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TADANORI YOKOO RECEIVES 2015 PRAEMIUM IMPERIALE AWARD

BY HANA E KO



Japanese painter **TADANORI YOKOO**, one of the winners of the 2015 Praemium Imperiale award. Courtesy Japan Art Association/The Sankei Shimbun.

On September 10, the five recipients of the 27th Praemium Imperiale award were announced, one of which is renowned Japanese artist and graphic designer Tadanori Yokoo. This year's laureates also include German sculptor and conceptual artist Wolfgang Laib, French architect Dominique Perrault, Japanese classical pianist Mitsuko Uchida, and ballet dancer Sylvie Guillem of France.

The Praemium Imperiale, established in 1989, is a prestigious prize awarded annually by the Japanese imperial family and the Japan Art Association, and was started as a way to honor excellence in areas of the arts that are not covered by the Nobel Prize. According to their official website, the Praemium Imperiale "recognizes individuals for their exceptional contributions to the international arts and for enriching the global community." One laureate is chosen for each of the award's five categories: painting; sculpture; architecture; music; and theatre (or film). As part of the award, each laureate also receives a prize of JPY 15 million (USD 125,000) and a medal from Prince Hitachi, the Honorary Patron of the Japan Art Association, in a special ceremony. This year's edition will be held in Tokyo on October 21, 2015. Tadanori Yokoo, who was awarded for his achievement in painting, is a pioneering Japanese artist who first came to prominence in the 1960s while working as a graphic designer. After shifting his artistic focus towards painting, Yokoo's works evolved to produce such avant-garde works as *Waterfall Rapture* (1996), comprising thousands of postcards that feature images of waterfalls, and the "Y Junction" series (2000–), which is made up of photographs of various crossroads taken in the artist's hometown and other cities. Soon to be an octogenarian, Yokoo continues to create an enormous output of works. In 2012, the Yokoo Tadanori Museum of Modern Art, established to showcase over 3,000 pieces of the artist's prolific work, opened in Kobe. The following year, another museum in Japan was built in his honor; named the Teshima Yokoo House, it also houses many of the artist's extraordinary paintings and is located on the Teshima Island of Kagawa Prefecture. Most recently, in 2014, Yokoo created 110 portraits of various artists and noted figures for the *Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain* in Paris, to mark the occasion of the institution's 30th anniversary.

In addition to its annual award, the Praemium Imperiale also operates the Grant for Young Artists, which is a program run by the Japan Art Association. The program, which was established in 1997 to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Praemium Imperiale, endows an annual grant of JPY 5 million (USD 124,000) to a group or institution that encourages the involvement of young people in the arts. This year's grant was awarded to the Yangon Film School, a nonprofit organization based in Berlin that is dedicated to nurturing emerging filmmakers in Myanmar.

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