

Visual EXPO by BRANDED SHORTS Unveils Key Award Winners Ahead of Tokyo Event: **SEKAI NO OWARI, Microsoft, and The RealReal** Recognized for Innovative Visual Expression

Public Impact and New Vision Awards celebrate new possibilities in music, live performance and AI, while the Personal Branding Award highlights Japan's distinctive digital creators



TOKYO – September 7, 2026 – Visual Voice Inc. today announced the key award recipients and nominees for Visual EXPO by BRANDED SHORTS, taking place in Tokyo on September 28–29, 2026.

Marking a major evolution after a decade of BRANDED SHORTS—the dedicated branded movie section of the Academy Awards®-accredited Short Shorts Film Festival & Asia (SSFF & ASIA), one of Asia's largest international short film festivals—this landmark event launches as an expanded, expo-style celebration of visual communication.

Ahead of the event, the festival has unveiled the winners of the Public Impact Award and the New Vision Award, honoring groundbreaking visual works by world-renowned Japanese band SEKAI NO OWARI, tech giant Microsoft, and luxury resale platform The RealReal. Additionally, five prominent Japanese digital creators have been nominated for the Personal Branding Award, recognizing individual influence and storytelling excellence on social media.

Public Impact Award: SEKAI NO OWARI “THE CINEMA” Fuses Live Music and Cinema in Record-Breaking Dome Tour

The Public Impact Award honors works, projects, or individuals that have achieved extraordinary societal reach and buzz through visual branding.

This year's award goes to "THE CINEMA," the 15th-anniversary dome tour by top Japanese band SEKAI NO OWARI. Conceptually designed as "the world's largest movie theater," the four-show sold-out tour attracted approximately 180,000 attendees. The production seamlessly integrated live performance with cinematic visual art, projecting custom-written short films on massive screens synchronized to each song. The initiative was recognized for transcending traditional live entertainment, leveraging visual storytelling to maximize brand value, and creating a massive cultural phenomenon.

**Title: THE CINEMA / Artist: SEKAI NO OWARI / Director: Dai Ikeda
Produce: SEKAI NO OWARI**



New Vision Award: Exploring the Boundaries of Visuals

— Real Action vs. AI Storytelling

The **New Vision Award** recognizes works that pioneer new expressions and possibilities in visual media for the year. This year, two contrasting approaches were selected:



Microsoft / Windows “Doppelmode”

Director: Mackenzie Sheppard / 1 : 00 / USA / 2026

Production : ProdCo / Agency : Droga5

Overview & Award Reason: Set in a university library, the film captures the clash and balance between study and play in student life. Amid the rise of AI and CGI, the production took a bold live-action approach by casting 25 actual pairs of real-life twins (50 people in total). The intricate synchronization and realistic physical interaction of the twins create a compelling, visually arresting portrayal of internal human duality.



The RealReal “L’Ultimo Uomo Reale”

Director: Sebastian Strasser, Niklas Weise / 2 : 00 / Germany / 2026

Production : Lipstick / Agency : Team One / Publicis Los Angeles

Overview & Award Reason: Set in a surreal future where AI has virtually replaced humanity, a man struggles with the anxiety of potentially being "the last real human." Rather than using AI merely as a production tool, the work incorporates the concept of AI directly into its narrative and direction. By blurring the line between reality and AI-generated worlds, it delivers a humorous, thought-provoking examination of authenticity.

Personal Branding Award Nominees: Spotlight on Japan’s Unique Digital Creators

The Personal Branding Award celebrates individual creators who build distinct worldviews on social media, generating empathy and driving new commercial value through authentic engagement. Five standout Japanese creators have been nominated:



Kazu Languages: A multilingual creator with over 5 million total social media followers who communicates with people in over 130 countries across 15 languages.

Kaho ("Kaho's Mountain Diary"): A leading outdoor content creator and certified mountain guide sharing mountaineering experiences and technical insights.

KELO: A world-renowned dancer/performer and Apollo Theater champion known for establishing unique dance genres and multi-disciplinary artistic performances.

Heisei Joshi♥Megu: A content creator preserving and reimagining 1990s–2000s "Heisei retro" pop culture and toys for modern digital audiences.

maruta: A movie review creator with approximately 570,000 followers, recognized for introducing films through distinct analytical short-form video storytelling.

The award winners for the Personal Branding Award, as well as the Public Impact Award and New Vision Award, will be officially presented at the ceremony on September 29.

The Visual EXPO by BRANDED SHORTS 2026 Award Ceremony

Addition to the Public Impact Award and New Vision Award, the Award Ceremony will feature the announcement of the prestigious Branded Shorts of the Year, alongside the HR Best Short Award, Japan Tourism Agency Commissioner's Award, and Personal Branding Award.

Date & Time: Tuesday, September 29, 2026 |
17:00 – 18:15 (JST)

Venue: Akasaka Intercity Conference
"The Air" (Tokyo)

Exhibition Period: September 28 (Mon) –
September 29 (Tue), 2026
*Online venue open through Nov 30

Ticketing: Available via Peatix
*(Early-bird discounts available until Sept 14)

URL: <https://expo.brandedshorts.jp/en/event/ceremony/>



■ Visual EXPO by BRANDED SHORTS Award Structure



Branded Shorts of the Year: Award given to the best BRANDED short film from outside Japan, chosen based on eight criteria: essentiality, ability to change perceptions, shareability, strength of message, viewership retention, originality, timeliness, and memory retention.

HR Best Short Award: Award given to the most engaging short film from the perspective of branding that leads to recruitment, based on the criteria of Purpose, Corporate Appeal, Message, Sustained Viewing, Originality, and Memory Retention.

Visual Tourism Award: Among tourism promotional films, movies, and videos produced in all 47 prefectures in Japan, the Visual Tourism Award, Japan Tourism Agency Commissioner's Award will be given to the work that demonstrates the highest level of creativity, promotional impact, and topicality from the perspective of tourism promotion.

Personal Branding Award: Award given to an individual who communicates their values, worldview, and creativity through social media and other platforms, generating empathy and trust through their unique voice and creating new value and possibilities through collaborations with companies and brands.

Public Impact Award: Award given to a work, project, or individual that has generated significant social impact and buzz through branding using video.

New Vision Award: Award given to a work that demonstrates new forms of visual expression and new possibilities in video branding that are unique to the year.

Event Details & Ticketing

Event Name	Visual EXPO by BRANDED SHORTS
Dates & Venue	September 28 (Mon) & 29 (Tue), 2026 Akasaka Intercity Conference (The Air, The Amphitheater, Green), Tokyo
Online Period	September 28 (Mon) – November 30 (Mon), 2026
Ticketing	Available on Peatix (Day Passes, 2-Day All-Access Pass, Online Viewing Pass) https://visualexpo2026.peatix.com/ Early Bird Discount: 10% off from August 27 to September 14.
Official Website	https://expo.brandedshorts.jp/

About Visual EXPO by BRANDED SHORTS



Established in 2016 as part of the Short Shorts Film Festival & Asia, BRANDED SHORTS has championed the potential of corporate visual communication. In 2026, marking its 11th year, the project expands into Visual EXPO by BRANDED SHORTS. Expanding across PR, HR, tourism, personal branding, food culture, and AI, the platform connects creators, corporations, and industry leaders through awards, seminars, and networking exhibitions.

<https://expo.brandedshorts.jp/en/>

【PRESS INQUIRY】

Visual Voice Inc., / Short Shorts Film Festival & Asia PR : Fuyumi Tanaka press@shortshorts.org

Still images are available here :

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1CTrf7jtkbxdRRbtA4QGdaI5L3_0aeCrI?usp=sharing