

YUKO MOHRI ENTANGLEMENTS

«In a kinetic work, you absolutely need to take friction into consideration. And resistance is a starting point for any spirit rebelling against its time. Not every change begins with a big revolution. Even a friction as tiny as a record scratch can ignite a revolution.»

Yuko Mohri

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ENTANGLEMENTS

curated by
Fiammetta Griccioli and Vicente Todolí

Pirelli HangarBicocca
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Public Program

2 October: Sound performance by musicians
Eiko Ishibashi and Jim O'Rourke with Yuko Mohri.

Museum Mediation

Museum mediators are present in the exhibition
spaces to answer questions from the public,
provide information and contextual elements that
can deepen the fruition of the artworks.

Catalog

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the exhibition is available at the Pirelli HangarBicocca
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Yuko Mohri installing *I/O*, 2023
Photo kugeyasuhide

The Artist

Yuko Mohri (Kanagawa, Japan, 1980; lives and works in Tokyo) made a name for herself on the Japanese art scene in the early 2000s with a practice that combines visual art and experimental music, later establishing herself as one of the most innovative voices in the international art world. Through complex, site-specific kinetic installations, she has developed a distinctive language that translates imperceptible natural phenomena such as humidity, gravity, magnetism, and heat into visual and acoustic effects. With a playful approach and a keen sense of irony, she assembles everyday objects and repurposed musical instruments, often connecting them to electronic circuits that activate light, sound, and movement. Transient environmental elements such as air currents, temperature, and dust shape her compositions unpredictably, making them resemble living organisms capable of responding to their surroundings. In this process, chance and accidental events merge with artistic intent, rendering each work a unique and ever-changing experience.

After studying visual arts at Tama Art University in Tokyo, Mohri graduated from the Department of Intermedia Art at Tokyo University of the Arts in 2006. During her student years, she was active in the underground music scene with the improvisational punk band named “sisforsound,” an experience that profoundly influenced her vision of art, opening it to a performative and experimental dimension. It was during this period that she discovered the work of artists who use sound as a key element in their production, inspiring her to explore the spatial, physical, and relational qualities of listening, which would become central to her art. As Mohri recalls, «I discovered that the kind of music I loved could also be art. The work of Christian Marclay, Carsten Nicolai, and Ryoji Ikeda, all of whom were originally musicians, began to be shown in exhibitions around the late 1990s. At that time, I learned the term “sound installation” and realized that sound could be part of an artwork.»

Rather than working with media such as painting or sculpture, Mohri began to assemble kinetic devices—composed of sensors, motors, radio parts, discarded appliances, electrical cables, microphones, and amplifiers—which she used to create her early works and live performances. During these years Mohri frequent-

ly visited the Akihabara district in Tokyo, known for its surplus electronics and second-hand appliances. There, she taught herself the basics of electronics and acquired the technical skills for handling various components. For the artist, DIY “do-it-yourself” is a form of creative freedom: the ability to bring even the most imaginative ideas into reality.

From her earliest experiments, Mohri has used technology and software to create works that activate and transform in unexpected and not entirely controllable ways. Among these is *Taiwa-Hensokuki* (2006), which can be translated as “dialogue-transmission machine,” consisting of two wall-mounted IBM laptops. The first computer reads aloud a text taken from a political statement broadcast by the Japanese mass media. The second transcribes it using voice-recognition software programed with a vocabulary defined by the artist, which also includes vulgar expressions. The altered text is then fed back to the first computer, which rereads it, initiating a continuous cycle in which the two machines exchange content in a surreal and satirical “dialogue.” A printer hanging beside the devices records the texts on a long roll of paper, leaving a tangible trace of the linguistic alterations generated by the interaction between the two computers.

Mohri’s interest in the ingenuity of circuits and interconnected systems also finds direct inspiration in the observation of urban reality. Her most famous series, *Moré Moré (Leaky)*, draws on the creative and makeshift solutions made in the Tokyo subway by the station’s operators to divert water infiltration using umbrellas, plastic sheeting, and tubes. The artist explains, «These site-specific expedients, adapted to each situation, seemed ideal to me: sculptures or architectural structures made ad hoc, without any sense of authorial intention. Moreover, they expressed Japanese politics in a nutshell. Instead of solving the problem at its root, it gets patched and mended, circling around the issue.» Documenting these “solutions” led first to the photographic series *Moré Moré Tokyo (Leaky Tokyo)* (2009–21), and later to the kinetic installation *Moré Moré (Leaky)* (2015–ongoing), in which streams of water are choreographically channeled inside a structure created by the artist. With this work, Mohri won the Grand



Moré Moré (Leaky): *Variations*, 2022
Installation view, 23rd Biennale of Sydney, 2022

Prix at the 2015 Nissan Art Award, a turning point in her career that allowed her to participate in an artist residency at the Camden Art Centre in London, marking the start of her international visibility.

A further distinctive trait of Mohri's practice is the use of noise and accidental sounds as elements that are just as expressive as the melody of an instrument: «I attach great significance to the noise generated by the work precisely because it is considered non-existent and ignored in "right" viewing or listening.» Indeed, for the artist these acoustic features paint a faithful, though never entirely identical, portrait of the environment in which the listener is immersed. Attention to the soundscape in its multiple facets is part of a current of thought that runs throughout the twentieth century and finds one of its earliest exponents in the French composer Erik Satie (1866–1925), who, in the 1920s, created background music—*musique d'ameublement*, or "furniture music"—intended to accompany daily life without requiring active listening. One of Mohri's early works, *vexations: c. i. p. (Composition in Progress)* (2005–09),



Yuko Mohri and Akio Suzuki during Suzuki's performance as part of the exhibition "Voluta," Camden Art Centre, London, 2018
Courtesy Camden Art Centre. Photo Mark Blower

is inspired by Satie's *Vexations* (1893), adopting its renowned structure of cyclical repetition. However, she is mainly influenced by the American composer John Cage (1912–1992), a revolutionary figure who expanded the boundaries of musical language, going beyond the canons of traditional music. Among his most famous innovations is the "prepared piano," an instrument modified by inserting screws, rubber pieces, and other objects between the strings so that it produces unpredictable sounds that are not completely intentional.

Mohri's investigation into the multiple ways of activating instruments and the acoustic properties of materials involves a constant dialogue and exchange with other musicians, sound designers, and visual artists. Foremost among them is Yoshihide Otomo, one of Japan's leading improvisers and noise musicians, who has collaborated with her from the early stages of her career until present. Another significant collaboration is with internationally renowned composer and electronic musician Ryuichi Sakamoto (1952–2023), which began in 2017 at the Sapporo International Art Festival. Here

Sakamoto composed an original piece for an automated piano featured in an installation by Mohri. In 2018, she also worked with sound artist Akio Suzuki at the Camden Art Centre in London, where Suzuki interacted with Mohri's installation *Flutter* (2018), thereby activating it as an unconventional electroacoustic instrument.

As she engages in dialogue with other voices in the contemporary art scene, Mohri also continues to weave an imaginary link with pioneering figures of modern art. Her exploration of movement is indeed in continuity with the work of artists such as Jean Tinguely (1925–1991), known for his playful and ironic kinetic sculptures, and members of the Fluxus movement, such as Shigeko Kubota (1937–2015) and Nam June Paik (1932–2006), who from the 1960s onward promoted art and practices based on electronics and the integration of visual, sound, and performative languages.

In 2024 Mohri represents Japan at the 60th Venice Biennale—a crucial milestone in her conceptual and formal research. The exhibition “Compose,” one of the most ambitious the artist has ever realized, is a comprehensive synthesis of her production, where natural processes and material transience intertwine. An interaction made possible by the distinctive architecture of the Japanese pavilion, featuring a central opening in both floor and ceiling. A composition of interconnected objects in a dynamic equilibrium—part of *Moré Moré (Leaky): Variations* (2015–ongoing)—is placed in dialogue with *Decomposition* (2021–ongoing), an installation that stages the decay of fruit, presented into a perceptual system of sound and light signals. Here too, Mohri invites us to observe reality as an energy field in continuous transformation, where even the most subtle processes reveal unexpected poetic dimensions.

The Exhibition

“Entanglements,” the most comprehensive solo exhibition by Yuko Mohri to date, centers on the idea of interconnectedness between objects, energies, sounds, and people. Through the works' real-time responses to physical phenomena, the exhibition explores the invisible forces that shape our world. The result is an ever-evolving scenario: a layered, immersive space where nothing is isolated, and every entity is part of an inextricable network of relationships in constant transformation.

The title evokes imperceptible connections and alludes to the delicate interplay between natural and artificial structures that influence our environment. The exhibition brings together seven of Mohri's most iconic kinetic sculptures and sound installations, drawn from different bodies of work created throughout her artistic journey. Each piece contains its own internal circuitry, set in motion by induced movement and often responding unpredictably to natural forces such as gravity, magnetism, or shifts in the atmosphere. Together, these self-contained systems interact with one another and the surrounding space to form a larger loop—an evolving landscape of signals, feedback, and resonance.

Installed in the Shed, the compositions have been reconfigured and tuned to respond to the architectural and environmental features of the space. All the pieces have been programmed to operate simultaneously, creating a unified visual and sonic field. As the artist explains: «I make my work in an improvised way. I don't depict a vision of a whole sculpture from the beginning. I always want to value the inspiration I get from the place and the encounter with it.» The entire arrangement unfolds as a collective and sensory experience, emerging through the continuous interplay between the works, their context, and the audience. Visitors' presence and movements subtly alter the system's behavior, drawing them into its dynamic flow and entangling them in the constellation of relationships the exhibition both reveals and enacts.



I/O, 2011–ongoing
Installation view, 14th Gwangju Biennale, 2023
Photo glimworkers

1. *I/O*, 2011–ongoing

In *I/O*, long rolls of white paper hang from the ceiling and move slowly, brushing against the floor. During this oscillation, they pick up dust and other particles present in the exhibition space. These residues are then read by a sensor and converted into random electrical signals, activating a series of objects such as dusters, discarded musical instruments, light bulbs, and blinds, which move and pro-

duce sounds. The installation is highly sensitive to environmental conditions such as air currents and humidity. These factors influence the behavior of the paper rolls and, consequently, the overall composition. The artist explains, «Sound is one of the effects of the dust picked up by the paper, just like the light bulb turning on and off. Sometimes unintended sounds can occur—the paper rustling as it grazes the floor or the motor uttering strange noises when the paper, swollen with absorbed moisture, gets stuck in it—and they add richness.» The title *I/O* refers primarily to the terms “input” and “output,” which describe the internal logic of the work: a system that collects traces and reintegrates them in the form of mechanical, visual, and acoustic activations. For the structural design the artist drew inspiration from seismographs and hygrometers, which translate environmental changes into wavy lines recorded on paper, while the feeding mechanism resembles that of a printer.

2. *Moré Moré (Leaky): Variations (Flow #1, Flow #2, Flow #3)*, 2018

Moré Moré (Leaky): Variations (Flow #1, Flow #2, Flow #3) draws inspiration from the makeshift repairs found in the Tokyo subway lines, improvised responses to leaks that Mohri has documented since 2009 in her photographic series *Moré Moré Tokyo (Leaky Tokyo)*. For the artist, these provisional interventions are forms of creative resilience: spontaneous and ingenious actions in response to minor faults, which become temporary solutions to deal with everyday difficulties. Water, by its very nature unruly and difficult to discipline, becomes the protagonist of a flow that follows gravity and pressure, eluding complete control. Mohri explains, «Many objects guided the movement of water, but I was interested in the movement of the water itself [...] you could try to control the water but end up with a shape you didn't even think about.» The water is channeled through pipes connected to everyday objects suspended by nylon threads. The result is not a closed system but an open unstable assembly, that nonetheless works. The installation consists of three distinct sections, each with specific features. *Flow #1* uses mainly kitchen utensils, chosen for their metallic clatter; in *Flow #2*, a clothes-drying rack makes gloves sway playfully, accompanied by the sound of friction from the suspended clothespins; in *Flow #3*, a



Moré Moré (Leaky): Variations (Flow #1), 2018 (detail)
Installation view, Project Fulfill Art Space, Taipei, 2018
Courtesy Yuko Mohri, Project Fulfill Art Space.
Photo Project Fulfill Art Space

cymbal is struck rhythmically. The structure of the work recalls Jean Tinguely's kinetic installations, such as *Ballet des pauvres* (1961), in which the base of the sculptural piece was raised off the ground, subverting the logic of sculpture as a monumental immobile element. For Mohri, whose practice includes several works that are suspended from the ceiling, this act of overturning becomes a metaphor for individual freedom—the idea that even small actions can contain a revolutionary and poetic charge.



Flutter, 2018
Installation view, Camden Art Centre, London, 2018
Courtesy Camden Art Centre. Photo Damian Griffiths

3. *Flutter*, 2018/2025

Flutter is conceived as an ecosystem: a set of interconnected elements influence each other via signals, sounds, and motion. At the heart of the installation is a circuit activated by environmental inputs—such as the movement of objects or changes in light—that generates chain reactions. Within this system, goldfish swim gracefully inside an aquarium equipped with external sensors that detect their movements. Nearby, copper coils generate a magnetic field that disrupts the needle of the compass, causing it to sway. Another element is a long chain that shifts back and forth. These three types of motion trigger intermittent electrical signals, which in turn activate the automatic performance of a reed organ, an aerophone



Piano Solo: Belle-Île, 2024
Installation view, Artizon Museum, Tokyo, 2024
Courtesy Artizon Museum. Photo Keizo Kioku

keyboard instrument—also called a harmonium—played by metal reeds vibrating under air pressure. The artist draws inspiration from Nam June Paik—whose pioneering video works incorporated goldfish—and echoes the multimedia interplay found in *Variations V* (1965), performed by John Cage, Paik himself, and the American choreographer Merce Cunningham (1919–2009). The title, *Flutter* alludes to the flowing tail fins of a goldfish, the gentle swaying of the chain, and the flickering dynamic of scales played on a reed organ.

4. *Piano Solo: Belle-Île, 2024*

Piano Solo: Belle-Île is an installation consisting of a mechanical piano and a video screening of a coastal landscape. It is a tribute to Claude Monet (1840–1926), the Impressionist painter known for his ability to capture light, reflections, and atmospheric variations in his landscapes and garden scenes. In particular, Mohri recalls *Belle-Île, effet de pluie* (1886), created by Monet during his stay on the island of Belle-Île-en-Mer, off the coast of Brittany. The painting belongs to the collection of the Artizon Museum, Ishibashi Foundation in Tokyo, where Mohri first exhibited *Piano Solo: Belle-Île* in 2024. Following in the French artist's footsteps, she traveled to the island to film the same stretch of rocky coastline that had inspired the painting. The video is screened in dialogue with an automated piano, which seems to come to life on its own, as if operated by a ghostly presence. In reality, the movement of the keys is triggered by acoustic stimuli from the recording of the video: two speakers emit the sounds of the marine environment, captured by microphones placed in front of the speakers and transmitted to the instrument. Limited to the range of its 88 keys and 12-tone scale, the piano attempts to translate these auditory stimuli into a sort of score, producing a deliberately approximate response. The artist explains, «I could have programed the system to pick up the exact pitch of the sounds and replicate them on the piano. However, I felt that the more inaccurate the conversion, the better revealed the true nature of those who emitted the sounds (both humans and things)—so that's how I ended up programming it. This resulted in a time lag between the emission of a sound and its replication on the piano, adding a tad of humor to the instrument's play, as though atonal music since Schoenberg flavored with a ragtime-like groove.»

The work is part of the *Piano Solo* series (2021–ongoing), started by Mohri during the COVID-19 pandemic, at a time when all forms of direct artistic collaboration were interrupted. The artist retreated to a forest by a lake, where she experienced a moment of reconnection with nature, recording sounds such as birdsong, the slightly ebbing and flowing water of the lake, and wind rustling through the leaves. Nature itself became the performer, and the sounds collected are converted into input for the piano, which reworked them in the form of music.



Magnetic Organ, 2024 (detail)
Installation view, Artizon Museum, Tokyo, 2024
Photo kugeyasuhide

5. *Magnetic Organ*, 2004-ongoing

Magnetic Organ is one of Mohri's earliest works, created in 2004 as a graduation project at Tama Art University in Tokyo. With this work, Mohri effectively started her career as an artist. The installation evokes the principles of chaos theory, according to which minimal disturbances can generate random effects in seemingly stable systems. At the center of the piece are two wire antennas, set opposite each other, which interact through an electromagnetic field. Charged with tension, this area of interference is deliberately destabilized by mobile elements—inspired by the kinetic and linear works of American artist Alexander Calder (1898–1976)—made with copper coils and piezo microphones positioned near them, which alter their equilibrium. The resulting acoustic feedback from the microphones is similar to a faint sound resembling chirping of crickets. This unstable sonic trace makes the hidden dynamics that animate the work perceptible. In 2011, following the earthquake that struck Japan, Mohri revisited the piece, giving it new symbolic resonance and turning it into a reflection on the invisible forces that shape matter, traverse space, and affect the world's equilibrium.



Decomposition, 2025 (detail)
Installation view, Project Fulfill Art Space, Taipei, 2025
Courtesy Yuko Mohri, Project Fulfill Art Space. Photo @choccat.cc

6. *Decomposition*, 2021-ongoing

Ripe, bruised fruits undergoing slow transformation: the work draws on the pictorial tradition of the Western still life, in which organic elements are captured at a precise moment in their lifecycle, frozen in an image to evoke beauty, and Eastern Buddhist-painting tradition of *kusōzu* (“nine stages of decay”), in which the fragility of life, death, and the afterlife are observed with detachment. In *Decomposition*, the artist transforms these pictures into a three-dimensional, immersive experience, taking what was traditionally merely depicted beyond the surface of the pictorial image. Here, the process of decay is no longer evoked but closely observed, made tangible and audible. Rotting fruit is connected to sensitive sensors capable of detecting tiny internal changes. The resulting ever-shifting data is converted in real time into fluctuating tonal change and energy that powers a backlit panel divided into five sections, each associated with a fruit and modulated by its specific state of transformation. As Mohri observes, «*Decomposition* means disintegration or rotting, while *composition* could mean songwriting or constructing something. It has the “de” prefix, so you can interpret

“decomposition” as the opposite of composing music. [...] It also works as a statement: “I don’t compose music.” The fruits design the sounds and dim the lights on their own.»

7. ***You Locked Me Up in a Grave, You Owe Me at Least the Peace of a Grave*, 2018**

The installation reflects on the concept of revolution, understood as a profound and radical transformation capable of breaking with the existing order to introduce a new one. It is composed of a spiral staircase, four loudspeakers and two sound sources, and recalls both the historical and political dimension of revolution—as collective energy spawned by the urge for change—and its cosmological dimension, linked to the movements of the planets that regulate the great cycles of the universe. The title ***You Locked Me Up in a Grave, You Owe Me at Least the Peace of a Grave*** is taken from an utterance by French revolutionary Louis-Auguste Blanqui (1805–1881) spoken in frustration at the surrounding noise during his imprisonment at Fort du Taureau in 1871, where he wrote his final book *Eternity by the Stars* (1872). In this volume, Blanqui reflects on the human existence and infinity from the perspective of the scientific cosmology of his time, resulting in the anti-progressive idea of eternal recurrence. A further reference to the idea of revolution is the suspended spiral staircase, inspired by the *Monument to the Third International* (1919–20) by Vladimir Tatlin (1885–1953), a Russian artist known as one of the leading figures of the Soviet Constructivist movement, who sought to unite art and industry, the symbol of a political and architectural utopia. Its spiral shape also evokes the perpetual motion found in nature, from water vortexes to galaxies. The sequence of sounds surrounding the viewer is fully controlled by a computerized system, which orchestrates its rhythmic, cadenced flow. The rotating speakers are inspired by the Leslie speaker, an electromechanical device invented by American engineer Donald Leslie (1911–2004) in 1941, which used the Doppler effect—the same effect we hear when an ambulance passes by. The cyclical structure of the work is also reflected in its soundtrack which, once completed, starts over again, creating a continuous and potentially infinite flow—an eternal return that once again recalls the great cycles that permeate nature, history, and the cosmos.



You Locked Me Up in a Grave, You Owe Me at Least the Peace of a Grave, 2018 (detail)
Installation view, Towada Art Center, Aomori, 2018
Courtesy Towada Art Center. Photo Kuniya Oyamada

Selected Exhibitions

Numerous international institutions have presented Yuko Mohri's exhibitions, including the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea (MMCA), Seoul (2025); Artizon Museum, Tokyo (2024–25); Aranya Art Center, Hebei (2024); Atelier Nord, Oslo (2021); Japan House São Paulo (2021); Ginza Sony Park, Tokyo (2020); Towada Art Center, Aomori (2018–19); Camden Art Centre, London (2018); National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto (2018); Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo (2012).

Mohri has represented Japan at the 60th Venice Biennale in 2024. She has also participated in various group exhibitions, including the Gwangju Biennale (2023); Biennale of Sydney (2022); PAC Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea, Milan (2022); Asian Art Biennial, Taichung (2021); Bienal de São Paulo (2021); Glasgow International (2021); Tai Kwun Contemporary, Hong Kong (2021); Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2018); Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, Brisbane (2018); Biennale de Lyon (2017); Kochi-Muziris Biennale (2016); Yokohama Triennale, Kanagawa (2014).

This publication accompanies the exhibition "Entanglements" by Yuko Mohri

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Situated in a former industrial building, once a locomotive manufacturing facility, Pirelli HangarBicocca occupies 15,000 square meters, making it one of the largest single-level exhibition spaces in Europe. This vast area comprises the Shed and Navate spaces, which are used for temporary exhibitions, and the permanent display of Anselm Kiefer's *The Seven Heavenly Palaces 2004-2015*. This monumental installation with seven reinforced concrete towers has become one of the most iconic works in Milan. The building also houses a number of services for the public: a spacious entrance with reception area, facilities for educational activities, space for conferences and meetings, Bookshop and bistro with a charming outdoor area.

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Pirelli HangarBicocca

Via Chiese, 2
20126 Milan

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Contacts

Tel. +39 02 66111573
info@hangarbicocca.org
pirellihangarbicocca.org

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