

LISSON GALLERY

Press Release

Lisson Street: Leiko Ikemura – *El Jardín Nocturno*

18 February – 9 May 2026
67 Lisson Street, London

Leiko Ikemura's Lisson Street presentation coincides with major shows at both Lisson Los Angeles and at the Albertina museum in Vienna. Following the London gallery's seasonal theme of *Landscape* – artistic responses to the natural world through varied lenses and viewpoints – Ikemura presents a nocturnal garden, *El Jardín Nocturno*, through a variety of sculptures, paintings, works on paper and poems.

The viewer enters the garden on the ground floor, where three sculptures are nestled in an undulating field of green stone. Ikemura's central and imposing *Rocket Girl* (2024) squats menacingly, being at once a symbol of chaotic, destructive forces, but also a figure for protective good, here guarding the two cat-like statues of *Miko* and *Mikolina* in the corner. Existing between genders and species, these three bronzes are also seemingly emerging from their terrain, sculpted through the primordial energy of the earth.

A sense of prehistoric time also bubbles up from the inky depths of a lake in the nearby painted *Nightscape* (2024), while upstairs the twilight garden flowers into daytime with pink blooms in a suite of rose-tinted canvases and gesture-filled fields of marks that coalesce into magical, light-filled landscapes, punctuated by Ikemura's cascading haikus in Japanese script. These poems have been translated into English below, running right to left from the doorway.

dawn light

*sleeping / I have become quite an isolated island
drifting aimlessly like flotsam*

*time isn't something to be struck
numbers racing by at incredible speed / the dizzying whirl*

*being alone / the swaying
play of shadow and light
perhaps I can delight in it*

*people fade away faintly
changing everything / ruins of things tumble
light lingering*

*the bonds between people break unstoppable
darkness or light
then what comes after that?*

*vanishing into / such forms and air / everyday things
rhododendrons blooming in the garden*

*only the echoes of life's voices remain
the tenderness of that withered flower*

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 the Osaka University of Foreign Studies from 1970–1972, followed by the 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 HEREDIUM 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's work has also been presented in group exhibitions, including at the Museum Frieder Burda, Baden-Baden (2023); The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto (2022–23); 9th Beijing Biennale National Art Museum of China, Beijing (2022); Singer Laren Museum, Laren (2022); The National Art Center, Tokyo (2022); Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst, Cologne (2022); AMMA Foundation, Mexico City (2022); The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo (2022); Shandong Art Museum, Jinan (2022); Aargauer Kunsthau, Aarau, (2022); The Centre Pompidou, Paris (2021); ARTZUID 2021, Amsterdam Sculpture Biennial, Amsterdam (2021); Shiga Museum of Art, Otsu (2021); Musée Cantonal des Beaux-Arts Lausanne, (2021); Toyota Municipal Museum of Art, Aichi (2021); Museum Folkwang, Essen (2021), National Museum of Ceramics, Leeuwarden (2020-21); and Oita Prefectural Art Museum, Oita (2020).

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