A Gaze upon Haniwa and Dogu

Exhibition view of the special exhibition *Haniwa to Dogu no Kindai* (Modern Images of Ancient Clay Figures)
Photo: Kioku Keizo

Machida Ko (Novelist), Nariai Hajime and Hanai Hisaho (Curators at The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo)

The special exhibition *Haniwa to Dogu no Kindai* (Modern Images of Ancient Clay Figures) is currently on view at the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo (MOMAT) until December 22, 2024. What stories have people seen in ancient figures since the modern era? Tracing this "gaze" reveals changes in society and the mind in Japan. The monthly magazine *Tokyojin* held a roundtable discussion entitled "A Gaze upon Haniwa and Dogu" at MOMAT. The discussion was moderated by Matsui Mio and featured novelist Machida Ko, whose *Koyaku Kojiki* (colloquial translation of the *Kojiki*) has received much attention, and exhibition curators Hanai Hisaho and Nariai Hajime.

Tradition, avant-garde and *yuru-chara*[1]. .....? A look at the *haniwa* / *dogu* boom

——In 2023, Mr. Machida published *Koyaku Kojiki* (Kodansha, 2023), a modern translation of the *Kojiki*.[2] A *kofun*[3] (an ancient burial mound) also appears in important scenes in *Kokuhaku* (Confession), published in 2005. Have you been interested in ancient history for a long time?

[1] *Yuru-chara* is an abbreviation for "*yurui* mascot characters (loose mascot characters)." They are mascot characters for local governments and city revitalization events. Their relaxed atmosphere is "soothing," and they have become popular, with grand prix events being held to commemorate them. https://www.yurugp.jp/en/

[2] The *Kojiki* is the oldest historical record in Japan, covering history from the creation myths of the Age of the Gods to the time of Empress Suiko (reigned 592–628). Divided into three volumes, upper, middle and lower, it was compiled in 712 and details the origins of the nation's founding and historical events and stories. The *Kojiki* does not contain any direct references to *haniwa*, but the Kofun period (from the early or mid-3rd century to the late 7th century), when burial mounds with haniwa were actively built, occurred after the time of Emperor Jimmu (reigned 660–585 BCE (traditional)), as described in the *Kojiki*, and is therefore sometimes associated with the myths and history recorded in the *Kojiki*.

[3] *Kofun* (ancient burial mound) refers to a specific type of burial mound built during the Kofun period. There are circular, square, and keyhole-shaped tumuli. For example, Daisenryo Kofun is one of the largest kofun in Japan and is part of the "Mozu-Furuichi Kofun Group: Mounded Tombs of Ancient Japan" (registered as a World Heritage Site in 2019).

Machida Ko: Not at all. I came here today as someone who knows nothing about *haniwa*[4] or *dogu*[5] (laughs).

Hanai Hisaho: Why did you write about the kofun in your works?

Machida: *Kokuhaku* (Confession) takes place around Mount Katsuragi, which is located on the border between Nara and Osaka Prefectures. The protagonist, Kumataro, travels from there to Yamato (southeast of Mount Katsuragi) and arrives at the Katsuragi Hitokotonushi Shrine[6] in Gose City, Nara Prefecture. It is in this scene that the kofun appears.

——The god, Hitokotonushi, appears in the *Kojiki* as well.

Machida: Yes, Emperor Yuryaku (417[418?]–479) meets Hitokotonushi no kami[7] on Mt. Katsuragi. I also used to walk around this area a lot and couldn't help but feel the shadow of history there. In addition, when I was in elementary school, the discovery of the murals in the Takamatsuzuka Tumulus [8] (Asuka Village, Nara Prefecture) became big news in 1972. This discovery led to a boom in excavations [of ruins] in the early 1970s.

Hanai: This boom in archaeological excavations is closely related to the content of this exhibition, *Haniwa to Dogu no Kindai* (Modern Images of Ancient Clay Figures).

Special Exhibition
Modern Images of Ancient Clay Figures

Photo: Kioku Keizo

The image of *Haniwa* and *Dogu* excavated from ancient strata has permeated all over Japan, and they have now become established characters. Unearthed artifacts have generated cultural phenomena in various fields, ranging from arts and crafts to architecture, photography, film, theater, literature, traditional performing arts, thought, and even educational programs. The postwar episode of Okamoto Taro and Isamu Noguchi "discovering" the aesthetic value of excavated objects, which had previously been treated as archaeological materials, is now a legend. Why did unearthed objects attract attention only during a certain period of time? How did the evaluation of them spread? Why were artists so passionate about unearthed artifacts? With a focus on art, this exhibition traces from the Meiji period (1868–1912) to the present day the genealogy of "motifs of unearthed objects" that have leaped onto the stage of cultural history to examine the changing gaze directed toward *Haniwa*, Jomon potteries, and *Dogu.*

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The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo (MOMAT)
https://www.momat.go.jp/en/exhibitions/560

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[4] *Haniwa* are unglazed earthenware objects that were lined up in tombs during the Kofun period for the purpose of rituals and warding off evil spirits. There are various types, such as house-shaped haniwa, vessel-shaped haniwa, animal-shaped haniwa, and human-shaped haniwa.

[5] *Dogu* refers to unglazed clay figurines made in the Japanese archipelago around the Jomon period (c. 14,000 BCE – c. 10th century BCE). *Dogu* can be a humanoid or spiritual figure, and the Clay Figurine ("Dogu") with Goggle-Like Eyes is the most well-known of them all. https://colbase.nich.go.jp/collection_items/tnm/J-38392?locale=en

[6] Katsuragi Hitokotonushi-jinja Shrine https://www.hitokotonushi.or.jp/index.html [in Japanese]

[7] The Kojiki states that when Emperor Yuryaku went hunting in the Katsuragi Mountains, he encountered a group of people and asked them their names, and the leader turned out to be the god of Mount Katsuragi. The god is said to have introduced himself as "I am Hitokotonushi no kami of Katsuragi, who proclaims evil in a single word, good in a single word (hito-koto)."

[8] In March 1972, an excavation of the Takamatsuzuka tomb was conducted and a brightly colored mural painting was discovered. The discovery of the colorful mural was a rare major discovery in the history of archaeology and made headlines throughout Japan. The mural was declared a national treasure in 1974.

——It's a very intriguing title, isn't it? The theme is *haniwa* and *dogu*, the ancient objects, yet it's modern.

Hanai: Thank you very much. It was only in the modern era that haniwa and dogu began to be written about in history books and to be seen as art.

Machida: Quite recently, right.

Hanai: And in the modern era, the way haniwa and dogu are perceived is changing with the times. In this exhibition, we explore the background of these changes and present a wide range of items, from fine art to manga. Nariai is in charge of dogu, and I'm in charge of haniwa in this exhibition.

Machida: What do you mean by the way they are perceived changing over time?

Hanai: The haniwa and dogu boom has been repeated several times. The most famous boom was probably in the 1950s. Many artists of that time used haniwa as a subject, Isamu Noguchi (1904–88) being a prime example. Then came the Jomon boom with Okamoto Taro (1911–96).[9]

Nariai Hajime: First came the haniwa boom, then the Jomon dogu boom. This is the reverse order of the historical trend. That's why the title of this exhibition is "haniwa and dogu" and not "dogu and haniwa."

Hanai: Isamu Noguchi and Okamoto Taro discovered "primitive beauty." This is an established theory in art history, but there was a haniwa boom before that, during the Meiji period (1868–1912) and before and during World War II. In the late Edo period (1603–1867), haniwa and dogu were not symbols of "Japanese beauty," but in the prewar and wartime periods, haniwa became a historical symbol of the *bansei ikkei* (unbroken imperial line).

The role expected of haniwa in each era

Machida: In other words, the basis of the booms was different at each time. To put it very simply, before the Meiji period (1868–1912) people just enjoyed haniwa as something obscure, but during the war they came to be seen as the figures that symbolize the fundamental idea of Japan. Then in the 1950s, after the war, there was the boom that led to what we see today, right?

Hanai: Yes, you're right. In the early Meiji period, the itinerant painter Minomushi Sanjin (1836–1900) painted dogu and earthenware in "*Mutsu Zenkoku Koto no Zu* (Ancient Potteries of Mutsu, Aomori)." They were arranged with tea utensils and plants in the style of Chinese literary painting (Southern School). It was called the joy of antiquarianism.

Machida: Is it something like an antique hobby?

Hanai: Yes, that's right.

Nariai: At the end of the Edo period, there was information that haniwa were buried in the graves of important people. But because Jomon pottery and dogu have such bizarre shapes, they were thought to have been made by non-Japanese aborigines.

[9] Okamoto Taro's "Jomon Pottery Theory" is widely known as an avant-garde artist's treatise on Jomon pottery as art.

Machida: What began as an individual hobby later became associated with the nation and Japanese history…

Nariai: Yes, especially the haniwa.

Hanai: After the Meiji Restoration (1868), the challenge was how to prove the history of the bansei ikkei in order to create a modern nation centered on the emperor. In particular, it was necessary to prove to foreign countries that Japan was a nation with a long history. In this case, kofun and ancient figures played a certain role. The Meiji government began to create genealogical records of Japan's history as a link to the emperor.

Machida: Ah, so that means something like recognition.

Hanai: Yes. A major turning point was the construction of the Fushimi-Momoyama-no-Misasagi (Imperial Mausoleum of Emperor Meiji [1852–1912]) in 1912. As part of the project to restore imperial rule[10], Emperor Meiji's tomb was constructed in the form of a mound. *Haniwa* were actually made and buried there.

Haniwa Warriors (Copies) (1912, made by Yoshida Hakurei [1871–1942]
Source: ColBase (https://colbase.nich.go.jp/)

Machida: Oh, new haniwa?

Hanai: Yes. Among them, *Haniwa Warriors (Copies)* (1912, made by Yoshida Hakurei [1871–1942]) will be exhibited at the Tokyo National Museum's special exhibition (Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Designation of the Warrior in Keiko Armor as a National Treasure) "Haniwa: Funerary Sculptures of Japan."

Nariai: The Second Sino-Japanese War began in 1937, and as the celebratory mood grew in the run-up to the 2,600th year of the Japanese imperial calendar in 1940, the "beauty" of the haniwa began to be praised. The face of the haniwa was considered the ideal Japanese person and was used to boost morale. Illustrator Fukiya Koji's (1898–1979) "Tempei Shinjo (Heaven's warrior)" is a classic example: a warrior dressed as a haniwa holds an air force soldier.

Machida: The *Nihon Shoki*[11] states that Nomi no Sukune (a powerful clan in the Kofun period), the founder of the Hajibe[12], invented haniwa as a substitute for martyrdom[13], right?

Hanai: Yes, it was. During the war, there was the aspect that soldiers were sent to the battlefield to die in

[10] Following the return of imperial rule to the emperor by Tokugawa Yoshinobu, the 15th shogun of the Edo shogunate, Emperor Meiji proclaimed direct imperial rule on January 3, 1868. Thus, the sovereignty of Japan returned from the Edo Shogunate to the Imperial Court.

[11] The *Nihon Shoki* is Japan's first imperially commissioned national history (the history of the country compiled by order of the emperor) and is said to have been completed in 720. Of the 30 volumes, volumes 1 and 2 are the "*Jindaiki*" (Records of the Age of the Gods), which have a strong mythological character. Volumes 3 and up to volume 30 record the deeds of successive emperors and historical events in chronological order.

[12] The Hajibe were a tribe involved in the production of clay figurines and unglazed earthenware for the imperial court, the construction of ancient tombs, and funeral services from the 6th to the 7th centuries.

[13] This refers to the custom of *junshi* (committing oneself to death by surviving one's own death) that was followed at the funerals of members of the imperial family at that time.

the place of the emperor. That may be one of the reasons why people felt so strongly about haniwa. Haniwa were a representation of nationalism.

The postwar Jomon boom, also connected to democracy

Machida: The boom of the 1950s was not led by the state, but spread from the general public.

Hanai: It started with the excavation boom that began immediately after the end of the war. In the process of national reconstruction and development, various parts of Japan were excavated. The Toro Ruins, which were the first to be extensively excavated and surveyed in Japan in 1947, also became a popular destination for school field trips.

Machida: There were often news stories such as "XX Boy Discovers Ruins!" then.

Hanai: The enthusiasm to rewrite history with their own hands was born from the people. The influence of the GHQ was also great. The wartime Kokoku Shikan (emperor-centered historiography based on state Shinto) was rejected, and the empirical-historical perspective was sought. Excavations were recommended as scientific. This is how history education progressed after the war.

Nariai: There was also a boom among artists. To put it simply, the first thing they did was to reflect on the war period. At the same time, they wanted to preserve the uniqueness of the Japanese people. In the midst of this dilemma, artists went to museums. To confirm who they were. And when they went there, the first things they saw were Jomon dogu and pottery.

Machida: It's like us novelists translating the *Kojiki* into modern language (laughs).

Nariai: Maybe so (laughs). Also, at that time, Jomon dogu and pottery were called "the energy of the people." Unlike the national haniwa during the war, Jomon was for the people. This was also related to postwar democracy.

——What motivated you to write *Koyaku Kojiki*, Mr. Machida?

Machida: I wanted to write about the history of Japan. I felt that there were a lot of young people today who didn't know Japanese history, and I thought that wasn't good. As we've discussed, historical views change with the times. Kokoku Shikan (emperor-centered historiography) in war time and historical views based on class struggle after the war, etc. However, in the field of Japanese subculture, the historical view doesn't seem to have been updated much since the 1970s when I was a kid. I thought we needed a more neutral view of history now, which should be written in the form of a story.

So I said to my editor, "Why don't you publish a Japanese history series?" He replied, "Why don't you do it yourself, Mr. Machida? How about starting by writing [a modern version of] the Kojiki?" Then I reluctantly wrote it (laughs). Now I'm working on a modern version of *Taiheiki*[14] (Chronicle of Great Peace).

Nariai: That sounds interesting! There are also works related to the *Kojiki* in this exhibition. One example is the mural painting "From Kojiki (C57-001)" by Akutagawa Madokoro Saori (1924–66). The theme of the

[14] *Taiheiki* is a military tale consisting of 40 volumes, which was completed in the 1370s. It is a great work of historical literature that depicts the 50 years of turmoil during the Northern and Southern Courts period (1337–1392).

painting is the visit of Izanagi (Izanagi-no-Mikoto, primordial god of creation and life) and Izanami (Izanami-no-Mikoto, primordial goddess of creation and death) to the underworld, but they are depicted as monstrous creatures.

Hanai: In the case of this work, there is a Mexican influence.

Nariai: Yes, Akutagawa was influenced by the Mexican Mural Movement. It seemed to her that Mexico had already overcome the challenges that Japan was facing. In response to the Spanish conquest and Europeanization, Mexico was producing modern works while drawing on its own traditions of Mayan civilization. This was a shock to Japanese artists, and Mexico became a huge boom in the 1950s.

The challenge for artists to explore and represent history

Machida: Listening to your explanation, it feels like there's a "true essence" of history. But that essence is constantly being twisted by the ideologies of the time and turned into something completely different. As an artist, Akutagawa's way of thinking was to try to uncover this "true essence"? In doing so, she referred to Mexico. If Spain ruled Mexico with some kind of ideology like Kokoku Shikan, then surely there had been a Mexico before that. Is that how it feels?

Hanai: Yes, there is also internationalism. If during the war it was nationalism, after the war it was internationalism.

Nariai: Okamoto Taro is the same. He said it's outrageous that Japanese traditions are *wabi-sabi*[15], that they can't be so passive. And that's why he brought up the Jomon period.

Hanai: During this period, "the people" [the values and social views of the people] were divided into several groups. While postwar education was actively promoted, the Korean War (1950–53) marked the beginning of Japan's rearmament.[16] Artists sensed the danger of this.

——Painting the *Kojiki* as a subject in a form like Akutagawa's work had a symbolic meaning for democracy. But I think the *Kojiki* itself reflects the politics of the early 8th century, when it was composed. What do you think about that?

Nariai: I think this is a very difficult point. I think it must have been a very difficult time for the artists themselves, wondering whether they should westernize or reject tradition, whether they should accept tradition or reject it, which direction they should go. I think the choice of the *Kojiki* really reflected the ambivalent consciousness of the artists.

Machida: When you read the Kojiki and look at dogu and haniwa, if you think about the message of each, it becomes ideological. But if you look at it from the perspective of "What's interesting about it?," even myths can be interesting.

Nariai: The imagination of two thousand years ago is expressed in haniwa and dogu.

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[15] *Wabi-sabi* is a uniquely Japanese aesthetic and sensibility that values simplicity, tranquility, asymmetry, empty space, and imperfection. Examples of this can be found in Japanese gardens, dry landscape gardens (*karesansui*) with stones and moss, the tea ceremony and its utensils, as well as historical artworks and traditional crafts.

[16] Japan renounced military forces under its postwar constitution, but as the Cold War intensified, a Communist government came to power in China, and conflict erupted on the Korean Peninsula, GHQ recognized Japan's right to self-defense and ordered the establishment of a National Police Reserve Force in 1950.

Machida: That's true. What people remembered and talked about at that time was written down in the *Kojiki*, wasn't it? What I did by writing *Koyaku Kojiki*, is like having put them back into "stories." I don't want to be presumptuous, but isn't this the same thing as Akutagawa and other artists of that time were trying to do? If so, I can trust [Akutagawa's artistic consciousness].

Driven by the occult boom, the dogu and haniwa booms have also spread to the subcultural world

Nariai: Following these artists, the [dogu and haniwa] boom spread to the subculture in the 1960s and 1970s.

Machida: As I recall, the turning point was the Osaka Expo in 1970. Until the Expo, all I found in bookstores were books about a bright future, but as soon as it ended, apocalyptic theories got popular. Goto Ben's (1929–2020) *Nosutoradamusu no Daiyogen* (Prophecies of Nostradamus) (1973) was also published at that time.

Nariai: *Nihon Chinbotsu* (Japan Sinks) by Komatsu Sakyo (1931–2011) was also published in 1973 (its English version, Japan Sinks, was published in 1976). The historical background is easy to understand. The period of high economic growth was coming to an end, and after the Anpo protests [Japanese national campaign against the US-Japan Security Treaty] and the Osaka World Expo in 1970, the so-called *Shirake* Generation, marked by apathy and indifference, emerged.

Machida: Yoshida Takuro's[17] songs were hits... (laughs).

Nariai: The driving force behind [the dogu and haniwa boom] was the occult boom. The *Bungeishunju Deluxe*[18] series (1976) is known as a pioneer of this genre, and later the theory that *shakoki dogu* (clay figurines (dogu) with goggle-like eyes) were aliens was introduced in magazines such as *MU* (monthly occult information magazine). Beginning in the 1970s and 1980s, countless science fiction and occult works featuring dogu and haniwa appeared.

Shakoki dogu (clay figurines [dogu] with goggle-like eyes)
Source: ColBase (https://colbase.nich.go.jp/)

Machida: There is no heat of the 1950s like Mexico and the Maya, is there?

Nariai: No, not at all. It is a complete meme culture, a culture of reproduction. So even though there are many numbers, there are few patterns. The dogu are always shakoki dogu, and the haniwa are always *bujin haniwa* (haniwa warriors) or *odoru hitobito* (terracotta dancers).

Machida: That is easier for readers to understand. In the case of words, if they deviate too far from the image that comes first, readers will have difficulty grasping the meaning.

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[17] Yoshida Takuro (1946–) is a Japanese folk singer and singer-songwriter who became a charismatic figure of the era with his innovative musical style. He also worked as a music producer and actor. He debuted in 1970 and retired in 2022.
[18] *Bungeishunju Deluxe* was a series published by Bungeishunju Publishing Company mainly in the 1970s that compactly compiled educational and entertainment items from the Showa era.

Nariai: Among them, Morohoshi Daijiro (1949–) is unique. *Ankoku Shinwa* (Myth of darkness) is probably something he actually went to the museum to research. He draws ancient figures that rarely appear in other artists' works, and the pottery that served as a model can be clearly identified.

Machida: How about Mizuki Shigeru (known as the leading *yokai*[19] manga artist, 1922–2015)?

Nariai: Mizuki drew Jomon pottery in "*Arasoi-no-Tsubo*"[20] from *Jomon Shonen Yogi*[21] (Jomon boy Yogi) (1976). Although the title is "Jomon," the story is reminiscent of Papua New Guinea, where he spent time during the war. Papua had a primitive way of life, and he probably drew it with the idea that Japan's Jomon period was similar.

The haniwa, a national symbol, goes the way of a mascot character

Machida: What is the status of haniwa and dogu now in 2024?

Nariai: Taketomi Kenji's (1970–) *Kodai Senshi Haniwatto* (Ancient warrior Haniwatto, serialized from July 2018) is still being serialized. Haniwa fights against his enemy *dogu*. Haniwa is the protagonist, and dogu is rather the enemy. This is a complete reversal of the wartime and postwar perception that haniwa = national, dogu = energy of the people. It's easy to see how perceptions change dramatically over time.

Hanai: I can't speak clearly about the current situation, but I have a feeling that it is Jomon-dominated. The haniwa is almost no longer used as a motif in artwork, but in the world of manga and anime, the haniwa has gone the way of the yuru-chara. NHK's "Hey! Hanimaru" ran for six years starting in 1983. Nariai and I belong to the Hanimaru generation who grew up watching it. Our parents' generation, who were exposed to archaeological excavations during their postwar education, wanted their children to learn history as a reproduction of that experience. In a way that has completely lost all ideology, both haniwa and dogu have somehow become part of our lives.

Nariai: It's scary in itself that [haniwa and dogu] have spread completely without ideology. If you unconsciously believe that the roots of the Japanese people are in the Jomon or haniwa, then that can easily be reversed and you can easily fall into a biased mindset.

Machida: This exhibition will be able to remind us of the ideological background that we have forgotten. That's very important.

Hanai: Thank you very much. I think that haniwa and dogu are the spiritual and social history of Japan.

Machida: When I published *Koyaku Kojiki*, I wondered if it would sell, but surprisingly, people read it.

After all, everyone needs a story to hold on to, or at least a connection to something. Nationalism is still abhorred, but deep down, people have a desire to unite with something. So inevitably, I think things that are buried in the ground [ancient figures] have a tremendous magnetic force, similar to digging up one's roots.

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[19] *Yokai* are mysterious phenomena, ghosts, specters, spooks or spirits that are beyond the understanding of human wisdom, and there are many different legends about them all over the country. Reference site: https://www.nichibun.ac.jp/YoukaiDB/ [in Japanese]

[20] A pot where everything goes your way, but happiness is skewed and conflict is created.

[21] The story of a 10-year-old boy named Yogi who goes on various adventures to save his family and village in the Jomon period village of Donguri.

Even people who have no interest in history are drawn to them. If you were to hold the same exhibition a few decades from now, the present might be seen from a different perspective.

Nariai: I would be happy if you could enjoy it in that way, one step removed from the time.

Moderated by Matsui Mio

Translated from "Haniwa to Dogu eno Manazashi (A Gaze upon Haniwa and Dogu)," Tokyo Jin, *November 2024 no. 485, pp. 74–82. (Courtesy of Toshi Shuppan)* [December 2024]

MACHIDA Ko
Novelist

Born in Osaka Prefecture in 1962. He began his singing career under the name Machida Machizo, and debuted in 1981 as a member of the punk band "INU." His first novel, *Kussun Daikoku* (The sniffling god of fortune), was published in 1996, and won the Bunkamura Deux Magots Literary Prize and the Noma Liberal Arts New Member Prize in 1997. In 2000, he won the Akutagawa Prize for *Kiregire* (Shreds), in 2002 the Kawabata Yasunari Award for *Gonge no Odoriko* (Gongen dancer), the Tanizaki Prize for *Kokuhaku* (Confession), and in 2008 the Noma Literary Prize for *Yadoya Meguri* (Inn tours). He has also translated classics into modern Japanese, including *[Shinyaku] Uji Shui Monogatari* (New translation of "A Collection of Tales from Uji") and *Koyaku Kojiki* (colloquial translation of the *Kojiki*).

NARIAI Hajime
Curator, The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo

Born in Shimane Prefecture in 1979. Graduated from the Graduate School of Language and Society, Hitotsubashi University. After working at Fuchu Art Museum and Tokyo Station Gallery, he assumed his current position in 2021. He conducts research focusing on postwar avant-garde art, and plans exhibitions that cross over reproduction culture and art. Major exhibitions he has been in charge of include "Parody and Intertextuality: Visual Culture in Japan around the 1970s" (Tokyo Station Gallery). His publications include *Geijutsu no Warusa: Kopi, Parodhi, Kitchu, Aku* (Bad art: copy, parody, kitsch, evil).

HANAI Hisaho
Curator, The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo

Born in Hokkaido in 1977. Graduated from the Graduate School of Fine Arts, Tokyo University of the Arts. After working at Ibaraki Ceramic Art Museum, The Museum of Modern Art, Ibaraki, and the National Crafts Museum, she assumed her current position in 2021. She conducts research across the fields of modern/pre-modern and art/crafts. Some of the major exhibitions she has been in charge of include "100 Years of *Mingei*: The Folk Crafts Movement." Her papers include "Resurrected Haniwa: 'Excavated' Identity" (Research Report of the Museum of Modern Art, Ibaraki, No.13, 2018).
