

## Announcing Highlights of “Tomoko Mukaiyama: Act of Fire”—The First Large-scale Solo Museum Exhibition of the Internationally Acclaimed Pianist and Artist



Tomoko Mukaiyama, who was born in 1963 in Shingu, Wakayama and is currently based in Amsterdam, has won renown as a multi-disciplinary artist whose practice spans music, video, performance and installation. Through efforts that constantly push creative boundaries and challenge taboos, she has continued to produce works that provoke deep reflection and emotional response in those who view or experience them.

For her first large-scale solo show at a museum, Mukaiyama has transformed the six galleries of Arts Maebashi into an underground theater comprised of a series of corridor-like installations featuring her works, both past and present. These include *wasted* (2009), a labyrinth of silk dresses; *nocturne* (2011) which utilizes grand pianos destroyed in the tsunami of the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake; and the video poem *KOKOKARA* (2025).

The exhibition title "Act of Fire" is suggestive of both a ritualistic space where feelings of loss, resistance and anger that lie rooted in Mukaiyama's body and memories are set ablaze, and an action by which the primordial medium of fire is used to throw light on real-world problems such as gender inequality, escalating natural disasters and constant territorial invasions. Images projected in succession within the corridors—family portraits, a male-only fire festival, congealed menstrual blood, tsunami mud, a burning piano—act not only to rekindle memories, but also to invite the audience on a journey to reflect and question the relationship between the self and the world.



## Tomoko Mukaiyama: Act of Fire

Dates: Saturday, January 24 to Sunday, March 22, 2026

Venue: Arts Maebashi (5-1-16 Chiyoda-cho, Maebashi, Gunma Prefecture)

Hours: 10:00 am to 6:00 pm (last entry: 5:30 pm)

Closed: Every Wednesday (open on February 11 (a public holiday), but closed the following day, February 12)

Press Preview: Friday, January 23, 2026, 2:00 to 6:00 pm (last entry: 5:30 pm). A guided tour will be given by the exhibition curator from 2:00 to 3:30 pm.

Admission: General: ¥1,000 / University students, seniors (age 65 or over) and groups (10 persons or more): ¥800 / High school or younger: Free

\*Free admission to Gallery 1 (1st floor)

\*Free admission for holders of ID booklet for the physically disabled and one caregiver

\*Free admission on "Tayo na Manabi no Hi" (Diverse Learning Day) (Saturday, February 14 and Saturday, March 14)

Organizer: Arts Maebashi

Special Support: Tomoko Mukaiyama Foundation, Multus

Production Support: LUFTZUG/Yutaka Endo, Reinier van Brummelen

Curators: Takenori Miyamoto, Misaki Azuma

Promotional Design: Yuri Suyama, Minami Ogahara

Grant Funding: Japan Arts Council, Fonds Podiumkunsten, Amsterdams Fonds voor de Kunst

Support: THE JOMO SHINBUN, Gunma Television, FM GUNMA, Maebashi City FM, Maebashi Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Special Thanks: PIANO PLAZA GUNMA, Maebashi Galleria, Yurinkan, Kiryu City

## TOMOKO MUKAIYAMA



Tomoko Mukaiyama is an Amsterdam-based pianist and artist who in 1991 received the Muramatsu Prize, in addition to becoming the first Japanese to win the International Gaudeamus Interpreters Competition. Her artistic practice, centering on issues related to femininity, encompass such themes as the body, sexuality, boundaries, memory, ritual, nature, and time and space. Her stage, installation and video work transcend traditional formats and have been shown at venues that range from major theaters like New York's Lincoln Center and the Paris Opera to museums, private homes, public spaces, online platforms and even fish markets on a small island in the Seto Inland Sea. In 2007, she established the Tomoko Mukaiyama Foundation in the Netherlands. In 2015, she established the non-profit organization ○+ (Multus) in Japan where she has also been active as a producer. Her originality is manifested over a wide variety of disciplines that include music, visual art, film, fashion, dance and photography.

©Kiriko Mechanicus

## Exhibition Highlights



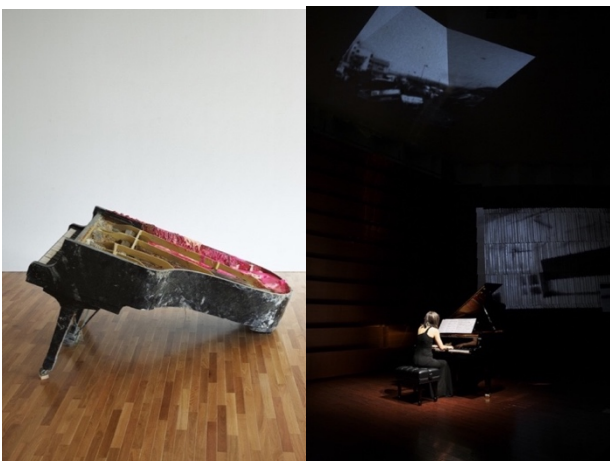
A grand piano destroyed by tsunami in the Minato district of Ishinomaki, Miyagi prefecture. Photographed in 2011.

### Galleries 1 & 2 | Installation with Two Tsunami-Damaged Grand Pianos

During the exhibition, the date March 11, 2026 coincides with the 15th anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake. At the time of the disaster, Tomoko Mukaiyama had planned but failed to perform her work *wasted* during a tour of Tohoku. On a subsequent return to Japan from Amsterdam, she traveled to the disaster-struck Minato district of Ishinomaki where she encountered two heavily damaged grand pianos.

Mukaiyama took possession of the pianos, which had previously been used at two schools in the area to play the Japanese national anthem and school songs. She incorporated them covered as they were in mud, sand and debris in an installation entitled *nocturne* in 2011. Eight years later, after partial cleaning and restoration, she used them again in her solo exhibition *pianist* at Maison Hermès in 2019. Now, six years later, she has reconfigured them again into a new installation.

In the disaster-affected areas, reconstruction and the fading of memories of 3.11 have gone hand-in-hand against a backdrop of worldwide floods and wildfires spurred by climate change and never-ending conflicts between nations and religions. In this installation, the two tsunami-damaged pianos are displayed simultaneously in Gallery 1 on ground level and the underground Gallery 2, connected by an atrium. Visitors are invited to ponder the way the 15 years following 3.11 have been re-presented by Tomoko Mukaiyama through the use of these pianos.



Tomoko Mukaiyama *nocturne* 2011



Tomoko Mukaiyama *pianist* 2019 / Maison Hermès ©Kiyooki Sasahara



### **Galleries 3 & 4 | A Corridor of Women Told by Blood-stained Dresses and Shoes**

In Arts Maebashi's underground galleries (2 to 6), Tomoko Mukaiyama uses distinctive corridor configuration to descend into the layers of her own memory, tracing her life as both pianist and woman through installations that combine sound, video and objects.

Galleries 3 and 4 feature her large-scale work *wasted* which first appeared at the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale in 2009. Originally consisting of thousands of dresses symbolizing women's lives and bodies, the installation has been reconfigured to suit the passage-like space with a focus now shifted to her own personal story.

Clothing and shoes stained with menstrual blood, a series of photographs, old birdcages and furniture symbolizing the loss of local ties, family ties and loved ones, and a grand piano left closed are scattered throughout the space. Not only do they speak quietly of her life so far, they invite visitors to engage in a silent dialogue about the variety of painful experiences both past and present surrounding gender diversity.



Tomoko Mukaiyama *Wasted* 2009 / Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale 2009



## Galleries 5 & 6 | Grand Hall of Images and Music Where the Pains of the World Are Ignited

From the corridor, visitors turn a corner and encounter a piano in flames. It is an upright piano that appeared in Mukaiyama's 18-minute video poem *KOKOKARA* which was broadcast free of charge in July 2025 to the public. As she plays Maxim Shalygin's *Nine Preludes* in the background, the piano collapses as its keyboard is consumed by flames. It is a vision that is both haunting and majestic.

Entering Gallery 6, a vast installation has been constructed around the burning piano which serves as a climax to *Act of Fire*. Mosquito nets connected together form curtains that divide the space with close-up images of fire cast upon them from multiple projectors. The effect is immersive, making it seem as if the entire room and the audience are engulfed in flames.

The flames that burn throughout the room are not only those that arise from the piano. The images, layered like flashbacks, show scenes of war in the Gaza district of Palestine where a humanitarian crisis continues to unfold, and scenes of the torches carried during the fire-lighting Oto Festival in Mukaiyama's hometown of Shingu, Wakayama. These images suggest that the flames rise not only from Mukaiyama's personal perception and rage, but also from pains in the wider world, lit here to be shared and sublimated.



Tomoko Mukaiyama *KOKOKARA* 2025

## Related Events

### Special Dialog: Kazuko Koike × Tomoko Mukaiyama

On the opening day of *Act of Fire*, we are proud to present a special talk between Tomoko Mukaiyama and Kazuko Koike, the renowned creative director and pioneer in art, fashion and design in Japan. You are invited to a rare dialogue between two artists who have explored creativity across multiple disciplines and found resonance in each other's work.

**Date & Time:** Saturday, January 24, 3:30–5:00 pm

**Venue & Capacity:** Arts Maebashi Studio/40 (advance reservation required)

**Reservations:** Please use the form on the Arts Maebashi website (bookings accepted from December 24)

**Participation Fee:** Free (with same-day admission ticket)



#### Kazuko Koike

Creative Director, Professor Emeritus at Musashino Art University. Participated in the founding of MUJI in 1980 and has served on its advisory board ever since. In 1983 she established and directed the Sagacho Exhibit Space where she introduced many international contemporary artists until 2000. Her writings and translations include *Bijutsu/Chukanshi: Koike no Genb a* (Heibonsha) and *Airin Gurei—Kenchikuka/Dezaina* (Eileen Gray: Architect/Designer) (Misuzu Shobo). She was named a Person of Cultural Merit in 2022 and received the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Neck Ribbon in 2024.

Photo by Taishi Hirokawa

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## Gallery Talk by the Curator

Guests will be taken on a tour of the exhibition by the curator who will provide commentary on the major works and themes.

**Dates & Time:** Saturday, January 31, 2:00–3:00 pm / Saturday, February 28, 2:00–3:00 pm

**Venue & Capacity:** Arts Maebashi Gallery/about 30 persons (No reservation is required. Please gather at the 1st floor reception desk.)

**Participation Fee:** Free (with same-day admission ticket)

**Guide:** Takenori Miyamoto, Chief Curator of Arts Maebashi and Associate Professor at Tokyo University of the Arts

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## Art Chat Days

Accompanied by an Arts Navigator, participants will share their thoughts and impressions as they converse about the works on display.

**Date & Time:** Saturday, February 14, 2:00 pm (duration: about 40 minutes)

Saturday, March 14, 2:00 pm (duration: about 40 minutes)

**Venue & Capacity:** Arts Maebashi Gallery/ about 5 persons (advance reservation required)

**Reservations:** Please use the form on the Arts Maebashi website (bookings accepted from December 24)

**Participation Fee:** Free

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## Tomoko Mukaiyama Piano Concert Presented by Gâteau Festa Harada

**Date & Time:** Saturday, March 7 Concert begins: 6:30 pm

**Venue:** Espoir Hall, 1st floor, Gâteau Festa Harada Head Office  
1207 Shinmachi, Takasaki, Gunma

**Program:** Maxim Shalygin — *Nine Preludes*

**Tickets:** ¥2,000 (Tax included. All seats are unreserved.)

All proceeds will be donated to Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders).

**Note:** Program details are subject to change. Please check the museum website for the latest information: [Arts Maebashi official website](#)

## Artistic Team

Music: Maxim Shalygin, Tomoko Mukaiyama  
Video: Tomoko Mukaiyama, Reinier van Brummelen  
Technical Director: LUFTZUG/Yutaka Endo  
Video Post-Production: Neda Gueorguieva  
Cinematography: Yoshio Kitagawa, Tomoko Mukaiyama  
Camera Assistant: Mirai Osawa  
Sound Recording: Akira Fukada, Youki Yaei  
Sound Engineer: Yuji Tsutsumida  
Lighting Technician: Hiroaki Tashiro  
Lighting Assistant: Moe Kanazawa, Karen Hachiga, Shinya Ishino  
Video Technician: Tomoya Kishimoto  
Creative supports: Takafumi Tamura, Hirokazu Shiono, Ting Gong, Yasuaki Mizunuma, Lucia Ramos Reyes, Kiriko Mechanicus, Yuri Tatsumi, José Pablo Vázquez Madero, Atsushi Honda, nyamcom, Yukimura Oda, Ryo Kurihara, Arts Maebashi Supporter  
English Translation: Norman Chan  
Wig Design: Yasuhito Shoji



## Press Preview

Date and Time: Friday, January 23, 2026, 2:00 PM – 6:00 PM (Last entry at 5:30 PM)

A press tour featuring artwork commentary by Ms. Mukaiyama and the curator will be held from 2:00 PM to 3:30 PM.

To register, please scan the QR code on the right or use the URL below.

<https://logofrom.jp/form/dWZu/1318863>

## Public Relations Images

We provide images included in this release for use in public relations materials.

If you wish to use them, please apply via this URL: <https://logofrom.jp/form/dWZu/1234122>

- \* After applying, we will send you a download URL along with an ID and PASS.
- \* When publishing, please include the exhibition name and dates.
- \* When publishing images, please accurately include captions and credits.
- \* Please send copies of published articles or VTRs to Arts Maebashi for our records.
- \* For interviews, filming, or recording, please contact us in advance.
- \* Image use is strictly limited to promoting this exhibition. Images cannot be provided for personal blogs, viewing purposes, or similar uses.



【1】



【2】



【3】



【4】



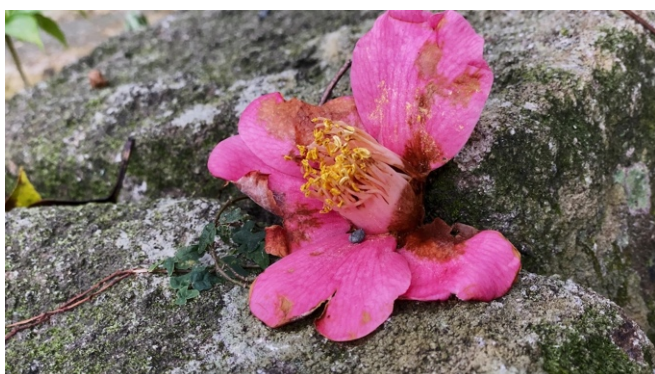
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【6】



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## Caption/Credit

- 【1】 Arts Maebashi “Tomoko Mukaiyama *Act of Fire*” Exhibition Poster Visual
- 【2】 Arts Maebashi “Tomoko Mukaiyama *Act of Fire*” Exhibition Key Visual
- 【3】 *Burning Fire-1* / 2025 / ©Tomoko Mukaiyama
- 【4】 *KOKOKARA* / 2025 / ©Tomoko Mukaiyama
- 【5】 *KOKOKARA* / 2025 / ©Tomoko Mukaiyama
- 【6】 *KUMANO* / 2021 / ©Tomoko Mukaiyama
- 【7】 *KUMANO* / 2021 / ©Tomoko Mukaiyama
- 【8】 *KUMANO* / 2021 / ©Tomoko Mukaiyama
- 【9】 *wasted* / 2009 / photo: Rachel Nieborg / ©Tomoko Mukaiyama

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## Contact

### Arts Maebashi

Maebashi City Hall, Culture, Sports, and Tourism Department, Culture and International Affairs Section

Contact: Sakai / Fujino (Public Relations), Azuma (Curatorial Affairs)

5-1-16 Chiyoda-cho, Maebashi City, Gunma Prefecture 371-0022

TEL: 027-230-1144 FAX: 027-232-2016

URL: <https://www.artsmalebashi.jp/>

Email: [press@artsmalebashi.jp](mailto:press@artsmalebashi.jp)

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## Access

### ●Public Transportation

Approx. 10 min walk from JR Maebashi Station

Approx. 5 min walk from Jomo Electric Railway Chuo-Maebashi Station

From JR Takasaki Station: Take the local bus (bound for Maebashi Ekimae) from Bus Stop 1 at the West Exit. Approx. 35 min ride. Get off at “Honcho” stop. Approx. 2 min walk.

From JR Shibukawa Station: Take the local bus (bound for Maebashi Station) from Bus Stop 1 in front of the station. Approx. 40 min. Get off at “Honcho” stop. Approx. 2 min. walk.

### ●By Car

Approx. 15 min. drive from Maebashi IC on the Kan-Etsu Expressway.

※For use of P-Mark parking lots, we will apply a 4-hour free parking discount to your parking ticket.

