

# Spencer Museum exhibition highlights Roger Shimomura's performance art

[news.ku.edu/2020/02/26/spencer-museum-exhibition-highlights-roger-shimomuras-performance-art](https://news.ku.edu/2020/02/26/spencer-museum-exhibition-highlights-roger-shimomuras-performance-art)

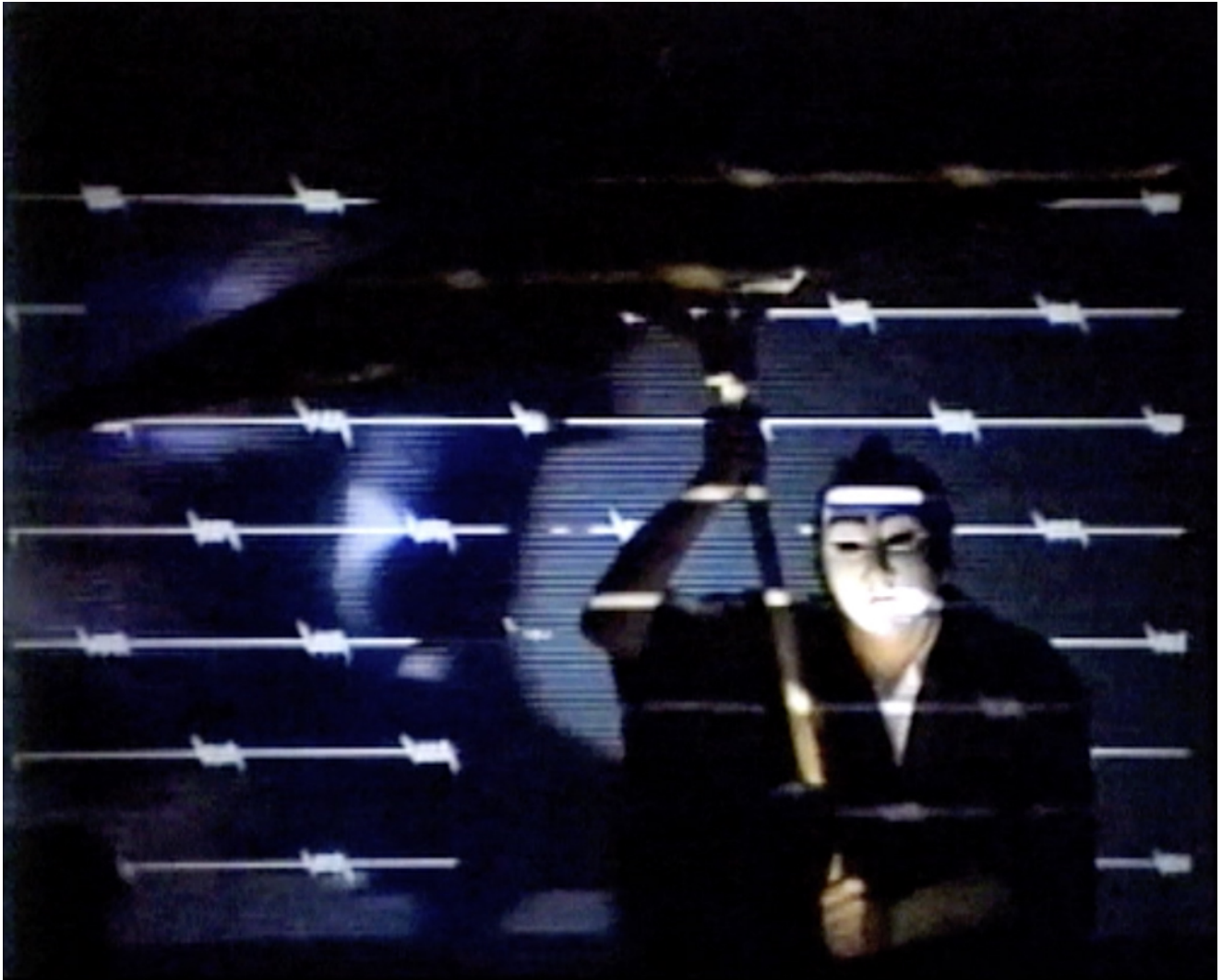
February 25, 2020

Wed, 02/26/2020



LAWRENCE — An exhibition opening Saturday, Feb. 29, at the Spencer Museum of Art highlights a lesser-known aspect of Lawrence-based artist Roger Shimomura's career: performance. Between 1984 and 2002, Shimomura wrote and directed 13 pieces that were performed multiple times at venues across the United States. "Staging Shimomura" includes digitally remastered footage from these performances, costumes and props, photographs from production, and other documentation, along with a variety of Shimomura's prints and paintings throughout his career.

Although Shimomura describes himself as a painter, performance art allowed him to expand and activate central themes in his work through live action. Like his paintings, Shimomura's performances are deeply biographical, with much of the source material coming from his grandmother Toku's diaries and tape recordings of daily life. Shimomura and his family, including Toku, were forced to live in an internment camp in Idaho as part of the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. Shimomura said the need to tell stories from Toku's recordings and diary entries pushed him toward performance work.



“You can’t paint those things. I mean, you could paint them, but that’s just one way of depicting the experience. A performance allows you to pick up what was before that, and during that, and after that,” Shimomura said. “Having that kind of material is what really shifted my center from painting to performance.”

Spencer Curator Kris Ercums said the dialogue between Shimomura's paintings and performances created in the exhibition offers visitors a more expansive experience of the artist's work.

“The performance work really expands his practice and the meanings of his paintings,” Ercums said. “They push even harder on you than the paintings do because of the live action. That’s what’s so compelling about them. They’re much more direct.”

“Staging Shimomura” will help audiences discover a deeper understanding of Shimomura’s rich universe of personal experiences and pop culture references that examine the dark underbelly of stereotypes and racism that continue to resonate with issues in America today.

A lecture series featuring scholars and artists along with a variety of other public programs will further explore themes in the exhibition.

“Staging Shimomura” will remain on view through June 21. The exhibition and related programs are supported by the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation, the H. Neil Mecaskey Jr. Foundation, the Franklin D. Murphy Lecture Fund of the Kress Foundation Department of Art History, KU Student Senate, the Linda Inman Bailey Exhibitions Fund and the Friends of the Art Museum.

## **Related programming**

---

### ***March 5***

#### **The Anatomy and Afterlife of Performance Art**

*5:30-6:30 p.m. / Spencer Museum of Art, Perkins Central Court*

Join artistic collaborator Joel Sanderson; Maki Kaneko, associate professor of art; and Spencer Curator Kris Ercums as they pull back the curtain on the choices that artists, curators and art historians make about staging, documenting, preserving and interpreting performance art.

### ***March 24***

#### **Staging Shimomura Lecture Series: Hiroko Ikegami**

*5:30-6:30 p.m. / Spencer Museum of Art, Perkins Central Court*

Hiroko Ikegami (Kobe University) examines Roger Shimomura’s “Seven Kabuki Plays” against the backdrop of his “Diary” paintings, both of which draw on his grandmother’s diaries from the period of the attack on Pearl Harbor and the subsequent incarceration of Japanese Americans.

### ***March 26***

#### **Senior Session: Provocative Performances**

*10:15-11:15 a.m. / Spencer Museum of Art, Perkins Central Court*

Spencer Curator Kris Ercums explores the role of performance in Roger Shimomura’s artistic practice, discussing connections with paintings, prints, theatrical prop and ephemera on display. Senior Sessions are designed for senior citizens but open to everyone.

### ***April 2***

#### **Staging Shimomura Lecture Series: Krystal Reiko Hauseur**

*5:30-6:30 p.m. / Spencer Museum of Art, Perkins Central Court*

Krystal Reiko Hauseur discusses her research for “Masking Identity: The Performance Art of Roger Shimomura” (2019), the first monograph on the subject.

***April 5***

**Day of Creativity**

*1-4 p.m. / Spencer Museum of Art*

Explore processes and ideas related to theater, performance and identity with hands-on activities, demonstrations and performances that celebrate creativity in various forms. Free and fun for all ages.

***May 7***

**Staging Shimomura Lecture Series: Scott Tsuchitani**

*5:30-6:30 p.m. / Spencer Museum of Art, Perkins Central Court*

Scott Tsuchitani, an interdisciplinary artist and cinematographer based in San Francisco, discusses the influence of Roger Shimomura’s work on other artists, including himself.

**Top image:** Photo from performance of “Seven Kabuki Plays,” courtesy of Roger Shimomura

**Right image:** Video still from performance of “Campfire Diary,” 1992, courtesy of Roger Shimomura.

The University of Kansas is a major comprehensive research and teaching university. The university's mission is to lift students and society by educating leaders, building healthy communities and making discoveries that change the world. The KU News Service is the central public relations office for the Lawrence campus.

[kunews@ku.edu](mailto:kunews@ku.edu) | 1450 Jayhawk Blvd., Suite 37, Lawrence, KS 66045