

## Hideki Tokushige Solo Exhibition "HONEBANA"

GALLERY KOGURE NEW YORK | March 14 - April 21, 2018

### Hideki Tokushige's First Solo Exhibition in America

The Japanese artist, Hideki Tokushige's first solo exhibition "HONEBANA" will be held at GALLERY KOGURE NEW YORK. His works have already been known through various websites.

[Huffington Post](#) [Daily Mail.com](#) [Wired.co.uk](#)

This will be Tokushige's first solo exhibition in America.

Once the exhibition is over, his artwork will not remain, but his pictures will. For this reason, he has very few solo exhibitions, which makes this a rare opportunity to observe his works. His latest work, Otome-Camellia will be exhibited as his 17th work from Tokushige's "Honebana" series.

### What is "HONEBANA"?

It is a Japanese term used for Tokushige's works. "Hone" means "bones" and "Bana(Hana)" means "flower".

Tokushige creates flowers with bones from dead animals. Once he takes pictures, he breaks them up and buries them under the soil. Tokushige describes this process in simple words;

Take bones out,  
make flowers,  
leave images,  
break, return to earth.

[YouTube](#)



*Lotus #3, 2009*



*Lotus #1, 2009*

### Event Outline

**Exhibition Title** : Hideki Tokushige Solo Exhibition - HONEBANA -

**Exhibition Period** : Wednesday, March 14<sup>th</sup> – Saturday, April 21<sup>th</sup> , 2018

**The Opening Reception** : Wednesday, March 14<sup>th</sup> , 2018, 6-8pm

**Open Hours** : 11am-6pm

**Closed** : Sunday and Monday

**Place** : GALLERY KOGURE NEW YORK

**Address** : 434 Greenwich Street, New York, NY 10013 (at the corner of Vestry Street)

**Website** : [http://www.gallerykogure.com/ny\\_exhibitios.html](http://www.gallerykogure.com/ny_exhibitios.html)

**For More Information** : [info@gallerykogure.com](mailto:info@gallerykogure.com)

**Artist's Website** : [honebana.com](http://honebana.com)

**Artist's E-mail** : [honebana@gmail.com](mailto:honebana@gmail.com)

## ■ About the Exhibition

One's view of life and death varies. Some believe that death is not an ending. As rain becomes the river, the sea, the clouds, and rain again, our memories circulate forever, changing their forms, becoming flesh, bones, earth and flower. There is a saying in Japan, "Life comes and goes" that we must accept our fate. However, in modern society, there is a tendency to detest old age, sickness, and death.

Tokushige's "Honebana" series is his lifework as an artist. This is his act of confronting life and death, and setting out on a journey in search of a new way of regeneration, and the pacification of the spirit.

Why does he choose to take this method? Nature has a systematic cycle. Spring comes after winter, flowers blossom and die, evening follows morning. Life returns to soil and regenerates. His work is an attempt to synchronize with nature's cycle.

The bones and fur he uses for his works are those of frozen rodents, sold to feed other pets. The rodents are born and killed in sterilized boxes, without a notion of a blue sky. Tokushige reflects this state, on our perspective on nature, and view on life.

He skins and takes out the bones of each frozen rodent, and creates bone flowers, takes pictures, develops them, and returns his works to earth. He respects their lives and turns them into beautiful flowers. This ritualistic process transforms the eerie to the beautiful.

This time, Tokushige will surprise us with his new experimental exhibition "Dialogue". One day, Tokushige receives a shocking e-mail from abroad that says "I am looking for an artist to donate my bones to once I die." The text messages exchanged by the artist and this new collaborator is somewhat different from his previous works. However, as we read along their dialogue, we will discover the same construction and serenity as the "Honebana".

GALLERY KOGURE NEW YORK is probably the smallest exhibition space in the world. This reminds us of the narrow space of Eastern countries and the riches the spiritual world brings. When you see our artwork, we hope you will feel your own existence disappear and expand infinitely. We will venture to emphasize the narrowness of Tokushige's exhibition space, to enable our viewers to observe his artwork deeply.

GALLERY KOGURE

## ■ Artist Statement

To connect equivocal elements is always an important theme in my artwork. The beautiful and the ugly, the holy and the unholy, absence and existence, creation and destruction, animals and plants, color and monochrome, and finally, life and death.

Our society has become bipolar than ever before. Is this good or evil? An enemy or a friend? I believe my role as an artist, is to think about the two senses of values and reconnect them. Nature has a systematic cycle. Spring comes after winter, flowers blossom and die, evening follows morning. Life returns to soil and regenerates. My work is an attempt to synchronize with nature's cycle.

My first experience of expressing myself was through photography. Roland Barthes defined photography as "that-has-been". This definition has always been the basis of my art, since I started studying as a student, till this very day as an artist. Like Land Art, Christo and Jeanne-Claude, Thomas Demand, I take pictures and leave no trace of my works, and try to reconfigure from an oriental interpretation.

Hideki Tokushige

## Hideki Tokushige

Born in Kagoshima Prefecture, 1974. Presently residing in Tokyo.

2004 He picks up a dead racoon dog on the road and take s it home. For the first time, he tries dissecting it with the guidance of a reference book his junior high school science teacher had written called "The School of Bones". At first, he could not touch it with his bare hands or look into its eyes. This experience made the artist realize that he knew nothing about the biology of living creatures. Raccoon dogs and human beings are both mammals. This was the moment when he noticed that he knew nothing about the human body.

2008 He starts creating flowers with bones. From his experience through dissecting the raccoon dog, the bones he would use needed to be those of a mammal. Since rodents had the most orthodox frame, he chose to use their bones. During his time working as a forklift truck driver, he created 4 bone flowers, but he did not show it to anyone, or exhibit his works.

2011 For the first time, he presents his work at an art event called "YOUNG ARTISTS JAPAN Vol.4" and wins the Grand Prix. His career as an artist begins.



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### ■ SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2015 NO-BANA (Brain Flower), LOWER AKIHABARA. , Tokyo, Japan

2013 HONEBANA (Bone Flower) - Queen of the night -, LOWER AKIHABARA. , Tokyo, Japan

### ■ GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2017 spiral take art collection, Spiral Garden, Tokyo, December 15-25

YUKI-SIS presents The Fools ≡ Great Artists, Spiral Garden, Tokyo

The Fools -Group exhibition by various artists, Gallery YUKI-SIS, Tokyo

2016 UFO has arrived at YUKI-SIS, Gallery YUKI-SIS, Tokyo

2015 Young people who open up the era, Takamatsu Mitsukoshi Art Gallery, Kagawa, Japan

Yayoi Kusama and New Age Artists, Hiroshima Mitsukoshi Gallery, Hiroshima, Japan

Yayoi Kusama and New Age Artists, Niigata Mitsukoshi Art Gallery, Niigata, Japan

Animals revived in Art, Istein Shinjuku Art Gallery, Tokyo

Art exhibition with bones, Istein Shinjuku Art Gallery, Tokyo

LOST ANIMALS II, Gallery Art Composition, Tokyo

2014 The Fools → Great Artists, Gallery YUKI-SIS, Tokyo

2013 ReSTART Group Exhibition, Gallery YUKI-SIS/, Tokyo

Esperanto, Bunkamura Gallery, Tokyo

CABINET DA-END 03, Galerie Da-End, Paris, France

2012 Magnetic Field Resonance, Gallery YUKI-SIS, Tokyo

Melting Point, Gallery YUKI-SIS, Tokyo

2011 YOUNG ARTISTS JAPAN Vol.4, Gallery TAGBOAT, Tokyo

### ■ AWAR

2011 YOUNG ARTISTS JAPAN Vol.4 Grand Prix, Tokyo

### ■ EDUCATION

1997 Graduated from Nippon Photography Institute, Department of documentary photography, Tokyo

## EXHIBITS

### <Photo Frame with Hinged Double Doors>

A wooden frame with hinged double doors, when opened becomes 2 meters wide. This is the only edition. The buyer, with the artist, will then break up the bones and return them to soil. The artist will take a picture of the buyer breaking up the bones, and the picture will be placed in the center of the frame. This entire process will be considered as artwork.



*Otome-Camellia*, 2017  
W1920×H1185×D50mm,  
(when closed, W960×H1185×D100mm)  
Ed. 1/1  
Wooden Frame with Hinged Double Doors,  
Pigment Print (lined with aluminum)



<A picture of the buyer breaking up the bones  
will be added to this side of the frame>  
1.

### <Dialogue>

March 2017, the artist receives an e-mail from abroad that says "I am looking for an artist to donate my bones to once I die." Surprised by her request, the artist continue to exchange messages. This is an 11-month-record of the two, during the period of March 2017 to January 2018.

*Dialogue*, 2018  
30×30×3cm  
Ed. 1/10  
Ipad, board

## <Bone Flower>

### Otome-Camellia made of bones and furs of mice and rats



The bones mainly used to make the petals of the "Otome-Camellia" were the shoulder blade bones of rats. It took 40 rats' shoulder blade bones to make a single flower. There were 20 shoulder blades all together. Both rats and humans have two shoulder blades each on their backs. The core connects to the humerus at the shoulder, and then to the collarbone on the side of the neck. Since it has width and curves, it can also be used to make carnations.



For the flower's center, small shoulder blades of mice are used. Surrounding the center are the shoulder blades of rats (most commonly used), and the outside are those of guinea pigs. The edges are straighter than those of mice and rats, and similar to the shape of ginkgo leaves. They all appear to be made with mice bones, but they are subtly different.



#### Q: How did you come up with the idea of creating flowers with bones?

I attended the documentary photography course at, 19 when I developed a passion for photography. Though I wanted my pictures to be unique, I couldn't find the uniqueness I was searching for. Until one day, (9 years from now) I was inspired by a rainy scenery. I had been looking for ideas of what I could create using rodent bones. I was walking through downtown of Tokyo, when it began to rain, so I had to get inside a cafe. There were many people walking outside. I could see them from the second floor window. They all opened up their umbrellas. The colors of numerous umbrellas jumped into my eyes, and the car lamps reflected on the wet road. The lights and colors were so inspiring! At that very moment, I came up with this idea. The umbrellas looked like lotus flowers floating on the water. This is how my first work became the lotus flower. Once this project was completed, I photographed the bone flower, framed the picture, broke up the bones and buried it in the soil where it belonged.

#### Q: Why do you choose to use bones?

Most people who look at my works don't realize that they are made with bones. In our modern society, we seldom see bones or dead bodies, so most people wouldn't come up with this idea. Some will show disgust after seeing what it is made of. However, I believe that bones are the most universal material for mankind. It's said that our act of painting and engraving go back 70,000 years. Our history with bones go back a long way, too. Crafts made with animal bones are discovered in the layer of soil from ancient times. Mankind has continued to create crafts for 70,000 years. In the movie "2001: A Space Odyssey" there is a striking scene where an ape-man holds a bone and uses it to make his first tool. Bones are originally universal materials for humans. 70,000 years of history of mankind, may have begun from the fingertips that crafted bones.

#### Q: When did you first start creating bone flowers?

I started creating bone flowers from 2008. At the time, I was working in a factory as a forklift truck driver, and continued making art in my spare time. I wasn't sure how people would react to my taking out bones and making art, so I kept my works to myself for 3 years.

In March, 2011, Japan was struck by the Great East Japan Earthquake and the accident at the nuclear power plant occurred. At the time, I lived in Tokyo, where the earthquakes struck frequently. Days of anxiety seemed to last forever. Like most people in Japan, I felt the need to take another good look at the life I had

been living. In other words, the earthquake encouraged me to go public with "Honebana" I started preparing for the exhibition, and 6 months after the earthquake, I presented my "Honebana" for the first time. I was awarded the Grand Prix at this exhibition.

**Q: How long does it take to make one?**

I dissect each one of the rodents, so I guess the dissecting process takes the longest. My work always begins from taking the bones out of the rodents. I used the bones of 100 or more rodents for one flower. I used their fur, too. I tan the hides myself. Sometimes, it takes more than 2~3 months just to dissect them.

**Q: How do you make bone flowers?**

Most of the time, I look at the shape of the bones and see if it reminds me of a flower. As with the case of "Otome-Camellia" which will be exhibited this time, I was touching the shoulder bones when I came up with an image of petals. I do not carve or process the bones. I use their shapes as they are. The variation of bones is actually limited. I try all sorts of combination to transform them into a flower. I do not use wires, either. All I use are bones, fur, and glue. This is because they should be returnable to earth.

**Q: Could you take us through the process, step by step?**

I usually describe my process of making bone flowers in simple words. "Take bones out, make flowers, leave images, break, return to earth" When I come up with an idea for the flower, I start the dissecting. I take out the bones and finally put together my flower. I use a 4x5 inch large camera for my works. I develop my pictures and print, exhibit, and then return my works to the soil. I think of this whole process as my artwork. The bone flower is then broken up and buried under the soil. You can see the process in this video below. [http://honebana.com/honebana\\_base/honebana\\_news001\\_en.html#return-sunflower-news2015\\_en](http://honebana.com/honebana_base/honebana_news001_en.html#return-sunflower-news2015_en)

**Q: What kinds of flowers have you made?**

When I came up with the idea of making flowers with bones, the image of lotus flowers popped into my head.

I envisioned a lotus flower made of bones, floating on the surface of the water and blooming. The lotus is known as a religious flower in Eastern countries. After that, I made a spider lily (lycoris). In Japan, this flower is also associated with death. I do not always choose religious flowers. I have made 17 kinds of flowers including lilies, dandelions, and hydrangeas.

**Q: Do you sell your bone flowers? If so, how much are they?**

My bone flowers do not remain once they are photographed. After they are exhibited, there are times I visit other countries and cities to show them once or twice, but usually, it is only once. It can never be shown after the exhibition is over. Only the people who come visit can see them. I would like people to witness my works directly. I believe this will be a special experience, because it shows that we are living in the present and that "now" will never come again.

I recommend people who come to see my works to take pictures. This is because I like the idea of my bone flowers captured and remaining in many pictures as possible.

**Q: Don't rodents disgust you?**

I use the bones of rats and mice sold at pet shops as food for other pets. They are called "frozen rodents" which are defrosted and given as food to pet snakes and owls. When I first knew of their existence, I was much surprised. The rodents are bred, nurtured, killed and frozen, for the use of human's pets.

I felt that this symbolized how we treat nature in modern society. To be honest, I am absolutely terrified of horror movies, and can't stand watching them. You can imagine how reluctant I was to touch dead animals. But then after a while I got used to it, and started to feel a sense of closeness to frozen rodents.

**PRESS RELEASE**

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