

Artist Statement

Olfactory Artist Naoko Kusunoki

My practice explores scent as a medium that destabilizes perception and expands what can be sensed, remembered, and imagined. Olfaction, unlike vision or language, resists fixation. It is volatile, partial, and always on the verge of disappearing. Precisely because of this instability, scent becomes a site where the boundaries between memory and invention, presence and absence, the real and the fictional, can be reconfigured.

Across my works, I investigate how scent can give form to what cannot be seen, and even to what does not exist.

I often begin with something that is missing: a memory that has not yet returned, a fictional plant, a character whose scent was never written. By creating fragrances for these absences, I treat scent as a method of restitution—an act of giving presence to what is silent or forgotten. In doing so, I examine how imagination can behave like memory, how fiction can acquire the texture of reality, and how an invisible medium can reveal what we have overlooked.

What interests me is not scent as a fixed object, but scent as a phenomenon: drifting, vanishing, lingering, returning. My installations treat fragrance as something that emerges between space, time, body, and mind. I aim to create moments in which scent reorients the senses—where one feels without fully knowing, remembers without certainty, perceives beneath the threshold of perception.

Ultimately, my work seeks to expand the role of olfaction in contemporary art, not as decoration or atmosphere but as a mode of thinking and feeling. Through scent, I explore how we inhabit the world, how we store and reconstruct experience, and how presence can be discovered even within absence. Scent, in its volatility, becomes a way to touch the intangible.

[Exhibition]

CAFE (Contemporary Art Fragrance Exhibition)

oneroom29, Kyoto
2026

Curator/Artist: Naoko Kusunoki, Nadia Vitlin

Artists: Katrina Cochrane, Clayton Ilolahia, Bhakti Gandhi, Daniel Pescio

CAFE (Contemporary Art Fragrance Exhibition) is an experimental, interactive exhibition that approaches fragrance as a form of contemporary art through the familiar structure of a café. Rather than presenting scent as a product or object, the project repositions it as a temporal and experiential medium.

Set within a restored Kyoto machiya townhouse, the domestic living–dining–kitchen space is reconfigured into a café-like environment where perfume and café culture symbolically exchange roles. Fragrances are displayed on the counter, scents appear on the menu, and visitors are invited to choose, sit, and spend time with a scent.

The project begins with a simple question: why are there countless cafés, yet no equivalent spaces for engaging with fragrance in a similarly attentive way? In response, CAFE proposes time, attention, and presence as essential conditions for olfactory experience.

Featuring artists from five countries—Japan, Australia, New Zealand, India, and Brazil—the exhibition frames fragrance as a social and spatial practice, unfolding through shared time and collective presence. By inhabiting rather than rejecting the structure of a café, CAFE operates as a subtle intervention into everyday life.

2026

Dimensions variable

Fragrance, glass, furniture, printed menu



[Exhibition Video](#)



Contemporary Art Fragrance Exhibition

ABSTRACT

Burning Bouquet (バーニング・ブーケ 燃える花束)
Top: Orange flower
Middle: Wisteria, Magnolia, White smoke
Base: Wood smoke

Kapua Musk (カプア・ムスク 雲のムスク)
Top: Lavender, Aldehydes
Middle: Heliotrope, Gourmand notes
Base: White musks, Dreamwood, Orcanox

Mizu No Ma (水の間)
Top: Fig leaf, Basil
Middle: Galbanum, Olibanum, Thornapple (dhatura)
Base: Seaweed, Labdanum, Hinoki

Poison Princess (ポイズン・プリンセス)
Top: Pink peppercorn
Middle: Oakmoss, Galbanum, Ivy, Strawberry eucalyptus
Base: Secret potion

Pretty Pest (プリティ・ベスト 美しき厄介者)
Top: Vivid green citrus
Middle: Soft white flowers, Violet leaf
Base: Dry earth, Amber, Patchouli, Oakmoss

Soil Ice-Cream (ソイル・アイスクリーム)
Top: Damp earth
Middle: White chocolate, Beetroot, Jasmine-milk
Base: Vanilla, Tonka

Suburban Summer (サバーバン・サマー 思春期の夏)
Top: Lemonade, Lime, Pine
Middle: Melting asphalt, Tar, Smoke
Base: Hot eucalyptus bark, Buddhawood, White cypress

SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL

Le Champ du Marc (Marcel Duchampのアナグラム)
Top: Cognac accord
Middle: Floral archive
Base: Oakwood accord

Ngahere Moss (ンガヘレ・モス 森の苔)
Top: Coriander, Pink peppercorn, Green notes
Middle: Woody notes, Ozonic floral notes
Base: Virginian cedar, Algae, Moss

Purple Sawdust (パープル・ソーダスト 紫色のおがくず)
Top: Violet dust
Middle: Iris dust, Santal, Cedarwood, White cypress
Base: Vanilla, Sawdust

Tāwhaohao Wood (ターファオファオ・ウッド 潮の流木)
Top: Cardamom, Black pepper, Cumin
Middle: Patchouli, Himalayan cedar
Base: Marine notes, Sandalwood, Amber

Rice Meditation (ライス・メディテーション)
Top: Rose petals
Middle: Mysore santal, Agarwood, Spices, Rice bran, Rosewood
Base: Black Lava, Olibanum, Resin

Waipoua Amber (ワイポウア・アンバー 聖なる森の琥珀)
Top: Bergamot, Clove, Cinnamon
Middle: Granium, Patchouli, Sandalwood
Base: Vanilla, Labdanum, Musk

[Exhibition]

Scented Absence

The Uncommon, Hong Kong
2025

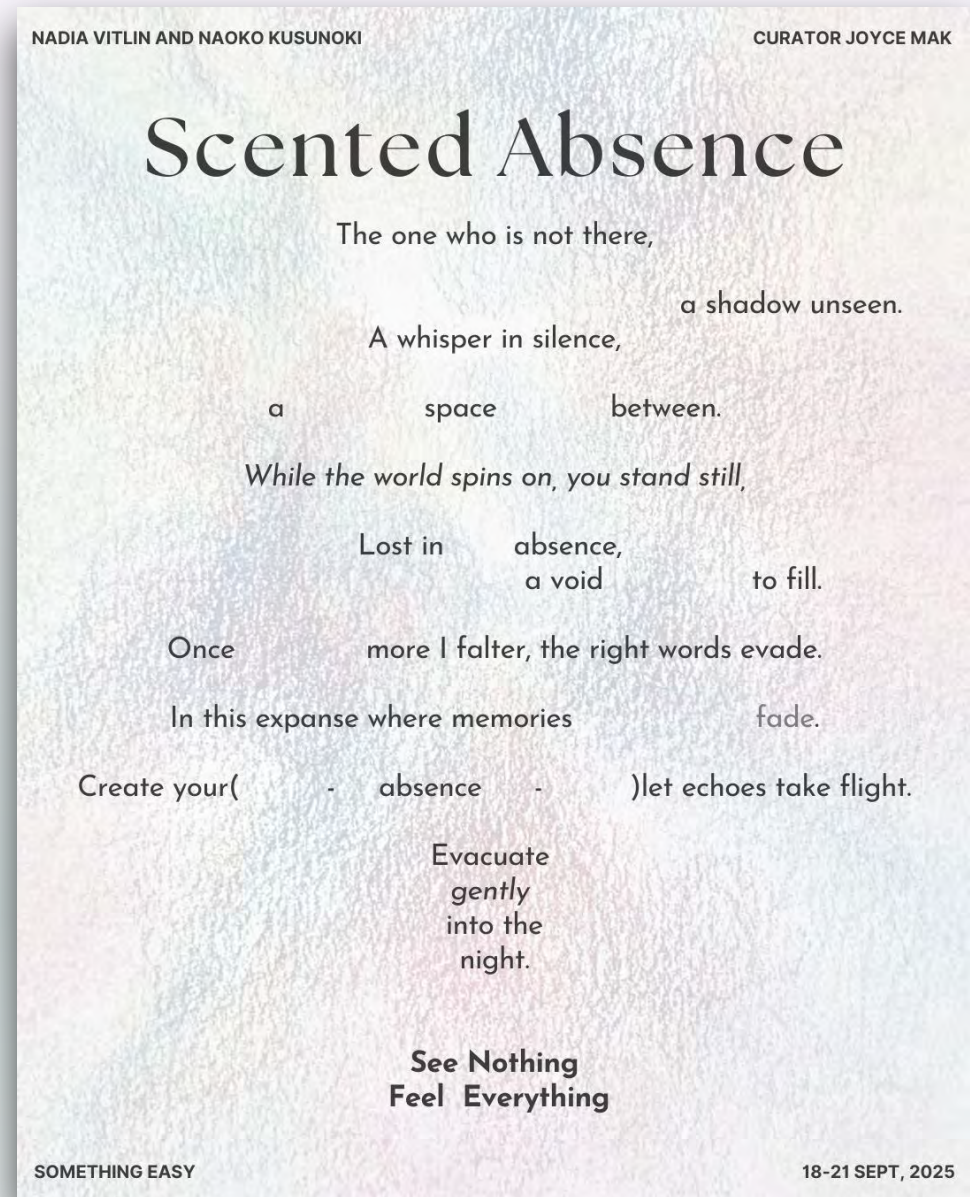
Artist: Nadia Vitlin, Naoko Kusunoki
Curator: Joyce Mak

Exhibition video

Inspired by Kenya Hara, "A vessel that's empty has the possibility to hold things inside. Similarly, abundance lies in the possibilities that exist before anything occurs." This exhibition explores the richness of emptiness as a fertile ground for creation and possibility. What does it mean to exist within the void? Is the question lies at the heart of the exhibition. This journey will challenge you to embrace the potential that lies in the void, where abundance awaits before anything materialises. It speaks the language of emotions, urging us to "see nothing, feel everything".

As you wander through "Scented Absence", let the aromas awaken forgotten memories and stir your emotions. Allow each scent to deepen your connection with the world around you, revealing layers of beauty often overlooked. Celebrate not only what you see, but what you feel, and rediscover the joy of living through the alchemy of scent.

Joyce Mak

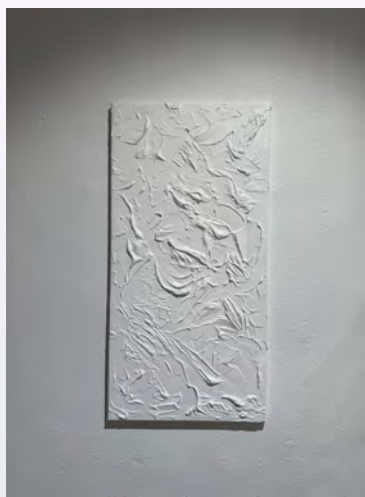




In Absentia 2025

Canvas, modeling paste,
acrylic, fragrance

Concept: The one who is
not there. The place
where you are not.
Scent concept: A
powdery, glowing
invisibility of existence.



Oblivion 2025

Canvas, modeling
paste, acrylic, fragrance

Concept: When all the
world knows except
you. Lost in the lack of
consciousness.
Scent concept: Opaque,
confusing nothingness.



Invisible Rose / Bois Disparu 2025

Grass bottle, paper, fragrance



Empty-Handed 2025

Cloche, clay, fragrance

Concept: Once again I
failed to bring the right
thing.
Scent concept: A
sparkling, beautiful object
that is not there.



The Vacancy 2025

Curtain, fragrance

Concept: This is an
empty space. However,
not anymore, because
you are reading this.
Scent concept:
Liminality



A Physical Void 2025

Paper, metal clip,
fragrance

Concept: Contribute to
the void. Take one with
you.
Scent concept:
Grounded, but missing.



Exodus 2025

Fog machine, fragrance

Concept: Create your
absence: evacuate.
Scent concept:
Transparent wood



NADIA VITLIN AND MAOKO KUSUNOKI

Scented Absence

Four stages to sensory liberation

I:
Discover scents that introduce the artists and capture the essence of the show, preparing you for the creative journey ahead.

II:
Step into a space filled with new scents emerging from a void. This stage inspires curiosity as you explore the unknown.

III:
Allow the scented papers to evoke a range of feelings. Some scents are inviting, while others are complex, blending interests with a hint of apprehension.

IV:
Standing within the fog, the lines between the known and unknown blur. The enveloping fog and dynamic scents create a rich sensory experience.

A Distinctive Conclusion
Join us for an exclusive wine tasting at the bar, featuring carefully curated wines by the artist. Experience the connection between taste and scent, creating a lasting emotional impact.

Indulge, Explore, and Enjoy.

CURATOR JOYCE MAK

A PROJECT BY SOMETHING EASY 18-21 SEPT, 2025

[Exhibition]

Olfactophone

The Secret Bar Nakameguro, Tokyo
2025

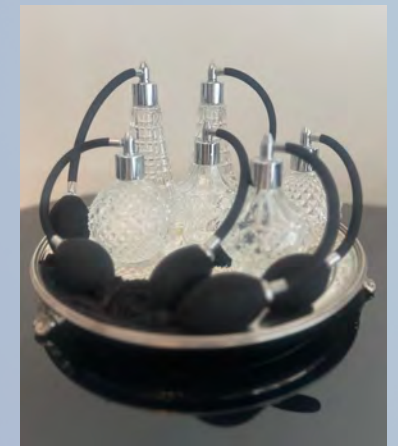
Artist: Naoko Kusunoki, Nadia Vitlin

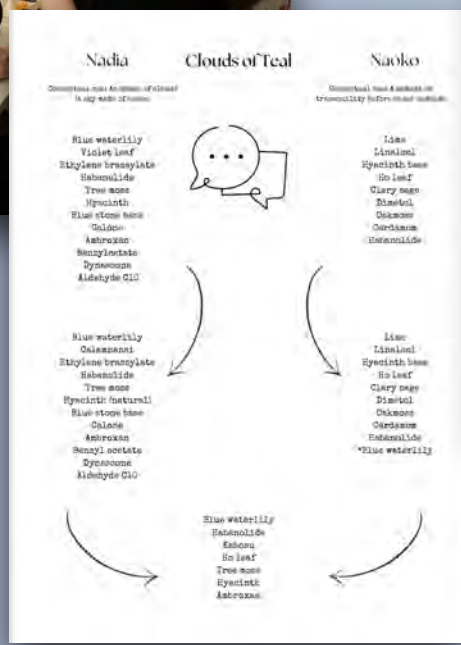
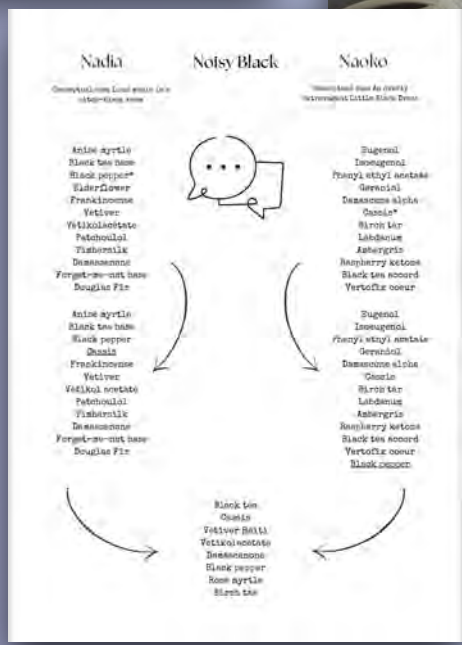
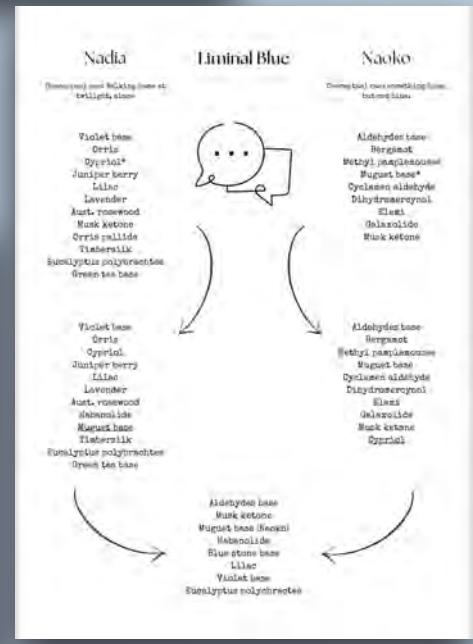
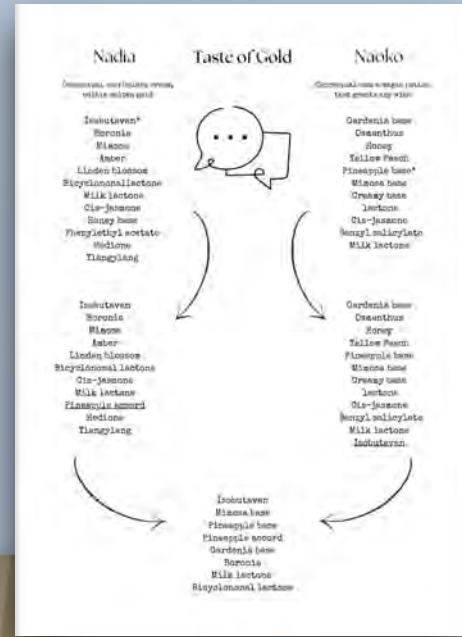
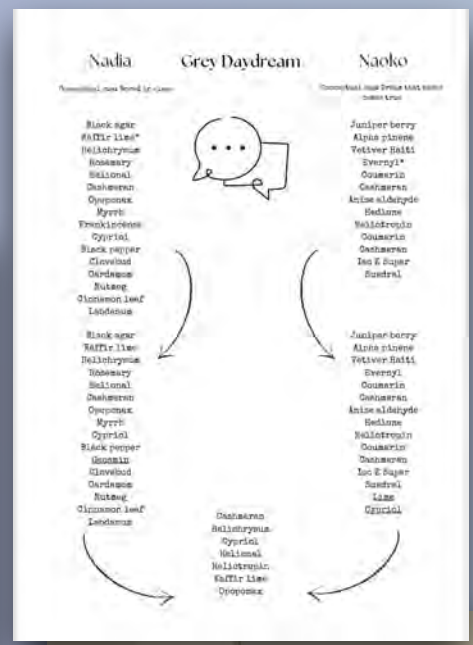
Naoko Kusunoki and Nadia Vitlin explore a scented dialogue to find a *Lingua Franca Profumata* - an aromatic common language. Using a process of interchange and exchange, Naoko and Nadia use a common concept rooted in a cross-sensory experience to create fragrances in iteration whilst exchanging information on the notes and ingredients they use, culminating in a singular common perfume created in-person.

Olfactophone is the scented representation of how language evolves to converge over time, bringing a common understanding to both ideas and reality.

Pink Melancholy / Grey Daydream / Taste of Gold /
Noisy Black / Clouds of Teal / Liminal Blue
2025

Dimensions variable
Fragrance, glass bottle, cocktail glass, paper





Artist dialogue video

[Fragrance / Performance Artworks]

The Scriabin Sonatas Reimagined—Part 2: 6-7-8-9-10 2024

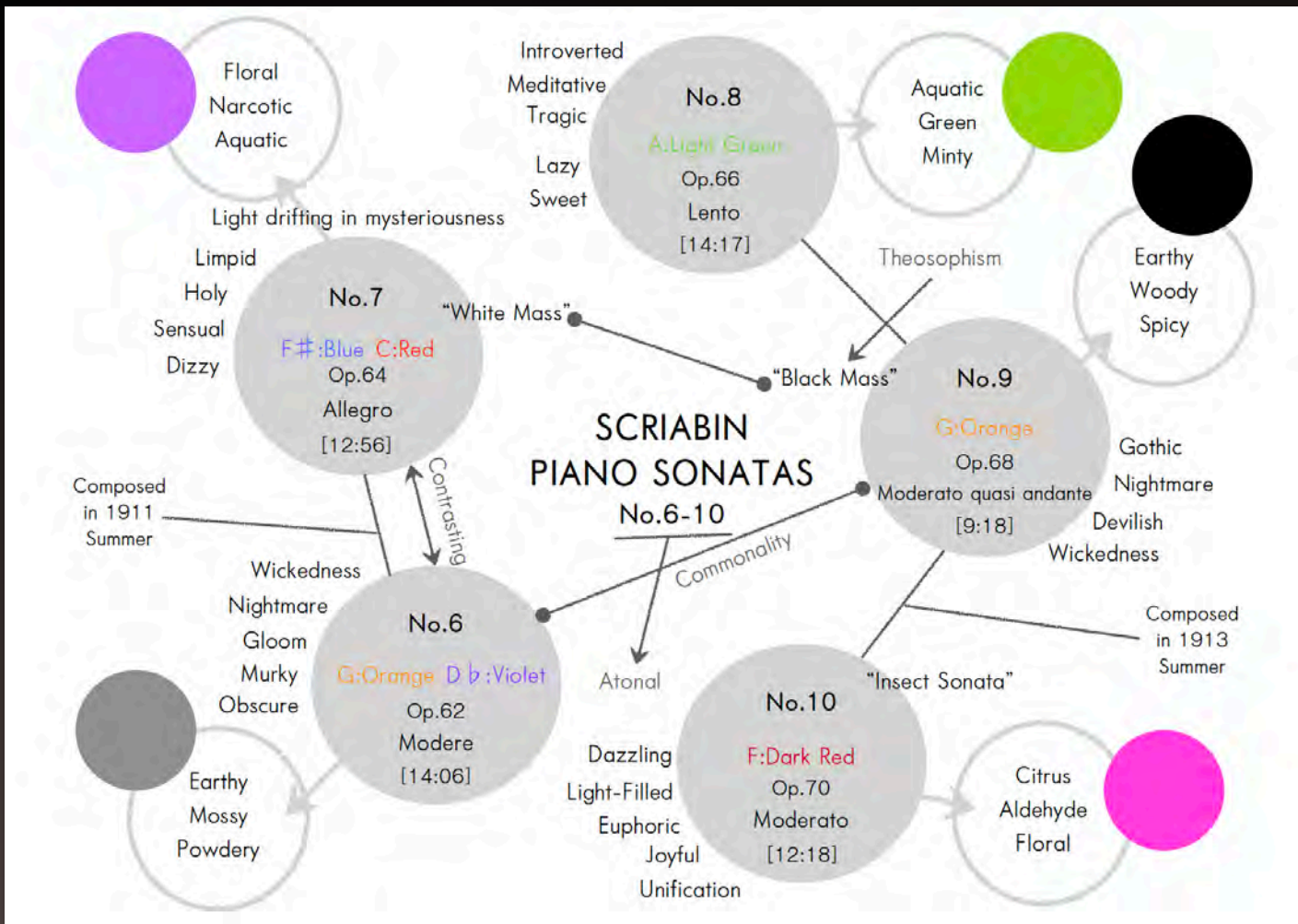
Dimensions variable
Scent diffuser, fragrance, glass bottle

Premiered: February 29, 2024
MUMUTH, Graz, Austria

[Visit the Project Page](#) [Perfume image video](#) [Premier video](#)

Re-interpreting the Five Late Piano Sonatas by Alexander Scriabin with a fresh look on classical music from a contemporary angle: interlacing sound, color, movement, light, scent, and space.





[Fragrance Artwork]

Herbert

2025

Dimensions variable
Fragrance, glass bottle

Included in the exhibition

Volatile Derivatives
Olfactory Art Keller, New York
2025

[Visit the Exhibition Page](#)

In film, music, and visual art there is a rich tradition of creating works that engage directly with previous works. Homages, parodies, appropriations, remixes, cover versions, remakes, knockoffs, and refutations all engage with previous works while explicitly acknowledging them.

In perfumery, intellectual property is much more difficult to protect than in other media, which results in a culture of secrecy and a taboo about referring to or building on previous works. Scent art, on the other hand, is free to respond to perfumes and engage with them in creative ways. In *Volatile Derivatives*, thirteen artists from seven countries present new works that respond to other scents.

Andreas Keller



In 1919, Jacques Guerlain created a legendary perfume called MITSOUKO. The name “Mitsuko” is instantly recognizable to anyone Japanese as a woman’s name. From the moment I first encountered this fragrance, my heart was drawn to it. Who was Mitsouko?

I soon discovered she was a character in Claude Farrell's novel *La bataille* (The Battle), where she falls in love with a British officer in the Royal Navy. Mitsouko was married to Sadao Yorisaka, a young Japanese marquis, and the British officer, Herbert Fairgan, was a friend of her husband. Both Herbert and Sadao died in the Russo-Japanese War. At the moment of his death, Sadao shockingly implies that he had known all along about the secret relationship between his wife and Herbert. Deeply moved by the story, I wanted to give Mitsouko and Herbert, who did not have a happy ending, a perfume as an everlasting tribute. Creating Herbert’s fragrance would be my sensory response to Mitsouko’s.

MITSOUKO, as is widely known, is a chypre floral fragrance with a fruity peach note with aldehydic C-14. But what would HERBERT's scent be like? The novel doesn’t provide a clear description, so I looked for subtle clues. I found references to ‘laurel’, ‘geranium’, and ‘tobacco’, and used these elements to compose a fragrance that would capture his essence.

[Participatory Artwork]

Exchanging Scents and Memories — Beyond Proust 2025

Dimensions variable

Fragrance, glass bottle, printer, photo, metal

Included in the exhibition

Hokkaido Photo Festa
Moerenua Park, Sapporo
2025

[Visit the Exhibition Page](#)

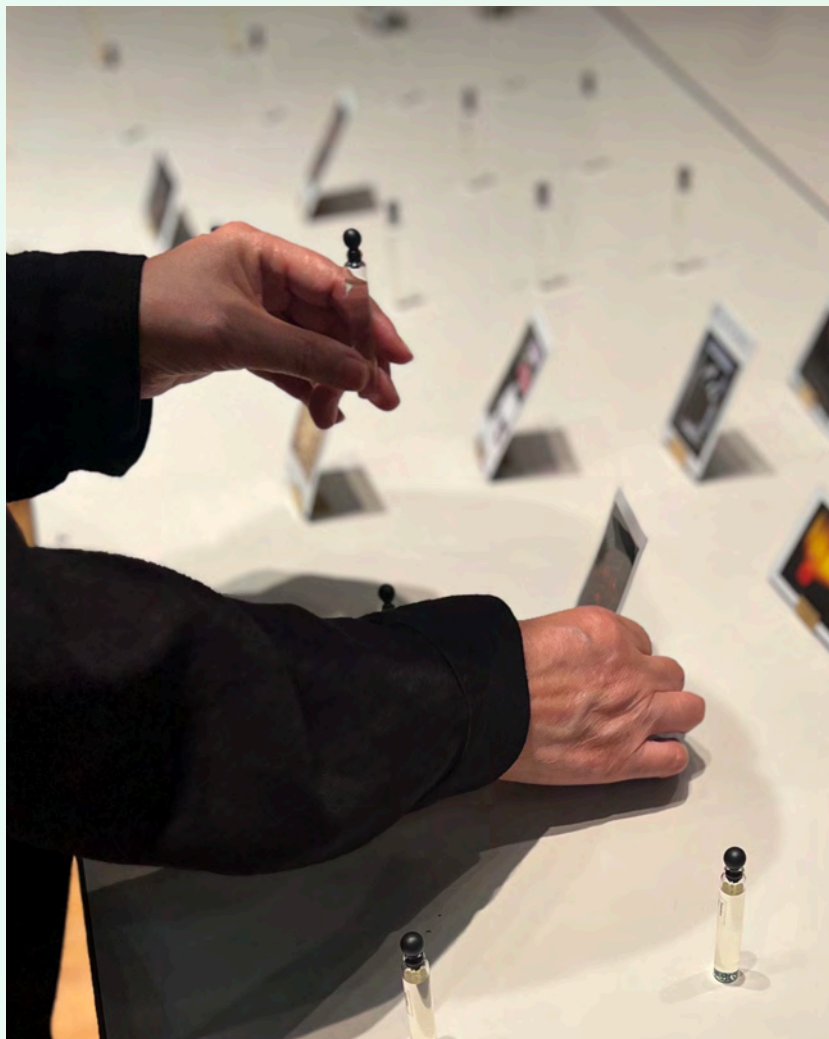


The phenomenon where smelling an odor instantly revives old memories is called the "Proust phenomenon," named after Marcel Proust's highly evocative description of it in *In Search of Lost Time*. It is classified as "involuntary memory," meaning it occurs without any conscious effort to remember.

Proust believed memories were counterfeit. Our intellects reprocess experiences and distort facts. Therefore, he opposed consciously recalling memories. That is precisely why he delighted in sudden flashbacks. He considered them closer to truth, as they avoided the weaving of false memories inherent in the act of recollection.

According to Brassai, Proust frequently used photography as a metaphor for this involuntary memory. Memory, Proust said, is "not a collection of copies of life's various events, readily accessible for viewing, but rather a kind of void from which dead memories are occasionally revived and drawn out by their resemblance to reality." He further likened "memories that never return" to "photographs that are never developed."

However, we in the modern age constantly carry devices with photographic capabilities-smartphones-allowing us to store memories and retrieve them at any time. This work uses scent as a cue, attempting to visualize memory by connecting fragrance and recollection through "voluntary memory."



8 SCENTS



- 1) **Somewhere Bright** — *Rose, Jasmine, Vanilla*
どこか明るい場所 ローズ、ジャスミン、バニラ
- 2) **Somewhere Quiet** — *Heliotrope, Powder, Leather*
どこか静かな場所 ヘリオトロップ、パウダー、レザー
- 3) **Somewhere Pleasant** — *Aldehyde, Muguet, Musk*
どこか心地よい場所 アルデハイド、ミュグ、ムスク
- 4) **Somewhere Deep** — *Cassis, Black Tea, Cedarwood*
どこか深遠な場所 カシス、ブラックティー、シダーウッド
- 5) **Somewhere Lonely** — *Water, Linden Blossom, Moss*
どこか寂しい場所 ウォーター、リンデンブロッサム、モス
- 6) **Somewhere Mysterious** — *Grape, Violet, Oud*
どこか神秘的な場所 グレープ、バイオレット、ウード
- 7) **Somewhere Nostalgic** — *Yuzu, Green Tea, Amber*
どこか懐かしい場所 ユズ、グリーンティー、アンバー
- 8) **Somewhere Fascinating** — *Pineapple, Gardenia, White Chocolate*
どこか素敵なお場所 パイナップル、ガーデニア、ホワイトチョコレート

[Fragrance Art Project]

Fantasy Flora—Winter Series The Pulse Beneath the Silence

2025

Dimensions variable

Scent diffuser, fragrance, paper, digital picture
frame, metal, stainless steel, metal

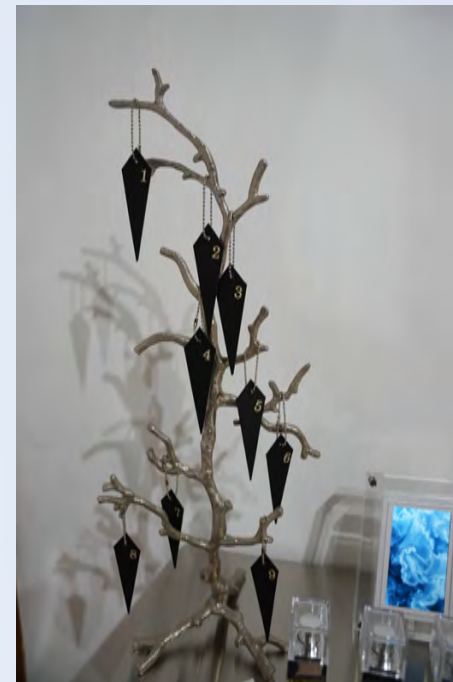
Included in the exhibition

Shinrabansho

MUSUBI Kiyosumishirakawa, Tokyo

2025

Developed through a sustained dialogue between human and AI, this series explores how scent can give form to what does not exist in nature. Each perfume interprets an imagined winter flora—constructed through language, data, and intuition. Through the act of naming and designing these fictional species, the boundaries between perception, memory, and invention begin to blur. A fragrance created for something unreal can still evoke a sense of recognition— as if one has encountered it before, somewhere in the folds of experience. In that moment, imagination begins to resemble memory, and fiction acquires the quiet texture of the real. These works trace that subtle transition, where absence takes on presence, and silence reveals its pulse.



No. 1
Glacialis Frond

Top: Frost Mint
Middle: Snow Lavender
Base: Crystal Moss

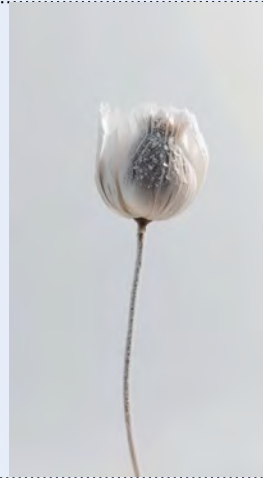
Family: Fern
Description: A frozen fern that sleeps beneath winter's stone. Its crystallized veins catch the pale light, and when touched by wind, it sings faintly like glass. It grows in silence, releasing a single spore only once in a century.
Color: Pale silver-blue, as if frosted over; when light strikes it, a faint jade transparency shimmers through.



No. 2
Frostmourn

Top: White Peach
Middle: Powder Snow
Base: White Musk

Family: Poppy
Description: A fragile flower blooming upon snowfields; its petals shatter like powdered snow at a single touch.
Color: Pale grey to silver-white, softly reflecting the light of snow.



No. 3
Brumal Thorn

Top: Silver Bergamot
Middle: Frost Rose
Base: White Amber

Family: Rose
Description: A low winter shrub with thorns that harden under frost. As the cold wanes, a single white flower emerges between them.
Color: Silvery grey branches with a milky white bloom, shining dully like frozen glass.



No. 4
Crysalin

Top: Pure Water
Middle: Snowdrop
Base: Honey Amber

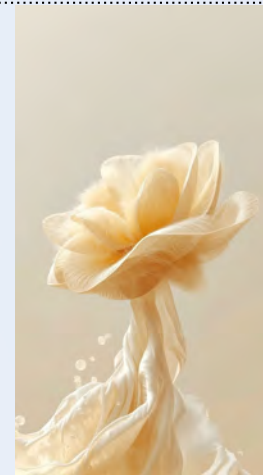
Family: Bulbous plant
Description: A translucent flower that blooms only once, at the moment the snow begins to melt.
Color: Almost colorless, with a faint golden glow at its core.



No. 5
Aurefleur

Top: Citrus Zest
Middle: Mimosa
Base: Cashmere Wood

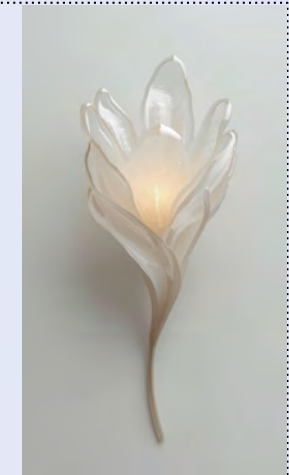
Family: Paeoniaceae
Description: A soft golden bloom that rises from between the snow. Its downy petals gather light and gently melt the ice around them.
Color: A tender gradient from pale gold to cream white.



No. 6
Nivalis Heart

Top: White Pear
Middle: Transparent Jasmine
Base: Vanilla cream

Family: Lily
Description: A luminous flower pulsing faintly beneath the snow; the colder it becomes, the brighter it glows.
Color: Milky white to soft silver, as if illuminated from within.



No. 7
Silvanth

Top: Icy Lemon
Middle: Pine Needle
Base: Incense

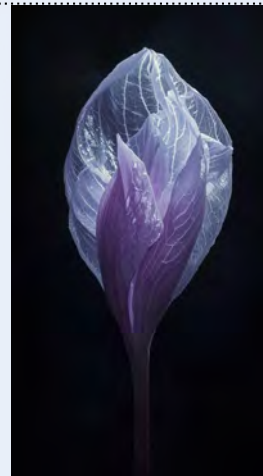
Family: Evergreen
Description: A slender conifer whose needles emit a faint resonance when touched by the wind. Said to "hum" in the coldest nights.
Color: Deep green fading to smoky silver; each needle tipped with frost-like shimmer.



No. 8
Velithra

Top: Frozen Berry
Middle: Snow Orchid
Base: Suede

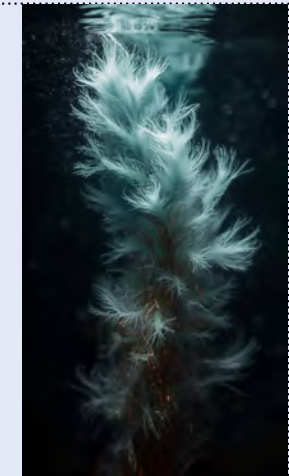
Family: Orchid
Description: A nocturnal flower that blooms only under the reflection of snowlight. Its petals are translucent lilac with veins of silver.
Color: Pale violet with glacial undertones; appears almost opalescent under moonlight.



No. 9
Thalora

Top: Frozen Melon
Middle: Bamboo
Base: Crystal Moss

Family: Aquatic plant
Description: Grows beneath frozen lakes; when the ice thaws, its translucent leaves release bubbles of scent like faint light.
Color: Icy turquoise with threads of gold beneath the surface.



[Participatory Artwork]

Time Capsule Project

2022-2023

Dimensions variable
Fragrance, PP bottle, scent diffuser,
paper, acrylic box

Included in the exhibition

The House of the Living
A private house, Tokyo
2022

[Visit the Exhibition Page](#)



Sometimes a single whiff of fragrance can instantly bring back a long-forgotten memory. This well-known effect—often called the Proust phenomenon—is classified in psychology as involuntary remembering, a form of recall that occurs without any intention to remember. Although widely referenced, olfactory-triggered memories are actually far less common than those prompted by visual or auditory cues.

Even so, they attract special attention because of their distinctive qualities: memories evoked by scent tend to be more enduring, more vivid, more detailed, and more emotionally charged than those elicited by other senses.


Can we intentionally create such a phenomenon? Is it possible to preserve the memory of a particular day within a fragrance—like a time capsule—and retrieve it in the future?


This work is an experimental project born from that question. If you would like to participate, please scan the QR code and follow the instructions to send a blank email, then take an envelope home with you. Inside, you will find two small bottles. First, use the bottle labeled 2022. Spray it onto the round blotter included, or into your space, over the course of several days. After that, seal the envelope and keep it for one year. You will receive an email from me when the year has passed. At that time, open the envelope again, smell the bottle labeled 2023, and share your reflections.

What will you remember? And will the scent unlock the memories held within it?

2022.5.13 - 5.29

Instructions for the project プロジェクトの指示書

1. Close your eyes for 10 seconds and smell the air.
10秒間目を閉じてこの空間の香りを嗅いでください。
2. Scan the QR code and send me a blank email.
QRコードを読み込んで空メールを送ってください。
3. Please take one envelope.
封筒を一つお持ち帰りください。
4. Follow the instructions inside the envelope.
封筒の中にある指示書に従ってください。

Your e-mail address will be used only for the purpose of this project.
登録いただいたメールアドレスは、本プロジェクトの目的にのみ使用します。

2022

-  1. SMELL THE 2022 AND USE IT UP
2022 ボトルの香りを全て使ってください。
-  2. SET AN ALARM FOR 1 YEAR
1年後の今日にアラームをセットして、
-  3. SEAL THE ENVELOPE
封をしてください。
-  4. KEEP AND OPEN IT AFTER 1 YEAR
保管して一年後に開封してください。

2023

-  1. SMELL THE 2023
2023 ボトルの香りを嗅いでください。
-  2. WHAT POPS INTO YOUR HEAD
香りから頭にふと浮かんだことを、
-  3. EMAIL IT TO ME
メールでフィードバックください。
-  4. APPRECIATE YOUR COOPERATION
ご協力ありがとうございます。

EMAIL TO: naoko.kusunoki@yourexclusive.jp

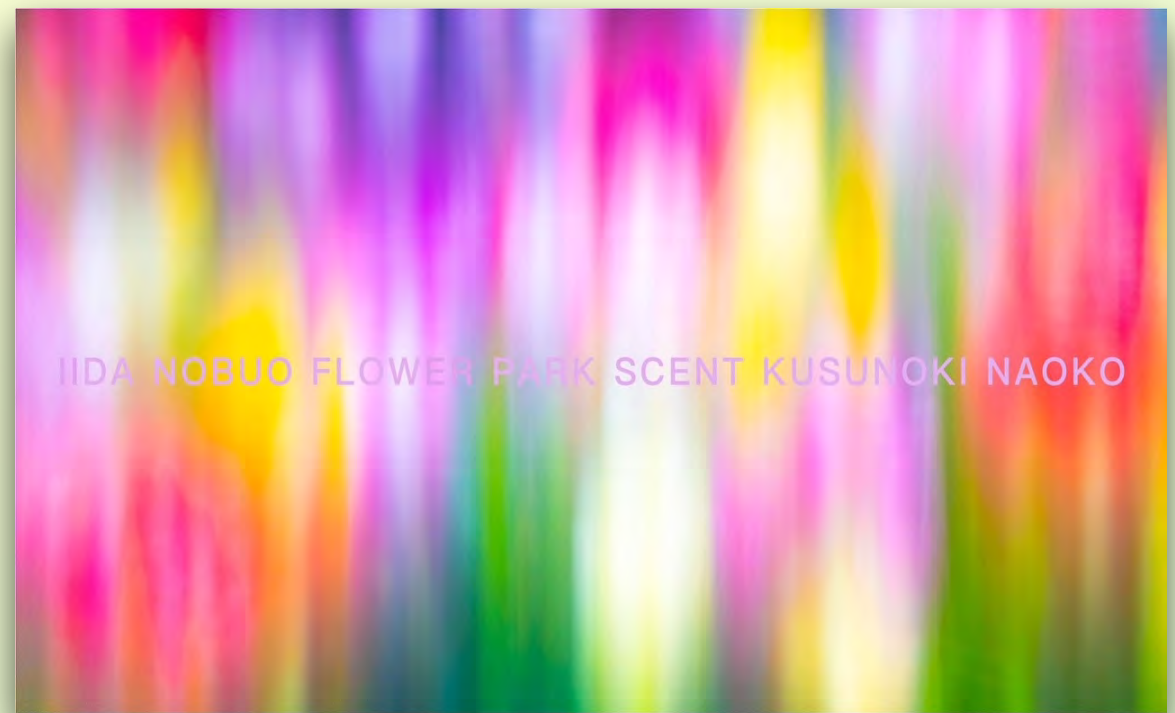


[Exhibition]

Flower Park—Subception

Gallery Dazzle, Tokyo
2022

Artist:
Nobuo Iida (Photo)
Naoko Kusunoki (Scent)



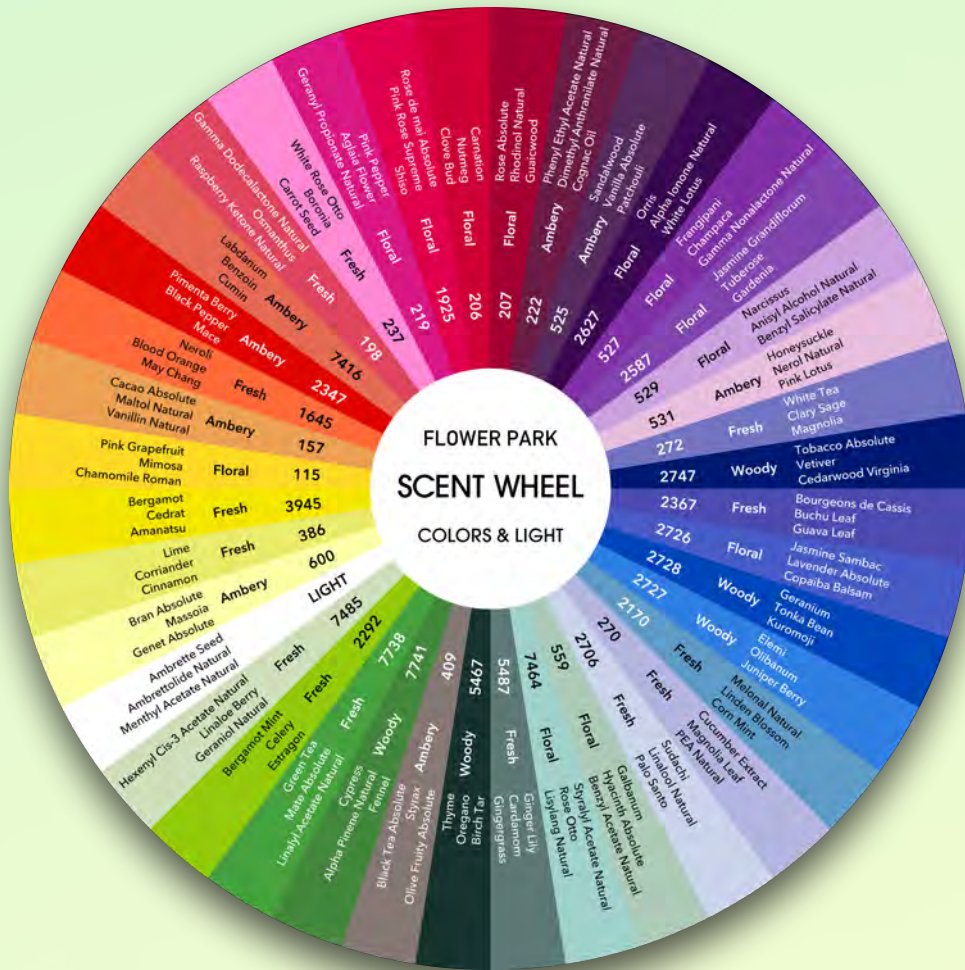
We live in an age dominated by vision, and flowers are no exception. Selective breeding has made them more colorful and longer-lasting, often at the cost of their fragrance. Scent is usually the first thing to fade, sacrificed for visual perfection and durability.

When I first encountered Mr. Iida's photographs, I intuitively felt they smelled good. I later realized that the fragrances lost through breeding seemed somehow contained within the images. This project arose from my desire to give form to those "captured" scents.

In these photographs, flowers dissolve into luminous fields of color. They appear delicate yet seductive, evoking warmth and an imagined scent, even though we only see them. It is as if they act below the threshold of perception—an idea expressed in the subtitle "Subception."

For the work, I extracted colors from the images, converted them into PANTONE values, and transformed these into 40 fragrances arranged on a Scent Wheel. The proportions of light and color were then recalculated and retranslated into new scents.





PANTONE® 1925 C	3%
PANTONE® 219 C	15%
PANTONE® 237 C	5%
PANTONE® 1645 C	4%
PANTONE® 3945 C	15%
PANTONE® 2292 C	8%
PANTONE® 7741 C	5%
PANTONE® 5467 C	6%
PANTONE® 2747 C	4%
PANTONE® 527 C	7%
LIGHT	28%

Flower Park
Scent Wheel
2022

Dimensions variable
Fragrance, grass bottle,
table, paper



Untitled (Perfume)
2022

Dimensions variable
Fragrance, grass bottle



[Fragrance Artwork]

Moon Collection

2025

119 × 43 × 25 mm
Fragrance, glass bottle

Included in the exhibition

Moon Collection
MUSUBI Kiyosumishirakawa, Tokyo
2025



15 十五夜

Top Persimmon
Middle Silver grass
Last Maple

15 Full Moon / Mid-Autumn Moon

August 15th of the Lunar Calendar
(October 6, 2025)

This moon is considered the clearest and most beautiful of the year. The seasonal sights—autumn grasses, the sounds of insects, night dew, and autumn breezes—further enhance the moon's luminous clarity.

23 二十三夜

Top Grape
Middle Balloon Flower
Last Oud

23 Twenty-Third Night / Midnight Moon

August 23rd of the Lunar Calendar
(October 14, 2025)

The moon rises around midnight.

13 十三夜

Top Crisp Air
Middle Rose Petal
Last Musk

13 Thirteenth Night / Late Moon

September 13th of the Lunar Calendar
(November 2, 2025)

Called the Late Moon in contrast to the Full Moon. By this time, the blowing wind feels distinctly chilly, and unlike the splendid Full Moon, it possesses a melancholy charm.

◆ Seeing only either the Mid-Autumn Full Moon or the Late Moon is called viewing only one moon (片見月).

LUNAR RAIN 月の雨

Top Water
Middle Lotus
Last Soil

Lunar Rain / Rainy Full Moon

On the night of the fifteenth day of the eighth month in the lunar calendar, when rain obscures the moon. Gazing up at the sky, resentful of the rain.

[Fragrance Artwork]

Andy Warhol

2022

Dimensions variable
Fragrance, glass bottle

Included in the exhibition

Portraits in Scent
Olfactory Art Keller, New York
2022

[Visit the Exhibition Page](#)



"Portraits in Scent" is an exhibition of olfactory portraits that capture the intangible (or is it the invisible?) that eludes photography and painting. Subjects whose essence has been reduced to mixtures of volatile molecules include public figures from King Harold to Neil deGrasse Tyson, as well as fictional characters. A collection of self-portraits and intimate portraits of artists' friends and family members is also on display

Andreas Keller