

I'm So Happy You Are Here

Japanese Women Photographers from the 1950s to Now

**An exhibition collaboration
between Aperture and Fotografie Forum Frankfurt**

Exhibition Duration: **24 May 2025 – 7 September 2025**
Opening: **Friday, 23 May 2025, 7.00 pm**
Press Preview: **Friday, 23 May 2025, 11.00 am**
Venue: **Fotografie Forum Frankfurt**

*Frankfurt am Main, April 23 2025 – With photographs from the 1950s to the present day, the exhibition **I'M SO HAPPY YOU ARE HERE** offers a new and fascinating look at Japanese photography. The focus is on women photographers and their perspective on everyday life and society in Japan. The exhibition features the work of over twenty artists from different generations, including **Ishiuchi Miyako, Kawauchi Rinko and Katayama Mari**. From street photography to contemporary experimentation, this exhibition is characterised by a broad range of themes, diversity and visual strategies. The exhibition was curated by Lesley A. Martin, Takeuchi Mariko and Pauline Vermare. The Fotografie Forum Frankfurt is the only German venue on the world tour. The Japanese curator Takeuchi Mariko will be present at the opening, and the exhibiting artists have been invited.*

The influence of women in Japanese photography has been greatly underestimated. While the work of male Japanese photographers has received most of the attention in the West in recent decades, their female colleagues have remained under the radar. The isolated position of Japanese women artists in a male-dominated society often seems to have given them the freedom to set aside traditional photographic conventions and work independently and experimentally. Many of the photographers featured in this exhibition use their personal histories to explore the role of women, raise questions about gender and identity, and critique patriarchal norms.

The exhibition is divided into four sections: 'The Pioneers', 'The Elevation of the Everyday', 'Critical Perspectives on Self, Gender, and Society' and 'Extensions of and Experiments with the Medium'.

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The Pioneers

The history of women's contributions to photography in Japan dates back to the earliest days of the medium. Women often worked behind the scenes, retouching and colouring photographs by hand, as well as making photographs themselves. In post-war Japan, women photographers were an integral part of modern and contemporary Japanese photography. One example is Watanabe Hitomi (b. 1939 in Tokyo), who began her career in the late 1960s documenting the student protests of the Zenkyōtō movement. As a photographer, her work offers a unique perspective on Japan's social and political upheavals.

The Elevation of the Everyday

In Japanese, photography – shashin – means 'imitation of reality' or 'representation of truth'. The women photographers in this section focus their attention on the 'small miracles' of everyday life. They tell stories of family and intimacy from the perspective of Japanese women, which is often missing from Western perceptions. Kawauchi Rinko (b. 1972 in Shiga) is known for her delicate, dreamlike photographs and poems that place everyday moments in a spiritual and ritual context.

Critical Perspectives on Self, Gender and Society

Many women photographers use personal narratives to address issues of identity, society and belonging. They question social expectations and create new, self-determined narratives. Yanagi Miwa (b. 1967 in Kobe), for example, integrates photography, performance and theatre in her work. The works, such as 'Elevator Girls', address the social constraints to which women are subjected.

Extensions of and Experiments with the Medium

One representative of this section is Katayama Mari (b. 1987 in Saitama). By questioning the materiality of photography her works transcend the boundaries of the medium. She uses photography and sculpture to challenge normative notions of the body. Through objects and staged self-portraits, she creates empowering representations of her body and invites viewers to reflect on representation.

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Participating Photographers

Hara Mikiko (1967), Hiromix (1976), Ishikawa Mao (1953), Ishiuchi Miyako (1947), Katayama Mari (1987), Kawauchi Rinko (1972), Komatsu Hiroko (1969), Kon Michiko (1955), Nagashima Yurie (1973), Narahashi Asako (1959), Ninagawa Mika (1972), Nishimura Tamiko (1948), Noguchi Rika (1971), Nomura Sakiko (1967), Okabe Momo (1981), Okanoue Toshiko (1928), Onodera Yuki (1962), Sawada Tomoko (1977), Shiga Lieko (1980), Sugiura Kunié (1942), Tawada Yuki (1978), Tokiwa Toyoko (1930–2019), Ushioda Tokuko (1940), Watanabe Hitomi (1943), Yamazawa Eiko (1899–1995) and Yanagi Miwa (1967)

Publication

The exhibition is accompanied by the publication 'I'm So Happy You Are Here: Japanese Women Photographers from the 1950s to Now', edited by Lesley A. Martin and Pauline Vermare, with additional contributions by Carrie Cushman and Kelly Midori McCormick, and Takeuchi Mariko, among others. The book is published by Aperture and can be purchased at the FFF shop (English, 439 pages).

*Press information and press photos for the exhibition **I'M SO HAPPY YOU ARE HERE** at the Fotografie Forum Frankfurt are available for download at: www.fff Frankfurt.org/presse.*

Supporting Programme

SAT, 24 May, 10.00 am – 1.00 pm **Workshop** 'The Curatorial Perspective' with **Takeuchi Mariko**

SAT, 24 May, 4.00 pm **Gallery Talk** 'I'm So Happy You Are Here' with the curator **Takeuchi Mariko** and **Celina Lunsford**

TUE, 10 June, 15 July, 12 August, 2 September, 3.00 pm **Curator Tours** with **Celina Lunsford** or **Andrea Horvay**

Public Guided Tours Wednesdays, 5.00 pm

Opening Hours Tue–Sun 11.00 am – 6.00 pm, MON closed

Entry 7 Euros, reduced 4 Euros

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Exhibition Production

The exhibition was curated by Lesley A. Martin, Takeuchi Mariko and Pauline Vermare and is a production of Aperture, in collaboration with Rencontres d'Arles, supported by Kering – Women In Motion, the Ishibashi Foundation, the Anne Levy Charitable Trust and the 1970 Japan World's Exposition Memorial Fund. The production in Japan was coordinated by Masako Sato, Contact, Tokyo.

The exhibition at the FFF is made possible by Japan Foundation, Seiko, the Women's Department of the City of Frankfurt am Main and the Deutsche Börse Photography Foundation.

About Aperture

Aperture is a nonprofit publisher that leads conversations around photography worldwide. From its base in New York, Aperture connects global audiences and supports artists through its acclaimed quarterly magazine, books, exhibitions, digital platforms, public programs, limited-edition prints and awards. Established in 1952 to advance 'creative thinking, significantly expressed in words and photographs', Aperture champions photography's vital role in nurturing curiosity and encouraging a more just, tolerant society. For more information, visit www.aperture.org.

Fotografie Forum Frankfurt

The Fotografie Forum Frankfurt (FFF) is one of the leading centres of photography in Europe. As an exhibition space, institution and event forum, the FFF deals with all aspects of photography. Since its founding in 1984 it has presented over 300 exhibitions with historic and contemporary artists. Additionally, the programme of the FFF ACADEMY comprises regular workshops, talks and discussions with internationally renowned photographers, artists and experts. Further information available at www.fff Frankfurt.org.

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