RADIANT

RITSUMEIKAN
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VOL.7

RITSUMEIKAN UNIVERSITY
KYOTO, JAPAN
RESEARCH REPORT

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RESEARCH OVERVIEW

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SOGAGOROUTOKIMUNE SOGANOYAGOROU
曽我五郎時致 曽我廼家五郎

Art Research Center Collection,
Ritsumeikan University (arcSP02-0515)

This is a ukiyo-e print of an actor from Kabuki, a traditional Japanese performing art that has been practiced for over 400 years. Kabuki actors wear distinctive makeup and traditional Japanese costumes as they perform stories often based on actual historical events. As an art form cherished by the Japanese people for centuries, this rich tradition continues to be passed down to the present day.

Art Research Center, Ritsumeikan University holds a huge collection of ukiyo-e prints and has made its database available to the public.

For more information, visit the following:
https://www.arc.ritsumei.ac.jp/e/database/

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Division of Research,
Ritsumeikan University

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research/radiant/

Published in 2026

RADIANT

RITSUMEIKAN UNIVERSITY

RADIANT is an adjective that means to
“shed light” or “shine brightly.”
We used this meaning so that
the research results of Ritsumeikan University
can be a step towards
creating a bright future and
helping to shed light
upon the world in the future.

FEATURE

ART

The Kinugasa area of Kyoto, where Ritsumeikan University's Kinugasa Campus is located, was once known as Kinugasa ekaki-mura (Painters' Village) because many Japanese painters gathered there to create their works. Even today, the residences and studios left behind by these artists remain, allowing visitors to feel the legacy of this artistic community. Ritsumeikan University has long worked to preserve and pass down culture and art through research at its Art Research Center. In April 2026, the university is to establish the College of Arts and Design. Embracing the concept that "the entire neighborhood is a learning place," the new College will continue to promote co-creation through industry-academia collaboration projects that leverage the cultural resources Kyoto has preserved over the centuries. This issue features some of our researchers engaged in the field of art.

RECONCEPTUALIZING JAPANESE ART

FOR A GLOBAL AUDIENCE

Middle left, bottom right: Created by editing the information available on ColBase (https://colbase.nich.go.jp/)

The history of modern Japanese painting is now undergoing a significant global re-evaluation. This trend is symbolized by a series of successful exhibitions at major institutions, led by the British Museum, and is accompanied by growing academic interest.

At this critical juncture, two leading art experts are to join Ritsumeikan University's new College of Arts and Design: Professor Sayoko Ueda, a specialist in the history of modern painting in Kyoto and art management, and Professor Ryoko Matsuba, a researcher of early modern Japanese publishing culture, who has also served as a curator at the British Museum.

Drawing on their respective research and practical experience, both professors address fundamental questions concerning authenticity in archives, approaches to social issues through art, and the future of curatorial practice. From their new standpoint in education, a new vision is set forth here.

Researcher introductions

UEDA My research focuses on the history of modern Japanese painting. Traditionally, Western-style painting (yōga) and Japanese-style painting (Nihonga) have been studied as distinct fields. However, my work takes a cross-disciplinary approach, focusing on the commonalities of both.

Previously, I concentrated on prominent yōga and Nihonga artists based in Tokyo, such as Yokoyama Taikan and Kuroda Seiki. Since relocating to Kyoto, I have developed a strong interest in the city's unique painting culture and am continuing my research in this specific area.

Before joining academia, I spent over a decade working in planning and management roles at the National Art Center, the Tokyo National Museum, and the Museum of Kyoto. I will be serving as a professor in the field of Art Management at Ritsumeikan University's College of Arts and Design when it is newly established in April 2026.

MATSUBA My research began with early modern (Kinsei) Kabuki theater and later expanded to ukiyo-e as a form of pictorial data. This shift led to a practical role at the British Museum, where I served as a project curator. There, I contributed to the curation and digital archiving of the *Shunga* (2013), *Hokusai* (2017), and *Manga* (2019) exhibitions.

A consistent thread running through my work—from Kabuki to Manga—is an interest in the historical transition of publishing culture from the early modern period to the present day, and a fascination with what has remained unchanged. One such enduring element is the "format." Even as new technologies and expressive methods emerge, the format tends to stay the same. My ongoing research question is: Why does this continuity persist?

The relationship between Kyoto and Tokyo: the reception of Japanese art

UEDA The new College of Arts and Design at Ritsumeikan University will be located on the Kinugasa Campus in Kyoto—a place rich in history. Now a quiet residential area, it once served as a villa district for aristocrats during the Heian period. Many temples and shrines remain, including Kinkaku-ji, built during the Muromachi period. The area remained rural until it was incorporated into Kyoto City during the Taishō era.

At that time, many artists

moved from the city center to Kinugasa in search of larger studios. Its natural surroundings became a key source of inspiration, and as famous painters relocated, their apprentices followed, shaping the area into a hub of Kyoto's art world.

Today, Kinugasa still houses the Dōmoto Inshō Museum and major cultural landmarks like Kitano Tenmangū Shrine, reinforcing its cultural importance. While many original buildings remain and some artist families still live here, Kinugasa is beginning to embrace new forms of expression—such as digital art—sparked by the energy of young creators and the University's vision.

MATSUBA While my research on ukiyo-e printed books is mainly based in Tokyo, the relationship between Kyoto and Tokyo is fascinating from an early modern art perspective. I previously discussed the term *utsushi*—a concept that goes beyond imitation to include recreation and succession, grounded in reproducible artistry and intervisuality.

In the early modern era, Edo emerged as an *utsushi* of Kyoto. In the modern period, this was reversed, with Kyoto and Osaka adopting Edo's culture. For example, illustrated books by Hokusai, an Edo-based artist, published in the 1820s, were sold in Kyoto and Osaka as design samples after his death in the 1880s. This mutual copying reveals the complex interplay between the two cities.

UEDA After living in Tokyo, I've come to truly "rediscover" Kyoto. From a Tokyo perspective, Kyoto's uniqueness can be hard to grasp. But being here has revealed its distinct standing in modern Japanese painting. Still, challenges remain. Kyoto is often viewed through stereotypical images of "Japan"—cherry blossoms, Geisha, and Kyoto itself. We must ask who creates these images and why.

Rather than simply producing and consuming such symbols, we need to explore how deeply their essence can be conveyed—and how authentically it can be received.

A comparison of museum operations in Japan and the UK: specialization and collaboration

MATSUBA I believe there is a significant difference between exhibition management in the British Museum and museums in Japan. The British Museum is characterized by a very high degree of specialization, which is a noteworthy point. Among fields like design, art handling, and educational approaches, the curatorial role is just one part. Of course, curators develop the proposal and select the objects, but a "no" from the design team could lead to a 30% cut of the items. The division of labor between curation, writing, education, design, and exhibition is different from museums in Japan. During the *Manga* exhibition, for example, the catalog was outsourced to the publisher Thames & Hudson, and we were sometimes asked to adjust the content to suit the catalog.

UEDA In Japan, using my former workplace, the Museum of Kyoto, as an example, the staff numbers are very small. It's common for one main person, with one assistant, to handle everything from planning and catalog content to administrative tasks and exhibition preparation. When I worked at the Tokyo National Museum, the division of labor was more advanced. A planning department would take the lead, with separate departments for publication planning, administration, and exhibition design. In a way, they were likely inspired by overseas museums like the British Museum.

MATSUBA While I think it must be incredibly demanding for Japanese curators to manage everything in small teams, it also means that the person deeply involved in the content oversees the entire process. There are pros and cons to both specialized and integrated systems.

Furthermore, the time spent on exhibitions differs greatly. The installation process alone is a striking example. For the Hokusai exhibition at the British Museum, the installation took a full month. The same exhibition content was shown at the Abeno Harukas Art Museum in Osaka, Japan, as a joint project. There, it was completed in 4 to 5 days. The work in Japan was handled by the world-class professionals from Nippon Express, whose quality of work impressed the British Museum staff considerably. The art handlers at the British Museum are not necessarily experts in Japanese art, although they are supervised by curators and specialists, so more time is naturally required.

UEDA The sharing and succession of expertise by these professional art handlers is also crucial for the future of art management. This is because I believe the experience of appreciating an artwork is not defined by the single object in isolation, but by a comprehensive whole that includes its materials, techniques, conservation methods, and exhibition approaches.

Promotional flyers for the exhibitions curated by Prof. Ueda.

Considering reproductions from the perspective of contemporary social issues

MATSUBA Speaking of the changing circumstances surrounding art, sustainability has become a major topic for museums and galleries worldwide. A single special exhibition can incur enormous costs in terms of budget, energy, and resources. For example, Tate in the UK has shown strong environmental awareness. In 2019, Tate declared a climate emergency and set ambitious targets to reduce its carbon emissions by 50% by 2023 and to reach net zero by 2030. In July 2023, Tate Modern also hosted the first UK-wide "Museums' COP" sustainability summit, highlighting its leadership in promoting sustainability in the museum sector. Another key contemporary issue is human rights—including movements such as Black Lives Matter—which, in turn, connects to sustainability, and by extension, to the issue of animal rights. The Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature in Paris once covered its taxidermy displays with *amigurumi* (small knitted stuffed animals) to provoke thoughts about the relationship between humans, animals, and nature. Prof. Ueda, with your extensive experience in Japanese museums, how do Japanese institutions approach these issues, including the broader topic of human rights?

UEDA While sustainable practices in museums have been discussed at conferences held by the Japanese Association of Museums and ICOM Japan, I must admit that efforts remain limited compared to global trends. For example, even at national museums, custom-made wooden boxes used to transport artworks are typically not reused. It's hoped that this will change in the future.

MATSUBA Thank you.

One recent example is the exhibition at the British Museum, "City Life and Salon Culture in Kyoto and Osaka: 1770–1900," held in the Mitsubishi Corporation Japanese Galleries, which was composed almost entirely of objects from the museum's own collection. This approach addressed not only financial concerns related to transportation but also the environmental and energy costs, as well as insurance challenges.

Such projects also raise questions about authenticity and the use of reproductions—a topic that remains under debate. We are exploring how to reduce costs by using facsimiles instead of original pieces, while also grappling with how to convey the "experience of the authentic" through substitutes. It's a sensitive issue that museums around the world are trying to navigate.

UEDA Regarding facsimiles, high-definition reproductions of cultural properties—such as the *Pine Trees* screen by Hasegawa Tōhaku—have been created. A particularly interesting example involves the *Wind God and Thunder God* screens by Ogata Kōrin and the *Summer and Autumn Grasses* screen by Sakai Hōitsu. Originally, these artworks were painted on the front and back of a single screen, but now they are preserved separately for conservation reasons. A Kyoto-based company, Benridō, produced a high-definition reproduction that reunited them into a single-folding screen. These reproductions are now used in educational projects and can be viewed up close, outside of display cases. That said, the prevailing belief in art appreciation remains that experiencing the original would be ideal. While reproduction technologies have improved remarkably through digital advances—and there is much to learn from facsimiles—some viewers may still feel that "something is missing." It's a dilemma for those of us working on the ground, and we are still exploring the best ways to utilize them.

MATSUBA In 2024, I was involved in a Hokusai exhibition in Norwich, UK. In collaboration with the Hokusai-kan Museum, which holds many of his original works, we curated the exhibition using only high-definition facsimiles. As Norwich is a regional city, we couldn't expect a large number of visitors, and an exhibition of originals would have resulted in a significant deficit. By using only facsimiles, we were able to host the exhibition free of charge.

While its role differs from that of a major museum, I believe it provided an opportunity for audiences in regional areas—many of whom may have been unfamiliar with Hokusai—to experience his art. This is an example of how reproductions can serve as a catalyst for developing connoisseurship.

UEDA It's true that one-of-a-kind artworks have their limitations in widespread educational activities. High-definition, full-scale reproductions provide an experience that the internet cannot replicate and hold great potential for public engagement.

MATSUBA Another ongoing discussion is that of repatriation. For example, many museums outside of these communities hold craft items once used by indigenous peoples, such as the Ainu or Māori. There have been attempts to display facsimiles within the local community, but questions continue to arise: Why hasn't the original been returned?

We're currently in the midst of this debate. While it provides opportunities for dialogue and exchange with lo-

Prof. Matsuba with the late Dr. Roger Keyes at The Mitsubishi Corporation Japanese Galleries of the British Museum.

cal communities, it remains a complex issue. At the British Museum, certain objects—such as the Rosetta Stone—are bound by regulations that prevent their removal. While relocating items from major museum collections is challenging, these institutions often provide benefits such as advanced conservation and research. Whether an object should remain in a major museum or return to its place of origin is a question that requires ongoing dialogue—including how we regard and utilize reproductions.

Digital archives and masterpieces

UEDA Digital archiving technology is continuously advancing. Materials that once required applications, permissions, and travel to access can now be viewed right from our desktops. In modern Japan, especially, an incredible variety of magazines, including art journals, flourished as a significant cultural phenomenon. The digital archiving of these journals has become quite substantial at institutions like the National Diet Library and the Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties.

However, when we turn our attention to Kyoto, we see that while numerous art magazines were also produced in the Kansai region—Kyoto, Osaka, and Kobe—during the modern era, their digital archiving has not kept pace with that of Tokyo. This disparity is likely why it was difficult to gain a clear overview of Kyoto's art history when I lived in Tokyo. I believe that by fully utilizing digital technology, we can create an archive for the Kansai region that encompasses not only artworks but also the surrounding print culture.

MATSUBA In Japan, the term "digital archive" is often used, but in English, the term "digitization" is more commonly applied, especially following the 2011 earthquake and the COVID-19 pandemic, which underscored the urgency of making materials widely accessible. Ritsumeikan University's Art Research Center has been at the forefront of digital archiving projects since its establishment in 1998, and the new College of Arts and Design places great importance on teaching these practices.

UEDA On a different note, as curators, we also face the question of what to preserve and highlight—not just in terms of digital records, but also through physical acquisitions. For example, when I published *The History of Modern Kyoto Nihonga,* I selected 54 painters I believed should be remembered. But I was also acutely aware of the weight of that decision—those not included may risk being forgotten. This illustrates how curators are always confronted with the lasting implications of their choices.

MATSUBA Yes, and that question becomes even more complex when dealing with contemporary forms like Manga. During the British Museum's *Manga* exhibition, we often debated how best to introduce Manga to international audiences. In museum acquisitions, curatorial selection process—shaped by institutional policies, collector interests, and personal perspectives—helps determine what enters the collection and how it is framed. Professor Nicole Coolidge Rousmaniere, the lead curator of the *Manga* exhibition, selected works that reflected her view of Manga, which doesn't necessarily align with mainstream Japanese perspectives. But that subjectivity is part of what gives the selection historical meaning: the values that shaped the curator also shape the collection.

Steaming and peeling of kozo (Japanese paper mulberry tree) bark in Ino Town, Kochi Prefecture.

UEDA Curatorial choices often begin with personal interest, but they must be weighed against broader historical and institutional contexts. Whether in acquisition or archiving, each curator carries the responsibility of preserving cultural memory. At the same time, I've come to feel that it's not only individuals who make these decisions—the mood of the era also does some of the selecting for us. What resonates with society at a given time often influences what is preserved, highlighted, or forgotten.

Knowledge in art and design born from practice

MATSUBA As a place for developing talent, the College of Arts and Design aims to cultivate our connoisseurship—the ability to discern differences—not just as knowledge, but through hands-on experience.

I currently live in Nagano Prefecture, where I personally cultivate tororo-aoi, a plant used as a raw material for washi paper. For example, even with something like washi, it is crucial to understand how differences in raw materials—such as *kōzo, mitsumata,* and *ganpi*—affect the final artwork. By having students personally experience the process from planting the seed to cultivation, I aim to foster individuals equipped with a discerning eye. Of course, we also emphasize fieldwork that takes advantage of Kyoto's unique, traditional character.

I believe that for future students, the role of facilitation will become increasingly important. This will be a crucial skill not only in art and design but in many fields. Personally, I anticipate a major shift towards a two-way research method, where student research also feeds back into my own.

UEDA When I think of collaborative research partners, given my own background in museums, my focus tends to be on curators at art galleries and museums. In this new college, however, we aim to engage with a much broader range of stakeholders, including the aforementioned art handlers, transportation professionals, media business divisions, corporate cultural affairs departments, artwork owners, and artists' families. This, too, is the fieldwork of art management.

I believe that by advancing research through practice alongside our students, we can contribute to solving real-world problems within museums and art galleries. I hope that our students will be proactive.

UEDA Sayoko, Ph.D.

Professor, Institute for General Education

Research Themes:
Modern Japanese Art History, Art Management

Specialties:
Museology, History of arts and art studies

MATSUBA Ryoko, Ph.D.

Professor, College of Letters

Research Themes:
1. The Publishing History from the Early Modern to Modern Period
2. Formats and Visual Representation
3. Research on the Materials and Tools of Traditional Woodblock Printing

Specialties:
Literature, Art, Traditional Craftmaking, and Theatre

View Researcher Database ▸

ART AND LIFE INTERSECT

A JOURNEY TO UNDERSTANDING HUMANITY THROUGH ART

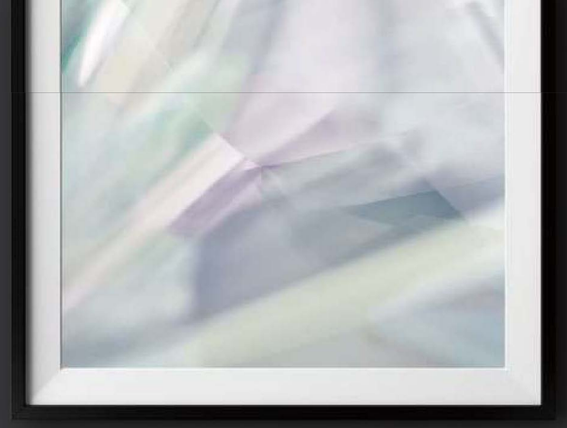
After encountering contemporary art in New York and San Francisco, Professor Yumi Takenaka shifted from pharmacy to aesthetics, drawn by the question of what defines art. Her research now explores the meanings of photographic works in society, revealing how images shape cultural perception, lead to a rediscovery of humanity, and bridge the realms of art and life.

The Rise of Postmodernism: A Backlash Against the Pursuit of Purity in Art

Modern art emerged and gained prominence from the late 19th century to the mid -20th century. This period of Modernism was characterized by the development of various influential movements, including Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Expressionism, Cubism, and Surrealism. Modernist artists sought to challenge traditional conventions and explore innovative visual and expressive techniques. The dominant modernist aesthetic would favor a unified pursuit of novel forms of expression, often regarded as striving toward a universally valid ideal.

Historically, art served to depict various real-life events, religious themes, and narratives rooted in the fabric of society. However, these connections were gradually abandoned, and art began to drift away from everyday life in pursuit of an autonomous ideal of "art for art's sake." This shift gave rise to what came to be known as "high art" or "fine art"—forms of artistic expression detached from social realities—that became overly valued, reinforcing cultural hierarchies.

In response to this, postmodern art emerged in the 1960s as a critique of both the distorted values and critical frameworks of modern art. It challenged the modernist pursuit of extreme purity and its claims to a biased form of universality.



Takenaka originally worked as a pharmacist, but in the 1990s, she left her job and spent a short time in San Francisco for study, which was to become a turning point that ultimately led her to art. During her time in the U.S., she encountered a range of contemporary artworks influenced by postmodernism, which prompted a fundamental question: "How can this be considered art?" This encounter with contemporary art proved to be a life-changing experience for her. Driven by a desire to explore how contemporary art is situated within the fields of art theory, aesthetics, and art history, Takenaka enrolled in the School of Letters at Osaka University, where she majored in aesthetics.

"Art is fundamentally intertwined with society, and artists engage not only in pure creative expression but also in broader social issues, including politics, economics, and the art market. Historically, however, art history has been shaped by Eurocentric values, centered on white male perspectives, and there has been a growing awareness—within the field of art history itself—that it has contributed to reinforcing a biased cultural structure," Takenaka explains. In the 1990s, when Takenaka was in graduate school, academic discussions, and translations calling for a critical reassessment of the art system and art history began to gain traction in Japan. "It was during this period, as I was conducting my graduate studies, that I became interested in the relationship between contemporary art, aesthetics and society," she recalls. "This interest led me to write my doctoral dissertation, focusing on that very relationship."

Art in Society: Photography as a Mirror of the Real

Takenaka's initial interest in contemporary art led her into the field of art studies, but as her research progressed, her focus expanded to the broader theme of art's role within society.

She participated in a major research project, titled "Globalization and Transformation in the Social System of 'Art'—Toward a Construction of a Theory of Contemporary Art/Visual Culture" after receiving her Ph.D. Continuing further, Takenaka says, "Through this project, I had the opportunity to collaborate not only with scholars of American, German, and Russian art, but also with sociologists, media scholars, and museum curators." Further, she says, "Engaging with experts studying art as a social institution and system, I deepened my interest in the societal functions and significance of art."

In the pursuit of this theme, Takenaka selected photography as her primary research focus. Unlike paintings and other art forms, which allow artists to freely construct a world entirely from imagination, photography's defining characteristic is its capacity to capture fragments of the real world. Even when a photograph is staged, it always involves a subject and can be understood as a technique that directly reflects certain aspects of reality.

Invented in the 19th century, photography was followed in the 20th century by the rapid expansion of media such as film, television, and photographic magazines. The images disseminated through these channels have profoundly shaped our perception of reality and influenced the social environments we inhabit, to the extent that mass media itself has come to constitute a form of reality. Among these image technologies and media, photography stands out as one of the most significant, which motivated Takenaka to explore its role in society.

Another reason for Takenaka's focus on photography is its ubiquity in contemporary life. For example, in today's world, smartphones enable us to take photographs in place of written notes, and to share and exchange images daily, making image creation accessible to virtually everyone. At the same time, an online aesthetic culture surrounding photography has emerged and become widespread on social media, especially among younger generations. Photography thus transcends its role as a mere tool for documentation; it has become a vital visual medium deeply embedded in everyday life, possessing artistic qualities and occupying a space at the intersection of "art and non-art."

Art or Not? Individual sensibility and social intuition are key

There are countless examples of photographs that were originally taken as mere documentation but were later recognized as works of art. The concept of documentary photography emerged when certain images—initially captured for evidentiary or record-keeping purposes—resonated deeply with viewers and were recognized as socially significant.

As public awareness of the documentary photography genre expanded, audiences began to find emotional depth in the lives of ordinary people depicted in the images. Moments such as expressions of parental love amid hardship or the quiet resilience of individuals confronting poverty touched viewers' hearts. These photographs eventually came to be recognized as artworks and were added to museum collections.

In this context, Takenaka pointed out that one factor that distinguishes art from non-art is individual sensibility. Among countless photographs, certain images stand out—those that are perceived as particularly compelling or evocative—and may be embraced as art.

The other key factor is the role of social institutions. A photograph deemed "good" based on personal sensibility may gain broader recognition when it is exhibited in a gallery, featured in a photo exhibition, or otherwise brought into public view. This visibility can lead to the photograph being recognized as a work of art. Moreover, once such work is displayed within the institutional framework of a museum, it can attain the formal status of an artwork. In this way, artistic value is often shaped and reinforced by social structures and systems.

Thus, even an everyday photograph stored on your smartphone can come to be recognized as art—if it reso-

nates with viewers and is integrated into the appropriate institutional or cultural framework.

The final performance: Photography, death, and dignity

As an example of how photographs for record-keeping purposes came to be recognized as works of art, Takenaka cites an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York that featured photographs of people taken before their execution in the camps under Pol Pot's regime in Cambodia (known as S-21).

Members of the Khmer Rouge took photographs of detainees prior to their execution. While the exact reason for these photographs remains unclear, one interpretation is that they served as documentation—"proof of the work"—involved in the mass purges. It is evident, then, that these images were never intended as works of art and should not be viewed or appreciated as such.

The individuals who photographed people moments before their execution were, of course, not artists. However, as human beings, we often assert our existence through acts of expression—what might be called performance. Singing a song, delivering a compelling speech, or even simply gazing at someone can serve as forms of expression that reveal one's inner self and intentions. A gentle look or an angry glance, for instance, are also expressions directed toward others, conveying emotion and meaning beyond words.

In this context, Takenaka suggests that the final appearance of those about to be executed can be seen as a kind of final performance by the detainees themselves. Although we cannot know exactly what was reflected in their eyes, many of them were likely aware that death was imminent—and in that awareness, their presence as human beings is profoundly inscribed in our hearts.

Takenaka reflects that if she were to be photographed in the final stages of her life—for example, while facing a terminal illness—she might feel a strong desire to have that final moment recorded.

From this perspective, these photographs can be understood as a deeply moving and sublime form of artistic expression—a "final performance" of the person being photographed. Takenaka argues that interpreting such images through this lens is one of the important roles that art can play. It allows us to receive the final images of those who were massacred with a sense of humanity, acknowledging them as evidence that these individuals truly lived. She emphasizes that this perspective carries profound meaning.

Understanding Humanity and the World Through the Lens of Art

Reflecting on the relationship between art and human nature, Takenaka remarks, "Art is one of the most vivid expressions of what it means to be human. The act of discovering, creating, and sharing beauty with others is not necessary for biological survival, yet people often go to great lengths—even risking their lives—to create and preserve it."

She sees this seemingly irrational impulse as a fundamental aspect of human identity and a key reason the study of art is so vital to the humanities. Her lifelong goal is to explore both humanity and the world through the lens of art—a perspective that not only underpins her own research but also resonates strongly with major currents in contemporary art scholarship.

Takenaka is currently conducting research on photographic works in the collection of the MoMA, with plans to publish her findings in the near future. In parallel, she plays an active role at the Art Research Center, Ritsumeikan University, where her research has expanded to include Japanese art—especially ukiyo-e prints—while maintaining photography as a central theme.

Her work on Japanese art often involves international collaboration, particularly with colleagues at the Institute of Oriental Art at Freie Universität Berlin. "It's fascinating to see how researchers abroad engage with Oriental and Japanese art," she notes. "I find their approach to Japanese art deeply inspiring, as it is guided by free thinking and unconstrained by established frameworks."

Another key area of interest for Takenaka is the advancement of digital humanities. The vArt Research Center, Ritsumeikan University houses an extensive image database of ukiyo-e and other artworks, and she sees great potential in leveraging AI and other advanced information technologies to examine these materials from new perspectives. She is especially eager to collaborate with researchers from diverse fields who bring expertise in these emerging methods.

TAKENAKA Yumi Kim, Ph.D.

Professor, Graduate School of Core Ethics and Frontier Sciences

Research Themes:
1. Aesthetics and ethics of the display of photography
2. Anglophone Aesthetics and Art Theory
3. Historical study of transnational visual culture in East Asia

Specialties: Art history and Aesthetics

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HISTORY, IDENTITY, AND CULTURAL REVIVAL IN THE RYŪKYŪ ISLANDS

Long regarded as outsiders within Japan, the Ryukyuan people—indigenous to the islands of modern-day Okinawa Prefecture—have endured decades of forced assimilation, devastation in World War II, and cultural suppression. Yet today, they are experiencing a powerful cultural revival and gaining recognition as a distinct people with a rich and complex heritage. In this article, Travis Seifman, Associate Professor, Kinugasa Research Organization, Ritsumeikan University, Japan, examines the historical roots of Ryukyuan identity, the ongoing challenges of cultural restoration, and the path forward for this resilient community.

Initially sparked by anime and video games, Seifman's interest in Japanese culture eventually evolved into a specialization in the history and culture of early modern Japan. His particular expertise lies at the intersection of Okinawan arts, culture, and politics from the early modern period to the present day.

The Ryūkyū Islands, known in the native language as Lūchū, were historically the territory of the Lūchū Kingdom (c. 1520s–1879), an independent kingdom with its own languages, political system, and cultural traditions. At its peak, Lūchū thrived as a trading hub, maintaining trading relationships with China, Japan, Korea, and a number of Southeast Asian polities. In 1879, Japan abolished the kingdom and annexed it as Okinawa Prefecture, imposing assimilation policies that suppressed Ryukyuan identity.

For centuries, Okinawa served as a gateway to Japan, but its strategic location also made it a calamitous battleground during World War II. Today, Okinawa retains a distinct cultural identity shaped by Ryukyuan languages, traditional arts, and unique spiritual practices.

Seifman's research explores the culture that shaped this distinctive region, offering valuable insights into the diversity of cultures within the islands that today comprise Japan.

Okinawa was the site of one of World War II's bloodiest battles, resulting in immense civilian casualties and widespread destruction. After the war, the islands remained under U.S. control until 1972. Even today, American military bases occupy about 15% of the main island.

Okinawa's History and Cultural Oppression

Perhaps some of the earliest Japanese depictions of Ryukyuan identity were images produced in connection with the seventeen official diplomatic missions sent by the Lūchū Kingdom to the Tokugawa shogunate in Edo (modern-day Tokyo) between the 17th and 19th centuries. These embassies were not only diplomatic in nature but also ceremonial and offered most Japanese their first and only impression of Lūchū's people, culture, and political identity.

Both sides had strategic interests in these missions. For Lūchū's rulers, it was a chance to affirm their autonomy and unique cultural identity. On the other hand, Japan's feudal rulers presented Lūchū envoys as exotic dignitaries from a subordinate realm and leveraged these visits to demonstrate their dominance.

Seifman remarks, "These embassies became a contested space of representation. On one hand, the Lūchū envoys sought to present themselves as they wished to be seen as a sophisticated, independent kingdom. On the other hand, the Shimazu and Tokugawa clans carefully orchestrated aspects of these visits to reinforce their own political narratives. This tension fundamentally shaped how Lūchū was perceived in Japan during that era, establishing lasting impressions that influenced modern understandings of Okinawa."

The impressions formed during these encounters continued to influence understandings of Ryukyuan identity in modern Japanese society. "Both sides had aligned interests in emphasizing Lūchū's distinctiveness. The kingdom used these displays to assert its refined culture and sovereignty over its own lands, while Japanese elites gained prestige by showcasing their control over what appeared to be an exotic foreign realm. This mutual performance of "foreignness" cemented certain cultural markers, such as specific musical traditions and distinctive clothing, as emblematic of Okinawan identity in the Japanese imagination."

Since Japan's annexation of the Lūchū Kingdom in 1879, the region has undergone a profound cultural and political transformation. The once-independent kingdom was fully absorbed into the Japanese state, and policies promoting assimilation led to the gradual erosion of Ryukyuan identity.

During World War II, Okinawa became the site of one of the war's most devastating battles—the 1945 Battle of Okinawa. Lasting from April 1 to June 22, the battle claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of Okinawan civilians, an estimated quarter to a third of the island's civilian population. The scale of the destruction, combined with the psychological trauma and displacement, left a deep and lasting impact on Okinawan people and society.

Throughout the battle and in its immediate aftermath, much of Okinawa's cultural heritage was lost. Sacred lands were repurposed for military use, and countless historical treasures and artifacts were either destroyed or looted.

Reviving Okinawa's Cultural Identity

Despite this long history of loss and suppression, Okinawan culture has endured. Many artifacts have been recovered and returned, symbolizing a slow but meaningful cultural restoration. In 2024, the U.S. returned four Ugui portraits—formal posthumous memorial portraits of kings of Lūchū that were looted during the war—marking a significant moment in this ongoing process of historical restoration.

"With every repatriation, the cultural picture becomes a little more complete," says Seifman. "There was something that was lost, and now it is back. It will take time to restore the paintings, but once they are on display again, people will be able to see them, connect with them, and feel perhaps a little bit more whole—that the culture is alive, that it continues, and that it is being recovered."

Shuri Castle (known as Sui gusuku in the Okinawan language) is the former royal palace of the Lūchū Kingdom and once served as a center of diplomacy, politics, and cultural life. Rebuilt after its wartime destruction, the castle (currently undergoing restoration following a 2019 fire) is a powerful symbol of Okinawan heritage and cultural revival.

Seifman stresses the importance of restoring historical sites that once played a central role in Ryukyuan society as a means of reviving their cultural identity. One key example he cites is the restoration efforts at Shuri Castle, the former royal palace of the Lūchū Kingdom, which was destroyed in 1945, rebuilt in 1992, and is today being rebuilt again following a devastating fire in 2019.

The gusuku serves as a powerful reminder of Okinawa's distinct history and cultural heritage. Seifman explains that such spaces provide opportunities for Okinawans to revive and engage with traditional practices in the modern era.

"Restoring these spaces provides a platform for reviving traditional arts—architecture, painting, lacquerware, woodcarving, and more. They also support the revival of court arts such as music, dance, theater, royal rituals, and ceremonies. The process of rebuilding and maintaining the gusuku is itself a form of cultural renewal."

For many Okinawans, Sui gusuku is more than a historic site; it is a symbol of their distinct cultural identity. Seifman stresses that its reconstruction must be approached with cultural sensitivity and an appreciation of its unique historical significance.

"The gusuku is a symbol that gives Okinawan people pride—a place where they can feel connected to their history and cultural identity. It also allows others—Japanese people and international visitors alike—to recognize that Okina-

wa was once an independent kingdom, with its own rich traditions and refined culture, separate from Japan."

He adds that faithful restoration is essential for honoring Okinawa's historical roots and preserving the cultural diversity contained within what are today the islands of Japan. Misrepresenting the site as simply a "Japanese" landmark would risk erasing this vital distinction and undermining centuries of Ryukyuan heritage.

The ongoing issues surrounding Shuri Castle reflect broader debates about the identity, representation, and sovereignty of the Ryukyuan people within Japanese society.

Disagreements persist over whether the site should primarily serve as a cultural

and sacred space for Ryukyuans to reconnect with their heritage or function mainly as a tourist attraction. Some have raised concerns about the continued use of the Japanese name Shurijō Castle Park, instead of the indigenous name Sui gusuku. The performance of Shinto purification rituals in the castle during its restoration has also been widely criticized, seen by many as a reminder of Japan's imperial-era imposition of the state religion.

Confronting Identity: Japanese or Okinawan?

Despite growing efforts to reclaim cultural autonomy, many Ryukyuans still navigate complex identities shaped by historical assimilation, the U.S. occupation, and ongoing pressure to conform to mainstream Japanese society.

Seifman explains that this identity crisis stems from Okinawa's layered history: as descendants of the once-sovereign Lūchū Kingdom, which saw itself as distinct from both China and Japan; their forced incorporation into the Japanese state in the late 19th century; and the impact of the U.S. occupation from 1945 to 1972.

These influences continue to shape modern Okinawan society, where questions of identity remain deeply felt.

"Since the 1880s, there was a strong effort within Imperial Japan to suppress—or even erase—Okinawan difference. Students were forced to speak Japanese in school and were punished for speaking the Okinawan language. Through a variety of policies, Imperial Japan strongly pressured people to learn to be, and to become, Japanese. And although such efforts are perhaps today not imposed or enforced as overtly or oppressively as in the prewar era, these pressures continue in complex ways. Fitting in and speaking perfectly standard Japanese are still often seen as essential for one to have a successful career and to otherwise succeed in Japanese society."

The cultural struggles of the Ryukyuan people reflect a broader global pattern, shared by many minority and indigenous communities, who have long fought for recognition, respect, and the preservation of their traditions. Acknowledging and honoring these cultural identities is a crucial first step in reversing centuries of oppression and forced assimilation.

"When we talk about cultural restoration or restitution, I immediately think of Native American and First Nations communities," says Seifman. "I think about the artifacts housed in the British Museum—taken from Greece,

Egypt, various African nations, the Middle East, and India. Even within Asia, there are many examples: the Korean government continues to seek the return of items from Japan, and China is still asking for the repatriation of artifacts held in England. This is a global conversation. Okinawa is often left out of that conversation, but it absolutely belongs in it. It is just another example of a community seeking the return of its cultural treasures and the right to tell its own story."

The Future of Ryukyuan Identity

Today, Ryukyuans continue to redefine themselves, not only by reviving and maintaining traditions but also by blending them with contemporary influences to forge a unique path forward.

"When we talk about rebuilding Shuri Castle, it is not just about restoring something from the past to preserve it like a jewel box. It is about creating a space for new cultural development. They are thinking about 21st-century Okinawan culture—something for the future. So, it really represents a kind of crucible, a foundation for building both a new, creative, contemporary culture and preserving an authentic traditional culture that continues into the present day," explains Seifman.

Experience at Ritsumeikan University

Reflecting on his research and time at the university, Seifman recalls the kindness and spirit of collaboration he encountered throughout his academic journey.

"I have been incredibly fortunate to receive warm, supportive invitations for collaborations in recent years. The key is maintaining both professionalism and kindness—especially when working across languages. My Japanese colleagues have shown remarkable enthusiasm and interest in our differing interests, approaches, and outlooks. That generosity of spirit—the willingness to work together in a friendly, collaborative way—has been invaluable."

Seifman plans to publish the first book in English about the Luchuan embassies to Edo, aiming to share the story of this unique part of Japanese and East Asian history with a global audience.

SEIFMAN Travis, Ph.D.

Associate Professor, Kinugasa Research Organization

Research Themes:
1 .History and culture of early modern Japan
2. History and culture of the Ryukyu Islands (Okinawa)

Specialties:
History of arts, Japanese history

View Researcher Database ▸

PAST ARTICLES RELATED TO ART

[Issue#22 Tourism]

How have Cambodia's classical dances been passed down for generations?

HAGAI Saori, Ph.D.
Professor,
Ritsumeikan International

[Issue#20 Regeneration]

Taking Japan's Intangible Culture to the World Stage

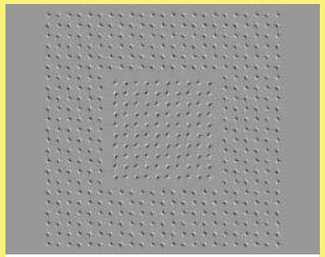
AKAMA Ryo
Professor,
College of Letters

Source: "Platinum Jungle" ©Masami Shinohara, from Manga109

[Issue #11 Language]

Extracting valuable information from big data to design human to human/ computer interactions

NISHIHARA Yoko, Ph.D.
Professor,
College of Information Science and Engineering



[Issue #8 The Heart and Mind]

Visual Illusions and the Mysteries of Human Perception

KITAOKA Akiyoshi, Ph.D.
Professor,
College of Comprehensive Psychology

[Issue#7 KYOTO]

Exploring the Landscape and Spectacles of Kyoto Reflected in Drawings and Old Photographs

KATO Masahiro, Ph.D.
Professor,
College of Letters

[Issue #4: A Declining Birthrate and an Aging Population]

Interactive Art That Greatly Changes the Image of Nursing Care

MOCHIZUKI Shigenori, Ph.D.
Professor,
College of Image Arts and Sciences

OTHER NOTABLE ARTICLES

[SPACE & EARTH]

Accomplishments of Moon Sniper SLIM

SAIKI Kazuto, Ph.D.
Professor,
NAGAOKA Hiroshi, Ph.D.
Associate Professor,
NAKAUCHI Yusuke, Ph.D.
Associate Professor,
Research Organization of Science and Technology

[Well-being]

Vital Signs Are the Window to Your Mind

OKADA Shima, Ph.D.
Professor,
College of Science and Engineering

[Issue#23 Money]

Information security requirements for the widespread adoption of cryptocurrency

UEHARA Tetsutaro, D.Eng.
Professor,
College of Information Science and Engineering

[Issue#22 Tourism]

What kind of management is essential for tourist destination development?

MAKITA Masahiro, Ph.D.
Professor,
Graduate School of Management

[Issue#21 Decarbonization]

The Challenge Towards Carbon Minus (Carbon Negative): Utilizing Biochar in Agriculture

SHIBATA Akira, Ph.D.
Professor,
Research Organization of Open Innovation & Collaboration

[Issue#20 Regeneration]

A Sustainable Social Movement Emerges in Small Businesses Reutilizing Vacant Houses

TOMINAGA Kyoko, Ph.D.
Associate Professor,
College of Social Sciences

Research is

Ritsumeikan's offerings to society. By 2030, Ritsumeikan University aims to become a next-generation research-intensive university that creates new value and nurtures innovative talent through global collaboration and interdisciplinary research and education, contributing to society as a center of shared knowledge. Mizuhiki in this instance consists of five cords, the two gold ones of which represent our university's basic and applied research.

Ritsumeikan University is

a comprehensive private university with 16 Colleges and 21 Graduate Schools across campuses located in Kyoto, Shiga, and Osaka. We provide students from Japan and abroad opportunities to learn together in an atmosphere of respect, connect with society, and pursue challenges and inquiry in their own way. The three red cords represent our university's three main campuses that drive its research.

*The item shown here is called "mizuhiki," a traditional Japanese cord used for gift wrapping.

RESEARCH OFFICE

The Research Office has the aim of contributing to society through research exchanges, technological transfers, support of ventures, etc., utilizing the intellectual assets of the University. To centralize information on researchers at the University and their diverse external needs as well as to facilitate industry-government-academia activities more smoothly, depending on the challenges involved, we serve as an integrated point of contact for various matters associated with research.

– Research Office at Kinugasa Campus
Mail: k-kikou@st.ritsumei.ac.jp

– Research Office at Biwako-Kusatsu Campus
Mail: liaisonb@st.ritsumei.ac.jp

– Research Office at Osaka Ibaraki Campus
Mail: oicro@st.ritsumei.ac.jp

Contact Us

Contact form for research-related matters

Ritsumeikan University Research Newsletter (RADIANT Mail Magazine) Subscription

OVERSEAS OFFICES

– UBC-Ritsumeikan Academic Exchange Programme Office
– Ritsumeikan India Office
– Ritsumeikan UK Office
– Ritsumeikan University Beijing Office
– Ritsumeikan University ASEAN Office
– Ritsumeikan University Washington, D.C. Office
– Ritsumeikan University San Francisco Office

https://en.ritsumei.ac.jp/international-outreach/offices/

RITSUMEIKAN UNIVERSITY

As a comprehensive university, Ritsumeikan University has continued to bring various researchers together to cooperate and traverse the boundaries of their respective fields, create new academic areas, and develop young researchers to lead the next generation. The university, where excellent faculty and unique students come together, provides an environment where you can cooperate with people who see the world from a different point of view in order to create new things and improve yourself.

KYOTO

Kamogawa River

iii

KINUGASA CAMPUS

A campus for Humanities and Social Sciences located in Kyoto, a city of academia, culture, and art.

4 Colleges

- College of Law
- College of Social Sciences
- College of International Relations
- College of Letters
- College of Arts and Design
  *Newly established in April 2026

6 Graduate Schools

- Graduate School of Law
- Graduate School of Sociology
- Graduate School of International Relations
- Graduate School of Letters
- Graduate School of Language Education and Information Science
- Graduate School of Core Ethics and Frontier Sciences
- Graduate School of Science in Arts and Design
  *Newly established in April 2026

Kinugasa Research Organization

Kinugasa Research Organization was founded in 1998 and it supports research activity as a research organization which manages the research institutes and research centers. The organization's goal is to contribute to human welfare and social progress under the four principles of "autonomy," "democracy," "openness," and "peaceful use".

Ritsumeikan Global Innovation Research Organization (R-GIRO)

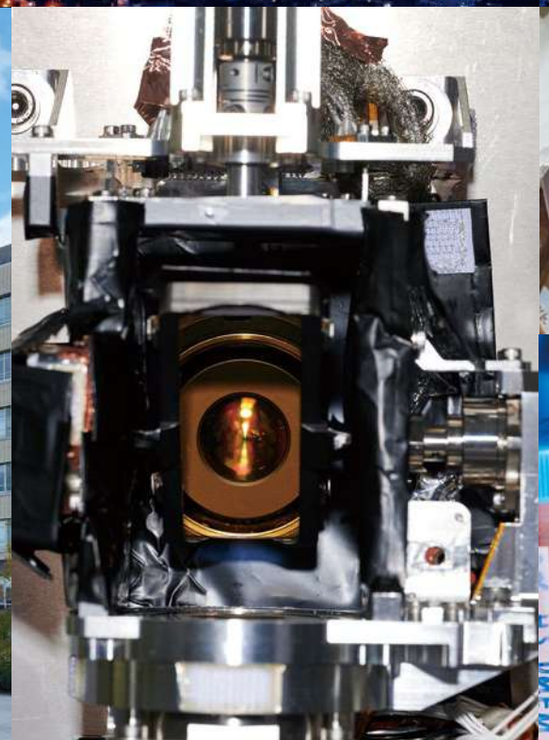
Ritsumeikan Asia-Japan Research Organization

View Research Organizations ▸

iv

SHIGA

Lake Biwa Fireworks Festival



BIWAKO-KUSATSU CAMPUS

A campus that drives research and innovation through collaboration with industry, government, academia, and the local community.

6 Colleges

- College of Economics
- College of Sport and Health Science
- College of Gastronomy Management
- College of Science and Engineering
- College of Life Sciences
- College of Pharmaceutical Sciences

6 Graduate Schools

- Graduate School of Economics
- Graduate School of Sport and Health Science
- Graduate School of Gastronomy Management
- Graduate School of Science and Engineering
- Graduate School of Life Sciences
- Graduate School of Pharmacy

Research Organization of Science and Technology

The Research Organization of Science and Technology was established in 1994 as the Research Organization of Science and Engineering (changed to its present name in 2012) to contribute to the development of science and technology and local society. The organization's goal is to contribute to local society through joint research in industry-academia-government collaborations.

BKC Research Organization of Social Sciences

BKC Research Organization of Social Sciences was founded in 1998 in order to promote industry-academia- government collaborations in Social Sciences at Biwako-Kusatsu Campus (BKC). We also aim to promote interdisciplinary research through exchanges with Natural Sciences in cooperation with the Research Organization of Science and Technology.

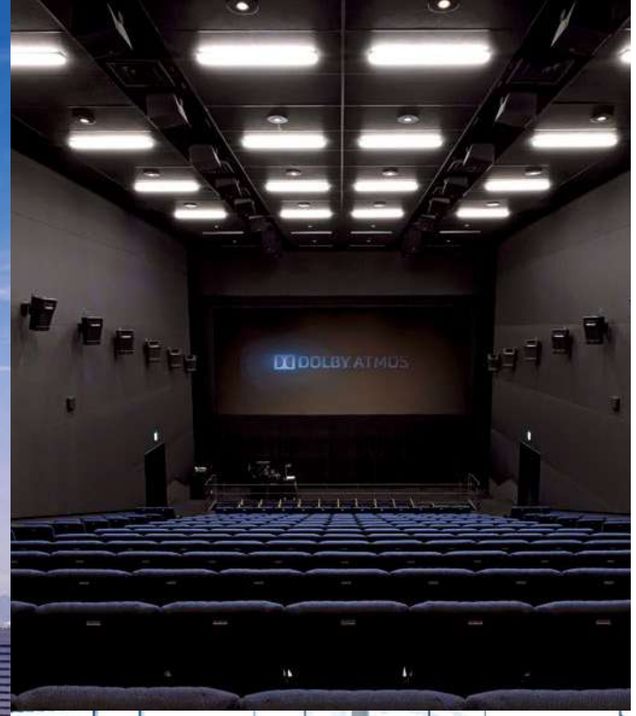
Ritsumeikan Global Innovation Research Organization (R-GIRO)

Ritsumeikan Asia-Japan Research Organization

View Research Organizations ▸

OSAKA

Osaka Castle



OSAKA IBARAKI CAMPUS

A socially connected campus that generates new value through community outreach.

6 Colleges

- College of Business Administration
- College of Policy Science
- College of Comprehensive Psychology
- College of Global Liberal Arts
- College of Information Science and Engineering
- College of Image Arts and Sciences

7 Graduate Schools

- Graduate School of Business Administration
- Graduate School of Policy Science
- Graduate School of Human Science
- Graduate School of Technology Management
- Graduate School of Management
- Graduate School of Information Science and Engineering
- Graduate School of Image Arts

OIC Research Organization of Open Innovation and Collaboration

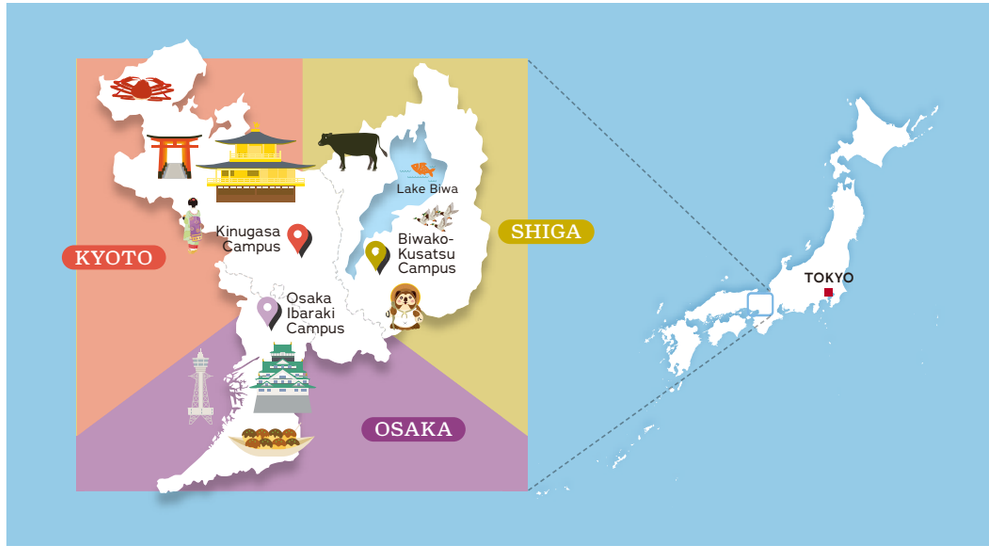
Respecting the three core concepts of Osaka Ibaraki Campus, Asia's Gateway, Urban Co-creation, and Regional Cooperation, Research Organization of Open Innovation and Collaboration's goal is to foster human recourses who can play an important role in the global society, create innovation, and serve as a key player in the regional community.

Ritsumeikan Global Innovation Research Organization (R-GIRO)

Ritsumeikan Asia-Japan Research Organization

View Research Organizations ▸

RITSUMEIKAN UNIVERSITY AT A GLANCE



3 Main Campuses

16 Colleges

21 Graduate Schools

6 Research Organization

16 Research Institute

34 Research Centers

861 Professors

280 Associate Professors

148 Assistant Professors

213 PDs, RAs

34,883 Undergraduate Students

4,380 Graduate Students

3,386 International Students

79 Countries and Regions

152 No. of International Faculty*1

JPY 5 billion Exernal Research Funding

JPY 2 billion Ritsumeikan Own Fund

National found for Scientific Research (KAKENHI)
JPY 1.6 billion
1st among Private Universities in Western Japan

*1 Sourse: University Rankinngs (Asahi Publication)

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Dispatch: 1164 researchers, 76 countries

- USA
- China
- South Korea
- UK
- Taiwan
- Germany
- Indonesia
- Thailand
- France
- Viet Nam
- Singapore
- Australia
- Canada
- Italy
- Malaysia
- Spain
- Netherlands
- UAE
- Czechia
- India
- Poland
- Austria
- New Zealand
- Sweden
- Guatemala
- Switzerland
- Cambodia
- Greece
- Ireland
- Philippines
- Tanzania
- Belgium
- Hungary
- Mongolia
- Nepal
- Peru
- Portugal
- South Africa
- Turkey
- Croatia
- Finland
- Laos
- Bangladesh
- Norway
- Uzbekistan
- Slovakia
- Brazil
- Denmark
- Kenya
- Kazakhstan
- Egypt
- Ethiopia
- Mexico
- Morocco
- Pakistan
- Sri Lanka
- Tunisia
- Argentina
- Azerbaijan
- Benin
- Bulgaria
- Chile
- Cuba
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Estonia
- Jordan
- Lithuania
- Myanmar
- Oman
- Paraguay
- Andorra
- Kyrgyzstan
- Serbia
- Solomon Islands
- Timor-Leste
- Zambia

Acceptance: 268 researchers, 39 countries

- China
- South Korea
- USA
- UK
- Germany
- Italy
- Taiwan
- France
- Indonesia
- India
- Australia
- Thailand
- Spain
- Viet Nam
- Egypt
- Mongolia
- Austria
- Bangladesh
- Canada
- Czechia
- Denmark
- Ethiopia
- New Zealand
- Philippines
- Switzerland
- Turkey
- Armenia
- Belgium
- Bulgaria
- Finland
- Hungary
- Mexico
- Netherlands
- Norway
- Pakistan
- Poland
- Uzbekistan
- Singapore
- Sweden

Academic Publications

Publications in Top 10% Percentiles*1
140 | **11.7%**

International Co-authored Publications*2
462 | **38.6%**

International Partners

471 Universities and Institutions

69 Countries and Regions

6 Overseas Offices

*1 Percentage = No. of international co-authored publications / No. of Scopus-indexed publications
*2 Percentage = No. of Publications in Top 10% Percentiles (Field - weighted) / No. of Scopus - indexed publications
Source: Elsevier's "SciVal" (data of 2024 as of July 2025)

MID-TERM PLAN FOR RESEARCH ADVANCEMENT

Ritsumeikan University has established a mid-term research advancement plan along with the R2030 Academy Vision.The Fourth Ritsumeikan University Mid-Term Research Advancement Plan (AY2021-AY2025) was newly developed in AY2021, with the basic goal of “realizing a next-generation research-intensive university that generates new social symbiotic values and emergent human resources.” In order to achieve this basic goal, we have positioned three ideal images of a university as the three goals of the Fourth Mid-Term Research Advancement Plan.

BASIC GOAL

Realization of a next-generation research-intensive university that generates new social symbiotic values and emergent human resources

IDEAL IMAGE OF A UNIVERSITY 1

A university that will enhance the potential of individual researchers by providing support according to the career stage of researchers, from early-career researchers (including doctoral students) to core researchers, and fundamental research support

IDEAL IMAGE OF A UNIVERSITY 2

A university that will become a "knowledge node" by building a global research network and strengthening the international dissemination of research results

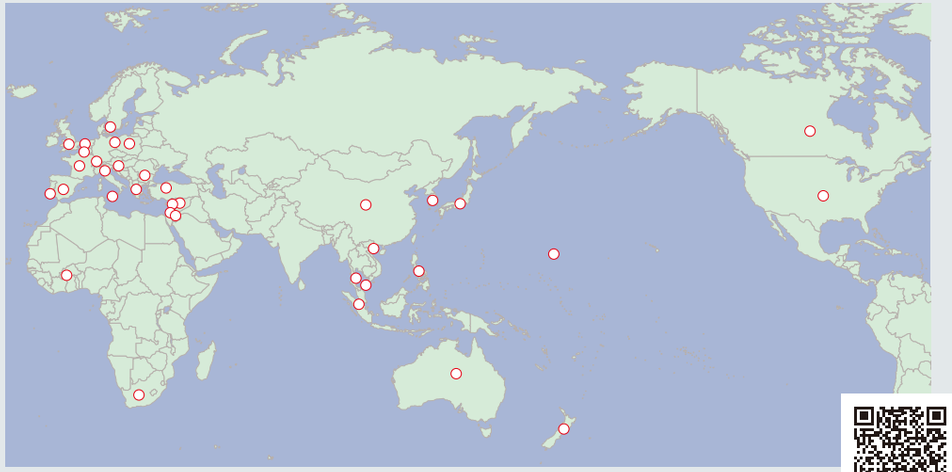
IDEAL IMAGE OF A UNIVERSITY 3

A university that will contribute to the resolution of social and humanistic issues through the promotion of distinctive interdisciplinary co-creation research and social implementation, and create and utilize "comprehensive knowledg

FOCUSED RESEARCH AREA

OUR GLOBAL RESEARCH NETWORK

Under the R2030 Academy Vision, Ritsumeikan University aims to realize a next-generation research-intensive university through the Ritsumeikan Knowledge Nodes (RKN) initiative. The RKN connects global research networks, promotes interdisciplinary collaboration, and shares research results internationally. The International Collaborative Research Promotion Program facilitates these global partnerships.



See more en.ritsumei.ac.jp/research/radiant/global/

Constructing a “New Social Theory” of Tourism Mobilities and the Digital Revolution

Prof. Hideki Endo
College of Letters

Empirical Study of Social Resilience in Middle Eastern Countries during Crisis: A Case Study of Informal Resource Distribution in Jordan

Prof. Kota Suechika
College of International Relations

Building an international DX consortium for Japanese arts and culture digital humanities research, with Ritsumeikan as the central node

Prof. Ryo Akama
College of Letters

Effect of newly developed lifestyle using hypoxic environment on health promotion

Prof. Kazushige Goto
College of Sport and Health Science

International Center for Enhanced Sleep Research Based on Embodied Environment Research

Prof. Shima Okada
College of Science and Engineering

Cultural Translation of Social and Emotional Learning

Prof. Hanako Suzuki
College of Comprehensive Psychology

LIFE IN RITSUMEIKAN

For International Students

Ritsumeikan University has 21 graduate schools, which consist of Graduate Schools based on their colleges at Ritsumeikan University, Inter-Faculty Graduate Schools, and Professional Graduate Schools, with over 1,000 international graduate students enrolled.
There are a number of scholarships that prospective students can secure before beginning their studies at RU, in addition to the scholarships and tuition reduction schemes that international students may apply for after commencing their studies.

Hirai Kaichiro Memorial Library (Kinugasa Campus)

See more Ritsumeikan University Graduate School Entrance Examination Information Website

KYOTO × RADIANT

Ritsumeikan University has approximately 2,800 faculty members. Among them, 152 are international faculty, the third highest number among Japanese universities. Each of its three main campuses features its own unique attractions. Through “KYOTO×RADIANT,” we introduce how Ritsumeikan researchers spend their spare time away from their academic work.

See more KYOTO × RADIANT

RANKINGS

QS World University Rankings 2026

3rd Among Private Universities in Japan

Global Ranking 680th

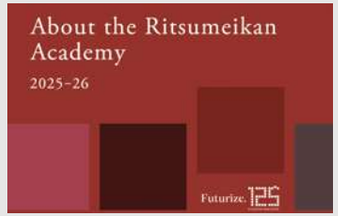
THE Impact Rankings 2025

35th for SDG 1

Global Overall SDGs Ranking 201 - 300
Tied for 1st among private universities in Japan

World University Rankings @RITSUMEIKAN UNIVERSITY

FOR MORE INFORMATION



About the Ritsumeikan Academy

Latest information on Research Activities

Graduate Student Career Pass Support Center

Research-Life Support Division

Ritsumeikan Advanced Research Academy (RARA)