

## ITTARIKITARI

The following biographies are for women who represent a selection of the contributors to the series of films and conversations recorded by Susan Christie and Emma Dove in Japan and Scotland, UK. These short films are part of an ongoing process of exchange or *Ittarikitari*.

### FILM 1

#### **Professionalism – Ness, Natsumi, Kirsty**

##### VANESSA COLLINGRIDGE

Dr Vanessa Collingridge is a leadership and impact coach, trained in conflict resolution. A former broadcaster, she specialises in media training and public engagement. In 2000 she left her job as a television presenter to author two biographies – one of 18th-century explorer James Cook and one of Celtic warrior queen Boudica.

TV work includes BBC, ITV and Channels 4 & 5, along with Discovery, The History Channel, BBC World Service, The Learning Channel, Tonight, BBC1's Real Story, BBC2's Timewatch and Radio 4's Making History. Vanessa wrote and presented the multi-award winning documentary series, *Captain Cook*, which has screened around the world, based on her book "Captain Cook". Other published works include the biography of Ancient British warrior queen "Boudica" and history book, "The Story of Australia", along with other popular history and peer-reviewed academic titles.

Vanessa is Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, Vice President of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society and co-founder/co-host of Café Scientifiques in Glasgow and Hong Kong.

##### NATSUMI SAKAMOTO

Natsumi Sakamoto is an artist based in Glasgow who creates multi-media installations that include film, drawing and animation. Her work explores memory, oral tradition and narrative to regenerate forgotten history and customs, in order to view them from a contemporary perspective.

*A Rowan Wards off Witches* is a documentary film which features interviews with women about Scottish superstitions and the witch-hunts. The rowan tree (sorbus), native to Scotland and Japan, features in both countries' folklore and also appeared in a memory shared by her grandmother. Inspired by the Scottish

superstition of growing a rowan tree in your garden to protect your family from witches, she explores where and how this oral tradition remains today.

Natsumi is working on a new project on Skye continuing her investigations into traditions. In this context she's focusing on women's textiles work and Gaelic singing; what is known as 'Waulking the Cloth.' *Waulking* is the practice of cleansing wet cloth by kneading and passing it from hand to hand.

## KIRSTY LACKIE

Kirsty Lackie is a visual artist based in Glasgow who graduated from Glasgow School of Art in 2018 following being awarded an MA in Psychology from the University of Glasgow. Kirsty's work intrigues and often contains an irreverent quality as well as a touch of the surreal and poetic sharpness. Her painting and writing are inspired by the awkwardness of everyday encounters.

"My art is about storytelling. I'm interested in blurring the line between illustration and fine art where I enjoy testing perceptions of reality and fantasy. My recent work plays with the juxtaposition between our temporary existence, and things like the infrangibility of everyday objects, or the awkwardness in the minutiae of the everyday. I try not to be downbeat about any of this, instead I like to set it free with humour and the absurd."

## **FILM 2**

**Birth, Pain, Monogenesis - Lieko, Naomi, Mel, Ness**

## LIEKO SHIGA

Born in 1980, award-winning photographer Lieko Shiga moved to the Miyagi Prefecture, north of Sendai in 2008. She draws inspiration from everywhere: friends, dreams, films, dance, news events, nature, literature, mythology and personal experience. Her highly regarded series of works include *The Human Spring*, *Blind Date* and *Rasen Kaigan*.

*Rasen Kaigan* is a body of work that engages with the local landscape – its physicality, myths, history and human intervention. Lieko sees this work as a collaboration with the local residents. *Human Spring* features S-chan, a friend whose behaviour is radically affected by seasonal change. His "super high" marks the onset of spring. Shiga states that, "He was the spring itself."

Shiga was on site when the 2011 tsunami struck and lost her work, home, studio and many neighbours during the disaster. She recalls the nearness of the waves and in the aftermath says that she “can finally feel what’s happening in the world.” This sensation and profound experience are present in her work. “I can imagine quite clearly now. I can trust my imagination. And it’s not only about dreaming; I’m connecting.”

### NAOMI OJIMA

Originally from Sendai in the Tohoku Region, Naomi Ojima is a visual artist who has been living and working in rural Morayshire for 24 years.

Her work spans painting, drawing, photography and film. Naomi experiments with scale and format, oftentimes creating small collections of works which carry an intimacy and at other times, shifting upscale to create massive images (The Night Photographs Series). Collaborations have resulted in several publications including work with poet Christine Hartmann which was produced as a conversation about colour and form, “when stillness meets creativity.”

Her relationship with Japan, her place of birth, is currently undergoing a shift because of the recent loss of her mother: “My mother passed away last September. Due to COVID restrictions, I was unable to be with her before she died. I stayed in Japan after her funeral and began a process of rediscovering what Japan means to me now.”

### MELANIE CHALLENGER

Melanie Challenger is a writer, poet and broadcaster whose recent work focuses on environmental philosophy and bioethics. She is Deputy Co-Chair of the Nuffield Council on Bioethics and CEP, a global collective of environmental philosophers, and has written for publications such as New Scientist, The Guardian, Aeon, and BBC Science Focus. She hosts the podcast *Enter the Psychosphere*, about diverse intelligences, minds and consciousness.

As the librettist for British classical composer Mark Simpson, she provided the text for his oratorio, *The Immortal*, which won the 2016 Sky Arts/South Bank Award for classical music and received its London premiere at the 2017 BBC Proms. Their opera *Pleasure*, was co-commissioned by Royal Opera House, Opera North and Aldeburgh Music.

Published works include *How to Be Animal* (2021), *The Tender Map* (2016), *On Extinction* (2011), and *Galatea* (2006).

## FILM 3

### Motherhood – Fuyuko, Chizuko

#### FUYUKO MATSUI

Fuyuko Matsui is a contemporary Japanese artist who specialises in Nihonga paintings. She is known for her Kusoju series which are based on twelfth-century Japanese drawings which depict the female body in different stages of decomposition. “I tried to paint a new kusoju – from a female point of view.” In addition to collections and exhibitions, Matsui has been undertaking a major commission; creating a series of large-scale paintings for a new Buddhist temple in Shinjuku, Tokyo.

Recurrent themes include dissection, mortality, loss, ghosts, stress and trauma. Her work is exquisitely rendered using traditional techniques and are often inspired by Japanese myths and writing. Matsui’s main interest, she has written, is the “visual transmission of the physical and spiritual pain, in order to awaken people into the immediate sensation of life.” Her art is part of the tradition of Japanese art which dates back to earlier centuries. For example, her painting *Insane Woman under the Cherry Tree* (2006) is inspired by *Ogress under Willow Tree* a painting by Soga Shohaku (1730–1781), the iconoclastic Edo-period painter.

#### CHIZUKO UENO

Chizuko Ueno is a public intellectual, social scientist, women’s rights activist, and Japan’s most prominent feminist.

Her research field includes feminist theory, family sociology, and women’s history. She is best known for her contribution to gender studies in Japan. Chizuko has been vocal in her criticism of the whitewashing of Japanese history. In particular, she has defended the compensation of Korean comfort women who were forced into prostitution by the Empire of Japan.

Chizuko is the author of numerous, highly respected studies of Japanese society, gender, and sexuality, including *The Modern Family in Japan: Its Rise and Fall and Nationalism and Gender* (2009). Ueno has inspired generations of students and the wider public by her dedication to social change.

## **PROJECT TEAM – CURATOR + ARTIST**

### SUSAN CHRISTIE

Susan is an independent curator based in Cromarty on the Black Isle with a special interest in rural contexts and community development. She is co-director of dance film production company GOAT and Vice-Chair of Skye arts organisation ATLAS Arts.

Her curatorial practice spans collaborative working, running festivals, fundraising, mentoring, overseeing commissions for public space, developing artists' residency programmes and hosting one-off events. Ongoing research includes the changing face of feminism in Japan. Since 2018, Susan has been collaborating with artist/film-maker Emma Dove to produce films featuring recordings of women's experiences in Scotland and Japan, with support from British Council.

Other activities include volunteering. Since the launch in early 2020, Susan has been the volunteer coordinator for a community-run cinema in Cromarty. As well as working in partnership with Eden Court, Cromarty Cinema generates its own seasons. Susan has curated programmes with themes which include *straightening our history* in the Highlands to *Playing Together//Hamkke Noneun* which focused on Japanese and Korean film, traditions, language + food.

### EMMA DOVE

Based in rural Dumfries and Galloway, Emma works with moving image, photography and sound.

Projects and collaborations have explored themes of place, migration, memory, and notions of home, often working with communities to create immersive works. Emma's creative process involves layering long-take video, voices and field recordings and she has exhibited at festivals in the UK, Italy, Sweden, Romania, Brazil, Mexico and India. Most recently, Emma has developed new work around themes of death and resilience. In 2020, she was commissioned by Glasgow University to respond to cross cultural research into end-of-life care in the UK and Japan.

Emma works part-time as Film Programme Coordinator at CAMPLE LINE – a gallery and multi-arts organisation in Dumfries-shire.