

EXHIBITION G U I D E

Jun. 20, 2025 - Aug. 10, 2025



ARTIST'S STATEMENT

In the early 1960s,
I was painting abstract paintings in Rome.
Why should I confine myself to a square canvas
when interesting shapes kept coming to mind?
This question suddenly occurred to me.
Let's cut out the shapes and set them free.
That was the first step toward creating a large space.
Since then, for more than half a century,
I have been creating works of art,
fascinated by the natural energy unique to the earth,
such as wind, water, and gravity.

—Susumu Shingu



The wind is invisible, yet Shingu makes it perceptible.
Water is fleeting energy, and Shingu gives it shape.

-Renzo Piano, architect



Japan Society Gallery relaunches its summer exhibition season with Susumu Shingu: Elated!

he artist's first solo museum exhibition in New York City, *Susumu Shingu: Elated!*, presents the dynamic sculptures of acclaimed artist Susumu Shingu. The joyful exhibition features mesmerizing sculptures that make visible the invisible forces of wind, heat, and gravity, while encouraging a heightened awareness of the natural environment. Shingu's application of biomimicry—drawing inspiration from natural elements and processes—appears in both the forms and the dynamic movement of his sculptures. They evoke insects, birds, sea creatures, flowers, plants, clouds, stars, and moons.

Since the 1960s, Susumu Shingu (b. 1937) has designed and engineered kinetic artworks that enliven parks, plazas, and public spaces around the globe. His traveling outdoor exhibition *Windcircus* completed a U.S. tour in 1988, visiting sites in New York; Fall River, Massachusetts; Chicago; Boston; and Los Angeles. Since 1989, his collaborations with Italian architect Renzo Piano (b. 1937), including *Boundless Sky* (1994) suspended in Kansai International Airport terminal building, have become world renowned. Shingu has also created several site-specific, monumental sculptures permanently installed in New York City: *Dialog with the Sun* (1995), *Distant Sky* (2012) and *Rainbow Leaves* (2021).

Celebrating Shingu's long and impactful career, this exhibition encourages us to contemplate our changing climate while appreciating summer breezes, inside and beyond the gallery walls.



INTRODUCTION

While Susumu Shingu is known for his monumental outdoor sculptures, since 1984 he has also been designing smaller, "superlight" sculptures made from wire, cloth, and carbon fibers. Also called "gram" sculptures due to their precise engineering, these lightweight works respond to interior breezes generated by air conditioners and the movements of visitors, visualizing energy currents running through enclosed spaces. In this gallery, sculptures—each weighing no more than 22 pounds—are suspended from the ceiling and powered by fans. The intricate motions recall elements of our natural world, from the flapping of a bird's wings to the cosmic movements of stars. At the same time, each sculpture reflects light and casts abstract shadows, creating real and ethereal impressions.



TIMELINE

1937

Susumu Shingu is born on July 13th in Osaka, the youngest of four sons.



1948-1953

Shingu begins painting from a young age with the encouragement of his father, a businessman who is also an amateur painter and a collector of antiques, old books, and textiles. As a fourth grade student, Shingu visits the studio of his relative, the renowned painter Ryohei Koiso (1903–1988).

1956

Shingu enters Tokyo University of the Arts and studies oil painting with Professor Ryohei Koiso. Having developed an interest in Shingu learns Italian with the goal of studying in Italy.



1960-1962

Shingu graduates from Tokyo University of the Arts and receives a scholarship from the Italian government to study with Franco Gentilini (1909–1981) at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Rome. He travels around Italy viewing early Renaissance paintings, especially the work of Piero della Francesca, with whom he feels a deep artistic resonance. During this period, Shingu's artworks change from pictorial to abstract.



1963-1965

Feeling restricted by the confines of the canvas, Shingu's works shift from two-dimensional to three-dimensional.

1965

While working as an interpreter and guide for Japanese tourists in Italy, Shingu meets Kageki Minami, industrialist and president of Osaka Shipbuilding Co., Ltd. (now Daizo Corporation). Minami encourages Shingu to return home to work for the 1970 Japan World Exposition (Expo '70) in Osaka.

1967

Shingu's solo exhibition Wind Structures opens at Shoho Gallery in Osaka and Hibiya Park in central Tokyo. The exhibition is well received, and Shingu is selected





1970

Two kinetic sculptures by Shingu are installed at Expo '70.





Shingu publishes his first picture book, Strawberries, The concept

conversation with

for the book is inspired by a

Japanese-American sculptor Isamu Noguchi (1904-1988).

1970

Minami sends Shingu to the U.S.

monograph, Shingu, is contracted

On this trip, the artist's first

for publication by Harry N.

Center for the Visual Arts at

Harvard University invites him to

1971-1972

During his residence at Harvard

Shingu obtains his private pilot's license. He begins corresponding

with one of his heroes, the designe and architect Charles Eames

(1907–1978), and later visits him in Los Angeles. Shingu shows Eames

a 16mm film of his sculptures in motion, leading to discussions of

structure and form. The two maintain a long friendship.

Abrams, and the Carpenter

be a visiting artist.



1977

Shingu

In collaboration with the architect Kijo Rokkaku (1941–2019), Shingu designs the Zasso Forest School, a kindergarten in southern Kyoto surrounded by nature. The building features large weathervanes set or top of its seven towers. This project is informed by Shingu's lessons on aerodynamics from his friend Professor Hidemasa Kimura (1904-1986), who designed the YS-11 aircraft and human-powered airplanes. In 1979, the school is awarded the 4th Yoshida Isoya Prize for outstanding achievem in art and architecture.



The picture book *Spider* is published under the guidance of Professor Takeo Yaginuma (1916-1995), chair of the Arachnological Society of Japan.



1982

One of Shingu's first international commissions is a sculpture for the ExxonMobil Research Laboratory in Dallas, a building designed by the architect I.M. Pei (1917-2019) The building is later converted into a school for pre-K through 12th grade.



1983

Following several monumental outdoor sculpture projects in Japan, Shingu designs a sculpture outside the New England Aquarium 65 feet, Celebrating the aquarium work evokes the ocean and the movements of sea creatures.



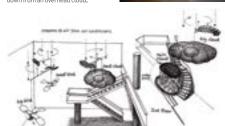
1984

Shingu's former professor, Ryohe Koiso, suggests that the artist study super-light indoor model airplanes powered by rubber bands. Shingu begins experimenting with interior sculptures made of carbon fiber, debuting them in his solo exhibition Breathing Sculptures at the Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Art in Kobe



1985

Shingu creates a permanent indoor installation filling the lobby of the Suita City Cultural Center in Osaka, It consists of multiple suspended sculptures that move through the air, and an arrangement of standing sculptures powered by water raining down from an overhead cloud.



outdoor sculpture in Boston landmark.



1986

Shingu is awarded the 1986 Yokohama Biennale Sculpture Exhibition Grand Prize and the 18th Japan Grand Prix of Art.

1987



Shingu's outdoor traveling exhibition Windcircus comprises standing sculptures of aluminum and steel created from 1986–1987, with additional works added in 1988. Windcircus completes the European leg of its international tour in 1987, traveling to Market Square and the banks of the Weser River in Bremen, Germany; Parc de l'Espanya Industrial in Barcelona, Spain; Villa Demidoff-Parco di Pratolino in Florence, Italy; and Mukkula Camping Site in Lahti, Finland.





1988

Windcircus travels to several locations in the U.S.: the World Trade Center in New York; Heritage State Park in Fall River, Massachusetts; Grant Park in Chicago: the Esplanade in Boston; and the Wilshire Federal Building in Los Angeles.





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Shingu is invited to create a sculpture for the 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul.



1989

Architect Renzo Piano (b. 1937) meets with Shingu after winning the competition for the Kansai International Airport, With their shared birth year, Italian language, and mutual understanding of each other's practices, they develop a long-term collaborative relationship. Shingu establishes a studio in Paris as a base for his projects in Europe.



1990

Shingu relocates his studio to rural Sanda, Hyogo Prefecture.



For the 1991 Setoda Biennale, Shing installs a sculpture near **I**kuchi Island, on a rock that emerges and disappears with the changing tides.



1992

Although he is initially commissioned to create a sculpture for the new Osaka headquarters of corporate communications company Brain Center Inc., Shingu ultimately design the entire building. His eye-catching sculpture is installed emerging from the top of the structure.



The city of Sanda, Shingu's new home, asks him to design a completion of their water supply



1994

Renzo Piano and Shingu collaborate on the Kansai International Airport. Piano suggests to Shingu: "I designed streams of air in this lobby...Somehow make them visible, for you are the artist who sculpture is installed on the ceiling of the international departures floor.



1995

Shingu's first permanent outdoor sculpture in New York City is installed outside the Queens Criminal Court.



1998

Issey Miyake (1938–2022) asks Shingu to produce a stage setting for his Spring/Summer 1999 Paris Runway Collection. Shingu's sculpture flutters as the models walk by



2000

Caravan, begins in the rice fields by his studio before traveling to the lands of indigenous people in Motukorea Island, New Zealand (Aotearoa); Inari, Finland; Tamdaght, Morocco; Undur Dov, Mongolia; and Cumbuco, Ceará, Brazil. In addition to 21 free-standing wind sculptures, children's messages from one site are delivered to children at the next location. Shingu meets with indigenous people in each location to learn how to coexist with the natural world and help ensure the future of the planet.



2001

Shingu opens solo exhibitions at Maison Hermès in Tokyo and the Glasgow School of Art, Scotland



2002

Shingu receives the Mainichi Art Award for his exhibition Wind Caravan and the Medal with Purple Ribbon for his artistic activities.

2005

Shingu designs the stage set for choreographer Jirí Kylián's *Toss of a Dice*, performed at the Nederlands Dans Theater I in The Hague, The Netherlands.



2007

Based on his learnings from the indigenous communities he met through *Wind Caravan*, Shingu launches the project Breathing Earth, a sustainable village integrated with nature. German filmmaker Thomas Riedelsheimer documents Shingu as he searches for the location of the village.





2010

The Japanese Government awards Shingu the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette.

2011

In the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake (3.11), Shingu launches the project *Genki-nobori*. Participants are invited to leave messages of encouragement on white fabric windsocks inspired by traditional koinobori ("carp streamers"). As the streamers "swim" in the breeze, they carry hope to people living through the disaster.



2012

Shingu participates in the Foire Internationale d'Art Contemporain (FIAC), designing an exhibition of floating sculptures in the basin of the Tuileries Garden in Paris.





2014

Susumu Shingu Wind Museum opens in Arimafuji Park, Sanda, Hyogo Prefecture. The Windcircus sculptures of 1986-1988 find a permanent home.

After six years of filming, Thomas

Breathing Earth: Susumu Shingu's

Shingu's second permanent outdoo

installed in the courtyard of a new

apartment building in Hell's Kitchen

sculpture in New York City is

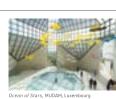


Shingu installs several suspended sculptures at the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center in Athens.



2018

Susumu Shingu-SPACESHIP opens at MUDAM, the Contemporary Art Museum of Luxembourg.



Susumu Shingu, une utopie d'aujourd'hui opens at the Château de Chambord in France.

2019



2021

Shingu's third outdoor sculpture in New York City is suspended in the central space between two colur of an apartment complex design by Renzo Piano.



2023

Shingu's collaborative relationship with Renzo Piano is explored in the exhibition Parallel Lives: Susumu Shingu + Renzo Piano at the Osaka.



2024

The exhibition COSMOS-Susumu Shingu-Wind Traveler opens at the Fubon Art Museum in Taipei. Taiwan Shingu's sculpture is installed in Fubon Xinyi A25, a skyscraper in Taipei designed by Renzo Piano



2025

Susumu Shingu: Elated!, the artist's first solo museum exhibition in New York City, opens at Japan Society, relaunching the summer exhibition season.





Stream of Time (Edition 3/8)

2013 Stainless steel, aluminum, carbon fiber, polyester cloth Collection Shawna Surrelle, MD, JD; WPB, Florida

Little Wings 11/50

Carbon fiber, aluminum, polyester cloth, and nylon string Created in 2011 by S. SHINGU, the exhibited model (11/50) is owned by atelier bo'ssa (Roberta BORGHI - architect & Akio SASSA - engineer), received for their contribution to the floating installation Sinfonietta of Light (2012) in Tuileries Garden, Paris.











Artist's drawing for Wings of Freedom (2022)

Artist's drawing for Little Cosmos (2014)

Artist's drawing for Catch and Run (2022)

Artist's drawing for Diary of Clouds (2016)

Artist's drawing for Wings of Freedom (2022)

Artist's drawing for Little Cosmos (2014)

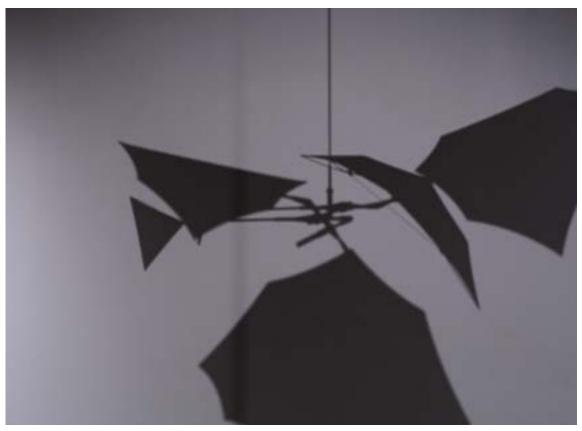
Artist's drawing for Catch and Run (2022)

Artist's drawing for Diary of Clouds (2016)



Catch and Run

2022 Stainless steel, carbon fiber, polyester cloth



Four curved wings twist and turn, rising and falling like autumn leaves caught in rotating gusts of wind. Alluding to its title, the serrated components seem to chase after each other as they spin around the central point of the sculpture—as if playing an endless game of tag. Indeed, from certain vantage points, the formation and movement of the wings recall wind-powered children's toys, such as rotating pinwheels or swerving kites.



Little Cosmos

2014 Stainless steel, aluminum, carbon fiber, polyester cloth

This entrancing formation of delicate white hexagonal planes resembles a galaxy of stars in constant motion. Like our own Milky Way—in which individual solar systems revolve around their central stars while the entire galaxy itself rotates around a supermassive black hole—here each plane turns independently while the entire sculpture spins slowly. The complexity of these simultaneous subtle movements is magnified by networks of shadows moving across the gallery floor, walls, and ceiling, evoking distant galaxies. Visualized by this cosmic cluster of drifting shapes, the dynamic movements and vast scale of outer space become at once comprehensible and awe-inspiring.

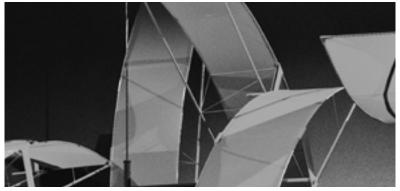


Wings of Freedom

2022 Stainless steel, carbon fiber, polyester cloth

A pair of glowing wings flexes up and down in the wind, mimicking a bird in flight. The spindly wires that form the supporting structure, meanwhile, recall the delicate antennae and legs of a butterfly. Counterweighted by a steel triangle resembling a tail, the composite creature turns slowly, hovering in midair. The artist has distilled the movement and forms of familiar birds and insects into artistic expressions.









Diary of Clouds

2016

Stainless steel, carbon fiber, polyester cloth

Like a bright yellow cloud drifting across the sky, the form of this sculpture evolves constantly with the direction and force of the wind. Made from interconnected curved components that swing around several horizontal axes, the sculpture changes constantly like the imaginary imagery that clouds often evoke. The rotation of each curved segment triggers the other components to move, and together, these synchronized shifts shape the trajectory of the sculpture's path through the air.



2024 Aluminum, stainless steel

Two sections of a hollow polyhedron spin clockwise and counterclockwise, propelled by hidden jets of water. Water drawn from Japan Society's garden pool sprays within the interior facets of the metallic form, causing each shell to spin back and forth around the central split. As the water trickles downward, it creates ripples in the pond. The seemingly heavy object floats like a moon rising over the ocean or an asteroid hovering above Earth. This recent sculpture builds on Shingu's career-long interest in moving three-dimensional works with water. Some of his earliest sculptures were shown at the 1970 Japan World Exposition in Osaka, and like Silent Water, they were powered by water pumped from an artificial pond.

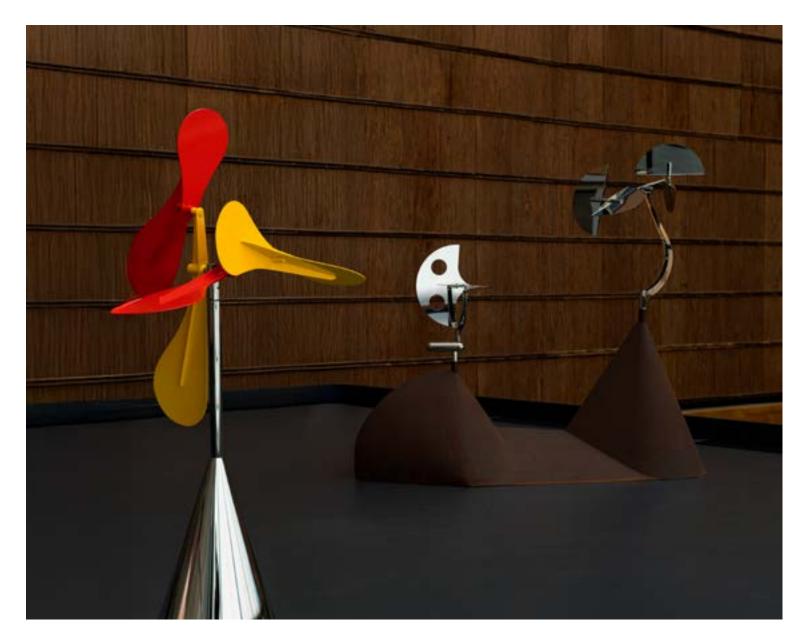




Menuet

1988 Stainless steel, aluminum

The menuet is a social dance that peaked in popularity in Europe during the 18th century. Formal, elegant, and slow-paced, it involved bowing to one's partner, simple turns, and extending pointed toes in time with the music. Throughout the dance, couples would separate and then reunite, touching only their hands. This work moves like dancers of a menuet. It is also reminiscent of a flower. Each pair of petal-like components joins at an axis yet turns separately—drawing close together, then moving further away. The entire work rotates continuously, creating a sense of steady momentum akin to a menuet.



Legend Island

2013 COR-TEN steel, stainless steel

Shiny, smooth stainless steel contrasts with COR-TEN steel, a steel alloy whose top layer oxidizes into a stable, rust-like surface that protects the metal beneath. Reminiscent of rocks or defunct machinery, the base of this work supports semicircular forms that spin and turn like weathervanes or gears. A set of four solid arcs contrasts with a single perforated crescent. These abstract shapes evoke anthropomorphic forms. The title conveys deep history or mythical storytelling, and was perhaps inspired by the artist's time spent learning about sustainable living practices from the Maori people in New Zealand (Aotearoa) in 2000.

Moon Boat

2013 Stainless steel, aluminum, carbon fiber, polyester cloth

As its title suggests, this work combines the forms of two skiffs counterweighted by metal oars. Illuminated from below, the glowing boats take on a fantastical quality as they turn and flip, as if propelled through space by the mysterious oars. The shifting form of the sculpture also recalls the waxing and waning of the moon.

Susumu Shingu's maquettes are on loan from Shingu Atelier unless otherwise noted.





When the earth came into being, the wind was already blowing. To me the wind is the absolute. After living with the wind for many years, this is the most important thing I have learned.

—Susumu Shingu

SHINGU'S STUDIO

SHINGU'S STUDIO



In this installation, a selection of Shingu's maquettes reveals the initial stages of his creative process. After making preliminary drawings, the artist constructs miniature scale models. Each of these maquettes—on view here for the first time—is a prototype that was used to design, engineer, and fine-tune one of Shingu's realized works. The functional models can be activated by air currents, just like their larger counterparts. In 1990, Shingu established his atelier deep in the countryside of Sanda, Hyogo prefecture. There, outdoor sculptures float on a small lake and surround the studio. Shingu's maquettes, meanwhile, live along the windowsill in the corner of his atelier, where they stand in colorful silhouette against the landscape scenery beyond. A similar corner windowsill has been constructed in this gallery, offering a glimpse into the artist's interior workspace.



CHILDREN'S **BOOKS**

Inspired by a conversation with the Japanese-American sculptor Isamu Noguchi (1904-1988), Susumu Shingu wrote and illustrated his first children's book, Strawberries, in 1975. Since then, Shingu has become a prolific author of children's books that draw us into the marvelous workings of the natural world. After exploring the life cycle of fruit in his first book, the subjects of subsequent tales ranged from minute insects to enormous whales. Dr. Takeo Yaginuma of the Arachnological Society of Japan collaborated with Shingu to create Spider in 1979, declaring, "I would do anything to help you if even one more spider lover is born."

More recently, Shingu has authored several pop-up books following the adventures of Sandalino, a friendly alien who dropped to Earth during a thunderstorm. As Sandalino falls in love with Earth he becomes acutely concerned about the future of our planet.

Shingu's children's books have been translated into multiple languages and are read by children around the world.















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