

Steinhauer, Jillian, *8 Hits of the Venice Biennale*, *The New York Times*, 19 April 2024



Japan Pavilion



Work by Yuku Mohri at Japan's pavilion. Moisture from the rotting fruit on display is converted into electric signals, which generate sounds or turn on suspended lightbulbs Matteo de Mayda for *The New York Times*

Given the Venice Biennale's reputation as "the Olympics of the art world" — set in a spectacular city, no less — artists and curators here often favor grand, weighty gestures. This year's Japan Pavilion wonderfully eschews gravitas for modesty and play, while still getting at something profound.

For her exhibition "Compose," curated by Sook-Kyung Lee, the artist Yuku Mohri has created two installations of contraptions-slash-sculptures from local materials. One set, inspired by the D.I.Y. methods for fixing leaks in the Tokyo subway system, features tubes and everyday objects — like pans, rubber gloves and coat racks — rigged together and dangling through the air. The systems catch and recirculate water seeping into the pavilion, sometimes activating chimes in the process.



Mohri's work was inspired by the rough and ready materials used to fix leaks in Tokyo's subway. Matteo de Mayda for *The New York Times*

The second series features rotting fruit: apples, bananas, oranges and more arranged on tables and covered with flies and seeping liquid. Mohri has attached electrodes to the fruit that convert its moisture into signals that generate droning sounds in speakers or turn on suspended lightbulbs.

The result is less a cacophony than an intriguing symphony that just hangs together — and purposefully so. "Compose" captures the fragility of life in a sinking city in a warming world, but without the usual sense of doom. Instead, Mohri finds whimsical possibility — and by extension, a kind of hope — in our futile-seeming efforts to find a fix. — JILLIAN STEINHAUER