

Fukushima, Natsuko, *Japan Pavilion at the 60th Venice Biennale: Yuko Mohri Composes Peace in the City of Water*, Tokyo Art Beat, 16 May 2024



# Japan Pavilion at the 60th Venice Biennale: Yuko Mohri Composes Peace in the City of Water

A closer look at the Japan Pavilion at the 60th Venice Biennale. Yuko Mohri takes a curious approach to contemporary conflicts and global crises.

## Yuko Mohri: Compose

The 60th International Art Exhibition, the Venice Biennale, runs from April 20 through November 24 at the Giardini and Arsenale venues.

The Japan Pavilion features *Compose* by contemporary artist Yuko Mohri, curated by Sook-Kyung Lee (Director of the Whitworth Art Gallery, University of Manchester). This is the first time in history that a foreign curator has overseen the Japan Pavilion.

Located in the Giardini, the Japan Pavilion is a unique architectural structure designed by Takamasa Yoshizaka, who studied under Wajiro Kon and modern architecture pioneer Le Corbusier. Mohri started her research in Venice last summer and spent several months interacting with the architecture and its surroundings, turning the Japanese Pavilion into her studio.

## The leaky ceiling in the City of Water

Upon arriving at the Japan Pavilion and entering the open-air piloti, one is immediately surprised. A square hole in the pavilion's center allows visitors to look down into the piloti from the second-floor exhibition space. Usually covered with glass, the hole is left open, allowing the artwork to extend up and down. The structure is also connected to the outside by a second hole in the ceiling. Like a Mobius loop, everything is connected, erasing all boundaries. This is a fitting use of space for Yuko Mohri, whose work seeks to generate change that the environment or humans cannot control. It rained heavily the day before the press preview, but Mohri was enthusiastic to take on the challenge, as the openings in the structure invite not only rain but also sunlight, wind, and ambient sounds into the exhibition.

The exhibition centers on the artist's most famous series, *Moré Moré (Leaky)*. However, it is a new work unique to Venice. The starting point was the fieldwork series *Moré Moré Tokyo (Leaky Tokyo)*, during which Mohri found and photographed emergency measures taken by subway staff with buckets, hoses, plastic bottles, and other tools to stop water leaks in Tokyo subway stations. *Moré Moré (Leaky)* continues the fieldwork and is constructed as an installation with a circulating water system that intentionally causes leaks.

For this exhibition, Mohri used various everyday objects obtained from antique shops, furniture stores, and flea markets in the



"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



Japan Pavilion Photo by Tokyo Art Beat



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Venetian suburbs. The circulating flow of water is presented as a kinetic sculpture. Although Mouri has been working with water as a material for a long time, she explains that the first thing that came to her mind when planning the exhibition was the floods in Venice, the city of water. The exhibition is cheerful, humorous, and elegant yet addresses fundamental climate change issues.

## Composing harmony with local fruits

Mohri also approached local Venetian grocers and farmers and purchased fruit for her installation. *Decomposition* generates drone sounds and flickering lights from electrodes inserted into fruit, which convert their ever-changing moisture into electric signals. The decaying fruit is then collected in the compost bins in the pilotis and is transformed into fertilizer for the plants in the Giardini.

Commenting on the exhibition's title, Sook-Kyung Lee writes in the statement

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.

*Compose* is a mixture of sounds and visuals, as well as the scent of ripening fruit, the fresh spring breeze in the Giardini, the glowing sunlight, and the voices of visitors, all creating a unique time and space. As the seasons change from spring to autumn, the exhibition will also change its appearance.



Yuko Mohri in Venice Photo by kugeyasuhide



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