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## Best in Show: 6 Standouts at the 2026 Venice Biennale

Highlights include a racy aquatic circus, a tender show of photographs, and more.

(…)

### “Ei Arakawa-Nash: Grass Babies, Moon Babies” at the Japan Pavilion, Giardini, through November 22

Artist Ei Arakawa-Nash in Japan’s pavilion. Photo by Katya Kazakina

Babies to the rescue! The Japan Pavilion was an oasis of calm amidst all the protests erupting on the grounds of Giardini and Arsenale this week. Filled with gentle music and baby cooing sounds, it greets visitors with milk bottles that adorn its entrance. Inside, 208 baby dolls wearing cool shades and colorful onesies hang on ropes and sit atop massive metal scaffoldings. A few rest in front of a large screen, watching. The installation by Ei Arakawa-Nash, *Grass Babies, Moon Babies* (2026), was an instant hit.

Visitors can grab a doll at a pickup area outside the pavilion and carry it upstairs to change its diaper. Inside the diaper, there's a QR code that leads to a poem people can read to their baby babies. Once done, they place the baby in a basket attached to ropes and send it back down to the pick-up station.

Each doll is surprisingly hefty, weighing around 6 kilograms (about 13 pounds, the size of an average 4-month-old). On opening day on Tuesday, a couple changed their real baby's nappy, using one of the changing stations (the only ones available on the biennial grounds). The interactive experience seemed to transform people: Everyone slowed down and mellowed out, smiling blissfully and even laughing. We all were babies once, after all. —*Katya Kazakina*

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