

## Etching to Learn

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Since the end of the 19th century, Japanese art has left its mark on Western art. This marriage of cultures has not only inspired masters such as Van Gogh and Monet, but has even influenced the West's approach to colour and space. IAM Contemporary Art aims to carry on this inter-cultural legacy, not only by empowering the art scene in Malta and Europe with selected Japanese and East Asian art, but by giving Japanese artists the tools to present their art to an English-speaking audience.

For many young Japanese artists, IAM Contemporary Art provides the opportunity to break into the European art scene. However, while art transcends language, the language barrier poses a challenge for these up-and-coming artists. 'The program helps students to improve their English, whilst giving them the opportunity to work on their art in the studio spaces,' explains Akiko Miyahara, Managing Director of IAM Contemporary Art.

IAM Contemporary Art, working alongside the Malta University Language School (MULS), has developed an artist residency program aimed towards Japanese art students who wish to learn English during their studies in art college. This is achieved by providing the artists with accommodation, as well as a studio space to work on their creative practice while studying English in a nurturing environment.

'The language courses are more focused on the communicative aspect, specifically listening and speaking skills,' Jean Bonnici, Director of Studies at MULS tells **THINK**. 'The format of the classes facilitates this type of learning. By having students from different countries and backgrounds, the students gain a better understanding of foreign cultures while developing the confidence necessary to speak the language fluently.'

The students follow a program of 20 hours of English classes per week for up to six months. Aside from their language skills, the students focus on their personal development, with special attention on their art. Miyahara explains how the program is aimed at 'elevating the student's career opportunities and, as artists, to be able to express themselves in a professional context.' This sentiment is echoed by Bonnici, who adds, 'Art has many different facets; when you're talking about art, especially your own, you need to have passion and be able to talk about it. To do so, you need to have the necessary language skills.'

Applications for the course are open at the time of writing. Applicants interested in the course are encouraged to reach out to [info@iamcontemporaryart.com](mailto:info@iamcontemporaryart.com) for further information. **T**



**(Top left)**  
Hiroki Okuma, *Two Seasons* (2022)  
Image courtesy of the artist

**(Top right)**  
Takatoku Nishi, *Shape of Light -in the box-* (2018)  
Image courtesy of the artist

**(Bottom)**  
Toru Ishii, *Spin Thread out of Light #BIRD* (2022)  
Image courtesy of the artist