

LISSON GALLERY

Press Release

Leiko Ikemura: *Riding Horizon*

February 24 – March 28 2026
1037 N. Sycamore Avenue, Los Angeles

Opening: February 24, 6 – 8pm

*Where do we come from, where are we going?
Just lie on the earth, and time flows slowly
Over the body, stretching into eternity*

For her first exhibition in Los Angeles, Leiko Ikemura presents a range of works produced over the past decade that explore the relationship between the female body and the natural world; between the heavens and the horizon line, or as she describes it: “the place where two worlds come together”. This in-between space – straddling both light and dark, the sky and the ocean, as well as both interior and exterior worlds – is represented by a huge metallic mesh wave within the gallery, a dividing line and architectural feature designed in collaboration with her partner Philipp von Matt.

One of Ikemura’s hybrid creations – a girl whose head has been replaced by a brace of birds – greets visitors outside the gallery. Inside the exhibition, the recurring figure of a reclining girl or woman is repeated throughout, firstly in a series of large-scale, colored bronzes, such as *Lying in Yellow Dress* (2021), which depicts a peacefully sleeping creature in a yellow dress. Elsewhere, *Double Figure* (2021) combines a pair of female forms – one crying into her hands, her legs removed at the waist and the other startlingly lacking a head – which nevertheless resembles a crashing blue wave and a fallen tree trunk. Placed on circular plinths, their watery, mountainous or plant-like shapes undulate and merge into larger-than-life amalgams of landscape-bodies or figure-scapes.

A less defined set of reclining figures feature in the large-scale tempera on jute paintings, from the loose and gestural diptych *Waves* (2025), with its dark connective tissue running between the two works like a river, to the tighter, earlier scene of *Zarathustra I* (2014). This work features a central tree seemingly growing out of a sleeping creature below, while other humanesque forms emerge from the rocky outcrops beyond the shoreline. A prominent, pyramidal stone in the top corner refers to the novel by Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, given that the idea for his four-volume book was said to have come to the philosopher after encountering a triangular-shaped rock, on a hill walk in Switzerland in 1881. Ikemura herself has undertaken a similarly arduous and precipitous journey and spiritual awakening: beginning with childhood in her native Japan, through to student days in Franco-era Spain, before she became a practicing artist in Switzerland and finally settled as a professor in post-Wall Germany, all while being haunted by the reality of never quite fitting in or being accepted.

Ikemura has been painting and sculpting girls since the 1990s, often placing her adolescent characters on indeterminate backdrops, with only a horizon line as anchor. A sequence of standing portraits in this show each convey a different energy or mood, like in *Blue Mom* or *Audry X* (both 2025). In addition to their overriding personalities, the upright figures all contain ambiguous expressions and intentions, whether an inherent sadness or a lightness of being, perhaps displaying either vulnerability or an unstoppable power, and sometimes both.

Through her fantastical treatment of the landscape painting genre, entering into the realms of reflection, dreamtime and even of conflict, the artist conjures up an otherworldly utopia in which humans and nature coexist within the melting vastness between the heavens of the cosmos and the oceanic spaces below.

About the artist

Since the 1980s, Leiko Ikemura has explored themes of transition, cross-culturalism, collective responsibility, and sexuality, emancipating the feminine body from its position in history and mainstream contemporary culture by challenging artistic conventions and disrupting social norms. The internationally recognized artist seamlessly shifts between luminous, otherworldly and often monumental oil paintings, introspective drawings and watercolours, glazed terracotta sculptures, glass and ceramics.

Focusing on the transient innocence of childhood, Ikemura's female spirits are defiant and independent, yet fragile and ethereal, almost ghost-like, bestowing the spirits with a composite power to exist within multiple worlds, between dreaming and waking states. A central, recurring motif in Ikemura's work is the '*usagi*', Japanese for rabbit, which first appeared in her work following the Tōhoku earthquake and Fukushima nuclear accident of 2011 and the subsequent reported birth defects in animals. This mythical hybrid creature considered a messenger for the '*kami*' (gods), integrates rabbit ears with a human face, personifying universal suffering, resilience and renewal while questioning cycles of creation and destruction. Fusing Eastern and Western art – conceiving a realm inspired by East Asian *sansuiga* painting traditions, old Japanese masters, surrealism, post-war abstraction, and the revival of figurative painting in the 1980s – Ikemura's spiritual works are imbued with a raw and tender presence that highlights the intimate relationship between human, animal, plant, mineral forms, and cosmology.

Leiko Ikemura (イケムラレイコ, 池村 玲子, Ikemura Reiko) was born in Tsu, Mie Prefecture, Japan and is based in Berlin. She studied at Osaka University of Foreign Studies from 1970–1972, followed by Escuela Superior de Bellas Artes de Santa Isabel de Hungría, Seville, Spain from 1973–1978. In 1979, Ikemura moved to Zurich to pursue a career as an artist. In 1991, Ikemura became professor of painting at the Universität der Künste in Berlin. Since 2014, she has held a professorship at the Joshibi University of Art and Design near Tokyo.

Ikemura has exhibited in numerous solo exhibitions internationally, including Albertina, Vienna (2025-26); Bündner Kunstmuseum, Chur, Switzerland (2025); HEREDIM in South Korea (2024), Georg Kolbe Museum Berlin (2023), Feuerle Collection, Berlin (2023), Museum de Fundatie, Zwolle, Netherlands (2023), Museo de Arte de Zapopan, Guadalajara, Mexico (2023), Being Art Museum, Shanghai (2023), Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Berlin (2022 & 2012), Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, Norwich (2021), CAC La Ciutat de les Arts i les Ciències Valencia (2021), Stiftung St. Matthäus, Berlin (2020), The National Art Center, Tokyo (2019), Kunstmuseum Basel (2019 & 1987), and Nordiska Akvarellmuseet Skarhamn (2019). Ikemura has also been presented in group exhibitions including the 36th São Paulo Biennial (2024); The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto (2022–23); 9th Beijing Biennale National Art Museum of China, Beijing (2022); The National Art Center, Tokyo (2022); Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst, Cologne (2022); AMMA Foundation, Mexico City (2022); Shandong Art Museum, Jinan (2022); The Centre Pompidou, Paris (2021).

About Lisson Gallery

Lisson Gallery is one of the most influential and longest-running international contemporary art galleries in the world. Today the gallery supports and promotes the work of more than 70 international artists across spaces in London, New York, Los Angeles, Shanghai and Beijing. Established in 1967 by Nicholas Logsdail, Lisson Gallery pioneered the early careers of important Minimal and Conceptual artists such as Donald Judd, Sol LeWitt and Robert Ryman among many others. It still works with many of these artists and others of that generation, from Carmen Herrera and Olga de Amaral to Hélio Oiticica and Lee Ufan. In its second decade the gallery introduced significant British sculptors to the public for the first time, including Tony Cragg, Richard Deacon, Anish Kapoor, Shirazeh Houshiary and Julian Opie. Since 2000, the gallery has gone on to represent many more leading international artists such as Marina Abramović, Ai Weiwei, John Akomfrah, Liu Xiaodong, Otobong Nkanga, Pedro Reyes, Sean Scully, Hiroshi Sugimoto and Wael Shawky. It is also responsible for raising the international profile of a younger generation of artists including Dana Awartani, Cory Arcangel, Garrett Bradley, Ryan Gander, Josh Kline, Hugh Hayden, Haroon Mirza, Laure Prouvost and Cheyney Thompson.

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