



Mao Ishikawa

1 May – 23 June 2025

Press Preview - 30 April

Mead Gallery
Warwick Arts Centre
University of Warwick
Coventry CV4 7AL



Mao Ishikawa. From, *Red Flower, The Women of Okinawa*

The Mead Gallery, Warwick Arts Centre is delighted to announce the first institutional solo exhibition in Europe of the renowned Okinawan artist and activist, **Mao Ishikawa**. Presenting more than 100 works from the 1970s to now, the exhibition includes photographs from her iconic **Red Flower: The Women of Okinawa** series, through to more recent bodies of work, including her ongoing series **Okinawa and the Japanese Self-Defence Forces** (1991 – 1995, 2003).

Often referred to as ‘*The Nan Goldin of Japan*’, Ishikawa first came to public prominence in the late 1970s with her radical, documentary-style series, **Red Flower, The Women of Okinawa** (1975-1977). Originally published in the photobook, *Hot Days in Camp Hansen* (1982), the series captures the lives of women living in the shadow of the US airbase and their relationships with African American service men. The candid style and immediacy of these images also captures the rapport Ishikawa developed with her subjects by living alongside them and listening to their stories – a distinctive and humane documentary style approach which she has maintained throughout her career.

Whilst predominantly based in Okinawa, Ishikawa has also been active further afield, covering people and events related to Japan’s former military forces, its current Self-Defence Forces, and the US military, with series including **Life in Philly** (1986), in which she visited the hometown of an African American Servicemen she originally met in Okinawa.

Now in her 70s, Ishikawa continues to search for and cover relevant situations today, recently presenting series that could perhaps be considered creative photography, such as **The Great Ryukyu Photo Scroll (2014 -)**, which were prompted by **Here’s What the Japanese Flag Means to Me** (2008).

This comprehensive exhibition is an unmissable opportunity to see and evaluate the long and illustrious career of one of Japan’s most compelling and original photographic artists, including multiple works never previously exhibited in the UK. **Mao Ishikawa Commented:** “*I am delighted to have my first institutional solo exhibition in Europe at the Mead Gallery. For the past 50 years I have photographed Okinawa and things related to Okinawa. From this exhibition, I hope that people all over the world can see what is happening on this small island.*”

VIEW AND DOWNLOAD SELECTED IMAGES [HERE](#)

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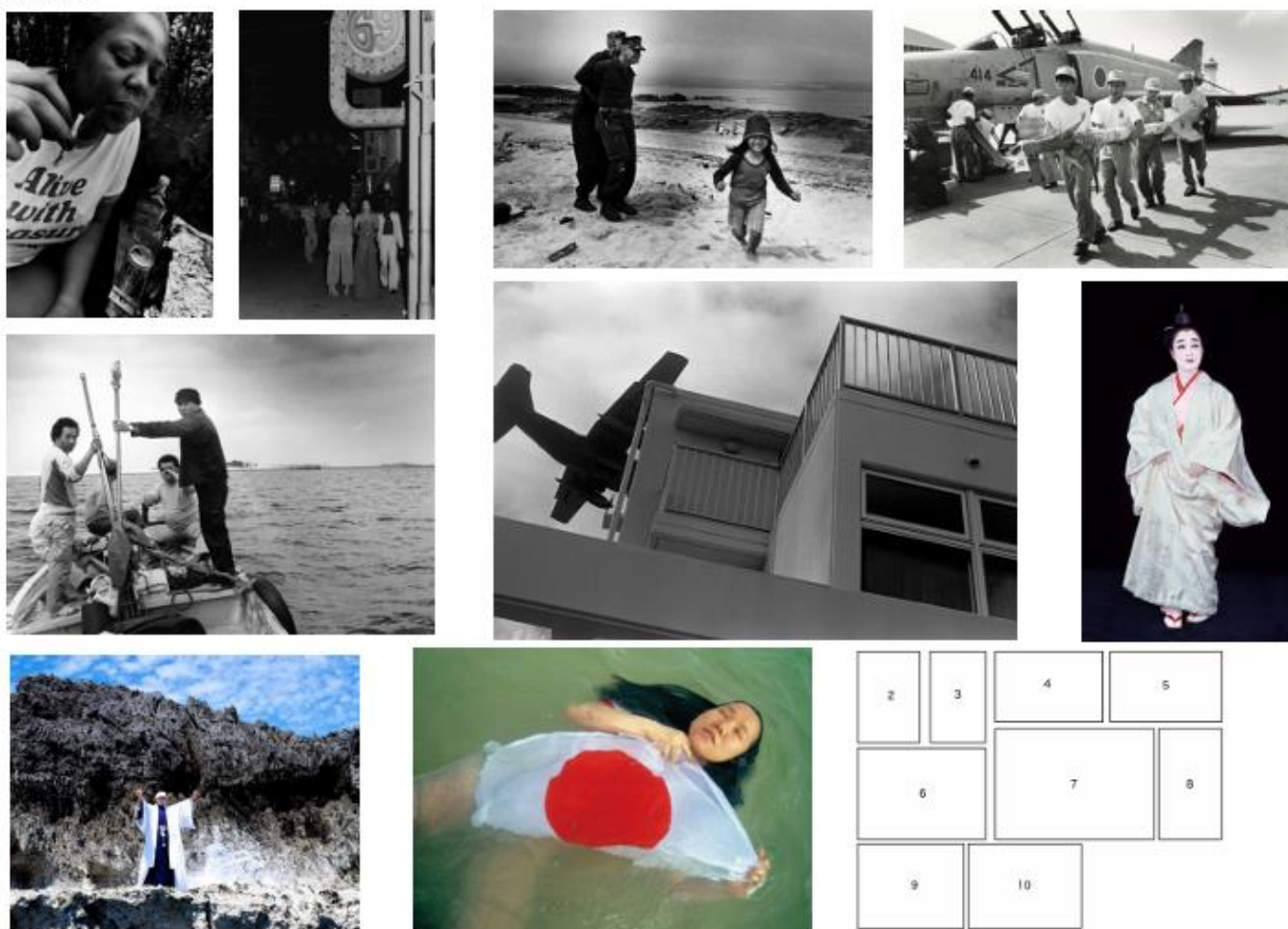
Mao Ishikawa (b. Okinawa 1953). Ishikawa began photography in the 1970s, studying photography under Tomatsu Shomei at the Workshop Photography School in 1974.

Ishikawa's work has been presented in numerous international exhibitions, including *The Perpetual Moment – Visions from within Okinawa and Korea*, MoMA PS1 (2004), *Okinawa Prised 1872–2008*, The National Museum of Modern Art Tokyo (2008) and *What Can I Do?* Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery, Tokyo (2023 – 2024). Ishikawa has published over 17 critically acclaimed photobooks, including, *Hot Days in Camp Hansen!!*. (1982) *A Port Town Elegy* (1990) *Sachiko Nakada's Theatre Company* (1991) and *Life in Philly* (2010).

Ishikawa's work is held in numerous public collections, including the Okinawa Prefectural Museum & Art Museum, the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Yokohama Museum of Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (USA), and the Metropolitan Museum of Art (USA).

Based in Okinawa, she continues to work and produce photographs that are closely connected to the people of the region. In 2011, she received the Sagamihara Photography Award for "Fences, Okinawa (1989)" and in 2019 the Photographic Society of Japan Award for Artist of the Year.

Images



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Key to images:

1. Red Flower: The Women of Okinawa
2. Life in Philly
3. . Red Flower: The Women of Okinawa
4. Fences
5. Okinawa and the Japanese Defence Forces
6. A Port Town Elegy series, 1983-1986
7. Fences,
8. Uchinaa Shibai (Okinawan Play): Great Actors series, 1989-1992 Ms. Kaneshiro Michiko
9. from The Great Ryukyu Photo Scroll Part 1, 2014 "Satsuma, don't come" A kaminchu (Okinawan priestess) praying.
10. Here's What the Japanese Flag Means to Me series, 2008

NOTES TO EDITORS

Further exhibitions at Mead Gallery

Mike Silva, new and recent paintings. 1 May – 2 July. British artist whose work explores intimate connections to personal memory. By delving into an ongoing archive of photographs, Silva paints portraits, interiors and still lifes that often feature acquaintances, friends, and lovers of past and present. To include a Gallery Late curated by Silva, focusing on his relationship with 1990s UK music culture.

Takuro Kuwata. November 2025 – March 2026 first institutional solo show in UK. Kuwata is best known for his bold combinations of traditional ceramic techniques and experimental sculptural processes, which have been presented in numerous institutions worldwide. Alongside Takuro's work, Mead will present a diverse array of traditional Japanese ceramics from major UK collections.

Warwick Arts Centre is at the heart of the University of Warwick – representing the largest multi artform arts centre outside London with a concert hall, middle scale theatre, cinemas, studio spaces and the Mead Gallery.

Warwick Arts Centre has been working with some of the world's most inspiring artists since 1974 including Pauline Black, Peter Brook, Guz Khan, Ken Loach, Annie Mac, the Maly Theatre of St Petersburg, Motionhouse Dance, Robert Plant, Simon Rattle and the CBSO.

In 2022, following a redevelopment programme the Arts Centre opened a new three screen cinema enabling the screening of a wider range of films from blockbuster to UK Independent films, opera, theatre and exhibitions. The Mead Gallery kept its unique footprint but moved to the ground floor, at the entrance to Warwick Arts Centre.

The Mead Gallery is an exceptional space, formed of three large white cubes. Its programme is driven by enquiry into modern and contemporary art practice and often features new, commissioned work from artists.

Key exhibitions include Phyllida Barlow: STINT, an exhibition of ten new sculptures in 2008; The Indiscipline of Painting in 2012; The World Turned Upside Down: Buster Keaton, Sculpture and the Absurd, 2013; Rana Begum: Dappled Light in 2022; Katrina Palmer: What's already going on in 2023 and Phantom Sculpture in 2024.

Warwick Arts Centre does more than provide a platform for outstanding artists to present their work. It works with artists and communities of people to co-create and deliver a year-round programme of events, workshops and projects designed to engage and inspire children, families, young people and adults of all backgrounds.

www.warwickartscentre.co.uk

The University of Warwick is one of the UK's leading universities, with a world-leading reputation for excellence in research and teaching, for innovation, and for links with business and industry. The University of Warwick received its first 450 undergraduates in October 1965 and continues to inspire and shape the next generation of thinkers and leaders, remaining at the forefront of academic and societal progress.

With a strong dedication to culture and the arts, the University of Warwick actively contributes to the cultural vibrancy of our local and global communities on and off campus. Around a third of the student body come from overseas, with 250 countries represented on the campus. It is based in Coventry, one of the most diverse cities in the UK,

The University of Warwick has invested £100 million into arts, which includes the RIBA award winning Faculty of Arts building, the Warwick Arts Centre and its Warwick Venice Centre.

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