

SIGMA and KYOTOGRAPHIE present:

Kikuji Kawada 川田喜久治 Endless Map – Invisible

Exhibit as part of the
“Arles Associé” sequence of the
Rencontres d’Arles.

Co-production :
SIGMA × KYOTOGRAPHIE

Curator :
Sayaka Takahashi
PGI

Artistic direction :
**Lucille Reyboz &
Yusuke Nakanishi**
KYOTOGRAPHIE

Scenography :
Hiromitsu Konishi
Space design

Wataru Hatano
Washi artisan

Venue :
VAGUE (Arles)
14 Rue de Grille, 13200 Arles, France

Exhibition Period :
July 7 – October 3, 2025
*The festival runs until Sunday, October 5.



From the series The Last Cosmology © Kikuji Kawada, Courtesy PGI

About the Exhibition

Endless Map – Invisible is the first major exhibition in France of Japanese photographer Kikuji Kawada, co-founder of the VIVO collective and a key figure in post-war Japanese photography.

"I never photograph anything other than the here and now.

The daily gaze is the starting point of all photography.

But once transmitted or printed, the image becomes a distant memory, a light, a shadow, an echo from elsewhere."

Kikuji Kawada (2025)

Curated by Sayaka Takahashi of PGI, a gallery in Tokyo representing the artist, this exhibition expands upon the presentation first shown at the 2024 edition of the KYOTOGRAPHIE International Photography Festival.

In this year marking the 80th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, *Endless Map – Invisible* brings together, for the first time, photographs from four of Kawada's most iconic series. It traces six decades of Japanese post-war history through the photographer's uncompromising gaze, where layers of time and memory intertwine to form a theater of the world.

The Map (1959 – 1965) and *Endless Map (2021)* : *The Map*, a fully formed book-object later revisited in *Endless Map*, is a powerful visual response to the trauma of Japan's defeat. It marked a real turning point in photographic storytelling, breaking away from traditional documentary photography of the time.

The Last Cosmology (1995): Conceived as a poetic meditation on Japan's transition from the Shōwa era to the end of the millennium, this series reveals Kawada's fascination with the cosmos and explores the sky as a stage for fate and disaster.

Los Caprichos (1972 – present): Inspired by Francisco Goya's eponymous work, this series has been recently revisited by Kawada. It offers a sharp look at the country's period of economic growth.

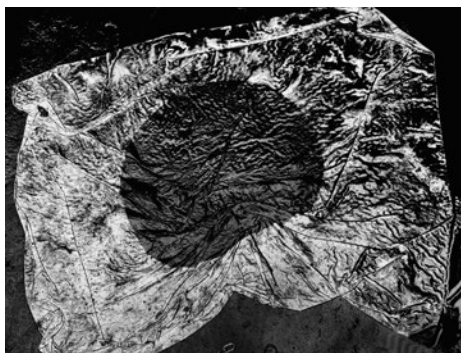
Vortex (2022) : Continuing his dive into abstraction and vertigo, *Vortex* expresses a form of inner collapse and cosmic exploration. Kawada further develops an aesthetic of the fragment, disturbance, and trace, making photography an instrument of thought in the face of the world's instability.

"These are images shaped by reverie. I hadn't planned for them to form a whole, but as they overlapped, they gave rise to metaphors unique to photography."

Kikuji Kawada (2025)

Through the four series featured in *Endless Map – Invisible*, Kikuji Kawada offers a deeply poetic and committed vision.

The Map



Kikuji Kawada Japanese National Flag,
1959 – 1965 From the series *The Map*
© Kikuji Kawada, Courtesy PGI

*"The change of medium came naturally. We live in a world of transitions—some chosen, others imposed. In 2021, while digitising the negatives for the exhibition at PGI, I felt that the light itself had changed. The darkroom became a light room, and the prints began to speak differently. Over time, our perception of images evolves. The title also had to evolve. Thus, *The Map* became *Endless Map* — no longer a closed series, but an infinite map. This sense of openness gave rise to new selections, new gestures, new media. And little by little, an abstraction emerged, born from what can no longer be conveyed as the visible alone."*

Kikuji Kawada (2025)

The Map and Endless Map

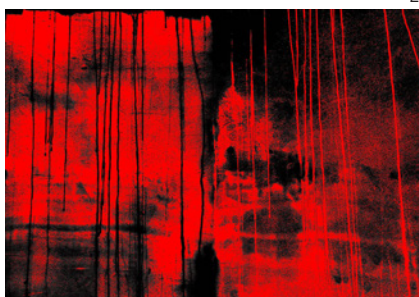
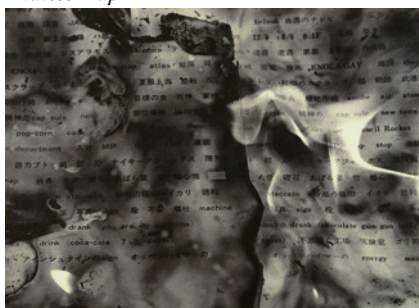
Published in 1965, *Chizu (The Map)* revolutionised the history of photography and is considered one of its greatest masterpieces. The work is a visual reflection on the collective trauma of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings and the two decades of reconstruction that followed World War II. In a sequence of dark, textured, and often abstract images, the ruins of the Genbaku Dome (the only building left standing near the site of the first atomic bomb) blend with symbols of economic growth and more subjective, introspective visions.

Rich in political metaphor and narrative experimentation around Japan's post-war memory, this work—conceived as a total artwork—redefined the form of the photobook by merging image, graphic design, and poetic narration in a radical, non-linear way. Collaborating with designer Kohei Sugiura, Kawada transformed the book from a mere vessel for images into a sensory architecture where every element—typography, sequence, layout—contributes to a dense, fragmented, almost labyrinthine reading.

Described by Martin Parr as "the holy grail of Japanese photobooks", *The Map* became a model for the photobook as an autonomous work, where form and content are inseparable. Its formal audacity and evocative power have profoundly shaped subsequent generations and remain a key reference in the history of photobook publishing, alongside the works of Robert Frank and William Klein. Its exploration of photography's expressive and subjective potential, and its use of allusion as a mode of expressing reality, signalled a decisive break from the documentary photography of the time.

In keeping with his lifelong practice of renewing his vision and re-engaging with past work, Kawada returned to *The Map* during the pandemic. Born from experiments with new techniques and media, these images, gathered under the title *The Endless Map*, are presented at VAGUE (Arles) in conversation with the original prints.

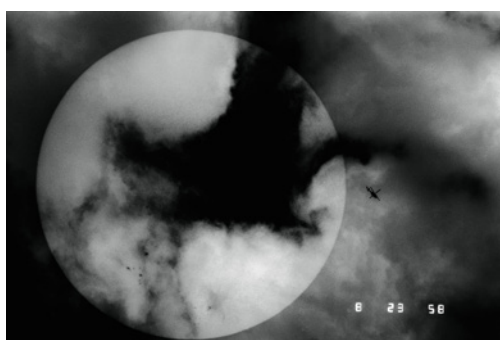
Endless Map



1. Kikuji Kawada Words Burning Up, 1960 – 1965
From the series *Endless Map*
© Kikuji Kawada, Courtesy PGI
2. From the series *The Map / Visions of the Invisible*
© Kikuji Kawada, Courtesy PGI
3. Kikuji Kawada Ohta River, Atomic Bomb Dome,
1959 – 1965 From the series *Endless Map*
© Kikuji Kawada, Courtesy PGI

The Last Cosmology

During the decades marking Japan's transition from the Shōwa era to the end of the millennium, Kawada pursued a unique body of work, always marked by a tension between history and the invisible, between signs of the past and the mysteries of the cosmos. The series *The Last Cosmology* (1995) explores the sky as a stage for fate and disaster. Made mainly in the 1980s and 1990s, these images show eclipses, clouds, and mysterious atmospheric phenomena as metaphors for a world in transition, haunted by the anxieties of the Cold War and the social upheavals of contemporary Japan. Kawada deploys a crepuscular and visionary photography, at the frontier of science and premonition.



1 Kikuji Kawada Helio-spot and a Helicopter, Tokyo, 1990
From the series *The Last Cosmology*
© Kikuji Kawada, Courtesy PGI



2 Kikuji Kawada 11th September, 2013, Tokyo, 1990
From the series *The Last Cosmology*
© Kikuji Kawada, Courtesy PGI



3 Kikuji Kawada
From the series *The Last Cosmology*
© Kikuji Kawada, Courtesy PGI

Los Caprichos

Los Caprichos is inspired by a series of etchings of the same name by Spanish painter Francisco de Goya. Created during Japan's rapid economic growth, these photographs explore confinement and mental architecture through images of labyrinthine structures, corridors, grilles, symbolic prisons —spaces where the visible dissolves into the geometry of anxiety and memory. Juxtaposition, visual rhythm, and suggestion — rather than direct description — are central to the series. *Los Caprichos* was first published in 1972 in *Camera Mainichi*, then exhibited in 1986 at PGI Gallery, and later brought together in 1998 in the book *Théâtre du monde*, alongside *Los Caprichos*, *The Last Cosmology*, and *Car Maniac*. Over time, it has taken shape as a work in its own right.

The work has been revisited by the photographer and will be presented in its temporal dimensions.

"People thought Los Caprichos was meant for publication, but no magazine can contain so many images. It needed a box, a title to make it a lasting work. This case became, for me, a theater of the world — a whim of the mind, like an expanding map. If I were to rename it today, it would be Endless Map, Unfinished, Continue : an open, inexhaustible series."

Kikuji Kawada (2025)



Kikuji Kawada From the series *Los Caprichos*
© Kikuji Kawada, Courtesy PGI



Kikuji Kawada From the series *Los Caprichos*
© Kikuji Kawada, Courtesy PGI



Kikuji Kawada From the series *Los Caprichos*, *Invisible*
© Kikuji Kawada, Courtesy PGI

Vortex

Published as a book in 2022 and presented at KYOTOGRAPHIE 2024 as a video installation, *Vortex* gathers images from the large body of work Kawada regularly publishes on his Instagram account. With these pictures, Kawada continues his dive into abstraction and the vertigo of urban chaos — a throughline in his practice since *The Map*, expressing his sensitive and incisive view of his era. Images of whirlpools, vortices, and rotating matter translate a form of inner collapse and cosmic exploration. The gaze finds no fixed point ; it is drawn in. Kawada further develops an aesthetic of the fragment, trace and disturbance, making photography an instrument of thought in the face of the world's instability.



Kikuji Kawada From the series *Vortex*
© Kikuji Kawada, Courtesy PGI



Kikuji Kawada From the series *Vortex*
© Kikuji Kawada, Courtesy PGI



Kikuji Kawada From the series *Vortex*
© Kikuji Kawada, Courtesy PGI

Kikuji Kawada : A Life in Books

At the conclusion of the exhibition, visitors can discover a selection of Kawada's publications, including several first editions, accompanied by a filmed interview with the photographer.

Before devoting himself to photography, Kawada worked for art book publisher Iwanami Shoten, an experience that greatly influenced his approach to the medium. For Kawada, the photobook is a creative space in its own right, a place of tension between images, memory, and narrative. He sees each book as an attempt to condense the chaos of the world into a form that is both closed and open to resonance. His formal rigor and vision of the photobook as a work of art have profoundly marked the Japanese and international publishing scenes, inspiring many photographers and publishers to conceive their books as singular and radical objects.



The Globe Theater, Kikuji Kawada



The Last Cosmology, Kikuji Kawada



The Map, Kikuji Kawada

Kikuji Kawada

Kikuji Kawada (born 1933 in Ibaraki, Japan) is a major figure in post-war Japanese photography. After graduating Kawada joined the publishing company Shinchosha as a photographer. He co-founded the legendary VIVO collective in 1959 alongside Akira Satō, Akira Tanno, Shōmei Tōmatsu, Ikko Narahara, and Eikoh Hosoe. Kawada belongs to a generation that profoundly renewed Japanese photographic language during a time of both socio-political and aesthetic upheaval. His book *Chizu (The Map)*, published in 1965, is considered one of the greatest masterpieces in the history of photography. This visual meditation on Japan's defeat and the nuclear catastrophe, rich in political metaphors and narrative experimentation, disrupted the conventions of the photobook. Kawada describes his work as capturing "the demons lurking in the era, fixed as shadows of astonishment," adding that "memory itself could then become the mirror of the artist's style." At 92, he continues to renew his vision and revisit his work, maintaining a continuous connection with his audience by regularly sharing his photographic reflections on Instagram. (@kawada_kikuji)

"At the time, our [VIVO] visions of the future were unclear. Magnum, which was a global reference in photojournalism, was a source of inspiration for us, but we were also deeply engaged in thinking about the photographer's independence. We were searching for our own path."

Kikuji Kawada (2025)



© Kikuji Kawada

VIVO

The Japanese collective VIVO was founded in 1959 by photographers Kikuji Kawada, Shomei Tomatsu, Eikoh Hosoe, Akira Sato, Ikko Narahara, and Akira Tanno. Born in the postwar context, VIVO—whose name evokes vitality and movement—marked a break with a documentary photography that was then dominated by the codes of social realism. Inspired by Western avant-gardes and driven by a desire to renew photographic language, its members explored more subjective, personal, and expressive forms. Although the group was active for only a relatively short period (until 1961), its influence on Japanese photography was considerable, laying the foundations for a free, experimental, and deeply culturally and politically engaged authorial photography. VIVO also played a decisive role in the recognition of the photobook as a creative space in its own right.

Scenography

Space design : Hiromitsu Konishi
Washi (Japanese paper) artisan : Wataru Hatano

The exhibition *Endless Map – Invisible* is presented with a refined and original scenography, specially conceived by Lucille Reyboz and Yusuke Nakanishi, co-founders of KYOTOGRAPHIE, together with designer Hiromitsu Konishi (miso), for its presentation at the Rencontres d'Arles.

The scenography reflects Kawada's fluid thinking and offers an immersive journey through the VAGUE exhibition space. Each series becomes a fragment of memory, a shard of vision, and an open meditation on reality, revealing the full visual power of Kikuji Kawada's work.

A true hallmark of the KYOTOGRAPHIE festival since its inception in 2013, scenography has always held a central place in the conception of each exhibition. For *Kikuji Kawada: Endless Map – Invisible*, Hiromitsu Konishi envisioned a space deeply rooted in Japanese tradition.

Artisan Wataru Hatano has been engaged to enhance the structures by applying washi in a variety of textures and colours—a traditional Japanese handmade paper produced for over 800 years, which he adapts innovatively for contemporary use.

In the first room, images from *The Map* and *The Endless Map* are displayed flat on a large square structure, arranged in a non-linear and intentionally organic manner. Tokonoma (traditional Japanese alcoves) line the walls and display vintage prints.

The room dedicated to *The Last Cosmology* has been transformed into an eye-shaped space, where the entire series is shown on walls covered in red washi-covered. For *Los Caprichos*, white washi covers a byōbu (Japanese folding screen) that serves as a display for the prints. As for *Vortex*, the projection has, for the first time, been divided into several films, disrupting chronology. Different temporalities are thus presented in three distinct alcoves.



Model of scenography design by Hiromitsu Konishi



Model of scenography design by Hiromitsu Konishi

SIGMA AIZU JAPAN | “The Art of engineering. Engineering for Art.”

At the venue, SIGMA presents a simple but symbolic display centered on the concept that drives its craft. Featuring the latest mirrorless camera, the SIGMA BF, the installation highlights the spirit of craftsmanship cultivated at its sole production site in Aizu, Japan, and reflects its enduring philosophy : a deep commitment to the art of photography. This same commitment forms the foundation of SIGMA’s collaboration with KYOTOGRAPHIE and the photographic works of Kikuji Kawada. Through this exhibition, visitors are invited to discover the shared values that connect its manufacturing ethos with the expressive power of photographic art.

<https://www.sigma-global.com/en/cameras/bf/>



KYOTOGRAPHIE : A Kyoto Story / A Twelve-Year Cycle

To mark the twelve years anniversary of KYOTOGRAPHIE International Photography Festival, a newly released publication celebrating the history of the festival will be available at the exhibition venue VAGUE during the solo presentation of Kikuji Kawada's *Endless Map – Invisible*.

KYOTOGRAPHIE: *A Kyoto Story / A Twelve-Year Cycle* is a bilingual publication that captures the essence of a festival that's growth has been shaped by its shared making and relationship with community, collaboration, and distinct sensitivity to place.

Guided by the narrative voice of its co-founders, Lucille Reyboz and Yusuke Nakanishi, this book offers readers insight into the festival's genesis and growth. With new essays, conversations, and archival materials, it reflects on the people, ideas, and cultural contexts that have shaped its story, with contributions from artists, curators, and cultural leaders including François Hébel, Mami Kataoka and Omar Victor Diop. Through discussions of scenography, transculturalism, and creative practice, each theme offers context for the defining elements of KYOTOGRAPHIE's distinctive character and identity as a festival.

More than a retrospective, the book serves as a living document, bringing together reflections on kinship and the making of a festival shaped by many hands. From an ambitious idea to its development into a global stage for photography and visual cultures, KYOTOGRAPHIE's story is one of imagination and shared purpose. Presented alongside Kikuji Kawada's exhibition in Arles, its story explores the role of independent festivals to shape contemporary visual culture across borders.

<https://www.kyotographie.jp/publications/a-kyoto-story/>



SIGMA

SIGMA

MADE IN AIZU, JAPAN

SIGMA is a Japanese manufacturer of photographic lenses and cameras. Since SIGMA's founding in 1961, we have continued to innovate and push the standards of optical engineering out of a deep respect for the creative ways photographers and filmmakers engage with the world. The exceptional quality of "Made in Aizu, Japan" is made possible by SIGMA's sole production base, the Aizu factory, and our supply chain concentrated in the Tohoku region. This quality embodies the true essence of SIGMA—an integration of local wisdom, craftsmanship, and technology.

"The Art of engineering. Engineering for Art."

As a camera and lens manufacturer, we have always been deeply motivated by the art of photography. We are inspired by the passion of photographers and filmmakers everywhere and hope that our relentless pursuit of quality and innovation will help artists realize their visions. Supporting the photographic and visual arts is a core tenet of our corporate mission. In addition to our ongoing sponsorships and partnerships with numerous festivals and cultural events, as well as maintaining, growing, and exhibiting our library of photobooks, we will continue to expand and deepen our support of the arts through new endeavors like this exhibition.



KYOTOGRAPHIE

International Photography Festival

KYOTOGRAPHIE is an international photography festival based in Kyoto—a city that garners global attention as a centre of culture and the arts in Japan. Each spring the festival unfolds as an immersive celebration of photography. More than just an exhibition, KYOTOGRAPHIE offers unique experiences where traditional and contemporary expressions intersect. As a platform for encountering diverse worldviews, it fosters new forms of dialogue, and invites audiences to discover new perspectives on the city.

Unconstrained by conventional boundaries, KYOTOGRAPHIE is known for an innovative approach to scenography and thoughtful installations. The experiences crafted by the festival reshape conventional formats, connecting audiences with new ways of perceiving both the work and the spaces around them. It is a multifaceted experience that could have only emerged in Kyoto.

KYOTOGRAPHIE is about bringing people together, creating moments where difference is celebrated, and genres are encouraged to converge. As a space for the unexpected to emerge, the festival embraces possibilities : building, dismantling, reimagining, and reconnecting—always evolving.

At the heart of KYOTOGRAPHIE lies the Main Programme. Each year, the festival's co-directors, Lucille Reyboz and Yusuke Nakanishi, establish a distinctive theme, around which the programme is curated and artists are invited. Various venues across Kyoto city are transformed into special exhibition spaces through close collaboration between the KYOTOGRAPHIE team, participating artists, venue partners, and scenographers.



Les Rencontres de la photographie, Arles 2025

Founded in 1970 by photographer Lucien Clergue, Les Rencontres de la photographie d'Arles (Les Rencontres d'Arles) is the world's oldest and largest photography festival, celebrating its 56th edition this year. Known for inspiring KYOTOGRAPHIE, the festival features complex exhibitions using historical landmarks from the Roman era. It attracts photographers, curators, journalists, and fans from around the globe, serving as a major hub for discovering talents and fostering cross-disciplinary exchanges.

"Arles Associé" is a sequence of the Rencontres d'Arles.

Vague

Vague connects the creative dots between Japan and the rest of the world. Located in Kobe (Japan) and Arles (France), Vague – meaning "wave" in French – is the spatial expression of Teruhiro Yanagihara Studio's design philosophies. It's an in-between space for creativity and a laboratory for experimental ideas. Vague has two homes – a spacious 1930s former bank in Kobe, a port city lying between mountains and sea in western Japan; and a sunlight-filled stone structure on a quiet street in the ancient city of Arles, in the south of France.



Transcendence exhibition
at Vague, Arles Associe 2024
© Kousuke Arakawa, KYOTOGRAPHIE

For more information

SIGMA official web site
www.sigma-global.com

KYOTOGRAPHIE official website
www.kyotographie.jp/

Les Rencontres de la photographie, Arles official website
www.rencontres-arles.com/en

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