

MEMENTO MORI

YURI SHIMOJO'S GROUNDBREAKING PAINTINGS COMMEMORATING THE 2011 JAPANESE EARTHQUAKE, TSUNAMI, AND NUCLEAR DISASTER PREMIERES IN THE U.S. ON ITS TEN-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

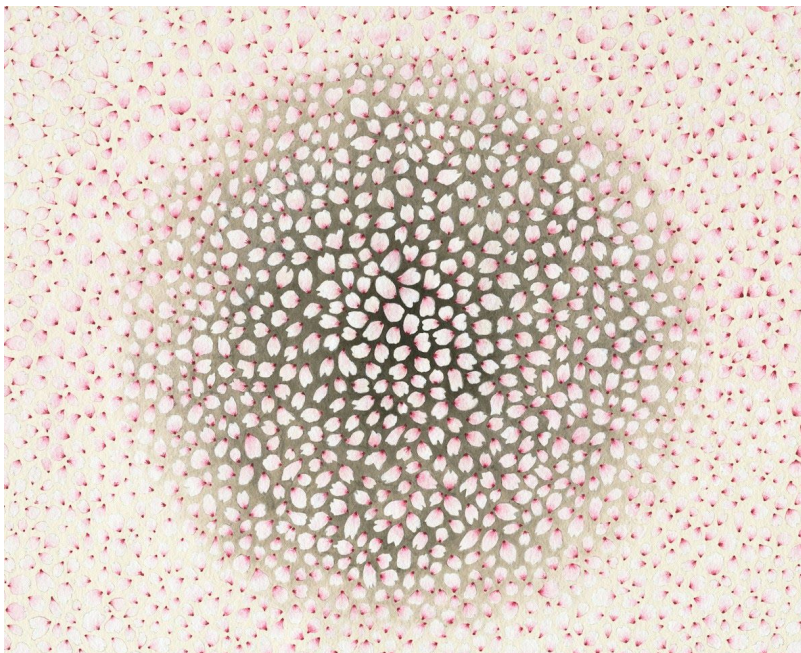
On view March 11, 2021 through April 18, 2021
313A Harvard Street, Brookline, MA 02446

A Conversation on Art & Healing

Join Yuri Shimojo, gallery founder Yng-Ru Chen, and
Duke University professor and art historian, Dr. Gennifer Weisenfeld, PhD

March 11, 2021 at 8 pm ET

Register [here](#) for the Zoom session



(February 17, 2021 -- Brookline, MA) -- On March 11, 2021, the tenth anniversary of the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami, the most powerful earthquake ever recorded in Japan, Praise Shadows Art Gallery will present the U.S. premiere of *Memento Mori*, Yuri Shimojo's monumental painting series dedicated to the memory of the lives lost in the natural and nuclear disaster. Previously shown only in Kyoto (2013) and Tokyo (2014), this body of work is considered Shimojo's most significant to date. In addition to the paintings, the artist will present a new mixed-media installation dedicated to the victims of Tōhoku, as well as the millions of people who have lost their lives to Covid-19.

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On the opening day of the exhibition, March 11, the public is invited to join an online conversation between Shimojo, gallery founder Yng-Ru Chen, and Dr. Gennifer Weisenfeld, Professor of Art History & Visual Studies at Duke University. This program is presented by Duke Alumni.

Memento Mori.

Remember your mortality.

Not long after March 11, 2011, the day of the earthquake and tsunami, Shimojo was in New York City, far from her ancestral homeland. She heard reports on the news of Sakura (Japanese cherry trees) blossoming amid the debris in Tōhoku, the epicenter of the earthquake. The disaster caused the deaths of nearly 16,000 people, with thousands more injured and missing. Shimojo started painting Sakura petals in an attempt to process her pain. This repetitive act became a form of ritual, akin to Buddhist monks counting each prayer bead. According to the artist, "By the time I stopped counting how many petals I had painted, I started to see each petal as a life. I conversed with each. I became them."

Painted with Japanese ink on Indian Khadi handmade paper, each work from *Memento Mori* follows the overall form of a circle. *Sakura* led to the completion of four more paintings, all created using a mandala-like sphere, and each different in their colors, intentions, and themes. The complete group of paintings are titled:

"Sakura 桜" implies Nirvana

"Vine 蔦" implies Passage

"Algae 藻" implies River Sanzu or River Styx

"Hana (flower) 花" implies Birth

"Universal Stain しみ of 宇宙" implies Itself or Yourself

The *Memento Mori* paintings, having traveled the globe over the course of nearly nine years, signify the artist's own spiritual journey. Shimojo, who lost all of her immediate family members before the age of 30, focuses on celebrating life's precious, fleeting moments. She asks the viewer to pay attention to what nature is trying to show us. And most of all, she views this body of work as a universal embrace of gratitude and fear, for life and for death.

The site-specific installation is created by Shimojo in collaboration with Maria Takeuchi (projection) and Alec Fellman (sound). On the floor in the center of the gallery will be a mound of white cleansing salt with 108 glass petri dishes set upon it. "108" is a sacred number in the Dharmic religions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism; in Japan, at the end of each year, Buddhist temples chime their bells 108 times to close out the old year and welcome in the new one. Each petri dish encloses an individual Sakura petal made of torn washi paper, then tied closed, as if in tribute, with fine silk thread. Another Sakura petal, suspended from the ceiling by a single silk white thread, hovers just above the salt mound, all graced in luminous projection. The accompanying sound, *Petal Mori*, a 108 minute looping soundscape, contains a bell ringing once per minute, simultaneously illuminating one of the 108 petri-dishes.

For the artist, *Memento Mori* in 2011 represented the formidable power of nature, reminding humans of our tiny presence in the universe. But that power is also healing and resilient. *Memento Mori's* intention here in 2021 is to bring into focus our individuality during a year of unimaginable loss at the hands of the global pandemic. *Memento Mori* as a body of work, ten years in the making, and for decades more

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into the future, the universality of its intentions will continue to blossom: helping us to recognize and embrace our place in the spiritual world.

About Yuri Shimojo

Yuri Shimojo was born in Tokyo in 1966. The last descendent of her samurai clan, Shimojo has always used painting to express the interconnected emotions of joy and pain. Using traditional Japanese watercolor or ground *sumi* and *shu* ink, her work combines the abstract and the surreal, often playfully, and always evocative of the desire for universal compassion. With minimal formal training in fine art, her style is grounded in the practice of Japanese traditional theater and years spent with indigenous cultures around the world, leading to the study of universal shamanism. She is based in New York and Kyoto. Her work has been exhibited throughout the United States and Japan, and is in private collections around the world. www.yurishimojo.com

About Praise Shadows LLC

We believe that the art ecosystem is filled with untapped potential, and our work is rooted in partnering closely with artists to develop opportunities in emerging models of creativity and entrepreneurship — exhibitions, commissions, brand partnerships, new technologies, original concepts that no one has ever tried before. Praise Shadows Art Gallery is a commercial gallery space in the Boston area showing the work of emerging and mid-career artists. It opened in December 2020. Praise Shadows Art Partners advises artists and companies in the creative industries on strategic partnerships and marketing. Our work is local, global, and virtual. www.praiseshadows.com

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Media Contact: hello@praiseshadows.com