

Press Release

For Immediate Release

June 8, 2026



**The First Maebashi Biennale 2026 Collaboration Project:
Shiroiya Hotel Art Illumination 2026
Miroco Machiko at SHIROIYA: “Putting Down Roots in the Air”
Dates: Saturday, September 19, 2026 – Tuesday, January 12, 2027**

Shiroiya Hotel, a leading art destination in Maebashi, Gunma Prefecture, will present its annual winter illumination program, now a familiar seasonal tradition in Maebashi. This year’s edition will showcase the work of Miroco Machiko, a painter and picture-book artist based in Amami Oshima, an island south of Kyushu.

As part of the First Maebashi Biennale, which is being held in the city centre, the hotel will present an art illumination installation to bring art and light to the streets.



Miroco Machiko ©Yayoi Arimoto

Miroco Machiko at SHIROIYA: Putting Down Roots in the Air

An art illumination event at the Shiroiya Hotel is held each year to celebrate the hotel's anniversary. It was created to bring a sense of light and warmth to the people of Maebashi and visitors to the city. This year, Miroco Machiko, renowned for her vibrant and dynamic portrayal of flora and fauna, will present an installation entitled *Putting Down Roots in the Air*.

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The work will unfold across the Green Tower of the Shiroiya Hotel, a planted structure designed by architect Sou Fujimoto in reference to the river terraces that once characterised the site. Taking inspiration from the art festival's theme of *Mebuku*, meaning "to bud" or "to sprout", Miroco envisages "seeds of fantasy" being carried from her southern island home. As these seeds take root and grow, they create a vibrant story, sharing the energy of new growth with passers-by.

■ Exhibition Period

September 19, 2026 (Sat) - January 12, 2027 (Tue)

Illumination Hours: Daily 17:00 - 23:00

■ Location

Shiroiya Hotel

2-2-15 Honmachi, Maebashi City, Gunma Prefecture

027-231-4618

Free Admission

About the Artist Miroco Machiko



Miroco Machiko is a painter and picture-book author known for her free and dynamic depictions of living creatures. She has held solo exhibitions in Japan and overseas.

Her picture book *The Day the Wolf Flies (Okami ga Tobu Hi;* East Press) received the Grand Prize at the 18th Japan Picture Book Awards. At the Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava (BIB), *Ore to Kiiro (Me and Yellow;* WAVE Publishing) received the Golden Apple, while *Kemono no Nioi ga Shitekita zo (Beasts Smelling;* Iwasaki Publishing) received a BIB Plaque.

She has received many other awards and published numerous books, including the 41st Iwaya Sazanami Literary Award. Her work also includes illustrations for books, CD jackets and posters. Since 2020, her exhibition *Creatures Are My Mirror* has toured museums across Japan. Deeply attuned to the movements of nature, she creates works that seem to carry the presence of the unseen and the vivid shimmer of life.

<Artist statement>

"For a time, I put down roots in a place far from everyday life. I surrender myself to that place, drawing sustenance from even the smallest glimmer of light. The plants that grow on the southern islands must withstand strong winds. To support themselves, they

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send out roots both below and above the ground. Like those plants, I become a seed carried on the wind, gathering light as I travel. Floating through the air, I extend my roots, nourished by what I take in from the atmosphere itself. What kind of shoots will emerge? What kind of flowers will bloom? From within Shiroiya Hotel, I nurture these seeds and let their roots spread outward into the world."

— Miroco Machiko



From left: *Hedera and Earthworm* (2015) / *Pitcher Plant* (2016) / *Cross-Section of a Dandelion* (2015)

Shiroiya Hotel Art Illumination

The Shiroiya Hotel opened on December 12, 2020. Its Art Illumination program began in 2021 to celebrate the hotel's first anniversary. During the pandemic, when movement and gatherings were restricted, the project provided an open-air space in central Maebashi where people could enjoy art and the anticipation of the year-end season without crowding indoors.

Since then, the hotel has invited an artist each year to create a new work, and with the support of many collaborators, the project has continued. Held at Shiroiya Hotel, the Sou Fujimoto-designed art hotel in Maebashi, the Art Illumination brings a glittering sense of light to the hearts of those who encounter it. Today, it has become a familiar winter tradition in the city, with many looking forward each year to discovering which artist will be featured next.

Past editions have featured works by Kengo Kito (2021), Takehito Koganezawa (2022), Toshihiko Mitsuya (2023), Kenzo Onoda (2024), and Mika Ninagawa with EiM (2025). Each artist has created a unique Art Illumination, accompanied by programs such as workshops for parents and children, as well as special culinary presentations.

This project has become a popular winter attraction in Maebashi, where the air grows clear and crisp with the famous *karakkaze* winter winds of Gunma Prefecture.

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Maebashi Biennale 2026

Maebashi Biennale 2026 will be held over 80 days, from Saturday, September 19 to Sunday, December 20 in the central district of Maebashi, Gunma Prefecture.

The international biennale art festival takes as its starting point *Mebuku*, Maebashi City's urban development vision established in 2016. In response to the private-sector-led urban renewal process that has since taken shape in the city, the festival uses art to explore Maebashi's present and envision its future.

The theme of the inaugural event is *Mebuku: Where Good Things Grow*. Moving beyond contemporary art, the festival will feature 70 artists and groups from various fields, including architecture, music, poetry, theater, and food. In collaboration with local creators, the festival will present over 20 programs.

The city's public contemporary art museum, Arts Maebashi, will serve as the main venue, alongside distinctive locations such as the Shiroiya Hotel, designed by architect Sou Fujimoto; the Maebashi Galleria, designed by architect Akihisa Hirata; hotels; galleries; shops; vacant buildings; covered shopping arcades; and publicly accessible open spaces. The festival will create a walkable art experience through the city by bringing together contemporary architecture and artworks within an area of roughly 500 square meters.

<https://maebashi-biennale.com/>

***Shiroiya Hotel has been certified as an official accommodation partner for Maebashi Biennale 2026.**

Shiroiya Hotel (2-2-15 Honmachi, Maebashi City, Gunma Prefecture)

ART DESTINATION

A Museum-Like Hotel Filled with Inspiration for the Senses

After 300 years as a long-standing ryokan in Maebashi, Gunma Prefecture, the Shiroiya reopened in December 2020 as the Shiroiya Hotel. Designed by architect Sou Fujimoto, the hotel was created to contribute to the revitalization of central Maebashi.

The former building, which had been left vacant, was renovated to create a dramatic atrium of exposed concrete where a dreamlike "light art" installation by Leandro Erlich hangs. Throughout the hotel, guests can enjoy contemporary art and design in a lush, green setting, from guest rooms displaying various artworks to public spaces featuring a diverse art collection.

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The property also includes a restaurant, café lounge, patisserie, bakery, tea room, and three types of private saunas. The hotel's main dining venue, Shiroiya the Restaurant, has been listed for five consecutive years in the gourmet restaurant guide Gault & Millau. With a wide range of activities available inside and outside the hotel, the Shiroiya Hotel offers a stay filled with inspiration.

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Link for Press Image : <https://we.tl/t-biTRy1nsQEoKtEnA>

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