

International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

Yuko Mohri “Compose” at the Japan Pavilion Curated by Sook-Kyung Lee

The Japan Foundation (JF) is the commissioner of the Japan Pavilion for the International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia. For the 60th International Art Exhibition, open to the public from April 20 through November 24, JF is pleased to present a solo exhibition of Yuko Mohri, titled “Compose”.

Known both in Japan and abroad for her sound installations and kinetic sculptures, Yuko Mohri (b. 1980, based in Tokyo) represents Japan with two newly created site-specific installations. Mohri invited Prof. Sook-Kyung Lee, who is currently the Director of the Whitworth, The University of Manchester, UK, as the Curator. This marks the first time the Japan Pavilion has appointed a curator based in a country outside of Japan. Mohri and Lee previously collaborated at the 14th Gwangju Biennale where Lee served as the Artistic Director on the theme of “soft and weak like water”. Referencing the classic Chinese text Dao De Jing by Lao Zi, the theme emphasized the subtle power of Mohri’s artistic practice. For the Japan Pavilion this year, Mohri exhibits two bodies of work that share the common element of water, filling the iconic space with sound, light, movement, and scent to create an environment that slowly and continuously changes.



“Yuko Mohri: Compose”, 2024. Installation,

Japan Pavilion at the 60th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia.

Photo by kugeyasuhide. Courtesy of the artist, Project Fulfill Art Space, mother’s tankstation, Yutaka Kikutake Gallery, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery.

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■ Curator's note

Yuko Mohri's practice is characterized by the transformative nature of ordinary objects and common situations. Her installation *Moré Moré (Leaky)* is originally inspired by various ad hoc efforts (bricolage) seen in Tokyo subway stations to stop water leaks. The service staff often use everyday items such as plastic bottles, buckets, and hoses to cope with the small "crises," widespread in the city with frequent tectonic activities. Mohri artificially creates leaks and then attempts to fix them in this work, improvising with a variety of common household goods she found at antique furniture stores and flea markets in the vicinity of the Biennale site. Water is diverted into a number of small passages and circulated by pumps, changing leaks to contained liquids that builds a large kinetic sculpture. The work embraces the open ceiling, the distinctive feature of the Japan Pavilion's architecture, allowing raindrops to enter the space when it rains. We are reminded of the increasing floods in this precarious time of climate emergency, especially in the context of Venice, a city constantly threatened by floods.

Extending from the gallery to the pilotis is *Decomposition*, a multi-part installation that generates drone sounds and flickering lights from the electrodes inserted into fruits that convert their ever-changing moisture into electric signals. Sourced from the local grocers and farmers, the fruits' internal states shift constantly, modulating the pitch of the drone and the intensity of the lights. As they ripen and wither, they start giving off the sweet smell of decay and are eventually gathered in the compost in the pilotis to serve as a source of other plant lives in the Giardini.

Rather than transporting complete artworks from Tokyo to Venice, Mohri turned a whole pavilion space into her own studio for a few months, gathering most materials from the local shops and markets. "Compose" therefore showcases a rare, site-specific presentation that reflects the people of Venice and their everyday lives.

With a title that etymologically signifies "to place together (com+pose)", the exhibition asks what it means for people to be and work together in a world challenged by division, conflicts, and multiple global crises. Mohri observes how crises bring out the greatest creativity in people – this is the primary idea behind Mohri's project, initially inspired by the Tokyo subway personnel's resourceful measures against water leaks. The water leaks are never fully fixed, and the fruits end up in the compost to rot in Mohri's installation, but these apparently futile endeavors indicate a glimpse of the hope that our humble creativity might bring about.

Sook-Kyung Lee (Curator)

■ Artist Biography

Yuko Mohri is an artist who creates installation and sculpture not to compose (or construct) but to focus on "events" that constantly shift according to various conditions including their environment. In recent years, she has also explored this idea through video and photography. She was born in 1980 in Kanagawa, Japan, and she received her MA in Inter-media Art from Tokyo University of the Arts. In 2015, Mohri received a grant from the Asian Cultural Council for a 6-month residency in New York. In the same year, she received the Grand Prix, Nissan Art Award. In 2016, Mohri took a residency at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and was in residence at the Camden Arts Centre, London. 2018 saw her as an East Asian Cultural Exchange Envoy, visiting 4 cities in China. In 2019, she received a grant from the Institut français for a 3-month residency in Paris.

Besides numerous solo exhibitions in and out of Japan, Mohri has taken part in a number of international group shows such as the 14th Gwangju Biennale (2023); 23rd Biennale of Sydney (2022); Asian Art Biennial (2021); 34th Bienal de São Paulo (2021); Glasgow International (2021); the 9th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (2018); 14th Biennale de Lyon, France (2017); Kochi-Muziris Biennale (2016).

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■ Curator Biography

Dr. Sook-Kyung Lee has been Director of the Whitworth and Professor of Curatorial Practices at the University of Manchester since 2023. She served as Artistic Director of the 14th Gwangju Biennale in 2023, titled “soft and weak like water”, which explored themes of resistance, indigeneity, decoloniality and ecology. Lee was previously a Senior Curator of International Art at Tate Modern, working in exhibitions, collection displays and acquisitions. She also headed a major multi-year research initiative “Hyundai Tate Research Centre: Transnational” at Tate Modern, overseeing its strategic vision and associated programming. Lee served as the Commissioner & Curator of the Korea Pavilion at the 56th Venice Biennale, and was appointed as Curator of the Japan Pavilion at the 60th Venice Biennale in 2024. Selected exhibitions include “A Year in Art: Australia 1992” (Tate Modern, 2021–23), “Nam June Paik” (Tate Modern, Stedelijk Amsterdam, Museum of Modern Art San Francisco, National Gallery Singapore, 2019–22) and “Doug Aitken: The Source” (Tate Liverpool, 2012).

■ About the Commissioner

The Japan Foundation, the organizer and commissioner of the Japan Pavilion at the International Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennale since 1976, is Japan’s only institution dedicated to carrying out comprehensive international cultural exchange programs worldwide. Established in 1972 as a special legal entity supervised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it was reorganized as an independent administrative institution in 2003. The Foundation has 26 overseas offices in 25 countries and creates opportunities for people-to-people interactions through conducting various activities and information services to deepen mutual understanding between the people of Japan and other countries/regions with its mission statement: Cultivating friendship and ties between Japan and the World.

■ Outline of the Japan Pavilion for the 60th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

【Exhibition title】 Compose

【Exhibitor】 Yuko Mohri

【Curator】 Sook-Kyung Lee (Director, The Whitworth, The University of Manchester, UK)

【Exhibition period】 Saturday, April 20 – Sunday, November 24, 2024

【Venue】 The Japan Pavilion at the Giardini

【Commissioner】 The Japan Foundation

【With Special Support of】 Ishibashi Foundation

【With the Support of】

Takeo Obayashi, Hiroyuki Maki, Buffalo Inc., Yukiko Ito, Lîn (Eric) Huang, RongChuan Chen, RC Foundation, Jenny Yeh, Winsing Arts Foundation, Hideaki Fukutake, Minamigata Holdings Ltd., Taku Hoshina, ARFLEX JAPAN LTD., Yoshiko Mori, Obayashi Foundation, Izumi Ogino, regist ART Inc., Masami Shiraishi, Tetsuaki Kobata, Haruo Nakamura, Nomura Foundation, Toshiaki Ogasawara Memorial Foundation, Miwa Taguchi, Chizuko Yashiro, Yoshihisa Kawamura, Yui Matsushima, Tatsuo Fujiwara, Fumiko Suzuki, Kyoko Hattori, Jun Horii, Fumio Nanjo, Yuko Tadano, Eri Takane, Kankuro Ueshima

【In Cooperation with】 Miyake Design Studio, Re-tem Corporation

【Japan Pavilion official website】 <https://venezia-biennale-japan.jp/official/>

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【Exhibition period】 Saturday, April 20 – Sunday, November 24, 2024

【Venue】 Giardini di Castello, Arsenale, etc.

【Theme】 Foreigners Everywhere

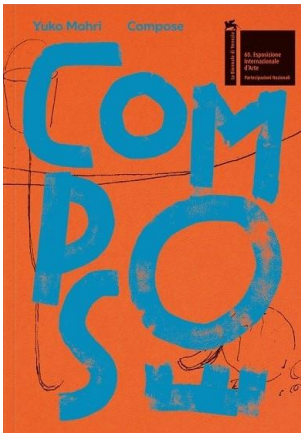
【Director】 Adriano Pedrosa (Artistic Director, Museu de Arte Sao Paulo)

【Official website】 www.labiennale.org/en/

■ Official catalogue of the Japan Pavilion

available through official bookshops at Giardini, Arsenale and online shop at

<https://www.moussemagazine.it/>



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Including essays by Sook-Kyung Lee, Azusa Hashimoto (The National Museum of Art, Osaka), and conversation between Vicente Todolí (Pirelli HangarBicocca) and the artist.

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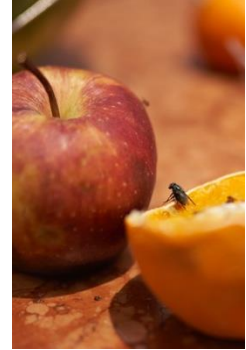
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1–8 **“Yuko Mohri: Compose”, 2024.** Installation, Japan Pavilion at the 60th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia. Photo by kugeyasuhide. Courtesy of the artist, Project Fulfill Art Space, mother’s tankstation, Yutaka Kikutake Gallery, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery.

9 Yuko Mohri (left) and Sook-Kyung Lee (right). Photo by kugeyasuhide.

10–11 **Yuko Mohri, Moré Moré (Leaky): Variations, 2022.** Photo: Lorenzo Palmer. Courtesy of the artist, Project Fulfill Art Space, mother’s tankstation, Yutaka Kikutake Gallery, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery.

12 **Yuko Mohri, Shinjuku Station, November 2, 2015. From the series “Moré Moré Tokyo (Leaky Tokyo): Fieldwork,” 2009–2021.** Courtesy of the artist, Project Fulfill Art Space, mother’s tankstation, Yutaka Kikutake Gallery, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery.

13–14 Yuko Mohri in Venice. Photo by kugeyasuhide.

15 **Yuko Mohri, Decomposition, 2022.** Photo by Naoki Takehisa. Courtesy of the artist, Project Fulfill Art Space, mother’s tankstation, Yutaka Kikutake Gallery, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery.

16 **Yuko Mohri, Decomposition, 2021.** Photo by Naoki Takehisa. Courtesy of the artist, Project Fulfill Art Space, mother’s tankstation, Yutaka Kikutake Gallery, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery.

17 **Yuko Mohri, Moré Moré (Leaky): Variations, 2022.** Courtesy of the artist, Project Fulfill Art Space, mother’s tankstation, Yutaka Kikutake Gallery, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery.

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