

Press Release | 18 November 2021

## ***Usagi Kannon* unveiled as the latest addition to the Sculpture Park**



Leiko Ikemura, *Usagi Kannon*, 2012/19. Photo: Sainsbury Centre

### ***Usagi Kannon* by Leiko Ikemura**

From 18 November 2021 in the Sculpture Park

**High-resolution image available for download: <https://bit.ly/3CnyzWX>**

The Sainsbury Centre unveils the majestic bronze sculpture *Usagi Kannon* by Japanese-Swiss artist Leiko Ikemura, as the latest artwork to join their expanding Sculpture Park.

*Usagi Kannon*, which translates as 'Rabbit Bodhisattva of Mercy', is a towering figure with rabbit ears and a human face. A recurrent and significant motif in Ikemura's work, the rabbit represents rebirth, fertility and renewal. This hybrid character was first created in 2011 in response to the Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan and the subsequent reported birth defects in animals. With a crying face in mourning, the artwork is dedicated to the people and living beings who died and suffered losses in the tragedy.

*Usagi Kannon* offers shelter through their bell-shaped skirt, acting as a protective shrine. Once inside, the small holes in the skirt shed star-like rays of light creating an encompassing universe around the viewer.

The presence of the sculpture coincides with the Sainsbury Centre's captivating exhibition *Leiko Ikemura: Usagi in Wonderland*, which explores connectivity within nature and draws on the role of humans, animals, plants and minerals in the eternal circle of life. Through her work, Ikemura empathetically addresses global issues such as climate and evolutionary change. *Usagi in Wonderland* is an important milestone in Ikemura's practice, marking her first exhibition in the UK and featuring works that span three decades of her colourful career.

The grounds of the University of East Anglia, within which the Sainsbury Centre and Sculpture Park sit, is home to the longest studied rabbit colony. *Usagi Kannon* is the most recent example of artwork interacting with the natural surroundings and biodiversity on site.

Whilst the exhibition *Usagi in Wonderland* finishes on 12 December 2021, *Usagi Kannon* will remain with us for some time. Visit the artwork in the Sculpture Park until the end of 2024, located at the south side of the Sainsbury Centre building.

– ENDS –

## **Notes to Editors**

### **Press Enquiries**

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### **Exhibition Information**

*Usagi Kannon*, Leiko Ikemura

From 18 November 2021

FREE to visit in our Sculpture Park during daylight hours

Visit [sainsburycentre.ac.uk](http://sainsburycentre.ac.uk) or call 01603 593199 (Monday–Friday, 9am–5pm)

### **About Leiko Ikemura**

Since Leiko Ikemura emerged in the 1970s, she has explored representations of the feminine, focusing on the innocence of childhood and the transition from girlhood to womanhood. Through her girlish figures and hybrid creatures, Ikemura subtly conveys a sense of estrangement and alienation. She asserts that humankind's intimate relationship with the natural environment and the universe can be a source of solace and comfort.

Ikemura is an internationally celebrated, Japanese-Swiss artist, based in Berlin. Originally from Tsu in Mie Prefecture, Japan, Ikemura studied painting in Seville, Spain before relocating to Switzerland and then Germany. She has won prestigious prizes in Germany, Switzerland and Japan.

[leiko.info](http://leiko.info)

### **About the Sainsbury Centre**

The Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts is one of the most important public university art galleries in Britain. It was founded in 1973 at the University of East Anglia (UEA) with the support of one of the nation's great philanthropic families, Sir Robert and Lady Sainsbury,

who donated their extraordinary art collection which includes works dating from prehistory to the late 20th century from across the globe. A radical new building by Norman Foster was designed to house the collection and was his first public work.

The Sainsbury Centre holds one of the most impressive art collections outside of the national institutions. It includes a significant number of works by modern masters of European art such as Pablo Picasso, Edgar Degas, Elisabeth Frink, Alberto Giacometti, Henry Moore, Sonia Delaunay, Tess Jaray, Francis Bacon, Cornelia Parker, Jean Arp, Mary Martin, Rachel Kneebone and Amedeo Modigliani. There are major holdings from Oceania, Africa, the Americas, Asia, the ancient Mediterranean cultures of Egypt, Greece and Rome, as well as Medieval Europe. Alongside these permanent collections, it hosts a range of exhibitions in the largest suite of temporary exhibitions galleries in Eastern England.

[sainsburycentre.ac.uk](http://sainsburycentre.ac.uk)