

G A S W O R K S



Umi Ishihara
Nocturnal Melody

22 January –
22 March 2026

Umi Ishihara

Nocturnal Melody

For her first solo exhibition in Europe, Umi Ishihara invites us to enter a world of nocturnal animals, where women come to life after dark, eyes glowing, long claws, climbing high. In the first gallery, the film *Nocturnal Melody* follows the experiences of Eri and Catalina, two dancers based in Tokyo whose lives are fuelled by music, nightlife and desire. They share their stories; of their childhood, growing up, dreams and politics as we join them in dressing rooms, dancing on stage and in the club all under a cloak of darkness. In this world, orthodox rules and societal codes become slippery. Performing, working, flirting and socialising merge into a continuous lived practice. As the film shifts amongst different registers including documentary footage, interviews-to-camera, night vision shots and saturated glimpses of Tokyo at night, we're offered fleeting insight into the complexity of their lives and the roles they occupy.

Umi's participation in the alternative worlds of *Nocturnal Melody* has precedent in her upbringing. She grew up with parents involved in the free rave scene in Japan in the 1990s, which immersed her from a young age in a world populated by people pushed to the margins of society who found solace in music. Umi – also the film's narrator – joins Eri, Catalina and their friends as a nocturnal animal, her voiceover bridging stories of pleasure and vulnerability in spaces that come alive after dark.

Shot on-location in Tokyo, and at Madam Woo's gentleman's club in the Shibuya district, *Nocturnal Melody* is interspersed with dream-like sequences of Umi's stylised nocturnal animals roaming the streets, licking and clambering over each other. With a proclivity for climbing, and eyes that can see at night, they have adopted characteristics that help them survive, and stand out, against the contours of their surroundings.

In the second gallery space, these nocturnal animals take over. Bathed in blue light, we see them grind, bump and slide over surfaces, playing with themselves, each other and with stacks of fake money. Dressed in pearlescent skinsuits, these uncanny creatures are other-worldly, animalistic and untamed. In this space, free of dominant societal structures, they can finally be themselves.

Umi Ishihara: *Nocturnal Melody* is commissioned and produced by Gasworks. The exhibition is presented in partnership with esea contemporary, Manchester, where it will tour from 10 October 2026 to 17 January 2027.

The headline supporters for Umi Ishihara's exhibition are Japan House London Trust and Arts Council England. Additional support from the Great Britain Sasakawa

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List of Works

Nocturnal Melody, 2026
video with sound
24 minutes

Nocturnal Breath, 2026
video installation with
sound, prop money, UV light
4 minutes

Events Programme

Curator's Tour

Saturday 14 February, 12:30 – 1pm

Rachel Be-Yun Wang, Assistant Curator at Gasworks, leads an introduction to *Nocturnal Melody*.

A Night at Ormside Projects: *Nocturnal Melody*

Thursday 19 February, 7pm – 1am

A night out at Ormside Projects. Please visit our website for details about the line-up and tickets.

Neighbourhood Breakfast & Exhibition Tour

Wednesday 25 February, 8:30 – 10:30am

Join us for coffee, tea and pastries from 8:30am, followed by a tour at 9:30am with Gasworks' Curator Rosa Tyhurst.

About Umi Ishihara

Umi Ishihara (b. 1993, Tokyo, Japan) is based in London and Tokyo. She gained an MA in Artist's Film & Moving Image from Goldsmiths, London in 2024, and a BA in Fine Arts (Inter Media Art) from Tokyo University of the Arts, Japan in 2018. Recent solo exhibitions Umi's works have been screened in museums and film festivals worldwide including Centre Pompidou, ICA London, BFI Southbank, International Film Festival Rotterdam, CPH:DOC. In 2024 she was awarded a GQ Global Creativity Award.



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