

Michimata Aoi continues to work in woodblock printing, addressing the positions and choices individuals face within social structures. Referencing "Kafka's Staircase," a concept proposed by social activist and writer Ikuta Takeshi—descending the stairs is easy, but ascending is difficult—she has depicted the struggles of ascending, descending, and remaining in place, as well as the relief and anxiety that follow one's choices.

Through progressive carving and layering, the woodblock transforms, and the same image cannot be printed after completion. This irreversibility resonates with her themes. The figures in her work do not tell dramatic stories; within a gentle visual language, they open a space where each viewer weaves their own narrative.



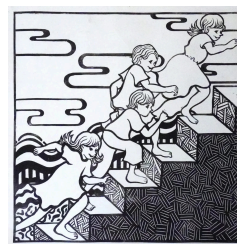
junction, 2025, Oil-based woodblock print on washi paper



path of innocence -1, 2025, woodblock print, 1170 × 2490 × 30 mm (46.1 × 98.0 × 1.2 inches)



path of innocence -2, 2025, woodblock print, 1170 × 2490 × 30 mm (46.1 × 98.0 × 1.2 inches)



Kafka's Staircase No.3, 2023, Oil-based woodblock print on washi paper, Edition: 1/1



Kafka's Staircase No.4, 2023, Oil-based woodblock print on washi paper, Edition: 1/1

ARTIST STATEMENT

Social structures assign us positions and demand choices. To strive upward, to remain in place, or to take a different path—examining the weight of these choices and what lies beyond them forms the core of Michimata Aoi's practice.

"Kafka's Staircase" is a concept proposed by social activist and writer Ikuta Takeshi. Descending the stairs step by step—losing employment, losing one's address, ending up on the streets—is easy, but the staircase back to one's former life rises like a wall. Referencing this concept, Michimata has depicted the difficulties of ascending, descending, and remaining in place within picture-book-like, gentle imagery.

Yet the inquiry does not stop at "the staircase one cannot climb." Away from the social pressure to ascend, there is relief in belonging somewhere. That relief is indeed necessary, yet it is inseparable from the anxiety of remaining there indefinitely. Standing at a crossroads, making choices, and the belonging and stagnation that follow—the artist's concerns have developed toward these questions.

In her practice, Michimata progressively carves while layering impressions. The woodblock changes with each printing, and although edition numbers are assigned, the same image cannot be printed after completion. Once you move forward, you cannot return. This irreversibility is not unrelated to the themes of descending the staircase and making choices.

The figures depicted in her work do not tell dramatic stories. Within a gentle visual language, they simply exist. Michimata intends this quietness to open a space where each viewer weaves their own narrative.

BIOGRAPHY

Michimata Aoi works in woodblock printing, continuously questioning one's position and choices within social structures. Through a process of progressive carving and layering, the woodblock transforms with each impression. Although edition numbers are assigned, the same image cannot be printed again after completion. Generated irreversibly despite being a reproductive medium, each work emerges as a singular existence — just as each person's experience differs from another. MFA in Printmaking, Graduate School of Art and Design, Musashino Art University, 2025. Major solo exhibitions include *relief* (Sapporo Art Park Museum, 2025) and *community of* (aaploit, 2025). Her work is held in the collection of Arts Maebashi. Born in 2000 in Hokkaido, Japan.

CV

EDUCATION

- 2023 B.F.A. in Printmaking, Department of Oil Painting, Musashino Art University, Tokyo
- 2025 M.F.A. in Printmaking, Graduate School of Art and Design, Musashino Art University, Tokyo

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2025 *relief*, Sapporo Art Park Museum, Hokkaido
community of, aaploit, Tokyo
- 2024 *SPRING*, aaploit, Tokyo
- 2023 Michimata Aoi Exhibition, anonymous art project, Tokyo
own pace, aaploit, Tokyo

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2025 New Acquisitions / Collection + Women Artists, Each World, Arts Maebashi, Gunma

- 2024 The Joy of Being With, Gallery COLORBEAT, Seoul, South Korea
Emerging Echoes: Presenting Realism, Gallery COLORBEAT, Seoul, South Korea
The 48th National University Print Exhibition, Ueda City Museum of Art, Nagano

ART FAIRS

- 2025 Art Fair Tokyo 2025, Tokyo (aaploit)
INAS 2025 – Incheon Art Show, Incheon, South Korea (aaploit)
2024
AFAF - Art Fair Asia Fukuoka, Fukuoka (aaploit)

WORKSHOPS

- 2025 Printmaking Workshop, Arts Maebashi, Gunma
2023 Spin and Surprise!? Try Rotational Printmaking!, Kiyoshi Saito Museum of Art, Fukushima

AWARDS & GRANTS

- 2023 Excellence Award, 3rd anonymous collection

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Arts Maebashi

SELECTED PRESS

- 2025 Art Collectors, No.191, February 2025: Dialogue with Yuji Akimoto
2023 Gendai Shiso (Contemporary Thought), January 2024 Special Issue on Kafka: Work featured in essay by Ikuta Takeshi
Fukushi no Hiroba, December 2023 & January 2024: Work featured in column by Ikuta Takeshi

aaploit

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<https://aaploit.com/en/artists/michimata-aoi>

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