



Kenji Yoshida. *La Vie 'Arawareru' (Life Manifests)*, 1978.
Oil on canvas, 50 x 51 cm, © Estate of Kenji Yoshida.

Kenji Yoshida: The Meaning of Life

5th March – 11th April, 2026

October Gallery presents a solo exhibition by **Kenji Yoshida**, comprising a selection of significant works, spanning the decades between the 1960s and 1990s. Yoshida is best known for the monumental, almost transcendent works that employ precious metals of gold and silver leaf upon Japanese lacquer and coloured paints on canvas. Highlights include exemplary works on paper from the 60s and 70s, portraying a unique combination of traditional Japanese and European modernist styles. These earlier works reveal Yoshida freely experimenting with colour and form to elaborate the iconic visual language that illuminates his mature canvases. The exhibition expands upon the recent presentation of Yoshida's works at Frieze Masters, 2025.

Conscripted at the age of 19, in 1943, Yoshida was directly assigned to a *kamikaze* squadron. The traumatic experiences he lived through left Yoshida profoundly conscious of the fragility of life and the overriding proximity of death, an awareness that permeates all the work that followed. Returning to his art after the Japanese surrender following *Hiroshima*, Yoshida moved to Paris, in the early 60s, to study graphic art techniques at Stanley Hayter's influential *Atelier 17*. The works from the 60s and 70s highlight Yoshida's blossoming to produce innovative etchings using subtle varieties of colour to highlight primary forms on the same plate. These early etchings already show Yoshida exploring metallic effects that lead into the delicate serigraphs and oil and ink on paper works of the 70s. We then see the artist explore the possibilities offered by gold and silver leaf as he moves assuredly towards the captivating multi-panelled works of the 80s and 90s. Here, highly mobile forms reveal the influence of European formalist abstraction while also recalling the irregular forms that pattern the grounds of traditional Japanese screen painting.

Employing this elliptical language of coloured forms, often rendered in dramatic silver and gold leaf, Yoshida invites the viewer to consider the fundamental forces of life and to meditate upon that essential unity which binds all living beings together. Nearly all of Yoshida's later canvases bear the single recurring title of *La Vie (Life)*; being a celebration of the cosmic mystery that is Life. Yoshida's entire oeuvre expresses his keenest desire that *Life* be considered precious beyond price and its nemesis – War - be rejected absolutely.

For information about **Kenji Yoshida** contact Alana Pryce Tojcic alana@octobergallery.co.uk. For press images & caption sheet, click the [Dropbox link here](#).

About Kenji Yoshida Born in 1924, Ikeda City, Japan. Died in 2009, Tokyo, Japan.

Before the outbreak of World War II, Yoshida studied art under Masaru Furukido. During the 1950s, he presented several solo exhibitions in Tokyo. In 1964, Yoshida left Japan permanently and moved to Paris, formerly, the acknowledged centre of Modernism. This relocation brought Yoshida's work into contact with the artistic movements of the time. He was confronted by the heady shock of the Abstract Expressionists, in particular Rothko and Motherwell, who both employ similarly abstract forms in striving for the transcendent spirituality that characterises Yoshida's art. During the 70s and 80s, Yoshida exhibited widely across Europe with solo exhibitions in 1974 at the Modern-Art Galerie, Vienna, Austria and in 1977, at Galerie Point W., Gaillard, France. In 1989, Yoshida presented his first solo exhibition at October Gallery, London.

In 1993, the significant qualities of Yoshida's work were recognised when he was honoured as the first living artist ever to be given a solo exhibition at the Japanese Galleries of the British Museum, London. His final exhibition while alive, in 2008, was in the main hall of UNESCO in the centre of Paris – the city that reciprocated his choice to make it his home by adopting him as one of her own artists and providing him with a studio for life.

About October Gallery

October Gallery has been instrumental in bringing to worldwide attention many of the world's leading international artists, including El Anatsui, Rachid Koraïchi, Romuald Hazoumè, Nnenna Okore, Laila Shawa, Eddy Kamuanga Ilunga, Alexis Peskine and Kenji Yoshida. The Gallery promotes the *Transvanguard*, the very best in contemporary art from around the planet, as well as maintaining a cultural hub in central London for poets, writers, intellectuals and artists, and hosting talks, performances and seminars, see <https://www.octobergallery.co.uk>

The rich diversity of art presented is an inspiration to collectors and enthusiasts. Institutions such as the British Museum and Tate Modern, London, UK; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA; Centre Pompidou, Paris, France; Museum Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf, Germany; Neue Galerie, Kassel, Germany; the Guggenheim, Abu Dhabi, UAE; and Setagaya Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan, have all collected works from October Gallery.

Founded in 1979, October Gallery is a charitable trust that is supported by sales of art, rental of the Gallery's unique facilities, grants from various funding bodies and the active support of dedicated artists, musicians, writers and friends from around the world. The Gallery's Education Department is inclusive of all ages from under 5's to PGCE students and delivers a wide range of provision, see <https://www.octobergalleryeducation.com>

Notes to Editors

Exhibition:	<i>Kenji Yoshida: The Meaning of Life</i>
Dates:	5 th March – 11 th April, 2026
Private View:	Wednesday, 4 th March, 6 pm – 8.30 pm
Venue:	October Gallery, 24 Old Gloucester Street, London, WC1N 3AL.
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