

LISSON

LEIKO IKEMURA

BIOGRAPHY



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 a 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's work has been included in numerous solo exhibitions, most recently 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 (2023), Being Art Museum, Shanghai (2023), Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Berlin (2012 & 2022), Herbert Gerisch-Stiftung, Neumünster (2022), Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, Norwich (2021), CAC La Ciutat de les Arts i les Ciències València (2021), Kunsthalle Rostock (2020), Stiftung St. Matthäus, Berlin (2020). Ikemura's work has also been included in group exhibitions internationally, most recently 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 Kunsthhaus, Aarau, (2022), The Centre Pompidou, Paris (2021). She is the recipient of many prestigious awards, from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology in Japan (2019), the Cologne Fine Art Prize (2014), the August Macke Prize (2009), and the Association of German Critics (2001), among others.

Ikemura's work is held in the permanent collections of international institutions such as the Centre Pompidou Paris, the Albertina, Vienna, Kunstmuseum Bonn, Sainsbury Center Norwich, Herbert Gerisch-Stiftung, Neumünster, Kunstmuseum Basel, Kunstmuseum Bern, Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, National Museum of Art Osaka, National Museum of Modern Art Tokyo, Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art Nagoya, Shiga Museum of Art Otsu, Toyota Municipal Art Museum, Mie Prefectural Art Museum Tsu City, and Centro de Arte Caja de Burgos.