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PERFORMING ARTS

# Eiko summons spirits in Vizcaya performance

By Jordan Levin

[jlevin@miamiherald.com](mailto:jlevin@miamiherald.com)

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Eiko performing "A Body in Places" Wednesday at Vizcaya JORDAN LEVIN



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The dance and performance artist Eiko Otake's newest work may be called *A Body in Places*. But as the tiny Eiko wafted through the grand palace of the Vizcaya Museum on Wednesday evening, flinging her feathery limbs against the massive structure, she seemed more spirit than body. Trailing swathes of red, black and white fabric, wailing like a lonely ghost, reaching longingly towards the sky, Eiko summoned a host of previously unimagined phantoms.

Eiko's performance, which opened [Tigertail Productions](#) month-long [Water festival](#), hypnotized the approximately 200 people gathered to see her. As the crowd trailed behind her, scuttling across Vizcaya's broad plaza, surrounding her as she paused, silent to a degree that was astonishing for a Miami audience, they could have been following a rare wild creature. People snapped photos almost constantly, a testament to the beautiful images Eiko created, and the longing to capture what felt like a series of magical moments – if sometimes at the expense of experiencing them. One over-eager photographer even inserted himself into Eiko's ending tableau, prompting her to shoo him off, flailing at him like an vengeful ghost.

*A Body in Places* was [inspired by](#) the tsunami and nuclear disaster at Fukushima in Eiko's native Japan, and she intends the piece to evoke thoughts of people who have disappeared. Because Eiko improvises *Places*, shaping it to each site where she performs, and because her uncanny intensity draws our attention to her and her surroundings, she also brings each performance site alive. At Vizcaya, she made us notice the roughness of the crannied rock plaza, the sound of the water – made them seem both concretely physical and full of possibility. (She repeats the performance Thursday evening at [Perez Art Museum Miami](#) and Friday morning at [Vizcaya](#).)

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She started in the second story walkway that circles Vizcaya's main courtyard, summoning our attention with a soft wail, running, flinging an enormous red cloak over the balcony's wall, like a fabric waterfall of blood, gesturing with a white chrysanthemum – a symbol of death and mourning in Japan. In that antique-looking palace, caked with white make-up, she seemed like a tragic, romantic figure

awakened from a centuries-long sleep, looking for her long-dead lover, or a world that had disappeared.

Descending down a long flight of stairs, through the courtyard, out onto the plaza, across it and down the broad stairs to the lapping water of the bay, Eiko seemed a lost, searching figure. Each time she paused, she seemed to be sensing invisible figures, or forces – with a mesmerizing longing. Her intensity made each moment into a striking picture. She plastered herself against a massive exterior wall, her red and black garments turning her into a live painting. Silhouetted against the stone barge that sits in the bay, she seemed like one of its statues. Supine and stretching atop a flowered quilt, she could have emerged from the mossy, creviced rock, or the lapping water of the bay, plaintively reaching her arms towards a flock of birds flying across the sky. Yet she was also physically, intimately present; scuttling among us, handing white chrysanthemums to a little girl, a young man, a white-haired woman, chewing the flowers and dribbling white petals from her mouth.

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At the end of *A Body in Places* Eiko seemed more lost and yearning than ever: alone on the plaza's farthest promontory, a golden spotlight illuminating her tiny, reaching figure, silhouetted against the darkening sky, like she'd pull the spirits down from the clouds, or fly away after them.

If You Go

What: Eiko Otake's "A Body in Places"

When: 6:30 p.m. Thursday

Where: [Pérez Art Museum Miami](#), 1103 Biscayne Blvd, Miami

Info: Free

When: 10:30 a.m. Friday

Where: [Vizcaya Museum & Gardens](#), 3251 S. Miami Ave., Miami

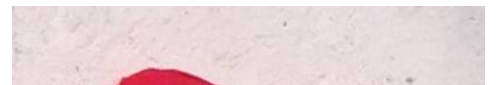
Info: Free with Museum entrance

What: Eiko video lecture "A Body in Fukushima"

When: 8:00 p.m. Friday

Where: Mindy Solomon Gallery, 8397 NE 2nd Ave., Miami

Info: \$10, [www.tigertail.org](http://www.tigertail.org)





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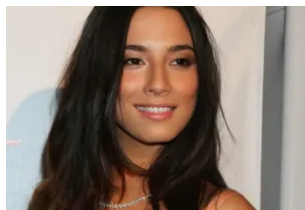
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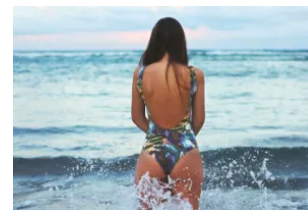
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