

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

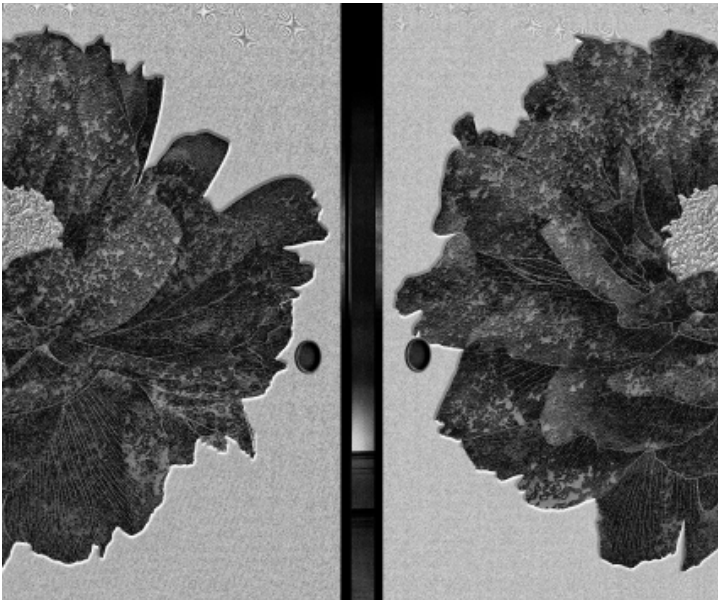
## *Synthesis II*

*“Adore” Madonna and Fusuma Photography by Kenji Wakasugi*

December 3, 2021 - January 11, 2022

Opening Reception: Friday, December 3 (5-8pm)

Book Signing: Saturday, December 4 (3-5 pm)



*Untitled (fusuma), 2021*

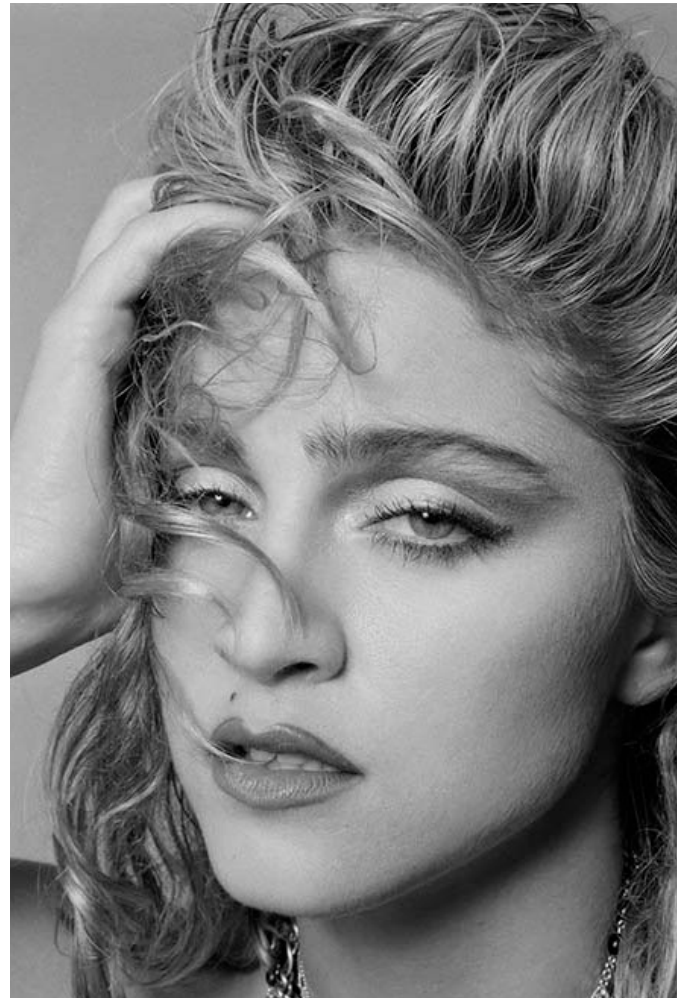
The show will also feature a limited second edition publication of *ADORE*, a photo book based on his 1985 photoshoot with Madonna, published by Nick Groarke, NJG Studio Ltd. in London.

Kenji Wakasugi was born in Osaka in 1941 and graduated from Osaka's Tokyo Technical School of Photography (now the Visual Arts Technical School) in 1969. In 1996, Wakasugi published his first photo book, *My Shangri-La*, winning accolades at the 76th annual Art Directors Club Awards in 1997. Wakasugi's works have been exhibited worldwide, including the Japanese Embassy in Belgium, the Nikon Salon in Ginza, Tokyo, and at Ippodo Gallery, New York. His works can be found in the permanent collections of the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Museum of Photographic Art, San Diego.

A key inspiration throughout Wakasugi's work is Junichirō Tanizaki's 1933 essay, "In Praise of Shadows." A reverence for shadow and negative space permeates

**NEW YORK - Ippodo Gallery** welcomes you *Synthesis II* "Adore" Madonna and Fusuma Photography, our second solo exhibition of works by Kenji Wakasugi.

A sequel to *Synthesis*, Wakasugi's inaugural exhibition at the gallery in 2016, *Synthesis II* highlights the artist's exploration of photography inspired by traditional ink-painting.



*Madonna, 1985*

both Wakasugi's traditional and modernist works.

A student of Japan's long history of ink-wash painting, or *suiboku-ga*, Wakasugi uses black and grey in his traditional photography of flowers, plants, and landscapes, to evoke classical painting by luminaries such as Tōyō Sesshū (d. 1506) and Eitoku Kanō (1543–1590). Many of his works show analog photographic images that have been superimposed to simulate the classical paintings typically seen on sliding doors, or *fusuma*, in their traditional architectural setting.

Juxtaposed to works emphasizing traditional styles and architecture are Wakasugi's images of Madonna, demonstrating a vivid sense of modernity and nostalgia for the late 20th century. Taken during a 45-minute photoshoot, Wakasugi captures the then 27-year old Madonna promoting her album *Like A Virgin* wearing clothes by Jean Paul Gaultier as well as numerous crucifixes and rosaries. Transcending typical fashion photography, Wakasugi's portraiture focuses on Madonna's facial expressions and gestures to reveal the superstar's stunning sensuality.

Wakasugi uses an array of modern and traditional techniques to further alter his photography, such as digital manipulation and the application of gold leaf and his ink-wash painting or calligraphy. Emphasizing his range of styles and influences, Wakasugi mounts his paintings using Western-style framing and hanging scrolls or *fusuma* sliding doors.

*Synthesis II* seeks to capture Wakasugi's fusion of traditional and postmodern photography. Please visit Ippodo Gallery to experience our mission to promote Wakasugi and other modern innovators of traditional Japanese art and crafts.

**Special thanks to:**

**Douglas Dubler 3**, Photographer, Madonna "Synthesis" exhibition printing, digital asset management, gallery lighting director, image curation of Madonna show

**Nick Groarke**, Creative Director, NJG Studio Ltd, Publisher of "ADORE" Vol.1 and Vol. 2

**Irfan Yonac**, Retoucher

All images in Madonna show are printed on **Canson® Infinity Baryta Prestige** paper



*For more information and images, please contact:*

**Shoko Aono**  
New York Gallery Director

212.947.4899  
shoko@ippodogallery.com

**Lillian Stafford**

212.947.4899  
lillian@ippodogallery.com