

Details of the Japan Pavilion program for the latter half of the 61st Venice Biennale period announced

First-ever official collaboration with the neighboring Korean Pavilion: A participatory opera traveling between the two pavilions and more

The Japan Foundation is pleased to announce the details of a related program to be held at the Japan Pavilion (Artist: Ei Arakawa-Nash; Co-curators: Mizuki Takahashi and Lisa Horikawa) during the latter half of the 61st International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia.

The details of “Opera *Grass Babies, Moon Babies* MORE THAN MUSICAL with Ei Arakawa-Nash,” a participatory vocal performance that will circulate and travel between the Japan Pavilion and Korean Pavilion, have been confirmed.

More information, including responses after the opening of the Japan Pavilion and the background to its first-ever official collaboration with the Korean Pavilion, can be found below.



Concept drawing for “Opera *Grass Babies, Moon Babies* MORE THAN MUSICAL with Ei Arakawa-Nash.” Courtesy of Ei Arakawa-Nash.

The Japan Pavilion exhibition *Grass Babies, Moon Babies*, which opened on May 9, 2026, has been featured in art media and newspapers both in Japan and overseas **as one of the must-**

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see pavilions at this year’s Biennale.

In Japan, the context leading up to the exhibition was covered extensively in *Harper’s BAZAAR art* and *ARTnews JAPAN*, and detailed field reports featuring the Japan Pavilion shortly after its opening were published in *Bijutsu Techo* and *Tokyo Art Beat*. Overseas, in addition to coverage in art media such as *ArtAsiaPacific*, *Artforum*, *ARTnews*, *ArtReview*, *Flash Art*, *Frieze*, and *The Art Newspaper*, the pavilion was also selected as one of “7 Pavilions That Have the Venice Biennale Buzzing” by *The New York Times* and featured in various newspapers around the world including *Corriere della Sera*, *The Guardian*, and *South China Morning Post*.

The exhibition **was born out of the childrearing experience of Ei Arakawa-Nash**, a queer artist who became a parent of twins in 2024. Using their own identity as a member of the Asian diaspora living in the United States and reflections on Japanese history as a launching point, the artist **transforms the Japan Pavilion into a space for visitors to, through the act of caring for babies—symbols of the future, question the state of the world they will inhabit.**

The fifty-seven baby dolls handed to visitors in the first-floor pilotis area, the starting point of the work, have been assigned birthdays corresponding to historical dates in the twentieth century that Arakawa-Nash wishes their children to know about. The exhibition features diverse collaborators and contributors across disciplines, national borders, eras, and generations. Visitors wander through their works while caring for the baby doll and, at the end, change the doll’s diaper to receive a “diaper poem” written by astrologer and writer Yukari Ishii according to the doll’s birthday. Through a series of caregiving acts, visitors are **faced with the question of how we might confront the past and celebrate new life into the future, imbued with responsibility and hope passed down from generation to generation.**



Top: Ei Arakawa-Nash, Grass Babies, Moon Babies
Bottom: “24-Hour Care,” a performance by FAC XTRA RETREAT

Photo: Uli Holz. Courtesy of the artists and the Japan Foundation.

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Goen Choi, *Corea Pavillion-Bush-Giappone Pavilion*, 2026
In the space between the Japan Pavilion and the Korean Pavilion at the 61st International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia
Photo: Uli Holz. Courtesy of the artist, Korean Pavilion, and The Japan Foundation



Joint toast with the Korean Pavilion (Japan Pavilion-Korean Pavilion opening reception on May 6, 2026).
Photo: Ryuichi Maruo. Courtesy of the Japan Foundation.

The contexts of the fifty-seven dates are **also connected to the neighboring Korean Pavilion (Artists: Goen Choi and Hyeree Ro; Curator: Binna Choi)** and one of the exhibition's most important initiatives, **the Japan Pavilion's first-ever official collaboration with another pavilion**. This collaboration was realized through an official collaboration with Arts Council Korea (ARKO) against the backdrop of close friendship as well as deep dialogue and trust that the artists and curators of the two pavilions have established over the course of many years.

Baby dolls with birthdays on dates that were important moments in history have been placed on the roof of the Korean Pavilion in poses related to those contexts, and baby dolls from the Japan Pavilion are also involved in Hyeree Ro's periodic performance *Bearing*. The "Bearer" who does a quiet daily ritual of the Korean Pavilion as "Liberation Space" also brings and takes a stroll with a baby doll from the Japan Pavilion to the Korean Pavilion once a week. Furthermore, Goen Choi's copper pipe sculpture *Corea Pavilion-Bush-Giappone Pavilion* is installed over the hedge along the border between the two pavilions so that it passes through both plots.

In addition, as part of the opening reception held on May 6, during the singing of **"Our □ (Mieum)"*** led by singer-songwriter Lang Lee, the Japan Pavilion team and audience members moved to the front of the Korean Pavilion, where they shared a toast with the Korean Pavilion team.

*Lyrics and audio of "Our □ (Mieum)" by Lang Lee sung at the opening reception can be found on the following special page on the official website of the Korean Pavilion (official website: <https://www.korean-pavilion.or.kr/reader/our-mieum/>).

This process of inter-pavilion dialogue and collaboration will be developed further during the latter half of the Biennale period. Details of **one of the highlights, "Opera Grass Babies, Moon Babies MORE THAN MUSICAL with Ei Arakawa-Nash,"** are as follows.

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■ Details of “Opera *Grass Babies, Moon Babies* MORE THAN MUSICAL with Ei Arakawa-Nash”

A world unfolds from audience members’ own voices in this experiential vocal artwork transcending the traditional pavilion framework. The unprecedented participatory vocal performance will start at the Japan Pavilion and circulate to the Korean Pavilion.

Title: Opera *Grass Babies, Moon Babies* MORE THAN MUSICAL with Ei Arakawa-Nash

Schedule:

Sunday, August 30: 11:30 a.m. (1st) / 4:00 p.m. (2nd) / 5:00 p.m. (3rd)

Tuesday, September 1: 11:30 a.m. (1st) / 4:00 p.m. (2nd) / 5:00 p.m. (3rd)

Wednesday, September 2: 11:30 a.m. (1st) / 4:00 p.m. (2nd) / 5:00 p.m. (3rd)

Venue: Across the Japan Pavilion and Korean Pavilion (circulatory performance) at the 61st International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

Performers: Yasushi Hirano (Bass-baritone) and Arielle Yuhyun Jeon (Soprano)

Participation Method: No separate ticket from the Biennale required

Organizer: 61st Venice Biennale International Art Exhibition Japan Pavilion Event Execution Committee (Ei Arakawa-Nash, Mizuki Takahashi, Lisa Horikawa, Takayuki Ishii, and Takayuki Mashiyama)

Co-organizers: MORE THAN MUSICAL, Taka Ishii Gallery, and the Japan Foundation

Overview: The project explores the concept of “the process of how humans learn to sing as a form of social formation.” The performance originates at the Japan Pavilion (the “origin of voice”), where audience members listen to the primal sounds and breath of a baby, responding with their own raw vocalizations. Moving toward the Korean Pavilion (the space of “socialization”), the audience echoes and mimics one another’s voices. Finally, professional opera singers gather these sounds, transforming them into a beautiful tapestry of music that represents a social structure, created entirely *a cappella* (without instruments). **The highlights of this performance are its “circulatory” staging that seamlessly dissolves the national silos of the historic Biennale, and the deeply immersive experience crafted by MORE THAN MUSICAL, which transforms passive viewers into active “co-creators.”** Directed by Tetsu Taoshita, the performance uses sound and bodies to explore the act of listening and responding to another’s voice as a form of care, questioning what kind of future world we will shape together. *This project was made possible by the historic first-ever crowdfunding campaign for a Japan Pavilion exhibition, specifically through the support of the “Perform at the Japan Pavilion” course.* (Special crowdfunding website: <https://congrant.com/project/artnest/19915>)

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MORE THAN MUSICAL: Founded in Hong Kong in 2016 and expanding its base to Japan in 2025, More Than Musical is an innovative opera (vocal art) company that reimagines the formal boundaries of traditional opera, continuing the practice of reconfiguring the reciprocal relationships between sound, body, space, audience, and memory.

At the company's core is immersive opera that transforms audiences from passive viewers into "co-creators" of expression. From *La Traviata* in historic buildings such as Kudan House and Ohara Sanso in Kyoto and the cross-disciplinary *KABUKI × Pagliacci* at Konno Hachimangu Shrine in Shibuya to massive-scale stadium performances beyond the boundaries of traditional theater, including the 2025 Zico All-Star Game "HIROSHIMA" and the 2026 J.League Opening Match, its site-specific productions are deeply intertwined with the inherent memories and collective natures of their locations. By engaging tens of thousands of spectators, the company has presented opera as a collective, contemporary experience.

The company redefines and promotes opera worldwide not as a static classical genre but as a continuous process of metamorphosis while fundamentally reinventing its scale and relationship with audiences.

(MORE THAN MUSICAL official websites: www.mtmjapan.org / www.morethanmusical.org)

• **Producer:** Rumiko Hasegawa

• **Director:** Tetsu Taoshita

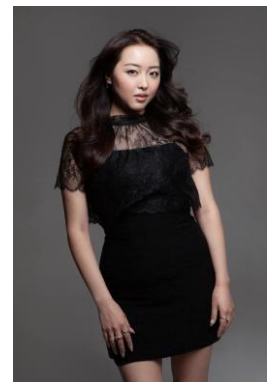
Born in Hyogo in 1972 and raised in Yokohama. He is the winner of the 20th Gotoh Memorial Cultural Award for Opera Newcomer. He trained in Western theater and directing under Michael Hampe and received instruction in playwriting from Oladipo Agboluaje. His recent directorial portfolio includes MORE THAN MUSICAL *KABUKI × Pagliacci*, *The Tale of the Heike* at Omiya Sonic City, *Lucia di Lammermoor* at Nissay Theatre, *Interview* for LDH, *Dorothy* and *Galileo* for Kansai TV, and the kabuki play *Yukibotaru Koinotaki*. In addition to continuing to direct opera, musical, and theatrical productions, his upcoming work includes playwriting overseas.

• **Project Manager:** Tatsu Fukamachi

• **Performer Profiles**

Yasushi Hirano (Bass-baritone)

Graduated at the top of his class from the Nihon University College of Art and the master's degree at the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna (Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst Wien). After debuting with the Graz Opera, he served as a resident singer with the Vienna Volksoper for fourteen years. He has appeared at venues such as the Vienna Musikverein, Berlin Philharmonie, and Salzburg Festival. During the 2025–2026 season, in addition to appearing in the Volksoper's production of *Die Zauberflöte* and joining the



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Bach Collegium Japan on their Shanghai tour, he made a highly acclaimed debut as Zaccaria in *Nabucco* at the Staatstheater Cottbus in Germany. His X account is @YasushiHirano.

Arielle Yuhyun Jeon (Soprano)

Completed both bachelor's and master's degrees with distinction at the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna (Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst Wien). She has performed roles including Ilia in *Idomeneo*, Mimì in *La Bohème*, Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte*, and Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* on the stage of the Theater an der Wien and various other opera houses. She made her debut as a soprano soloist at the Wiener Konzerthaus. She has also performed the role of Mater Gloriosa in Mahler's Symphony No. 8. She has won prizes at several competitions, including the Grand Prize at the Schubert International Competition.

■ Other related programs

• "Kids' Tour 2" by Ei Arakawa-Nash on Friday, November 20

Children will be led through the venue by the artist himself while caring for baby dolls, symbols of the future, in this special tour for children living in Venice.

• Sound listening event *Cloud Babies, Night Babies* on the evening of Friday, November 20

A listening event for 8-channel sound art created by Sergei Tcherepnin for the exhibition is planned to be held after nightfall.

• Performance: "Ei Arakawa-Nash + End of Fall" on Sunday, November 22

Arakawa-Nash will give a closing performance inspired by research on the carbon footprint of the Japan Pavilion conducted by Art Climate Collective Japan (ACCJ), led by the nonprofit Arts Initiative Tokyo (AIT).

■ Examples of media coverage

ArtReview (May 1, 2026) "[The Interview: Ei Arakawa-Nash](#)"

ArtAsiaPacific (May 4, 2026) "[Must-See National Pavilions at the 61st Venice Biennale](#)"

The Art Newspaper (May 6, 2026) "[Our pick of the best pavilions at the 61st Venice Biennale](#)"

Frieze (May 6, 2026) "[National Pavilions Review: Porta-Potties, Porn and a Defiant Rave](#)"

ARTnews Japan (May 7, 2026) "[Embracing Otherness at the Japan Pavilion: Ei Arakawa-Nash in Conversation](#)"

ARTnews (May 7, 2026) "[Drained, Drowning, and Decay: The Best National Pavilions at the Venice Biennale](#)"

Flash Art (May 8, 2026) "[In Minor Keys' 61st Venice Biennale](#)"

The New York Times (May 8, 2026) "[7 Pavilions That Have the Venice Biennale Buzzing](#)"

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Bijutsu Techo (May 8, 2026) "Venice Biennale kicks off: Questions about caregiving and the future posed by Ei Arakawa-Nash through 'babies' at the Japan Pavilion"

BAZAAR art (May 12, 2026) "Interview with Japan Pavilion official artist Ei Arakawa-Nash: Thoughts behind *Grass Babies, Moon Babies*" (reproduced from *Harper's BAZAAR art No. 5* released on April 20)

The Guardian (May 14, 2026) "Naked jetskiers, human bells and a celebrity seagull! Venice Biennale's wildest moments – in pictures"

Artforum (May 14, 2026) "Looking for Depth in Venice"

Corriere della Sera (May 15, 2026) "Una nuova tecnologia (e noi)"

Tokyo Art Beat (May 15, 2026) "Report on *Grass Babies, Moon Babies* by Ei Arakawa-Nash at the 61st Venice Biennale Japan Pavilion: The significance of caregiving and history represented by 200 baby dolls"

South China Morning Post (May 20, 2026) "How Asian artists at the 2026 Venice Biennale are making their voices heard"

■ Exhibition Details

The Japan Pavilion at the 61st International Art Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia

Title of Exhibition: Grass Babies, Moon Babies

Dates: Saturday, May 9 – Sunday, November 22, 2026

Venue: The Japan Pavilion (in the Giardini, one of the Biennale venues)

Artist: Ei Arakawa-Nash

Co-curators: HORIKAWA Lisa (National Gallery Singapore, Senior Curator and Director (Curatorial & Collections), TAKAHASHI Mizuki (Centre for Heritage, Arts and Textile, Hong Kong, Executive Director and Chief Curator)

Organizer/commissioner: The Japan Foundation (JF)

Special support: Ishibashi Foundation

Exhibition website: <https://venezia-biennale-japan.jpf.go.jp/e/art/2026-en>

Official Instagram: @japan_pavilion_vb2026

■ About the Commissioner

The Japan Foundation (JF) is an independent administrative corporation that promotes exchanges of culture and art, Japanese-language education, and Japanese research and international dialogue based on its mission: "Cultivating friendship and ties between Japan and the world." The JF has been the organizer/commissioner of the exhibition in the Japan Pavilion at La Biennale di Venezia since 1976.

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■ About La Biennale di Venezia

La Biennale di Venezia is an Institution organizing International Exhibitions and Festivals that uses locations in the island city of Venice as venues. It has made its mark on history for more than 130 years, starting with the first International Art Exhibition in 1895. In the present day, it embraces its International Art and Architecture Exhibitions, International Theatre, Contemporary Dance, and Contemporary Music Festivals, as independent departments; among these, the International Art Exhibition draws the attention of the global art world as a place to get an overview of current artistic trends.

Japan officially participated in International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia for the first time in 1952, and has continued its involvement in every exhibition following the completion of the Japan Pavilion in 1956. The JF has organized the Japan Pavilion exhibitions from 1976 to the present day. See the Japan Pavilion's [official website](https://venezia-biennale-japan.jp/e/art/2026-en) (<https://venezia-biennale-japan.jp/e/art/2026-en>) for more information about its previous representative creators.

■ Reference materials

Handwritten Message by Ei Arakawa-Nash(Displayed on the wall of the first-floor pilotis of the Japan Pavilion to welcome visitors)

[Original handwritten text at the venue]

Dear visitors,

This is Ei. This pavilion exists like a stage shaped like a small mountain, where you can participate by carrying a baby doll with you. It is also your choice to experience the exhibition without carrying a doll. You cannot select your favorite doll, but the staff will pass you one random doll that weighs 5 to 6 kg. You can also change their diaper upstairs, in exchange for a poem. Please return the doll before you leave the pavilion.

As a queer person, I never thought I would have children. I feel pressured to be a “good” queer parent, and I took this Biennale job to promote a much-needed discussion on surrogacy and egg donation in Japan. This participatory performance refers to the care labor historically shouldered by women. Your choice to carry a doll also communicates not only our love and enthusiasm, but also our ambivalence about having, or not having, a child—something that should be discussed in a safe space.

Please read the dates near the entrance. As a child, I learned that Japan was the only country to experience the atomic bomb. I also think it is important to face the details of Japan's ultra-nationalist past. I wanted to pass this history on to my children as a lesson, because I have made some embarrassing mistakes in the past.

I didn't know Koyo, but as soon as I started to look for minor keys around Japan, the list began to grow quickly. I have only 57 dates here, but I will continue finding more.

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• **Examples of the “diaper poem” written by astrologer and writer Yukari Ishii for each birthday**

Each of the fifty-seven baby dolls that await visitors in the first-floor pilotis area, the starting point of the work, has been assigned a different historical date in the twentieth century as its “birthday.” Near the exit, at the end of the exhibition, visitors perform a specific act of caregiving by changing the diaper of the baby they have been carrying. When they scan the QR code printed on the diaper, a “diaper poem” written by astrologer and writer Yukari Ishii and uniquely tailored to that baby’s birthday is gifted to them. The following is a small sampling of the poems taking on diverse historical events available at the venue.

03/01/1919 - Seoul, Korea - March 1st Movement

自由と革命の星が南中した時	When the lodestars of freedom and revolution
人々は高く旗を掲げた	reached their zenith in the sky
あなたは幸福の星を受け継ぐ人	the people raised their flags high
人々が「自分は誰か」を思い出そうとするとき	the stars of good fortunate shine on you
あなたの誕生日がいつも目印となる	when someone tries to remember where they came from
	your birthday serves as a sign

03/26/1971 - Fukushima, Japan - Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant begins commercial operation

いちばん強い人の心には	At the center of the strongest heart
とても臆病なうさぎが住んでいる。	trembles a small, timid rabbit
なにがいちばん怖いかを知ること、	by facing what scares you most
だれよりも強くなれる。	you can grow strong
遠くまでゆこうとするときほど、	the farther away you roam
帰り道のことを大切に考える。	the more carefully you think about the route home
ほんとうの勇者はいつも生き残り、	the true hero keeps on walking
物語のおわりまで歩くのをやめない。	all the way to the story's end

11/20/1989 - United Nations - The Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted

たくさん子どもたちの骨をあつめて	Surveying a horizon strewn with the bones of children
それを組み立てても 生きかえりはしない	as countless as stars in the dark night sky
しかしふり向けば	we cannot bring the dead back to life
これから生まれてくる子どもたちがいる	yet we can piece those tiny bones together
星の数ほどのこどもたちの涙をあつめて	to uplift the children who will be born next
その結晶を大人のひとりひとりに配る	we collect their tears in the hopes
かつて子どもだった大人たちに	they might crystallize to illuminate the adults
	who were once children themselves

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Anche raccogliendo le ossa di tanti bambini
E riassembrandole, questi non torneranno mai in vita.
Eppure, se ci si volta indietro,
Ci sono bambini che stanno per nascere.
Si raccolgono le lacrime di tanti bambini, tanti quanti le stelle,
E come cristalli si distribuiscono, uno ad uno, agli adulti
Che una volta erano bambini.

Surveying a horizon strewn with the bones of children
as countless as stars in the dark night sky
we cannot bring the dead back to life
yet we can piece those tiny bones together
to uplift the children who will be born next
we collect their tears in the hopes
they might crystallize to illuminate the adults
who were once children themselves



たくさんの子どもの骨をあつめて
それを組み立てても 生きかえりはしない
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かつて子どもだった大人たちに

11/20/1989 | Nazioni Unite | Adozione della Convenzione sui diritti dell'infanzia
•
11/20/1989 | United Nations | The Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted

An example of a "diaper poem" by Yukari Ishii displayed after scanning a QR code. Courtesy of the artists and the Japan Foundation.

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