Press Release ver.2
2026 年 11 月 10 日

Special Exhibition　Raphaël Zarka: Geometry, Time and Skateboarding

February 6 (Sat.) – May 5 (Wed., National Holiday), 2027

The practice of a contemporary French artist moving fluidly between disciplines

—from the history of science and art history to street culture—

through sculpture, photography, video, drawing, and writing



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The Kyoto City KYOCERA Museum of Art is pleased to present the first solo exhibition in a Japanese art museum by Raphaël Zarka (b. 1977), a French artist based in Paris.

Drawing on a wide range of disciplines, including art, geometry, architecture, and skateboarding, Zarka explores the relationships between form and space, movement and time. Taking inspiration from the history of science, historical illustrations, and urban environments, he reinterprets forms and structures through a diverse range of media, including sculpture, photography, video, drawing, and writing. Examples include works based on the forms of 17th-century sundials, as well as works from the series, “The Schoenflies Family”, in which three-dimensional models devised by mathematicians are rendered in wood. By connecting knowledge and perspectives from different fields, Zarka reinterprets familiar forms and transposes them into new contexts, a defining characteristic of his practice.

Skateboarding is another central theme in Zarka’s work, informed by his own experience as a skateboarder. He draws on the skater’s perspective, in which steps, slopes, and curved surfaces in the urban environment become terrain for riding. His works include a series of photographs collected and selected by the artist, depicting skateboarders riding on public sculptures, as well as sculptures designed to be skated on. These works explore not only the relationship between bodily movement and space, but also raise questions about who uses public space and how.

Alongside key works from throughout his career, the exhibition will feature new works developed during Zarka’s residency in Kyoto. The exhibition offers an insight into the trajectory of his ongoing artistic investigations.

*The exhibition was initially conceived under the provisional title “The Thinking Sculptors — Raphaël Zarka and Horiuti Masakazu: A Dialogue on Geometry and Modernity.” Due to various circumstances, however, it will now be presented as a solo exhibition by Raphaël Zarka.

Highlights of the Exhibition

1. Recurring Forms Across Different Media

Recurring forms and motifs connect Zarka's sculptures, paintings, photographs, and drawings. Drawing on geometry, science, and historical illustrations, he reinterprets forms across different materials and media, allowing them to appear in unexpected ways. By tracing these recurring forms, visitors can discover connections between works while appreciating the distinct qualities of each.

2. Discovering New Perspectives as You Move Through the Gallery

The exhibition space has two entrances, each offering a different route through the exhibition. Rather than following a single direction already decided, visitors are invited to move freely through the space and experience it as a continuous circuit. The exhibition is organized into four chapters, but these are not arranged in a fixed sequence; instead, they overlap and intertwine with one another. As you move through the exhibition, you may encounter a work you have seen before or discover connections between different works. Even the same work may leave a different impression depending on where you view it from and the order in which you encounter it. We invite you to move freely through the space, explore the works in your own order, and enjoy the new discoveries that emerge through repeated encounters.

3. A New Work from the "Gnomonic Abstraction" Series, Created in Japan Using Traditional Japanese Colors

For this exhibition, Zarka will create a new work from the Gnomonic Abstraction series on site in Japan. The work will incorporate traditional Japanese colors that closely resemble those used in earlier works in the series. In this series, which takes the geometric forms and patterns found in sundials as its point of departure, color plays an important role alongside the composition of forms. We invite you to discover how this ongoing series evolves through the incorporation of traditional Japanese colors, and to pay attention to the new expressions that emerge through this work created especially for the exhibition.

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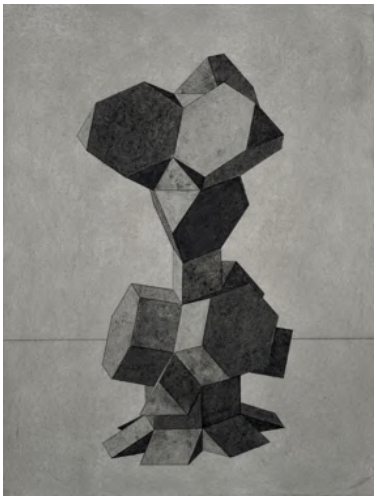
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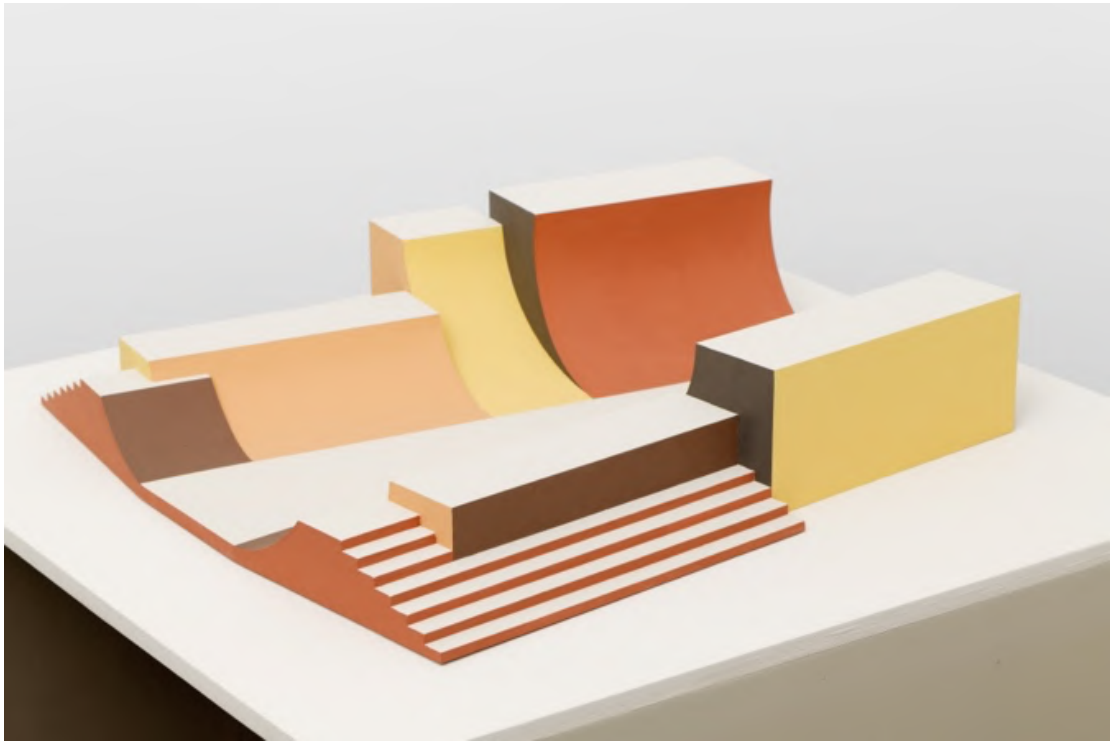
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Work Descriptions (Please refer to the images on the previous pages)

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Figure 1 | *Mount Melville*

A sculpture based on an eighteenth-century sundial that once stood on Mount Melville in Scotland. The original stone sundial consisted of a vertical structure composed of various geometric forms stacked together, including small columns, polyhedra, and cubes, with recessed surfaces and decorative motifs such as circles and heart shapes. Its tiered composition evokes the stacked sculptures of Romanian sculptor Constantin Brancusi (1876–1957), as well as the traditional forms of Japanese stone lanterns. Reconstructing this complex arrangement in oak and concrete, Zarka transforms the historical timekeeping instrument into a sculpture, bringing to the fore the sculptural qualities of its geometric forms, layered composition, and ornamental details.



Mount Melville
2018, solid oak and concrete, 192 × 50 × 50 cm
exhibition view, National Museum of Contemporary Art, Bucarest (RO) – 2019
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Mitterrand, Paris
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Figure 2 | “Monte Oliveto” series / “The Schoenflies Family” series

[Wall: “Monte Oliveto” series]

A series inspired by the decorative elements found in the Renaissance frescoes at the Abbey of Monte Oliveto in Italy. Fresco is a technique in which pigments are applied to wet plaster, allowing the colors to bond with the wall as it dries. During the Italian Renaissance, the technique was widely used to depict religious narratives and decorate architectural spaces. Zarka looks beyond the narratives depicted in these paintings to focus on architectural elements and geometric patterns that imitate marble and form part of the abbey’s cloister decoration. These patterns emulate marble marquetry, a decorative technique in which pieces of marble are assembled to create intricate designs. By faithfully recreating these patterns according to their original designs and scale, Zarka emphasizes the timeless quality of their geometric compositions, bringing these historical decorative elements into a contemporary sculptural context.

[Sculptures: “The Schoenflies Family” series]

A series of sculptures inspired by the regular forms and symmetries of crystals, which were studied by the German mathematician Arthur Schoenflies (1853–1928). Schoenflies developed mathematical classifications of the recurring forms and regularities found in crystals, contributing to the study of the structures of matter. By faithfully recreating their designs and dimensions using the technique of marquetry, Zarka recreates these mathematical models as wooden sculptures, combining multiple identical forms to create new configurations. By reinterpreting forms derived from mathematical research as sculpture, he explores the artistic possibilities that emerge from the combination of regular geometric forms.



“Monte Oliveto” series
2016, ink on paper marquetry mounted on paper, 76 × 56 cm (each)

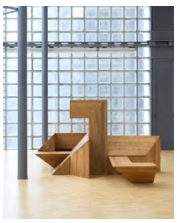
“The Schoenflies Family” series
2016, solid cherry wood, variable dimensions

exhibition view, FRAC Franche Comté, Besançon (FR) - 2018
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Mitterrand, Paris

Photo: Blaise Adilon
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Figure 3, 6 | “Paving Space” series
A series of sculptures that, like “The Schoenflies Family” series, takes as its starting point three-dimensional models derived from the research of the German mathematician Schoenflies. Zarka recreates the basic forms as wooden sculptures and combines them to construct space. He further develops these forms on a scale that allows them to be skated on, connecting mathematical forms with bodily movement. By transforming forms originally conceived for mathematical study into spaces in which people can move and play, Zarka considers the relationships between geometry, sculpture, and the body.

【Figure 3】
Paving Space
Regular Score W8M1
2016, 8 modules of solid oak, 168 × 336 × 168 cm
exhibition view, Fondation d’entreprise Hermès, Tokyo (JP) - 2024
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Mitterrand, Paris
Photo: Nacása & Partners Inc. / Fondation d'entreprise Hermès
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【Figure 6】
Paving Space
exhibition view, Palais de Tokyo, Paris (FR) - 2016
Skater: Sylvain Tognelli / Photo: Maxime Verret
© Raphaël Zarka / ADAGP, Paris & JASPAR, Tokyo, 2026 C5692



Figure 4 | *L’Oisellerie No. 1*
A drawing made with ink and gesso on cardboard, based on the form of a 17th-century stone polyhedral sundial. The work takes inspiration from a sundial at the Château de L’Oisellerie in the Charente region of France. A polyhedral sundial is a three-dimensional structure with multiple faces, each bearing a dial or markings that indicate the time through the position of the shadow cast by sunlight. Zarka depicts its structure, composed of assembled stone elements, and the geometric patterns carved into its surfaces through axonometric projection. This method of representing three-dimensional forms on a two-dimensional surface without the use of conventional perspective is often employed by modern artists and architects. The work also draws on the technique of marquetry, in which different materials are assembled to create decorative patterns. By translating this historical timekeeping instrument into a geometric drawing, Zarka highlights the relationship between its practical function and its sculptural and aesthetic qualities.

L’Oisellerie No.1
2022, paperboard marquetry, ink and gesso, 59 × 43 cm
Photo: Romain Darnaud
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Mitterrand, Paris
© Raphaël Zarka / ADAGP, Paris & JASPAR, Tokyo, 2026 C5692



Figure 5 | “Translating Halt” series
A series of drawings based on illustrations from *Perspective Drawing for All Builders (unpublished English translation)*, a book published in 1625 by the German craftsman and author Peter Halt

(1575–after 1634). The book features geometric forms composed of polyhedra, depicted using perspective drawing. Zarka reinterprets these illustrations as “virtual sculptures” that were never physically realized, translating the forms depicted through perspective into axonometry while preserving their proportions and spatial relationships. Alongside charcoal and pencil, he uses fragments of ancient Roman terracotta from an oil amphora, a vessel used to store and transport olive oil approximately 2,000 years ago, rubbing them directly onto the paper to leave traces on its surface. As material from antiquity becomes part of the drawing, different layers of time come together on the paper. Rather than simply reproducing the forms depicted in the original illustrations, Zarka brings out their latent sculptural potential, investigating the relationships between drawing and sculpture, documentation and creation, as well as the past and the present.



Translating Halt No.1
2019, charcoal, pencil and rubbing of Gallo-Roman terracotta on paper, 76×56 cm
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Mitterrand, Paris
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Figures 7 | “Riding Modern Art” series

A photographic series featuring skateboarders performing tricks and riding on modern sculptures installed in public spaces. The photographs were collected and selected by Zarka. Skateboarders perceive the slopes, curves, and steps of these sculptures as terrain for riding. Through these actions, Zarka draws out the potential for form and movement inherent in the sculptures, demonstrating how engaging with artworks through physical interaction, rather than simply viewing them, can transform both the way art is experienced and the way public space is used.



Riding Modern Art, a photographic archive
2007-2017
(Sculpture: André Volten, Untitled, 1980-1982, Utrecht /
Skater: Oskar Rozenberg Halberg / Photo: Marcel Veldman, 2014)
pigment print on fine art paper, 70×50 cm
© Raphaël Zarka / ADAGP, Paris & JASPAR, Tokyo, 2026 C5692

Figure 8 | “Cycloid Ramp” series

A series in which the cycloid, a curve studied in mathematics and physics, is transformed into a ramp for skateboarding. A cycloid is the curve traced by a point on the circumference of a circle as it rolls along a straight line. The 17th-century scientist Galileo Galilei took an interest in this curve and investigated its relationship to the motion of falling objects. Fascinated by the cycloid as the fastest curve in the world, Zarka translates this mathematical form into a structure that can actually be skated on. By making a form found in equations and diagrams physically accessible through bodily experience, he brings scientific inquiry, play, and sculpture into dialogue. In the exhibition, a scaled-down model of the ramp's structure will be shown.



Cycloid Ramp No.2
2024, painted plywood and wood-fiber board, 15.5×67.5×67.5 cm
Photo: Romain Darnaud
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Mitterrand, Paris
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Figure 9 | “Gnomonic Woods” series
A series of works based on the triangular, circular, and semicircular patterns found on 17th- and 18th-century Scottish sundials. The works are made on wooden boards. Sundial decorations combine forms that indicate the time and the movement of the sun. Even forms that appear purely ornamental function as sundials in their own right, which Zarka calls “functional ornament.” Zarka extracts these motifs and layers them through printing onto wooden surfaces, creating new combinations of colors and patterns. He also connects the motifs and compositions of these sundials to those found in modern Western art, particularly Constructivism, Suprematism, and De Stijl, as represented by artists such as Russian painter Kazimir Malevich (1879–1935) and Dutch painter Theo van Doesburg (1883–1931). By transforming forms found in historical scientific instruments into pictorial compositions, Zarka explores the relationships between functionality and ornamentation, and between science and art.



Gnomonic Woods No.22
2023, layered monotype, painting on paper mounted on painted plywood, 41.5×29.5 cm
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Mitterrand, Paris
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Figure 10 | “Gnomonic Abstraction” series
A series that develops patterns and geometric forms found on historical sundials into abstract paintings. The term “gnomonic” describes the science of sundials and the observation of the sun’s movement through the use of shadows. Zarka extracts circles, triangles, straight lines, and other forms from the surfaces of sundials, recomposing them on canvas through color and form. Shapes originally designed to indicate the time or track the movement of celestial bodies appear in the paintings as combinations of colors and geometric forms. His compositions also reference the oblique and diagonal arrangements found in the works of Dutch artist Theo van Doesburg (1883–1931). Through this process, Zarka transforms forms that originated in scientific practice into abstract painting.



Gnomonic Abstraction 11
2020, acrylic on linen canvas, 200×300 cm
Photo: Vincent Everarts
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Mitterrand, Paris
© Raphaël Zarka / ADAGP, Paris & JASPAR, Tokyo, 2026 C5692

Profile

Raphaël Zarka（1977- ）
Born in France, Zarka graduated from the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris (France).
Zarka’s expanded sculptural practice encompasses photography, drawing, and writing. He is also known for authoring three essays on the forms and spaces of skateboarding. His approach to art-making recalls that of a researcher or archaeologist, and he has described his own work as “documentary sculpture.” He is particularly interested in the evolution of geometric forms borrowed



Raphaël Zarka
Photo : Maxime Verret
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from the fields of science and technology, which have often occupied the margins of art history. He is currently pursuing a doctoral degree through his artistic practice, focusing on the evolution of freestanding sundials in seventeenth-century Europe.
From April to July 2026, Zarka stayed at Villa Kujoyama in Kyoto, where he conducted research and developed new work.

Exhibition Information

Special Exhibition　Raphaël Zarka: Geometry, Time and Skateboarding

Website: https://kyotocity-kyocera.museum/en/exhibition/20270206-20270505

Period: February 6 (Sat.) – May 5 (Wed., National Holiday), 2027

Venue: Kyoto City KYOCERA Museum of Art, Higashiyama Cube

Hours: 10:00 – 18:00 (Last admission at 17:30)

Closed: Mondays *Open on March 22 and May 3

Organized by City of Kyoto; Sony Music Entertainment (Japan) Inc.; Kansai Television; The Mainichi Newspapers

With support from Villa Kujoyama*; NISSHA FOUNDATION

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Individual Supporter: Seth & Yana Coren

In Cooperation with: Sokyo Gallery

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Inquiries: Kyoto City KYOCERA Museum of Art, TEL: +81-75-771-4334

Tickets go on sale at 10:00 AM on Tuesday, December 1!

Ticket Prices
Adults: 1,800 (1,600) yen
University and High School Students: 1,600 (1,400) yen
Junior High School Students and under: Free
Ticket Sales: Available at the museum's official online ticketing website.

*All prices include tax.
*Prices in parentheses are for groups of 20 or more.
*Free admission for visitors with a disability certificate and one accompanying caregiver (proof. required).
*Students must present a valid student ID for admission. *Advance ticket pricing is not available.

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