FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Yo-E Ryou Invited to the 61st International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia by Koyo Kouoh

Project Title: *Breath Orchestra* (2026) by Yo-E Ryou
Exhibition Dates: May 9 – November 22, 2026
Location: The Arsenale, Venice

Studio Yo-E Ryou is pleased to announce that Yo-E Ryou has been invited to the 61st International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia by curator Koyo Kouoh. Within the theme of *In Minor Keys*, Ryou will present *Breath Orchestra* (2026), an immersive installation that explores attunement and unlearning through intergenerational transmission, and the shared labor of survival. As the only South Korean woman artist invited to the main international exhibition, Ryou's presence in Venice marks a dialogue grounded in situated knowledge. Her project at the Arsenale emerges from years of living and working on Jeju Island, unfolding as an immersive field of breath, sound and image.

Resilience in the "Minor Keys"

The 2026 Biennale, *In Minor Keys*, emphasizes lower frequencies, quiet resistance, and radical solidarity. Ryou's practice aligns with these "minor keys": By attuning to the submerged silence of diving, *Breath Orchestra* gathers quieter intensities of survival, labor, endurance, and care.

Drawing from long-term relationships with Haenyeo—women divers of Jeju Island, Ryou listens to the *sumbisori*, their sharp whistling exhale upon resurfacing, as a threshold between exhaustion and recovery. For these women, breathing is never a solitary act, but a polyphony of silences. Engaging with this embodied knowledge at risk of disappearance within accelerated conditions of contemporary life, Ryou's work turns toward how breathing and listening might be re-learned, particularly in times of violence and displacement, where pause becomes a condition of survival and love.

Breathing Architecture for Deep Listening: *Breath Orchestra*

The centerpiece of the presentation is a 9-channel immersive sound installation synchronized with two moving image works projected on curved surfaces. The soundscape surrounds the viewer with layered breath rhythms, moving like a diver's inhale and exhale to create a breathing architecture that mirrors the lived tempos of submerging and surfacing.

The accompanying videos provide a visual counterpoint for these rhythms: *Ellipses 0 — Practice* (2026) features local girls performing rhythmic breathing and imagined submersion, tuning their breath across past, present, and future. In contrast, *Ellipses I — Rest* (2026) stays with the communal life of the divers on land, focusing on bodies leaning on one another as labor pauses and recovery arrives through quiet togetherness.

Central to the space is the *Bulteok*, a timber structure reimagined from the traditional stone windbreaks along the shores of Jeju Island, where generations of women gathered to warm their water-drenched bodies, share food, and pass down knowledge. Ryou's *Bulteok* offers a space for deep listening, inviting visitors to pause and inhabit the modulations of silence. The installation is further grounded by *Water Speaking, Body Writing, 4–6* (2024), a series of research drawings made in the process of getting to understand tidal rhythms, underwater landscapes, and the anatomy of the ears.

The physical presence in Venice is extended digitally through Unlearning Space Radio, the artist's Jeju-based research platform. A curated 24-hour sound stream, *Sonic Letters – Island to Island*, will

broadcast throughout the Biennale, gathering voices from Jeju and Korea, alongside diasporic and neighboring island communities, as gestures of hydrofeminist solidarity and collective repair. Accessible at radio.unlearningspace.com

Breath Orchestra is presented with the support of Arts Council Korea, Samsung Foundation of Culture, and the Teiger Foundation, in partnership with American Friends of Zeitz MOCAA.

About Yo-E Ryou

Yo-E Ryou (b. 1987) is an interdisciplinary artist based on Jeju Island. A graduate of Yale University (MFA) and Rhode Island School of Design (BFA), her work investigates how sensory experience and ecology shape ways of knowing that resist linear documentation. She is the founder of Unlearning Space, a platform dedicated to artistic research and collective inquiry.

Media Inquiries:

studio@yoeryou.com
www.yoeryou.com

A complete digital press kit, including a worklist, a selection of work images, a comprehensive artist CV, and portfolio, is available at yoeryou.com/press

Between May 5-6, installation images will be provided by the Press Office of La Biennale di Venezia. Please contact the Office at pressoffice@labiennale.org / foreignpress@labiennale.org. From May 7, installation images provided by the artist will be updated to the above link.