

ALISON BRADLEY PROJECTS

Press Release

Mao Ishikawa: ROGUE

April 16th—June 6th, 2026

Reception: Thursday, April 16th, 6:00–8:00 p.m.

“Human beings have an ugly face and a beautiful face. They tell you lies, and they tell you truth. They are sweet, and they are violent. All of these things make a person. I want to see everything. Therefore, I always take photos of people standing right in front of them. I never hide myself when I take photos.” – Mao Ishikawa

Alison Bradley Projects is pleased to present *Mao Ishikawa: ROGUE*, the Okinawan photographer’s first solo exhibition in the United States, bringing together over 30 vintage prints from four of her major series: *Red Flower (Akabana)* (1975–1977), *Life in Philly* (1986), *A Port Town Elegy* (1983–1986), and *My Family* (2001–2005). Spanning four decades, the exhibition highlights Ishikawa’s distinctive approach to photography—one grounded in closeness, participation, and long-term relationships with her subjects. The exhibition opens on April 16th, 2026, with a reception from 6:00–8:00 p.m., and remains on view through June 6th, 2026.

Ishikawa’s early work emerged in the aftermath of Okinawa’s 1972 reversion to Japan, a moment that left intact the extensive network of U.S. military bases on the island. Produced in Koza City and Kin Town, *Red Flower*—originally published as *Hot Days in Camp Hansen!!* (1982)—centers on the social worlds surrounding Camp Hansen, where Okinawan women working in bars formed relationships with African American U.S. servicemen. Rather than adopting a distanced or explanatory framework, Ishikawa embedded herself in these environments, working alongside her subjects and photographing the rhythms of daily life: late nights, shared interiors, and moments of collective ease.

The apparatus of photography ceases to be a physical or psychological barrier for Ishikawa; instead, the camera acts as an extension of her body, candidly and honestly participating as a neutral observer without hierarchy. Her approach collapses the boundary between observer and participant. The resulting images function as both document and personal record, shaped by relationships built over time. Rather than reducing Okinawa to a narrative of occupation, Ishikawa foregrounds a complex network of connection, care, and mutual recognition formed within these conditions. This relational method extends into *Life in Philly*, produced during her time in Philadelphia, visiting a former serviceman, Myron Carr, whom she had met in Okinawa. There, her attention shifts to scenes of domestic and communal life, capturing moments of revelry and friendship, intimacy and love, and everyday movement through the city, tracing continuities between lives shaped across different geographies.

In *A Port Town Elegy*, Ishikawa turns to another marginal community in Naha, photographing port workers and day laborers she came to know through her own bar. The series continues her long-term, immersive approach, capturing a social world defined by both precarity and community. Later, in *My Family*, Ishikawa directs the camera toward herself. Produced following major surgeries, these self-portraits extend her practice inward, confronting the body with the same directness and refusal of distance that defines her earlier work.

Across her practice, Ishikawa resists fixed narratives, insisting instead on the density of lived experience within conditions of militarization, marginalization, and historical entanglement. Her photographs remain attentive to the ways relationships—however fragile or fleeting—take shape within these structures.

Ishikawa is currently included in the Whitney Biennial 2026, marking a significant moment of recognition in the United States. Seen in this context, her work articulates a perspective shaped from within Okinawa’s ongoing geopolitical position—one that continues to resonate across generations and borders.

The exhibition is accompanied by an original essay by Eimi Tagore titled “Without Exception.”

Artist Biography:

Mao Ishikawa (b.1953, Ogimi Village, Okinawa Prefecture) began her photography career in the 1970s, studying under Shomei Tomatsu at the WORKSHOP School of Photography in 1974. Based in Okinawa, she focuses on the island's people and social realities.

She received the Sagamihara Photography Award in 2011 for "FENCES, OKINAWA," and in 2019, the Photographic Society of Japan Photography Lifetime Achievement Award. In 2024, she was honored with the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Award, as well as the Ken Domon Award and the Higashikawa Award.

Ishikawa is also featured in *I'm So Happy You are Here: Japanese Women Photographers from the 1950s to Now*, an Aperture publication and traveling exhibition organized by Lesley A. Martin, Takeuchi Mariko, and Pauline Vermare. Showcasing the work of over two dozen artists across generations, *I'm So Happy You are Here* offers a critical reappraisal of Japanese photographic history through the lens of women, highlighting perspectives long overlooked in dominant narratives of the medium. Following its debut at the Rencontres d'Arles in Arles (2024), the exhibition traveled to several venues, including Fotomuseum Den Haag in The Hague (2025) and FFF Frankfurt in Frankfurt (2025). It is scheduled to be presented next at The Photographers' Gallery in London (2026), Hikarie Hall in Tokyo (2026), and International Center of Photography in New York (2026).

Her solo exhibitions have included the Okinawa Prefectural Museum & Art Museum (2021), the Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery (2023), KYOTOGRAPHIE (2025), and the Warwick Arts Centre (2025). Ishikawa has also participated in significant international exhibitions such as the Yokohama Triennale (2020), the Busan Biennale (2024), the São Paulo Biennial (2025), and the Whitney Biennial (2026).

Ishikawa's works are included in the public collections of institutions such as the Okinawa Prefectural Museum and Art Museum, the Tokyo Photographic Art Museum, the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, the Yokohama Museum of Art, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

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