

Ohmaki Shinji Before and After the Horizon

Conducting research around Aomori ahead of the exhibition, in the Onizawa district of Hirosaki, Ohmaki happened upon an old *kashiwa* oak tree on which legend has it a demon once sat. Employing the leaves of this tree to symbolic effect at the beginning and end of the exhibition, he has taken the form of *kashiwa* leaves, which do not fall until new foliage appears in spring, and superimposed it on the business of human life and death to make works that express the passing of one generation to the next.



*You can take photographs except No.2, 3, 18.
*Do not touch the artworks.
*Audio guide



Led into the room by a *kashiwa* leaf, one finds a ball of light descending slowly from above before vanishing in a puff of smoke. Covering the floor is a layer of glass-like slag, residue from high-temperature waste processing at a local recycling plant. Disappearing into the black sea of slag, the luminous sphere evokes the beginning and end of life, and the emergence of new life once more.

Further in the visitor is greeted by *Echoes Crystallization: Horizon*, a work in white correction fluid and crystal powder on a bright white panel. Closer inspection reveals a peak reminiscent of Mt. Horai (Penglai) of the utopian Peach Blossom Land of legend, and a mysterious scene in which that mountain is projected beyond the horizon. Turning around one finds a conical shape has been cut from the black wall behind. The landscape of white light, and vanishing point looming in darkness, highlight the relationship between positive and negative, yin and yang, that is, the inability of one to exist without the other.

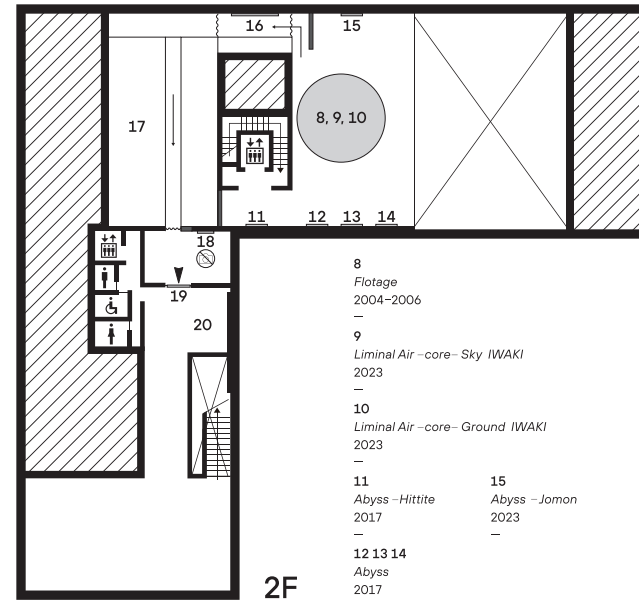
- 1
Oak Leaf -the Given- (Right)
2023
- 2
A Blink of Eternity
2011
- 3
sink
2023
- 4
Echoes Crystallization: Horizon
2023
- 5
Depth of Shadow -Vanishing Point-
2023

On stepping into the gloom of a forest, tapping can be heard coming out of nowhere: the sound of a woodpecker striking a tree perhaps, or a human being engaged in making something. In the Hirosaki forest, Ohmaki heard woodpeckers seemingly communicating back and forth. Are these birds perhaps messengers, opening up windows between the world we are in now and what lies beyond, encouraging exchange with faraway lands? Or with these invisible communications, rendered solely in sound, are they making connections between this world and the next?

- 6
KODAMA
2023

This new version of Ohmaki's landmark work *Liminal Air Space - Time*, in which gauzy fabric evokes the organic motion of waves, dominates the museum's cavernous atrium, giving visitors a somatic sensory experience of the first beach scene Ohmaki encountered in Aomori, as the work's distinctive wave sound and imagery sweep us into its powerful yet snug embrace. The sound emanating from the work was created by collecting the voices of people living in the local Tsugaru region.

- 7
Liminal Air Space-Time: Event Horizon
2023



- 8
Flotage
2004-2006
- 9
Liminal Air -core- Sky IWAKI
2023
- 10
Liminal Air -core- Ground IWAKI
2023
- 11
Abyss -Hittite
2017
- 12 13 14
Abyss
2017
- 15
Abyss -Jomon
2023

The colorful flowers and patterns on the white felt floor of the gallery include new designs spotted by Ohmaki around Aomori. Walking among them, one is cocooned in a realm of vernal light and color of the kind born out of the white of snow.

For the nearby *Glass of Echo*, displayed in the corridor, Ohmaki has visualized the accumulation of time, pouring into glasses carefully-collected mineral pigments adhering to molds from the rendering of each individual flower. Viewers will find their thoughts turning to the multiple strata of time, from the great temporal flow in nature, to their own memories of the past.

- 16
Glass of Echo -Hirosaki-
2023
- 17
Echoes Infinity -trail-
2023

Inspiration for this video came from the bossa nova track "Waters of March" (Águas de Março) by Brazilian composer Antonio Carlos Jobim, in which its creator is described confronting various difficulties to make it through chaotic times, a worldview chiming with that of the people of Aomori, who amid the harshness of their natural environment have always kept faith in the coming of spring and continuation of life. In the video the resounding tones of Tsugaru dialect, courtesy of a local singer, coupled with a jaunty melody, are overlaid on Aomori landscapes encountered by Ohmaki.

Installed in the window is a new addition to the museum collection, *AMBER WINDOW (HIROSAKI)* by Wada Reijiro. The glass panel transforming the view from the window into a vision in gold is filled with apple brandy. The vision of rebirth and creation of memories of land and people that lies at the core of this exhibition, is linked to this work by Wada reflecting the building's triumphant transformation from brick warehouse to art museum.

- 18
Before and After the Horizon
2023

At first glance *Abyss* with its images of giant urn is a simple composition in black and white. A study of the urn surfaces however reveals motifs, overlapping and concealed, from the civilizations that humans have built in different times, in different places.

In *Flotage* extending across the floor nearby, a world map seemingly constructed by stitching together land torn apart is drawn in intricate detail, along with innumerable, oscillating lines. To peer into the circular work from outside is to be swept up in the sensation of glimpsing the abyss at the bottom of an urn. *Liminal Air -core- IWAKI Sky* and *Liminal Air -core- IWAKI Ground* reference the landscape of sky and terrain woven by Mt. Iwaki, symbol of Hirosaki. In their stately turning they seem to stir this world and spawn new chaos. In the blurring of overlapping lines, the reflected surroundings, and the rotating motion, we begin to discern the artist's viewpoint as he attempts to grasp the world amid constant flux.

As they did on entry, at the exit visitors will encounter a *kashiwa* oak leaf. The complex veins visible in the *noren* curtain's resist-dyed motif are those of the artist's palm super-imposed on those of the leaf. The *kashiwa* leaves at entrance and exit constitute an alpha and omega connection symbolizing beginning and end, and visitors move through the gallery in the manner of blood flowing through a body, finally passing through the curtain to the start of the next world. The curtain was made using local indigo, with help from a creator who employs the traditional *jigoku* date technique that uses only lye and the fermented indigo leaves known as *sukumo*.

- 19
Oak Leaf -the Given- (Left)
2023
- 20
Archive Space
This area presents photographs, sketches and other material from the artist's exhibition research in the region, primarily in the Tsugaru area. Please feel free to browse through the books.