

Press Release

In the beginning, Womankind was the sun - Weren't we?

Curated by **Layla Yamamoto**

On view:

May 17th - June 14th, 2025

11:00 am - 6:00 pm (Tue - Sat)

Closed on Sun, Mon, National Holidays

Opening Reception:

May 17th, 2025, 4:00 - 6:00 pm

Location:

KOTARO NUKAGA Three, TERRADA Art Complex I 3F, 1-33-10

Higashi-Shinagawa, Shinagawa-ku, Tokyo, 140-0002 Japan

Featuring work by:

Yoshiko Shimada - Layla Yamamoto - Namae Myoji

In the beginning, Womankind was the sun – Weren't we? explores the Japanese state's historical and ongoing control over women's bodies and sexualities. Curated by Layla Yamamoto, the exhibition features works by three contemporary Japanese women artists—Yoshiko Shimada, Layla Yamamoto, and Namae Myoji—challenging the patriarchal narratives through historical critique and speculative futures.

The title references pioneering Japanese feminist activist Raicho Hiratsuka's 1911 article in *Seito* (Bluestocking), in which she denounced women's subjugation in modern Japan, likening the moon to women's oppressed status and the sun to independence. More than a century later, Japan still ranks 118th out of 146 countries in the 2024 Gender Gap Index, highlighting persistent structural inequality despite constitutional protections. Recently, a Japanese politician sparked controversy by suggesting that women over 30 ought to be required to undergo hysterectomies to pressure younger women to have children, underscoring the continued normalization of state and societal control over women's bodies. In response to these realities, the exhibition poses urgent questions: Have Japanese women ever truly been independent? And if not, how might they achieve liberation akin to the sun?

Through the works of Shimada, Yamamoto, and Myoji, *In the beginning, Womankind was the sun – Weren't we?* challenges institutionalized control over women's bodies and invites viewers to reimagine a society where women are no longer confined to the subordinate role of the moon.

In the beginning, Womankind was the sun - Weren't we? was selected through apexart's Open Call. For more information and images visit <https://apexart.org/yamamoto.php> or contact maryam.ghoreishi@apexart.org.

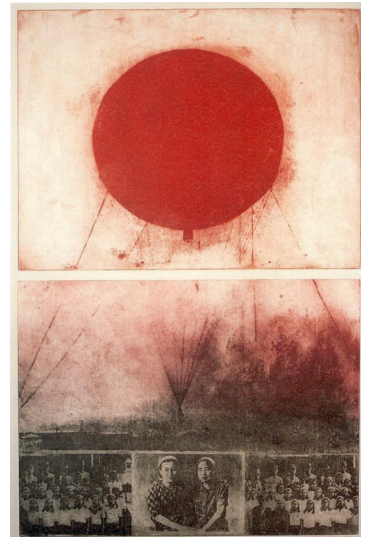
Layla Yamamoto is a contemporary artist based in Tokyo, Japan. Yamamoto explores Japan's sociopolitical landscape, reflecting feminist and postcolonial perspectives. Her works critically examine Japan's nuclear power history and systemic sexual violence in the postwar period, and offer reinterpretations of anime and manga culture through feminist and queer lenses.

apexart's program supporters past and present include the Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation, the Kettering Family Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Buhl Foundation, Bloomberg Philanthropies, Spencer Brownstone, the Kenneth A. Cowin Foundation, Epstein Teicher Philanthropies, The Greenwich Collection Ltd., William Talbott Hillman Foundation/Affirmation Arts Fund, the Fifth Floor Foundation, The Puffin Foundation, the Trust for Mutual Understanding, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, and public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, public funds from Creative Engagement, supported by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and administered by LMCC, funds from NYSCA Electronic Media/Film in Partnership with Wave Farm: Media Arts Assistance Fund, with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, as well as the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the New York State Legislature.

#IntheBeginning

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Yoshiko Shimada, *A Balloon Bomb-Rising Sun*,
Print work, 90 x 60 cm, 1993