

# Stephan Goldrajch

## Yokai, Japanese Spirits

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press release



Stephan Goldrajch  
*Yokai #30, 2024*  
Watercolor on paper  
30 x 40 cm  
Courtesy de l'artiste et Xippas

### Xippas Paris

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### Opening on Saturday March 15, 2025 from 3pm to 8pm

Stephan Goldrajch's second exhibition with Xippas Paris presents a new project inspired by a residency in Japan and his discovery of the Yokai Museum. Focusing on traditional Japanese mythology, the exhibition invokes the figure of the Yokai known as fantastical creatures that combine features of animals, humans and objects. Yokai may be malevolent, mischievous or benevolent and also embody the idea of metamorphosis, as their nature changes frequently. Popular characters in Japanese folklore, Yokai are omnipresent in the country's oral culture and contemporary imagery be it cinema, animations or mangas.

The exhibition on view at the gallery brings together sculptures, objects and wall pieces made with crocheted wool, the artist's preferred medium, as well as a series of watercolors that allude to different stages of his encounter with Japanese mythology. Brightly colored and deliberately naïve in appearance, they embark us on a collective journey and invite to revisit the popular myth.

"Meeting other people is at the heart of my work, which is why I don't have a studio. Crochet is a nomadic and universal practice – I can set up anywhere and get started," says the artist. Goldrajch's projects often take the form of "textile performances" done around the world, during which the artist wears his crocheted costumes and connects with people from all walks of life (residents of retirement homes, schoolchildren or inhabitants of working-class neighborhoods) and includes them in his creative process. In turn, these collaborations produce mesmerizing stories, materialized through sculptures, drawings, books or photographs taken by Myriam Rispens, his long-time collaborator.

During his trip in Japan, the artist made a series of performances, poetically and playfully documented in his book entitled "Odori" (2024). Dressed in a black-and-white

multifaceted wool costume, his character, which can be seen in some of the exhibition's watercolors, comes to life by interacting with strangers while wandering from town to village, roaming forests and mountains "in search of Yokai". Using this character enables Stephan Goldrajch to delve into a culture through a series of encounters: with people, spaces or spirits. Like a "genius loci", each of the artist's projects take us to a place, real or imagined, with its inhabitants and their mythologies.

The exhibition at the gallery recreates this quest for a traditional Japanese tale. As we move through the exhibition space, different Yokai appear before us, just as they did before the artist's character when he traveled in Japan. As we enter, subterranean Yokai pierce the surface of the earth in wall boxes made of wool threads. In the main exhibition space, large-scale crochet sculptures can be viewed: *Tanuki*, a raccoon with exaggerated male attributes, stands next to a strangely smiling, oversized flower, as if it came out of a forest populated by enigmatic creatures where spirits play tricks on humans. Yokai-objects, monsters with an appearance more absurd than terrifying, stand out in crochet *tableaux* with exuberant shapes: abandoned everyday objects, such as *Kasa-Obake*, a one-eyed, one-legged umbrella with its tongue out, came to life after a hundred years of existence, or *Bakezori*, a wandering sandal seeking to frighten and surprise humans.

Passionate about mythology, whether it comes to folklore or invented legends, Stephan Goldrajch is equally interested in creating and transmitting stories in a contemporary context with a particular interest on how these stories are experienced, owned and communicated.

By "weaving bridges between the social and contemporary art", with a collective approach, Stephan Goldrajch blurs the boundaries between art and life and questions the status of the artist. The choice of medium is also meaningful: knitting, crochet or embroidery refer to artisanal techniques and popular practices involving active collaborations. In addition, Stephan Goldrajch's work goes beyond the limits of his medium by making a crocheted costume, a wool *tableau*, a drawing or a poem. His medium is thus fluid and materializes through participation, transforming each project into a collective story.

**The Yokai project inspired the artist's publication "Odori" (2024) and was also shown at the Embassy of Japan in Belgium, Brussels (2024).**

**In parallel to the exhibition at Xippas Paris, works from the Yokai project are included in a group show at the Fondation du Doude in Blois, France, on view until May 11, 2025.**

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Stephan Goldrajch was born in 1985 in Ramat Gan, Israel. He lives and works in Brussels, Belgium.

He studied at the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Visuels de La Cambre in Brussels and at the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in Jerusalem.

Known for his crochet work, expressed through wall pieces, sculptures, installations and performances, Stephan Goldrajch reinvents popular mythologies through participatory projects. For his first solo exhibition at Xippas Paris in 2022, Stephan Goldrajch was inspired by the famous Bayeux Tapestry to create his crochet version. In 2021, he created a large-scale installation *Arbre à Palabres* for the EMST in Athens, where he reactivated African rituals by involving local associations. Previously, on the invitation of the Wiels Art Centre in Brussels, the artist invented *Légende du Canal*, an imagined story in which he invited residents of two Brussels neighborhoods separated by the canal – the popular Molenbeek and the commercial Dansaert – to collaborate on weaving flags.

He has published numerous books including "Huit récits fondateurs", "Le Bouc épissaire selon Stephan Goldrajch", "Masques" and "Poème d'Arménie".

Numerous institutions have exhibited his work, such as the Embassy of Japan in Belgium (Brussels), the Centrale for contemporary art (Brussels), the Centre Wallonie-Bruxelles

(Paris), The National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens (EMST), the Jewish Museum of Belgium (Brussels), the Ixelles Museum (Brussels), the Haifa Museum of Art (Haifa), the Tanzmesse (Düsseldorf), among others.

His works are part of private and public collections: Yokai Museum, Japan; International Carnival and Mask Museum, Binche, Belgium; Jewish Museum of Belgium, Brussels; URBAN Collection, Brussels, Belgium; P.O.C Collection of Galila Barzilai, Brussels, Belgium; National Center for Space Studies (CNES) and FRAC Toulouse, France; Private collection, Phoenix, Arizona, USA.