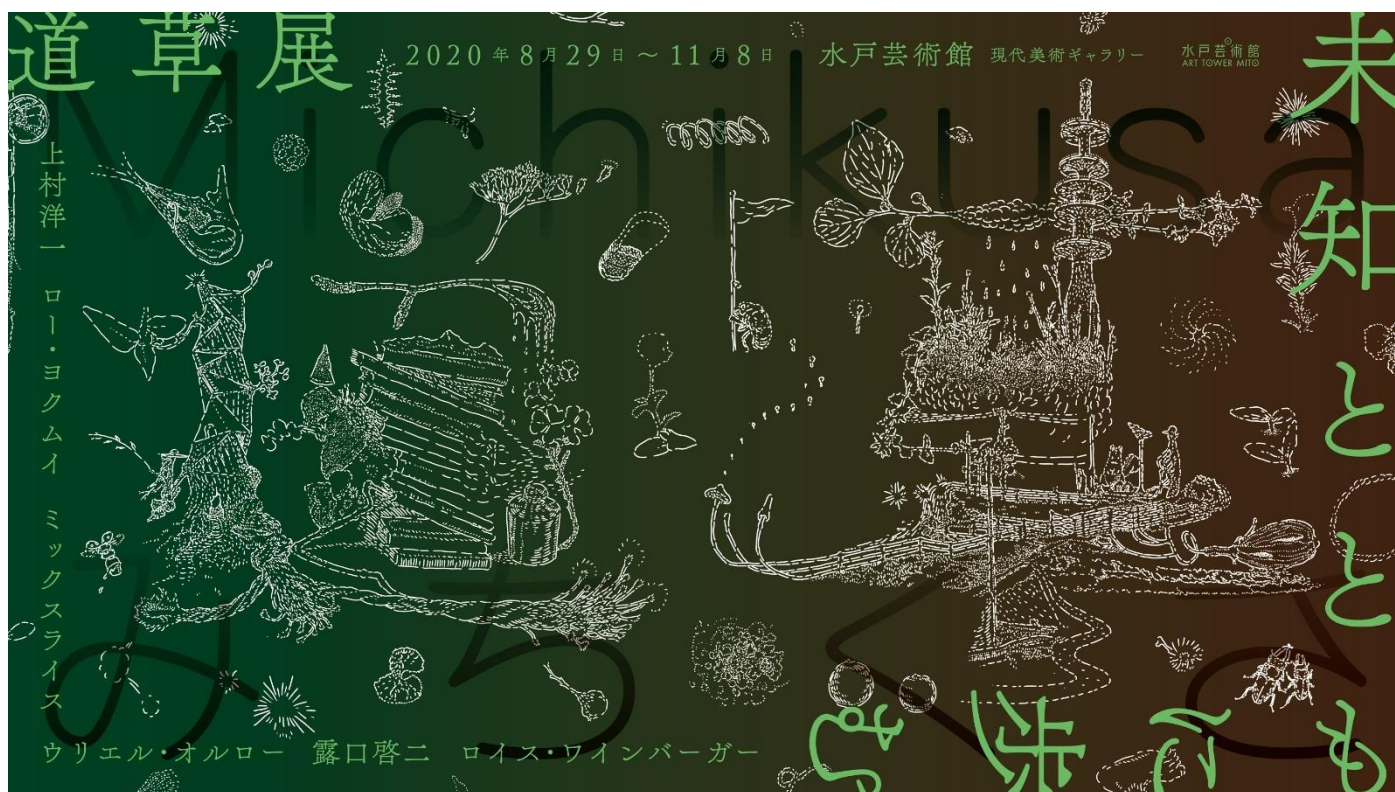


# Michikusa: Walks with the Unknown



Title: Michikusa: Walks with the Unknown  
Dates: August 29 – November 8, 2020  
Closed on Mondays (except September 21, public holiday)  
Venue: Contemporary Art Gallery, Art Tower Mito  
Artists: Yoichi Kamimura, Law Yuk-mui, mixrice (Cho Jieun, Kim Jungwon, Ko Gyeol), Uriel Orlow, Keiji Tsuyuguchi, Lois Weinberger

## Exhibition Overview

We have arrived at a critical point in history when the impact that human activities are having on the planet—from extreme weather conditions to environmental pollution—is a matter of intense debate around the world, leading to calls for governmental responses both politically and economically. Against a backdrop of such increasing social awareness, this exhibition features works of contemporary art created out of interests in plants and fieldwork, through which it explores the way humans have developed alongside the environment. It considers the connections between humans and nature as seen in drawings, photography, video works, installations, and more by five artists and one group who focus their practices on botanical history and the nonhuman.

The exhibition also features a program of related events where participants can imagine and share their visions of future relationships between humankind and the environment. With workshops and a reference room about adapting to climate change, the exhibition creates opportunities for visitors to learn through

dialogue and hands-on experience while thinking on an individual basis about global problems and social coexistence.

## **Exhibition Topics**

**A contemporary art exhibition examining the connections between humankind and the environment through the works of five artists and one group all active in Japan and internationally**

**Featuring a unique selection of around forty artworks, including posthumous works, new works, and works shown in Japan for the first time**

Visitors can view works by the overseas artists Law Yuk-mui, mixrice, and Uriel Orlow on show in Japan for the first time as well as a new work by Yoichi Kamimura, who has attracted attention in both the visual art and music fields, and a posthumous piece by the late Lois Weinberger. In addition, an installation by Keiji Tsuyuguchi reconfigures two of his major series in an entirely new way.

**“The way a society deals with its plants tells us a lot about itself”: What emerges from the gap between nature and second nature?**

Since World War Two, the coexistence of humankind and the environment has been a source of constant exploration in society, likewise inspiring many artists in their practices. In Japan, the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011 also proved a major turning point in terms of how artists thought about the environment. It remains the case, though, that large-scale development and the unsustainable use of resources continues worldwide and is leading to global warming.

The exhibition takes the relationship between humankind and its environment—a universal theme that is inseparable from human activity—and delves deep into it, particularly through works of art created since the 1990s. In these works are reflected perspectives critical of the contradictions and distortions in society that exist as so-called “second nature,” from social injustices to historical amnesia, and the power structures that appear at the borders between human civilization and the natural world. These perspectives may be regarded as poetic and political attempts by artists to present problems, made possible precisely because, as Weinberger once put it, “the way a society deals with its plants tells us a lot about itself.”

**Developing side by side with the unknown: Fieldwork in artistic practice**

A subtheme of the exhibition is fieldwork in artistic practices. Emphasizing the process of creating the work rather than the predicted goal, this method homes in on the multilayered circumstances of the subject through participation, observation, and description, not only documenting the situation but also what is more difficult to describe in an account like emotions and the aspects that change over time, capturing this within the final work in order to stir the imagination of the viewer. These artworks can also serve a function during debates as useful examples of approaches conscious of the problematic nature of representation and the potential for artistic practice to foster a hierarchical relationship between the artist and the subject.

Some of the exhibits can be viewed as artistic expression adopting an approach whereby the artist places himself or herself in an environment, and then unfamiliar environmental elements infiltrate the process of creating the work. The environmental and marginal perspectives bestowed by the artist’s physical sensations

(or their disappearance) dwelling in the artwork surely provide us with hints for re-questioning the relationship between humankind and the nature.

### **Why *michikusa*?**

The Japanese word *michikusa* has two meanings. The first refers to loitering, the act of spending time doing something en route to a destination; the second means the plants that grow by the side of the road. The former yields expanded perspectives that capture changes and subtleties ordinarily overlooked, while the latter awakens our minds to the ecology that is more familiar to us than the romanticized, untouched version of nature.

If viewed from the history of life on earth, the planet's coexistence with humankind could be interpreted as merely *michikusa*. That coexistence now faces the threat of extreme weather and frequent natural disasters, and is heading toward a major crossroads. At this intersection where the impact on the environment by human activities cannot be overlooked, should we slow down the rate at which we are progressing as a race? Should we pay closer attention to the environment that surrounds us? Should we examine the process by which we got to where we are today? Such questions are encompassed within this word, *michikusa*.

### **Exhibition Highlights**

**“The best gardeners are those who abandon the garden”: Lois Weinberger’s posthumous work on display in the Art Tower Mito plaza**

Lois Weinberger sadly passed away in April 2020. The exhibition includes his posthumous work *Wild Enclosure* (2020), which was especially conceived for the plaza at Art Tower Mito.

**A new installation by Yoichi Kamimura exploring ecology across the conventional boundaries between humankind and nature**

The exhibition presents *Breath You*, a new sound installation by Yoichi Kamimura, who conducts field recordings as what he calls “meditative hunting” and creates work that investigates the ambiguous relationship humans have with the natural environment.

**The future of humankind and the environment: Thinking about global problems in terms of familiar environments and everyday realizations in a reference room planned in partnership with the Global and Local Environment Co-creation Institute**

As an endeavor by the Global and Local Environment Co-creation Institute and Art Tower Mito to link specialist research on the environment with the direct concerns of citizens, the exhibition features displays of resources and materials related to climate and environmental change as well as online programs collecting information on the local environment from the general public.

### **About the Artists**

#### **Lois Weinberger**

Born 1947 in Stams, Tyrol, Austria. Based in Vienna, Austria, where he died in 2020.

Starting to create art from the 1970s and employing nature as his central medium, Lois Weinberger exhibited his work internationally. Positioning his art as a practice of what he called “against the aesthetics

of the Pure and the True, against the ordering forces,” his creative source was consistently ruderal species, the plants that live in environments heavily disturbed by human activity. With his work he contributed significantly to the recent discussion on art and nature since the early 1990s. *Das über die Pflanzen/ist eins mit Ihnen*, the railway track plant installation he made for of documenta X, was chosen by Artnews in 2020 as one of the 20 best environmentalist artworks of the past fifty years.

The exhibition includes Wild Enclosure (2020), a three-meter-square outdoor installation especially envisioned for the plaza at Art Tower Mito. The indoor exhibits trace the artist’s focus on plants through the works he made based on his practice in the field.

Major solo exhibitions: Lois Weinberger “Visible Nature / Invisible Nature” (Watari-um, The Watari Museum of Contemporary Art, 2019), Lois Weinberger | Gift (S.M.A.K, Ghent, 2014), Lois Weinberger (MUMOK, Museum of Modern Art Ludwig Foundation, 2000)

Major group exhibitions: documenta 14 (Kassel and Athen, 2017), Venice Biennale (as a collaboration with Franziska Weinberger, Austrian Pavilion, 2009), Empty Garden (Watari-um, The Watari Museum of Contemporary Art, 1999), documeta X (Kassel, 1997), Biennial Sao Paulo, 1991

Artist’s website: <http://www.loisweinberger.net/>

## **Keiji Tsuyuguchi**

Born 1950 in Tokushima prefecture. Based in Hokkaido.

From the end of the 1990s, Keiji Tsuyuguchi started creating photography with an emphasis on the landscape and history of Hokkaido. “The photographer arrived late to the incident,” believes Tsuyuguchi, who has attempted to capture the changes that occur in an environment by placing himself within it and repeatedly visiting a location with the aid of historical documents and reference materials, rather than reproducing the results of an incident. This exhibition spotlights the “divergence,” “distortion,” and “disruption” that continually occur somewhere through Tsuyuguchi’s major series *Natural History* and *Place Names*.

Major solo exhibition: Natural History (nap gallery, Tokyo, 2019), On Natural History - Hokkaido, Fukushima, Tokushima (CAI01, Sapporo, 2014), Place Names (LIGHT WORKS, Yokohama, 2002)

Major group exhibition: Azamino Contemporary vol.9 Uncertain Landscape (Yokohama Civic Art Gallery Azamino [Gallery 1 and 2], 2018), Sapporo International Art Festival (2014), Snowscape Moere 7, Reproducing Landscapes (Moerenuma Park, Sapporo, 2012), Non-sect Radical, Contemporary Photography III (Yokohama Museum of Art, 2004)

Artist’s website: <http://www.fremen.biz/>

## **Law Yuk-mui**

Born 1982 in Hong Kong, where she remains based.

With a focus on the landscape and geography of Hong Kong, her home country and a place where various races and cultures intersect, Law Yuk-mui creates richly poetic works reflecting that history and rapid social change.

*Pastiche* (2019) is a video work that layers complex and vividly emotional connections among humans and plants over the geopolitical identity of Hong Kong. At the climax, where emotional shifts of sorrow, joy, and love are expressed through gesture, sound, and song, words by the artist and quotations from plays and

poetry form a montage, creating an effect that oscillates between the visual and the linguistic.

Major solo exhibitions: From Whence the Waves Came (Art Basel Hong Kong, commissioned by Parasite, 2018), Victoria East (Videotage, Cattle Depot Artist Village, Hong Kong, 2017)

Major group exhibitions: medialogue: Pastiche (Hong Kong Visual Arts Center, 2019-2020), The 23rd ifva Festival, Media Art Category Finalist Exhibition, (Pao Gallery, Hong Kong Art Center, 2017-2018)

Artist's website: [www.lawyukmui.com/](http://www.lawyukmui.com/)

### **mixrice (Cho Jieun, Kim Jungwon, Ko Gyeol)**

Formed in 2002. Based in Seoul, South Korea.

Examining the changes that occur due to migration as well as its traces and evoked memories, mixrice collaborates with communities or individuals in very specific circumstances to create work across a range of media, from photography to video, text, animation, and more.

*The Vine Chronicle* (2016) is a body of video, photographic, print, and graffiti works, following the trajectories of trees transplanted when the land at their original locations was redeveloped. It hints at the issue of development that disregards sustainability to interfere with not only the roots, trunks, and branches of plants or trees, but also the natural and social environments that encompass humankind.

Major solo exhibition: Migrating Flavours (Eastside Projects, Birmingham, UK, 2018), Traversal project – mixrice report: welcome, my friend! (Artspace Pool, Seoul, 2010), A Dish Antenna (Alternative space Poo, Seoul, 2009)

Major group exhibition: Migration – Speaking Nearby (Asia Cultural Center, Gwangju, 2019), Korean Art Prize (National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul, 2016), Culture City of East Asia 2017 Kyoto

Artist's website: <http://mixrice.org/>

### **Uriel Orlow**

Born 1973, in Zurich, Switzerland. Based in London and Lisbon.

Through exhaustive archival research and on-site fieldwork as part of the creative process, Uriel Orlow turns his attention to things neglected by history or art, making work that evokes memory through space. The exhibition introduces five works from the body of work *Theatrum Botanicum* made between 2015 and 2018. These works decipher South Africa's historical and contemporary entanglements with Europe from the perspective of plants exploring trade of goods and exchange of knowledge during apartheid and into the present.

His recent project *Learning from Artemisia* (2019) surveys the history of the titular plant, which is cultivated as antimalarial medicine, opening up new possibilities for artistic intervention in history in the form of constructing sustainable relationships of cooperation between an artist and local women's cooperative in Congo.

Major solo exhibitions: *Learning from Artemisia* (La Loge, Brussels, 2020), *Soil Affinities Les* (Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers, Paris, 2018), *Mafavuke's Trial and Other Plant Stories* (The Showroom, London, 2016)

Major group exhibitions: Lubumbashi Biennale (2019), Manifesta 12, Palermo (2018), the 13th Sharjah Biennale (2017). He presented a collaborative work with Mikhail Karikis at the 2nd Aichi Triennale, Nagoya (2013).

Artist's website: <https://urielorlow.net/>

### **Yoichi Kamimura**

Born in 1982, in Chiba Prefecture, where he remains based.

Yoichi Kamimura searches for ways to perceive the landscape through the visual or auditory senses, and approaches environments around the world via field recordings and, based on the materials and concepts he attains there, creates installations, paintings, sound performances, sound art, and more. Interpreting field recording as what he calls "meditative hunting," he examines the ambiguous relationship between humankind and nature by the means of that act.

For this exhibition, the artist has made a new installation *Breathe You* that fills the entire space with a meditative soundscape comprising various environmental noises produced by drift ice, the cries of marine life, and a mixture of human breathing or whistling that recreates the now rarely heard phenomenon of "singing" drift ice.\*

*\*This natural phenomenon occurs when air is pushed out through the gaps in drift ice and makes a sound like human whistling. Due to the decreasing amount of drift ice in the sea, there are today few opportunities to hear this "singing."*

Major solo exhibition: emergencies! 039 (NTT InterCommunication Center, Tokyo, 2019), Temporary Ground (Marueido Japan, Tokyo, 2019, Criterium 82 (Contemporary Art Gallery, Art Tower Mito, 2011)

Major group exhibition: The Drowned World Anchor (Spiral Hall, 2019, Ubiquitous Views (Aomori Contemporary Art Centre, Aomori, 2016)

Artist's website: <http://www.yoichikamimura.com/>

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Opening Hours: 10:00–18:00 (last admission: 17:30)  
Admission: ¥900  
Free of charge for high school students and younger, seniors over 70, the disabled and one accompanying adult. Student card or other age identification required.  
First Friday of every month: special discounts for students and senior citizens. Admission for college students and seniors aged 65–69 is ¥100  
Organized by: Mito Arts Foundation  
In association with: Austrian Embassy Tokyo / Austrian Cultural Forum Tokyo, Embassy of Switzerland  
Supported by grants from: The Japan Arts Council  
Supported by: Genelec Japan Inc., Suntory Holdings Limited  
Curator: Oko Goto (Curator, Contemporary Art Center, Art Tower Mito)

## **Related Program**

### **Events for All Ages: Autumn Michikusa Lab**

In this series of workshops, participants can join Ken Kitano in making cyanotypes with plants found by the side of the road, and can join Fumio Wada in making essential oils with original fragrances based on their impressions of the artworks in the exhibition.

Dates: October 24, 25, 31, and November 1

Venue: Workshop room, Contemporary Art Gallery, Art Tower Mito, etc.

## **OTHER PROJECTS** during the exhibition period

### **Criterium 97 Ryosuke Higo**

Ryosuke Higo is an artist whose work questions and examines conventions and common sense. His work has focused on the gestures, behavior, and speech patterns we make unconsciously in everyday life. Based on a phantom island mistakenly shown on Google Maps, the exhibition considers the fictions, and their propagation, that society and individuals both intentionally and unintentionally create, featuring works that attempt to pass this on in new forms.

Dates: August 29 – November 8, 2020

Venue: Gallery 9, Contemporary Art Gallery, Art Tower Mito

Organized by: Mito Arts Foundation

Curated by: Yu Iseki (Curator, Contemporary Art Center, Art Tower Mito)

\*Criterium comes from the Latin “criterion,” which means a standard. Every exhibition is formed jointly by the artist and the curator.

\* Entrance fee for Criterium is included in the admission of the exhibition.

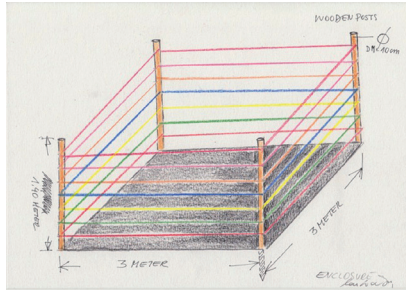
## Press Image Stock

The images are available for press purpose. Please contact Torii at the office.

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Criterion97



1. Lois Weinberger, *Burning and walking*, documentation of documenta X, 1997  
Courtesy of Studio Lois Weinberger and Krinzinger Gallery, Vienna \*referential image

2. Lois Weinberger, drawing for *Wild Enclosure*, 2020, Courtesy of Studio Lois Weinberger and Krinzinger Gallery, Vienna

3. Keiji Tsuyuguchi, *Minamisoma, Itagawaura*, Tohoku Pacific Coast, from the series "Natural History", 2015, chromogenic print

4. Law Yuk-mui, *Pastiche*, 2019, 3 channel video

5. mixrice, *The Vine Chronicle*, 2016, 2 channel video

6. Uriel Orlow, *Muthi*, 2016-18, single channel video

7. Yoichi Kamimura, *phantom power*, 2019, water generated by melting drift ice, glass, metal plate, speaker, sound (photo: Ken Kato) \*reference image

8. Yoichi Kamimura, drawing for *Breathe You*, 2020

【Criterion97】  
Ryosuke Higo, *Sandy Island*, 2020, mixed media

## NOTES

### Contact:

Contemporary Art Center, Art Tower Mito

1-6-8, Goken-cho, Mito City, Ibaraki, 310-0063, Japan

Tel: +81 (0)29 227 8120 / Fax: +81 (0)29 227 8130     <https://www.arttowermito.or.jp/>

Regarding the exhibition, contact Oko Goto (Curator, Contemporary Art Center, Art Tower Mito)

Regarding educational programs, contact Junko Moriyama, Maiko Sato (Educational program coordinators)

For public relations and publicity of photographs, contact Kaori Torii (PR).

Email: [cacpr@arttowermito.or.jp](mailto:cacpr@arttowermito.or.jp)

Information is available on ATM twitter account     [http://twitter.com/MITOGEL\\_Gallery](http://twitter.com/MITOGEL_Gallery)

Requests regarding publication of information:

1. Please make sure to use the official title of the exhibition, along with the exhibition dates.
2. When using photographs, please put captions, credits and any other information attached to a photograph adjacent to the photo.
3. The phone number of Art Tower Mito to be published is +81 (0)29 227 8111 only.
4. Please send Kaori Torii a copy of the VTR, newspaper or magazine for our archives.
5. For interviews with an artist or to photograph the exhibition, please contact Kaori Torii in advance.

Requests may not be accepted under some circumstances.

## ACCESS

### Train:

Take the Limited Express on the JR Joban Line from Tokyo Station (also from Shinagawa and Ueno Station) in Tokyo, and get off at Mito Station. The Express runs every 30 min. The ride takes 72-84 min.(¥3,890)

From Mito Station, take a bus for Daiku-machi from the stop no. 4, 5, 6 or 7 at the north exit bus terminal and get off at Izumi-cho 1-chome outside Keisei Department Store, the forth stop. (¥170) It is a 2 min. walk to Art Tower Mito.

\*Mito Station (the north exit) --> Ichu-zaka --> Minami-machi Ni-chome --> Minami-machi San-chome --> Izumi-cho I-chome

### Highway Bus (Mito-go):

Take a highway bus bound for Mito (via Akatsuka route or Ibarakidaigaku route) from the highway bus terminal located at the Yaesu south gate of Tokyo JR station. (¥2,120)

The ride takes approx. 100 min. Get off at the Izumi-cho 1-chome stop, opposite Keisei Department Store. It is a 2 min. walk to Art Tower Mito.

### Car:

Get off at Mito IC on Joban Highway, and drive toward the city center on the route 50 for about 20 min.

Pay parking is available on the basement level of Art Tower Mito. Gate is at the north side of the main building.

Free for 30 min., ¥200 for an hour and ¥100 for every additional 30 min. Open from 7:00 to 23:00.