

Responses to EIKO'S WORK

"A Body in Fukushima" and "A Body in a Library"

Students Responses to A Body in Fukushima exhibition at Wesleyan University 2015

Chloe

Walking through the three gallery spaces of *A Body in Fukushima*, I keep returning to a question posed at Thursday evening's artist talk: *What would the picture be without Eiko?* Eiko's presence in the photographs transforms them — what would be photographs of a ravaged landscape, bereft of human presence, become photographs about life.

In class Eiko said: "We move because when we die we don't move." Eiko is clearly in motion in these photographs, even if in the least noticeable of ways — a single finger reaching, an inhalation of breath... And if she's moving, then she must be alive. If we're moving, we're alive. If we're alive, we're moving. This is always the case. Life is movement.

Even in the images where Eiko rests corpse-like in the deadened landscape of Fukushima, she appears unmistakably awake. Even then she emits a subtle energy. Perhaps it's the bright colors of her costumes that make her appear so alive, but I don't think so — I think it's that her performance endures in the photographs, a wild presence somehow captured by camera.

In my first journal I wrote about the idea of return: *What if we return home and feel displaced? What if we outgrow home while away? What if home outgrows us in our absence? What if home doesn't grow but shrinks?* In the case of Fukushima, home becomes untouchable — mountains of radioactive televisions, refrigerators, washing machines, bicycles, personal belongings to never be touched again. I cannot fathom an untouchable home. I think about the way old photographs feel between my fingers, the texture of my mother's quilts, the soft sheets on my bed. I think about all the ways my home is touchable.

From the artist talk, Eiko's mention of the morning dew in Fukushima has stayed with me. How the water feels clean but isn't. How one cannot see its toxicity. How do we proceed when the danger, the damage, is invisible? In some of the exhibition's photographs, Fukushima appears intact, as if no harm were done — a radioactive ruin, eerie and difficult to believe.

In the galleries, I found myself gripped by the articles of clothing on display. While the photographs show Eiko's body alive—in motion—her clothing on the floor of each gallery confronts the viewer with an absent body. Sometimes an object indicates the lack of a subject. This is the case with the articles of clothing Eiko chose to include in *A*

Body in Fukushima. Each piece of clothing conveys a profound lack. Each one says: *a body should be here, a body once was here.* One feels this lack all the more intensely when one glances up from the article of clothing on the floor to a photograph of Eiko wearing it, moving in it, being a body in it — present and alive. A parallel can be drawn between Eiko's clothing and the piles of household possessions photographed by Johnston. Both are objects once possessed but now untouched/untouchable, objects that remind us the subject is missing.

A Body in Fukushima and the collection of news articles we read have lead me to ask: How do we comprehend the incomprehensible? How do we make sense of what doesn't make any sense? It's an important question to consider given the world is often nonsensical. Fukushima's nuclear disaster, for example, makes *no* sense — *how did this happen? How do we let these things happen? In a country of fault lines and shorelines, how did it ever become okay to so strongly incentivize nuclear energy?* (The article we read from *The New York Times* quotes 63-year-old fisherman Tsuneyoshi Adachi saying: "Sure, we are all worried in our hearts about whether the same disaster could happen at the Shimane nuclear plant... [but] the town knows it can no longer survive economically without the nuclear plant." —*How did this become a town's only option?* It is tragic and astounding and incomprehensible.)

One answer to the question of how we comprehend the incomprehensible is *art*. Through art we find ways of understanding what's impossible to understand and, most importantly, we do so without claiming to understand. Art gives us an entry point into the nonsensical without rationalizing it, without forcing logic onto an illogical situation. *A Body in Fukushima* recognizes that what happened in Fukushima is truly incomprehensible (and inexcusable — we cannot rationalize the situation), yet the exhibition helps us to understand, to see, to find meaning.

Sometimes I wonder if words are the best way to tell a story, to tell history. Sometimes I want to write and think and learn and remember in images and movement, rather than in words. Images and movement articulate meaning nonverbally, allowing us to take in information without translating that information into words. The knowledge we gain from "reading" images and movement lives in our bodies differently. *A Body in Fukushima* is one example of a history written in images and movement, and one that demonstrates the power and profundity of nonverbal language.

At the artist talk Eiko touched on the idea that time is not even. She said: "Something happens and it shakes you." Time is not even because the shake reverberates — an event like the nuclear disaster in Fukushima cannot be neatly contained within a framework of linear time. Disaster is uncontainable, ongoing, erratic. Disaster cannot be sealed off into a single moment in time, a fact that appears ironic in the case of Fukushima where the place itself has been sealed off.

During the talk, Eiko also mentioned that space is not empty. Dance, she explained, should not only take place within the studio and the theater but out in the world. This

idea resonates for me. I often conceptualize the dance studio as “empty” space — a blank space like a blank canvas or a blank page. I relish in this supposed emptiness. In the studio I can pretend there is no world to contend with, no reality to move through. The studio becomes a utopia, the place where everything begins, a sealed and neutral bubble. This illusion of empty space is problematic, for it tends to produce an art severed from the world in which we live. If, as I proposed earlier, art can offer ways to comprehend the incomprehensible, then art should be rooted in our incomprehensible reality. If art helps us to make meaning of the world, then art cannot exist exclusively in the studio or theater.

Eiko and Koma’s *Wallow* takes place on a beach in Pt. Reyes, CA — a place rich with texture and movement. Eiko and Koma’s bodies make indentations in the sand, the water comes rushing onto shore, fills the hollows where their bodies have been, wets their skin, their costumes, their hair. The beach functions almost like another dancer in the piece, alive and moving. The space of the beach feels far from empty.

After watching *Wallow* and going to *A Body in Fukushima*, I have been thinking about silence. Both the beach in *Wallow* and Fukushima in Johnston’s photographs appear as silent landscapes. What does it mean to be in sustained silence? Sound fills space. Indeed sound is in part what makes space *not* empty. When sound is absent, space seems to empty. There is a sense of absence, loss, a certain unease. In *Wallow* we see the waves crashing over Koma’s body, but we hear nothing. We see Eiko flop onto the sand but hear no thud. In some of Johnston’s photographs, we see a place that looks occupied / lived in / undamaged, yet we hear no sounds of life, no human chatter / no footsteps / no cars on the roads. In both cases, the silence is disturbing.

The topic of translation came up in our last class when discussing Kaneko. I want to think about translation in the context of movement. In *Wallow*, Eiko and Koma translate seal-ness. In class we attempted to translate marshmallow. Last night I saw Compagnie Marie Chouinard perform *Henri Michaux: Mouvements*, a work that translates 64 pages of India-ink drawings into movement with dazzling exactitude. What is this process of translating *into* movement? Is movement always a translation, or is movement sometimes simply movement? Is movement ever the original? If so, can we translate *out of* movement into another language? We are all bodies with history. We are not neutral bodies. We are not blank pages. I want to remember something said in class: “Translation is an inescapable part of the human experience.”

In class we talked about nouns in relation to verbs: a yawn versus *to* yawn, a sigh versus *to* sigh. The title *A Body in Fukushima* contains two nouns: “body” and “Fukushima.” Studying the photographs, I am struck by Eiko’s ability to both become the landscape and appear other to it. She appears to be, at once, the landscape itself and a human body set apart from the landscape. There’s a simultaneous clarity and confusion between body and place. The choice to parallel “body” and “Fukushima” in the title plays off this simultaneity. Had the title consisted of a verb and a noun (for example: *Being in Fukushima* or *Being a Body in Fukushima*), then Eiko as human

subject would have been set apart from the place; versus the title *A Body in Fukushima*, which makes the relationship between Eiko's body and the landscape of Fukushima invitingly ambiguous.

When we did our armpit movement exploration in class (yawning with our armpits), Eiko posed two questions: "Where does armpit begin?" and "Where does armpit end?" *A Body in Fukushima* asks: Where does Eiko's body begin, and where does it end? She is a defined entity separate from Fukushima, yet her form bleeds/melts/dissolves into the landscape.

Kotaro

I had to stop to think about how much time we have already left behind, four years. "What have I been doing for this period of time?" That was the question I had to ask myself after reading the assignments. Looking at "*A Body in Fukushima*" also made me think about the same question. The disaster has not ended yet, and it will haunt us for years to come. The figure of Eiko reminds me of a Japanese ghost that haunts the deserted place, lonely and sorrowful. It seems to me that the ghost had left her memories or items at those places, and returned to retrieve them. The ghost seems to embody the will of Fukushima people who used to live around there. I believe that they want to come back to their houses at least once to clean up the places and see the end of their lives in Fukushima. For human beings who can be strongly tied to the external world through memories, the recognition of the end is very important. It is impossible for one to just abandon a memory and go on living a new life. One needs a form of conclusion to temporally make an end, separate one mode of life from another. I think that what the ghost was doing in the pictures was to witness the end of their lives. The space was not empty, because the deserted landscape of Fukushima gave a birth to the ghost who expressed the anger and sorrow through dance. Someone had to perform such an act, otherwise the real ghost will haunt the minds of Fukushima people forever. The destroyed town of Fukushima also shows that time is not even. Time does not pass there, because time exists only in being lived by people. That is why the number of years that has passed surprised me. Not a single human being has been permitted to return to dwell in the region, and the passage of time does not convey itself in the pictures. This is also relevant to the ghost metaphor: ghost is supposed to transcend the time and space. The devastated Fukushima seemed timeless, but the ghost hints the remains of people's memories and feelings that once existed there.

David

I did not get to see the opening talk for *A Body in Fukushima* (sorry!), but instead spend 3 hours on Saturday in close viewing at the Davison, Zilkha and Freeman Center galleries. The exhibition as a whole left me considering your intense relationship with the environments in which you perform. In some of the photos from your July trip to Momouchi it looks as if you are trying to insinuate yourself in the natural world that has overtaken the railways of modern Japan in the wake of 3.11. These pictures, and your movements the exhibition re-presents, are attempts to grapple with the loneliness of the space surrounding Fukushima and make sense of the tragedy that has befallen it. In the video display at Zilkha gallery you are literally grasping at the natural as you wrestle with a tall weed and in doing so, take on its spindly, extended form. The black box this video is framed in has the viewer looking down to observe it, inviting a reflection on the ground and the space constituted by the exhibit, and by extension your dance piece. (The only aspect of the exhibit I didn't like was the part of the soundtrack to the video in this box which

switches to the steady beat of a drum. It injected a pacing into the presentation that seemed forced and superfluous in relation to the naturalistic pacing of the photographs.)

The photos present an ideal form by which to present your movements. Unlike a filmic presentation of dance, which is trying to simulate a viewer's presence at the site (in space and time) of the dance, Bill Johnson's photos have no such preconception— they are static, only a slice of continuous motion. The photos instead attempt to convey aura. They are an additional layer of artistic labor to your movement, but it's hard to read them artistically separated from the form of your body in them, and indeed the two forms fit together perfectly. Johnson captures you in direct dialogue with your environment, often explicitly mirroring the saddened forms around you, whether sitting down as if on one of the miraculously intact wooden chairs behind you at Yaburemachi, or assuming the hopefully-poised outreached arms of a shriveled plant in Sakamoto. I particularly like the way Johnson framed the Sakamoto pictures, so as to have a head-on view of the surface on which you are dancing. The ground forms a flat line which divides your body and the great expanse of sky above you (the present) from the historical concrete below you, soil genealogies in black and grey. The composition of these photos belies a historical understanding of the disaster, rooted in Japan's complicated history with progress and development since World War II. While the nation has hurt for a long time over the tragedy of the “Great War”, technology has largely taken the place of lifting Japan out of its slump. The country is in some ways the most developed in the world, and its extensive rail network and nuclear technologies are points of national pride. The degree of reliance on rail is staggering. Eiko, by placing yourself at these rail stations you put yourself in conversation with the hundreds of passengers who used to rely on these now abandoned stations. Your movement seems to be a emotional passage of its own— by passing through physical space you recall the physical traces of of all those that have come before you, enabling a way to cope with the feelings of mourning these places invite.

Claire

In merely trying to process your work, reports on Fukushima, and the body of knowledge in Dower, I am beginning with a sense of defeat. I have spent twelve hours of the last two days immersed in these physical-verbal-audio-visual texts and I know I've barely scratched the surface. While the movement studies we do in class are somewhat familiar to me, (as a dancer at Wesleyan) studying Japanese culture and history is an entirely new world. I feel that in order to begin to process the tragedies of Hiroshima and Fukushima (to name two), I have to get in touch with my own sense of failure. I am hyper-aware that I have a overwhelming superficial knowledge of everything we are delving into. I am thinking about you, Eiko, and the decades that you have spent intertwined with a culture of defeat and toxicity. In learning about your career and observing *A Body in Fukushima*, defeat and failure have taken on a new meaning for me. The two words used to connote termination or collapse but you seem to steadily reject this notion. Defeat and failure seem to be qualities that carry you forward, rather than obstacles or impediments. In the same vein, post-war Japan has grown out of compounding defeat and failure.

Women are especially capable of finding strength in weakness and adding softness to struggle.

I saw the coexistence of these qualities throughout your exhibit at Wesleyan. Your composure urgency of the work.

The abandoned towns featured in the photos remind me of the haunting legacy of slavery in the United States. The actual material contamination of the land in Japan is a fitting parallel for the blood, sweat, and misery, soaked into huge swaths of agricultural land in the US South. Both cases showcase the pinnacle of human arrogance and short-sightedness, the lengths people will go to for money and the consequences they ignore along the way. I was very disturbed reading the New York Times article, “In Japan, A Culture That Promotes Nuclear Dependency,” for the way it shows how much these towns

benefitted, economically, from nuclear power. The article details how the initial cash flow that accompanies a town's agreement to build a nuclear plant is so large that the standard of living in the entire town rises. Then, two or three decades down the line, the cash flow dries up and the town is forced to build a new plant or plummet into poverty. There are several voices in the article that compare this process to the vicious cycle of drug addiction.

Ethan

I was particularly struck during the *Body in Fukushima* talk by something that Eiko said about trying to be a bridge, an entryway, through which viewers can access the physical intensity and grief contained in the photos of Fukushima. In the photographs without the presence of her body, I find it remarkably harder to empathize with the wasted landscape of the Fukushima region. I find it much more impossible to imagine the sensations of loss and the massive, disastrous human effect embedded in the empty streets and overgrown fields. But by seeing another human in the space reacting emotionally and physically to her surroundings, I can imagine myself in her place with all of the feelings and sensations that would come with such an experience. Her body is a human bridge that I find absolutely necessary for nurturing a sense of empathy and understanding for this totally *other* world that Fukushima has become.

This talk of bridges and windows reminds me of the theme of translation that we discussed in class last time. In a sense, Eiko seems in these photographs to be translating for us, the viewers, the sensations of being in Fukushima. Looking at the landscape alone is like perhaps like attempting to read in another language, a language we can only barely understand but not truly comprehend. And of course, us viewers in Middletown, Connecticut can never *truly* understand something like the pain and suffering and loss experienced by the people of Fukushima. But with the translating body of Eiko, we can understand somewhat better the toll exacted on the bodies of Fukushima. The pain of the landscape becomes the pain of a body, a universal language that all bodies can read and perceive.

during the talk was compelling. The story of the nuclear disaster and it's aftermath are events that might insight anger, despair, range. However, what I saw in you and Bill was curiosity, respect, patience and solemnity in relation to each other and your work. This to me, was also an exhibition of soft strength, of constructive weakness and failure.

Claire

The work you did for a body in Fukushima displays a commitment to a place and to processing the event in the aftermath. This is yet another example of using failure as strength. Not only did you accept the horrors of the disaster, you actively sought them out, trespassed and risked your health in order to investigate and pay respect to the place. In Andy's essay in the gallery pamphlet he shared a quote: "I can't go on...I'll keep going. I can't go on...I'll keep going" as a description of your attitude towards failure and defeat. Wallow feels like constant failure and defeat. Eiko feels like constant failure and defeat.

Strength in failure is reflected in the content of the work you do and also in your quality of movement. I was particularly moved by the summer photos in the greenery by the train. There are all of these seeming paradoxes at play. You position yourself in a place where, before the accident, your body would have been quickly obliterated by a commuting train but when you lie there, there is pervasive quiet and stillness. Then there is the presence of the green vines thriving out of radioactive soil. You embody softness and your kimono is light as you convey the unbearable weight and harshness of nuclear disaster.

Eero

Eiko's movements looked to me like a ghost mourning the abandoned towns along Honshu's eastern coastline. I found the structure of the performance moving, with Eiko's live movement sample followed by the photos. The position of the stage light so close to her body lit up the exposed side of her body eerily, revealing, through slow movement, a somewhat-human figure. The shapes cast on the far wall by the stage light towered over the audience, like a memory haunting our consciousness beyond the initial shock value we place on the visual body count of a disaster like Fukushima.

The photos felt like a hand beckoning the spirit Eiko showed us back into the still life of their frames, but these shots came alive on their own as well. It was inspiring to hear how the work Eiko and Bill Johnston undertook in Japan put them in dangerous proximity to the areas still contaminated by the reactor explosion in Fukushima. This work was a physical gamble, and these stakes manifested in the

Nora

I found the photographs in *A Body in Fukushima* to be a demonstration of how a body in a space can give a point of reference and circumstance and spatial understanding. In these photos, the human body reminded me of how the now abandoned place had once been filled with inhabitants and how humans had been responsible for the current eeriness and oddness of that space. Eiko's performative, yet emotive, presence in the spaces, in the photographs, revealed a present quality (Eiko's being there reminds us that it is in fact 2015) while harkening back to the moment these places became stagnant in time. Was she going back in time or bringing Fukushima to the present? Both Eiko and the place show signs of age – the place overgrown or decaying, Eiko's feet scratched and her face wrinkled with time and feeling. Both place and performer, to me, expressed mourning, an anger, and a certain defiance in showing themselves together, in bright clear color in a quiet gallery in Connecticut. They requested together to not be forgotten, to be meditated on, ruminated on, and experienced, even if remotely, again. They succeeded in bringing me to "hesitate," and find a point of entry to begin to imagine the reality of a disaster in a far away place in a far away time. I was especially drawn into the video played inside the box with headphones – I was able to be sucked in to a place across the world and imagine the pathways of Eiko's body in that space, peering down over an edge into a reality I could start to imagine.

Rachel

After the talk, I found the entire experience of looking at the art rather chaotic. I know there is something inherently chaotic about attending an opening to an event, but I don't think it was the people that made me feel so. I also think something about knowing that I was going to have to reflect on the art made me self-conscious about any feelings I had and thereby hyper-aware of my reactions to each photograph. I think there is also something about being a "photographer" myself, and knowing that I constantly look at photography with a critical eye, even when I don't want to. Lastly, as for the exhibit itself, I did feel like there were just too many photographs, and that although I loved getting to see various perspectives on your travels, it disabled me from giving my full attention to every image. And maybe that was the point, to feel overwhelmed just as those who were forced out of their homes felt (and evidently still feel) overwhelmed. But in this context I felt like it prevented me from truly connecting to the images.

However, that does not mean I did not enjoy the show. Actually, the opposite is true - I found it to be extremely powerful (I even waited until the end when everyone left so I could walk around the show on my own). The images I enjoyed the most were the ones where Eiko's presence wasn't, for lack of a better word, obvious. Where Eiko was small - taking up the least amount of space – and therefore letting the vastness and lifelessness of the landscape seemingly speak for itself. There was something I liked about the idea that if someone were not looking carefully, he

or she would be able to miss Eiko. Just like how easy it is to turn a blind eye to what is still happening in Japan (or for that matter anywhere in the world). I liked these images because they depicted how beautiful landscape is not always what it seems. This landscape, which at first appears perfect, is subsequently disrupted by Eiko's presence and transformed into its true melancholy self. It becomes apparent that this is not beautiful forest that children can run around in, but rather forest that is so contaminated that lying down in it could actually harm you. Doing exactly what you are supposed to do in nature, which is to just physically be in it, is forbidden. Such 'distant' images were then nicely complemented by some close ups. There is one in particular that I enjoyed, where your lace undershirt is ripped but you still can see your beautiful kimono overlaying you. Your face conveys despair and total loss. This image is so powerful because it's all about you. For a similar reason, I also really loved the images at the *Tomioka Fishing Port* because the series included both images of you on the beach as well as the placidity of the beach itself when unoccupied. Having the comparison, and actually being able to see what the land looked like with no one in it, which was absolutely beautiful. But yet the ones next to it immediately bring to question the calmness that the beach scene presented.

Throughout looking at the images, I kept thinking about the role that color played in my perception of the image. How did the color of your kimono affect the way I perceived the image? How did it affect how you (Eiko) perceived the image after the fact? I'm sure you thought about it, but I kept wondering why you made certain color decision that you did. What made you want to wear red and more easily be seen, versus wearing a dark people that blended in with the surrounding debris?

Trouve

Zilkha: The juxtaposition between summer and winter. The deceiving beautiful green, how toxic those vines must be. One would think that they suffocate her body, but Eiko pulls and touches them as if they are part of her, her belongings. She makes the train track a bedroom. How painful and beautiful and eerie. The color contrast between her body/clothing and the landscape is often stark, but why does she blend in. What kind of camouflage is here. This makes me think of emotional camouflage. Eiko performs camouflage in these places. Mixing her body with destruction, becoming naked, desolate. You can see it in her face, but also in the way she touches the vines, grabbing them for dear life...screaming for something: "Nothing is left."

I thought when I saw the photographs from Momouchi station: "No one is coming." I thought of her performance in the Philadelphia train station. Though I haven't seen full size images in person of the Philly train station performance, I am beginning to get a sense of how these different spaces are full in different ways. Mamouchi has no people waiting for the trains, but Eiko somehow brings to life something in this station. She embodies all the ghosts, unevenly. That's why it makes sense that she is not sticking out in these pictures but almost blending or meshing in. She is part of that landscape and animating that space in a way that brings to life what is already there, not necessarily adding anything new. As I am understanding more, being here is becoming more painful. I have a headache. I need to wait to see the other two exhibits.

Exhibit Davidson

Desolation. Evacuation. Buddha Beach looks like the land before time, almost prehistoric. In the set of photographs with Eiko and the ropes at Buddha beach, there is one photo where she is lying on the cusp of what looks like sand and gravel or black top. The sand is creeping over the black top, what was once human labor that placed the cement there for the parking lot of a popular beach. Eiko reaches over to this

black top hesitantly from her place lying on the sand, but at a border. You can see here, the tsunami sailing far above the cement, leaving its remains of sand scattered and untouched and silent in a trail. Eiko's only company are eight birds flying across the port in the background. There is no life here. In this photograph, the space is distorted. The landscape is somehow flattened by eiko's placement. Or maybe the emptiness of the space has this flattening feature. Makes me think how when space is full, it is easier to see, understand the depth of a scene. When there is nothing, it is difficult to tell the scale but the feeling of flattening is overpowering. Eiko literally changes the space of the landscape by providing a depth of perception. Her body's placement determines or maps the area's desolation literally but also symbolically through her performances and presence.

The space where the concrete provides a stage for eiko to move, it's sunset, the light is in the background. These are haunting but banal. She is moving as if this is her house. The contortion, the fluidity with these sequences of photos alongside one another. I feel kind of sick. Eiko speaks with or speaks for the cloudy, cosmic sunset. Her power is channeled through here. Why Tomioka Beach? Why the place I lived with my children? Why this blanket? Significance is lost, and everywhere breathes radiation. The wilting protective sea wall lines the horizon.

Has Bill photographed movement before? He's really good! Especially this one in Yonomori, the four photos. The one on the top right eiko is suspended in motion. Running from something. The red kimono is a person next to her, she is dragging along. I am understanding more now, why that object holds so much significance here, to rub up against the landscape and carry through the streets. It's a baggage that holds generations of memories and belongings and fear. It is blood but it is also hope for life. It doesn't stand out on it's own but makes sense with the rest of these town's dynamic, colorful landscapes. It is just as fierce a color as the blue house beside the street or the green leaves, or the emerald fence, or the pink flowers. The only thing that's dark is the government's one-ton bags. Not even the piled wreckage is dull the. This is the sick confusing distinction because just because something is colorful doesn't mean it's not toxic.

I am haunted by these pictures.

In the first photo in the exhibit she is lying on this empty unbelievably long road to what looks like a reactor site. There is a slight glare from above and the sun is caught in a cloud on the upper left hand corner. This was the first thing I saw when I came in. I felt a jolting feeling in my gut.

I'm not sure if I felt lonely or cosmic. This is the distinction or imperative that Oe speaks of. The cosmic, the bodily, a calling or feeling. A specificity that informs this place of not knowing how or when to be in the world. Some of these photographs remind me of the cosmic force finding you, and handing you your work, your life themes. What feels haunting is the determinacy of fate! Themes choose us, they kill us in the form of tsunami, they radiate us, they bring pain in a million other ways too. I feel thankful for being disrupted by these images.

Gabriella

I liked the idea of Kappas still roaming around Fukushima. A friend and I mused that Eiko could be mistaken for a Kappa, garbed in white and sliding her diagonal facing feet across the pavement. Her hunched shoulders and long black hair framing her pale face honestly reminded me a bit of KaoNashi from Spirited Away. I wonder if any spirits at Fukushima mistook her for a non-human.

One quote from the Body at Fukushima talk that captivated me was when Eiko talked about seeing dew in the morning and for a second believing that it's fresh, when it's in fact completely irradiated. I thought about this when I saw Eiko in the train tracks tangled in green leaves.

There is one photo where Eiko is grabbing both the plants and her blanket. It looks like she is having trouble carrying both, and that she knows she will soon have to decide: her belongings, or her home? She cannot possibly take the entire earth with her; it is far too much. Should she drop her blanket, her protection, in order to embrace the nature of her dying world?

I thought a lot about time I looked at the Fukushima photographs and thought about the Crazy Iris readings. Time is not only uneven, but overlapping. The abandoned house that Bill Johnston photographed reminded me of the houses in 夏の花.

That said, in the picture where Eiko is on the sea wall and looking at the sky in dismay, I pictured her both asking the heavens how the earth has become so wretched, and noticing an atomic bomb in the sky.

Nora

I went to the exhibit in CEAS with my boyfriend on Valentine's Day. Although it may have seemed like an odd way to celebrate the day, I felt more ready and comfortable watching the video. I felt I could be patient with the material, to watch, to comment out loud in almost a stream of consciousness way to this other person who I could always bounce things off of, and take it in.

He, not really knowing that Eiko was dancing/moving throughout the photos, noted how the transition from one still to another created an illusion of movement, as if you could see the movement or anticipation in each motionless picture. His fresh perspective helped me separate this work from the other work I had seen from Eiko & Koma in the past, and in this class. And I was able to better see Eiko's body as a stranger and a generic human rather than my professor.

Nora NEW thoughts!

I didn't write about this before because I didn't really want to process this - but my boyfriend's friend and the friend's girlfriend joined us for awhile and watched the movie. They were passing through Middletown and only coming to say hi to Nick, my boyfriend, and so weren't coming at all to see the exhibit. They were clearly confused why I was invested in this, they were clearly not interested, and talked about other things the whole time they were there. I felt uncomfortable but wasn't sure how to react. This was a perfect example (which Claire noted to me today) of how hard it is to speak about this class with people who are outside of it or who don't feel the need to be invested with you in this work (unlike my boyfriend who tried to engage because he knew it was important to me).

Torie

What grabbed me about the exhibit and talk is the piece on human negligence. Looking at these photos of utter destruction and abandonment, it's perplexing and heartbreaking that it was humans that created it and did it to themselves. We've gotten to a point in the way we live where we are so detached from the impact of our actions. Our priorities are distorted. To think that there is anything so important in the world that we would sacrifice our homes and health for it—or worse, to sacrifice the homes and health of others for it.

There is a stillness to the photos, like the frozen snapshot lasts much longer than the single frame itself. All of the items in the abandoned homes and the bicycles at the station that were just left behind, never to be retrieved create a unique and eerie sight.

I was especially moved by the juxtaposition between summer and winter photos and was surprised by how lush the area becomes in the summer. The green is brilliant and shocking. Nature carries on—it's only humans that have been forced out by our own catastrophe. It is really a testament to the power of nature.

Eiko's expressions of utter despair and loss reveal her willingness to face the impact of the disaster head on. There is no shying away or turning away from the heartbreaking reality of the situation. I think it's so important to let ourselves see the impact of our actions, decisions and situations, because it creates energy around it and actually carves out space for a collective shift in thinking or decision-making to occur.

Time is not even: the ground and plants, the abandoned items, bicycles, tires, trees—they all have high levels of radiation, which alters the way that a human can interact with them. With most objects we come across, we interact with them for a moment and then move on. It's easy to forget about the many things we have touched, or to never notice them, because there are often no lasting effects of that encounter. However, to engage with the materials that were left behind at Fukushima, to touch or taste them, will have repercussions in the future. Small amounts of radiation may cling still to Eiko's body because of the way she came into contact with the space. Also, all these items are linked to one specific point in time in the past: the moment of the nuclear explosion. They are now inseparable from that moment. However, this is only the case in the context of human beings, because of the way that the radiation interacts with our body. Again, the plant life continues to thrive. We would not call the radiation poison in that context.

Alexis

While working on the **Fukushima exhibit**, I had registered the jaw-dropping damage that the triple disasters had caused to the area and its residents but observing the way my stomach dropped in a totally different way after the talk, the readings, and the finished exhibit itself, it turned out the full weight of these events hadn't really sunk in for me. Surely the rush to complete the task at hand played some part in this but also the colors and aesthetic beauty of the photos made me rather forget how much of a disaster we were dealing with when I was just working on the video. Seeing the large-format prints also brought out details that made the scenes that much more salient.[1] The bright turquoise of the water, the flowers and vines that have bloomed and thrived in the abandoned cities, the way your hair would meld with the fishing net you danced with or how jarring it was to sometimes see photos where you stood still, face unobstructed and directed full on towards the camera. There is one like this in the DAC where you are standing in front of the large graffiti of a girl in a pink dress and I stared for a long time. I'd seen this picture before but seeing it in print, even your face felt unfamiliar. It was a strange moment of recognizing when time and space felt uneven, like catching a brief scent of the air in this empty city. It was a moment where the purpose of the whole project was resoundingly clear.

It was difficult to just watch the videos without being self-conscious about my hand in making it, although the one at CEAS did manage to lull me into the world that was being created by dancing in these emptied spaces. We spoke of ghosts while putting together the soundtrack of the Momouchi summer video and for me, your figure served as the avatar of these spirits; of people like Muto Ruiko and so many others—a spirit dancing in “grief, anger, and remorse.”

Learning the details behind the disaster, from the history, to the mechanics, and the government/media hand involved, I found myself puzzling over the elemental nature of this matter, “radiation.” Plutonium Boy stuck with me—what a cruel/clever/funny manipulation of the public mind[2]—and listening to Bill talk about measuring the radiation everywhere you went, I was again struck by the physical risk this project had involved. I think I would have been just as willing for my own work, but it drove home for me how frightening this substance, radiation, was. It’s invisible, and of nebulous construct and consequence. You can’t tell immediately if it’s there, if it’s hurting you. It’s not like an earthquake or tsunami[3] where the cause and effects are visible and tangible, or even other poisonous chemical substances like cyanide or hydrochloric acid. Radiation, as a form of energy instead of a thing of matter, feels very abstract even in concept.

....

The more I learn about radiation contamination, those painted windows outside the walls of the waste plants are so much darker and more disturbing. At first, I found them to be ironic and strange but this image has become one of the most haunting representations of the disaster’s consequences—a reminder of what was and can never be again[4].

Considering our enormous advantage in getting to learning so thoroughly about Fukushima, with the added support of our readings on post-war Japan and careful instruction and guided thought exercises, I come to the question: how can a topic be effectively taught without this kind of educational structure? What is a poor little newspaper to do? A very well-constructed broadcast may do better thanks to the power of images but still, the sensitivity to such big disasters has undeniably faded with the world. Considering the statistics of Fukushima, I was surprised that this event did not get more attention. Chernobyl, a comparable incident, is so well engrained into public consciousness that it has become a cultural reference point. Artists like Kraftwerk were quick to reference it (which of course helped solidify the event’s status in public consciousness) and I have trouble remembering a time before knowing about it. But at least for me, and I think, a lot of my peers, Fukushima was just another massive accident in a series of many, massive and shocking accidents (oil spills, public shootings, etc). Clearly the scope of the damage didn’t sink in but again, was that just me?

[1] As film never has this advantage of being seen “in print” versus translated on screens, it is moments like this take drive home why film people obsess so hard around image quality. It is the difference between being brought into a world and just watching it. Which, with the *Dogme 95* films, can be an intentional choice in itself. But there is definitely something to be said about the print and film, especially in the digital age, seems to suffer from an inferiority complex.

[2] What is it about “cuteness” in Japanese/Asian culture? I’ve seen “cute-ified” shopping carts, medical equipment, parking meters...why do they want everything to be cute? And it’s the same aesthetic of cute—big, anime style eyes, objects anthropomorphized as child versions of whatever they are (kawaii?). People also “cute” themselves up. I am very curious.

[3] In regards to the video taken of the tsunami: how did this guy manage to capture this when other buildings and cars were being swept away en masse? I suppose he was just on a sturdier building but I can’t imagine how surreal it must be to watch such a scene—I’m not sure if it would have occurred to me to tape it. Seeing this, and coupled with the photographs from the exhibition that shows how the plant life has flourished in the absence of humans, despite the radiation, highlighted the force and indifference of nature. Both reassuring and terrifying. That said, how do animals fare? Assumedly not well...I’m rather surprised the plants don’t show any sign of distorted biology. In *The Guardian* article about the environmental effects of decontamination, it was implied that the wildlife suffered more from these

cleanup efforts than the accident itself: “Kiyomi Yokota, a naturalist and secretary of the Fukushima Nature Conservation Association, said that standing up for wildlife in the current situation would be difficult. “If people want to go home, I don't think I could tell them, ‘No, stop the decontamination, save the fish,’ he said. Human health, in other words, trumps habitat.”

[4] The flowers may grow back here but the scenes on these painted windows show a fabricated utopia that is so far in tone from the reality that the ham-handed attempt at beautifying instead feels like insult added to injury.

Kotaro

I had to stop to think about how much time we have already left behind, four years. “What have I been doing for this period of time?” That was the question I had to ask myself after reading the assignments. Looking at “*A Body in Fukushima*” also made me think about the same question. The disaster has not ended yet, and it will haunt us for years to come. The figure of Eiko reminds me of a Japanese ghost that haunts the deserted place, lonely and sorrowful. It seems to me that the ghost had left her memories or items at those places, and returned to retrieve them. The ghost seems to embody the will of Fukushima people who used to live around there. I believe that they want to come back to their houses at least once to clean up the places and see the end of their lives in Fukushima. For human beings who can be strongly tied to the external world through memories, the recognition of the end is very important. It is impossible for one to just abandon a memory and go on living a new life. One needs a form of conclusion to temporally make an end, separate one mode of life from another. I think that what the ghost was doing in the pictures was to witness the end of their lives. The space was not empty, because the deserted landscape of Fukushima gave a birth to the ghost who expressed the anger and sorrow through dance. Someone had to perform such an act, otherwise the real ghost will haunt the minds of Fukushima people forever. The destroyed town of Fukushima also shows that time is not even. Time does not pass there, because time exists only in being lived by people. That is why the number of years that has passed surprised me. Not a single human being has been permitted to return to dwell in the region, and the passage of time does not convey itself in the pictures. This is also relevant to the ghost metaphor: ghost is supposed to transcend the time and space. The devastated Fukushima seemed timeless, but the ghost hints the remains of people’s memories and feelings that once existed there.

Derrick

Throughout the talk of *Body in Fukushima*, I was thinking how a site provides meaning to an action (a dance, a video, a photo, etc). I had memories of the Fukushima’s nuclear disaster, it happened before I come to college, I was in Shenzhen (near Hong Kong), China. The Chinese were paranoid, the media tried to political right and spread rumors. My mother, like many other people, panic bought salt because there were rumors that the sea water was getting contaminated. We were so far away from Japan, yet we felt the defeat and failure from natural disaster (combined with human’s influence?) So many people knew about this, talked about that, but who cares? And does it matter if we only talk about it and didn't experience that? For people who experienced that in a closer level, it must feel more intense. Eiko was making herself part of the memories, and the memories were formed with movements and in that original and authenticate space. (that might be dangerous) By putting herself on that spot, the action’s essential meaning was changed. I asked myself: “Does the dance that didn’t happen on the site qualify to interpret or reflect what happened in Fukushima?” Compare to the majority who talked about it, even panicked about it, but forgot about it within a month, the artist placing herself in the original site provides a deeper meaning, it's a more sincere message. By being there, and putting herself in the

space, the artist can feel the sadness, failure and fear, and then the artist became part of that space, and the movement thus has more meanings.

Gabriella

When Eiko described “building a hole to Fukushima” as inspiration to “A Body in A Station”. I remember in class she mentioned digging a rabbit hole, like in Alice in Wonderland.

The rabbit hole in Alice in Wonderland reveals a world of magic and nonsense. I can't imagine Alice's surprise to see herself land in Fukushima. One motif in Alice in Wonderland is the threat of death, which looms closer than Alice believes in colorfully absurd Wonderland. The threat of death in Fukushima feels just as silent, particularly because it is invisible. In some of Eiko's images in “Body in Fukushima” you cannot see the radiation wheezing out of the plants Eiko embraces. Alice's loneliness, as the only being in Wonderland, interacting with absurd creatures, can be likened to Eiko's loneliness in Fukushima, wandering past the Kappa's. If you think about it though, what happened in Fukushima sounds a lot more like nonsense than a cheeky talking cat.

Gla

ECOLOGICAL SUCCESSION

Notes from Visits to an Exhibition

At Sakamoto Station

the rubble grids, the pieces of things that no longer work. The Lighting in the air.

laid Across the rubble. but somehow the lighting in the photograph

on that day

the photograph was taken , tastes of lingering spirits (in the dry grasses

tastes of lingering spirits who have no where else to be

how close are they to the camera glass

(The light in this image reminds me of how light becomes tangible for Wakako in

Two Grave Markers) I will elaborate more on this soon, not in this journal.

[“This light outside the window was different, however. It extended all over the sky

so slowly, and even tenaciously, that the eyes could follow its spread. Because its

mass was felt to be tangible, this light was different from the energy without

thickness that Wakako, until now, has thought of as “light.” (Two Grave Markers,

Hyashi Kyoko, page 32)]

Video Box Zilkha Gallery

I am feeling an aim at some kind of deeper digestion. I wonder if it is an aim or a subtle taste of, perhaps that taste will grow as I watch longer.

to release your body as a permeable membrane so the energy of the places may pass freely through.

When the screen was black between images you see the ceiling of this room reflected

vinyl leaves find warmth in a telephone booth. I wonder if “they” (the vinyl leaves) know that people used to go in there to make calls

The noise playing in the Video Box is some

“birds with drum”

Birds With Drum

the drum serves as evidence for the human hand

but the drum beat could be coming from an imagined creative spirit

(*a Kappa)

I wonder if the drummer of the noise was in Fukushima . (I wonder if they drummed in that place, by the train tracks) (how does dancing through the radiation vary from drumming through it?)

The drumming hand could have been on another part of the world, very far away.

But likely, Fukushima and the drummer are both on Earth. And The image of Eiko in the vines and the noise coming from the headphones of the drum with the birds are both in Zilkha Gallery.

The wire coming from the headphones is like the vine coming from the leaf in the

phone booth in the digital image.

When the screen was black between image you see the ceiling of this room. I wonder if the average viewer would notice that layer of reflecting on this place. How the images of Eiko take us to Fukushima, but they also open up new ways of being here (the place in which the images are being presented).

The Kappa: to study these syncretic beings more...

something that lives between the mind, and the formations of awesome nature movements. (how this word “awesome” has changed through the 90s and 00s)

The word “awesome” is different if a 80 year old person uses it. Does that mean anything to you?

The voices of a plant.

Bill and Eiko’s Images, Ecological Succession

Like how we imagine the “apocalypse”--- the plants will follow the people.

This has already happened in many parts of the world,

Like in these images of places abandoned by people

The Process of Growing Over

The iron tracks are slowly being eaten away by her ancient roots.

As I am looking at the images of Eiko, I am thinking about the role of her facial expressions. It is so different to see a glob of a body (like if her head is hidden or turned away) without a facial expression.

The face, as a fetishized cultural organism, creates a plane where subtle gestures are easily relatable. In everyday life, facial expression guides our sympathy, guides our ability to sense the emotions of other people. Because when you see someone making a face, you might almost instantly be able to imagine if that was your face.

Some people have “deformed” faces. Such as many of the people who were injured by atomic bombs near Hiroshima and Nagasaki. People don’t know what to do when they look at you. When they look at you, you are like a different animal, because your faces is falling off in different directions, and they can’t imagine what that would feel like. I think I can imagine what that would feel like. It takes patience to discover how someone is. It reminds me some of how Oe talks about discovering his relationship with his son. At Momuchi Station, I see Eiko’s hand on the Pavement. I can feel the pavement. What if we were trained to read people’s emotions by looking at their calves? Or scrutinizing their arm pit.

I was surprised by how playful and free the show felt in South Gallery. The bright, almost yellowy, natural light through the large windows. Seeing the show at night is a different experience, especially because the images presented are taken during the day, so when looking at the images when its dark outside in Middletown, there is more of a disconnect. The dark windows almost become a sort of frame separating me from the content of the images, where as during the day, the sun feels like it brings me closer to them.

[the layers: the sunlight on Eiko being in the setting inside the photograph, and the sunlight on the photograph, and the sunlight on myyy skin]

dry brown plants vs. green wet plants

I was talking to someone about the effect of the quantity of images of Eiko moving. (The images And I think if there were fewer images, the movement may not come across, the amount of images can be overwhelming, almost repetitive, but I think that if there weren’t so many, we wouldn’t get the sense of duration. the slight twitching...Her patience in the space. Her breathing over time, as you are breathing. Our breaths are a one to one ratio.

In a sense I feel that the images aren’t meant to be scrutinized so much compositionally or

individually. As a record of Eiko's movement, they are something to soak in. Altogether, they begin to dig into the earth of the outer layer of our bodies. Altogether, a foggish form forms.

Hmmmmmm

But I do appreciate the way they have been carefully curated. The photo-editing processes and the curation, and me writing about it creates many exciting layers of investigation---more doors for us to enter into. Where as sometimes Eiko's movement itself is like this enervating glob that may seem to defy analysis, the way that the photos and information about her project are presented allows us to sense that instinctive, subconscious energy that her movement gives off, but also present logical frames, doors, that invite one to enter into it from different intellectual, perhaps more formalized, angles.

Kotaro

Fukushima Exhibit

At the first time I visited the exhibition, I perceived Eiko as a ghost that haunts a devastated city of Fukushima. This impression changed when I was watching a video at the Freeman East Asian Center. There are many pictures that capture Eiko on the beach, trying to move tetrapod blocks that were washed ashore. These pictures remind me of my hometown where tetrapod blocks are still scattered around the beach. The tsunami could move such heavy stones in a moment, but no matter how hard Eiko tries, she can hardly move tetrapod blocks. We see the power of the nature that is way beyond the human power. Then, I realized that Eiko is actually alive in those pictures. I had had this strange feeling from looking at Eiko in the pictures of Fukushima, and I did not know why. But, when Eiko appeared to me as a live person in the pictures, I got to know the reason: she is not supposed to appear as a live person in Fukushima. She must be either a ghost or a dead body, if any, so that we can make sense of it. For, we naturally expect a pile of dead bodies in Fukushima after the disaster, not a live person. But, Eiko is alive in the picture, expressing herself as a live person with sorrow and anger. That contradiction between my perception/expectation and what is in the pictures had been troubling to me since the first time.

Chloe

More than once I found myself thinking about *A Body in Fukushima* while watching Kurosawa's film. When Murakami and Yusa collapsed in the field of flowers at the end of the film, I saw Eiko under flowers and grass in Fukushima. When all of the showgirls collapsed after performing, I saw their overlapping bodies as a landscape much the way I see Eiko's body in Bill's photographs.

This past weekend I took my friend Kate to see *A Body in Fukushima*. She's a photographer, currently working on a photo exhibition documenting acts of creative environmental intervention. Standing together in the DAC gallery, she says to me: "It's surprising to me how many images are displayed. I'm so used to exhibitions that have only a couple photographs on each wall. So paired down." We're

looking at the back wall of the gallery where four images are grouped together in a square configuration — Eiko performing on an asphalt road with her red cloth. Kate and I agree that all four images are necessary. They form one composition, and together they create the effect of a flipbook. They become a sequence, a dance. The movie in the East Asian Studies Gallery creates a similar effect: Each image picks up where the one before it left off, so that Eiko appears in continuous motion.

More than once I found myself thinking about *A Body in Fukushima* while watching Kurosawa's film. When Murakami and Yusa collapsed in the field of flowers at the end of the film, I saw Eiko under flowers and grass in Fukushima. When all of the showgirls collapsed after performing, I saw their overlapping bodies as a landscape much the way I see Eiko's body in Bill's photographs.

This past weekend I took my friend Kate to see *A Body in Fukushima*. She's a photographer, currently working on a photo exhibition documenting acts of creative environmental intervention. Standing together in the DAC gallery, she says to me: "It's surprising to me how many images are displayed. I'm so used to exhibitions that have only a couple photographs on each wall. So paired down." We're looking at the back wall of the gallery where four images are grouped together in a square configuration — Eiko performing on an asphalt road with her red cloth. Kate and I agree that all four images are necessary. They form one composition, and together they create the effect of a flipbook. They become a sequence, a dance. The movie in the East Asian Studies Gallery creates a similar effect: Each image picks up where the one before it left off, so that Eiko appears in continuous motion.

I watched the interview with Eiko and Bill again before going to the galleries with Kate. What Eiko says in the interview about the wind in Fukushima, about feeling and *seeing* it—a tangible presence in the landscape—about sensing that she was not dancing alone but with this dancing wind, about acknowledging that Fukushima is a *living* place, informed how I viewed the photographs. I saw a duet between Eiko and the wind, her hair tossed and costume billowing. I also saw a duet between the landscape and the wind — grass swaying, petals on flowers fluttering. The same became true of light: I noticed Eiko's reflection in water and then the reflection of the sun. I noticed Eiko's shadow and then the shadow of a tree. Wind and light dancing with Eiko and Fukushima — a world alive.

Something that surprises me from the interview with Eiko and Bill is how Eiko talks about empty space. She's talking about being in Fukushima—about inserting herself someplace where she doesn't have answers (which is an idea worth clinging to, worth living by)—and she says: "Okay, Bill is here. I'm crying. I've brought my red fabric. There's this empty space. In Japan, empty space is very rare. Often that actually makes this post atomic or post air raid scene very peculiar in Japanese history — a field had been emptied. Because usually empty space means people had been living there... Here in Fukushima: empty space." I had noticed another reference to empty space in the beginning of "Even a Dog that Wanders Will Find a Bone." Doryun Chong quotes Eiko saying: "As a child, I remember... the many empty lots there were to play in [in Tokyo]" (57). So empty space exists in the Fukushima of today and the Tokyo of Eiko's childhood. Yet Eiko insists: "Space is not empty."

Perhaps space is not empty but can be emptied. If we find empty space where people once lived, then perhaps empty space is the lack of what was once present. Empty space is absence. Then again, in reading our collective "Time is Not Even, Space is Not Empty" document, I see that Alexis has written: "Space is not empty because absence is felt just as strongly as presence, sometimes more so." I totally agree. If empty space is absence—the absence of a building that was bombed in Tokyo, the absence of people who once resided in Fukushima—but absence can be felt, then empty space contains feeling. And

if empty space *contains* anything, then it's not empty but full of its contents. I see my logic going in circles.

Clare

In response to the film in Freeman: The negative space around your body felt immense. With the soundtrack of waves crashing and the open planes of concrete and blue sea, I felt as though I was stranded in the ocean with you. Although this sequence was a composite of still images, there was an undeniable sense of movement. I imagined myself floating on huge concrete piece like rafts, both of us floating, and as the waves tipped our two platforms we would come in and out of each other's sight. I felt as though you were coming in from a long and unexpected journey at sea. As the footage shifted from you wallowing on the concrete, to your figure walking along the middle of the road and finally coming to stand and move on shore, next to grass. There seemed to be a hunger for the land, a desire to feel grounded and connected to the shore, but also this precarious toxicity. Like longing for the earth but the earth that used to be, an earth that had not been so violently blown apart. The care and interest you show in your surroundings made it seem as though you were, after grounding yourself, trying to put the world back together. Consoling the fractured concrete and nursing it back to stability, even when you yourself were still in a realm of such instability. It was haunting to watch the wet kimono on your body and also see it on the floor of the gallery, as if you had melted into the sea and your cloth had washed up to dry in the sand.

Trouve

Exhibit Davidson

Desolation. Evacuation. Buddha Beach looks like the land before time, almost prehistoric. In the set of photographs with Eiko and the ropes at Buddha beach, there is one photo where she is lying on the cusp of what looks like sand and gravel or black top. The sand is creeping over the black top, what was once human labor that placed the cement there for the parking lot of a popular beach. Eiko reaches over to this black top hesitantly from her place lying on the sand, but at a border. You can see here, the tsunami sailing far above the cement, leaving its remains of sand scattered and untouched and silent in a trail. Eiko's only company are eight birds flying across the port in the background. There is no life here. In this photograph, the space is distorted. The landscape is somehow flattened by eiko's placement. Or maybe the emptiness of the space has this flattening feature. Makes me think how when space is full, it is easier to see, understand the depth of a scene. When there is nothing, it is difficult to tell the scale but the feeling of flattening is overpowering. Eiko literally changes the space of the landscape by providing a depth of perception. Her body's placement determines or maps the area's desolation literally but also symbolically through her performances and presence.

The space where the concrete provides a stage for eiko to move, it's sunset, the light is in the background. These are haunting but banal. She is moving as if this is her house. The contortion, the fluidity with these sequences of photos alongside one another. I feel kind of sick. Eiko speaks with or speaks for the cloudy, cosmic sunset. Her power is channeled through here. Why Tomioka Beach? Why the place I lived with my children? Why this blanket? Significance is lost, and everywhere breathes radiation. The wilting protective sea wall lines the horizon.

Has Bill photographed movement before? He's really good! Especially this one in Yonomori, the four photos. The one on the top right eiko is suspended in motion. Running from something. The red kimono is a person next to her, she is dragging along. I am understanding more now, why that object holds so much significance here, to rub up against the landscape and carry through the streets. It's a baggage that holds generations of memories and belongings and fear. It is blood but it is also hope for life. It doesn't

stand out on it's own but makes sense with the rest of these town's dynamic, colorful landscapes. It is just as fierce a color as the blue house beside the street or the green leaves, or the emerald fence, or the pink flowers. The only thing that's dark is the government's one-ton bags. Not even the piled wreckage is dull the. This is the sick confusing distinction because just because something is colorful doesn't mean it's not toxic.

I am haunted by these pictures.

In the first photo in the exhibit she is lying on this empty unbelievably long road to what looks like a reactor site. There is a slight glare from above and the sun is caught in a cloud on the upper left hand corner. This was the first thing I saw when I came in. I felt a jolting feeling in my gut.

I'm not sure if I felt lonely or cosmic. This is the distinction or imperative that Oe speaks of. The cosmic, the bodily, a calling or feeling. A specificity that informs this place of not knowing how or when to be in the world. Some of these photographs remind me of the cosmic force finding you, and handing you your work, your life themes. What feels haunting is the determinacy of fate! Themes choose us, they kill us in the form of tsunami, they radiate us, they bring pain in a million other ways too. I feel thankful for being disrupted by these images.

Lila

I was able to re-experience *A Body in Fukushima* with fresh perspectives and new inquiries. There were actually a number of factors that contributed to my second viewing of the work in the DAC. It was compelling to observe the work after reading *Crazy Iris* and gaining a more acute awareness of the effects of radiation. I was also looking at / discussing the work with a friend who is not in the class and had not seen the exhibit before and we additionally had the great pleasure of listening to Eiko speak to some of the photographs specifically. This was particularly interesting to me because the first time around I was struck by how differently I felt about the photographs with Eiko versus those without. The one's without seemed to emphasize the absence of a subject, which I believe was also noticed by Chloe. But during this second viewing Eiko spoke about the images depicting the "clean up" going on around Fukushima. After considering the Japanese identity captured among the rubble and chaos, I immediately recognized the complexity of these 4 or so images. Eiko pointed out how the excessive efforts to sort and organize persisted, regardless of the fact that the materials and land of concern are entirely useless due to radiation. Many workers risked increased exposure to radiation in an effort to organize the rubble. Perhaps this was a way to compensate for the loss. But it also seems that this impulse to control and maintain is revealing of an identity that is embedded in Japanese culture, one that withstood absolute chaos and destruction.

Ethan

I spent a significant amount of time this week looking at the *Body in Fukushima* video installed in the Zilkha Gallery. Although the video is comprised of many of the same photographs that are presented elsewhere in the show as still images, the intentionally ordered, slideshow nature of the video totally alters the experience of viewing these photographs. Watching the video, I can't help but think of the images as part of a chronological order. Seeing them in a moving series forces me in some way to construct a sort of narrative that explains and makes sense of their order. Images pop into my head of Eiko actually moving from one scene to another; the piece begs the question of what sort of movement occurred between frames to construct the order presented to us?

This narrativizing of images brings the photographs to life in a very unique way. The movement between stills brings to mind the daily, vibrant movement of *life* that so recently filled the empty space in these nuclear wastelands.

About Interview

Torie

I found this video to be full of rich insights. In the aftermath of Fukushima, Eiko describes how she had no idea what to do as an artist to deal with this major event, but she knew that she wanted to be there, in that place. I can see what great value there can be in putting oneself in a distinct physical environment to use the senses as a way to pave new channels of thought—a way to deal when the mind cannot even begin to know how. Eiko shares the questions that she faced as she took on this Fukushima project, being there in the midst of destruction: What is now? How has now come? What do I see and smell and how does that impact what I'm thinking? I love these questions. It is easy to be swept away down endless trails of thought, trying to get down to the bottom of something or to find some pathway of reason to end up where we have something firm to grasp onto, some idea to provide us comfort or understanding. However, these truly are endless, and I often find that even if I use my mind to come to peace with something, it's only a short matter of time before I've forgotten and don't feel that peace anymore. The body is equipped with sensing capacities—it is a tool that is available in any present moment. It is an anchor.

I thought Eiko's description of being in the empty space near the nuclear reactor site was beautiful. An extended period of not thinking, not knowing what to think, and then feeling the wind, basking in the coldness, having something to endure. Sensing the conditions that have been and continue to be endured by all the things that have been left behind, abandoned because of radiation. The objects can act as markers of time having passed; they will show wear from the environment's conditions and weathering as more time goes by. Identifying with the same 'activity' of just being there is a unique kind of humanizing of the inanimate, and I think this is getting at something profound. We humans surround ourselves with objects. We use them for all sorts of things: comfort, status, everyday chores, travel... it really is infinite. They are a key part of what our environment consists of, they allow us to do things we couldn't do without them, and thus they are integral in shaping who we are. The toys we play with as children, the words we write on paper with pens and mail as love letters, the lights that we plug in that allow us to glow in the night time...these objects are all full of life because of the way we come into contact with them, and they in turn make our life richer. It's not just inanimate objects that have been left behind and contaminated at Fukushima—it is huge parts of people's lives. It's not to say that these things cannot be held onto in memory or rebuilt, but this is a substantial loss.

These objects get stored in bags of garbage, stored in the town of Tomioka because it is land that is too radioactive for human occupation. Stuff will just go on sitting somewhere, in the same place, forever, because we do not know how to dispose of it in a way that wouldn't kill us. This is fascinating. And this whole situation was human-made. Plutonium does not occur in nature. We created something that if an amount gets into our body that is half the size of a pinhead, we will die. And we make cartoons to convince people that it is safe. We are swayed by our minds—how our minds process the sweetness of cartoons, how our minds process what money will buy us and what that will mean—we are so swayed by our minds that we neglect the simple facts of our bodies and our bodily wellbeing. Through this reading and viewing, it's becoming so clear to me how much we need a return to our sensory selves. This is something that Angelo gets at with his rejection of intellectual reason, which I'll elaborate on later.

I loved the feedback that Eiko's friend gave her: because you're in the picture, I can see scenery longer and in more detail. Having a human body in the photo can increase the viewers engagement with the place. It can literally transform the place. Just as places transform us, we can transform them. Geographically speaking, we are born at a point on the planet. And, assuming we go on to live around this point for some time, our entire identity is formed in relationship to that point. And, our entire identity is formed in relationship to all the points at which our ancestors were born. But these geographical points

(that fall within towns, nations) wouldn't have come to hold the identity-shaping meaning that they do if not for the humans who created the boundaries of space in which the points fall. We shape place; place shapes us. So, it only makes sense that capturing the relationship between us and place would draw a viewer in more: it displays a unique, infinitely complex relationship that every human is in at every moment—we just aren't in the habit of examining these moment-to-moment relationships all the time.

It is the depth of these relationships—of human to place, human to time, human to object, object to place, object to time, place to time, on and on—that I am beginning to see emerge through this class. I am learning how to inquire into things, and to inquire into them in spite of the dominant paradigms I have grown up in that have said only certain things are beautiful, certain things are safe, and certain things are worthwhile. I am beginning to think that perhaps *anything* is worthwhile—it just depends on the perspective, the inquiry, or the way of being that we bring to it. There's a phrase Eiko use, describing her friend's response to the photo project: "Now you wanted to become exposed to the radiation." Exposure! Exposing self in spite of it being an unhealthy situation, in spite of it not having any tangible political use in Fukushima. Instead, it is a willing exposure that arises out of a real want to be in contact with what human have created and destroyed—to exploring the impact in a different way than what is commonly done (or avoided or hidden).

Sara

"A body in Fukushima" is important is because it forces people to see the tragedy, especially those who have been desensitized to the nuclear world around them. I can imagine that images of the destruction are normalized, and your presence in the pictures breaks the normality. You bring humanity to places that no longer seem human, but were created and destroyed by human power. During the talk, Bill brought up a good point that people like to look at photos of places with Eiko rather than just photos of places. You represent a lot of things, including the people who once inhabited the space, but who are no longer there.

A Body in a Library

Trouve

EIKO in OLIN – OUR BODIES TOGETHER

The first half of Eiko's performance was more about the audience than Eiko. She held the space, every once in a while she grounded me in Fukushima's body and mind, but it became more about watching people's reactions for me than about intently watching her delicious movements. Once she became more mobile, I couldn't take my eyes off her. At one point I was standing by the library kiosk, and the performance came to a climax when she came to that bowl of liquid and sipped from it gently. That was probably the most influential part of the whole performance for me. Something about the desperation, the intent, the ambiguity.

All of it made sense to do in Olin lobby: a thirst for knowledge as she tackled the books off their shelves, lingered or got lost in the staircase, felt extremely dehydrated and had to drink some water, felt overwhelmed by the amount of books...There are all things I felt in these space, and can relate to very easily! Of course this is a silly analogy of what happened in the space but this is the only functioning in that specific space that I have seen or experienced, so it is all I have to offer as an understanding.

I felt magic poking through the stacks, attempting the see her through or in between bookshelves, cozying/pushed up against my fellow audience members. A few of us ran through the stack's pathways and used our usually unimportant knowledge of elevators or back alleys to

avoid the crowd and keep our eyes on Eiko or maintain the trace of her being there as fast and swiftly as possible. I felt like a child running through the stacks, I did not feel pressure to produce a paper or to learn. Eiko was feeling that suffering for me. I was watching a version of a previous me—maybe.

At one point she looked up to smile at me, I was stunned and struck. I felt terribly sad before that moment (when she had just gotten up from the ground), but in all that intensity and all that misery she was feeling, all I could do was smile. I smiled at my teacher, a woman/artist whom I admire and love. At first I was embarrassed for breaking the intense feelings of 'grief' and sadness associated with Eiko's oeuvre, but after reflecting on the event, I think something else, besides an explanation of my deviance is possible.

✚ Maybe my smile could have been a kind of reparative compassion for the wounds Eiko relives and performs. The somatic feelings of depression that come with studying the disasters of the world can be healed through this reinhabiting of our social relationships. To strip this to its bare life:

white man observes Japanese woman in nakedness.

In our interaction, our bodies were reproduced in ways that became radically severed from our historical/biological bodies.

Another favorite part for me was hearing all of those footsteps in the stacks. How magical it felt to listen to the grumbling thunder above and around us. This noise, this rumbling is what altered the space temporally for me. I wanted to close my eyes and fall into a pit like Alice in Wonderland; when she slips into the whole, with rabbits and books and clocks floating up as gravity pulls her weight down faster than the objects surrounding her. The bodies of the audience performed through me or with me or about me. Eiko centralized us, or controlled our movement effortlessly, and we swarmed her, around the various obstacles lie little fish, swimming in a deceptively and vast playground.

Chloe

Reflections on A Body in a Library:

Cesare Pavese said: "We do not remember days, we remember moments." I remember the moment when I first saw Eiko's tongue. A glimmer of pink inside a dark mouth. A speck of color contrasting her white face. The moment I saw Eiko's tongue I began to see her body differently. I began to imagine the interior space of this body lying on the tiled floor of the Olin lobby — a space occupied by muscles, bones, organs, blood, breath...

What if we could see the interior space of the bodies of others? What if we could see into own interior space? We would be disturbed, I think. I recall Hayashi's descriptions of bodies turned inside out by the atomic bombs — flesh melting away to reveal muscles and bones. But what if we could see the interior space of an unharmed body? What if we had transparent flesh? How different the world would look...

While Eiko moved on the floor of the Olin lobby, I found myself wondering what she was seeing. What does one see from the ground? — a point of view that's often understood as antithetical

to the human point of view. I looked up and discovered a beautiful ceiling. How is it, I wondered, that I have walked through this lobby more times than I can count and never noticed, or at least never registered, its ceiling? So often we occupy spaces without studying them, scrutinizing them, learning them by memory. So often we exist in a space without knowing its details. Even familiar spaces can have their unknown surfaces.

I'm sitting in Olin right now, at one of the long tables in the room where Eiko ended her performance. After nearly four years on this campus, I have had many experiences in Olin. This building is filled with my memories and the memories of others. Now yet another memory—that of Eiko performing *A Body in a Library*—has come to dwell in this place. This memory is qualitatively unique. A new energy. An unusual vividness. This memory changed and is changing my experience of Olin.

Before I noticed Eiko's pink tongue, I noticed her kimono. I recognized it from the photographs in *A Body in Fukushima*. Then I realized I'd also seen the dark violet fabric she lay beneath on the floor of the Olin lobby in Bill's photographs. Later in the performance I would recognize the red fabric too. That Eiko was wearing the same kimono and dancing with the same fabrics as in the exhibition's photographs impacted me hugely. Suddenly the body on the floor of Olin had a history — this body has been in Fukushima. I thought: Fukushima in relation to Olin.

I keep thinking about the contrast between the pace Eiko established at the beginning of the performance—moving ever so slowly on the floor of the lobby—and the pace at which her audience chased after her when she began to move about the building. I felt a sense of urgency inside both Eiko and the audience, but they were two different textures of urgent. I'm not sure I can pinpoint the difference... Was Eiko's a slow urgency and ours fast? Was Eiko's the urgency of the soloist and ours that of the collective? Was Eiko's a lonely urgency and ours shared urgency? Was Eiko even experiencing urgency? I would like to ask her.

Eiko had told our class that the performance would be about 45 minutes. Soon after the performance began, I realized I had completely lost track of time. How many minutes had passed? 5? 15? I remained temporally disoriented throughout the performance, up until Eiko bowed. I want to ask Eiko about her own experience of time within the performance. How does she know when it's been about 45 minutes? Does she? Do the moments billow when she's performing as they did for me when I watched her? Does the line between moments disappear for her like it did for me? The performance did not feel long. In fact, it sped by rather quickly (as our class sessions always do), yet each moment felt expanded. I am somewhat baffled by this experience of time: each moment expands, billows, blends into the next moment, but the time flies by faster than usual. I felt this simultaneous gaining and losing of time deeply and acutely during *A Body in a Library*.

Ethan

I have something that I have to admit: within about five minutes of the performance in Olin, I became quite bored. I found myself unaware of where exactly to focus. You, Eiko, were clearly the focal point of the room, but I could only gaze upon your seemingly still body for so long before snapping out of my mesmerized state and back into a room filled with people obviously unaware of just what to do with their eyes. People seemed to be truly enjoying the space, but eyes of people sitting and standing around that crowded lobby wandered all over the place,

silent but examining the gaze of others. Everyone seemed a bit lost, longing for guidance about just where to place their own gaze.

In this strange atmosphere of boredom, however, I found my mind wandering to unexpected places, my senses picking up on things formerly left unknown and unexplored. My ears tuned into the comforting, consistent hum of the air conditioning. The sound is always present, I presume, but it took a state of focused boredom, a wandering mind, to hone in on the oddly pleasant sound. Silence can be frightening; sometimes it just takes an ambient tone to remind one of the buzzing humanity around us. While my ears explored the warm hum of the heat being pumped into the room, my eyes wandered upwards in hope of finding the root of the tone, but instead my vision settled on the intricate, ornate molding covering the lobby's ceiling. I couldn't believe I had never before noticed the beautiful stuff, decoration that must've consumed quite a lot of time during the construction of Olin. That beige color is really something. I wonder who designed the stuff. Was it a prefabricated option? Or did the architect, perhaps, craft the intricate weave for this space alone?

My head buzzed with these thoughts with Eiko all the while waking from her dormant slumber at my feet. But within four or five or ten or eighteen minutes or something, a change. My mind snapped back into place, gazing intently as the blanket inched off Eiko's pale body. In my memory, the rest occurs so quickly. A lurch, some running, cameras snapping, legions of boots rumbling in the stacks. But those minutes of boredom seem still to stretch out for eons (or something like that), exploring a space I'd never before allowed myself to even consider.

Gabriel

I thought that the Olin Lobby was a good venue for Eiko's performance. Something about the harsh coldness of the black tiles and slamming of entrance doors gave the scene good texture. I thought about the disruption that was being made, having a performer block the entrance of the library, and subsequently run through it with a whispering possey of 20-50 people. We probably sounded like rats.

Why was Eiko going through the library? Was she looking for an exit? Was she looking for survivors? I pictured Eiko as a hibakusha from long ago, perhaps a ghost. When she leaned into the ceramic bowl of water, I was reminded of the river scene in Kyoko's "Two Grave Markers".

Someone mentioned that the way Eiko's followers could travel so many different directions to end up as close to her as possible was a comment on how there are so many ways to attack or perceive an issue. I remember peering through a bookshelf to see Eiko's forehead and a bit of her nose, and wondered what my role was as a spectator. Did I see an injured girl amidst rubble? Or maybe this moment represented seeing an old photograph— you can get a real sense of what's going on, but never the whole picture.

It was really clever to put promotional videos of Eiko around the Library. I think a lot of people were excited to guess where Eiko would go next, depending on where promotional material was. Seeing many Eiko's around Olin was a bit creepy. I thought of the N Factory and the number of dead girl bodies. I wasn't sure why she chose the books she dropped on the table, maybe more clarity of what these books meant to Eiko could help viewers understand the performance a bit more.

Kotaro

I can hardly encounter a scene like that in our modern society. Even when people are at the same place, their minds are elsewhere. Smartphones, laptops, and books—our lives are infused with devices that disperse our attentions. Although I am the very nexus of dispersed ideas and sensations, I can hardly be aware of the physical space at which I stand and exist. I cannot “be” without intentions and purposes. Eiko’s performance was a negation of this mode of being. For the first twenty minutes or so, she did not move. It was all in silence, something was evolving within her. One could barely see the apparent change in the scene. Yet, people were grabbed by something in the atmosphere. I saw no one checking phone or texting friends. Everyone’s attention was at an entity lying on the ground. People were at the same physical space, so were their minds. There was a unity of strange kind. Watching Eiko slowly taking off the blanket, I felt like I was witnessing a cicada emerging from a chrysalis. In the early summer, I used to walk around the city to find a newly born cicada and watch its emergence in silence. The cicada was fragile, and could not stand by its own legs. In the moment of birth and death, any creature becomes vulnerable. But, the vulnerability exposes the creature’s naked will to live, which is very strong and touching. I read somewhere that holding a newborn infant has a therapeutic effect for depression and anxiety disorder. The will to live, which is intrinsic in a human being, becomes gradually buried by stress and fear in everyday life. Witnessing a naked will to live in another creature can remind us of the existence of the same will in us. The fragility and vulnerability I perceived in Eiko’s performance had the same effect on me. I also found it suggestive that Eiko started her performance at the entrance of the library. It’s a place for people to enter and exist, and no one stays there unless there is need. For those in the audience who did not know what was happening, they had no obligation to stay. It is different from watching something at a theater, because you go to the theater with some expectation or intention in your mind. You do not randomly enter into there to encounter a performance. Eiko’s performance at Olin elucidated the modern people’s way of viewing performance for the pleasure of consuming. Our way of spending leisure time is all constructed by the structure. In the structured setting, you rarely encounter a thing that is not out of your intention and expectation. By going to the theater, you have an intention to watch a performance, and you get some pleasure in accordance with the expectation you have for the performance. This is the case not only for the performance, but also for any type of pleasure seeking: drinking, dancing, and so on. Even in free time, when we are supposed to be free from intentionality, our experience cannot help being explainable and quantifiable. I witnessed something different in Eiko’s performance. No one knew what was happening and why it was so catching. There was no intentionality on the side of the audience: we were there watching an unknowing thing unfolding and becoming something else. Because we could not expect anything, we had no option but to follow Eiko to see what was to become of all this. Eventually, no one knew what it is that attracted them and left puzzled. I perceived a different form of the consumption of time in this. In the structured setting with some intention and expectation, we desire to have more intense and stronger sense experience from the consumption of time. There is no limit in the desire for intensity and strength of pleasure. So, instead of quality, we come to focus on quantity of pleasure, and it continues to grow until it burns down the constitution of our being. Yoga or meditation might be on the opposite side of this pole. But, I assume that Eiko’s performance provided something very different from these. I can only say that there is something about

lack of intentionality in space and time that created a different sense of pleasure for a human being

Nora

My favorite part of Eiko's performance in Olin was her audience. I say "her" audience because of how taken with her every person seemed to be. As she moved deliberately and slowly on the ground in the lobby, I saw faces of wonderment, concern, and curiosity. No one dared move too much. But once Eiko began to travel about the library, the audience was taken in a physical sense. They/we raced to get closer to Eiko. They/we were on a treasure hunt and Eiko was leading us to treasure, or glimpses of her improvisation were like a gem flickering through arms and legs and iPhones filming. I saw her yellow kimono flash between books amongst other running students, hoping to catch a peek of her oddity and purposeful play. Eiko's body was not only a body in a library, it was a body surrounded by other body's, a body of a leader, a body of art against body's of curiosity. She was framed by the echoing marble and then hushed carpet and small walls of books, but also she was framed by swishing coats of college students and giggles of surprise and wonder. Closeness became necessary and exciting, contact was inevitable amongst the audience members, and bodies were on display all over the library.

.

Rachel

To put it simply, Monday was a long day. I had cried two times, which was once more than the average I have abusing lately. Until 4:30 pm, all I had eaten was a banana. Overwhelmed by exhaustion and stress and overall a sense of listlessness, I actually felt accomplished that I did not fall asleep during the Godzilla screening. Eiko's performance was a much-needed 'glimmer of light' on this sadness. At 9:50 pm, I was pleasantly surprised to see a crowd starting to form in the Olin lobby. Not that I thought people would not interested in seeing you perform, but rather that a performance at 10 pm on a Monday night was likely to disrupt people's habitual work schedules.

Although I have watched a plethora of your performances online, seeing you live really blew me away. To be fully honest, at the beginning I felt anxious. I knew that you were purposely moving slowing – or rather, hesitating – and I tried to focus as intently as I could. However, I found myself getting distracted by my role as "photographer." I was focusing on the shutter speed/aperture of my camera and each time I clicked I felt like the noise of the camera was ruining the show. However, as a few more minutes went by, I felt myself calming down and being more acquainted with you/the performance. There was something really beautiful about how I knew that you were moving the mattress to the floor to standing, but there was no distinct moment of movement. That is, I could not pinpoint any specific points where you moved from (a) to (b) but rather everything morphed into one conglomerate of a movement.

Following you around Olin was [fun](#). Following you around Olin, with 100 or so students running around with me, was powerful. Having some feelings of happiness and togetherness during this week of distance was so needed. I just read Nora's movement comment about how hard it can be to share this class with others and I think Nora makes a great point – it is hard to convey to others, even my loved ones, how becoming a maggot or a marshmallow for an extended period of time can actually be really profound. It's hard for people to grasp the idea of movement as translation. And so I think something that I found

personally uplifting about your performance was that it allowed others to have a proper insight into your work - and in some ways, a better insight into why I spend so much time thinking/talking about this class. I was so happy to know that my friends all found the performance really transformative/moving, because it meant that they had some glimmer of understanding about why this course is so powerful/amazing for me.[1]

[1] Sorry for all my uses of “/” in this journal, I keep having a hard time deciding what ADJECTIVE to use and don’t trust myself to make the right decision/am happy to give you the various options that my brain is thinking about

Sara

Reflections on Eiko’s performance: Eiko—you are so funny. I don’t think I would have very much interest in your work if I didn’t know you. Because I know you, I felt like I knew exactly what was going on in your head as you performed. Obviously, there is no way for me to actually know, but I think I could trace your creative process a little bit. I thought about how the rest of the audience must be thinking, “why is she moving so slowly?” Meanwhile, I was thinking about how you told us that you don’t move slowly, you just hesitate. I laughed out loud when you made the more sudden movements of pulling the blanket around you, or falling to the floor, or falling against a wall or a door.

I also thought about how “a body in a library” might relate to “a body in Fukushima.” At first it was weird to me, because in Fukushima, you had a very important message to get across and you were dealing with all the suffering that happened there. There was a lot of gravity. Meanwhile, the library felt like a space where you performed just for the hell of it. But then I realized that you do something special no matter where you are, which is that you put your body into spaces where other people do not but their bodies. That is radical, no matter you are in a famous historical space or if you are in a place with little significance. I saw you on the lobby floor and I thought about how dirty the floor is. No one else just splay her/his body out onto that floor. It was like the audience was a magnet to you. I have never seen a group of people more excited to walk around Olin. People (including myself) scrambled around the library looking for alternate pathways to arrive at the locations where you were.

Torie

The opening was so slow, which allowed for this really gradual realization that something was wrong. There wasn’t a big sense of shock: like oh my god I know what’s happening and it’s bad! But Eiko’s movement definitely looked like she was grappling with something devastating. Her movement and expressions reminded me of a newborn baby slowly grasping and interacting with their surroundings, not having any adult figure to model how it ought to be dealt with. Panic came in waves. But this was accented with testing out what her body could do, where it could take her. Forced to do this exploration without a parent stabilizing her.

I find Eiko’s facial expressions to be so full of emotion and pain and awe. It’s so engaging to watch her face react to different stimuli: to what she’s seeing, touching, and what thoughts or realizations might be unfolding with her sensory experience.

She searches for something under the mat, folds the mat on itself, wraps herself in it. I think of a mat/cushion like this as a fairly solid object, but the way she interacted with it made me realize just how bendable it is. It makes me think about how many things in my life that I don't bend because I think they are more solid than they are. In a bodywork session (a particular kind of therapy that gleans insight more from the body as opposed to the mind) that I had in August, I discovered how when my body receives pressure, even if the pressure applied is from a supportive, loving hand, I resist pushing back against it, meeting it. I don't want to move in a way that might have the pressure go away. I like the pressure. I love it. It feels good. But I don't engage with it fully. This reminds me of my initial thought that a cushion is not meant to be bent and folded into a different shape—especially that might permanently alter it (like when you dog-ear a page, even if you un-dog-ear it, the crease from the fold will still be there).

I really got the sense that the cloth and pad were all of Eiko's belongings. I think going into the viewing knowing about the integral part of Fukushima to this work contributed to this. She had to carry them with her, as she was forced to move in search for a new place. This heavy message was really dissonant with some of the laughter that bubbled up in the audience as we began to move around the space. I talked with a student afterward who said that he found it funny to see this woman interacting with the space of Olin in such a unique way—because he has his whole own associations with Olin. For him this new experience in the space felt silly, even though he could sense the seriousness of the performance. I wonder if this is something that is just part of it and is okay, or if it takes away from the experience.

In the beginning, I was less interested in how the audience was interacting with the performance/each other. Even though it was easy to notice the audience given that people were coming and going and walking through the space, I was more drawn to focus on Eiko herself and the subtle details of her performance. However, when we moved to the stacks, I was actually more intrigued by how the audience became a part of the performance. It was impossible to see Eiko from most angles, so the way I could tell where she was by where the viewers were looking. I liked observing a collective direct their attention at one thing and then have that direction change as a result of however Eiko moved. She had created a situation where she had the power to align people's gazes. Similarly, when she would look really closely at a particular object (I noticed this especially as she would look at her hands), it cued me as a viewer to look at it closely as well. She was modeling how to pay close attention to detail.

When Eiko was in the doorway of the reading room, everyone was crowding around so it was hard to see. My instinct was to stand on my tiptoes, to gain a line of sight above the one I have naturally. This didn't work, however, and instead I crouched down and was able to see parts of her through the legs of those in front of me. It also cut out the distraction of all the other heads in front of me. It was quiet down there and felt more intimate. This reminds me of what we've discussed in class about how in Japan everything happens much lower to the ground! Choosing a different physical perspective can give me access to or align me with what I'm looking at to a greater degree.

Lila

In “A Place of the Festival” HAYASHI describes an immediate darkness following the bomb, causing the victims to believe that they had lost their sight: “Our eyes were open but we could see nothing. Only pitch-black” (10). She also describes how following the bomb, there was silence and the only sound that “did reach their ears was the sound of the plane making its getaway” (8). In a similar vein, in “The Two Grave Markers” she describes a city known for festivities and merriment that is plagued with silence: “due to a single strange bomb, it had become a totally soundless city” (26). The stillness conveyed in these recollections juxtaposed with the comprehensive descriptions of the effects of radiation is particularly eerie. The way that the silence and the darkness precedes chaos caused by the bomb reflects how many of the severe symptoms of radiation poisoning do not immediately reveal themselves. There is a similar sort of waiting period, filled with anticipation.

These pieces made me contemplate the significance in recognizing this stillness. This awareness made me reflect upon your performance. In a similar way, there was a prolonged stillness (although, of course you were never actually still, but always moving. Just slowly), charged with anticipation, followed by a certain degree of activity and confusion. I had one friend who was working in the library at the time of the performance and after seeing everyone gathered in the lobby, he decided to take a peek. He saw you lying on the ground for a few minutes and decided to continue on with his work. He said he didn’t really understand what was going on but didn’t want to ask anyone because the room was so silent. I thought his experience with the performance was significant. We are so used to constant movement and activity, especially here at school, that standing still and witnessing something that is still produces discomfort. We disregard such moments of quiet. He recognized that something important was happening because there were people watching but did not engage in his hesitation to continue watching. But as we have impressed so much in class, focusing on this stillness and slowness and hesitation is important, especially in processing time of chaos. HAYASHI similarly acknowledges the importance of stillness.

Alexis

Eiko in Olin

In consideration of the concept of “A Body in Places,” I found one of the most striking elements of the performance to be the audience responses. The event that was Eiko’s performance was notable in that it very much bled into the ‘real’ world, versus being contained to a ‘performance world’ as may be established in a theater or museum setting. I suppose this is something previously experimented upon with the “Body in Penn Station” performance, but I liked watching familiar faces happen upon the performance and be transformed from busy student to audience member. The way people watched was also notable—there was a clear sense of waiting in the beginning, and the room felt abuzz with a kind of anxiety of trying to figure out what exactly we were watching. It was slow enough to try viewers’ patience, but the emotions portrayed (some mysterious but keen mourning) were strong enough to keep the viewers staying.

When Eiko started to move around the space, it was clear that filming would become very difficult, as everyone crowded around, competing to keep her in view. As I was present with the additional motive of filming the piece, I recognize that I put some distance between the piece and how I might have experienced it if I hadn’t been attending to my own little mission.

I am reminded of the theater show *Sleep No More*, which attempts to play with audience interaction by letting the viewers have physical autonomy over how they watch the performance—they can get close, they can walk away, etc. The audience in Olin had the same kind of agency, but both with *Sleep No More*, and with this performance, it was interesting to see how the line between performer and spectator remained opaque, if less rigid. People were welcome to crowd around (perhaps to the detriment of other viewers and Eiko's mobility), but no one dared cross the line into the performer's world to touch Eiko, to play with her props, to act as an obstacle. In terms of performance study, it seemed to be a clear example of the where a performer chooses to keep her audience. An easy example of someone who makes a point of erasing this line might be Marina Abramovic, who does invite true interaction with her phenomenal body. Perhaps why the opacity of the actor-spectator line with the Olin/"Body in Places" piece(s) is important is because the concept leans on the body we see as body as semiotic as it is phenomenal, so as to retain its power of linking the various locations and as said in the Fukushima exhibit, [for Eiko's body] to act as a bridge across which we can relate to these otherwise unconnected and distant places.β

As Eiko's phenomenal body ran and writhed through Olin, it was difficult to retain perspective on the link to the semiotic body that is meant to connect the whole "A Body in Places" series. The performance in front of us was stimulating enough (especially once we left the lobby), that the audience was very much reacting to the immediate display versus its possible underlying meanings (hence, perhaps, the giggles and playful following). I still am not confident in how to interpret the 'meaning' of the show and I am hesitant to theorize. Certainly, there were inevitable connections to the Fukushima work, and its corresponding social message, but there were enough departures here that it seemed to be open to another implication. Choosing not to prioritize following the original route through the library, which would have taken the audience past the pictures corresponding to *A Body in Fukushima*, seemed to be a telling indication of what was important about the piece. Perhaps in reconfiguring an otherwise familiar space, into a kind of unpredictable route, could separate the audience's sense of being in a 'library' to a more disembodied space of a certain kind of institutional thinking. Perhaps her body's restless mourning and vaguely mischievous exploration was a signature of a soul not resting peacefully, frantic at the unresolved chaos it has left behind. I imagine coming back and 'ending' a trip like one to Fukushima may feel very much like this. I think about Hara's description in *The Land of Heart Desire* of how the grotesque trauma of the bomb left everyone who survived a kind of 'living dead.'

~ ~ ~

Clare

YOUR BODY WAS REACTING TO THE HISTORIES AND TRAUMAS OF JAPAN AS YOU MOVED THROUGH OLIN. When I sat down (in Olin) just after the performance to write down my thoughts I asked, "what does it mean to have 'A body in a Library'". I think my answer has something to do with the irrelevance of the Library. When you do "A body in Fukushima" the specific place is inseparable from the weight of your work. In Olin, I felt that you were embodying your history, more than the particular space: thus, you were dancing a Japanese post-war body. I was amazed at the narrative quality of your work, even though it is in no way semiotic. Everyone watching was transported confronted with the fragility of nuclear aftermath,

even if in a subliminal way. What was remarkable was your ability to PAINT SPACE AND TIME. Olin's time-space is painted with specific academic and social associations for each person in that audience. However, from the moment you started and long after you finished, people were completely taken out of the task-oriented, obsessive, myopic mindset of library academia. We were asked to immerse ourselves in the same text—the text of your movement—and also to contend with the complex histories of your work. I think that “a Body in places” is powerful because it deals with the way that trauma goes with a person, regardless of where they are displaced, in dialogue with the forced displacement of so many bodies after nuclear crises.

I noticed physical opposites. You are on top of the cushion and then all of a sudden you are underneath it. You are peering under it and all of a sudden your body is on top of it. When you began to wrap yourself around the cushion, it came to life as if there was another person there. Your pony tail fell and looked as if it could be the hair of the person you were embracing. The cushion felt so round and warm and human, you gave it life. Then it also felt as though you were nursing it and healing it when you lifted it to stand up. Amazing how it started to collapse when you did sort of a child's pose around it. The illusion of the futon as your human companion dissolved and it returned to being thick cloth again.

In a live performance context I was I could better understand what happens in the slowness of your movement. From my angle, I could not see your hands at first. All of you that I could see was soft, round, moving gently. You and your Kimono and the Futon and the cloth all moved as an amoeba. When your hand became engaged and started to move this blobness (warm marshmallow?) was ruptured. I had allowed my eyes to slow down and soften. I was looking for detail and excitement in the slow, round continuity of the wallow. As soon as your hand came into my life of sight, there was a lot more to consider. Because you had drawn us in with such restrained subtle movements, we became accustomed to observing closer and slower than we every thought we could. This meant that the moment of hand and the moment of verticality and this whole crescendo was all the more exciting. As I watched I noticed myself getting maybe too close from your liking because I was thinking about what we do in class. I wanted to go upside down and peer at every angle that inspired me. I wanted to be moving around and seeing as much as I could see from every place. I'm sorry if I every inhibited your intended path. I would love to talk more about the way you prepare from performances, how “choreographed” your work is etc.

Nora

I was excited to hear others' reflections on Eiko's performance in the library. I shared many of the same sentiments... I too felt protective of Eiko and our relationship with her and her work; I too felt playful and mischievous as I literally ran through the stacks; I too felt uneasy that we were giggling at a spectacle of suffering. I was comforted to hear my classmates feel the same, feeling conflicting emotions, and for Eiko to reveal that teaching as a working artist made her more “naked” to us. I am grateful for being a part of this class.