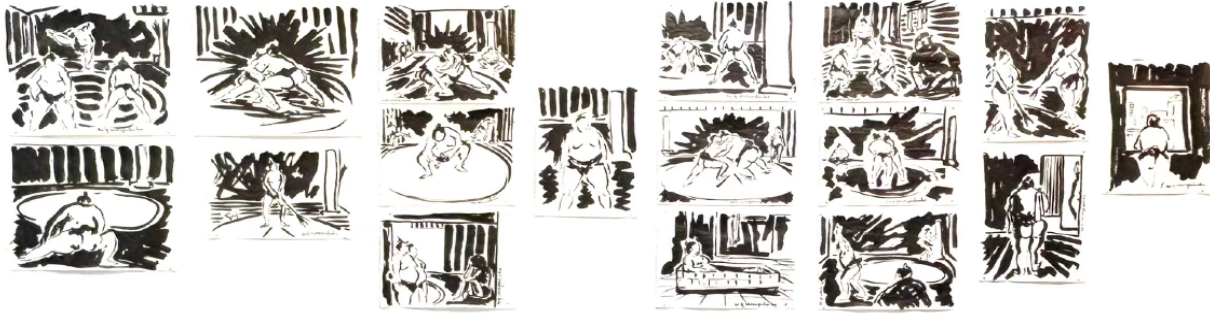




Installation view of works by Zoia Skoropadenko at Paris Exhibition June 2026.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 10 September 2026

Contemporary Art Meets the Living Heritage of Sumo

Zoia Skoropadenko presents ***SUMO: The Sacred Spirit***

12-18 October 2026 | Annex Aoyama, Tokyo

TOKYO, JAPAN - [10 September 2026] - Ukrainian-born, Monaco-based contemporary artist Zoia Skoropadenko will present SUMO: The Sacred Spirit at Annex Aoyama in Tokyo from 12 to 18 October 2026. Bringing contemporary artworks into dialogue with rare historical sumo objects, including artefacts from the Edo and Meiji periods, the exhibition explores sumo through ritual, discipline, physical presence and cultural memory.

The exhibition brings together Skoropadenko's contemporary artworks and a selection of historical objects associated with Japanese sumo culture. It creates a distinctive encounter between present-day artistic interpretation and the material and spiritual heritage of one of Japan's most emblematic traditions. Rather than presenting sumo simply as a sport, the exhibition reveals a living culture with its own visual language, ceremonies and way of life.

For this exhibition, Skoropadenko turns toward the sacred core of sumo: the traditions, ceremonies and spiritual presence that exist beyond the public spectacle of the tournament. In preparing the project, she sought out places where this deeper dimension can still be felt—visiting shrines connected with sumo, attending dohyo-matsuri ring-blessing ceremonies, entering training stables and observing the gestures, objects and acts of purification that surround the ring.

These encounters became the exhibition's point of departure. Skoropadenko's drawings and paintings do not portray the wrestler only at the instant of combat; they trace the world that makes that instant possible—the preparation, repetition, silence, discipline and reverence carried from one generation to the next. SUMO: The Sacred Spirit invites visitors to cross the threshold from sport into ritual and to experience the dohyo not simply as an arena, but as a charged and sacred place.

The exhibition is imagined by renowned French scenographer Pascal Rodriguez, whose projects and collaborations include the Centre Pompidou, the Grand Palais, the Palais des Papes and the Palais de Tokyo. His scenography brings contemporary works and historical objects into a single immersive environment, allowing the architecture, symbolism and spiritual atmosphere of sumo to unfold throughout Annex Aoyama.

Exhibition highlights

- Contemporary artworks by Zoia Skoropadenko exploring the sacred traditions of sumo, including its discipline, ceremonies and everyday life

- Historical gunbai - ceremonial fans carried by sumo referees, known as gyoji - including examples dating from the Edo and Meiji periods
- A richly embroidered historical kesho-mawashi dating from the early twentieth century
- Additional sumo-related objects, archival materials and works illuminating the visual language, rituals and cultural memory of sumo
- Interview opportunities with the artist and, subject to confirmation, project participants, lenders and sumo specialists

The historical objects are not treated simply as decorative accompaniments. Placed in conversation with contemporary art, they draw attention to the forms, colours, gestures and symbols through which sumo communicates authority, ceremony, endurance and identity.

"Sumo is far more than a contest of strength. It is a complete visual and ceremonial world, shaped by discipline, history and extraordinary human presence. This exhibition is my tribute to that world and to the people and objects that carry its traditions and sacred knowledge forward."

- Zoia Skoropadenko

A long-standing artistic relationship with Japan

Skoropadenko has built a sustained creative relationship with Japan through exhibitions, live drawing projects and cultural initiatives. Her work has been shown in Tokyo and elsewhere in Japan, addressing subjects including Fukushima, Japanese landscapes, everyday urban life and sumo culture.

Her earlier Japan-related projects include participation in the Tokyo Midtown Koinobori Gallery and presentations from her sumo-focused series *Life of the Champion*. Her sculpture *The Hope* was inaugurated in Soma, Fukushima Prefecture, in 2015; another version forms part of the collection of the National Chernobyl Museum in Kyiv. *Life of the Champion* was presented at the Taiho Sumo Memorial Museum in Hokkaido from 2025 to 2026. In 2019, she participated in Art Fair Tokyo as a special guest, and in 2025 she represented Monaco at Osaka International Art.

The October exhibition extends this relationship through a focused exploration of sumo - not only as a sport, but as a living cultural tradition with its own material history, spirituality and compelling visual vocabulary.

About Zoia Skoropadenko

Zoia Skoropadenko is a Ukrainian-born contemporary multidisciplinary artist, curator and cultural producer who lives and works in Monaco and maintains close professional connections with Paris and Tokyo.

Working across painting, drawing, printmaking, sculpture and ceramics, she is known for bodies of work including *TORSO*, *Intellectual Landscapes*, *Coffee Drinkers* and *Life of the Champion*. Her practice frequently begins with direct observation of people, places and everyday objects, transforming them through an economical and expressive visual language.

Skoropadenko received her early artistic education in Kryvyi Rih, Ukraine, and studied at Ivan Franko National University of Lviv. In 2011, she was officially recognised as a professional artist-painter by the Government of Monaco. She is also the founder of La Vitrine Contemporaine de Monaco, an independent exhibition space supporting artists and experimental presentations.

She curated a presentation of Ukrainian art at the European Parliament in Strasbourg in 2012, held a solo exhibition at the Council of Europe in 2013, and presented her work at the historic London Stock Exchange Rifle Club venue in 2015. She has also participated in cultural and charitable initiatives

connected with Fukushima and Chornobyl.

About Pascal Rodriguez

Pascal Rodriguez is a French Architecte DPLG, scenographer and exhibition designer whose career spans more than two decades. Bringing architectural rigour to immersive spatial storytelling, he transforms complex artistic and cultural narratives into environments that guide how audiences encounter artworks, ideas and history. His scenographies have been presented at leading institutions including the Centre Pompidou, Grand Palais, Musée d'Orsay, Musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac, Philharmonie de Paris, Mucem, Les Abattoirs, Palais des Papes and Palais des Festivals de Cannes. He created the scenography for the Centre Pompidou's landmark Brancusi retrospective in 2024 and for Kandinsky: The Music of Colours at the Philharmonie de Paris. His international projects include Matisse by Matisse at UCCA Beijing and Shanghai, while other exhibitions have explored figures such as Jeff Koons, Alberto Giacometti, Niki de Saint Phalle and Romy Schneider. In 2026, he designed the scenography for Hilma af Klint: The Paintings for the Temple, the first major French exhibition devoted to the Swedish pioneer of abstraction, presented by the Grand Palais in collaboration with the Centre Pompidou.

Exhibition information

Title	SUMO: The Sacred Spirit / 相撲：神聖なる魂
Artist	Zoia Skoropadenko
Scenographer	Pascal Rodriguez
Venue	Pasona Group Annex Aoyama
Address	PASONA SQUARE, 3-1-30 Minami-Aoyama, Minato-ku, Tokyo 107-8351, Japan
Dates	Monday, 12 October-Sunday, 18 October 2026
Public opening	Monday, 12 October, from 11:00 a.m. JST
Press presentation	Thursday, 15 October, 12:00 noon JST (planned)
Official reception	Thursday, 15 October, 6:00-8:00 p.m. JST
Opening hours	11:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.
Admission	Free
Access	Gaienmae Station, Exit 1a, approximately five minutes on foot; Omotesando Station, Exit A4, approximately five minutes on foot
Languages	Japanese, English and Ukrainian
Organised by	Zoia Skoropadenko and her project team
Venue support	Pasona Group Inc
With support from	Embassy of Ukraine in Japan; Ukrainian Sumo Federation
Website	https://www.zoiaskoropadenko.com/sumobyzoia
Press-Kit	https://www.zoiaskoropadenko.com/press-kit-1

Press contacts

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Website: <https://www.zoiaskoropadenko.com/sumobyzoia>

The exhibition opens to the public at 11:00 a.m. on Monday, 12 October. A press presentation is planned for 12:00 noon on Thursday, 15 October, followed by the official opening reception from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. The exhibition continues through Sunday, 18 October.

SPONSORSHIP COORDINATION

All sponsorship proposals, requests and related communications for this exhibition are coordinated directly by Zoia Skoropadenko and her project team. Pasona Corporation supports the exhibition as the venue partner and is not involved in sponsorship solicitation or coordination.

Notes to editors

- Downloadable press images, artwork images, artist portrait and captions: [\[PRESS KIT LINK\]](#)
- Artist interviews can be arranged in Japanese, English or Ukrainian
- Further information about historical objects, lenders and image credits will be supplied once confirmed