Governors Island Arts Organizations in Residence

Bridging the Connection

September 25, 26, 27 & October 2, 3, 4, 2026
11:00 AM–5:00 PM
16 Nolan Park, Governors Island, New York, NY 10004

Opening Reception: Saturday 26, 2-4pm

Organized by Bangladeshi American Artists Forum (BAAF)
Curated by Kaiser Kamal and Kyoko Sato

Artist-in-Residence from Japan: **Nobuko**
Exhibiting Artist:
Arthur Azad | Alma Leya | Barkia Azam | Bishwajit Chowdhury | Bonnie Astor | Dina Zaman | Dipa Debnath | Farhana Yasmin | Kaiser Kamal | Kaniz Husna Akbory | Kazol Anthony Das | Kyaw C Maung | Mohammed Hassan Rokon | Nobuko (Japan) | Ruddro Md Ayudh Jahangir | Salma Sinha Kaniz | Sazada Sultana | Shinobu (Japan) | Sherry X Chen | Shameem Subrana | Sujit Kumar Saha | Syed Azizur Rahaman | Tajul Imam | Tariq Julfiker | Zebun Nesa Kamal

Each year from May through October, more than two dozen arts and cultural organizations activate the historic houses on Governors Island through the **Governors Island Arts' Organizations in Residence** program. The program provides a unique platform for artists and cultural organizations to present free exhibitions, public programs, workshops, and artist residencies in one of New York City's most distinctive cultural settings. Over the next decade, New York City and the Trust for Governors Island plan to expand this seasonal initiative toward year-round permanent homes for cultural organizations on the Island.

Against this extraordinary setting between the waters of New York Harbor and the city skyline, the **Bangladeshi American Artists Forum (BAAF)** has been presenting Between River and Harbor: Stories That Carry Us, a multidisciplinary cultural program exploring migration, memory, identity, belonging, and the ways stories travel across generations and borders.

This fall, curated by **Kaiser Kamal and Kyoko Sato**, the program transforms one of Governors Island's historic houses into a space of encounter—a place where personal histories, ancestral memories, artistic practices, and different cultural perspectives can meet and resonate with one another.

The title *Bridging the Connection* evokes the movement of people, ideas, memories, and cultures. Rivers carry stories from one place to another, while harbors have historically served as points of arrival, departure, exchange, and transformation. In this context, the harbor becomes a metaphor for New York itself: a city shaped by generations of migration and by the continuous exchange of cultures from around the world.

Through this exhibition, artist residencies, educational activities, and public programs, BAAF will explore how stories—personal, ancestral, and imagined—are carried through time. The participating artists consider how cultural memory can be preserved while also being transformed through new environments, new relationships, and new generations.

A Bangladeshi American–Japanese Cultural Dialogue

A significant new dimension of this fall's program is BAAF's collaboration with New York–based curator Kyoko Sato, with the support by the **Art Incubation Association of Japan**, which brings artists from Japan into the Governors Island program for the first time. This collaboration expands the conversation beyond a single diasporic experience and creates a broader dialogue between **Bangladeshi American and Japanese artistic perspectives**.

The participation of Japanese artists **Nobuko**, as a resident artist, and **Shinobu**, as an exhibiting artist, introduces another cultural and geographic perspective to the program. Their presence creates an opportunity to consider

both the differences and shared experiences of migration, cultural memory, displacement, belonging, and the negotiation of identity across borders.

Rather than presenting cultures as isolated traditions, *Bridging the Connection* seeks to reveal the connections that emerge when artists from different backgrounds come together. The exhibition asks how cultural identity evolves when people move between places—and how art can become a vessel for memories, histories, and stories that might otherwise be lost.

The collaboration also reflects New York's role as an international meeting point, where artists and communities from different parts of the world continuously encounter one another and create new forms of cultural expression.

Governors Island as a Place of Connection

Governors Island provides a particularly meaningful setting for this exploration. Historically associated with movement, arrival, departure, and the protection of New York Harbor, the Island today has become an important public space for art, culture, environmental initiatives, and community engagement.

Surrounded by water yet connected to Manhattan and Brooklyn by ferry, Governors Island naturally embodies the central metaphor of the exhibition: a place between places.

Within the historic house, visitors will encounter artworks and programs that invite reflection on where we come from, what we carry with us, and how our stories change as they move from one generation and culture to another.

Bridging the Connection ultimately celebrates art as a form of connection—connecting people to memory, communities to one another, and cultures across oceans and borders.
The program welcomes visitors to Governors Island to experience these encounters and to consider their own stories.

The Bangladeshi American Artist Forum (BAAF)

The Bangladeshi American Artist Forum (BAAF) is a New York City-based collective dedicated to empowering visual artists of Bangladeshi origin. Founded in 2015, BAAF fosters cultural exchange, amplifies diasporic voices, and bridges Bangladeshi heritage with contemporary global art practices. The organization supports artists through exhibitions, workshops, mentorship programs, and collaborative projects while promoting cross-cultural dialogue within NYC's diverse creative landscape.

Artist-in-Residence from Japan:

Nobuko

Nobuko (b. 1971 Tottori, Japan) is a contemporary Japanese artist known for her interactive art style and growing international recognition. She graduated from the Osaka Travel Journal Travel College in 1992 before dedicating herself to her artistic career. Nobuko's work has been showcased in several solo exhibitions across Japan. Her featured exhibitions include shows at the Kinryuzan Taikyu-ji Temple in Daisen, Tottori (2024), the Takahashi Community Center (2025), and Cafe Loco in her hometown of Yonago (2026).
Her talent has earned significant acclaim in the global art scene, particularly through the Art Incubation Association's New York Open Call Exhibitions curated by Motoichi Adachi and Kyoko Sato. She received an award in the Winter 2023 exhibition, followed by the Runner-up Excellence Award in Spring/Summer 2025, and the prestigious Excellence Award in Spring 2026. This rising success has caught widespread media attention, with features on NHK's Ohayo Nippon and numerous features across over a dozen television news programs and major newspapers, including Kyodo News.
Passionate about community engagement, Nobuko has been conducting her specialized "Nade-gaki" (stroke-painting) workshops since 2025. These workshops are held at culturally significant venues across Japan and the United States, including Taikyu-ji and Kiyomoto-in temples in Tottori, Jisho-ji in Kagawa, Saimyo-ji in Tokushima, Honryu-ji in Tokyo, and the MAX Gallery NY in New York.

Exhibiting Artist from Japan:

Shinobu

Shinobu Yamada (b. Wakayama, Japan) is a Tokyo-based contemporary artist whose practice bridges traditional Japanese aesthetics and modern painting. Raised by a master calligraphy instructor, Yamada developed an early intimacy with the tactile and sensory qualities of sumi ink and washi paper. She began painting independently in 2020, establishing a distinct visual language that synthesizes the vivid intensity of acrylics with the monochromatic depth of traditional ink.
A member of the Nanakusakai art collective since 2024, Yamada's work investigates universal themes of mortality, the cadence of breath, and the cycles of life—themes catalyzed by a pivotal personal illness. Her conceptual framework expanded significantly through scuba diving, which introduced her to the quiet vitality of marine ecosystems. An avid mountaineer and soccer player, Yamada translates her rigorous physical engagements with the natural world into dynamic, textured visual expressions of enduring vitality.

Curators:

Kaiser Kamal

Kaiser Kamal is a Bangladeshi-born, Queens-based visual artist, curator, and cultural organizer whose work explores abstraction, migration, and the emotional architectures of diasporic life. Kamal Completed his MFA from the University of Dhaka, Kamal's mixed-media practice layers' texture, memory, and urban experience to examine how personal and ancestral stories shape identity.
He has presented 10 solo exhibitions and participated in 150+ group shows across Asia, Europe, and the United States, alongside curating 15+ exhibitions that amplify BIPOC and South Asian voices. As co-founder of the Bangladeshi American Artist Forum (BAAF), he leads initiatives that support immigrant artists through exhibitions, mentorship, and community-engaged programs.
Kamal currently serves as Artist-in-Residence and Curator for *Between River and Harbor: Stories That Carry Us* at Governors Island, transforming Building 16 Nolan Park into a living archive of diasporic memory and collective storytelling.

Kyoko Sato

Kyoko Sato is a New York-based independent curator, art consultant, and producer who acts as a vital cultural bridge between the artistic landscapes of Japan and the United States. Her career began at NHK Enterprises in Tokyo, but her relocation to Manhattan marked the start of a transformative chapter dedicated to elevating Japanese contemporary art on the global stage. Over the years, she has shaped influential cultural programming, served as Director of Asian Programming at WhiteBox, and worked as a consultant for Tagboat, Asia's largest online art gallery.
Sato's career is defined by her tenacity, a trait best exemplified by her landmark collaboration with The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Her dedication culminated in the blockbuster 2014 traveling exhibition, *Ancient Egyptian Queens and Goddesses: Treasures from The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.* Produced alongside the Asahi Shimbun, the historic showcase drew massive crowds at the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum and the Kobe City Museum, cementing her reputation as a master coordinator of major international museum exchanges.
Beyond ancient treasures, Sato is a passionate champion of contemporary voices. In 2018, she curated the massive retrospective *A Colossal World: Japanese Artists and New York, 1950s–Present,* which united 55 legendary and emerging artists, including Yayoi Kusama and Yoko Ono. Through her platform Japan Contemporaries and her recurring "Art Incubation", Sato continues to break down institutional barriers, giving independent creators a democratic stage in the heart of the international art market.