Naho Kawabe “Fern Flower”

Duration : 4/4 (Sat.) - 5/3 (Sun., National Holiday), 2026

Opening Reception : 4/4 (Sat.) 6-8pm

Venue：WAITINGROOM (1F-2-14-2 Suido, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo 112-0005, JAPAN)

*We are open on Wed. to Sat. 12-7pm and Sun. 12-5pm

*Closed on Mon., Tue. and National Holidays / We will open on 5/3 (Sun., National Holiday).

*Artist, Naho Kawabe will be present at the opening reception on 4/4, Sat. 6-8pm and the exhibition opens at noon before the reception.

WAITINGROOM (Tokyo) is pleased to present “Fern Flower,” a solo exhibition by Naho Kawabe, on view from Saturday, April 4 to Sunday, May 3, 2026. Kawabe, known for her careful research and use of diverse materials, has explored themes such as the history of the coal mining industry and migration through techniques including video, collage, and installation. In this new works exhibition, Kawabe reflects on the complex relationship between ferns, industrial energy, and labor. The remains of fern plants that lived during the Carboniferous period transformed into fossil fuels, which in turn became the energy powering large-scale infrastructures that have continued to develop since modern times. Engaging both time and space, Kawabe translates this history poetically and theatrically, inviting viewers to explore and imagine the interplay between past, present, and future. The solo exhibition is centered on new installation works combining charcoal and electrical materials, as well as two series of photo-collage works. These are complemented by a charcoal-based two-dimensional work and a selection of drawings. We invite you to take this opportunity to view the new works by Kawabe, whose practice has received significant recognition both in Japan and internationally, including participation in the Aichi Triennale 2025 and the receipt of the 4th Fukuoka Art Award.

Fern and Carnation - *Immigrés, donc travailleurs*, 2026, lithograph on c-print, set of 9 (each 400 × 400 mm)

About the artist, Naho Kawabe

Born in Fukuoka in 1976. She graduated from Musashino Art University in 1999 and University of Fine Arts of Hamburg with MFA degree in 2006. Currently lives and works in Germany and Japan. Kawabe's practice centers on the transformation of materials. Working across media, she creates video, photography, installations combining multiple objects, as well as sculptures using glass panels and coal. In her process, careful research plays a crucial role, as she places strong emphasis on the social contexts of materials. By examining these contexts such as their origins, surrounding historical events, and contemporary issues, Kawabe “transforms” materials that carry multiple layers of information through her works. This act of "transformation"—whether through dismantling, recombining, or allowing materials to evoke other motifs—forms the basis of her artistic practice. By carrying out these transformations with her own hands, Kawabe continues to explore ways of giving form to the invisible conditions shaping our world today. Kawabe is active both in Japan and internationally. Her recent exhibitions include “The 4th Fukuoka Art Award Winners Exhibition” (2026, Fukuoka Art Museum, Fukuoka), Aichi Triennale 2025 “A Time Between Ashes and Roses” (2025, Aichi Arts Center, Aichi Prefectural Ceramic Museum, Seto City, Aichi), group exhibition “Japaner im Revier Aufbruch ins Fremde?” (2024, Japanisches Kulturinstitut, Köln, Germany), group exhibition “WINDS OF ARTIST IN RESIDENCE 2023 3rd Period: Urban Phenomenology—Just what is it that makes our future so uncertain, so appealing?” (2024, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Fukuoka), solo exhibition “Black and Green” (2022, TOM REICHSTEIN CONTEMPORARY, Hamburg, Germany), Naho Kawabe, Utamura Hanae “STRATA” (2022, WAITINGROOM, Tokyo), group exhibition “Exhibition of New Collections” (2022, Fukuoka Art Museum, Fukuoka), solo exhibition “Blooming Black” (2019, Boxes Art Museum, Guangzhou, China), solo exhibition “Save for the Noon” (2018, WAITINGROOM, Tokyo), solo exhibition “In Other Words” (2018, konya-gallery, Fukuoka) and many others.

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Where Prehistory Meets the Future, Records Entwine with Memories

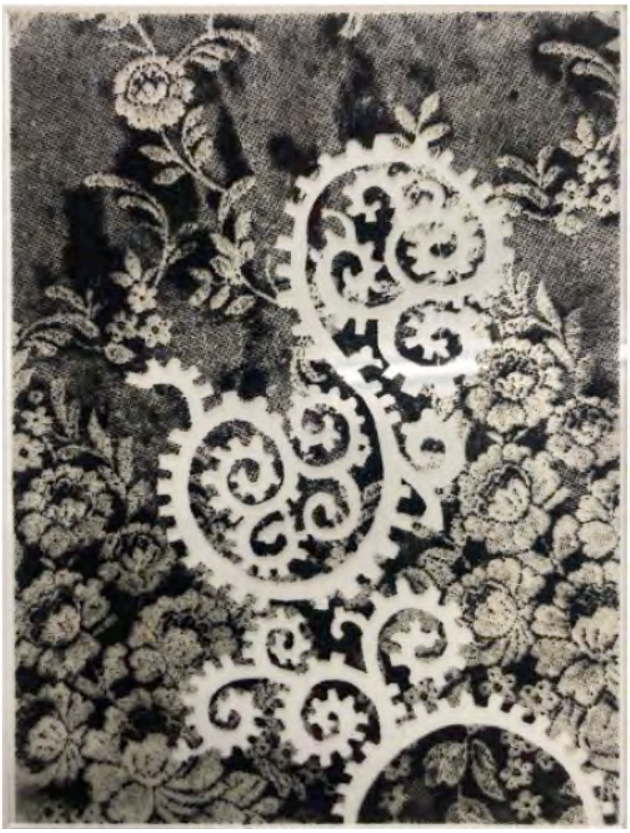
Around 300 million years ago, the Earth experienced a verdant era dominated by massive ferns. Over the course of millennia, the remains of these plants were compressed into layers of coal, and during the 18th and 19th centuries, the Industrial Revolution transformed this natural resource into a vast energy force that reshaped the world's infrastructure, economies, and everyday life. Even today, these ancient ferns continue to be burned, and the energy they release still courses through our world.

Ferns reproduce via spores and do not bloom, which makes the title "Fern Flower" inherently paradoxical. Kawabe reflects on the possibility of ferns flowering—that is, on the (im)possibility of achieving an idealized utopia through the continuous consumption of fossil fuels. She observes: "The promise of liberation from labor through infinite energy, and the emergence of a happy utopia through technological progress—perhaps such promises of fulfillment were like the fern flower." The ferns that became the origin of the modern myth of progress, and the coal industry that laid the foundation for contemporary technological society, are central to Kawabe's new installation works. Combining coal and electrical materials, her works bring this complex entanglement of nature and technology into a tangible spatial experience.

At the same time, Kawabe's long-standing interest in migration connects the centuries-long history of the coal industry—and its surrounding global political and economic dynamics—to the everyday lives of individuals. Since 2022, she has been researching Japanese workers who migrated to Germany to work in the coal industry. Her latest photo-collage series draws on this research, combining 1960s photographs of the workers with period magazines and newspapers, as well as contemporary color images. Through these works, she brings to life the personal stories of Japanese workers from that era, weaving them into an imagined family album. In this series, Kawabe employs lithography to symbolically intertwine ferns and carnations, linking industrial forces with the lived experiences. Carnations have historically symbolized resistance and labor movements. By combining them in a chimeric form, the individual lives of miners are drawn out from the broader historical framework of coal-mining and fold back into it again.

Within the cycles generated throughout Kawabe's creative process, individual experiences and history reflect and converse with one another in an ongoing dialogue. Traversing diverse materials and motifs, her carefully constructed works invite audiences to imagine the history and future of energy, technology, and ecology, while tracing the imprint of labor and industry within these larger currents.

Japaner im Revier, 2024, digital c-print, set of 3 (each 420 × 297 mm)



Arabesque, 2020, charcoal, lacquer spray, glass, 413 × 313 mm

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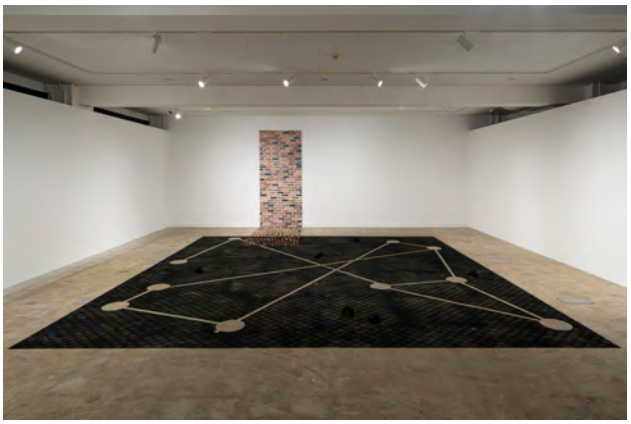
Naho Kawabe

Aichi Triennale 2025 “A Time Between Ashes and Roses”
(2025, Aichi Arts Center, Aichi Prefectural Ceramic Museum, Seto City, Aichi)
Installation View, Photo: ToLoLo studio
© Aichi Triennale Organizing Committee



Group Exhibition “WINDS OF ARTIST IN RESIDENCE 2023 3rd Period:
Urban Phenomenology —Just what is it that makes our future so uncertain, so appealing?”
(2024, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Fukuoka)
Installation View, Photo: Ittoku Kawasaki

1976 Born in Fukuoka, Japan
1999 Musashino Art University, Tokyo, Bachelor
2006 University of Fine Arts of Hamburg, Diploma
Currently lives and works both in Germany and Japan.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2022
Black and Green, TOM REICHSTEIN CONTEMPORARY, Hamburg, Germany

2021
1/3 2/3 3/3, Paper Gallery, Pristina, Kosovo
Artist in Quarantine, nachtspeicher23 e.V., Hamburg, Germany

2019
Blooming Black, Boxes Art Museum, Guangzhou, China

2018
Save for the Noon, WAITINGROOM, Tokyo, Japan
In Other Words, konya-gallery, Fukuoka, Japan

2017
The Children of Icarus, WAITINGROOM, Tokyo, Japan

2016
delikatelinien, Ermekeilkaserne, Bonn, Germany

2013
Observer Effect, Wassermühle Trittau, Germany
Observer Effect, Galerie du Tableau, Marseille, France
relation, unscharf, STORE contemporary, Dresden, Germany

2012
Blüthenstaub, Port Gallery T, Osaka, Japan

2011
Open Secret: 5th shiseido art egg Award Exhibition, SHISEIDO GALLERY, Tokyo, Japan

2010
Most things happen in the interval, Port Gallery T, Osaka, Japan

2005
Helgoland, Gallery IAF SHOP*, Fukuoka, Japan

2004
dem Anschein nach, Einstellungsraum e.V., Hamburg, Germany

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2026
The 4th Fukuoka Art Award Winners Exhibition, Fukuoka Art Museum, Fukuoka, Japan

2025
Aichi Triennale 2025: A Time Between Ashes and Roses, Aichi Arts Center, Aichi Prefectural Ceramic Museum, Seto City, Aichi, Japan
The Lure of Outer Space Emigration to Moon, Mars, Venus?, Deutsches Auswandererhaus, Bremerhaven, Germany

2024
Micro Salon, CADAN YURAKUCHO, Tokyo, Japan
Kleine Gesellschaft für SCHWARZWEISS, Rote Flora, Hamburg, Germany
Japaner im Revier Aufbruch ins Fremde?, Japanisches Kulturinstitut, Köln, Germany
Natur, Enter. Teil 1, KÜNSTLERHAUS Bergedorf, Hamburg, Germany
WINDS OF ARTIST IN RESIDENCE 2023 3rd Period: Urban Phenomenology —Just what is it that makes our future so uncertain, so appealing?, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Fukuoka, Japan

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GROUP EXHIBITIONS (CONTINUED)

2023
Recent Discovery CADAN × ISETAN ART GALLERY, Isetan Shinjuku Store Main Building 6F art gallery, Tokyo, Japan
de/cipher, Arti et Amicitiae, Amsterdam, the Netherlands
de/cipher, gkg, Bonn, Germany

2022
Naho Kawabe, Utamura Hanae, *STRATA*, WAITINGROOM, Tokyo, Japan
Himekore x Sasakore Enjoy with your five senses! Contemporary Art Collection Exhibition, Susaki Machikado Gallery, Former Miura House, Kochi, Japan
Exhibition of New Collections, Fukuoka Art Museum, Fukuoka, Japan

2021
Kleine Gesellschaft für Weg und Umweg, Hinterconti, Hamburg, Germany
OUT FOR ART Jugend kuratiert, Haerder Center, Lübeck, Germany
ISOLA, Galerie Hengevoss-Dürkop, Humburg, Germany

2020
10TH, WAITINGROOM, Tokyo, Japan
LRRH_Contribution, ZERO FOLD, Cologne, Germany
Aufenthaltswahrscheinlichkeiten, 8. Salon e.V., Hamburg, Germany

2019
Aufenthaltswahrscheinlichkeiten / Stochastic Effect, The Blend Apartments & Artist in Residence, Osaka, Japan
Naho Kawabe, Neil N Alone, *Posture Training*, FLAG studio, Osaka, Japan
RADICAL TWILIGHT, Frappant, Hamburg, Germany
Naho Kawabe, Daniela Wesenberg, *drawings and objects*, Galerie Nanna Preußners, Hamburg, Germany
Fuzzy Dark Spot, Deichtorhallen Sammlung Falckenberg, Hamburg, Germany

2018
Transitions, Frappant, Hamburg, Germany
Landschaft. Gebrochene Idylle, Schloß Agathenburg, Agathenburg, Germany

2017
NEWSPACE, WAITINGROOM, Tokyo, Japan
Naho Kawabe, Hendrik Lorper,*wie es sich ereignet*, Take Maracke & Partner, Kiel, Germany

2016
LIFESTYLES – KUNST aus FUKUOKA, JAPAN, Westwerk, Hamburg, Germany
QMAC Collection Exhibition ON THE WALL, Operation Table, Fukuoka, Japan
Grenzenlos – Himmlische Perspektiven, Schlosskirche, Universität Bonn, Bonn, Germany
The Material of Memory, Frise, Hamburg, Germany
ort_m migration memory, Frappant, Hamburg, Germany
FIELD of OUR IMAGINATION, Westwerk, Hamburg, Germany

2015
Von Wörtern und Räumen, Galerie im Marstall Ahrensburg, Ahrensburg, Germany
Sudden Change of Idea, Union Art Museum, Wuhan, China
Presente / Interchange & Commentary III, Frappant, Hamburg, Germany

2014
IN SEARCH OF CRITICAL IMAGINATION, Fukuoka Art Museum, Fukuoka, Japan
Notausgang am Horizont, 8. Kunstfrühling, Bremen, Germany
How Modular Is Now?, Künstlerhaus Sootbörn, Hamburg, Germany
Can I ask you personal question?, Sichuan University Art Gallery, Chengdu, China
Bien Merci, Galerie Le Couer, Cologne, Germany
Subreale Welten. Photography from Hamburg, Port Gallery T, Osaka, Japan
Naho Kawabe, Jane Brucker, *piece, piece*, Port Gallery T, Osaka, Japan

2013
… und Hamburg, was glaubst Du?, Kunsthaus, Hamburg, Germany
ONE YEAR, Galerie Marstall Ahrensburg, Ahrensburg, Germany

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GROUP EXHIBITIONS (CONTINUED)

2012
boesner art award 2012, Märkisches Museum, Witten, Germany
Moving Surface, Künstlerforum, Bonn, Germany
Video Violence, Kunsthaus, Dresden, Germany
Thermal noise(The Bee to Bee Net), FRISE, Hamburg, Germany
Out of Space, Gallery SUZUKI, Kyoto, Japan
Toi, Port Gallery T, Osaka, Japan

2011
Archive und Geschichte(n), Galerie der Gegenwart, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg,Germany
JCE: Jeune Création Européenne (The Bee to Bee Net), Paris and other cities in Europe

2010
Versus Whiteout (The Bee to Bee Net), Kunsthaus, Hamburg, Germany
come into sight, Port Gallery T, Osaka, Japan

2009
The Bee to Bee Net, Künstlerhaus Sootbörn, Hamburg, Germany
Twinism. 20 years partnercity Hamburg / Osaka, Kunsthaus, Hamburg, Germany / AD&A Gallery, Osaka, Japan
StipendiatenArt, Johann-Friedrich-Danneil-Museum, Salzwedel, Germany

2008
The Bee to Bee Net meets hulahoop, Gallery hulahoop, Hong Kong
Einladung, Mecklenburgisches Künstlerhaus Schloss Plüschow, Germany
Wir nennen es Hamburg, Kunstverein in Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany

2007
Lebe wohl. Suizidalität, Kunst und Gesellschaft, Kunsthaus, Hamburg, Germany

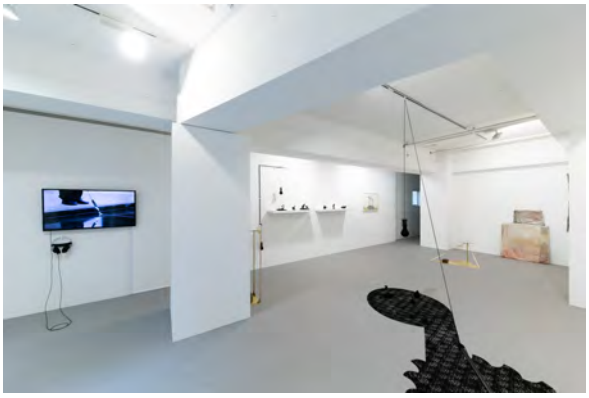
2006
Migration Addict, Sculpture square, Singapore
Joint the dots, Ben Kaufmann Gallery, Berlin, Germany
Plattform#3, Kunstverein Hannover, Hannover, Germany

2005
Wintergarden, Raboisen, Hamburg, Germany
Migration Addict, Warehouse, Shanghai, China

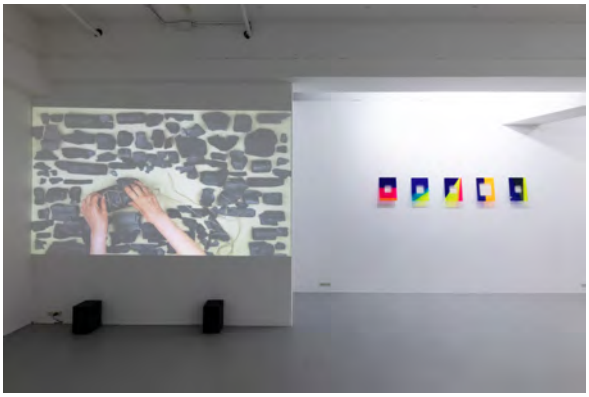
2003
Sweet Tune, Hotel Stadt Altona, Hamburg, Germany

2000
KROM, Setagaya Art Museum Gallery, Tokyo, Japan

1998
World Wide Network Art, Asahi Super Dry Hall, Tokyo, Japan



Naho Kawabe, Utamura Hanae “STRATA” (2022, WAITINGROOM, Tokyo)
Installation View, Photo: Shintaro Yamanaka (Qsyum!)



Solo Exhibition “Save for the Noon” (2018, WAITINGROOM, Tokyo)
Installation View, Photo: Shintaro Yamanaka (Qsyum!)

AWARDS

2026 The 4th Fukuoka Art Award, Excellence Award
2021 Nordhorn Art Award Short list
2012 boesner art award 2012, Jury's Special Award
2011 The 5th shiseido art egg Finalist

PUBLIC COLLECTION

Fukuoka Art Museum, Fukuoka
Boxes Museum, Canton, China
Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg, Germany
Sparkassen-Kulturstiftung Stormarn, Ahrensburg, Germany
Sichuan University Art Gallery, Chengdu, China
Brodtmann/Berenberg Bank, Hamburg, Germany

ARTIST WEBSITE

http://www.nahokawabe.net

***Inquiry about the exhibition and artist**

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(Owner & Director: Tomoko Ashikawa)
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