

ARTISTS' BIOGRAPHIES

“A SOUL IN EVERYTHING. ENCOUNTERS WITH AINU FORM THE NORTH OF JAPAN” (NOV 5, 2021 – FEB 20, 2022)

MAYUNKIKI



Photo © Hiroshi Ikeda, 2018

„Did you know that you were Ainu from when you were a child?

I knew. Both of my parents are Ainu. Even before I could remember, my father always told me, “You are Ainu. And that is nothing to be ashamed about.”

(Vice Japan Interview with Hirohisa Asahara, translated by *notautmnperson* 23.2.2017)

Ainu activist and artist Mayunkiki (Mai Hachiya) is intensely concerned with her own identity and the tradition of female tattooing in Ainu cultures. She is also a member of the vocal trio “Marewrew”, which interprets traditional songs. In two video sequences, she interviews her own parents on sensitive topics such as identity and traditional tattooing.

KANAKO UZAWA



Photo © Joakim Wikström, 2021

„Which way should I go? Singing in the white snow asking who I am.”
(*Beyond Ainu Studies*, 2014, 86)

The Ainu scholar and activist focuses on the issues of identity and social change. She lives with her family in Norway and is currently a research associate at the Research Faculty of Media and Communication at Hokkaido University. She contributes to collaborative research and Ainu performing arts on the multiple articulations of indigenous knowledge. She is also a research collaborator on ArCSII (Arctic Challenge for Sustainability). She is a member of the editorial board of *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples in New Zealand, Aotearoa*.

LAURA LIVERANI



Photo © Laura Liverani

„The posed portrait as a mode of representation highlights both personal and social identities of each individual. In a collaboration between photographer and sitter, each person portrayed has some degree of control in how they appear in the images. Whether at home, at the workplace, at school, or elsewhere, the everyday environment is transformed into a temporary set where to perform [an] identity.”

(Citation Japan Foundation Sydney, 9.5.2019)

Laura Liverani is an Italian documentary photographer and university lecturer. She lives in Japan and Italy. Her film and photography project *Ainu Neno an Ainu* is a journey of identity exploration and reflection on what it means to be Ainu today, in the practices of daily life. It shows how Ainu are engaged in preserving their own culture and re-developing themselves in a globalised modernity. “Ainu neno an Ainu” means “human like a human” in the Ainu language.

BORIS LABBÉ



Photo © Boris Labbé, 2021

„My work relies on repetitive images, repetitive movements and time loops.“
(Work portrait „MONADE“, 2020)

The work of French video artist Boris Labbé draws heavily on his drawing practice and thrives on merging images and sounds in a rhythm. Labbé usually works with reflections and repetition. In his works of the series “SIRKI”, it is traditional textile patterns of the Ainu cultures and chants in which these structures are found again. The vocals to the videos are by Marewrew, a trio that includes Mayunkiki, who collaborated with Boris Labbé during his stay as artist in residence at Tenjinyama Art Studio in Sapporo in Hokkaido in July 2018.

OKI KANO



Photo © Laura Liverani, 2015

„Everything is in danger including language and music.“

(Interview with Umeko Ando and Andi Otto in June 2018)

Oki Kano was born in Hokkaido in 1957. His mother was Japanese and his father the well-known wood sculptor and Ainu activist Bikki Sunazawa. After studying in Tokyo, he went to New York in 1987 where he worked as a special effects artist on film productions. When he returned to Japan in 1992, he first came into contact with a *tonkori*, the traditional zither of the Ainu of Sakhalin. The instrument inspired him to go back to Hokkaido where he taught himself to play. He is considered the world's best-known player of this rare instrument, and his works combine traditional Ainu music with reggae, African and electronic music. He is an active member of the United Nations Working Group of Indigenous Artists. Together with his band, he plays at concerts worldwide, sometimes also in collaboration with the vocal trio Marewrew with the artist Mayunkiki.