OVERGROWN

8 AUGUST — 10 SEPTEMBER 2017

Can
    Androids
Dream ?

Kei Imazu (b. 1980) is a painter based in Tokyo, Japan who interlaces past, present, and future through a comprehensive act of excavating images taken from the vast sea that is the internet—often times historical relics and artifacts, and other times more contemporary cultural iconographies—alongside everyday objects and occurrences. The word excavating here is crucial. In many ways, Imazu paints with the mentality of an archeologist. She navigates and unearths historical relics that have been destroyed in war or pilfered by treasure hunters that are now kept existent only within the ethereal realms of cyberspace. Imazu digs through literature, philosophy, and poetry derived from different cultures as a demarcating point to begin her work. Layer by layer, she simultaneously conducts acts of pictorial construction and deconstruction, representation and abstraction, and in doing so develops ocular operas that reveal the esoteric in the human condition.
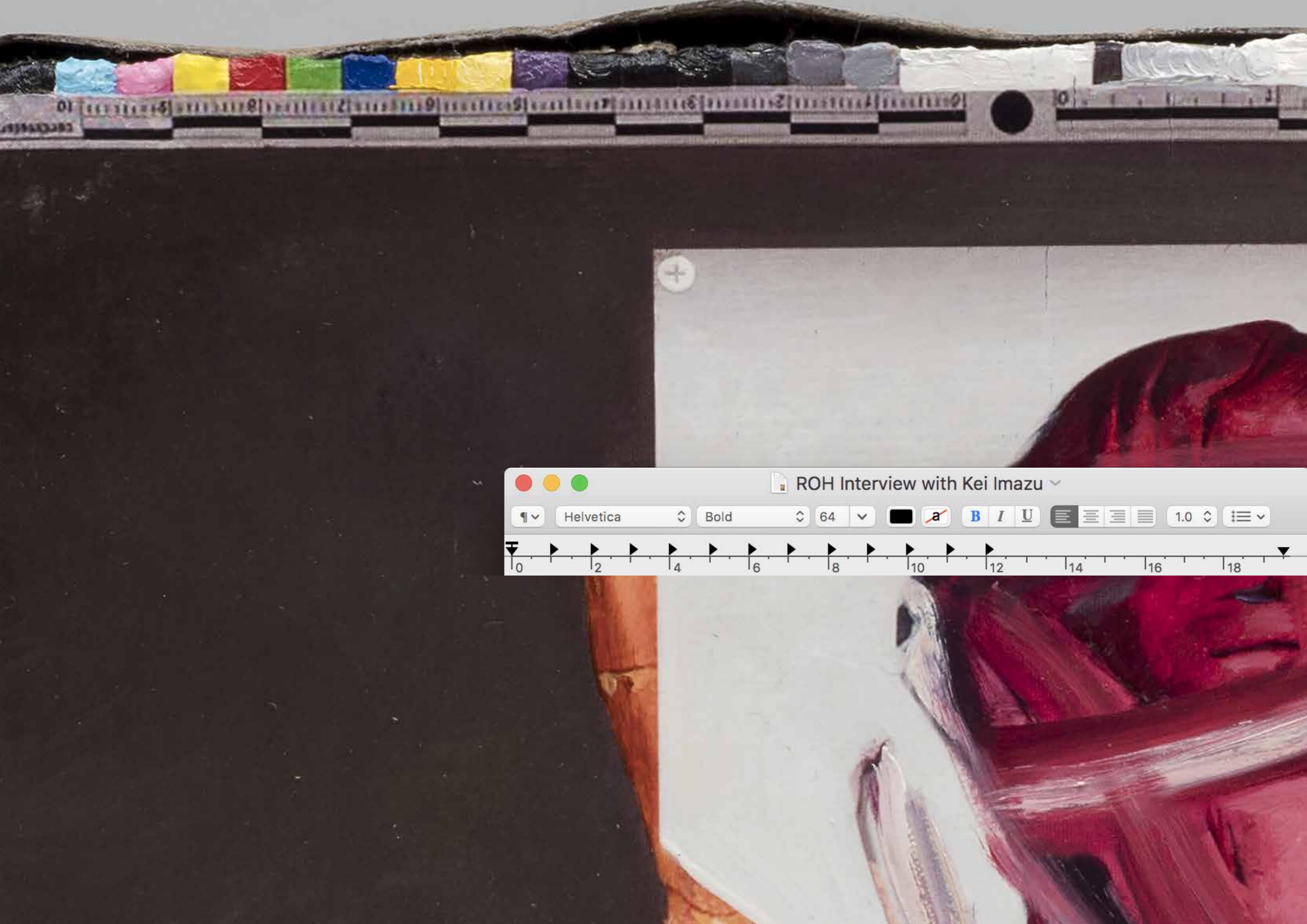
ROH Projects is pleased to present Overgrown, where Imazu shows new works conducted throughout her OPQRSTUDIO residency in Bandung for a durational residency in which she makes new strides in both conceptual and compositional dimensions of her practice. There is no way of knowing what discoveries she has yet to make, but the time spent with ROH and our artists has been truly remarkable.

KEI IMAZU   WOOO

2017. Oil, Acrylic on Canvas

210 x 406 cm

A YOUNG GIRL'S GRAVESTONE

CARAVAGGIO'S FOOT, EGYPTIAN MASK

What do you see painting as?

There is rich history behind painting, and I find the various approaches and practices that have been established to create paintings very interesting. For example, even when I draw a simple line onto the canvas, I enjoy referring to the history and meaning behind it.

Although anyone can perform this same action, a single line, like one's signature, is a mark that can only be made by oneself.
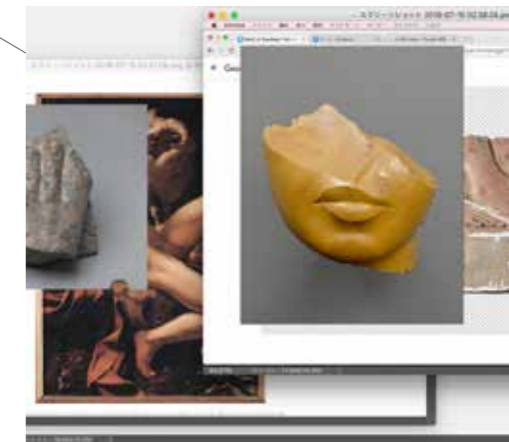

DOWNLOADED BULB FLOWER FROM 3D MODELS FREE DOWNLOAD WEBSITE

What are some of the references of the images you used in your current paintings?

PHOTO FROM WHEN THE PASTEUM TOMB WAS DISCOVERED

For now, about the painting I am currently working on in OPQRStudio: this painting is of a monkey under the lid of a coffin, giving life back to lifeless flowers and figures by watering them. I am inspired by Motojiro Kajii's novel, "Under the Cherry Tree." Referring to Kajii's passage on how a beautiful flower cannot bloom without the corpses that have been buried underneath it, I draw various comparisons and relationships between the coming and going of the digital and the living, monkeys and humans, life and death.

SKETCH OF ALOYS ZOTL'S DRAWINGS OF MONKEYS

LEGS OF AN ANIME FIGURE

What is your selection process in terms of the images you select?
I mostly start by entering a keyword. For example, simply typing "figure" into Google gives me a great number of images. Then, when I click on an image, related images come up as well. So, I choose these images, as if I'm choosing actors for the screenplay that comes before the movie.

What are some of the new ideas you are exploring, that were not present in your previous works?

Up until my previous series, I depicted themes of iconoclasm, artworks destroyed by war, and stolen artworks. People lost the opportunity to see the original, so they resort to seeing data and images on the Internet. Thus, I work to take these images that are only accessible on the Internet and recreate them into my paintings.

This time, my works incorporate stories and settings, like a scene in a play. The large, blue painting (Human Study) depicts an android studying the gestures of human beings.

As I felt like I kept looking for images of various bodies on the Internet for the purpose of my painting, and though artificial intelligence now organizes the large quantity of images, I decided to depict this scene of research in my painting.

Monkeys have recently appeared in my paintings. Human beings aim for development, which is where problems such as capitalism and war arise from. The monkeys' gestures signify that they often must learn about failures and human history within my paintings.

Additionally, I have recently complicated my paintings by adding square windows and various lines to the composition. Though I introduce specific spaces and images into my paintings, I try to perform in a way that erases all of that. I create illusion, yet I immediately bring anti-illusion into the painting. This is a repetitive process, and I'm interested in working through whether the final product will become an image, or return to the medium of the paint or the gesture of a writer.

FRA ANGELICO (1387-1455)
'THE ANNUNCIATION', 1442-43 (FRESCO)

Though there is a frame in this Angelico painting,

frames often appear in Bacon's works.
However, Bacon always paints a character protruding from the fames.
I am inspired by such spaces as much as rejecting them.

How do you see digital interfaces and the internet affecting your practice?

I perceive the Internet as a vast space with no gravity or substance. When thinking about the digital realm, I think about its converse relationship with the analog realm, for the analog realm holds substance. I have recently incorporated dripping paint to my works, but that is just the effect of gravity emphasizing the substance of the paint. I am interested in keeping the meaning of the image while also maintaining the dripping quality of the paint itself.
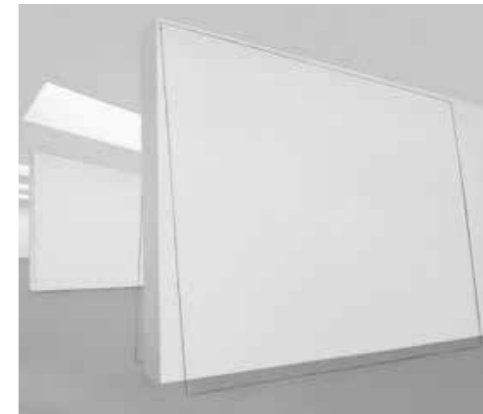
FRED SANDBACK

I see certain patterns being repeated in a number of your works. Can you explain more about them? (for example: the woman character)

I often use the same image. My paintings are created by combinations of meaningful symbols and elements, and so even when using the same woman character, it will hold a different meaning when placed next to different images. This is similar to different combinations of words, for example, when one sees the word, "female" placed next to "gun," one thinks of violent images, yet when "female" is placed next to "enfant," one recalls maternal images. The repeating and reusing of the same image result in a distorted and modified meaning in the final painting.

Why do you feel a need to represent your ideas through painting instead of digital media? What is the purpose of the gestural "abstraction" elements in your painting?

Painting is a very physical and direct act, and in an instant, the artist's action can be permanently fixed onto the painting. Digital media can completely repeat the same act. Humans undoubtedly make mistakes, yet I am interested in fixating the spontaneity onto my paintings.

Though I first use digital media and jpeg images to create a complete image, I certainly incorporate physicality and spontaneity into the image.

Since digital technology tries to create human beings, humans try to create digital technology. I feel that there is an eternal longing for each other, and at the end of the chase, whether success or failure, I want to depict it in my paintings.
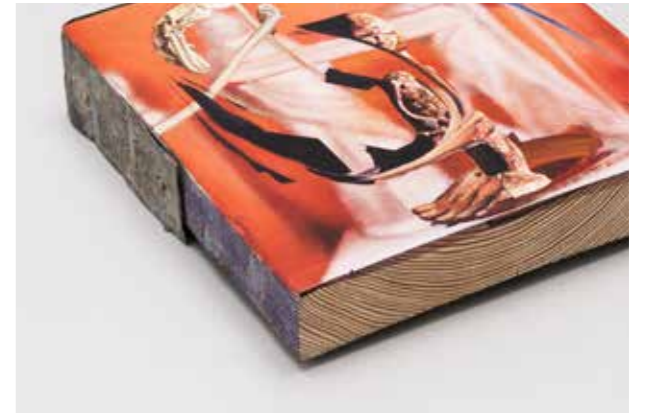
KEI IMAZU   LYING WARRIOR
2016. Oil, Mixed Media on Wood
19.5 x 41.5 x 1 cm

KEI IMAZU   PROFILE OF WOMAN
2016. Oil, Mixed Media on Wood
18.5 x 23 x 5.5 cm

KEI IMAZU   ORANGE BOX
2016. Oil, Mixed Media on Wood
22 x 23 x 5 cm

KEI IMAZU DONUTS
2016. Oil, Mixed Media on Wood
18 x 22 x 4 cm

KEI IMAZU CANDY IN AMBER ROOM
2016. Oil, Mixed Media on Wood
12.5 x 17 x 2.5 cm

KEI IMAZU   HUMAN STUDY

2017. Oil, Acrylic on Canvas

210 x 406 cm

KEI IMAZU   UTAN
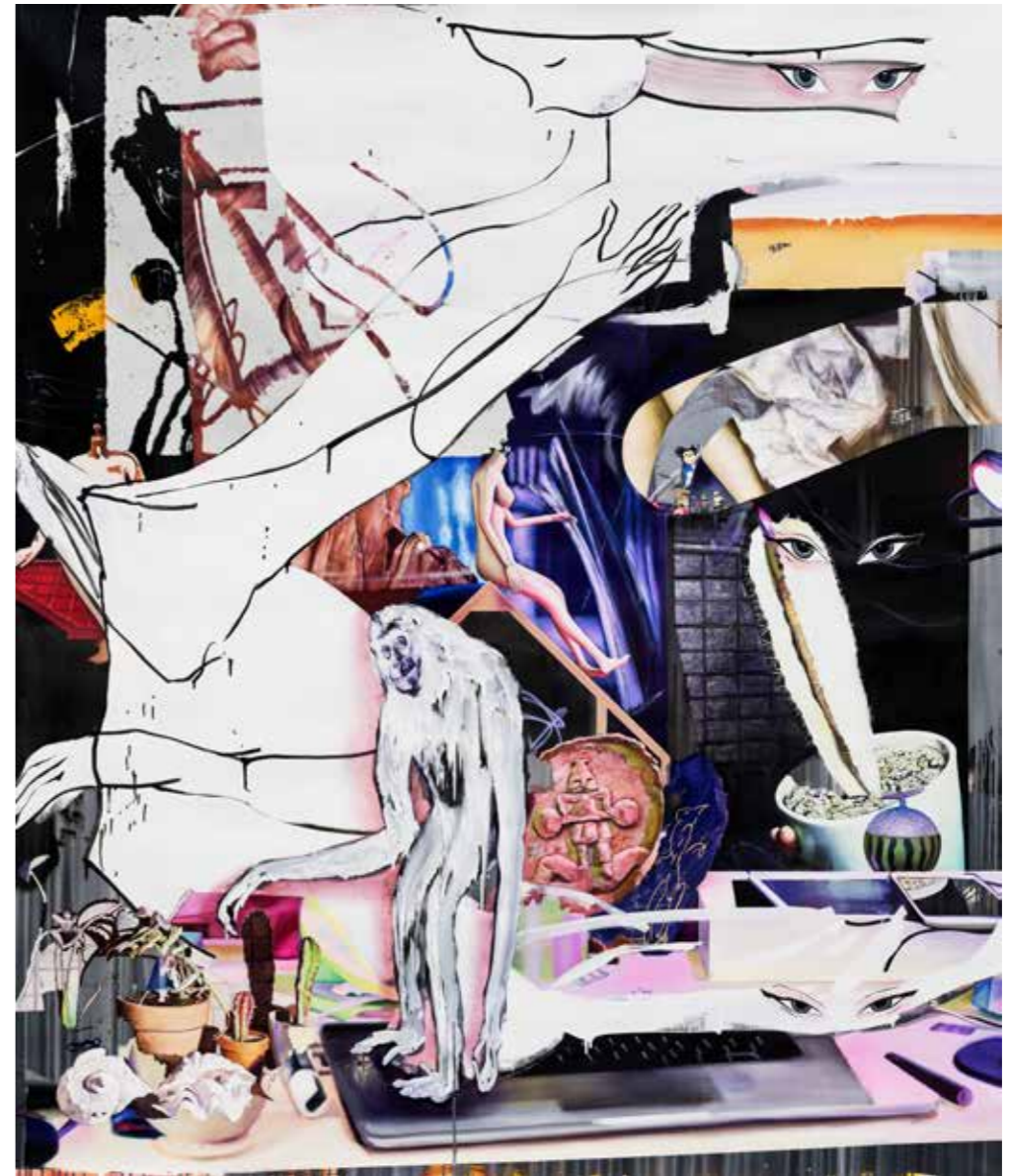   2017. Oil on Canvas
                160 x 150 cm

KEI IMAZU   MONKEY GROWS SOMETHING UNDER THE TOMB
               2016. Oil on Canvas
               146 x 205 cm

KEI IMAZU   SLEEP WELL
               2017. Oil on Linen
               220 x 190 cm (with frame)

KEI IMAZU YELLOW ROOM
2017. Oil on Canvas
140 x 230 cm

IMAZU KEI

1980   Born in Yamaguchi, Japan
2005   B.A., Tama Art University, Tokyo
2007   M.A., Tama Art University, Tokyo

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2006   Kei Imazu solo exhibition, Gallery b.Tokyo
2007   Kei Imazu solo exhibition, Gallery b.Tokyo
2008   Kei Imazu solo exhibition, NICHE GALLERY, Tokyo
2009   Kei Imazu solo exhibition, NODA CONTEMPORARY, Nagoya
2010   Flash, YAMAMOTO GENDAI, Tokyo
        26th ANA MEETS ARTS Kei Imazu solo exhibition, Haneda Airport, Tokyo
2012   SHINING REPLACE, Dai-ichi Life Gallery, Tokyo
2013   PUZZLE, YAMAMOTO GENDAI, Tokyo
2015   Broken Image, YAMAMOTO GENDAI, Tokyo
2016   Repatriation, YAMAMOTO GENDAI, Tokyo
2017   Overgrown, ROH Projects, Jakarta

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2005   Yanaka-Biyori (Good day in Yanaka City), Gallery J2, Tokyo
2006   Hyakka-Ryouran (Blossoms in gay profusion), BOICE PLANNING, Kanagawa
        The Third Reunited Exhibition, Yokohama Citizen Gallery, Azamino City
2007   Niche Young Artist Show, NICHE GALLERY, Tokyo
        Amuse Art Jam, Kyoto Culture Foundation 5F, Kyoto
2008   Who's Next, MUSEUM at TAMADA PROJECTS, Tokyo
        EX-SURFACE, artlantico GALLERY, Tokyo
        Women Without Boundaries, ART LABOR GALLERY, Shanghai
        These Artists Are Good!, NODA CONTEMPORARY BEIJING
2009   ARTIST IN OHIRA-SO STUDIO vol.1, Koganecho Bazaar Taiheiso Studio, Kanagawa
        VOCA 2009, The Ueno Royal Museum, Tokyo
2010   JAPANESE COLORS, Gallery IHN, Korea
2011   Culture, Art Center Ongoing, Tokyo
        Girlfriends Forever!, Tokyo Wonder Site Hongo, Tokyo

Ilissos, from West Pediment of Parthenon.

Phot. Oxford University Press.

British Museum.
(Elgin Room.)

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