

# TSUCHI: THE BEAUTY AND PERIL OF EARTHY MATERIALS IN CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE ART

**Earthy materials such as soil, clay, sand, and gravel have exerted an increasingly powerful attraction on Japanese artists in recent decades. These materials manifest themselves in multifarious ways, ranging from a beguiling sensuous impression of nourishing fertility to toxic contamination that threatens survival. This presentation will examine “tsuchi,” a Japanese word for earth, in works of ceramics, photography, and installation art. Artists considered include the ceramicist Koshi Ito, the installation artist Toshikatsu Endo, and the photographer Lieko Shiga. The artistic fate of tsuchi is closely entwined with the ecological challenges of life on Earth.**

*Koshi Ito, Ceramic installation at the Hiroshima City  
Museum of Contemporary Art, 1989.*

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