Details of Galerie Taménaga: Three Generations of Franco-Japanese Art

Founded in Tokyo in 1969 by Kiyoshi Taménaga, Galerie Taménaga has built its identity around a family history and a singular cultural ambition: bringing Japanese and European art into conversation.

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Dear Art Enthusiast,

In a photograph taken in Paris around 1960, the art dealer Paul Pétridès, a young Kiyoshi Taménaga and his wife, and the painter Tsuguharu Foujita are brought together in a moment that captures the beginnings of a world in which art, friendship and patronage would become inseparable.



Paul Pétridès, Kiyoshi Taménaga and Tsuguharu Foujita, 1960. Courtesy Galerie Taménaga

Kiyoshi Taménaga had arrived in Paris just three years earlier, at the age of twenty-five, drawn by a fascination with painting that would become, in the words of his grandchildren, "*his whole life*". Another photograph, taken around the same period on Avenue Matignon, captures him alongside Bernard Buffet. Together, these images offer more than a record of the gallery's early years. They reveal the personal relationships, artistic affinities and enduring friendships that would shape the history of **Galerie Taménaga** and define its founder's approach to the art world across generations.



Bernard Buffet and Kiyoshi Taménaga, Matignon Avenue, Paris, circa 1960.

The ambition extended far beyond opening a gallery. In the late 1960s, access to European masterpieces in Japan remained limited. The National Museum of Western Art had opened in Tokyo in 1959, but the great artists of the School of Paris were still largely encountered at a distance. When Kiyoshi Taménaga founded his gallery in Tokyo in 1969, he set out to change that. But he soon recognised that bringing European art to Japan required more than importing paintings: it meant establishing a presence at the very centre of the European art world. In 1971, he opened on Avenue Matignon, becoming the first Japanese gallerist to establish a Paris gallery devoted to major European masters. From this address, he cultivated close relationships with artists including Tsuguharu Foujita, Bernard Buffet, Jean-Pierre Cassigneul, Paul Aïzpiri and Jean Fusaro. Fifty-five years later, the bridge runs in both directions: the gallery has spaces in Paris, Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto.

Today, the Paris gallery is led by Kiyomaru and Ami Taménaga, the third generation, who are developing a contemporary programme alongside the gallery's long-standing focus on modern European masters. This autumn, their vision was particularly visible. At Asia NOW, Galerie Taménaga presented Wataru Ozu, Chiharu Yakushigawa and Takehiko Sugawara, three Japanese artists exploring the possibilities of contemporary painting through Ozu's reinterpretation of traditional genres, Yakushigawa's physically immersive pigment-based practice, and Sugawara's abstract compositions rooted in Nihonga. Across the city, the gallery's own space presented *Floating Worlds*,

a solo exhibition by Kyosuke Tchinai, marking the ninth chapter in a relationship spanning nearly three decades.

This week, we spoke with Kiyomaru and Ami Taménaga about the values inherited from their grandfather, the evolving artistic dialogue between France and Japan, and the role of a family-run gallery in an art world increasingly shaped by fairs and digital platforms.



Kiyomaru and Ami Taménaga by Studio Vanssay.

POD: What inspired Kiyoshi Taménaga to found the gallery in Tokyo in 1969, and how did his experience in Paris shape his vision?

> Kiyomaru and Ami Taménaga: Our grandfather, Kiyoshi Taménaga, arrived in France in 1957, at the age of 25. That is when he discovered what would become his whole life: painting.
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> The National Museum of Western Art in Tokyo opened in 1959, only 2 years after our grandfather arrived in Paris. What inspired him was a wish to share the works of European masterpieces, especially the works of the School of Paris, and of the artists who followed those masters, with the Japanese public, who at the time had very limited access to such works. But at the same time, he understood that to truly bring these works to Japan, he first needed direct engagement with them, and for that he needed a base in Paris. This is why he opened the Paris gallery in 1971. Being in Paris allowed him to build trust and have direct relationships with the artists themselves,

including Léonard Foujita, Bernard Buffet, Jean-Pierre Cassigneul, Paul Aïzpiri, Jean Fusaro, and many others. It also gave him a deep knowledge of the art market and of the Parisian galleries. The gallery became a bridge between the two cultures, built on close, personal relationships with artists, collectors, dealers, and his passion for art.



Visit of French President François Mitterrand with Kiyoshi Taménaga, Paris, 1984.

POD: What are the most important lessons you have inherited from your grandfather? As the third generation, how do you balance the gallery's historical legacy with your own vision for its future?

Kiyomaru and Ami Taménaga: The most important lesson our grandfather left us is that a gallery's work is measured in long term vision. He believed an artist's career must be nurtured patiently, and that our role is to accompany artists through every stage. Above all, he taught us to believe in our artists. His meeting with Paul Aïzpiri in 1971 was the beginning of a relationship that has lasted more than fifty years, and we have worked with Kyosuke Tchinai for almost three decades. Our grandfather used to say that a gallery and an artist are like a marriage: a commitment built on trust, loyalty and mutual respect, which grows deeper with time.

As the third generation, we see this legacy not as a constraint but as our foundation. Our grandfather brought French artists to Japan; our father then introduced more contemporary Japanese artists to France. Our ambition today is to carry both directions forward at once: to continue championing French and Japanese artists across all galleries, and to welcome more international artists across both countries.

POD: How has the relationship between the French and Japanese art scenes evolved since the gallery opened in Paris in 1971?

Kiyomaru and Ami Taménaga: Since 1971, the relationship between the French and Japanese art scenes has evolved into a genuine dialogue. The two cultures had long inspired each other. In the 1970s, however, the art market flowed mainly from France to Japan. Japanese audiences' long-standing attachment to French painting deepened considerably, from the Impressionists to the School of Paris and living figurative painters such as Bernard Buffet, through museum exhibitions, department store galleries and a growing network of art dealers. By the end of the 1980s, Japanese collectors were among the most active in the world.

Since then, the exchange has increasingly flowed in both directions. Japanese creativity became part of life in Paris through fashion, architecture and design, then through major exhibitions of Japanese artists in French museums. In Japan, meanwhile, a new generation of collectors has turned toward contemporary art, supported by new international art fairs.

What has not changed is the mutual admiration between the two cultures, where respect for tradition goes hand in hand with innovation.



Kiyoshi Taménaga, Bernard Buffet Annabel, Kyoto 1987



Left: Construction in progress ahead of the inauguration of the Paris gallery on 23 March 1971. Right: Galerie Taménaga, Osaka, 1971.

POD: What defines Galerie Taménaga's curatorial approach today, and how do you select the artists you represent?

> Kiyomaru and Ami Taménaga: We are drawn to artists who combine a deep understanding of their medium with a voice of their own: artists who are able to express a singular identity through their craft, in a way that transcends cultures and generations. Intuition also remains essential for us. We are committed to discovering talented contemporary artists ourselves. Supporting their development is a challenge and a responsibility, but also a privilege. Since our father took over, we have presented many Japanese and international contemporary artists, with particular attention to Japanese artists still little known abroad. It is also our mission to bring more French and international artists to Japan and Paris, continuing the cultural exchange that has always defined our gallery.

POD: In an art market increasingly shaped by international fairs and digital visibility, what do you believe makes a family gallery relevant and distinctive today?

> Kiyomaru and Ami Taménaga: Fairs and digital platforms have transformed the way people discover art, and we believe that family galleries should embrace them, as we do: we exhibit at international art fairs like BRAFA, and Asia NOW, and we share our artists' work online. However, we also believe what makes a family gallery distinctive is something these tools cannot create on their own: relationships built patiently over decades, on trust and direct dialogue with artists and collectors.

A family gallery thinks in generations, so it can accompany artists over the long term, and its collectors often follow it from one generation to the next. In our case, our grandfather worked with artists like Bernard Buffet, and Paul Aïzpiri until the end of their lives, and some of the Japanese artists we represent today have been with us for twenty or even thirty years.

A family gallery also often has a particular kind of independence. Without outside investors, it can make choices guided by conviction, and take risks on young artists who are not yet known. Finally, a family gallery carries a story, a continuity of identity that gives meaning to what it shows. For us, the future of family galleries does not lie in choosing between tradition and modernity, but in using today's tools in the service of a long-term vision.



Celebration of Galerie Taménaga Tokyo's 50th anniversary, 2019.

POD: How do the gallery's different locations in Paris, Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto influence its programme and relationships with collectors?

Kiyomaru and Ami Taménaga: Each of our galleries has its own character, shaped by its city and its public. Tokyo is our flagship gallery, and our collectors there come from all over Japan. Thanks to more than fifty years of history, we have built long-standing relationships with collectors who have followed our artists over the decades

and supported them throughout their careers. However, since Japan became a very popular vacation destination, we are also fortunate enough to receive various international clients as well. In their programme, some artists overlap with Paris; however, Tokyo organises various independent group exhibitions, often focusing on both Japanese and International artists, and both contemporary and modern.

Osaka has a very different cultural character from Tokyo, and the gallery there welcomes collectors from across western Japan. Despite being a smaller gallery than in Tokyo, Osaka has been around for a long time, the same years as Paris, and thus, we have a longstanding relationship with our client there as well. The programme focuses more on our modern works, often organising separate exhibitions from Tokyo.

In Paris, we regularly present the Japanese artists we have long championed, while also creating exhibitions designed specifically for French and European audiences, from group shows to more experimental projects. With its own community of collectors and its standing as one of the world's great cultural capitals, Paris remains an essential place for our gallery.

Finally, our gallery in Kyoto, opened in 2021, is dedicated to young emerging artists. It allows us to discover and support new talent, and to introduce a new generation of collectors to the gallery.

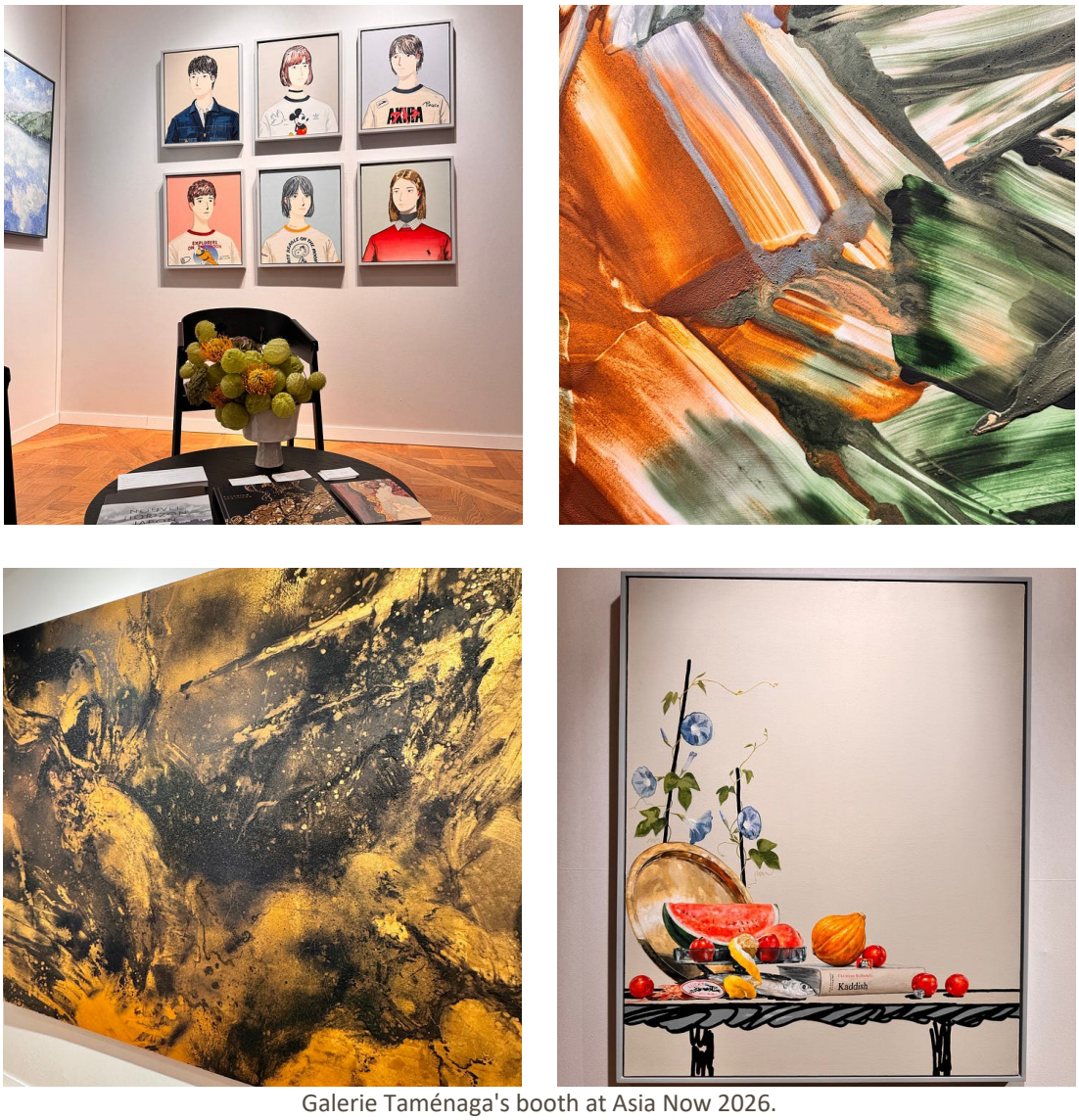
POD: At Asia NOW, you are presenting Wataru Ozu, Chiharu Yakushigawa and Takehiko Sugawara. What connects these three artists, despite their different approaches to painting?

Kiyomaru and Ami Taménaga: What connects these three artists is a pictorial practice deeply rooted in Japanese tradition, yet constantly renewed through experimentation. Moving between figuration and abstraction, we have a major figure in contemporary Nihonga, called Sugawara, who through his powerful abstraction, he conveyed the overwhelming sense of vitality in nature. Ozu reinterprets motifs from Western art history through a contemporary eye, building his compositions around *ma*, the Japanese idea of the space between things. Chiharu Yakushigawa paints directly with her body: she applies hand-ground pigments, prepared using the traditional *tempera nerikomi* technique, to her hands and feet, leaving traces on the surface as if dancing. Her colours face each other, touching and

at times encroaching on one another, yet each keeps its own space, like different beings learning to coexist.

In Ozu's *ma*, in the breathing space of Sugawara's compositions, and in the boundaries between Yakushigawa's colours, we find the same very Japanese sensitivity to time, silence and what is left unsaid, expressed through the language of contemporary painting.

Bringing these three voices together in Paris is our way of showing the richness and vitality of contemporary Japanese painting today.



Galerie Taménaga's booth at Asia Now 2026.

POD: What role do art fairs such as Asia NOW play in building long-term relationships between artists, collectors and galleries, beyond the visibility of the event itself?

Kiyomaru and Ami Taménaga: For a gallery like ours, a fair is never simply a question of visibility; we always try to participate in fairs that are coherent with our programme. Asia NOW is one of them. It brings together a public that is sincerely curious about Asian art, and it offers us the opportunity to introduce our artists to collectors who may not yet know their work. We also value what happens after the fair as well, especially the conversations that continue, the collectors who later visit the gallery, and who begin to follow an artist from one exhibition to the next.

POD: Speaking about *Floating Worlds*, what led you to dedicate a solo exhibition to Kyosuke Tchinai this autumn? What makes this particular body of work important within his practice and the gallery's programme?

Kiyomaru and Ami Taménaga: We have been working with Kyosuke Tchinai for almost three decades, and *Floating Worlds* marks his ninth exhibition at our Paris gallery. We organise an exhibition to present a new body of work every three years, a rhythm that gives him the time he needs to let his ideas mature, and gives our collectors an opportunity to follow his evolution over the years.

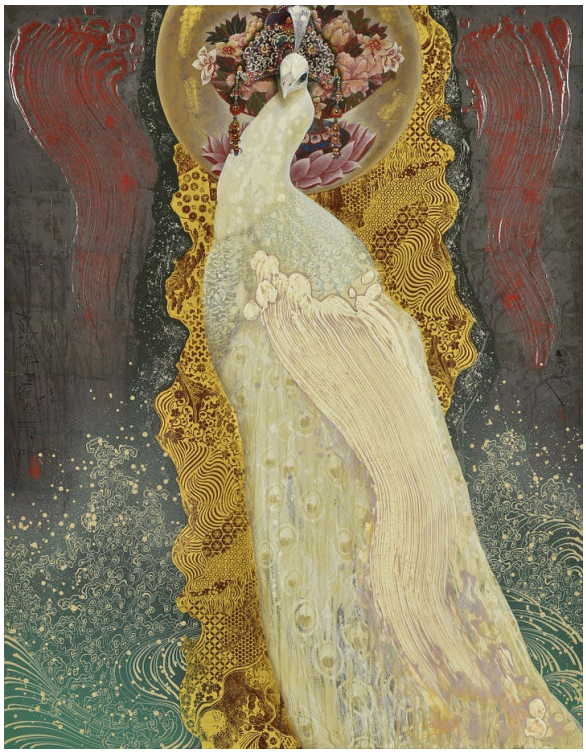
This exhibition is therefore both a continuation and a new chapter. Each show reveals how his work has changed since the last, and *Floating Worlds* is no exception, where we see a new motif emerge within his dream-like paintings that investigates the link between birth and awakening. Seeing these works together in Paris, after nearly thirty years of collaboration, is a moment of great pride for us.



Galerie Taménaga - Kyosuke Tchinai - Danse des camélias - 116 x 89cm

POD: What changes have you observed in the way collectors engage with Japanese art internationally? Are you seeing new generations of collectors develop an interest in Japanese artists, and what are they looking for?

Kiyomaru and Ami Taménaga: Global connectivity and digital platforms have made accessing culture far more simple today and Japan, in particular, continues to fascinate international audiences through its distinct cultural identity, exceptional craftsmanship, and refined artistic tradition. Around us we see two main paths among collectors: some are drawn to works more deeply connected to heritage and with a sense of technical mastery, while others seek dynamic new expressions that reflect contemporary Japanese culture. Both perspectives demonstrate how global interest in our country's artists keeps expanding and deepening, which are incredible to see.




Left: Galerie Taménaga - Kyosuke Tchinai - Le Roi Paon - 146 x 114cm.
Right: Galerie Taménaga - Kyosuke Tchinai - Envol céleste - 162 x 114cm.

POD: What advice would you give to a collector who wants to begin building a meaningful collection of Japanese modern and contemporary art?

Kiyomaru and Ami Taménaga: We think it is important to take time with building your collection. A meaningful collection grows slowly, as your eye and taste develops and your understanding deepens.

We also think it is important to explore the various artworks they have to offer. Japanese art is remarkably diverse, so visiting exhibitions, galleries, and museums are important and seeing how such artworks lives within its own culture is also meaningful.

It is also important to buy what moves you. Trends come and go, but a work you truly love will stay with you for a lifetime.

We also believe in following the artist rather than individual works. Getting to know an artist's practice over time, and seeing how it evolves from one exhibition to the next, is what gives a collection its depth and coherence.

Finally, we also believe that building a relationship with a gallery will help you discover various artists, it will accompany you to share its knowledge of the artists you are interested in, and helps your collection grow with intention.



Jean-Pierre Cassigneul and Kiyoshi Taménaga, Tokyo 1970

POD: How do you see Galerie Taménaga evolving over the next decade?

Kiyomaru and Ami Taménaga: Over the next decade, we hope Galerie Taménaga will continue to grow as a bridge between both cultures, while remaining true to the values established by our grandfather and carried forward by our father. Our grandfather brought French art to Japan, and our father introduced contemporary Japanese artists to France. Our ambition is to carry both directions forward: to continue showcasing the modern masterpieces at the heart of our collection, while championing emerging talent and welcoming more international and Japanese artists to our galleries in Paris, Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto.

Final Detail



Galerie Taménaga Paris façade. © Galerie Taménaga

Among the many things Kiyomaru and Ami Taménaga said, one image keeps returning: the union. Their grandfather compared the bond between a gallery and an artist to a union, built on trust, loyalty and mutual respect, deepening with time: fifty years with Paul Aïzpiri, almost thirty with Kyosuke Tchinai. The same logic appears in the way the third generation describes the painters they brought to Asia NOW. In an art market increasingly governed by immediacy, Galerie Taménaga has remained faithful to a different measure of time: allowing ideas to unfold, artists to evolve and relationships to deepen across generations.

The next chapter is already taking shape. On 26 November, the gallery will open an exhibition devoted to Tamihito Yoshikawa, bringing together forty new abstract paintings inspired by Monet and his exploration of colour and light. Here, the legacy of French Impressionism meets the sensibility of a contemporary Japanese artist, continuing a conversation that has defined the gallery since its beginnings.

Until next time,
Politics of Details