

The 15th shiseido art egg

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Gravity and Radiance Umi Ishihara

SHISEIDO GALLERY

Duration: September 14 (Tue)–October 10 (Sun), 2021
Weekdays: 11:00–19:00
Sundays and holidays: 11:00–18:00
Closed Mondays (including national holidays falling on Monday)
Organized by Shiseido Company, Limited

*Content and schedule are subject to change depending on the status of Covid 19 infection.

“shiseido art egg” is an open-call program that offers up-and-coming artists the chance to exhibit at the Shiseido Gallery, now dedicated to the discovery and creation of new kinds of beauty for over a century. This 15th edition of the program received 243 applications from all over Japan, including, once again, a large number of extraordinarily creative proposals making optimal use of the Shiseido Gallery exhibition spaces. From these, the artists Umi Ishihara, Mika Kan, and Kayako Nakashima were chosen for their unconventional takes on today’s new values and aesthetics, with solo exhibitions by these artists being staged in turn at the Shiseido Gallery from September to December.

All three artists came up with proposals that subtly interrogate the dangers of these times of uncertainty and instability, look at potential sources of hope, and encourage us to rethink conventional notions of “the art experience.” Perhaps their efforts to share, by exhibiting, experiences that only art can offer, in turn offer valuable clues for the generation of new values at a time when the future is so hard to see.

Umi Ishihara, the first artist to present her work, makes experimental films and video installations on the themes of love, gender, personal histories, and society. Revolving around actual events, and constructed with the addition of fictive and narrative elements, Ishihara’s works neatly capture various aspects of modern society, and the subtle workings of the human heart. In recent years she has expanded her presence and profile in the art and film domains, notably through selection for Britain’s “Bloomberg New Contemporaries 2019” exhibition for emerging artists, and by having two of her films chosen simultaneously for the International Film Festival Rotterdam.

For this exhibition Ishihara joined formerly needy individuals who gather at a church in Kita-Kyushu along with church staff to put on a play with a biblical theme, which she filmed. In the large gallery, for the section devoted to this play we screen the artist’s video, interspersed with interviews with the actors. The interviews show formerly struggling people from various backgrounds, and those who support them, talking about their lives. An attempt by an artist whose works to date have incorporated her personal experience and real events, to tackle the realities of others, this work is also influenced by Simone Weil’s *Gravity and Grace*, and according to Ishihara, explores the nature of suffering and forgiveness.

Ishihara’s exhibit proposal is about what could be described as the hard labor of making a film in conjunction with the congregation of a church while coming to grips with social realities along the way, and was selected in eager anticipation of the kind of gestures potentially revealed in a video installation that replaces Weil’s experience* with one at a church in Kita-Kyushu, intersecting theater conducted with the congregation of the church with reality, as a kind of metafiction.
This exhibition centering on a video work, unfolding into an installation in the smaller gallery, addresses such universal themes as pain and the meaning of life.

*From jury comments by Toshiharu Ito: “Ill and exhausted after an extended period in unskilled factory jobs, Weil headed for Portugal, where in a deserted village one night, she had her first personal encounter with the divine, and became convinced that beauty was the sole road to truth. This world is governed by gravity, always, relentlessly heading downward, and even if we try to diverge from this, our spirits, governed by gravity, will err repeatedly. So rather than attempting to elevate ourselves, the preferable course is to wait and hope. It is only by divine favor that we can avoid falling, and allow ourselves to soar.”

At the time I suddenly decided to go live in Kita-Kyushu, I was a lost soul, having no longer any idea how to go on with my life in these chaotic circumstances. I was just plain tired. I think I returned to a place that was not even mine originally, relying solely on memories of living in the church a few years earlier, taken there by a friend, because without prayer or something like it, I could no longer stand being alive.

The father of the friend who had brought me to Kita-Kyushu was a pastor who also gave practical help to those in need, and I too gradually started going to church. Spending time with those at the church, in a place where I still knew few people, I found myself wanting to make a work with the people here, because documenting the lives of the sinners who congregated at this church, damaged yet deserving of love, struck me as an important thing to do.

Gravity and Radiance is a video installation composed of a Passion play depicting the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ made with people from the church, of all ages and backgrounds, plus interviews with those people. Just being alive can make you feel as if gravity is pulling you under, but I made this work to celebrate that moment when prayer releases you from gravity just for an instant, allowing you to float freely.

Umi Ishihara

① *Gravity and Halo* 2021 HD video 3min
Cast: Tameharu Shimobeppu
Music: Yusaku Arai

② *Gravity and Radiance* 2021 HD video 30min

Start time:
11:00 / 11:30 / 12:00 / 12:30 / 13:00 / 13:30 / 14:00 / 14:30 /
15:00 / 15:30 / 16:00 / 16:30 / 17:00 / 17:30 / 18:00* / 18:30*
*Weekdays and Saturday only

Cast: Kiyoshi Kikukawa	Jesus
Shinji Mori	Judah, man
Nobuko Fujita	Angel
Fukuto Ishibashi	Angel
Kanna Murakami	Apostle, woman, Angel
Tameharu Shimobeppu	Apostle, man, Angel
Nobuyuki Nishihara	Apostle, man, Mary Magdalene
Masayo Kawauchi	Apostle, woman
Tomoko Okuda	Apostle, woman
Tomoshi Okuda	Priest

Director: Umi Ishihara
Producer: Akira Okuda
Director of photography: Saki Yagi
Sound: Takuya Kawakami
Production: Kinu Kakimoto

2nd Camera: Terukazu Sugino (TONPETTY Inc.)
Production designer: Tetsutaro Nakamura
Production designer: Hanako Maeda
Gaffer: Yoshitaka Shimamura
Best boy: Hikaru Ijichi
Hair and Makeup: Ayano Ura
Hair and Makeup: Uran Takenaka
Costumes: Tatsuhiko Tsukano
General affairs: Mizuki Kimura
Coordinator: Miki Tanise (Pikaluck)
Cooperation: Toshihiko Kuwashima / Miki Tsukano /
Higashiyahata Christ Church

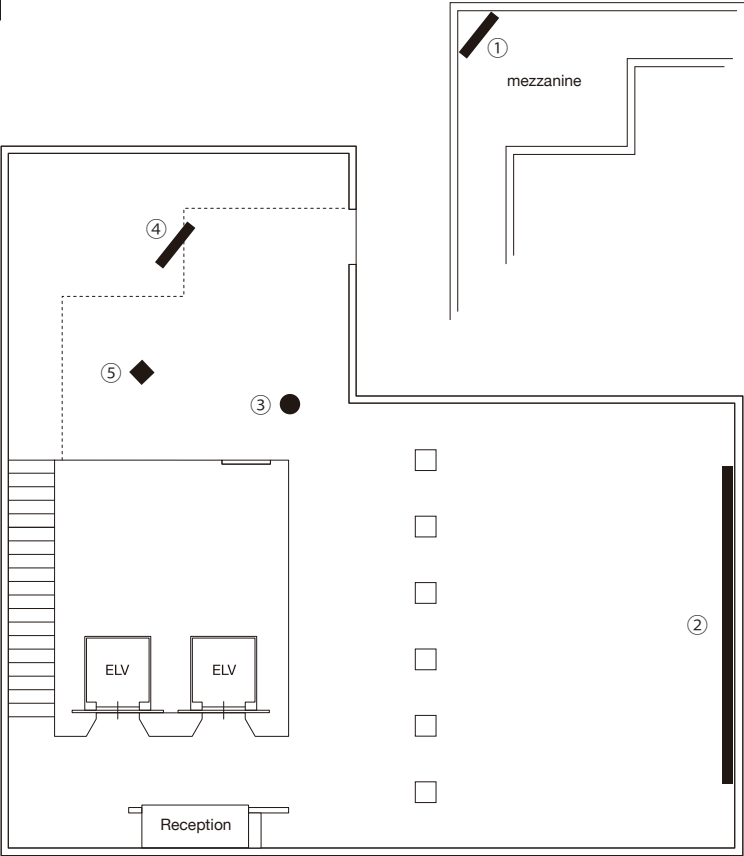
Location: Edamitsu Honmachi Shopping Street Iron Theater

*Please do not photograph video work and exhibition staff with angel costume.

③ *Gravity and Fluctuation* 2021 Moving light

④ *Rite of the Apostles* 2021 HD video (loop)
Cast: Kinu Kakimoto

⑤ *Body of Christ* 2021 Bread



Umi Ishihara

1993 Born in Tokyo
2018 BFA Intermedia Art, Tokyo University of the Arts, Japan
2021 MA Artist’s Film, Goldsmiths University of London, UK (leave of absence)
Currently lives in Fukuoka Prefecture

Selected film festival screenings

2019 *Janitor of Lunacy* BBC, BFI Southbank (London)
2019 *The Garden Apartment / The Pioneer*, International Film Festival Rotterdam (Rotterdam)

Selected solo shows

2017 “Mire of Dickhead Demon,” TAV Gallery (Tokyo)

Selected group exhibitions

2021 “Digitalis or First-Person Camera | Umi Ishihara, Maiko Endo, Yokna Hasegawa, Mayumi Hosokura,”
Takuro Someya Contemporary Art (Tokyo)
2019 Bloomberg New Contemporaries, South London Gallery (London)