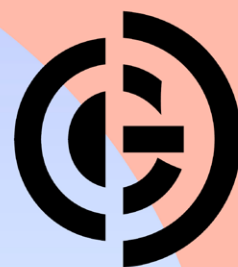


Press Kit

Polaraki

Mille polaroids
d'Araki Nobuyoshi



Guimet
Musée national des arts asiatiques

Exposition
1^{er} octobre 2025
12 janvier 2026

Guimet
Musée national des arts asiatiques
6, place d'Iéna 75116 Paris / guimet.fr



POLARAKI

A thousand polaroids by Araki Nobuyoshi

*October 1, 2025
January 12, 2026*



© Musée Guimet, Paris / Nicolas Fussler, photographie

Araki Nobuyoshi, *Sans titre*, 1997 – 2024 © Nobuyoshi Araki

A prolific, obsessive and deliberately provocative photographer, Araki Nobuyoshi has been a key figure in the history of Japanese and international photography since the 1960s. Organized in the wake of an exceptional donation to the Guimet Museum, the POLARAKI exhibition reveals an essential aspect of his work: the exploration of the infinite possibilities offered by the Polaroid, a central source of experimentation in the artist's oeuvre.

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Credits for all the polaroids of *Araki's Paradise*:
Araki Nobuyoshi, *Sans titre*, 1997 – 2024
© Nobuyoshi Araki © Musée Guimet, Paris /
Nicolas Fussler, photographe

Warning: Due to their sexually explicit nature,
some of the photographs in the exhibition may
be deemed offensive by certain viewers.
Access to the rotunda is not allowed to persons
below the age of 18.



The exhibition

"[Araki's] polaroids do not merely represent an abundance of flowers; they are flowers themselves. Polaroid photographs bloom as they develop. Yet unlike flowers [...], their freshness endures."

Stéphane André

For the Japanese artist Araki Nobuyoshi, instant photography is a daily practice. Born in Tokyo in 1940, he studied photography before joining an advertising firm in 1963. Since becoming independent in 1972, he has achieved wide recognition in Japan and internationally for his distinctive vision of intimacy. He is now best known for his close-up photographs of flowers and, more controversially, for his staged representations of the female body, which blurs the line between eroticism and pornography.

As a counterpoint to his carefully composed images, Araki turned in the 1990s to Polaroid photography, which allowed him to capture his immediate surroundings at any moment. From then on, the medium sustained a chaotic and poetic visual diary around which his entire oeuvre is structured, haunted to the point of obsession by love, sex, life and death. In 2025, Stéphane André donated his collection of nearly one thousand polaroids by Araki, acquired since 2000, to the Guimet. Shown for the first time in the form André had devised in his Paris apartment, the exhibition *POLARAKI* pays tribute both to the centrality of the Polaroid in Araki's art and to its appropriation by a private collector in a manner recalling a cabinet of curiosities.



Araki's Paradise

1997–2024, 906 dye diffusion prints mounted in 391 frames, Guimet Museum, donated by Stéphane André (2025)

Araki's Paradise brings together nearly a thousand Polaroid prints by the artist acquired by Stéphane André between 2000 and 2024. Donated to the Guimet Museum by the collector in May 2025, they are presented here as they were arranged in his Parisian apartment. Half of the image combinations within the frames are the work of Araki. The other half were composed by Stéphane André, who also chose the location of each frame in a grid extending the system of visual poetry developed by the artist. In order to respect the wishes of two former models, who do not want their photographs to be exhibited, the Guimet Museum has decided, in agreement with the artist, to leave the space occupied by the frames in question vacant.

The Polaroid as a visual diary

Araki's work has been shaped by his personal experience as embodied by three major series devoted to his life with Aoki Yoko between 1971 and 1990, from their honeymoon to her death.

Already a central figure of the *shi-shashin* (I-photography) movement, Araki embraced instant photography in the 1990s. The process—invented by Edwin Land and marketed from 1948 by Polaroid—enabled him to record his daily life with unrelenting immediacy, producing countless square-format prints. The medium also expanded his artistic possibilities: he wrote and painted directly on the images; cut, re-assembled, and displayed the prints edge to edge in monumental grids. Together, these polaroids form a continuous stream that blurs the line between private and public, anticipating contemporary uses of photographic images.



The models and the photographer

Araki's work navigates between diverse aesthetic worlds. In the 1960s and 1970s his early projects developed an intimate approach to the that broke with advertising stereotypes. Two decades later, his use of the Polaroid gave rise to a form of visual poetry built on unexpected juxtapositions. It also served a Japonising erotic aesthetic, drawing on cultural markers—kimonos, tatami, chopsticks, ropes—that frame an exoticising and objectifying representation of the model's body.

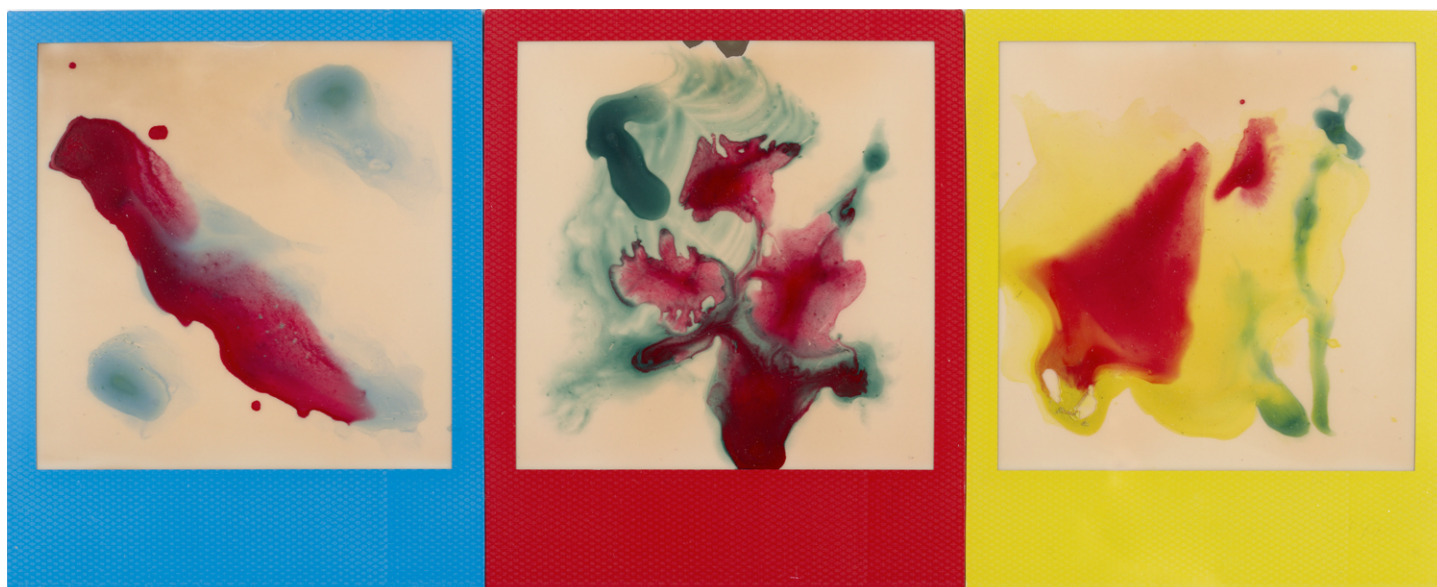
The erotic and pornographic aspects of Araki's work have at times been interpreted through the lens of Japanese art history in the lineage of erotic prints (*shunga*) and traditional rope arts (*hojojutsu*, *kinbaku*). This heritage-based comparison has often been used to legitimise the explicitness and aggressive nature of certain photographs. As views on gender relations continue to evolve, representations once justified in the name of tradition are being reconsidered. Araki's portrayals of the female body are no exception.





Books

Araki Nobuyoshi has developed and elicited an intense publishing activity closely linked to his photographic practice. From the late 1960s onwards, his early work was disseminated through books compiled and printed by him on photocopiers at the Dentsu advertising agency, where he was then employed. To date, there are more than 500 books devoted to his work. On the occasion of the *POLARAKI* exhibition, collector Stéphane André loaned eight volumes exclusively devoted to Araki's instant photography practice to the Guimet Museum.



Araki Nobuyoshi, *Hana Kinbaku* © Nobuyoshi Araki
© GrandPalaisRmn (MNAAG, Paris) / Thierry Ollivier

Hana Kinbaku

2008, dye destruction print (Ilfochrome); box set containing the book *Hana Kinbaku* (Tokyo, Taka Ishii Gallery, 2008) and two colour reversal film photographs mounted in synthetic resin. Guimet Museum (2020)

Emblematic of a visual and metaphorical connection between women and flowers that is common in Araki's work, *Hana Kinbaku* presents three versions of the same photograph: the two original slides, a large-format print, and the associated publication.

By trapping the film between two resin plates, Araki permanently prevented new prints from being made and transformed the diptych into a unique, non-reproducible image, much like a Polaroid. The work is thus representative of the artist's propensity to play with the parameters of photography (differed/instantaneous, reproducible/unique, opaque/transparent).