

Nobuyuki Tanaka
Breathing Membrane
-Between Body and Surface-

Breathing Membrane — Between Body and Surface —

My lacquer sculpture is a practice of "tactile becoming" that emerges through the accumulation of sense of touch and time.

Using the dry lacquer-Kanshitsu technique, I layer hemp cloth and lacquer multiple times, then remove the internal core material. A thin, yet self-sustaining, almost spiritual membrane emerges.

Lacquer as a material stimulates my instincts, guiding my consciousness to its primal state and driving me to create. From the jet black, a fluid, rising structure forms, as if surging from the abyss. From the vermilion, a sensual expression is evoked, as if the traces of life have been etched into it.

The surface is not merely an outer layer. It is a "breathing membrane" connecting the inside and outside, body and space. Through the process of repeated layering and abrading, the work incorporates light, inviting the viewer into the realm of the unconscious



Nobuyuki Tanaka Biography

1959 Born in Tokyo

1983 B.F.A., Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music

1985 M.F.A., Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music

2003 Received the 14th Takashimaya Art Award, Takashimaya Culture Foundation

2012 Received the Craft Arts Section Award, 18th MOA Mokichi Okada Prize

2021 Winner of the Excellence Award at the 1st Suzhou International Craft Triennale

Based in Kanazawa, Japan

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Selected Solo Exhibitions

2004 "Urushi Japanese Lacquer Contemporary Works of Art," KOICHI YANAGI Oriental Fine Arts, New York, USA (2007, 2011, 2015)

2009 "The Evocation of Japanese Lacquer," NIZAYAMA FOREST ART MUSEUM, Toyama, Japan

2010 "The Tactile Memory," Takashimaya Art Gallery X, Tokyo, Japan

2014 "NOBUYUKI TANAKA New Works," KENJI TAKI Gallery, Tokyo, Japan

2016 "Imaginary Skin," The Ueno Royal Museum, Tokyo, Japan

2017 "Nobuyuki Tanaka: Teahouse - Flowing Water, Touching Water," Yamaguchi Prefectural Hagi Uragami Museum, Hagi, Japan

"NOBUYUKI TANAKA New Works," KENJI TAKI Gallery, Nagoya, Japan

2018 "NOBUYUKI TANAKA-Urformen Primordial Memory-" Museum Pfalzgalerie Kaiserslautern, Germany

2019 "NOBUYUKI TANAKA-Urformen Primordial Memory-" Museum für Lackkunst, Münster, Germany

2024 "The Realm of Surfaces: Where the Spirit Dwells," KENJI TAKI Gallery, Roppongi, Tokyo, Japan

2025 "Tactile Becoming-Lacquer Black and Breathing Light," KENJI TAKI Gallery, Nagoya, Japan

Selected Group Exhibitions

1994 "The Domain of the Medium, Crafts Gallery," The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, Japan

1999 "The Genealogy of Craft Objects, Crafts Gallery," The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, Japan

2001 "Art Works on the Desk Top IX," Contemporary Art NIKI, Tokyo, Japan

"VISION: Selected Works from The Collection of Toyota Municipal Museum of Art,"

Toyota Municipal Museum of Art, Aichi, Japan (2002, 2003, 2004, 2005)

2004 "MODERN MASTERS & COLLECTION," 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Ishikawa, Japan

2005 "Ars Nova-Between the Contemporary Avant-garde Art and the Crafts," Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Japan

2007 "Roppongi Crossing 2007, Future Beats in Japanese Contemporary Art," Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan

2008 "JAPAN! CULTURE-HYPER CULTURE Exhibition," Kennedy Center, Washington D.C., USA

2010 "China Hubei International Lacquer Triennale 2010," Hubei Museum of Art, China (2013, 2016, 2019, 2023)

2012 "The 18th MOA Mokichi Okada Award: Prospecting the Future of Nihonga and Kogei Grand Prix of Painting Section,"

MOA MUSEUM OF ART, Shizuoka, Japan

2013 "Kuroda Tatsuki, Tanaka Nobuyuki-The Power of Lacquer" Toyota Municipal Museum of Art, Aichi, Japan

"The Audacious Eye: Japanese Art from the Clark Collections" Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minnesota, USA

2015 "Simple Forms - Contemplating Beauty," MORI ART MUSEUM, Tokyo, Japan

2017 "OKU-NOTO TRIENNALE," Ishikawa, Japan (2021, 2023)

"HARD BODY CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE LACQUER SCULPTURE," Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minnesota, USA

2019 "ASIAN IMPACT," TOKYO METROPOLITAN TEIEN ART MUSEUM, Tokyo, Japan

15th Anniversary Exhibition "Where We Now Stand-In Order to Map the Future,"

21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Japan

2021 "GO FOR KOGEI," Natadera Temple and other venues, Ishikawa, Japan

"THE FIRST SUZHOU CRAFT ART BIENNALE 2021," Suzhou, China

"Finale - Director's Cut," Museum Pfalzgalerie Kaiserslautern, Germany

2022 Special Exhibition of Works from the Collection "Sunset/Sunrise," Toyota Municipal Museum of Art, Aichi, Japan

2023 "POKEMON ×KOGEI," National Crafts Museum, Ishikawa, Japan

"Urushi Storm: Lacquer Art Expressions Racing Through the Present," Wajima Lacquer Art Museum, Ishikawa, Japan

"Light & Shadow for Crafting Crafts," National Crafts Museum, Ishikawa, Japan

2026 "Urushi Now: Contemporary Japanese Lacquer," Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK

"LOEWE FOUNDATION Craft Prize 2026 Exhibition," National Gallery Singapore, Singapore

Selected Collections

The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, Japan

Toyota Municipal Museum of Art, Aichi, Japan

21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Ishikawa, Japan

MORI ART MUSEUM, Tokyo, Japan

Hiroshima Prefectural Art Museum, Hiroshima, Japan

The Japan Foundation, Tokyo, Japan

SHISEIDO Art House, Shizuoka, Japan

Wajima Lacquer Art Museum, Ishikawa, Japan

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA

Gitter-Yelen Foundation, New Orleans, USA

Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York, USA

Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minnesota, USA

Philadelphia Museum of Art, USA

Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, Norwich, UK

Victoria and Albert Museum, UK

Grassi Museum, Leipzig, Germany

Museum Pfalzgalerie Kaiserslautern, Germany

Museum für Lackkunst, Münster, Germany

HUBEI Museum of Art, China

Flamingo Museum of Contemporary Art, Vietnam



Texture of An Archetype I (1994)
laquer, linen, clay powder
Photo: Tadasu Yamamoto



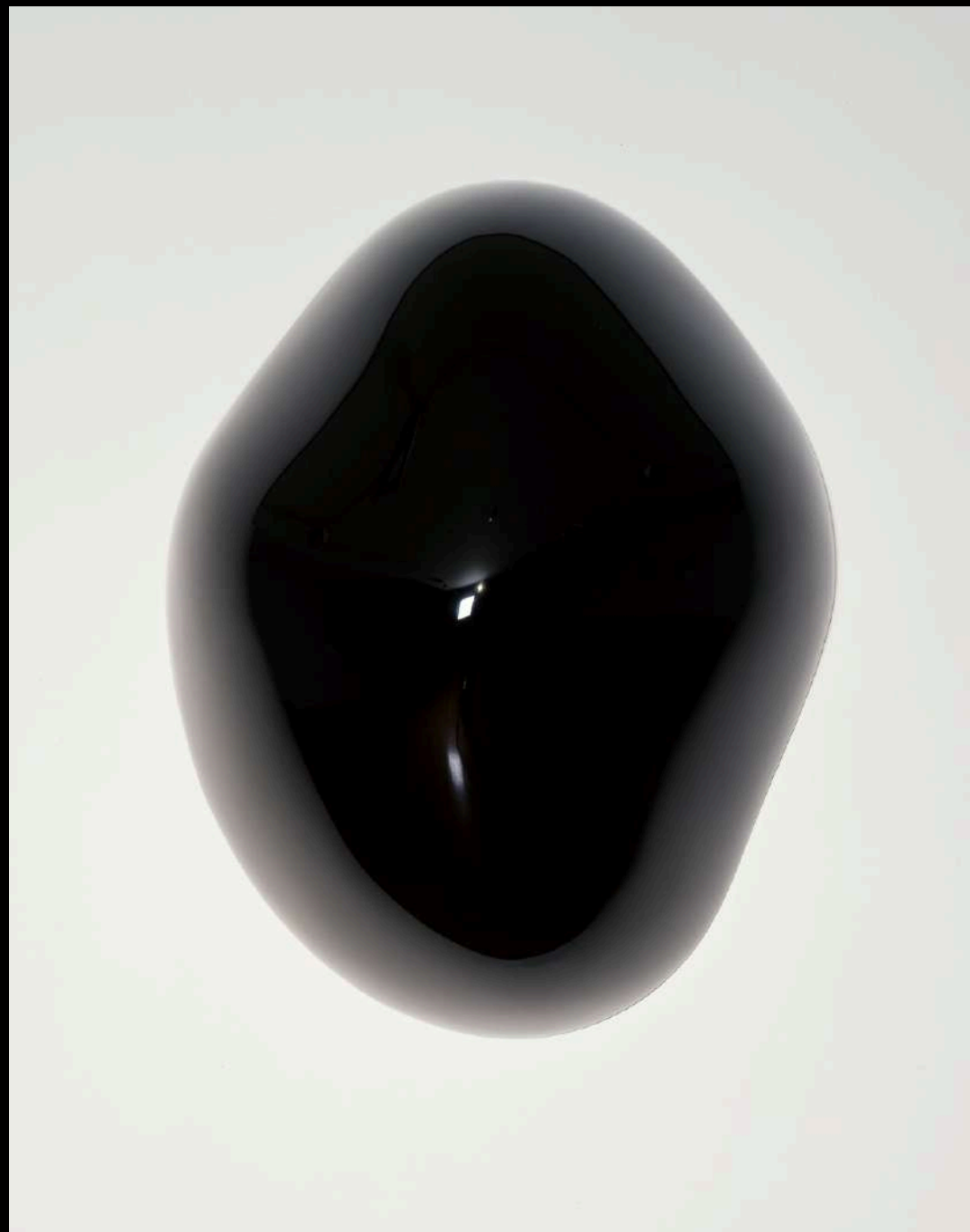
Orga (1999)

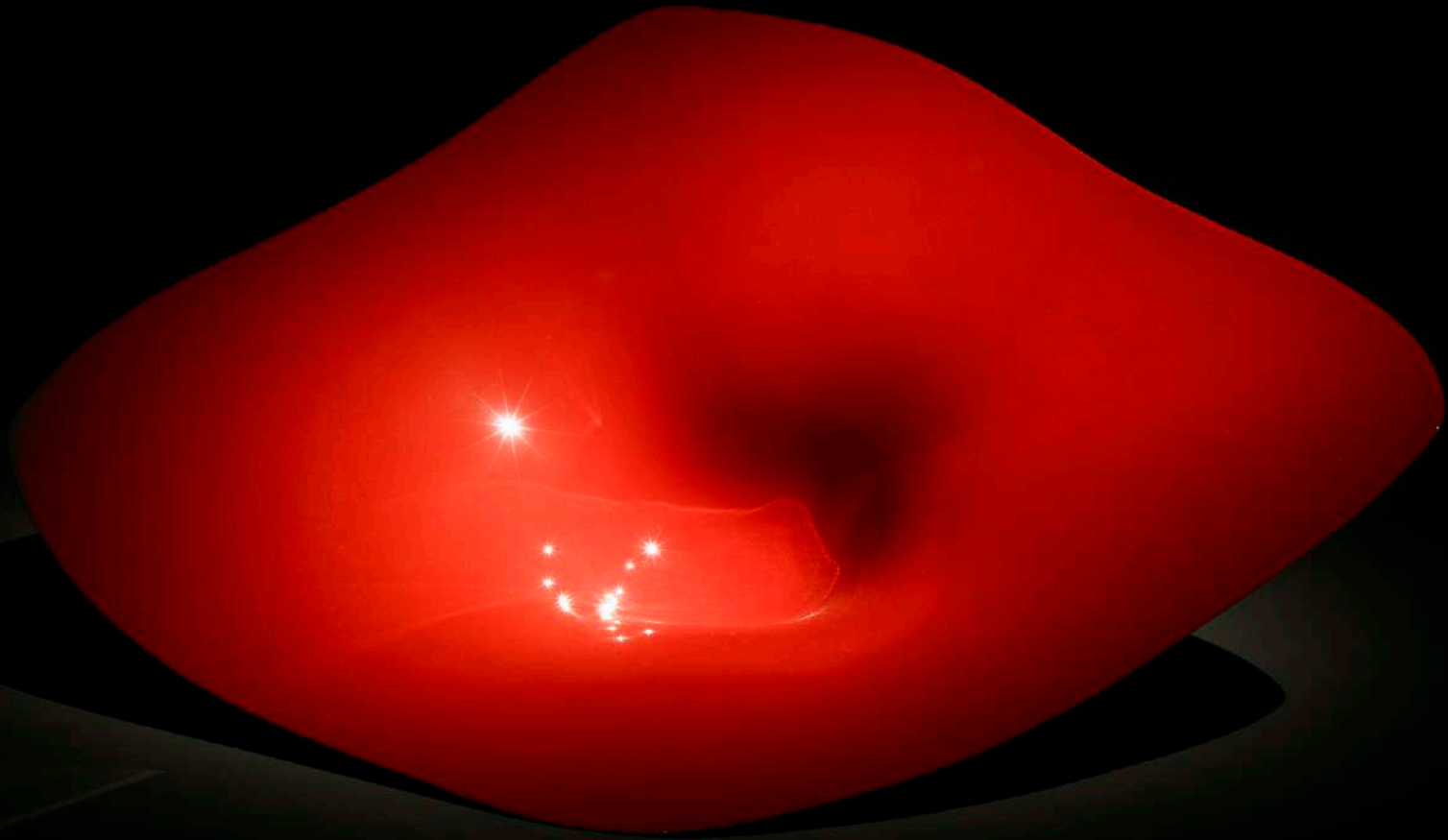
lacquer, hemp / Kanshitsu (dry lacquer)

H89.5×W72.5×D34.5 cm

Collection of Toyota Municipal Museum of Art, Japan

Photo:Tadasu Yamamoto





The Tactile Memory (2004)

lacquer, hemp / Kanshitsu (dry lacquer)

H110×W86×D23 cm

Collection of Toyota Municipal Museum of Art, Japan

Photo:Tadasu Yamamoto



Inner side - Outer side (2005)

lacquer, hemp / Kanshitsu(dry lacquer)

H220×W158×D85 cm

Collection of the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Japan

Photo: SUEMASA Mareo



FLOW V (2018)
lacquer, hemp, styrofoam
Kanshitsu(dry lacquer)
H248×W34×D24 cm



Exhibition view at Museum Pfalzgalerie Kaiserslautern

Mit dem Fluss des Wassers,
dem Blick auf die Natur und alles,
was sie umspült, erschaffe ich eine
Metapher für die Natur an sich.

Within the flow of water, to view the
world of nature and all that flows
around it, I am creating a metaphor
to nature itself.

Nobuyuki Tanaka



An Archetype 2016

lacquer, linen, clay powder

H180×D250×25 cm

Exhibition view at Museum Pfalzgalerie Kaiserslautern



Primordial Memory (2017)

lacquer, hemp, styrofoam Kanshitsu(dry lacquer)

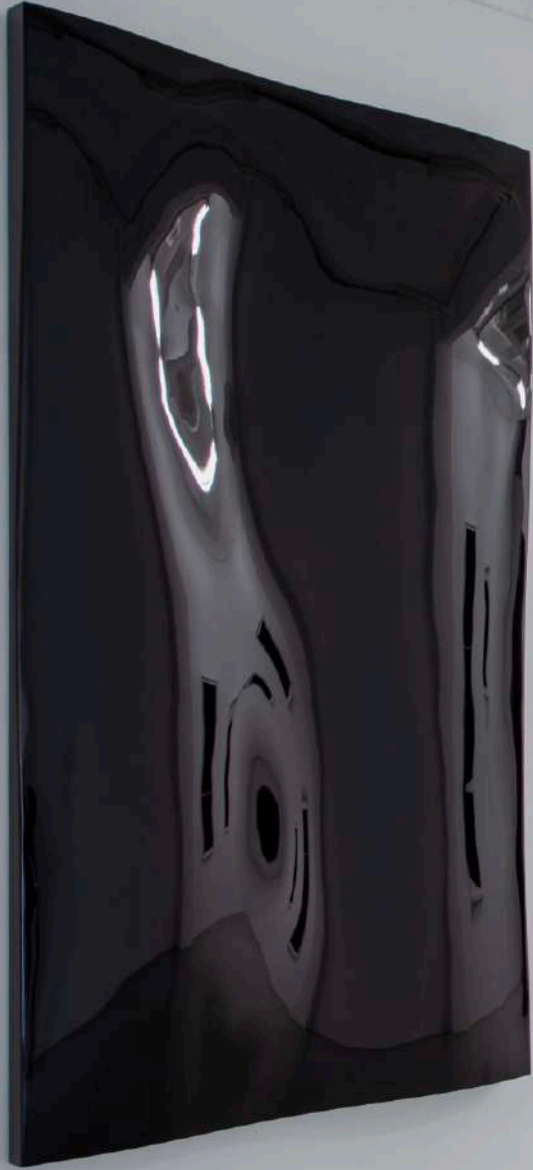
H215×W300×D27 cm

Photo:Tadasu Yamamoto



Orga2021
laquer, hemp / Kanshitsu(dry laquer)
H32×W29×D24 cm

Inner side -Outer side 2021-S
laquer, hemp / Kanshitsu(dry laquer)
H206×W94×D97 cm



Tactile Becoming - Lacquer Black and Breathing Light - (2025)

laquer, hemp, styroform / Kanshitsu(dry laquer)

H240×W120×12 cm

Photo: Tadasu Yamamoto



Inner side - Outer side 2021-N

laquer, hemp / Kanshitsu(dry laquer)

H208×W95×D98 cm



The Tactile Memory -Traces of Red -
lacquer, hemp, Kanshitsu(dry lacquer)
H209×W92.5×D43 cm
Photo:Tadasu Yamamoto