

Forest Festival of the Arts Okayama : Clear-skies Country 2027 Reveals Curatorial Concept “Protopia — A Becoming Forest”

Participating Artists, and Initial Venues Announced



Chien-Chung Liao, *Echoes in the Mountains* (2024), Forest Festival of the Arts Okayama, Photo by Takeshi Asano. This work remains on long-term installation.

(June 3, 2026 - Okayama, Japan) The Forest Festival of the Arts Okayama: Clear-skies Country Executive Committee is pleased to announce the outline, concept, initial participating artists, and initial venues for ***Forest Festival of the Arts Okayama: Clear-skies Country 2027***, an international art festival to be held across northern Okayama Prefecture from **September 18 to November 23, 2027**.

Following the inaugural edition in 2024, the festival will once again unfold across the rich landscapes and cultural heritage of **northern Okayama Prefecture**, a region distinct from Japan’s Seto Inland Sea coast and shaped by the mountainous landscapes of the Chugoku region in western Japan. Through contemporary art, the festival seeks to foster new forms of exchange between specialists from diverse fields, artists, visitors and the natural

environment, while highlighting the area's historic towns, folk traditions, and agricultural culture through newly commissioned and site-responsive works.

“Building upon the vision of the inaugural festival, the 2027 edition imagines the forest as something that slowly and continuously evolves toward a future that is just a little better than today,” said **Artistic Director Yuko Hasegawa**. *“Inspired by the idea of ‘Protopia,’ proposed by technology thinker Kevin Kelly, the festival seeks to combine this protopian vision with the idea of social common capital. More specifically, the aim is to cultivate venues, originating in the festival, for interchange and collaboration by people from all sorts of fields, including technology, agriculture, welfare, and education.”* (*Read the full concept text, [here](#).)

The first group of participating artists brings together internationally active practitioners from across the globe, including **Juliana dos Santos (1987, Brazil)**, **Isabel Sicat (TOQA) (1993, Philippines)**, **Sputniko! (—, Japan)**, **Luiz Zerbini (1959, Brazil)**, **Leandro Erlich (1973, Argentina)**, **Rirkrit Tiravanija (1961, Thailand)**, **Mika Ninagawa with EiM (—, Japan)**, and **Mirai Moriyama (1984, Japan)**. Spanning diverse artistic practices and cultural backgrounds, the participating artists will engage with the landscapes, cultural heritage, local knowledge, and social contexts of northern Okayama through newly commissioned and site-responsive works. Additional artists will be announced at a later date.

The festival will present artworks across **seven municipalities** in northern Okayama Prefecture. The **first venue announcement** includes nine locations across **five municipalities**, including several sites participating for the first time. In **Tsuyama City**, venues include the Sakushu Folk Crafts Museum, Josai Romance Hall, and the Tsuyama Railroad Educational Museum. In **Niimi City**, the festival will feature the Niimi Museum of Art, participating in the festival for the first time, as well as Ikurado Cave and Makido Cave. Additional venues include GREENable HIRUZEN in **Maniwa City**, Mizunosato Okutsu Lake in **Kagamino Town**, also participating for the first time, and Nagi MOCA in **Nagi Town**.

As part of its international outreach ahead of the 2027 edition, the festival co-organized the symposium *“How Can Art Activate Local Capital? — From Hidden Resources to Shared Futures”* with IUAV University of Venice during the opening week of the 61st Venice Art Biennale. Featuring presentations and discussions by Yuko Hasegawa, **Emanuele Coccia**, **Bianca Bondi**, **Asim Waqif**, **Alessandra Marcon**, and **Angela Vettese**, the symposium explored how regional art festivals can foster new forms of public space, knowledge exchange and community-building by connecting people and nature, urban and rural areas, and tradition with contemporary culture.

Festival Overview

Title: Forest Festival of the Arts Okayama: Clear-skies Country 2027

Concept: Protopia — A Becoming Forest

Festival Period: Saturday, September 18 – Tuesday, November 23 (National Holiday), 2027

Area: 12 municipalities in the northern Okayama Prefecture (the cities of Tsuyama, Takahashi, Niimi, Maniwa, and Mimasaka; the towns of Kagamino, Shoo, Nagi, Kumenan and Misaki; and the villages of Shinjo and Nishiawakura)

Art Venues: 7 municipalities in the northern Okayama Prefecture (the cities of Tsuyama, Takahashi, Niimi, and Maniwa; and the towns of Kagamino, Shoo, and Nagi)

Artistic Director: Yuko Hasegawa

Organizer: Forest Festival of the Arts Okayama: Clear-skies Country Executive Committee
Ryuta Ibaragi (Governor of Okayama Prefecture)

Cooperation: West Japan Railway Company

Web site: <https://forestartfest-okayama.jp/en/>

Yuko Hasegawa, Artistic Director

Curator and art historian. She currently holds positions as Visiting Professor at Graduate School of Management, Kyoto University, in "Curatorial Theory and Practice"; Program Director of Art & Design at the International House of Japan; Visiting Professor at the Research Institute for Humanity and Nature; Professor Emeritus at Tokyo University of the Arts; and Artistic Director of the Inujima Art House Project. Former Director of the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa.

She is the recipient of the Commissioner for Cultural Affairs Award (Japan, 2020), the Chevalier of the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (France, 2015), the Order of Cultural Merit (Brazil, 2017), and the Officier of the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (France, 2024).

She has curated numerous biennales, including the 7th Istanbul Biennale (2001), the 4th Shanghai Biennale (2002, co-curator), the 29th São Paulo Biennale (2010, co-curator), the 11th Sharjah Biennale (2013), the 7th Moscow Biennale (2017), and the 2nd Thailand Biennale (2021). She also curated international exhibitions including Japanorama: A New Vision on Art Since 1970 at the Centre Pompidou-Metz (2017) and Fukami: A Plunge into Japanese Aesthetics at Salomon de Rothschild Hotel, Paris (2018).

From 2006 to 2016, she was Professor at Tama Art University, and from 2016 to 2023 Professor at the Graduate School of Global Arts, Tokyo University of the Arts. In 2023, she was Visiting Professor at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, and in 2025, Guest Professor at Università Luav di Venezia.

Her major publications include Curation -The way to shuffle sensibility and intelligence, Destroy, They Say: Women Artists Subtly Traversing Boundaries, Japanorama : new vision on art since 1970, and New Ecology and Art: Anthropocene as "dithering time".

About Forest Festival of the Arts Okayama

First held in 2024, Forest Festival of the Arts Okayama: Clear-skies Country is an international art festival spanning northern Okayama Prefecture. Through collaborations among artists, local communities, and visitors, the festival seeks to rediscover the region's cultural and environmental richness while envisioning sustainable futures through art.

- Press kit is [here](#).
- Press images are [here](#).

Media Contact

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