

June 2024

Press Release #1

Mai Yamashita + Naoto Kobayashi

To Others, and Together With Others



Exhibition Overview

Exhibition Title | Mai Yamashita + Naoto Kobayashi: To Others, and Together With Others

Date | Saturday, July 27 - Sunday, October 6, 2024

Venue | Contemporary Art Gallery and Plaza, Art Tower Mito

Open Hours | 10:00-18:00 (no admittance after 17:30)

Closed | Mondays (except for National holidays) and days following national holidays.

Admission | ¥900. ¥700 for a group of more than 20 people. Free of charge for high-school students and younger, seniors over 70, and the disabled and one accompanying attendant. Student card holders and seniors 65-69 receive a discount rate of ¥100 every first Friday. Student card or other age identification required.

Organized by | Mito Arts Foundation

Funded by a Grant from | JAPAN CENTER FOR LOCAL AUTONOMY, Charitable Trust "Eco Ibaraki Fund"-
Preservation of the Environment, Ibaraki Co-op Consumers Cooperative Environment Fund

Supported by | RO Labo Co.,Ltd., Suntory Holdings Limited, Takuro Someya Contemporary Art, Nakagawa Chemical Inc., Mito Botanical Park

Curated by | Megumi Hatai (Curator, Contemporary Art Center, Art Tower Mito)



Mai Yamashita + Naoto Kobayashi is an art unit active both in Japan and overseas whose practice centers on video works and installations. In the works of Yamashita + Kobayashi, who attempt to build relationships with nature while perceiving it in its unfathomable state as an uncontrollable and uncertain entity, we often tend to encounter situations in which the trivialities of the everyday take on value or are transformed into miraculous events. Such works have the power to subvert viewers' perspectives and values in subtle yet dynamic ways, and at times even change the way they see the world. They can also be regarded as the culmination of the artists' sincere interest in and concern for "others" that encompasses nature and animals, and ultimately, the world itself as a whole.

This exhibition presents a comprehensive overview of the diverse expressions and practices of Yamashita + Kobayashi, including their earliest works and works that have never been presented before in Japan, and in doing so, attempts to unravel the full scope of their artistic endeavors. Additionally, utilizing the characteristics of the site, a new project in the form of a participatory work featuring a series of large flower beds, will be set up in the outdoor plaza of Art Tower Mito over the course of the exhibition period. At a time when the precarious relationship between humans and nature has been visualized through disasters and the pandemic, and as global conflicts continue, the exhibition provides an opportunity to reconsider our relationships with "others," renew people's perception of the world as they see it, and to question the very nature of our individual existence.

Mai Yamashita + Naoto Kobayashi

An art unit consisting of Mai Yamashita (b. 1976, Chiba, Japan) and Naoto Kobayashi (b.1974, Chiba, Japan), which officially commenced its activities in 2001. The unit worked overseas until 2012 following the completion of their studies at Tokyo University of the Arts, and is currently based in Chiba Prefecture, Japan. They have held museum solo exhibitions at Kunstverein Göttingen (Germany, 2011), Oyama City Kurumaya Museum of Art (Tochigi, 2015), Kurobe City Art Museum (Toyama, 2021), and Chiba Prefectural Museum of Art (Chiba, 2023) among others, and have participated in numerous international biennales and triennales including Art Setouchi 2019.

<http://www.yamashita-kobayashi.com>



Photo: Ryohei Yanagihara

【Exhibition Overview】

●A large-scale solo exhibition that comprehensively introduces the work of the internationally active art unit Mai Yamashita + Naoto Kobayashi, from their earliest works to most recent.

This exhibition is the largest solo exhibition to date to showcase the video installations and other artistic endeavors of the art unit Mai Yamashita + Naoto Kobayashi, who create works through their interactions with others, including plants, animals, and nature. The exhibition presents a comprehensive display of approximately 120 pieces from 35 series of works by Yamashita + Kobayashi, spanning from their earliest creations to most recent, including those that have never been shown before in Japan, and in doing so, attempts to unravel the full scope of their practice. Their new work, “What Humans Do To and Together With Flowers,” conceived and produced for this exhibition, will make full use of the museum’s outdoor plaza, taking into account the views from the tower, in a refreshing attempt to engage with the architectural elements of the museum from a new and unprecedented perspective.

●New Participatory Work Presented in the Museum’s Outdoor Plaza

For their new work “What Humans Do To and Together With Flowers,” to be presented at this exhibition, large flowerbeds will be created in the outdoor plaza of Art Tower Mito. Each flowerbed make up a kanji character measuring 13 meters square and 1.5 meters thick, and when viewed from above the museum’s tower, the word “大丈夫” (it’s okay) appears on the lawn. In this work, the artist proposes a unique way for viewers to interact and engage with the piece, inviting them to freely bring their own flowers and plant them in the museum’s flowerbeds. A large-scale flower-planting session will be held each month over the course of the exhibition to adorn the flowerbeds of “大” “丈” and “夫” with flower seedlings, one kanji character at a time. Approximately 1,000 flower seedlings are required for each character. This is a participatory work that allows visitors to go beyond the role of a mere viewer and actively involve themselves in the work through the experience of “planting flowers.”

●Formation and Ongoing Activities of the “Flowerbed Club”

A “Flowerbed Club” was formed by recruiting people who would be involved in the production of the flowerbeds for the new work, from preparations prior to the exhibition, to deciding on the color scheme of the flowers, the management and operation of the flower-planting sessions, and continuing to tend to the flowers.

As the world faces a variety of problems such as pandemics, natural disasters, and conflicts, and the state of affairs remains unstable, artists are becoming increasingly politically conscious in the production of their work. The word “politics” is defined in the Kojien (widely regarded as the most authoritative and comprehensive dictionary of Japanese) as “activities conducted to(wards) and with others.” Yamashita + Kobayashi, whose previous works have involved other living creatures and nature, reinterprets “others” as “flowers,” using this as the title of their new work. The artist sees the creation of flowerbeds as a form of small politics, and through collaborations with local residents, aims to foster a sense that everything “will be okay.”

※The club’s activities are introduced on the exhibition website

【Related Events for the New Work: “What Humans Do To and Together With Flowers”】

Location : Plaza

Participation fee : Free

No advanced reservation required. All visitors are welcome to participate.

Opening Artist Talk

Date : July 27th (Sat.) at 16:30-17:00

Exhibiting artists Mai Yamashita + Naoto Kobayashi will talk about their new work on site.

Flower Planting Session for 「大」

Dates : July 27th (Sat.) and 28th (Sun.) at 17:00-18:00

Flower Planting Session for 「丈」

Dates : August 17th (Sat.) and 18th (Sun.) at 17:00-18:00

Flower Planting Session for 「夫」

Dates : September 7th (Sat.) and 8th (Sun.) at 17:00-18:00

Flower seedlings will be provided. Participants are advised to each bring a shovel and work gloves. The sessions will be postponed in the event of stormy weather but will proceed as planned in light rain. In addition to the sessions listed above, visitors are also welcome to bring their own flower seedlings and plant them in the flowerbeds during the exhibition period.

Flower Give-Away Session

A give-away session will be held in correspondence to the exhibition's closing, where visitors are invited to freely take home the flowers from the flowerbeds.

Dates : October 5th (Sat.) and 6th (Sun.) at 10:00-14:00

What to bring : Container or bag to take flowers home, shovel, and work gloves

【Related Programs】

Gallery Tour with the Artist

Dates: July 28th (Sun.), August 18th (Sun.), September 8th (Sun.) at 14:30-16:00

Location : Contemporary Art Gallery

Capacity : 20 persons per session (reservation required, first-come-first-served basis)

Gallery Tour for Parents with Babies

Dates : September 1st (Sun.) and September 4th (Wed.) at 10:30-12:00

Location : Contemporary Art Gallery

Target: Pre-school children and their family

Capacity : 5 families per session (reservation required, first-come-first-served basis)

Fee : 1500 yen for guardians only (includes admission to the exhibition / general admission fee applicable from second accompanying guardian)

Weekend Gallery Talk

CAC (Contemporary Art Center) gallery volunteers take visitors on a guided tour to explore the exhibition together.

Dates: Saturdays from August 10th onwards, starting at 14:30approx. 40min.

Venue: Contemporary Art Gallery Fee: free *exhibition ticket is required.

【Press Image Stock】 The images are available for press purpose. Please contact Torii at the office.

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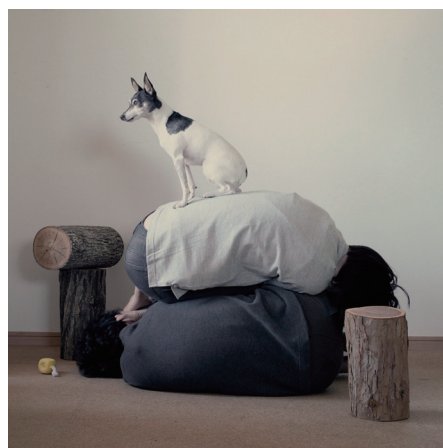
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1. Image sketch for *What Humans Do To and Together With Flowers*, 2024
2. *Candy*, 2005
3. *A Spoon Made From The Land*, 2009 (Exhibition view, Yokohama Triennale 2011) photo: Kei Okano
4. *infinity*, 2006
5. *Restart - as an Alien*, 2001
6. *Cairn*, 2018

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7. *How Beautiful The World Could Be*, 2019 (Exhibition view, Art Setouchi 2019)
 8. *infinity~mirage*, 2021/2023-
 9. *Present (for Giraffe)*, 2004
 10. *NC_045512*, 2023 (Exhibition view, Chiba Prefectural Museum of Art) photo: Shinya Kigure

NOTES

CONTACT

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Regarding the exhibition, contact Megumi Hatai (Curator, Contemporary Art Center, Art Tower Mito).

Regarding educational programs, contact Junko Moriyama, Yoshihiro Nakagawa (Educational program coordinators)

For public relations and publicity of photographs, contact Kaori Torii (PR). Email: cacpr@arttowermito.or.jp

Information is available on Art Tower Mito's X account http://twitter.com/MITOGEI_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 Torii Kaori a copy of the VTR, newspaper or magazine for our archives.
5. For interviews with the 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 Joban Line from Ueno Station (also operating from Shinagawa and Tokyo Station), Tokyo, and get off at Mito Station. The Express runs every 30 min. The ride takes 65-85 min. From Mito Station, take a bus from stop no. 4, 5, 6 or 7 at the North Exit bus terminal and get off at "Izumi-cho 1-chome," the fourth stop. Walk toward the direction of Mito station and cross the street (route #50) on the first crossing. Walk ahead along the narrow lane in parallel to the crossing. It is a 2-min. walk to Art Tower Mito.

For details, please contact East Japan Railway Company (JR). Tel: +81 (0)29 221 2836 <http://www.jreast.co.jp/>

Highway Bus:

Take a highway bus bound for Mito (via Akatsuka route or Ibarakidaigaku route) from stop No. 4 at the highway bus terminal located at the Yaesu South Gate of Tokyo station. The ride takes approx. 100 min. Get off at the "Izumicho 1-chome" stop. It is a 2-min. walk to Art Tower Mito.

For details, contact Ibaraki Kotsu (Transport). Tel: +81 (0)29 251 2331 <http://www.ibako.co.jp/>

Car:

Get off at Mito IC on Joban Highway, and drive toward the city center on route 50 for about 20 min. Art Tower Mito is on the crossing of route 349.

Pay parking is available (underground parking and multi-story parking). The gates are located on the north side of the east end of the Art Tower Mito building. Free for first 30 min., then ¥200 for an hour and ¥100 for every additional 30 min. For highway tolls and routes, please refer to E-NEXCO Drive Plaza "DoRaPuRa."

Tel: +81 (0)570 024 024 <http://www.driveplaza.com/>