

*"During my apprentice years, every day was about looking, imitating, and repeating. I realized that this habit carried over into painting as well. I studied by observing masterworks, copying them, and then repeating my own works. I also noticed there was a kind of pattern in this practice. Beyond canvas, I seem to have an attachment to works painted on panels. The designs on panel paintings become templates, which I then irregularly adapt onto canvas. As a result, there are often multiple versions of very similar images."*

— Masaya Yoshioka

Masaya Yoshioka, born into a family of generations-long shrine carpenters, has pursued painting alongside his path as a carpenter since his teenage years—a dual life he continues into his forties. Just as an apprentice carpenter learns through direct observation under a master, Yoshioka learned painting through the study and copying of masterworks.

Considering that painters were once regarded as craftsmen not so long ago, Yoshioka may be seen as carrying forward that premodern lineage of the painter as artisan.

Yoshioka describes carpenters as inherently imaginative beings: when they construct a house, they envision the lives that will one day unfold within its spaces. This sensibility resonates in his paintings. After mastering various pictorial styles in his teens, Yoshioka turned in his twenties to depicting rural scenes where modernity and folklore intersect. These everyday landscapes are populated by figures whose behavior seems to transform the ordinary into the extraordinary: unruly, violent, liberated, sometimes delicate—raw instincts expressed in fleeting acts.

Among the motifs Yoshioka has repeatedly returned to for over two decades is the convenience store, a familiar element of the Japanese landscape. In 2008, his work *Entrance Ceremony*—depicting a couple engaged in sexual acts outside a convenience store, observed by schoolchildren—was awarded at the Tokyo Wonder Wall competition for its portrayal of “negative elements of contemporary society.” Yet when his solo exhibition at the Tokyo Metropolitan Government followed, the same work was excluded for being “obscene,” despite its status as a prize-winning piece. This episode itself became a mirror of what the work represented: rather than the imagery alone, the act of censoring a prize-winning work

revealed society's contradictions, as if a fictional scenario had suddenly materialized in reality.

As a substitute, Yoshioka presented *Tokojouzu*, a painting of an unoccupied alcove, for the exhibition. Long kept in his studio, it was finally shown again after fifteen years at his 2024 solo exhibition *Koshikata Yukusue Season 2* at Minnano Gallery, before entering the Mon°C Collection—ironically located in the same district as the Tokyo Metropolitan Government offices.

For those familiar with the censored work, the vacant alcove suggested lingering traces of human presence. Similarly, Yoshioka's ongoing series *Fiftysix Convenience Stores* rarely depicts people, yet conveys a strong sense of lived life. These seemingly ordinary suburban views hover between before and after—images that might anticipate something about to happen, or quietly record its aftermath. It is precisely this ambivalence that makes the works resonate so closely with our own daily lives. An upcoming presentation of this series at a commercial complex in Daikanyama, Tokyo, in late 2025 will bring the works into broader view, inviting encounters that may echo the Western “discovery” of ukiyo-e centuries ago.

Yoshioka's paintings remind us that while we may insist “such things never happen in everyday life,” the news confronts us daily with accidents and incidents that unfold in that same everyday. For people who cannot know what they will be doing an hour from now, every view before us is always on the threshold—either just before or just after something has happened. Like a carpenter imagining the life of a space not yet built, Yoshioka sees scenery already charged with possibility. Once discovered, there is no reason not to paint it.