SARA ITO

"Her practice explores the ambiguity of cultural representation and mistranslation, examining how imagination, memory, and fantasy become intertwined with reality, heritage, and everyday rituals." I am a Japanese multi-disciplinary artist working across photography, video, animation, textiles, and performative installation, based in Japan and the Netherlands. My work gives form to the unspoken loneliness and longing of people living inside urban, image-saturated life, a life built on consuming and being consumed. I transform images and cultural symbols into open-ended spaces for interaction, reinterpretation, and the creation of new narratives. I'm drawn to how these symbols shift through personal experience, collective memory and fear, and imagination. In my making, I often set myself repetitive, labor-intensive tasks. This ritual reflects two forces I recognize in Japan: an animistic spirituality that values stillness and emptiness, and a hyper-capitalist, performative society. I combine this ritual with collaborative making and contextual research. With humor and caricature, I perform and embody the tension between human emotion and heartless systems, and explore ways to reclaim intimate connection and humanity.

WEBSITES

portfolio website

saraito.com

SOCIAL MEDIA

www.instagram.com/saraitokyo/

EDUCATION

2024 - 2026 Master Photography & Society Den Haag, Koninklijke Academie van Beeldende Kunsten diploma

2015 - 2019 BA Marketing and Management Hitotsubashi University diploma

EXHIBITIONS

2026 Graduation Show: Emerging Asian Talents Namuso Gallery The Hague, Netherlands Namuso Gallery is pleased to present the second edition of Graduation Show: Emerging Asian Talents, featuring nine recently graduated artists of Asian heritage who are currently developing their practices in the Netherlands. Building on its inaugural edition, the exhibition continues Namuso Gallery's annual initiative to support emerging artists at a pivotal stage in their careers. By bringing together artists whose practices are informed by both their Asian heritage and their education in the Netherlands, the exhibition reflects the gallery's ongoing commitment to fostering dialogue between the art scenes of Asia and Europe. namuso-gallery.com/exhibitions/27-graduation-show-2026-emerging-asian-talents/
Group

2026 Graduation Show KABK academy building The Hague, Netherlands The Royal Academy of Art, The Hague (KABK) proudly presents an exhibition with the graduation projects of artists and designers of the class of '26. The Graduation Show is the conclusion of each student's time at the academy, showcasing their journey of personal and communal study, exploration, and growth through their final presentation. Using their work as a lens through which to see — and respond to — the world around them, the bachelor's, master's, and PhD students each offer a unique reflection on social and philosophical issues. graduation.kabk.nl/graduation-show
Group

2025 To Touch The Sun Paradise The Hague, Netherlands To Touch The Sun is a group exhibition by first-year students Master Photography and Society that invites audiences to take a critical look at a pressing crisis: the complex and layered spatial challenges currently facing the Netherlands. Fifteen works make up the exhibition – each taking this crisis as the starting point. The first-year students in conversation with the Dutch journalistic platform De Correspondent, invite you to join our exhibition from 9 to 14 June 2025. It will take place at Paradise, which is a collaboration venue between West Den Haag and KABK. This crisis centers around competing — and often conflicting — priorities, including housing, energy transition, water management, recreation, economic development, public health, nature conservation, and biodiversity. While these tensions may remain largely invisible to the broader public, their urgenc is becoming increasingly undeniable. Through varied visual languages and artistic strategies, the participating artists explore and interrogate these unseen pressures. The works reflect on the multiple dimensions of the crisis, offering alternative perspectives, subtle provocations, and space for dialogue. Our collective work invites viewers to engage with the critical questions shaping the physical, social, and political landscapes of the Netherlands today — and to consider what role art can play in illuminating the unseen. To Touch The Sun will feature a range of photographic, video, artistic works and installations by fifteen international image-makers from eleven countries including: Alberto Vidal Bernedo, Elena Krukonyte, Eva Chapkin, Fenna Jensma, Joanna Demarco, Julie de Ruijter, Khalil Döring, Mirko Pirisi, Marta Karkosa, Matteo Montaldo, Nadia Sheikh, Nikos Kapetanios, Odysseas Tsompanoglou, Raisa Durandi and Sara Ito. This project is an outcome of the MAPS1 Studio3 unit guided by Andrea Stultiens, Josta van Boxmeer, Bebe Agterberg, Jonathan Tang, Theo Baart, Dirk-Jan Visser, Jana Romanova and Ola Lanko. www.kabk.nl/en/events/to-touch-the-sun-by-1st-year-students-master-photography-and-society
Group

2025 Push, Pull, Shift Živi Atelje DK Zagreb, Croatia The Balkans are an «identity» heavy region. Zagreb is no exception. Some explore identity through themes related to the environment, social justice and exclusion, in a constructive way. Unfortunately, all too often unconscious biases and a lack of awareness manifest as Othering, including "benevolent othering". This was the starting point for the 21 artists who were part of a research trip to Zagreb in collaboration with @ziviateljedk . Once we arrived, we took off and went on a journey, a journey where we explored the concepts of perceived, projected, shaped and constructed identities. www.instagram.com/p/DG8yEpVtvdE/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==&igsi=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
Group

2024 I SAY BLUE Gallery John Kamakura, Japan (Translated from JP to ENG) Glass artist Haruna Oikawa and Kamakura-based photographer Sara Ito—who share a closely aligned artistic worldview and a long-standing friendship—will hold a two-person exhibition, "I SAY BLUE," at Kamakura Gallery John. For this exhibition, both artists have created works themed around the anticipation of the coming summer. Oikawa will present pieces from "sherbet," a series she has long been developing that incorporates glass work into everyday life. Centered on colors like pastel blue and sea green, her glass pieces express gradations reminiscent of refreshing soda and sunsets. Ito's photographic works are characterized by pastel and sepia tones, capturing a style that is both refreshing and tinged with a quiet wistfulness. This exhibition presents the exhilarating streets, people, and landscapes of early summer—while simultaneously evoking sentimental scenes that carry the melancholy of a festival's aftermath, or the end of summer. Please come see, in person, the BLUE of early summer expressed through the differing mediums of glass and photography, united by a shared artistic vision. gallery-john.jp/blogs/exhibition/20240518
Duo

PROJECTS

2026 Ashita no Friends KABK MA Photography & Society

PUBLICATIONS

2026 2nd edition (W)HOLE Book Screwdriver Screwdriver The

The Hague, Netherlands saraito.com/ashitanofriends Ashita no Friends can be interpreted two ways: Tomorrow no Friends, or Friends of Tomorrow. Each reflects two different fantasies: a capitalistic fantasy that isolates us from each other, and another created with community in this project. My research began in a pachinko hall in Tokyo, where players sit alone with gambling machines that offer an escape from themselves. But this escape traps us deeper inside capitalistic forces that take away our agency, growing larger by feeding on individual loneliness. Modern fantasy pushes us further from others, turning even other people into content to consume. How can we break free from this cycle of consumption and loneliness, and reconnect with the feelings we want to escape, and with each other? Before capitalism offered an escape from oneself, communities had other tools to engage with the world, such as yokai. Yokai are monsters that pre-modern Japanese society used to name the unknown, whether from nature or our own minds. These creatures were shared through stories and rituals, so that no one had to face the unknown alone. I had participants create their own monsters and imaginary friends, and filmed the everyday places where these beings appear. I animated their creatures into that footage, weaving imagination and reality together. By doing so, I give form to the uncanny inside us, the way our predecessors once did with yokai. The film illustrates that what is imagined does exist, manifesting the inner reality of people into physical form.

2025

Mijinko-pyon-pyon KABK MA Photography & Society Tha Hague, Netherlands saraito.com/mijinko-pyon-pyon Mijinko-pyon-pyon unfolds as a performative act of seeing and naming. Created in collaboration with another Japanese woman who migrated to the Netherlands, the video captures a process of exchanging and interpreting everyday photographs. The original meaning of each photo transforms into a fantasy or philosophical world that reflects our inner selves. My collaborator and I form a dialogue in which one voice represents the grown-up who has learned to see the world through language, logic, knowledge, and bias, and the other represents the child, who, with fewer of these filters, uses free imagination to create new meaning from what they see. At first, they experience moments of being lost in translation, but as the conversation continues, the adult gradually reclaims a way of seeing that is less burdened by familiar filters. These two voices could also belong to one person, revealing two conflicting modes of perception within the self. Through this playful, sometimes painful exchange, the work questions how belonging, alienation, and translation shape our ways of looking. Mijinko-pyon-pyon invites the viewer into a fragile space of misrecognition and co-creation, asking whether we ever truly see what others see and how we might belong to one another or to a larger community through shared language and visuals.

2025

In Search of Arashi KABK MA Photography & Society Zagreb saraito.com/arashi An experimental video by an Italian-Japanese artist duo traces the invisible forces that shape us. Through shifting, layered perspectives, it explores what it means to exist in a state of constant flux. They listen to the wind to take off, flying over the mountain. Dialogue evolves around their memory, longing for home, and the urgency to leave their home and family. The wind and the mountain represent opposing but interdependent forces—the wind shapes the mountain, but the mountain channels and challenges the wind. "Arashi" (storm) adds an element of intensity and transformation, evoking both the clash and the merging of moving identities. The storm is a weave of forces in tension, a complex phenomenon where different elements meet, collide, and transform. If we think of it as a metaphor for migration and identity, the storm becomes a place of transition, a moment where nothing is stable and everything is in flux. Arashi is not just the endpoint but the process of transformation itself—where wind and mountain meet.

2025

Territoris KABK MA Photography & Society The Hague, Netherlands saraito.com/territoris Territoris invites players to engage with the sense of disconnection that arises when imagining the future. It's a puzzle game inspired by Tetris where you to deconstruct and reassemble the Dutch landscape of present and future. What does it mean to dwell in the space illustrated in speculation? The gameplay embodies the constant human and non-human negotiation over space, questioning the given idea of the future. While examining each element of the utopia as it falls, the landscape and soundscape accumulate and then disappear, embodying the temporality of the space we inhabit. The blocks, representing the competing needs of the country, must fit cleanly, while interruptions of floods and storms take away your control. It's a puzzle game that never allows you to stop — just as in real life, where you must constantly negotiate your space in order to live. I invite players to engage with these scenarios and reimagine the future of the Netherlands. The process started with my own struggle to grasp the urgency of spatial planning. I wanted to make the issue more tangible and accessible. My solution was a game built in p5.js, designed in five stages with backgrounds of Dutch landscapes. Each falling block carries a fragment of these images, accompanied by ambient sounds: forest rustles if the block is green, water sounds if it is

Hague, Netherlands screw-driver.xyz/?utm_source=ig&utm_medium=social&utm_content=link_in_bio&fbclid=PAcGRvZgJleHRuA2FlbQIxMQBzcnRjBmFwcI My research on "Ashita no Friends" project was featured on the second edition focuses on (W)HOLE. I created a collage of text and research materials, titled "Alone in Fantasy" ---- (description of the magazine) In the algorithm driven post-truth era, the world order that we know of crumbles a bit more each day due to our collective humanitarian agreements being desecrated by techno-oligarchs, cannibalistic pedophile billionaires and warmongering politicians. Navigating our lives in this environment gets harder each day as the ground we stand on crumbles, leaving dark sinkholes in its place. So rather than waiting in vain for these holes to be blatantly patched up, missing our chances of peeking into very-maybe-a-bit-100%-true post-truths, we invite you to take a leap of faith like Alice through a (w)hole of your choosing. Look at the (w)holes and its parts: complex systems, extractive practices, conspiracy theories, wormholes, heartbreaks, grave diggers, caves, tunnels, loopholes, manholes, black holes and much more. It might be obvious what was sitting in front of your face at first, but just be careful when sticking in your nose, since holes prove to be a fertile ground for murky waters. Maybe it will be a gateway to 7 minutes in heaven providing you with godly knowledge; maybe it will be your reason to have an Icarian fall towards the pits of modernized hell. With the second issue of screw*driver magazine, (W)HOLE, we want to provide an opportunity for you to approach and rummage in areas that you would not usually look into.

2019

No 07 'Decelerate' eye_C mag Book eye_C eye_C Tokyo, Japan www.eyecmag.com/news/2022/11/11/eyec-mag-no-07-decelerate My photography series "Winter Story" was featured --- We're pleased to announce the release of eye_C mag No. 07 titled 'Decelerate' In 'Decelerate', which is also our 5th Anniversary issue, we take a step back to deliver a mostly visual project with some of our favourite brands out there. Our covers this time includes a 04:00 AM sunrise shoot in Tokyo with yoshiokubo, a heavily heritage focused editorial with visvim and finally a closer look at F/CE.'s seasonal collaboration with NANGA. Furthermore we take an i debt look at White Mountaineering's Autumn/Winter lineup, the latest from COVERCHORD Women and a full breakdown of nonnative's 42nd collection. You'll also find editorials with Tokyo mainstays F.C.R.B., uniform experiment and SOPHNET. among others as well as a travel journal from the North with HHV. Lastly we've highlighted our seasonal eye_C collaborations, this time with thisisneverthat, S.F.C., HERILL, yoshiokubo and ROTOTO which will be available at our Tokyo pop-up later this month.

blue. The sounds accumulate as blocks pile up, while random events mimic the disruptions of climate and flooding. Through play, I hope to shift the discussion from distant policy to lived imagination. The speculative images of the future by Talking Landscape Sound and Music by Parvin Diyanat & Jake Parry Made in conversation with De Correspondent

2024 Shiromuku KABK MA Photography & Society The Hague, Netherlands saraito.com/shiromuku Shiromuku, a traditional Japanese bridal garment, is a cultural symbol of patriarchal values. Its whiteness is meant to cleanse a woman's past, presenting her as pure, blank, and unmarked as she enters her husband's family. I return to a photograph of my mother, who wore shiromuku at her wedding and became a full-time housewife, and to the unconventional name she gave me. The name "Sara" traces back to sarasa textiles, known for their vibrant and intricate patterns originating in India. They were introduced to Japan in the 16th and 17th centuries through maritime trade by Portuguese and Dutch merchants, and were celebrated within urban merchant culture. What did it mean for women to dress themselves in such exotic garments, carrying a sense of desire and self-expression? I imagined a tension between these two forms of dress: one erases traces of the past and performs ideals of purity and virtue, while the other carries traces of global exchange and celebrates hybridity. I sewed a shiromuku from plain white fabric and stained it with images: ruins along the Silk Road, traces of craft and exchange, records of diseases that traveled across borders, a solitary bride, and patterns embedded in my name. This act resists the purification of the histories and memories that women carry. I am not the "authentic" Japanese woman you imagine. I stand with the freedom my mother gave me, and within a shared history that crosses the waters between us. I will remember the stains I have inherited. I am ready to carry the ones that are yet to come.

2024 Matsusaka Matsusaka, Japan saraito.com/matsusaka In collaboration with a hospice institution that provides hospice care in a town, Matsusaka (⊠⊠) in Mie Prefecture, I had the opportunity to visit nine individuals who opt for palliative care at home rather than life-prolonging treatments. The images I captured reflect my encounters during these visits—the smell of excrement, the musty rooms, piles of personal belongings covered in dust, traces of family tension, the boredom, and the ever-present background noise of the television. The project explores the emotional landscape of those who provide care, and receive, by going into the realities of end-of-life care.

2023 Have You Lived All That Kamakura, Japan saraito.com/haveyoulivedallthat In Have You Lived All That, I surrendered to the ritual of the camera as a machine. I walked through cities and mountains, taking a photograph every thirty minutes as the alarm rang, with the question in mind "Can we stop thinking of photogenic moment with a camera in hand?" By refusing the instinct to choose what to frame (and what to frame out), I attempted to become an operator of the camera . Yet in the end, I saw the trace of my gaze and realized the true absence of myself was impossible. In the editing process, I reclaimed agency, reframing and reinterpreting what the apparatus captured. The work questions the myth of objectivity in photography, revealing the entanglement of intention, manipulation, and machine. It invites the audience to wonder: can we ever fully erase ourselves from the act of seeing? Can we erase the camera from our life experience? "A way of certifying experience, taking photographs is also a way of refusing it-by limiting experience to a search for the photogenic, by converting experience into an image, a souvenir. " -Susan Sontag



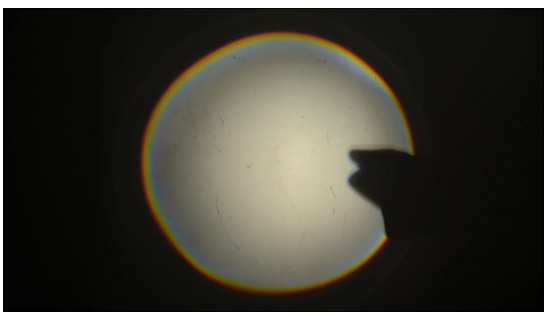
Ashita no Friends - installation, 2026
wood, fabric, projection and sound, 200 x 200 x 240 cm



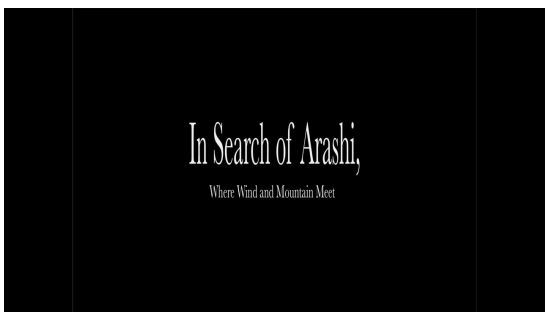
Ashita no Friends, 2026
10:46



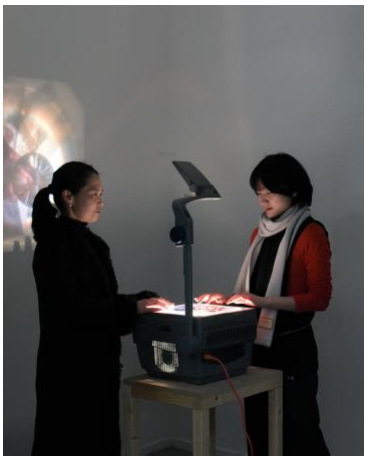
Alone in Fantasy, 2025
3:17



Mijinko-pyon-pyon, 2025
3:01



In Search of Arashi, 2025
8:10



Mijinko-pyon-pyon - installation, 2025
photography print, video installation, 50 x 50 x 170 cm



Territoris - installation, 2025
javascript game coding, photography, rapsberry pi, 100x100x70 cm



In Search of Arashi -installation, 2025
essay film, 140 x 250 cm



Shiromuku, 2024
Printed photograph on fabric, 200cm x 125cm



Shiromuku, 2024
Printed photograph on fabric, 200cm x 125cm