

It’s Tomo Koizumi’s world of fluffy organza

For the Frill of It

It’s not hard to spot a Tomo Koizumi gown: Look for poofy avant-garde silhouettes of vibrant organza ruffles. Sam Smith wore a hot pink rendition while making a dramatic entrance à la helicopter in the *I’m Not Here to Make Friends* music video. Lady Gaga christened a white and grey take with ribbon accents as an airport fit. Even Misa wore a voluminous rainbow dipped iteration at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. What sparked Japanese designer’s love with this textile? It was perhaps a bond borne out of necessity. Before showing his collections in major fashion cities and creating bespoke looks for celebrities, he was a painting major at university who had ventured into costume design. Scouring Nippori, a district in Tokyo known for selling deadstock fabrics, he discovered the common Japanese polyester organza. Through heavy experimentation, he developed his now-hallmark ruffle technique. Koizumi’s entry into fashion was equally as serendipitous. “People thought what I was making was costume and not fashion. I even thought that too,” Koizumi admitted. What changed? Eight years after starting his eponymous label, his sculptural designs caught the eye of Katie Grand in 2019. A few weeks later, he held his first show at New York Fashion Week with the backing of Marc Jacobs. Since this Cinderella moment, his stock has been on the rise. After being awarded the LVMH Prize in 2020, he debuted his fall 2023 collection at Milan

Fashion Week with the support of Dolce & Gabbana and has had archival pieces acquired by The Metropolitan Museum of Art. But he is making his most dramatic turn in 2024. Koizumi is *rebranding* himself as a contemporary artist with grand plans to disrupt the world of fine art. He has already staged his first solo exhibition in Tokyo, showcasing his ruffled creations as art. “The two industries are different but the two categories (art and fashion) are almost the same to me when I make a piece,” Koizumi shared. Despite taking a deliberate break from his craft, the multi-hyphenate is still in the headlines. Japanese dance company K-Ballet held a special one-night performance entirely inspired by Koizumi’s out-of-this-world garments. Of course, the show that took place at the end of March featured dancers plié-ing in tutus, shrugs and leg warmers elevated by the newfound artist’s voluminous touch. “I know my style isn’t mainstream,” Koizumi shared. “But I want to be a role model for someone who may not fit in but still wants to do something unique.”

Text /  
MADELEINE MAK  
Photos /  
Tomo Koizumi

ruffles and we’re all just living in it.



TOMO KOIZUMI





**MANIFESTO:** Do you have a special childhood memory about fashion?

**TOMO KOIZUMI:** My mom was conscious about what to wear and how to dress her children even if we were not a rich family. She dressed me in really colourful clothes when I was little.

**M** You look up to designers like Christian Dior, Cristobal Balenciaga, and John Galliano. Is there a shared quality between them that inspires you?

**TK** Strong originality and a touch of humour.

**M** Who inspires you in fine art?

**TK** Mark Rothko because the colours that he chose not only harmonise but also create chaos.

**M** Your spring-summer 2024 collection is distinct in the sense that you approached each piece as if it were a painting. The gowns were later sold through a gallery. What inspired this shift?

**TK** I really wanted to change the idea that fashion is just a product made in a factory. Some dresses can be art and can have an unique value like art. I hope this whole process shakes people's minds.

**M** How do you view art?

**TK** Building a concept is complicated but it is worth it.

**M** You just had your first solo exhibition in Tokyo. Tell us more about this.

**TK** The pieces I exhibited is almost similar as what I've been making but how I chose to show and exhibit it was quite different.

**M** You're not planning to produce any fashion collections this year. Why?

**TK** I normally make one collection a year but I did two last year. Apart from this, I need to do more research on the art industry and give a good input as a contemporary artist.

**M** How else do you nurture your creativity outside of fashion and fine art?

**TK** Reading books is important for my creativity. I read novels, art books, and business books.

**M** What challenge shaped you into who you are today?

**TK** Chasing uniqueness as a creative. Although I haven't shown my art outside of Japan, I believe in the people who follow me on social media.

[www.tomo-koizumi.com](http://www.tomo-koizumi.com)

