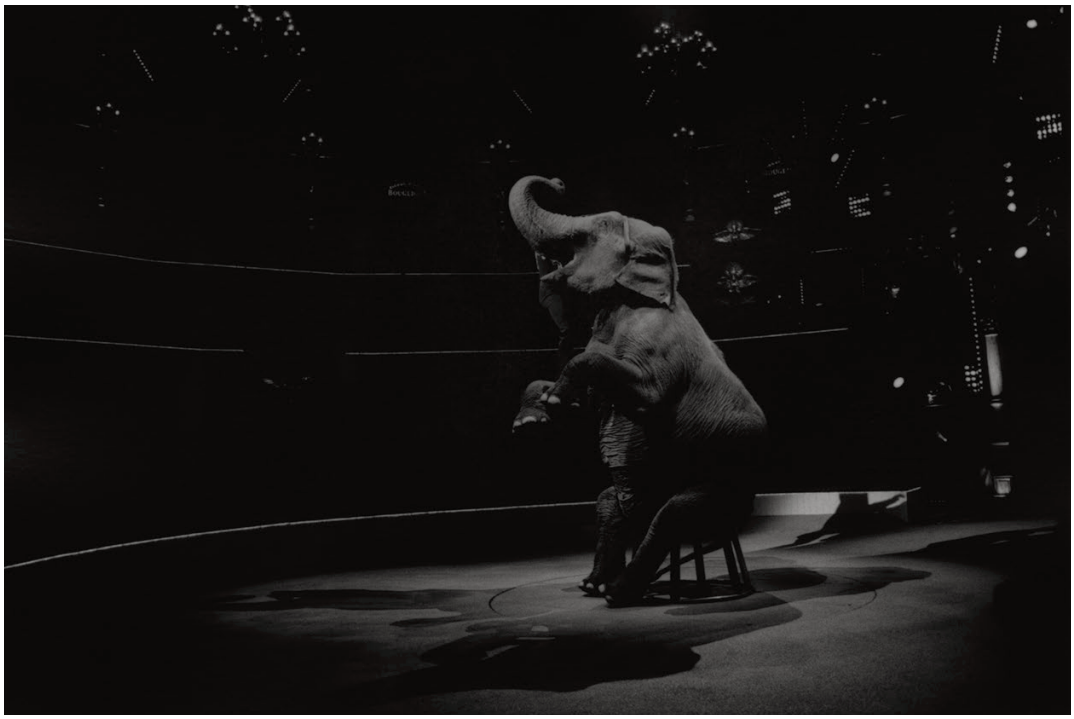
SAKIKO NOMURA

TENDER IS THE NIGHT

02.06 - 05.11.2025

The 1990s are known as "the lost years" in Japan: the financial crisis of 1989 and the bursting of the economic bubble inhibited Japanese society's growth. Conversely, photography and art experienced a period of change and internationalization. Museums and galleries opened, while infrastructures surrounding photography were strengthened. Public and private institutions alike began to treasure collections that featured this artform. Nevertheless, Japanese society, at that time, harbored enormous discrimination against women, which was no different in the world of photography. There were outstanding women photographers, but they were few and far between, and it was difficult for them to abandon anonymity. It was precisely in this context that women's consciousness changed radically, and a true blossoming of new women artists—whose work was often disrespectfully referred to as "girl photographs"—emerged.



Fate in spring 001, 2020

Sakiko Nomura (Shimonoseki, Yamaguchi Prefecture, 1967) was part of this current and began to shape her path as a relevant photographer in her country, with interests that would differentiate her from her contemporaries. Nomura worked as Nobuyoshi Araki's (Tokyo, 1940) assistant for twenty years, one of the most prominent Japanese photographers. In 1993 she began to exhibit her work frequently in Japan and other Asian nations, as well as in Europe and Mexico. Aside from her images, photobooks make up a large portion of her artistic production, publishing close to forty to this day.

Presented by Fundación MAPFRE, this retrospective borrows its title from the renowned F. Scott-Fitzgerald novel *Tender Is the Night*, published in 1934. Much like the book, the protagonists that make up the artist's photographs are young and attractive. Likewise, Nomura's images also convey the power and tension of erotic desire, albeit with much tenderness.

Naked Room 006, 1994

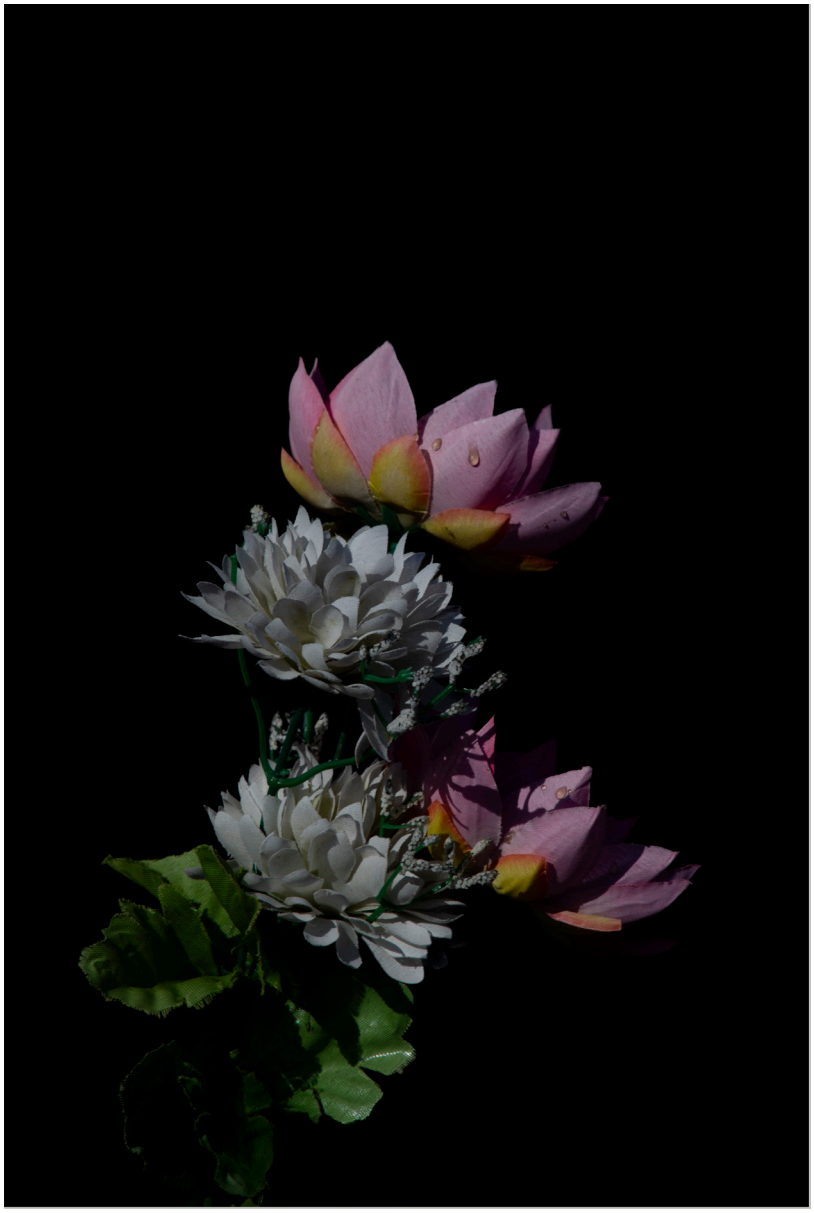
Portrayed almost exclusively in black and white, in mysterious nighttime settings that are full of shadows, and often grainy or out-of-focus, Nomura's male nudes, which she is best known for, alternate with images of animals, still lives (particularly flowers), views of cities, hotel room interiors, weather events, lights, and moving reflections, to name a few of the motifs developed by the artist.

As a whole, these images have temporal connotations that are reminiscent of cinema. Scenes that the viewer can infer and are loaded with allegorical meanings, such as the transient nature of things and the fleetingness of time; in other words, the passing of life.

Photographs often serve as a registry of events or people. They refer to a date, or to the place where they were taken; they speak of one or several specific individuals. However, Nomura avoids these inquiries. Thus, a chronological order encompassing all of her works does not exist.

Night Flight 017, 2008

For this reason, most rooms have been organized according to the photographs that make up the artist's photobooks. In others, works are grouped thematically, with occasional overlaps. The show also features a selection of images produced in Granada during the summer of 2024, commissioned by Fundación MAPFRE on the occasion of this exhibition, along with eighteen photobooks and a film created from three shorter films — *HIROKI*, *FLOWER*, and, *SEA*—directed by Nomura herself.



Moonlit Night 015, 2023

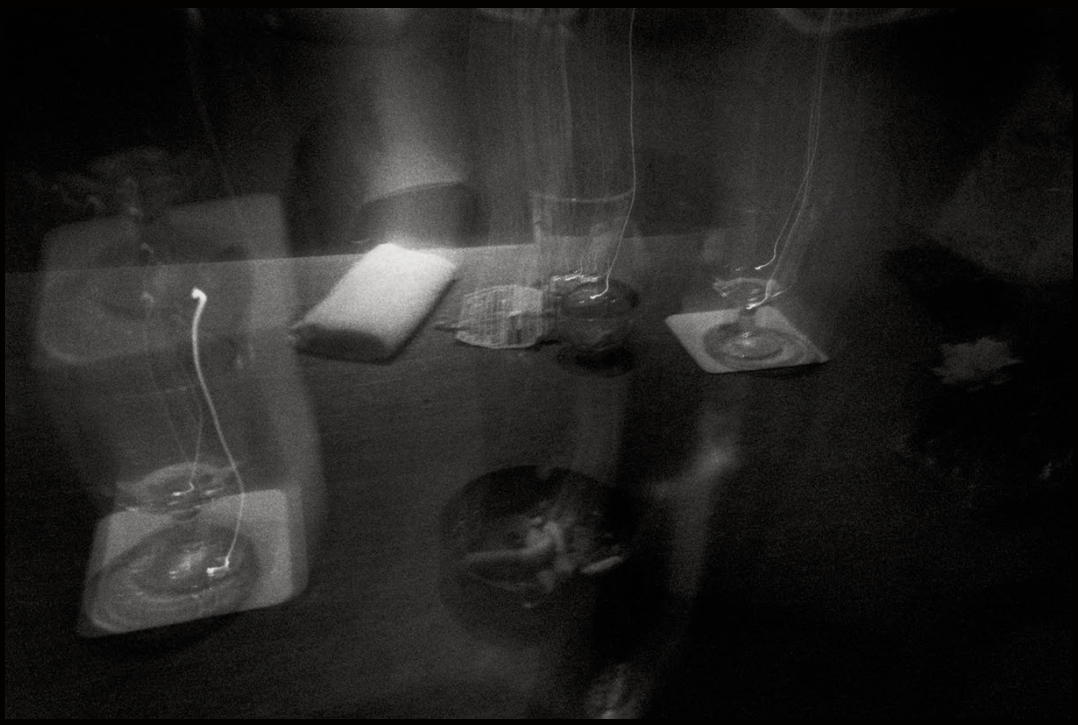
Nudes

Titled *Naked Room*, Nomura's first book was published in 1994 and includes a cover featuring the silhouette of a young man's naked chest. The image is grainy, low in contrast, and out of focus. These are some of the traits that would define the artist's work from that point onward. Alternatively, the history of nudes in photography suggests that this genre has been geared toward a male perspective and is often produced by male photographers, who use the female body as an object to portray. By focusing on male bodies, Nomura has subverted the rules and has challenged the stereotypes of an entire tradition that is greatly influential in both the West and the Far East, particularly in Japan.

Naked Time 052, 1997

Journey Into the Night

Attracted to darkness as the counterpart of light, Nomura's photographs feature out-of-focus nighttime scenes, shadows, and dim light, as if the artist were seeking a way out, or the light at the end of a journey. The elements and subjects that she captures seem to appear within the magic brought about by darkness, which the artist occasionally discovers only after the film is developed.



Black Darkness 017, 2008

Photobooks

Sakiko Nomura has published close to fourty photobooks throughout her career, which is still far from the 450 published by her mentor, the renowned photographer Nobuyoshi Araki, yet play a key role in Nomura's work. The artist herself supervises their publication with great care and often finds meaning in her work through this process. Viewed from a different perspective, perhaps it is the audience who discovers their meaning, since her photographs—which are undated and do not include specific references—are not always easy to decipher and require some effort. Viewers must be committed to their role as active subjects.

hotel Pegasus 030, 2013

SAKIKO NOMURA

TENDER IS THE NIGHT

FUNDACIÓN MAPFRE

Paseo de Recoletos, 23
28004 Madrid
cultura@fundacionmapfre.org

CURATOR

Enrique Juncosa

DATES

From February 6th to May 11th, 2025

OPENING TIMES

Mondays (except public holidays):
2 pm to 8 pm
Tuesdays to Saturdays: 11 am to 8 pm
Sundays and public holidays: 11 am to 7 pm
(Last access: 30 minutes before closing time. Visitors must leave the galleries 10 minutes before closing time)

TICKET PRICES

Standard: 5 €
Reduced: 3 €
Free entry: Mondays (except public holidays)

COMMENTED TOUR

Brief explanation of the main artistic aspects of the exhibition and its most outstanding works.
Hours:
Wednesdays and Thursdays: 5 pm to 8 pm
Fridays and Saturdays:
12 am to 2 pm and 5 pm to 8 pm
Sundays and holidays: 12 am to 2 pm
No additional cost upon entry.
Information at reception desk

AUDIO GUIDE

4 €. Spanish and English

BOOKSHOP

LAIE
Tel. 911 703 851
fmapfre@laie.es

Share your thoughts on the exhibition:
#SakikoNomuraFM

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https://exposiciones.fundacionmapfre.org/SakikoNomuraFM

Cover: *Black Darkness 061*, 2008

All images: © Sakiko Nomura courtesy of Akio Nagasawa Gallery

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