

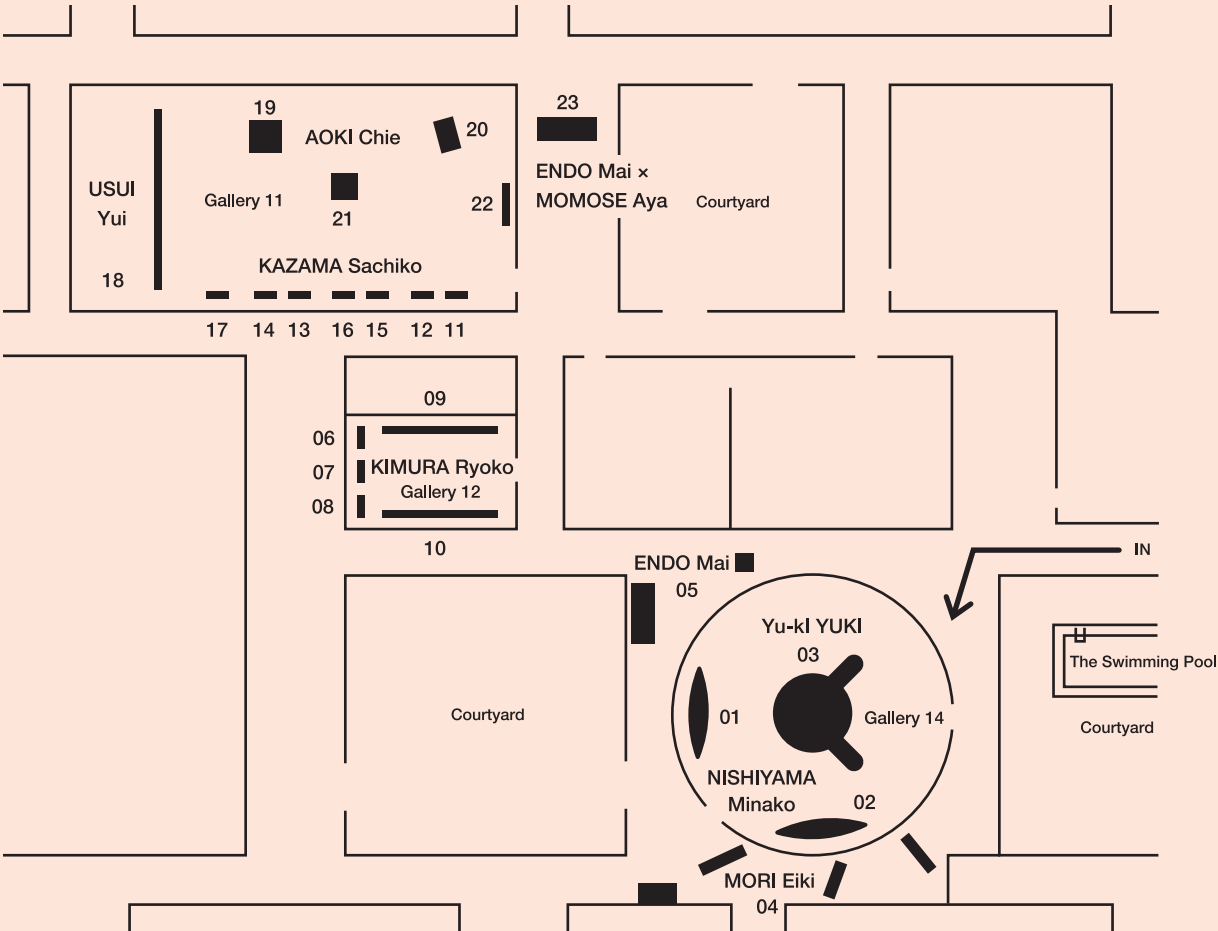
FEMINISMS

2021.10.16 sat. – 2022.3.13 sun.

Venue: 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa Gallery 11・12・14
Organized by: 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa [Kanazawa Art Promotion and Development Foundation]
In Cooperation with: Slacktide Co.,Ltd. TOKI CORPORATION

Feminism in Japan from the 1990s onward was linked to popular culture, focused on girls and young women in Europe and the US, and was disseminated through the media. Young women’s activities in Japan were also featured in the media, particularly a brand of feminism that became known as the “Girly Movement.” However, in Japan’s case it cannot be denied that in some ways the movement was less a call for change than it was fodder for the media, turning images of women into objects for consumption. Laws such as the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1986 and the Basic Act for a Gender Equal Society of 1999 were passed and a gender-equal society seemed to be on the way, but in reality there remained a pervasive sense of incongruity between the individual and society, as seen in the marital and family systems, social norms of heterosexuality, and conventions of femininity and masculinity.

Now, in the 2020s, social changes are stirring as small voices raising dissent connect through the Internet and gain strength. Feminism, which was thought of as only for women, is extending a helping hand to anyone who feels out of place in society. In recent years, the word has begun to be used in the plural form: feminisms. Ways of thinking about and understanding feminism differ depending on people’s generation and era, nation and ethnic group, environment and values. The message of pluralistic feminisms is the importance and necessity of members of society mutually acknowledging diverse ways of thinking. In this exhibition, works by nine artists, each with their own perspective, offer a window into expressions of feminism in Japan, and how artists perceive gender, the body, society, and what lies beyond.



Gallery 14

01
NISHIYAMA Minako
♡Erica’s Palpitant Teleppon Club♡
archive
1992 / 2021
mixed media
(Hello, this is Erica〜♡, Courtesy of Yoshimi Arts
telephone, poster, card, pocket tissue, etc.)
dimensions variable
collection of the artist

02
NISHIYAMA Minako
TELEPHONE PROJECT ’95,
MOSHI MOSHI Pink,
~The other side of the telephone ~
archive
1995 / 2021
mixed media
(pink public telephone,
SAKURA badge, pocket tissue, etc.)
dimensions variable
collection of the artist

03
Yu-ki YUKI
“For your own good,”
2020
yarn knitted with the mother,
wadding, ad balloons,
a cosplay friend
who haven’t been seen in 10 years,
videos
H300×W350×D350cm
collection of the artist

Gallery 14 adjacent space

04
MORI Eiki
Untitled,
From the series “Family Regained”
2017
chromogenic print, tarpaulin
dimensions variable
collection of the artist

05
ENDO Mai
I AM NOT A FEMINIST!
2017 / 2021
video (40min.53sec.), contract
collection of the artist

Gallery 12

06
KIMURA Ryoko
Beauty of My Dish
-Man’s Body Dish for Sashimi
Under the Cherry blossom
2005 / 2021
pigment on silk, hanging scroll
H141.5×W57cm
collection of the artist

07
KIMURA Ryoko
Beauty of My Dish
– Banquet of Mermaids
2005
pigment on paper
H73×W91cm
collection of SUNAKOSHI Soushi

08
KIMURA Ryoko
The Sea of the Enchanted City
– The Little Merman
2016
pigment on silk, hanging scroll
H182×W64cm
collection of HASHIMOTO Noriko

09
KIMURA Ryoko
Crocodile and Tiger
“We are Asian Tigers”
2009 / 2021
six-panel folding screen.
pigment and silver leaf on paper
H242×W439×D2cm
collection of the artist

10
KIMURA Ryoko
Crocodile and Tiger
“Let’s Ride a Croco-dile!”
2009
six-panel folding screen.
pigment and silver leaf on paper
H242×W439×D1.8cm
collection of the artist

Gallery 11

11
KAZAMA Sachiko
Der Lungenwald
- LUNGENWALD
2021
woodcut print /
oil ink and acrylic on Japanese paper
H138×W99.5cm

12
KAZAMA Sachiko
Der Lungenwald
- LINGENBAUM
2021
woodcut print /
oil ink on Japanese paper,
H138×W99.5cm

13
KAZAMA Sachiko
Der Lungenwald
- industrial mountains
2021
woodcut print /
oil ink, acrylic on Japanese paper
H138×W99.5cm

14
KAZAMA Sachiko
Der Lungenwald
- Primitive vein
2021
woodcut print /
oil ink and acrylic on Japanese paper
H138×W99.5cm

15
KAZAMA Sachiko
Der Lungenwald
- Ypres fog
2021
woodcut print /
oil ink on Japanese paper
H138×W99.5cm

16
KAZAMA Sachiko
Der Lungenwald
- Xmas truce
2021
woodcut print /
oil ink, acrylic on Japanese paper
H138×W99.5cm

17
KAZAMA Sachiko
Tiger Robe
1998
woodcut print /
sumi ink on Japanese paper, string
H180×W93cm

18
USUI Yui
shadow of a coin
2013-2018
organdy, embroidery thread,
acrylic frame (7pieces)
dimensions variable
#1-2, 4-7 collection of the artist,
#3 private collection

19
AOKI Chie
BODY 19-1
2019
lacquer and hemp cloth
on polystyrene foam
H63×W60×D100cm
collection of the artist

20
AOKI Chie
BODY 16-1
2016
lacquer and hemp cloth
on polystyrene foam
H90×W170×D102cm
collection of Sokyo

21
AOKI Chie
BODY 20-1
2020
lacquer and hemp cloth
on polystyrene foam
H260×W50×D50cm
collection of Sokyo

22
AOKI Chie
BODY 21-2
2021
lacquer and hemp cloth
on polystyrene foam
H35×W99×D70cm
collection of the artist

Gallery 11 adjacent space

23
ENDO Mai × MOMOSE Aya
Love Condition
2020
Video (1h.15min. 40sec.)
collection of the artist

AOKI Chie

Born 1981 in Gifu. Aoki’s “BODY” series has the primal theme of confrontation with the subconscious. The deep, lustrous jet-black mirrored surfaces of her *urushi* (lacquer) works are reminiscent of smooth female skin, and the figures fused with abstract masses seems to be truly alive, beckoning the viewer’ s awareness into the interior of the *urushi*. They express the existence of human beings who live powerfully and vigorously while bearing the burden of complex emotions. Major solo exhibitions include *Shikkoku no Shintai*, Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Art (2017).

Although the *BODY* series clearly makes use of the female body as its motif, Aoki has almost never spoken about femininity. Biologically speaking, Aoki may be female, but she did not base the works on her own body or set out to attach any special significance to being a woman. While discussions around the relationship between gender and the body remain ongoing in feminism, gender is something that is shaped by society and culture, and the artist’s own objectified body, captured in lacquer, merely exists here as a human form.

ENDO Mai × MOMOSE Aya

ENDO Mai: Born 1984 in Hyogo. As an actor and visual artist, Endo’s playful practice incorporates talking, DIY, and acting through the vehicle of her body. She focuses on the marital system and sexual and gender norms, and frequently collaborates with others. Major exhibitions include *Rules?*, 21_21DESIGN SIGHT (Tokyo, 2021). In 2018, she and MARUYAMA Mika founded the queer/feminist art zine *Multiple Spirits*. They investigate relationships of influence between Japanese *shojo* (girls’) culture and queer/feminist activism, and held the exhibition *When It Waxes and Wanes* at VBKÖ, Vienna in 2019.

MOMOSE Aya: Born 1988 in Tokyo. Momose re-examines asymmetries of seeing and being seen, speaking and being spoken about in the moving image, creating video and performance works that explore divergences of voice and body and question social structures and norms centered on the visual. Recent major screenings of works include the 13th Yebisu International Festival for Art & Alternative Vision: *PROJECTS: Retouch Me Not*, Tokyo Photographic Art Museum (2021).

In the video work *Love Condition*, two people (presumably the artists) discuss “ideal sex organs.” They explain their ideas and mold them out of clay before moving on to the next image. The speakers’ hands, constantly moving in a graceful fashion, seem to be playing with clay. But their conversation is both natural and intellectual as they discuss fixed notions of sex organs and attitudes toward pleasure. As we enjoy listening to them talk about body parts that are often overlooked, our thoughts inevitably turn toward genitalia. The work causally conveys the state of desire and care in a manner that transcends gender differences.

NISHIYAMA Minako

Born 1965 in Hyogo. Since the early 1990s, Nishiyama has revealed relationships between gender and consumption in Japanese culture by exaggerating visual tropes of *shojo* (girls’) culture such as the color pink, cuteness, and fragility. Major exhibitions include *Knit Café In My Room By Mitsuharu Hirose and Minako Nishiyama*, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa (Ishikawa, 2009). Her work is in the collection of the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa.

Feminism of the 1990s is distinguished by its embrace “girlishness” as a positive trait and its efforts to spread this view through pop culture. In this exhibition, Nishiyama’s early work serves as the starting point for the third wave of feminism in Japan. The display is an archive of a telephone project the artist undertook in 1992 and 1995. Even though the posters outside, magazine ads, packages of tissue, and particularly *Moshi Moshi Pink* only provided a telephone number, men called the numbers because they were attracted by the erotic imagery and craved sexual communication. By combining actual male-female communication with art, Nishiyama expresses a critical view of attitudes related to sex in the ’90s. Girlishness and vulgarity are two aspects of pornography, and Nishiyama’s works convey the idea that Japanese feminism accentuated sexual differences by developing closer ties to consumer culture.

USUI Yui

Born 1980 in Tokyo. Usui interprets events and history that have been forgotten or overlooked by society through in-depth research, creating works that generate relationality and critique through familiar techniques and materials such as handicrafts and fabric that have traditionally been regarded as “women’s work.” She won the VOCA Award in 2018. Major solo exhibitions include *shadow work*, Oyama City Kurumaya Museum of Art (2016).

While Usui’s handcraft techniques are frequently praised for their “feminine” qualities, the artist originally had negative feelings about being a woman. She says that it was a relief for her to encounter feminist thinking. By confronting her femininity, Usui discovered new possibilities and turned her personal sense of discomfort with society into art. In *shadow of a coin*, she deals with so-called “shadow work,” a term for unpaid labor performed primarily by women. The method of embroidery that Usui uses is also known as “shadow work.” The technique involves embroidering a pattern in a see-through fabric to give it a shadow-like transparency. While expressing a critical view of shadow work, *shadow of a coin* seems to stress the fact that it is a means for women to pursue a way of life that suits them.

KAZAMA Sachiko

Born 1972 in Tokyo. Kazama’s black-and-white woodcut prints shed light on dark corners of the present and its underlying history, drawing on her original research into online discourse and old documents and materials, and capturing the past, present, and future in a single frame. Her comical and cynical works reflect the mentality not of a member of society, but of an outside observer lacking a fixed identity. She won the Tokyo Contemporary Art Award 2019-2021 in 2019, and her work is in the collection of The Museum of Modern Art, New York (USA).

Tiger Robe expresses a feminist viewpoint regarding dismantling and rebuilding the patriarchy. But rather than raising objections, Kazama’s works adopt a bird’s-eye view of personal anger toward social systems. In this pair of works, part of Kazama’s latest series, *Der Lungenwald*, the artist likens the lungs – which due to the coronavirus crisis are currently the center of attention – to trees, and uses the heart shape of the inverted lungs as a symbol of friendship. The work’s message – that love has more potential to create peace than binary opposition – is an effective way of approaching feminism. *Der Lungenwald* reminds us that in the future feminism will have to address issues such as opposition between men and women, and internal conflicts in feminism.

MORI Eiki

Born 1976 in Ishikawa. Mori works in various media including photography, video, performance, and text, addressing the subjects of sexuality and gender differences. He presents his own questioning of the present-day family in visual form through observation and participation, distilling social issues with a light and delicate touch. He won the Kimura Ihei Award in 2014. Exhibitions include *Shibboleth—I peep the ocean through a hole of the torn cardigan*, Ken Nakahashi (Tokyo, 2020).

Mori received the 2013 Kimura Ihei Award for his work, *intimacy*, which depicted tranquil and intimate relationships between lovers of the same sex. The next theme he dealt with was “family.” When Mori shot a given family, he would join them in the picture to create pseudo-family photographs of people without any actual blood ties. When you are LGBTQ, it can make it difficult to create a family. Mori titled the series *Family Regained* based on the hope that society and the times will change. As of 2021, a same-sex partnership system, which had yet to receive much attention when Mori began taking these pictures in 2013, has been introduced in over 100 municipalities through Japan. Mori’s photographs ask us outright, “What is a family?”

ENDO Mai

Born 1984 in Hyogo. As an actor and visual artist, Endo’s playful practice incorporates talking, DIY, and acting through the vehicle of her body. She focuses on the marital system and sexual and gender norms, and frequently collaborates with others. Major exhibitions include *Rules?*, 21_21DESIGN SIGHT (Tokyo, 2021). In 2018, she and Maruyama Mika founded the queer/feminist art zine *Multiple Spirits*. They investigate relationships of influence between Japanese *shojo* (girls’) culture and queer/feminist activism, and held the exhibition *When It Waxes and Wanes* at VBKÖ, Vienna in 2019.

In 2017, Endo made a work titled *I Am Not a Feminist!*, which deals with her married life. In 2021, after her divorce, she remade the work – this version appears in the current exhibition. Structured around a conversation with the photographer MORI Eiki, the piece presents a wide range of views about the marriage system. Using a methodology that culminates in a marriage contract, the two talk intimately and earnestly in a relaxed atmosphere, suggesting the importance of conversing in a society in which a variety of values exist side by side.

KIMURA Ryoko

Born 1971 in Kyoto. Interpreting East Asian images of the male figure as *bijinga* (lit. “pictures of beautiful people,” but traditionally referring to paintings of women), Kimura paints with a perspective that encompasses romance, love, and the sexual gaze from a heterosexual female standpoint. She explores the possibilities of contemporary Nihonga (Japanese-style painting), working in traditional styles such as yamato-e, Kano School painting, and hand-painted ukiyo-e. Major exhibitions include *Imayo: Japan’s New Traditionalists*, Honolulu Museum of Art (USA, 2016) and Shoto Museum of Art (Tokyo, 2017).

After painting an erotic image of a woman, Kimura experienced a sense of discomfort when men suggested that she display her sexuality more openly. This led her to depict a male image as a means of exposing herself. *Beauty of My Dish*, represented here by two pieces, is one of Kimura’s early series. The male images, conceived by Kimura as objects of desire, met with fierce criticism not only from men but also from women on the grounds that simply replacing a female image with a male one endorses the idea of men as sex objects. However, Kimura’s continuing motivation for depicting men lies in the fact that women artists rarely deal with male motifs. How will art history judge Kimura’s pictures of *ikemen* (good-looking men) rendered with traditional *Nihonga* (Japanese-style painting) techniques?

Yu-ki YUKI

From Shizuoka. While engaging with aspects of Japanese otaku culture such as cosplay, pop idols, and BL (“boys’ love,” manga depicting male same-sex romance primarily targeted at women), Yu-ki focuses on filters (vessels for desire) that exist in the interzone between self and society, between fiction and reality, endeavoring to question and dismantle constrictive two-way relationships. She won the 21st Taro Okamoto Award for Contemporary Art in 2018. Major exhibitions include *Listen to Her Song*, The University Art Museum, Tokyo University of the Arts (Tokyo, 2020).

“*For your own good*” has a multilayered structure in which a doll represents the “inner mother” that maintains control over one’s psyche. The huge stuffed figure, made by Yu-ki and her mother, has its roots in the artist’s own beloved doll, which her mother named “Sanko-chan my 3rd Daughter.” While a “matricidal” image, inseparable from the inner mother, is projected on the doll’s back, a “BL” image of a untied piece of yarn is projected on the figure’s womb. The work, which expresses a complicated mother-daughter relationship and inner world, was created with handicraft and sewing techniques that the artist honed in her “cosplay” (costume play) activities. While attempting to discover her true self in a cultural domain that includes boys’ love, Yu-ki also deals frankly with her real character and the fact that she finds it impossible to escape from the image of the ideal daughter that has been forced upon her.