



Kei Imazu explores the relationship between the physicality and contemporary visual expression. In recent years, she has been working on framing the history of colonialism, the worship of the Mother Goddess, and environmental issues arising in the Global South. The faces depicted in the paintings symbolise life or the land, conflicts over resources and territory, and the history of women, transcending the sense of time and space to offer suggestions to those of us living in the present day.

<https://anomalytokyo.com/en/artist/kei-imazu/>

(reference)

Drowsiness 2022

oil on linen, H194xW162cm



Kei Imazu Solo Exhibition
"Tanah Air" Installation view, Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery, Tokyo, 2025



Kei Imazu Solo Exhibition
"Tanah Air" Installation view, Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery, Tokyo, 2025



Kei Imazu Solo Exhibition
"Tanah Air" Installation view, Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery, Tokyo, 2025



For Imazu, who lives in Indonesia, the repeated plundering of resources by developed countries and the resulting environmental issues are a daily reality. The local subjects depicted in her work include the Citarum River, called "the most polluted river in the world," the eruption of a mud volcano at a natural gas mining site in Sidoarjo, and the lives of their inhabitants.

Kei Imazu Solo Exhibition
"Tanah Air" Installation view, Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery, Tokyo, 2025



Artificial Green by Nature Green is the first collaborative project by Bagus Pandega and Kei Imazu. By combining their individual practices, they have translated into experimental installation, composed of paintings, drawings, kinetics, mechanics, and synthesizers. The main issue that the artists are trying to address with this installation is the environmental and ecological problems that are happening around Indonesia. Nature is being exploited in the name of resources, economic growth, development, and industrialization. The newest of the series for BAB2024, focuses on the destruction/deforestation of tropical rainforests, which are valuable biodiversity hubs, by palm tree plantations in Indonesia, the world's largest supplier, to the present-day deforestation. This is done through drawings created by a brush controlled by bioelectrodes extracted from palm trees, and an installation that develops an image that is erased by the flow of water.

Solo exhibition 「Mapping the Land/Body/Stories of its Past」
ANOMALY
2021/10/2(Sat) - 11/7(Sun)



Photo: Keizo Kioku

While deriving from the personal knowledge and experience of Imazu, whose activities are now based in Indonesia, Mapping the Land/Body/Stories of its Past was also inspired partly by indigenous/different cultures and the works of female authors, including Josei gaka retsuden (Lives of female artists) by Midori Wakakuwa*1), Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth by Elizabeth Grosz*2), and Onna ga gakusha ni naru toki: Indonesia kenkyu funtoki (When a woman becomes a scholar: Journal of an Indonesian research struggle) by Aiko Kurasawa*3)

At the start of her book, Grosz wonders when and how art began as a material and conceptual structure in the context of the history of bio-evolution. In her book, works of art manifest an absorption in generation and continuation, and appear as contracted conditions for the present to overcome the future. In spite of being the indigenous inhabitants, people will reframe even the history of a colony built by foreigners as a living entity supporting their land, and the memory of that land.

For example, the work of an Aboriginal artist may look like an Op Art abstract painting, with fine dots covering the canvas. Let us say that these works are transcriptions onto canvas of an attempt at “ritual dreaming” (a form of mapping) drawing on things linked to the artist’s own body and the history of the ethnic group (e.g., topography, animals, wars, natural disasters, birth, marriage, ancestors, and totems). There is a connection here with Imazu’s own doings in Indonesia. When she moved there about three years ago, she often felt bewildered and uneasy when confronted with unfamiliar things and places. In those days, she would make paintings by relying on the memory and experience of her own body. Similarly, after she gave birth to a child whose roots also lay in Indonesia, she thought of mapping the history of the child’s motherland on motifs in paintings.

In the land to which she emigrated, Imazu experienced many things, including childbirth and child-raising, the evolution and extinction of creatures, a colonial history, and earth-mother worship. She positioned these things on the canvas to serve as triggers for the recollection of the history of the past, and thereby framed them as paintings. This could be termed akin to the process of dreaming inclusive of contemplation which looks to the future.

It may also be noted that Imazu enhances texture by various effects on the surface of the object in the 3D image created by computer graphics. Coupled with the rendering effect of Dimension® and the strokes that she physically applies with a brush, her procedure could presumably be regarded as a kind of mapping.

*1)Midori WAKAKUWA, Josei gaka retsuden (Lives of female artists), Iwanami Shoten, Publishers, 1985.

*2)Elizabeth GROSZ, Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth, Japanese translation published by Hosei University Press, 2020.

*3)Aiko KURASAWA, Onna ga gakusha ni naru toki: Indonesia kenkyu funtoki, (When a woman becomes a scholar: Journal of an Indonesian research struggle), revised edition, Iwanami Shoten, Publishers, 2021.



Memories of the Land/Body (2020) Photo: Keizo Kioku

The idea for the new work *Memories of the Land/Body* came from the mapping pointed out by Grosz. Imazu made extensive use of texture mapping and bump mapping to produce various effects on object surfaces by means of 3D images from computer graphics made with Dimension®, and incorporated this into the production process.

For example, in the background of *Memories of the Land/Body*, Imazu references a painting of Gunung Sumbing, a volcano on the island of Java, by the Dutch geologist Franz Wilhelm Junghuhn. The act of making maps was once motivated by the aim of assisting efforts by Western powers to colonize “uncivilized” lands and efficiently increase their production capacities. In this sense, the mapping done in Indonesia by the Dutch East India Company in colonial days and by the Japanese army during World War II may be considered an indicator of territorial expansion.



RIB (2021) Photo: Keizo Kioku

For *RIB*, Imazu transferred flat, 2D motifs sampled from the pictures of artists appearing in Josei gaka retsuden to 3D space with depth. A paragraph with the heading “Did women make pottery?” in this work contains the following passage: “Sitting on the ground in the shade with her legs stretched out and a baby nursing at her breast, the woman deftly made an urn and expertly wielded a cord to decorate it with a pattern, all the while talking in a loud voice and scolding her children”^{*4}). *RIB* was born of the empathy Imazu felt for the text grounded in earnest sentiments expressed by the author in the afterword of this book as she experienced childbirth and child-raising in another country while struggling with physical and temporal constraints that were not there before.