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Taka Ishii

Gallery

Kei Takemura “Garden Next Door”

Dates: Sep 5 – 26, 2026

Location: Taka Ishii Gallery Roppongi

Opening reception: Saturday, Sep 5, 17:00 – 19:00

Taka Ishii Gallery is pleased to present “Garden Next Door,” a solo exhibition of the work of Kei Takemura, on view from Saturday, September 5 through Saturday, September 26, 2026. Kei Takemura has long attended closely to the layers of time and memory accumulated in objects and places, and to the traces of presence inscribed within them. As though entering the reverse side of the world, her works gather up invisible relationships and bring into viewpoints at which past and present, presence and absence, intersect. Within them appear things that persistently vanish only to be born anew, particles of fleeting moments that briefly take form.

When I looked into the garden next door this morning, the weeds beneath the grape trellis that stands along the fence between our properties were growing thick and wild, but the lawn beyond had been neatly mown, and I knew that the old man next door was doing well. When we first moved here it was winter, and I saw a thick trunk and twisting bare branches entwined around a sturdy structure made of heavy iron poles, almost like scaffolding at a construction site, in the garden next door facing our house. I assumed it was a wisteria trellis, like the one at my grandmother’s house, but when the weather grew warmer and grapes appeared, I realized it was not wisteria after all. Come to think of it, the leaves had been grape leaves all along.

Recently it has been abnormally hot, or rain has fallen as if a basin of water had been overturned. My phone has sounded alerts warning that such downpours were expected in Takasaki. I had not had that time to look at the garden next door behind our house. So when I saw weeds growing so tall in the old man’s garden, where there are usually none, I was startled by the realization that, without meaning to, I had forgotten about him – and almost at the same moment, I thought of my mother.

The old man never forgets to tend his garden, even though he is in poor health. He tends it so that, in every season, there are always flowers at their best. This naturally produces a great many pruned branches and leaves, which he gathers in an empty kerosene can and sets alight. One day, as I watched, a wind swept down from Mount Akagi, and in an instant the flames leapt as high as a person. They looked as though they might reach the eaves of the house. I searched for the old man, wondering whether he had noticed, but he was nowhere in the garden. So my husband called the fire department, though by the time the firefighters arrived, the flames had subsided. Through the window, I could see one of them speaking to the old man.

When I recently met a couple I know for the first time in a while, they told me that their warehouse had burned down after a fire spread from the neighboring property, and that many precious pieces of Scandinavian furniture had been lost. Among them was a bench I had once sat on, which could also be used as a bed. A wooden elephant by Kay Bojesen survived the fire, but the monkey, being slender, had burned and crumbled away without a trace. They gave me the charred elephant. It looked like an accumulation of black powder, and when I lifted it, it was a little lighter than I had expected. I remembered once holding a real human skull. It had been a little heavier than I expected. I think I will repair this thing that became lighter through burning and make it a little heavier again.

Fluorescent silk produced by genetically modifying silkworms with DNA from luminous coral looks slightly pink when seen as it is. But when the room is darkened, a green LED is shone on it, and it is viewed through a red acrylic sheet, the silk appears to glow. Late one night, I was repairing the black roof tiles from Noto that I am showing at Art Tower Mito, using this thread. When I looked closely to see whether the thread was truly glowing, the luminous thread leapt into my eyes, but I noticed that the red things around it had disappeared. It reminded me that when I was a student, I used to write the parts I wanted to memorize in red pen and make them disappear beneath a red plastic study sheet. If you looked very closely, the words were still there.

—Kei Takemura, August, 2026

In this exhibition, Takemura uses red and green threads alongside gold. Complementary colors that intensify one another, red and green may, through light or a filter, cause one to emerge vividly while the other disappears, evoking the provisional nature of what appears before us. Gold, by contrast, recalls the the radiance of the Buddhist Pure Land, the sacred realms beyond ordinary time and place in medieval Europe, and perfected matter achieved through transformation. It becomes a doorway through which another time and light, beyond the transformations wrought by fire, may re-enter this world in color. Colors that appear only fleetingly, and a light that endures beyond time and space: these works offer a new response by the artist to what persists within an every-changing world. “Garden Next Door” is presented concurrently with Takemura’s major solo exhibition “All Things Move” at Art Tower Mito.

◎Concurrent Exhibition
“All Things Move”
Dates: Jul 25 – Oct 12, 2026
Location: Contemporary Art Gallery, Art Tower Mito
Opening hours: 10:00 – 18:00 / Closed on Mondays

For further information, please contact:
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tel: +81 (0)3 6434 7010 fax: +81 (0)3 6434 7011 Tue-Sat 12:00 – 19:00 Closed on Sun, Mon, and National Holidays
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Kei Takemura “Garden Next Door”
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