

# Kenjiro Okazaki: Never could be any other way — anagnorisis

June 5 – August 7, 2026  
5 Hanover Square  
London



Kenjiro Okazaki, *Et egredietur virga de radice lesse, et flos de radice eius ascendet. And for all this, nature is never spent. Generations have trod, have trod, have trod. I got old. Landscape plotted and pieced — Off side of my thought? fold, fallow, and plough.*

*For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow. The world is charged with the grandeur of God. Whatever is fickle, freckled — And still — it blooms. who knows how? The light is calm. We were struck by the sudden appearance of yucca trees*

*The blossoms are not. Ring-a-ring o' roses, come again another day. Praise him. The blossoms that remain are falling blossoms. That day, sunset seeing a butterfly fall. Nothing is so beautiful as Spring — when weeds, in wheels, shoot long and lovely and lush. (2026) © Kenjiro Okazaki, courtesy Pace Gallery*

Pace will present Kenjiro Okazaki's first-ever solo exhibition in the UK at its London gallery from June 5 to August 7. Titled *Never could be any other way — anagnorisis*, the presentation brings together sculptures, large-scale paintings, and a selection of the artist's delicately framed Zero Thumbnail series.

The first part of the exhibition's title, "Never could be any other way", is the phrase inscribed in the run-out groove of The Beatles' Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band (1967), buried in the infinite loop after "A Day in the Life." The second part, *anagnorisis* (ἀναγνώρισις), is Aristotle's term from the *Poetics* for the moment of tragic recognition—the retroactive discovery that what has happened could only have happened this way. Both name the same structure, which is the central thesis of Okazaki's forthcoming book *The Discovery of Art* (Film Art-sha, June 2026).

Okazaki is an acclaimed artist, architect, and theorist whose multifarious practice spans painting, sculpture, robotics, costume and set design, and architecture. One of Japan's leading contemporary artists, he examines the relationship between temporality and human perception. Central to his practice is the concept of *zōkei* (plastic arts): the making of form from substance. Asserting that our engagement with the universe is as malleable as the materials that constitute it, Okazaki positions *zōkei* as a practice through which perception and the world itself are brought into relation.

The artist's theoretical project draws on mathematics, quantum physics, art history, poetry, music, and literature. At its center is a conception of time as a constraint—one that art makes visible in order to overcome it. This idea was already central to Okazaki's practice well before his stroke in 2021 and the six months of rehabilitation that followed; that experience gave it new concreteness. For Okazaki, rehabilitation is not the recovery of lost movement, but the discovery, after the fact, that the movement was there all along.

Okazaki produces his multi-panel abstract paintings—figuring in this exhibition as diptychs and quadriptychs—using richly hued acrylic paints, thickly daubed onto the surface. As with the work of Paul Cézanne, a key source of inspiration for the artist, the gaps between brushstrokes emphasize that their proximity is contingent and open. Each island-like block of color is created within a single unit of continuous time, while the intervals between their making can vary from half a day to several months. Okazaki calls these units of color “giornata” (a day’s work), borrowing the Italian term used in buon fresco painting to describe how much work can be completed in a single day.

At first glance, the paintings’ clusters of color, texture, and shape appear distinct and independent. Through sustained looking, mirrored gestures and complementary or analogous color combinations map relationships across the panels, unfolding into an ever-expanding set of possibilities.

This relational logic extends beyond the visual field and into language. Okazaki’s long, narrative titles—often assuming poetic or fragmentary literary form—further expand the paintings’ potential for meaning. As the artist has explained, the titles belong to an “expressive sequence distinct from that of the work itself, functioning to subject the visual to the order of language.” For Okazaki, the encounter between two autonomous sequences—the visual and the textual—interrupts their internal logic and, in doing so, produces a “network structure” of meaning.

A selection of small-scale paintings from Okazaki’s Zero Thumbnail body of work, begun in 2005, will also be included in the exhibition. Working within a fixed scale and format, these condensed compositions allow for a wide range of painterly decisions. In some works, thin coats of paint create a near-translucent effect; in others, the acrylic’s jelly-like viscosity evokes a tactile sensation, as if the viewer’s own hands were implicated in the painting’s creation. The wooden frames Okazaki makes for the Zero Thumbnail works—marked by cut apertures and pronounced variations in grain—are conceived in direct relation to the compositions they enclose. In dialogue with the paintings, the frames both extend and compress the artist’s gestures. At an intimate scale, the works articulate the visual intensity of Okazaki’s practice.

Three sculptures, including one made this year, will also feature in the exhibition. These large, resin and synthetic marble forms possess an organic, almost fleshy sense of motion. Bearing the marks of manipulation—compression, expansion, contraction, and fracture—the sculptures give material form to a foundational principle of Okazaki’s work: the making of form from substance.

*The Discovery of Art*, Okazaki’s forthcoming book examining art through the lens of AI and the Socratic method, will be published by Film Art-sha on June 26. Concurrent with the exhibition in London, his solo presentation, *Tender Buttons*, opens at the Naoshima New Museum of Art on the island of Naoshima in Japan, on June 7. Later this year, the artist will unveil Nakatsukuni Lykeion, a new museum in Haizuka (Shōbara, Hiroshima Prefecture), Japan. The museum builds upon the Haizuka Earthwork Projects, initiated in 1994, and will include Tsukuyomi-dō (Chapelle Lunette), a pavilion designed by Okazaki. Nakatsukuni Lykeion is shaped by the same principles as Okazaki’s theoretical project, placing rehabilitation theory into practice alongside art, ecology, and learning.

With a unifying emphasis on form, **Kenjiro Okazaki** (b. 1955, Tokyo) explores themes related to time, space, and the human experience through a postmodernist lens. In the vein of artists such as Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Paul Klee, Tomoyoshi Murayama, Filippo Brunelleschi, and John Cage, Okazaki’s work is rooted in an investigation of the perception and reconstruction of time. In addition to his artistic practice, he is a critic renowned for his efforts in redefining abstraction. Over the course of his four-decade career, his richly varied oeuvre has cemented the artist as an important voice in the cultural landscape of Japan and beyond.

In 2002, Okazaki was named Director of the Japanese Pavilion at the 8th International Architecture Exhibition at the Venice Biennale. In 2007, he created the costumes and set design for Trisha Brown’s dance performance *I love my robots*, which premiered at Montclair State University, New Jersey, before embarking on a world tour including performances at the University of California, Berkeley (2007); Montpellier Dance Festival, France (2007); De Singel, Antwerp, Belgium (2008); and The Joyce Theater, New York (2008). In 2014, he received the Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Okazaki’s first solo exhibition was held at Muramatsu Gallery, Tokyo, in 1981, and important solo exhibitions of his work include *Kenjiro Okazaki*, Galerie Medianne Elko, Paris (1982); *Toki no Katachi*, Setagaya Art Museum, Tokyo (1989); *Kenjiro Okazaki*, Musée des Beaux-Arts d’Agen, France (1994); *Abstract Arts Can Become Concrete Tools*, Toyota

Municipal Museum of Art, Japan (2017); *Kenjiro Okazaki: Retrospective Strata*, Toyota Municipal Museum of Art, Japan (2019–20); and *Kenjiro Okazaki: 而今而後 Time Unfolding Here*, Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo (2025).

Works by Okazaki are held in important collections worldwide, including Benesse Art Site, Naoshima, Japan; Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art; Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo; Museum of Modern Art, Toyama, Japan; National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo; The Rachofsky House, Dallas, Texas, among others. Okazaki lives and works in Tokyo, Japan.

**Pace** is a leading international art gallery representing some of the most influential artists and estates of the 20th and 21st centuries, founded by Arne Glimcher in 1960. Holding decades-long relationships with Alexander Calder, Jean Dubuffet, Agnes Martin, Louise Nevelson, and Mark Rothko, Pace has a unique story that can be traced to its early support of artists central to the Abstract Expressionist, Minimalist, Pop, and Light and Space movements. Now in its seventh decade, the gallery maintains enduring ties with its legacy artists and estates while also making long-term investments in the careers of contemporary artists, including rising painters Pam Evelyn, Li Hei Di, and Lauren Quin as well as established figures such as Loie Hollowell, Kylie Manning, Robert Nava, Adam Pendleton, Marina Perez Simão, and Anicka Yi.

Under the current leadership of CEO Marc Glimcher and President Samanthe Rubell, Pace has established itself as a gallery of and for the future. It has played a key role in shaping and building major public and private collections across the globe since its founding. Pace highlights the shared lineages among its intergenerational artists through a robust global exhibition program encompassing 20th-century masterworks and contemporary art, as well as scholarly projects from Pace Publishing, one of the longest standing gallery imprints. Its artist-first ethos extends to public installations, philanthropic events, performances, and other interdisciplinary programming.

Pace also has a strong reputation for collaboration, and it shares representation of some artists with various small and midsize galleries around the world. In 2025, in this spirit of community, Pace became a partner in Pace Di Donna Schrader, a boutique gallery devoted to secondary market sales operating on a global scale. Pace continues its long history of collection-building with this venture, which charts a new path for its work in the secondary market and its stewardship of historic artworks.

Today, Pace has nine locations worldwide, including two galleries in New York—its eight-story headquarters at 540 West 25th Street and an adjacent 8,000-square-foot exhibition space at 510 West 25th Street in Chelsea—and 125 Newbury, an experimental project space in Tribeca named for the gallery’s original address on Newbury Street in Boston. Through an exhibition program directed by Arne Glimcher, 125 Newbury mounts innovative shows by emerging artists as well as curated presentations focusing on specific aspects or periods of historical artists’ practices. Pace’s origin in New York dates to 1963, when it opened its first space in the city on East 57th Street.

Pace has also been active in California for some 60 years, opening its West Coast flagship in Los Angeles in 2022. It maintains European footholds in London, Geneva, and Berlin, where it established a gallery space in 2025. Pace was one of the first international galleries to have a major presence in Asia, where it has been active since 2008, the year it first opened in Beijing’s vibrant 798 Art District. It now operates galleries in Seoul and Tokyo along with offices in Beijing and Hong Kong.

#### Press Inquiries

Europe  
Rebecca Riegelhaupt  
Senior Director, Communications  
rriegelhaupt@pacegallery.com  
+44 7917 909779

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