

A note from Nora

Eiko's *A Body in Places--Met Edition* has begun!

On Sunday she performed at The Met Cloisters, and she has two more performances in Met spaces over the next two weeks. Take note, that each performance in this series will be quite different. At [The Met Breuer on the fifth floor, this Sunday](#), Eiko will move the projector through two or more galleries. At [The Met on Fifth Avenue in the Robert Lehman Wing, on November 19](#), she won't be able to move the projector at all and has created a new score for performing with the stationary projection. You can see her closely in the gallery, or from a balcony above.

I saw Eiko perform at The Cloisters this Sunday, and below I share with you my reflections. See a video excerpt from the day, filmed and edited by Marius Becker, [here](#).



I entered the chilly room to find a projector on a cart, Eiko, and images of her projecting onto the textured rounded wall. Eiko stands defiantly in the beam of light, her body tripled. There's real Eiko, there's the shadow of Eiko, and then there's the image of Eiko from Fukushima in 2014. The video is obscured and distorted because it is projected onto the cloister's stone wall from an odd angle.

I take my seat among dozens others and train my focus on Eiko. But unlike Eiko's other performances I've seen, my eye doesn't stick with her face, or the one finger she is moving so delicately. Instead, it jumps from the image of her surrounded by half-dead sunflowers, to the projector hanging from red straps in its cart, to Eiko's toe hanging off her sandal. I am constantly aware of these various and ever-moving elements, how they circle around each other, slip over each other. I am mesmerized by the dance that isn't quite a solo, and snapped into attention when images are replaced with sentences without punctuation that describe what Eiko has witnessed in her trips to Fukushima. Language brings a first person narrative voice into a mostly abstract performance. The start of a sentence, "The damaged," catches the sleeve of her kimono and she lets the words slide onto her, examining them with us. The words are so bright that they give her thin white robe a contaminated glow. Then she lets them slip off - back onto the cold stone wall yards behind her.

Later I change my vantage point: I station myself against a wall, on the floor, looking upwards at Eiko circling the space. She pushes the projector cart, its images sweeping across the wall. The light is bright. The photos by William Johnston are all taken in day light, and whether they depict Eiko in a dusty, desolate construction site, or in lush greenery that seems to prosper in the absence of humans, the grayness and greenness (and redness of the fabric

she carries with her) are vivid and glowing - irradiated, maybe. Light slides over audience members' faces to my right, and they squint a little. When it comes to me it is so bright it makes me think of the accounts I read of the unbearable brightness of the atomic bomb.

I lose sight of Eiko behind the blinding lamp of the projector, until I realize she has abandoned her post as pusher and is standing next to me. Together, we look at the wall between us, stained with her. My eyes flip back and forth between seeing the texture of the background and the content of the image on it: between the pockmarked stone wall and a photograph of her kimono; between real Eiko skin and a photographic reproduction of Eiko skin on top of it. I'm reminded of laying in the backseat of a car staring out a rain-strewn window shifting my focus from raindrops to streetlights, raindrops to streetlights. Distance and closeness collapse, swap, reverse.

Eventually she shuffles away, but not without seeing me, and showing me the despair she is so frankly confronting. She is performing; she is utterly and intensely in character. But she performs with us, not for us. She watches the images of herself with us, listens to the intermittent wailing of the soundscape with us, and inhabits the pain of Fukushima genuinely in this New York City landmark.

The last thing I see as I leave is Eiko pressing herself against the wall where a photo of her on a beach is projected, almost making herself to scale again, jumping back into the place. We witness a temporary collapsing of place and time.

As I make my way back to the subway through a very wet Fort Tryon park, my observations turn to questions. She's forced me to see the consequences of human carelessness through stone and light and skin, overlapping, piling up, and slipping off each other. How do I hold onto the big picture as it distorts and slides over a body and over the architecture of curved wall? Can the memory gain meaning as it loses its recognizable shape? Eiko told me her intention was to metaphorically "stain" the museum walls with Fukushima. The walls remained unchanged - when the light slid away it was like it had never been there. But when light flooded my vision, its image turned into a simple sensory experience, and I could see Eiko close up discolored by her own double, I felt empathy. Was I the one stained?



Photo (top) by William Johnston, and photo (bottom) by Nora Thompson

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