

## Selection of the artist for the 61st International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

To select an artist for the Japan Pavilion, the Japan Foundation's Advisory Committee on International Art Exhibitions, which consisted of six members commissioned by the Japan Foundation, held two screening meetings and made their selection from the list of candidates recommended by twenty-six Japanese and international nominators. Like the previous Biennale and the one before that, the basic selection policy was to choose either an individual artist or a continuously active collective of artists and for the artist (or collective) to be an appropriate representation of trends in contemporary art in Japan. In addition, having a certain amount of international experience would also be desirable, and the artist (or collective) must either possess Japanese citizenship or use Japan as a primary base of artistic activities either currently or in the past.

The two screening meetings were held after a preliminary meeting was held to go over related policies and methods. During the first screening meeting, each committee member, who had taken a look at each candidate's materials and comments by the nominators in advance, stated their overall opinion, and then the members discussed each artist and ultimately voted to narrow down the list to seven candidates to be discussed at the next meeting. The Japan Foundation then approached each candidate to confirm whether they would be able to participate if they are selected and to request that they submit a basic exhibition plan. However, unlike the last Biennale, this plan would have to include not only a concept paper but also visual materials to show the exhibition.

One of the candidates declined the offer to participate because she was already preparing for different exhibitions, and another candidate indicated that they were not an individual artist but part of a two-person unit in their plan, so the second screening meeting examined the six plans that were actually submitted. After critiquing each of the plans separately, the committee discussed the plans as a whole, including comparing them to each other. The committee members exchanged opinions on the plans, which focused primarily on performances and images, as well as whether the plans would be feasible in the Japan Pavilion's space and then voted, ultimately deciding to select Ei Arakawa-Nash.

Arakawa-Nash was born in Iwaki, Fukushima, Japan, in 1977 and then moved to the United States of America in 1998, where he was based first in New York and then in Los Angeles. He is currently a naturalized United States citizen. He is known for his performance-focused installation art, and, in recent years, he has held solo exhibitions at Tate Modern (London, 2021), the National Art Center (Tokyo, 2024), and other venues. At the Biennale, other participating countries have increasingly been featuring artists who have multicultural backgrounds as well as minority artists. By introducing a queer Japanese American performance artist, the committee hopes to nurture Japan's diversity in Venice. The working title of Arakawa-Nash's plan is *Babies Earnestly Against Nationalism (BEAN)*, and the plan is for this large-scale installation to feature "performances" by the artist's young twins as well as many baby dolls and to involve audience participation. Given the unique talents of the artist, we expect a sharp, humorous artistic critique based on an awareness of issues faced by LGBTQ people and the Japanese diaspora.

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