

# 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.

[Fragrance Art Project]

# Fantasy Flora—Winter Series The Pulse Beneath the Silence

2025

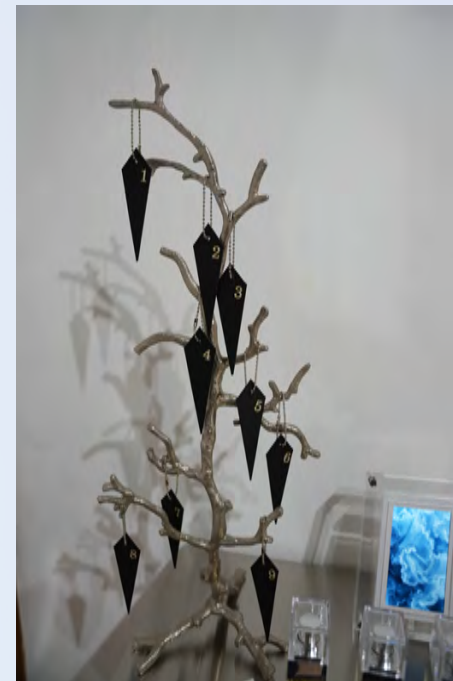
Dimensions variable

Scent diffuser, fragrance, paper, digital picture  
frame, paper, 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

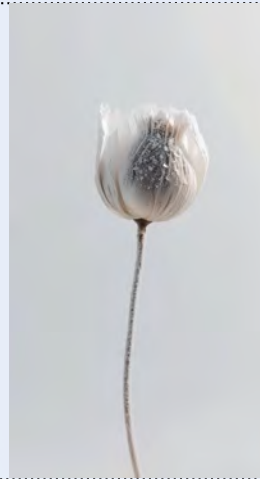
**Family:** Fern  
**Description:** A frozen fern that sleeps beneath winter's stone. Its crystallized veins catch the pale light, and when touched by wind, it sings faintly like glass. It grows in silence, releasing a single spore only once in a century.  
**Color:** Pale silver-blue, as if frosted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



No. 2  
Frostmourn

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

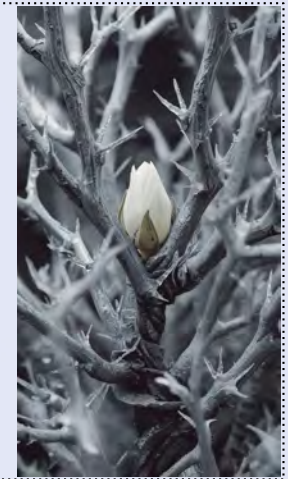
**Family:** Poppy  
**Description:** A fragile flower blooming upon snowfields; its petals shatter like powdered snow at a single touch.  
**Color:** Pale grey to silver-white, softly reflecting the light of snow.



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

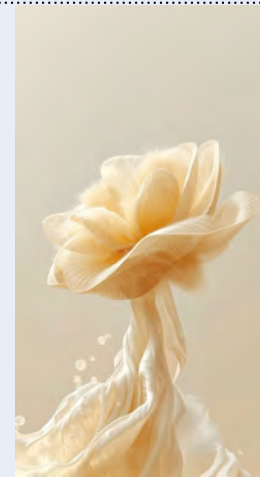
**Family:** Bulbous plant  
**Description:** A translucent flower that blooms only once, at the moment the snow begins to melt.  
**Color:** Almost colorless, with a faint golden glow at its core.



No. 5  
Aurefleur

**Top:** Citrus Zest  
**Middle:** Mimosa  
**Base:** Cashmere Wood

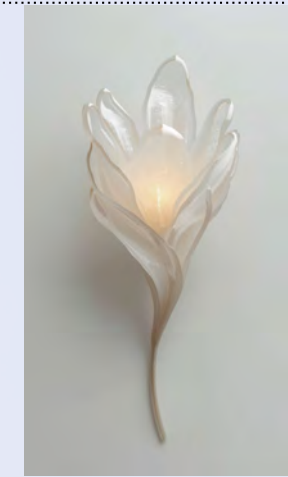
**Family:** Paeoniaceae  
**Description:** A soft golden bloom that rises from between the snow. Its downy petals gather light and gently melt the ice around them.  
**Color:** A tender gradient from pale gold to cream white.



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

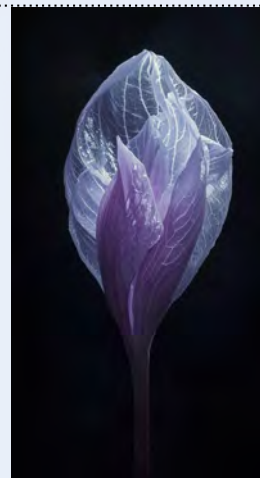
**Family:** Evergreen  
**Description:** A slender conifer whose needles emit a faint resonance when touched by the wind. Said to "hum" in the coldest nights.  
**Color:** Deep green fading to smoky silver; each needle tipped with frost-like shimmer.



No. 8  
Velithra

**Top:** Frozen Berry  
**Middle:** Snow Orchid  
**Base:** Suede

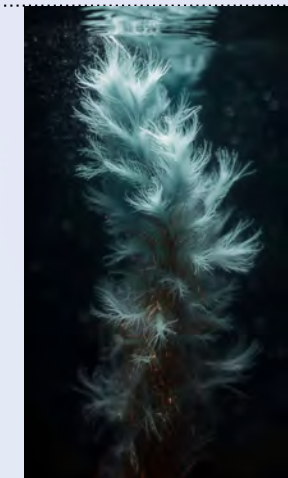
**Family:** Orchid  
**Description:** A nocturnal flower that blooms only under the reflection of snowlight. Its petals are translucent lilac with veins of silver.  
**Color:** Pale violet with glacial undertones; appears almost opalescent under moonlight.



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]

# 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](#)

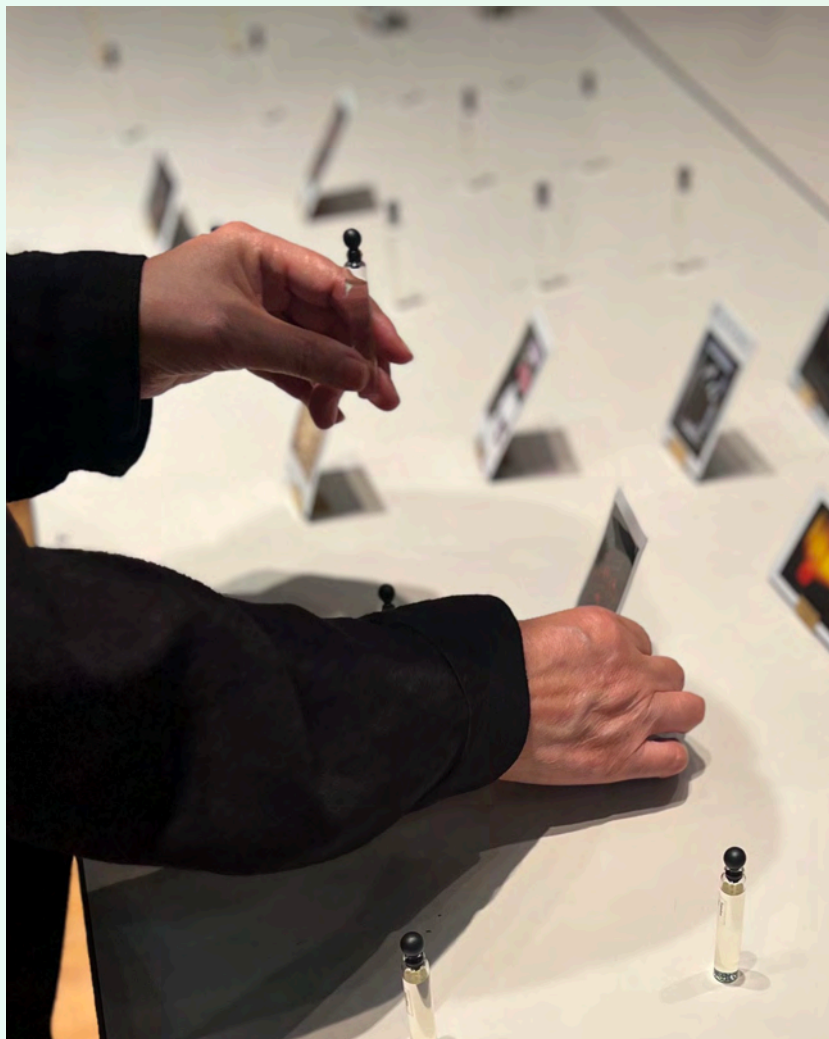


The phenomenon where smelling an odor instantly revives old memories is called the "Proust phenomenon," named after Marcel Proust's highly evocative description of it in *In Search of Lost Time*. It is classified as "involuntary memory," meaning it occurs without any conscious effort to remember.

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、ミュゲ、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



[Exhibition]

# Scented Absence

The Uncommon, Hong Kong  
2025

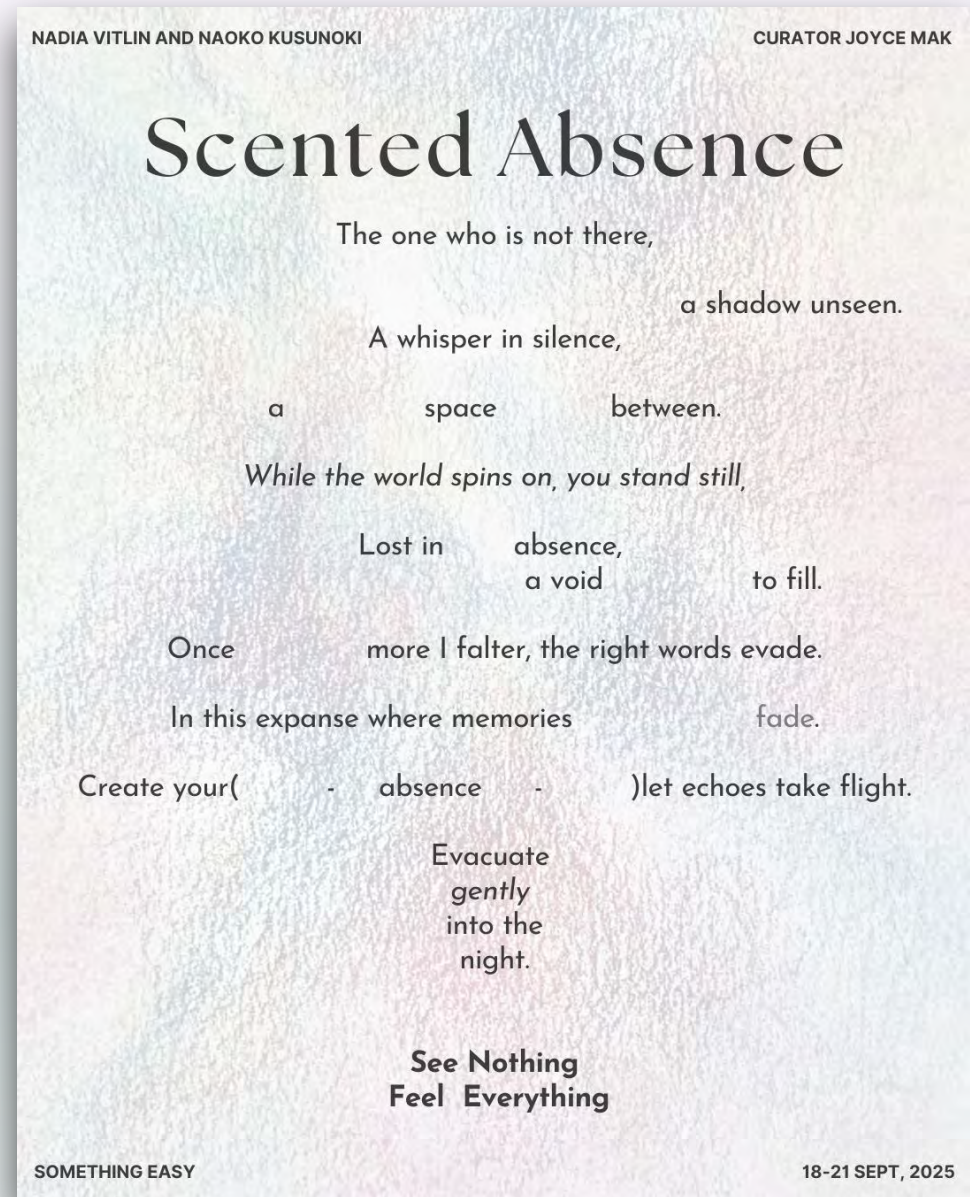
Artist: Nadia Vitlin, Naoko Kusunoki  
Curator: Joyce Mak

## 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

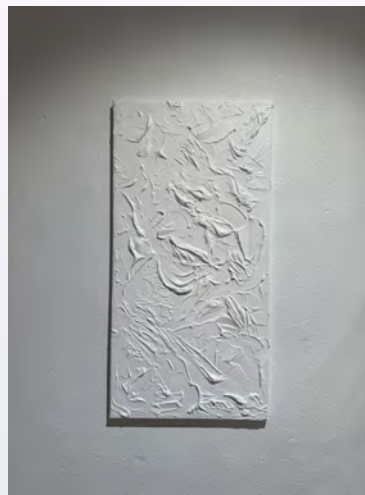




## In Absentia 2025

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





[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







[Fragrance / Performance Artworks]

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

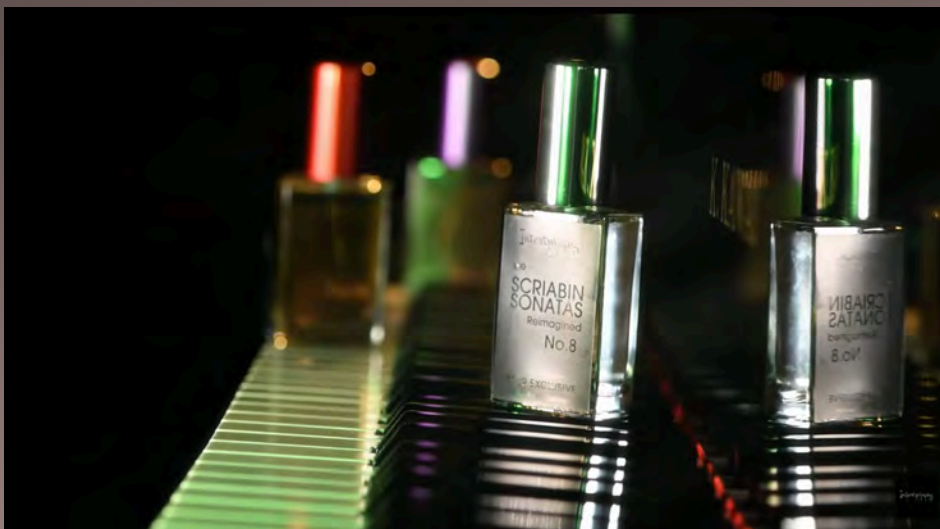
Dimensions variable

Scent diffuser, fragrance, glass bottle

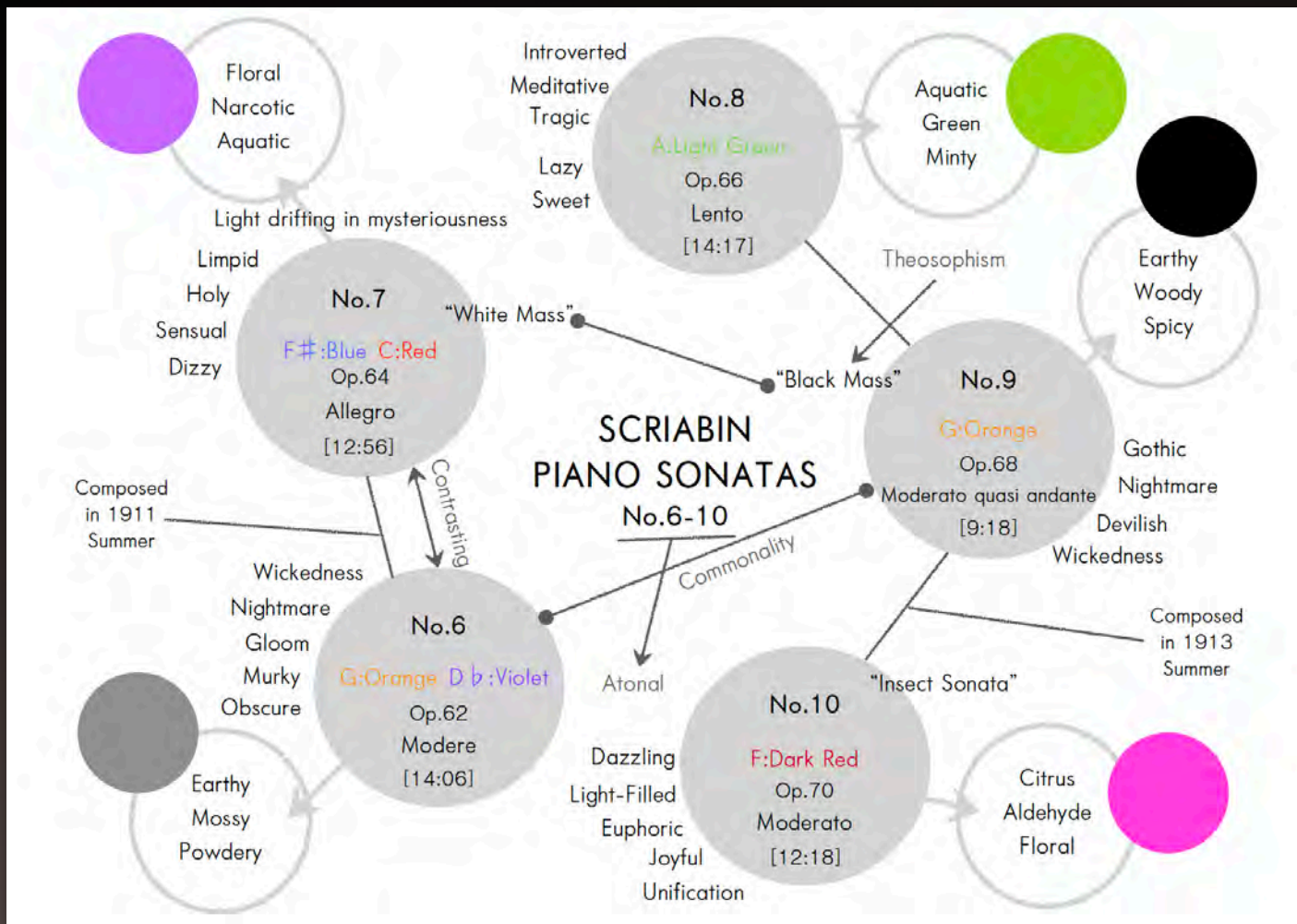
Premiered: February 29, 2024  
MUMUTH, Graz, Austria

[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.









[Participatory Artwork]

# Time Capsule Project

2022-2023

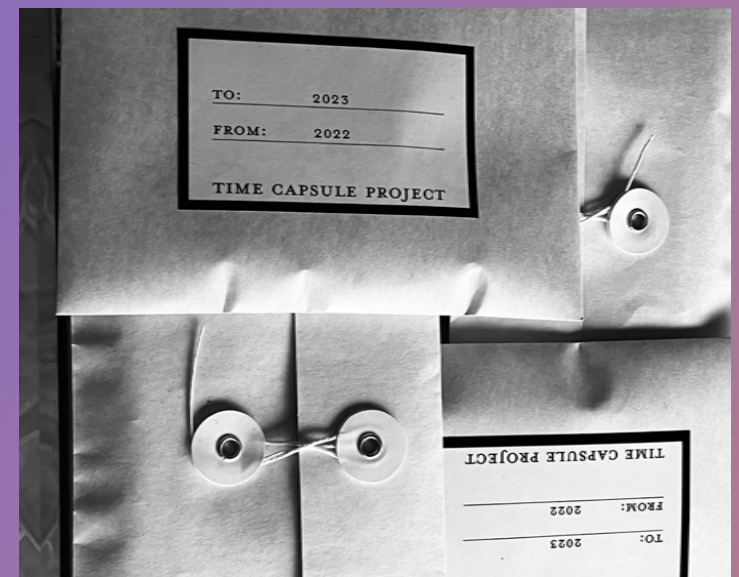
Dimensions variable

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。

*Naoko Kusunoki*

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](mailto:naoko.kusunoki@yourexclusive.jp)



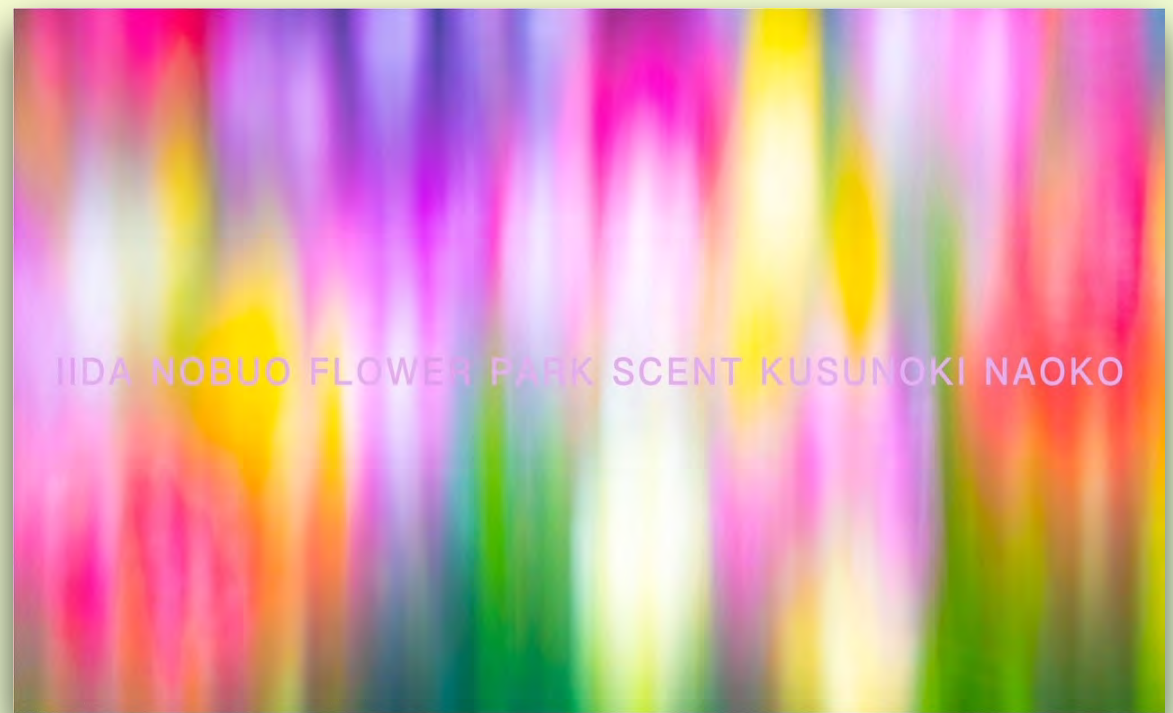


[Exhibition]

# 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.

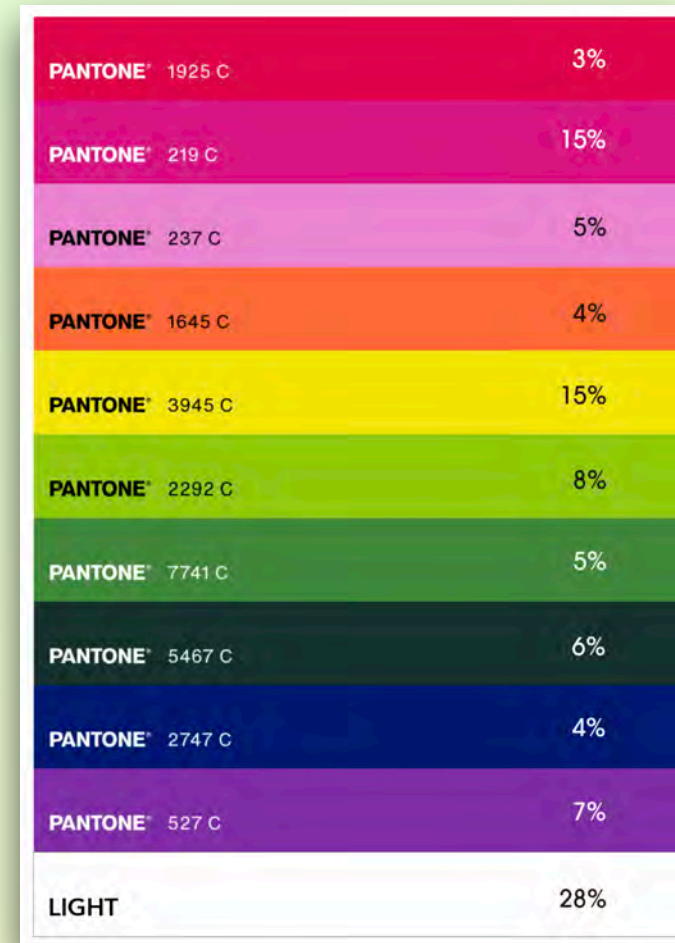
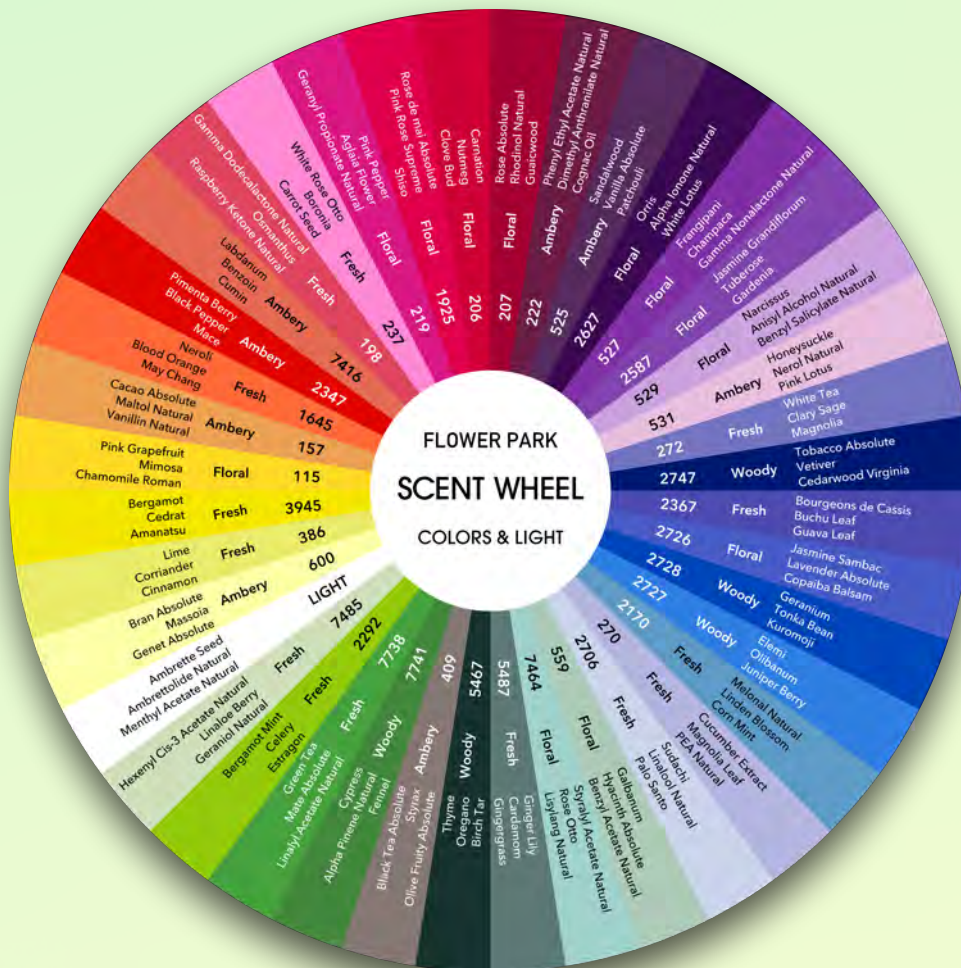
When I first encountered Mr. Iida's photographs, I intuitively felt they smelled good. I later realized that the fragrances lost through breeding seemed somehow contained within the images. This project arose from my desire to give form to those "captured" scents.

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.







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]

# 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.

[Visit the Exhibition Page](#)

Andy Warhol

was smell-obsessed.

August 6, 1928

Pop

Silver

He switched perfumes every 3 months, but continuously used "No.5". He was buried with "Beautiful" when he died. He loved most the scent of spring in NYC. This scent was made based on them with the essences of pop and silver.



"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



[Fragrance Artwork]

# Physis

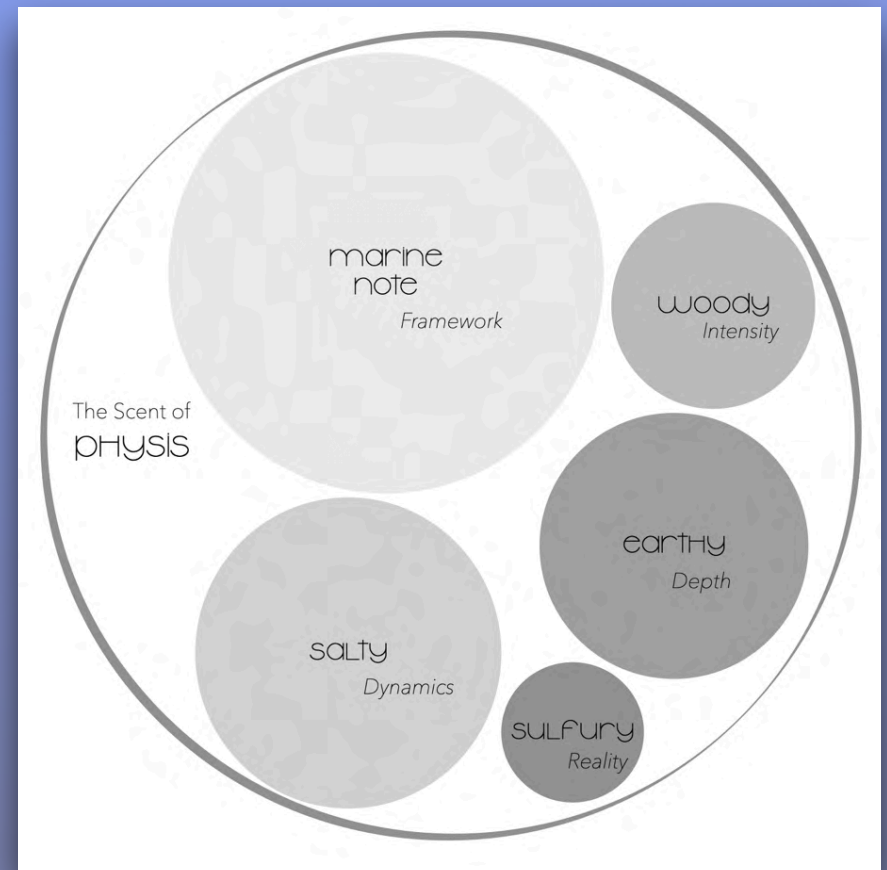
2023

Dimensions variable  
Fragrance, scent diffusor

Included in the exhibition

physis

Ryoten Ogata Solo Show  
MA5 Gallery, Tokyo  
2025



Ever since I was young, standing before the sea has enveloped me in a strange mixture of fear and awe. I could never fully explain that sense of reverence through the harshness of nature or the beauty of the landscape alone. It felt more like sensing the presence of an immense living being, or like my body filling with a smooth, inner light—something beyond reason. When I encountered the concept of *Physis*, that unexplained feeling finally settled into place.

Ironically, the words *nature* and *art* are often positioned in opposition, yet at times nature surpasses our imagination, while society creates ecosystems more intricate than those found in the wild. The two continually intersect as they evolve. In a world in constant transformation, we are compelled to keep reinterpreting our relationship with nature.

What does the sea give us now, and what can we offer in return?

Here, I hope to create a space for a dialogue with nature—one that unfolds beyond reason.

Ryoten Ogata



[Fragrance Artwork]

# euforia

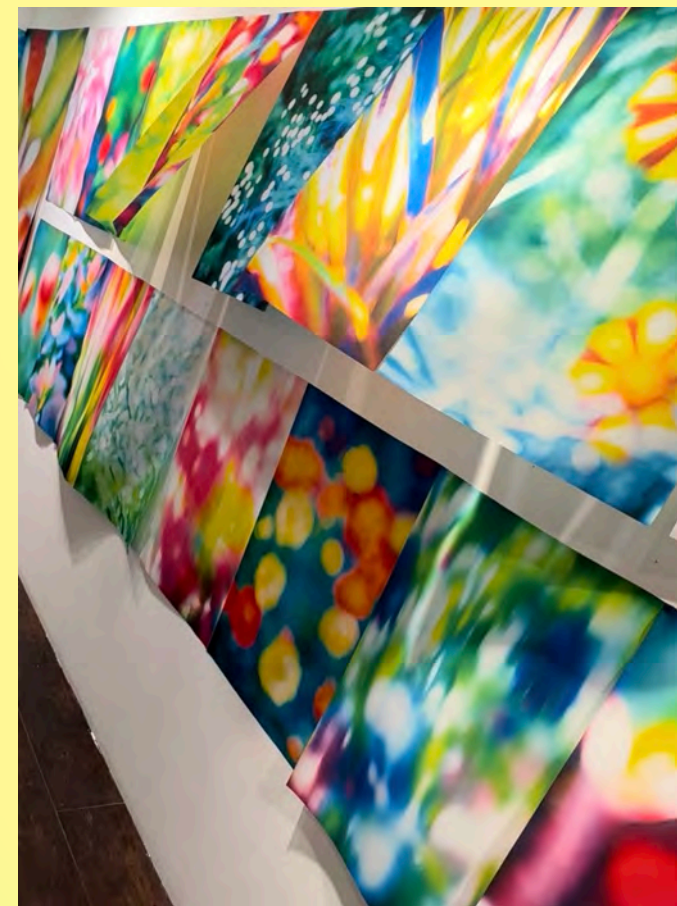
2023

Dimensions variable  
Fragrance, scent diffuser

Included in the exhibition

euforia

Nobuo Iida Solo Show  
Gallery Dazzle, Tokyo  
2025





[Fragrance Artwork]

# Lamination

2023

Height: 14 cm, Diameter: 4.5 cm

Fragrance, bottle

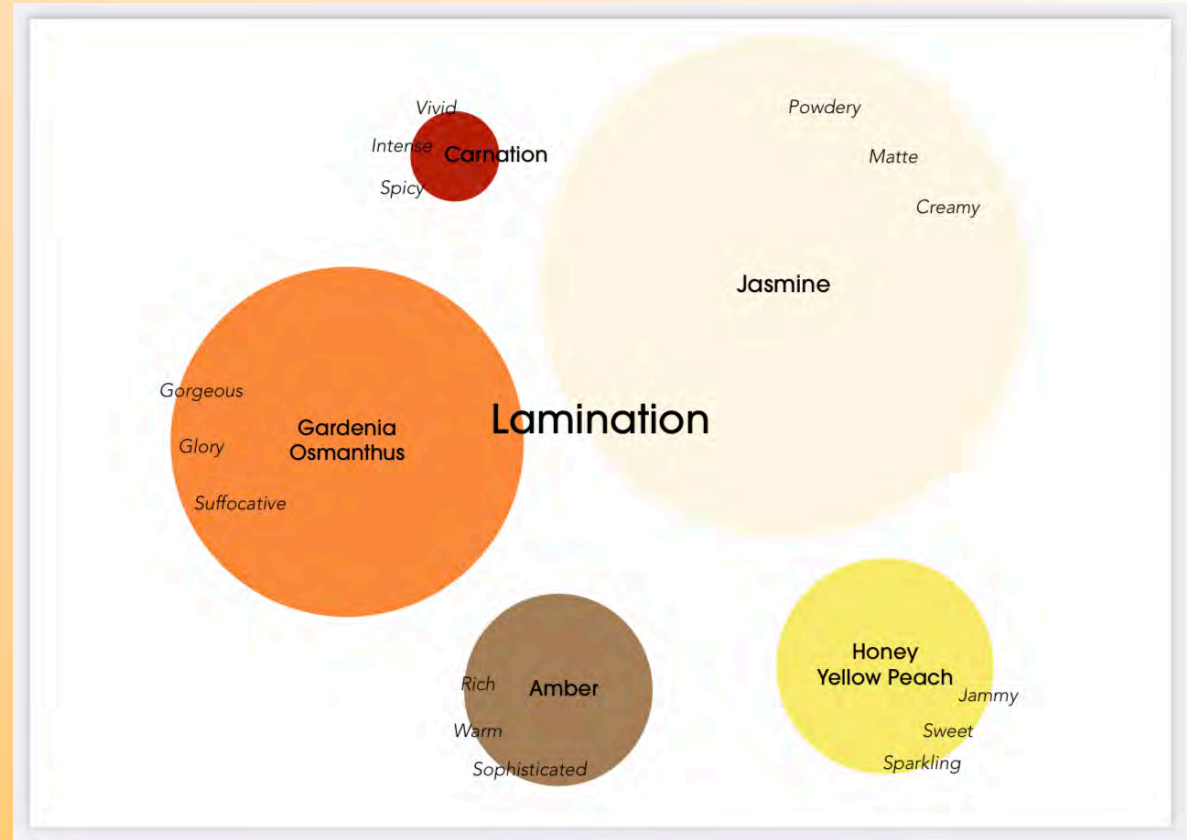
Included in the exhibition

KO-HEY! ARIKAWA EXPO HAPPY GO ROUND

Solo Show

Moon Terrace Agarizaki, Okinawa

2023





[Fragrance Artwork]

# Mirror

2021

Dimensions variable  
Fragrance, grass bottle,  
mirror, paper

Included in the exhibition

Mirrors and Windows  
Ginza Okuno Building, Tokyo  
2021

[Visit the Exhibition Page](#)

