Materials for the Arts | New York City Department of Cultural Affairs

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MATERIALS FOR THE ARTS PRESENTS "TEMPORAL BELONGING," A NEW EXHIBITION BY MFTA ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE NATSUKI TAKAUJI

A free opening event with the artist will take place on Thursday, September 18, 2025 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

***Additional photos of "Temporal Belonging" and Natsuki Takauji at MFTA are available for download here*.**

Natsuki Takauji in the MFTA artist studio. Photo courtesy of Anna Droddy.

Queens, NY — Materials for the Arts (MFTA) is pleased to present "Temporal Belonging," a new solo exhibition by MFTA Artist-in-Residence Natsuki Takauji, now on view at the MFTA Gallery through October 9, 2025. Influenced by her visit to cities in her native Japan—Nagasaki, Hiroshima, and Fukushima—where abandoned homes remain eerily frozen in time after nuclear devastation and natural disasters, Takauji brings a keen awareness to the overlooked and forgotten. Through

immersive installations and small-scale works, “Temporal Belonging” invites visitors on an intimate journey through Takauji’s subconscious as she explores themes of life and death, home and belonging, and all the fragile spaces in between.

Temporal Belonging *by Natsuki Takauji in the MFTA Gallery. Photo courtesy of MFTA*.

In “Temporal Belonging,” Takauji pushes her interdisciplinary art practice through an exploration and recontextualization of everyday objects and mundane life. As MFTA’s Artist-in-Residence since May 2025, Takauji had access to free workspace and a 35,000-square-foot warehouse of materials donated across New York City—an everchanging archive of what people leave behind. Walking through MFTA's warehouse aisles, Takauji engaged with every material, from dolls to a rabbit costume, as if she were meeting a person for the first time. She deciphered and enshrined their stories, reminding us of the powerful meaning imbued in all the materials of our lives.

Temporal Belonging *by Natsuki Takauji in the MFTA Gallery. Photo courtesy of MFTA*.

“‘Temporal Belonging’ is a powerful reminder that even the most ordinary objects carry deep stories of identity, memory, and transformation,” said **NYC Department of Cultural Affairs Commissioner Laurie Cumbo**. “Materials for the Arts continues to empower artists like Natsuki Takauji to explore creative reuse in a multitude of ways. This exhibition reflects New York City’s commitment to sustainability, creativity, and the essential role of the arts in how we see ourselves and our shared history.”

“Natsuki's approach to the materials she’s chosen for her exhibition feels deeply nostalgic and sentimental,” said **MFTA Executive Director Tara Sansone**. “These wayward objects are suspended in a sort of limbo in our warehouse; they’re at a halfway point between their old purpose and their new one. In ‘Temporal Belonging,’ Natsuki’s creative practice finds new meaning for these materials, showcasing them in her artworks with the utmost reverence.”

“This residency made me rethink our relationship to materials; how we invent them, cherish them, and neglect them,” said **artist Natsuki Takauji**. “Traditionally, the materials I work with are ones that I’ve purposely chosen and purchased. Here, the materials choose me. Developing connections with materials that contain a unique past and quality, I began to explore the life of materials, from beginning to end, and the complex human psychology around the materials, their meanings, narratives, symbols, and the efficacy of powerful subconscious associations with objects.”

Tchotchkes in Temporal Belonging. *Photo courtesy of MFTA*.

But how can one determine when an object is no longer valuable? In this exhibition, the answer is simple — utility is in the eye of the beholder. A vintage wooden hutch, reminiscent of one in a grandmother's living space, is inhabited by knick-knacks and tchotchkes, inviting viewers to explore its contents. Cabinets filled with portraits that, while depicting strangers, still feel familiar. Secret compartments reveal wooden blocks with manga-style comics etched on their surface — drawings Takauji developed during adolescence. Other drawers burst with Raggedy Ann dolls, Ralph Lauren-esque teddy bears, baby dolls who were once held tight. A picture frame no larger than a sheet of paper encompasses contrasting strips of fabric. Purple, blue, green, tan, and black — each color taking up varying space within the wooden frame: bra straps. Every item has been delicately selected by the artist for viewers to contemplate their existence while reflecting on their own.

Temporal Belonging *by Natsuki Takauji in the MFTA Gallery. Photo courtesy of MFTA*.

As a part of their residency, MFTA Artists-in-Residence have access to an entire studio space within the warehouse to develop their work. In Takauji's case, she chose to expand her artistry beyond the four walls of her studio. Concerned with herself as a temporal belonging to the passage of time and space, Takauji took to filming the panoramic railroads outside the MFTA studio windows and the warehouse. These videos, both mundane and intimate, are juxtaposed with her documentation of her trip in Japan, screened in this exhibit.

Video installation of the MFTA warehouse by Natsuki Takaujji. Photo courtesy of MFTA.

MFTA will celebrate the opening of “Temporal Belonging” with a free public event on Thursday, September 18, 2025 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., where attendees will have the opportunity to engage with the artist as they experience her work.

“Temporal Belonging” by Natsuki Takauji will be on view at Materials for the Arts Gallery through October 9, 2025, welcoming visitors Monday through Friday from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Admission to this exhibition is free and open to the public.

For over a decade, MFTA's Artist-in-Residence program has supported artists who incorporate reuse into their creative practice, offering them free studio space, a stipend, and access to the warehouse’s vast collection of donated materials. These resources have fueled New York City's arts community since MFTA was founded in 1978. Each MFTA artist residency culminates in a solo exhibition at the MFTA Gallery, which inspires thousands of educators, students, artists, nonprofits, and social service organizations. Visitors are encouraged to explore the creative potential of nontraditional materials and discover how these objects can transform into art.

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About Natsuki Takauji

Natsuki Takauji is a Japanese interdisciplinary artist based in Queens, NY. Her work explores displacement, memories, and healing through both personal expressions and communal

participation. Her practice ranges from intricate mixed-media sculpture, multimedia art, and painting to socially engaged and large-scale public art.

Her public art sculptures have been on view at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Rye Town Park, Riverside Park South, and Van Cortlandt Park, including current installations at JFK International Airport, and Oeno Gallery Sculpture Garden in Ontario, Canada. She recently exhibited at Kapow Gallery, Japan Society, Tokyo Metropolitan Museum, Kameyama Art Triennale in Japan, and World Art Expo Seoul in South Korea. Learn more at natsukitakauji.com.

About Materials for the Arts (MFTA)

A program of the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, with support from the Department of Education and Friends of Materials for the Arts, MFTA is NYC's largest reuse center supporting nonprofits with arts programming, public schools, and City agencies. On average MFTA collects about 1.5 million pounds of supplies each year which it provides, free of charge, to its member organizations. In addition to providing materials, MFTA has the MFTA Education Center, Gallery, Artist-in-Residence and Designer-in-Residence programs, and Third Thursday public programming, which are supported by Friends of Materials for the Arts. Learn more at nyc.gov/mfta.