





# HISAE IKENAGA PHANTOM LIMBS

Curator: Charlotte Masse

*semi-de-yellow-Extension cord from Subtle Oblivion series, 2022 – Photo: Christof Weber*

# 1. HISAE IKENAGA

## PHANTOM LIMBS

27.04 - 25.08.2024

Curator: Charlotte Masse

With *PHANTOM LIMBS*, the Korschthal Esch presents the first solo exhibition of Hisae Ikenaga (born in 1977 in Mexico) at a public institution in Luxembourg. In a layout devised specifically for the two spaces that house the exhibition, roughly thirty artworks bear testament to the research into material and form that the artist, who is of Mexican and Japanese descent, has undertaken over the last fifteen years.

Since the 2000s, Hisae Ikenaga has been developing a multifaceted oeuvre that draws from the classical vocabulary of sculpture and architecture, the conventions of which she humorously subverts. The artist collects, transforms, and combines objects borrowed from both industrial production and the domestic sphere to create hybrid compositions whose meaning is ambivalent. By accumulating and collaging forms that are sometimes abstract and sometimes recognizable, she invites the visitors to imagine new uses for them based on their perceived aesthetic and mechanical qualities.

By expanding her practice to include ceramics – which she creates by modelling or extrusion before incorporating “modern” materials – she constructs worlds infused with an unsettling eeriness, where organic and inorganic, fragility and stability, functionality and ornamentation, industry and craftsmanship collide. In the series *Subtle Oblivion* (2022), items of furniture are combined to form a sculpture that straddles the boundary between art and design, while in *Black Artichoke I-II-III* (2024), the artist defies traditional pottery conventions by stripping her pieces of the status of vessel and instead transforming them into objects of study.

The term *phantom limb* is taken from medicine and describes the perceived sensation of an amputated limb still being attached to the body. In Hisae Ikenaga’s oeuvre, it refers to the absent elements, which paradoxically multiply the meanings of the images and objects that compose it. By means of these deliberate omissions, the artist invokes our collective memory of objects and their histories, while also deconstructing their conventional or everyday or habitual connotations to imbue them with a dimension that transcends the aesthetics of everyday life.

## 2. THE APPEARANCE OF THINGS

### GERTRUD PETERS

« *We must question things themselves*<sup>1</sup>. »

Edmund Husserl

Somewhat by chance, I found myself in an old hall in which the sun cast specks of light through a row of small, high-set windows onto the sandy floor. A recess had been dug in the centre of the round room, and other holes were also visible, framed by markings and flanked by measuring sticks. They contained excavated clay jugs and old pieces of stone, and a nearby workbench was scattered with salvaged pottery shards. An archaeological dig, right in the middle of the city! This couldn't be right, something didn't add up; in fact, what I had stumbled across that day in 2022 was *Archaeological Manufacturing*, an installation by Hisae Ikenaga at the Rotondes in Luxembourg. The installation played with archetypal recollections of famous excavation sites and inducted me, the viewer, into the circle of those who make discoveries, prompting questions such as: What objects did we once live with? Which of them were and remain important, and which have value? And do these pieces of cultural heritage artefacts actually belong to us?

It felt as if I was becoming more visible myself, as the objects seemed to be re-ordering life, erasing the distinction between art and everyday life, past and present, thereby refreshing my perspective and my mood. Surrounded by these artefacts, it was suddenly very easy to participate in the artwork, to explore it from all sides, and become fully immersed in the atmosphere of an archaeological dig.

As part of her solo exhibition at the Kenschthal Esch, this fascinating building whose architecture likewise refuses singular categorisation following its successful renovation – Brutalist elements meet sweeping levels, slender pillars, and staircases, all of which vaguely recall its original use as a designer furniture store – Ikenaga presents a companion piece to *Archaeological Manufacturing* that is simultaneously more distant and more intimate: *Industrial Visceral, Untitled Installation* (2021).

Here too we find a gathering of indeterminate things, but with a “cleaner” appearance: the tables and shelves are made of polished steel, and storage jars, metal bowls, glass beakers, and conical flasks dominate the scene. We see pipettes, thermometers, and saw blades designed for lab use. Ceramic sculptures varnished with a glaze or a delicate pastel pigment and which are clearly handmade are carefully distributed throughout the space, with everything subject to an almost oppressive degree of order. Depending on the viewer's individual visual vocabulary, the haptic, seemingly organic “things” and the artificial tools and test tubes may invoke a forensic scene or a commercial kitchen, a research institute or a museum depot. In any case, you get the feeling you are intruding in a specialised work or exhibition environment. “Be brave!”, you want to say to yourself, and then dare to venture closer. In doing so, we make contact, and begin to grasp the multifaceted entanglements between what the artist has presented to us and what we see in it. Both elements intermingle inside us just like what occurs when one of the conical flasks on display is vigorously swished around in a chemistry lesson to mix together different solutions.

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<sup>1</sup>Edmund Husserl, “Philosophy as Rigorous Science”, in *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, trans. Quentin Lauer (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 96.

*Untitled II* (2023) also achieves a similar synthesis between object and memory. Four tube-like ceramic figures hang from a kind of outdoor climbing frame made of stainless steel, evoking associations between pleasure and pain. For Ikenaga, a form – whether made by hand or using pre-cast pieces – is never merely a form; there is always something soulful at play, something that stirs us, something that speaks out of the object and brings it into appearance.

An earlier work, *Door Made of Doors* (2009), illustrates this “thingness” even more directly, intervening decisively in the cosy confines of human existence: a normal door – or three doors, to be precise – is arranged like a half-open fan, neither connecting nor separating one space from another. This (im)possible opening embodies a state just like the one described by French philosopher Gaston Bachelard (whom the artist admires): “By means of poetic language, waves of newness flow over the surface of being. And language bears within itself the dialectics of open and closed. Through meaning it encloses, while through poetic expression, it opens up. [...] [M]an is half-open being.”<sup>2</sup>

We experience this poetics when we look at Ikenaga’s work: there is a sensuality that flows through the objects’ “object-ness” like a poem. The brown wooden coat hanger in *Blue Curve-Hanger* (2019), for example, seems as if it has had a long day, as if it is waiting for the coat that will soon hang upon it and the pleasant evening the two will then enjoy together. In other works, it is the addition of a sock or a feather duster to otherwise -chic displays made of chrome and colourful laminate that gives them a whimsical air, providing us with a glimpse into their secret lives in our houses and apartments. Once again, in a vivid mirroring of Bachelard’s sentiment, we see art and everyday life merge into an “interstitial possibility” of being.

It is as if Ikenaga has decided to dedicate her oeuvre to things that resist being confidently and definitively categorised. But then is there actually anything in our world that can be categorised with certainty? Has our desire to be of importance been transferred to the objects around us? Or is it the other way around? Ikenaga does not answer these questions but attends to them as a curator in the original sense of the word: as a guardian. All the beakers, funnels, knobs, vases, and sculptures that recall entrails and plaster-cast limbs that she has assembled on elegant shelving systems are static at the moment of being observed, but the artist has managed to charge them with an energy composed of matter and spirit. They are inhabited by a consciousness that wishes to break free and will in fact fulfil this desire, dissolving form and entering into being.

Düsseldorf, March 2024

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<sup>2</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p. 222.

## 4. Biography of the artist

Born in Mexico (Mexique), 1977 / Lives and works in Luxembourg

### Education

2004 Universidad Complutense, Madrid, département d'art, master en théorie et pratique de l'art contemporain 2004-2005

2003 Université de Barcelone, Barcelone, département d'art, cours de troisième cycle "Homeless Beauty",

2000 Université d'art & de design de Kyoto, Japon. Programme d'échange 2000-2001

1996 ENPEG École Nationale de Peinture, de Sculpture et de Gravure "La Esmeralda", Mexico MFA Beaux-Arts. 1996-2002

### Residencies

2023 Résidence au Bridderhaus, Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg (LU)

2017 Résidence au centre d'art d'Addaya, Alaró, Majorque (ES)

2016 Résidence à la Fondazione Pistoletto, Biella (IT)

2013 Résidence au Art Center South Florida, en accord avec AC/E (US)

2009 Résidence à Camac, France - Aide à la mobilité, Matadero de Madrid (FR)

2005 Résidence à HANGAR, Barcelone, accord entre HANGAR et FONCA (MX)

### Solo shows

2024 "Restes morcelés" BF15, Lyon (FR)

2023 "Industrial-visceral" Saarländische Galerie-Europäisches Kunstforum e.V., Berlin (DE)

"Visceral Rack" Cecile's box, ville de Luxembourg (LU)

"Back in those days" CAW, Walferdange (LU)

"Reproduction d'éléments", OAI / Ordre des Architectes et des Ingénieurs-Conseils (LU)

2022 "Multiforme" Avenue Van Volxem 316, Brussels (BE)

2022 "Archaeological Manufacturing" Rotondes 2, ville de Luxembourg (LU)

2021 "Industriel-visceral" Nosbaum Reding gallery, projects. ville de Luxembourg (LU)

2019 "Amalgama ", Arróniz Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico (MX)

2017 "Subtle Oblivion, Galerie Max Estrella, Madrid (ES)

- "Only Wood", Galerie Siboney, Santander (ES)
- "Création" et "Création 2.0", Basilique Saint Vincent, Metz, et Ancienne synagogue de Forbach (FR)
- 2016 "Non-fonctionnel", Octave Cowbell, Metz (FR)
- 2013 "Multifuncional/Colapso" Galería Formato Cómodo, Madrid (ES)
- 2012 "Diálogos desatinados" Centro Mexico Madrid (ES)
- 2011 "Ambiguous Situations" Praxis International Art NY (US)
- "Sistema métrico Campo de fútbol" Abierto X Obras, Matadero de Madrid (ES)
- "Concreciones " 3+1 Art Contemporai, Lisbonne (PT)
- 2009 "Los inútiles", La Eriza, Madrid (FR)
- "Encontrados" interventions dans la maison, La Casa Encendida, Madrid (ES)
- "Sistema métrico / Malformaciones" Galería Formato Cómodo, Madrid (ES)
- "Manufacturing Flaws" Praxis International Art Miami. Et NY (US)
- 2008 "Objetos perdidos" Galería Formato Cómodo, Madrid (ES)
- 2007 "Vaivén ", Institut du Mexique en Espagne, Madrid (ES)
- "TURN OVER" Mehr Gallery, NY (US)
- 2003 "Múltiple apetecible" Galerie Garash, Mexico (MX)
- 2002 "estándar" galerie de "La Esmeralda" Centro Nacional de las Artes, Mexico (MX)
- 2001 "Every day signs/signos cotidianos", Prinz Gallery, Kyoto (JP)
- 1997 "Mácula", Casa Museo de León Trotsky, Mexico (MX)

### **Group shows (selection)**

- 2023 "Bienvenue à la Villa ! (2) Acquisitions récentes d'art contemporain, Villa Vauban, ville de Luxembourg (LU)
- 2022 "Nothing is permanent" Parcours de sculptures dans la ville d'Esch-sur-Alzette, Esch2022 – Capitale européenne de la culture (LU)
- Exposition dans le cadre de "Art Au Centre #10, Liège (BE)
- "Solitude Publique", Schau Fenster, Berlin (DE)
- "Publicité solitaire", KIMGO, Berlin (DE)
- 2021 "Le dos au sol" Agence borderline, Marché aux poissons & Casino, Luxembourg (LU)
- "IM-MOBILITY", BIL, ville de Luxembourg (LU)
- "Subtil Quotidiá", Galería Pep Llabrés, Palma de Mallorca (ES)
- "El todo es más que la suma de las partes" Galería Max Estrella, Madrid (ES)
- 2020 "LEAP20" (prix luxembourgeois d'encouragement aux artistes), Rotondes, Luxembourg (LU)
- 2019 "Play time", Gallerie la Vitrine, Limoges (FR)
- "Libro de l'artiste-non-livre", IVORYPRESS, Madrid (ES)

- 2018 "IKEA HACKED, Nos produits. Votre Ideas", Musée Ikea, Ålmhult (SE)  
 "a\_mueblements" Faux Mouvement, Centre d'Art Contemporaine, Metz (FR)  
 "En construcción", CGAC, Centre d'art contemporain de Galice, Galice (ES)  
 "DRIFT. Miradas cruzadas entre diseño y arte contemporáneo", Musée d'art contemporain de la Fondation Naturgy (MAC), A Coruña (ES)  
 "Querer parecer noche", Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo (CA2M), Madrid (ES)  
 "No home: a place", Casa de América, Madrid (ES)
- 2014 "UNDER(DE)CONSTRUCTION" Kreativquartier, Munich (DE)  
 "Ocho cuestiones espacialmente extraordinarias", Tabacalera de Madrid (ES)
- 2013 "Hacer en lo cotidiano", Centro de Arte Joven, Av. Madrid (ES)
- 2012 "Lorca al Vacío", Projet de théâtre, Sociedad Cervantina Madrid (ES)  
 "De aller-retour", Centro de Arte Contemporáneo de Cádiz. Organisé par Obra Social Caja Madrid (ES)
- 2011 "Selva de Cristal", Museo del Chopo, Mexico (MX)
- 2010 "Sobreestructuras", OTR, Madrid (ES)
- 2009 "La vida en este lado", Galerie Espacio Líquido, Gijón (ES)  
 "Insert Coin; art contemporain espagnol", Para/Site Art Space Hong Kong (HK)  
 "Being between", Galerie Dvorak Sec, Prague (CZE)
- 2008 "Hecho a mano", Galerie Casas Riegner, Bogotá (CO)  
 "Where the wild things grow", Praxis gallery, NY (US)  
 "Located Work", collaboration avec Joseph Kosuth, La Casa Encendida, Madrid (ES)  
 "Informed by Function", Lehman College Art Gallery, NY (US)  
 "Elefante Negro", Musée Anahuacalli, Mexico (MX)
- 2007 "Mirador 07", Matadero de Legazpi, Madrid (ES)

### Grants and Prizes

- 2021 "Art in Situ OAI", Ordre des Architectes et des Ingénieurs-Conseils/Forum DaVinci. Ville de Luxembourg (LU)
- 2020 "LEAP20 " Le Prix Luxembourgeois d'Encouragement aux Artistes, Rotondes, Luxembourg (LU)
- 2018 Subvention de la Direction Régionale des Affaires Culturelles, Ministère de la Culture, Grand Est (FR)
- 2015 Subvention de la Fondation Pollock-Krasner  
 Bourse pour jeunes créateurs 2010 du FONCA (MX)
- 2010 Bourse à la création, Matadero de Madrid. Abierto x Obras, Madrid (ES)
- 2009 Propostions 2009 subvention, Fondation Art et Droit et VEGAP. Madrid (ES)



- 2008 Premier prix Génération 2008, Obra Social, Caja Madrid (ES)  
Prix d'acquisition de la 2ème Biennale de Móstoles (ES)
- 2007 Création INJUVE 2007 Accésit, Madrid (ES)
- 2006 Propositions 2006 Subvention pour " A distancia..." par la Fundación Arte y Derecho & VEGAP, Madrid (ES)
- 2004 Bourse de l'Institut National des Beaux-arts (INBA) et bourse de la Collection Jumex pour le Master en théorie et pratique des arts contemporains, Universidad Complutense, Madrid (ES)
- 2003 Bourse de la Collection Jumex pour le cours de troisième cycle, Barcelone (ES)
- 2002 Prix d'acquisition de la première Biennale tridimensionnelle d'Azcapotzalco (MX)

### **Publications (selection)**

Hisae Ikenaga : *Industrial Visceral*, cat. d'expo avec textes de Marianne Derrien, Laura Helena Wurth (Bruxelles : Nosbaum Reding, 2023)

*Hisae Ikenaga : LEAP20*, cat. publié à l'occasion du 3<sup>ème</sup> LEAP - Luxembourg Encouragement for Artists Prize, avec texte de Luis Francisco Pérez (Luxembourg : Rotondes, 2020)

## 5. Press visuals & credits

Please note that photographs of the exhibition will be available from 2.05 on



*Semicircle-Yellow-Extension Cord*  
from *Subtle Oblivion* series, 2022  
Chrome steel, laminated board and extension cord  
80 x 95 x 12 cm  
© Hisae Ikenaga / Photo : Christoph Weber



*Diagonal wood-umbrella*, 2016  
Chrome steel, laminated board and umbrella  
140 x 100 x 9 cm  
© Hisae Ikenaga



*White wood-keys*, 2016  
Chrome steel, laminated board and keys  
140 x 100 x 9 cm  
© Hisae Ikenaga



Yellow T-shirt, 2016  
 Chrome steel, laminated board and shirt  
 140 x 100 x 9 cm  
 © Hisae Ikenaga / Photo : Juan Carlos Martínez



Untitled II, 2023  
 Galvanized steel and ceramics  
 80 x 130 x 60 cm  
 © Hisae Ikenaga / Photo : Alexandre Ismail/Nosbaum Reding



Untitled installation, 2021  
 Stainless steel tables, metal shelves, steel trays, glass containers and pipettes, glazed and pigmented stoneware, tools and thermometers  
 Variable dimensions  
 © Hisae Ikenaga / Photo : Alexandre Ismail/Nosbaum Reding



Industriel - viscéral II, 2021  
 Chrome iron tube, oak, enamelled and pigmented stoneware  
 115 x 77 x 18 cm  
 © Hisae Ikenaga / Photo : Alexandre Ismail/Nosbaum Reding



Only wood series, 2021  
 Cut magazine page, plexiglass and oak base  
 45 x 35 cm (each)  
 Hisae Ikenaga, Exhibition view, Industrial-visceral , Nosbaum Reding Projects, Luxembourg, 2021  
 © Hisae Ikenaga /Photo : Courtesy Nosbaum Reding



Only wood, from Only Wood series, 2021  
 Digital printing on adhesive, cutting  
 280 x 209 cm  
 © Hisae Ikenaga

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All press kits can be downloaded under:  
[kanschthal.lu/presse](https://kanschthal.lu/presse)

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Free admission  
WED 11AM - 6PM  
THU 11AM - 8PM  
FRI/SAT/SUN 11AM - 6PM  
MON/TUE closed