

Taking Purikura

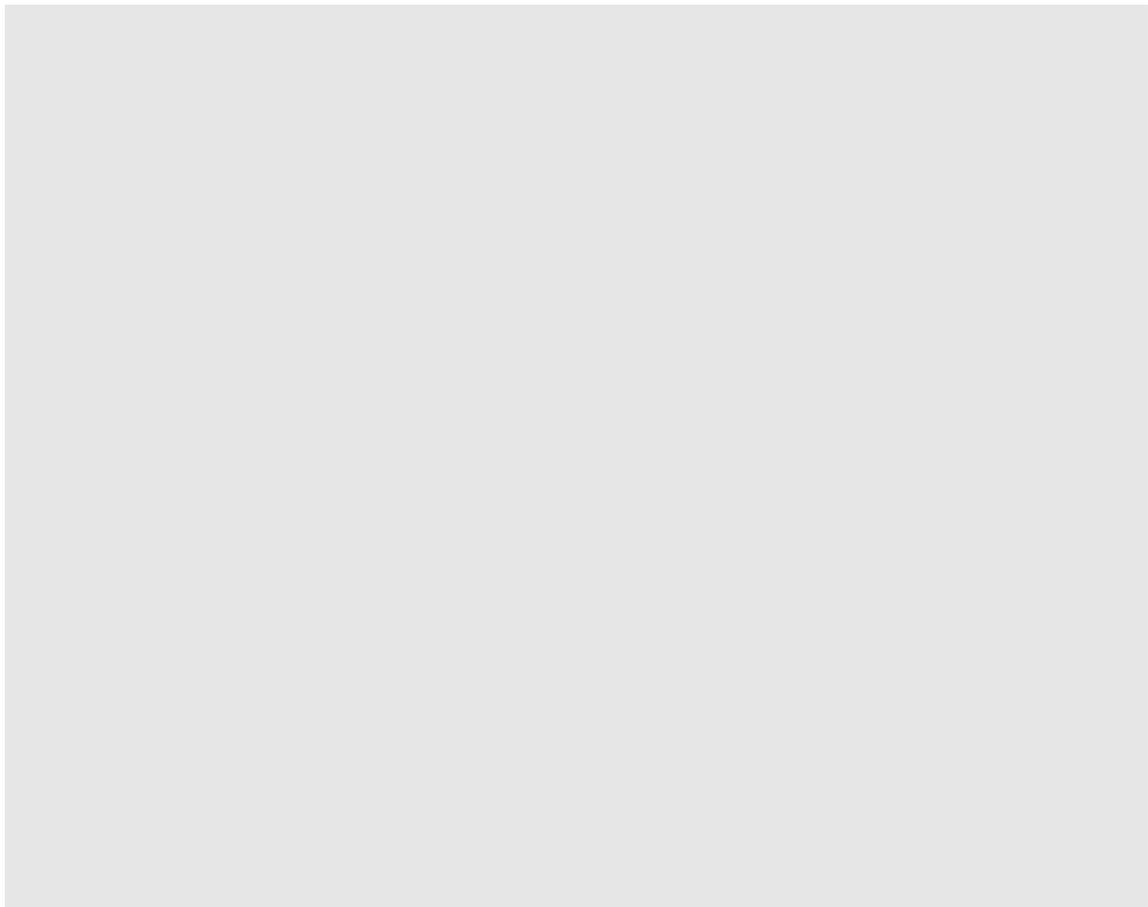
Vernacular Photography and Contested Female Visibility in Japan

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For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy – Visual Anthropology

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Cited in "People Who Made the 'Purikura' boom" (Kudo and Terashita 1998)

I declare that this thesis and the work presented is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, or reproduced photographs, this is clearly stated

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Abstract

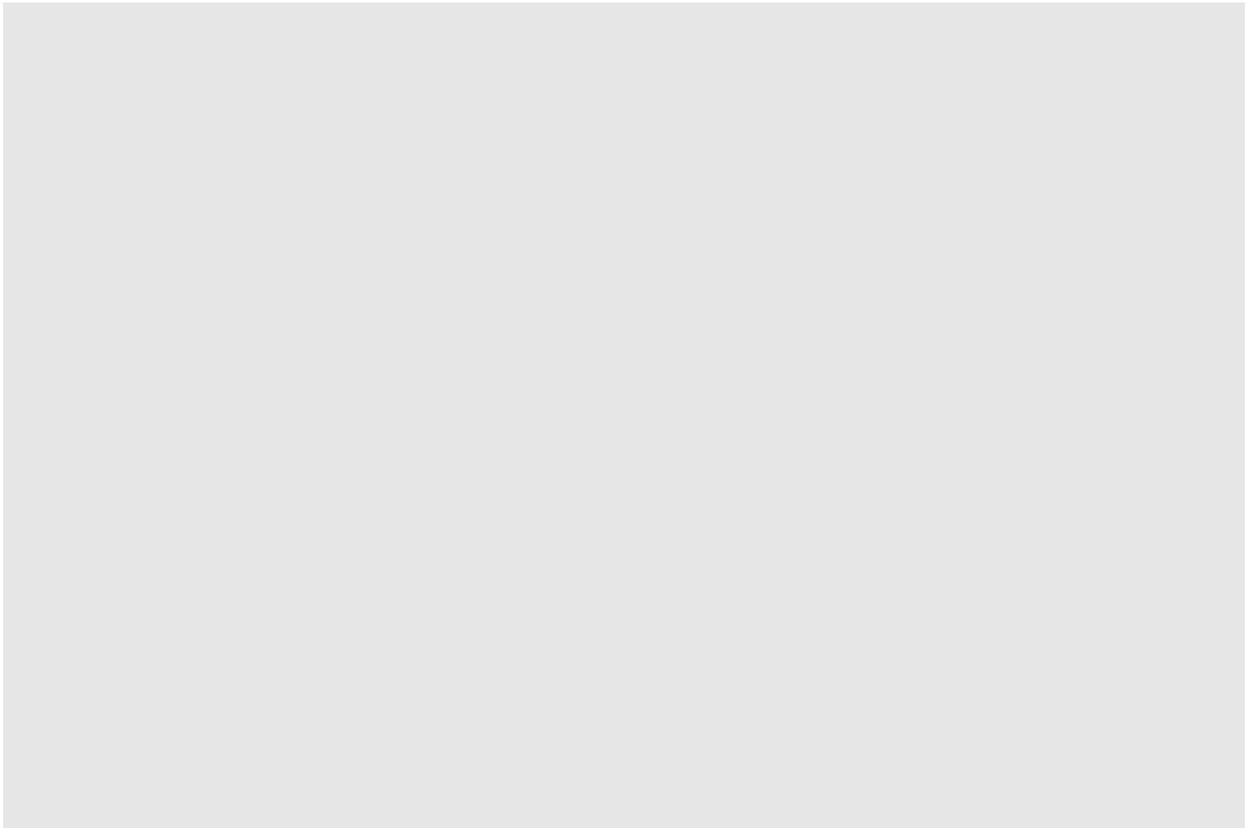
This thesis is an exploration of purikura, a type of Japanese photo booth that has been prevalent since the 1990s - these machines, which utilize a broad variety of technologies to allow users to draw on, manipulate or beautify their appearance, serve as a popular form of vernacular photography among young women in Japan. It has been theorized that purikura machines serve as a means of public display of relationship networks, as a form of social capital, and as a tool for the crafting of new friendships. Through the use of these machines as a participant observer, as well as an engagement with the social media, magazines, films, music and *manga* (comics) favored by interlocutors, this thesis expands on the mediascape purikura persists within to better contextualize this practice. Through participant observation, this thesis expands on the *kata*, or practiced coordination required in purikura production, demanding an attention to poses, symmetry and group camaraderie. These photographs, which are often utilized for the commemoration of fashion and leisure activities, also serve as a form of conspicuous consumption - this is further enhanced through the beauty practices that these machines work in tandem with, creating an exaggerated gender performance of emphatic femininity in retaliation against larger social expectations of marriage and motherhood for young women in Japan. As a form of digitally enhanced photography that is circulated broadly across social media, this thesis also explores the potential for the proliferation of purikura photographs to be understood as a technologically-mediated cyborg selfhood with a global audience. Through purikura, many young women in Japan are using self-directed photography to describe meaningful life events, peer relationships, and emotions - purikura users challenge normative classification, choosing instead to align themselves within their own subcultures in ways that are unreadable to those who do not participate, where beauty practices have been utilized for in-group classification, further questioning the boundaries of normative Japanese femininity.

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Introduction

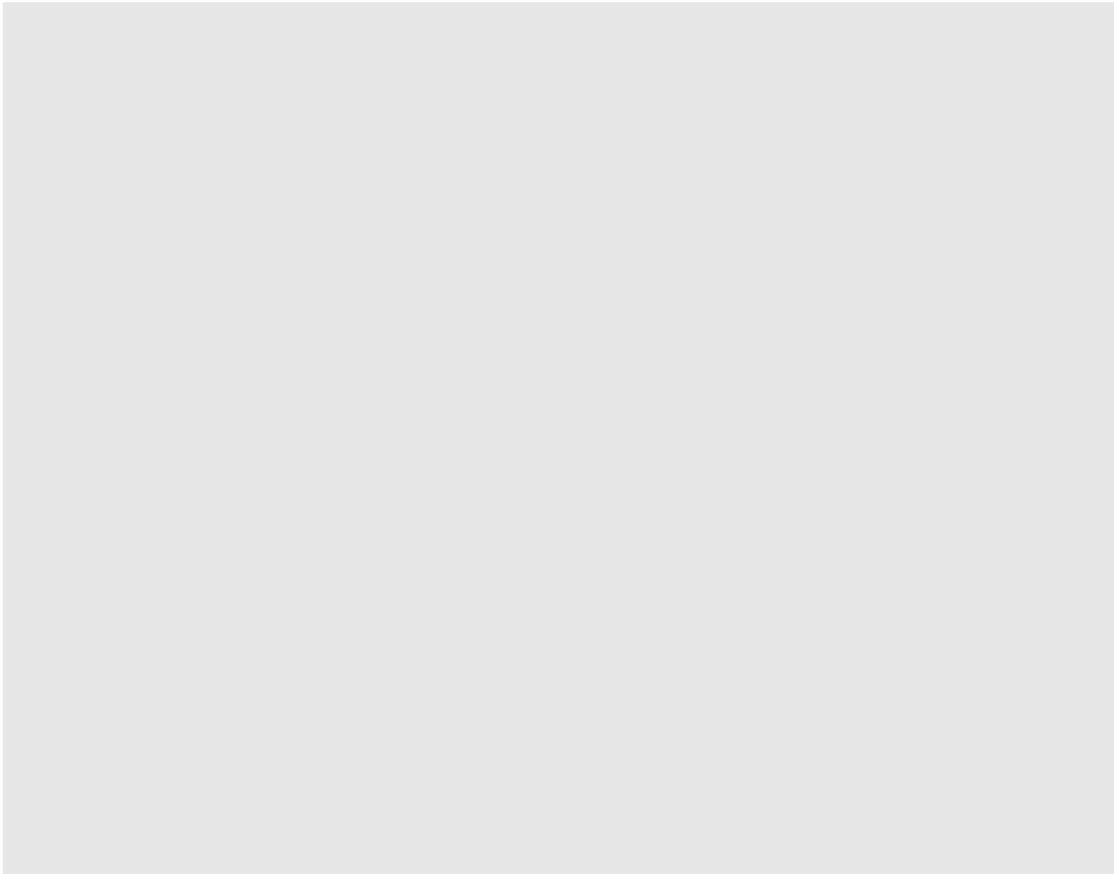


(Estèbe 2020b)

While working as a visiting researcher at Tokyo University in 2016, I undertook a year of fieldwork on the vernacular uses of *purikura* (a portmanteau of *purinto kurabu*, from the English “Print Club”), the colloquial term for photo sticker booths in Japan and other parts of East Asia. These machines, which debuted in 1995 from manufacturer Atlas, have been a dominant form of vernacular photography for over two decades, and are driven largely by female consumers. (Chalfen and Murui 2004; L. Miller 2005; Okabe et al. 2009; Ashcraft and Ueda 2010; Sandbye 2013) It has been theorized that purikura machines serve as a means of public display of relationship networks, as a form of social capital, and as a tool for the crafting of new friendships. While initially limited to minuscule, pixelated stickers which emphasized a decorative border, purikura has developed over the years to allow more creative control from consumers in the form of digital stamps and *rakugaki* (graffiti; scribbles). Since the early 2000s, machine development has gravitated towards the cosmetic enhancement of users’ appearance, particularly stressing skin “brightening” (lightening), eye enlargement, and face shaping, subjects I discuss in more depth across future chapters.

Throughout this introductory chapter, I will look at purikura in relation to some elements of the history of photography in Japan, along with its roots in colonialism, to further illuminate the continued effects of the latter on contemporary Japanese visual culture and its commentators. This discussion seeks to contextualize previous studies of purikura within the larger histories of photography, colonialism and the field of anthropology, and is intended to serve as both a literature review and, in the latter half, an account of my own methodologies and experiences in the field.

TYPOLOGIES OF GIRLS



High school students holding purikura, cited in *The Real Faces Behind The Purikura Gimmick* (Naoya Harano, president of Atlus, 1997)

“Younger high school girls wear their plaid skirts and sweaters and their elephant sox, loose, baggy, white ... in particular they cultivate a loud, braying, humorless laugh ... which is used constantly, and have amplified noise-making into something like a menace. You can hear them coming.

It has a name. It is called kogal.”

(Richie 1999, 75)

Young women in Japan, dubbed the “purikura generation” (Johnson 2003), are a regular preoccupation of academics and media outlets both in and outside of Japan. A distinguishing characteristic of this fixation is that of the trend in creating simplified

tropes of female behavior and girls' culture, effectively producing stylized 'types' for general consumption, in which women have been "debated, stereotyped, fictionalized and caricatured." (L. Miller 2004b, 238) Purikura users are typically aged between their teens and late 20s - in their research on purikura in the early 2000s, Chalfen & Murui found purikura to be "...very important as a gendered practice – with high school girls predominating." (Chalfen and Murui 2004, 179) Okabe et al concur, stating that "purikura are popular among teenage girls, particularly during the high school years" (Okabe et al. 2009, 73), which is similarly confirmed by Ishikawa. (Ishikawa 2007, 62) The particular stress on high school-aged girls is reiterated in all other anthropological studies of purikura (L. Miller 2005; Sandbye 2013), and as a consequence, the typology most often associated with purikura users is that of the '*kogal*' – a group largely understood to have been fashionable high school girls, most prevalent in the 1990s, whose adoption of purikura is directly linked to its rampant success. Mette Sandbye describes the 'purikura phenomenon' as being coupled with kogals (Sandbye 2013), an association reiterated in most analyses of purikura, confirmed by Best & Suzuki who state that purikura became a fad among kogals within 3 months of its debut in 1995. (T. Suzuki and Best 2003, 64)

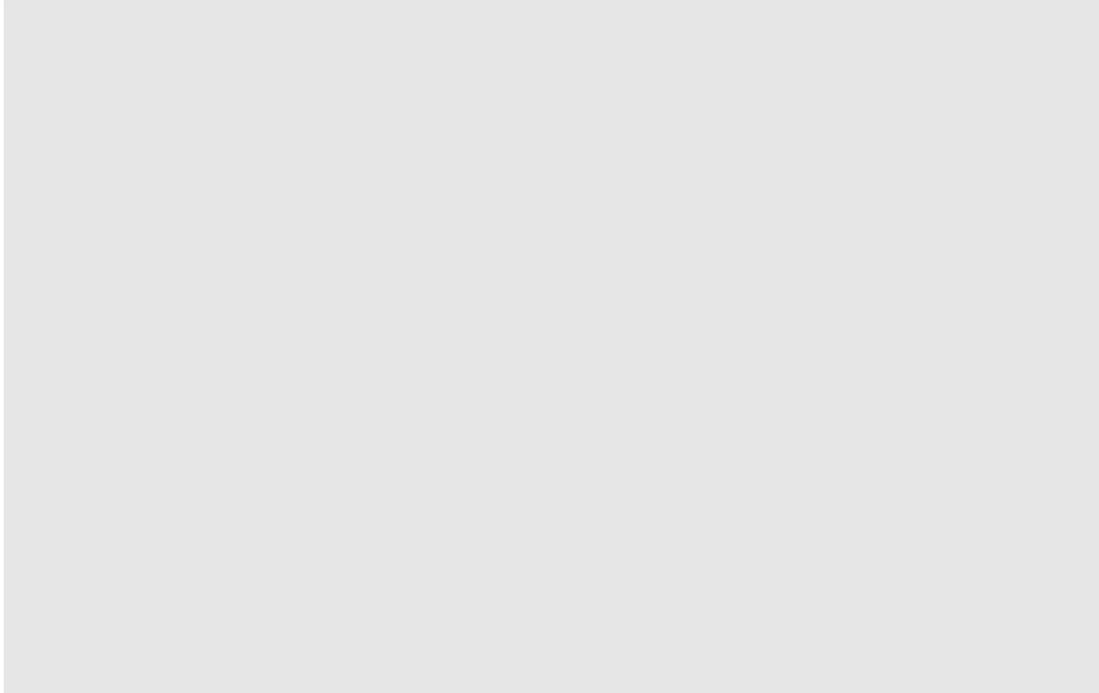
Academic descriptions of kogals rarely deviate from a prescribed set of characteristics – they are understood by Suzuki & Best to be stylish, high school age girls (Suzuki and Best 2003, 5), who remain mostly unchanged in Sandbye's description as "stylish Japanese urban high-school girls". (Sandbye 2013, 114) For Iida, kogals serve as a designator for the commodified image of young girls, who they go on to describe as "adorning themselves with loose white socks, a very short skirt and brown dyed hair." (Iida 2001, 231) Donald Richie's account of kogals similarly mentions dyed hair and loose socks (Richie 1999, 71), a trend he surmises occurs because "everyone is supposed to look the same" (ibid). He continues:

"They come in their hordes, driven by fashion and their glands. Let me describe them lest this motley show be lost forever ... girls often wear very short skirts ... which thus offer an expanse of leg so that the thighs may flash" (Richie 1999, 76).

Sharon Kinsella further describes kogals as:

“A mode of ‘prostitute-chic’ ... School uniforms worn in the kogal style resembled the semi-naked images of schoolgirls in sailor suits that have long featured in pornography ... The kitsch, showy style gave the girls the general flavor of high-class hookers ... a gaudy, new-money look.” (Kinsella 2002, 230)

Miller gives a concise description of ‘kogal’ as “the mainstream media label used to describe young women between the ages of 14 and 22” (L. Miller 2004b, 225) - she continues her account by stating that, among the many subcultural identities available to young women, “none has become the focus of such mainstream anxiety and voyeuristic interest as ... kogals.” (ibid) In their analysis of kogal trendsetting, Suzuki & Best clarify that the term is less a tangible subculture, and more a categorical term for Japanese observers to classify youth, as “a recognizable social type, distinguished by age, sex, and styles of dress, grooming and consumption.” (Suzuki and Best 2003, 62) As Miller has stated, the term kogal does not belong to those it describes (L. Miller 2004b, 225) - the rhetoric surrounding kogals in both academia and popular media “classifies young women into manageable boxes” (ibid 240), allowing Japanese and foreign critics to assert that the kogal is “only a fashion trend of nonsensical, self-centered youth.” (ibid 241) This division — between the producers and subjects of academic knowledge and meaning (Tagg 1988, 6), highlighted by a pronounced absence of a ‘kogal’ voice within academic literature — can be better understood in the historical context of anthropology, photography, and colonialism.



Baron Von Stillfried – Women, 1870s (Worswick 1979:104)

Any understanding of photography's history must be considered in terms of a tandem and interwoven past with the beginnings of the social sciences in the 19th century. This "curious echo" between the histories of photography and anthropology (Pinney 2012, 17) contains complex layers of ethics and agency, which informs the production and consumption of both photographs and anthropological knowledge to this day. It is important to understand photography through its historical uses by colonizing forces to justify imperialism, (Maxwell 2013:125) often through anthropological means.

The shared histories of photography and anthropologically-enacted colonialism, with their common dialogues of authorial agency, also correspond and overlap with a monumental shift in the history of Japan. For over 200 years, the Tokugawa Shogunate enforced a policy of national seclusion for the country, which severely restricted foreign entry, often on penalty of death. (Fraser 2011, 11) With loosening trade restrictions in 1843, the arrival of a daguerreotype camera allowed Japan access to photography only a few years after the process was introduced in France. (Ibid: 11) The practice of photography began to flourish by the mid 1870s, after the collapse of the Tokugawa regime ushered in the Meiji era, and with it, the opening of Japan to a fascinated

Western audience “hungry for information about the newly opened country” (ibid: 35). Theorist Jan Morris has postulated that it is difficult to imagine how captivating this country must have been for a foreign audience, to whom Japan was “almost as unknown as another planet” (Morris 1980, 7)

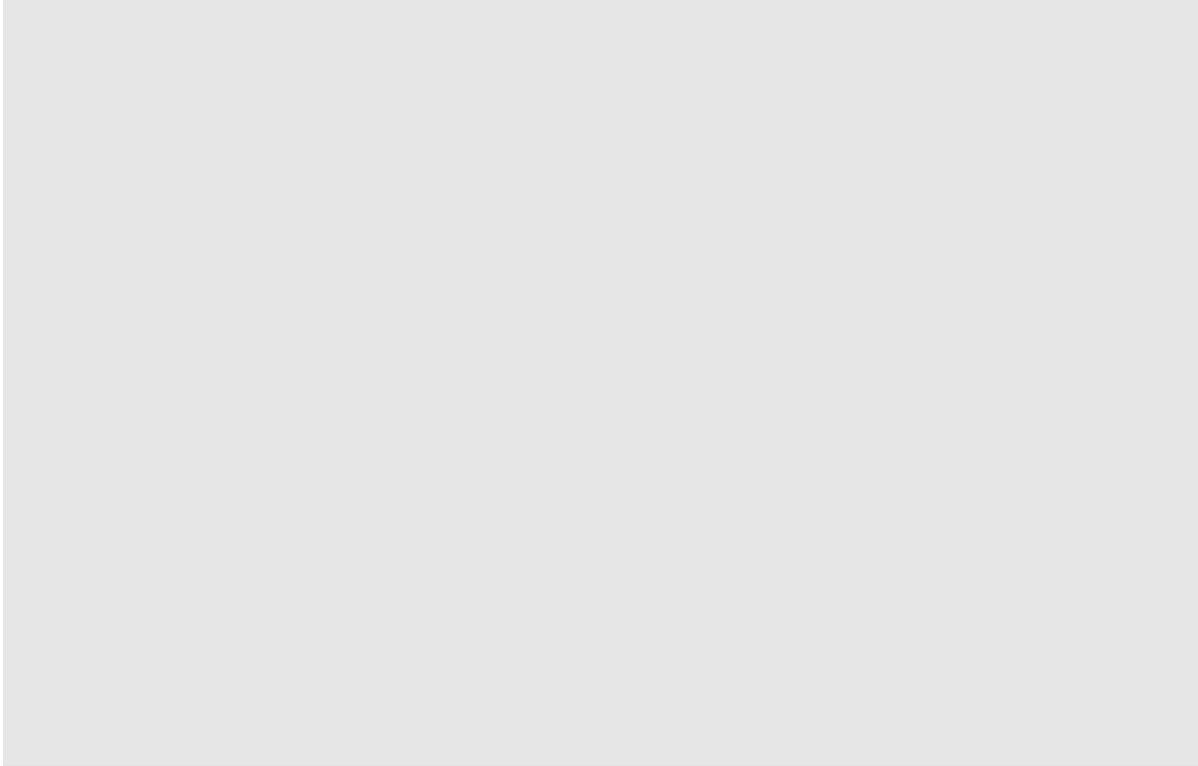
This fascination created a burgeoning trade in photographic images of Japan, particularly for those of “native types”, for which the Italian-British photographer Felice Beato specialized in crafting. Throughout the 1860s, Beato developed a thriving business fashioning a typology of Japanese subjects for the foreign market (Hight 2011, 10), a “rare example of the visual record of Japanese culture available to Western audiences of the time” (Lacoste 2010, 18) that further created an entire genre of photography buoyed by its popularity with Western consumers outside of Japan. The photographic industry created by Felice Beato in the 19th century generated an important foundation of visual knowledge for an audience that knew little about Japan, and theorists have suggested that this marketing allowed Beato to create images that confirmed Western stereotypes about Japan’s “exotic nature” (Fraser 2011, 40). Beato’s studies “reflected the cultural biases of the time, often comparing Japanese culture with that of ‘civilized nations’” (Lacoste 2010, 19), emphasizing cultural differences between Japan and the West. Beato, and many of his successors, continued to perpetuate an Orientalist¹ vision of Japan as a “pre-industrial, rural, primitive society” (Hight 2011, 9),

¹ Much of the writing that I engage with throughout this chapter can, and should, be understood within the context of Orientalism, with its association with the ‘primitive’ that is “fundamental to the historical construction of Western ideas of Japanese difference” (Cox 2007, 4), a theme within academic practices that I engage with on page 34. However, as an issue of positionality, Orientalism “proposes a deterministic model of imperial/colonial power relations” between Japan and the West (ibid 7) - as such, I have chosen to focus primarily on themes of primitivism, as it is most resonant with the perspectives of commentators from *within* Japan, whose criticisms of female-centric vernacular photography and beauty practices cannot be defined quite so neatly as Orientalist in nature. Primitivism, when seen in the context of Western perspectives on Japan, is situated within Orientalism - however, I felt that this did not adequately serve to describe the power relations experienced by my interlocutors in their daily lives, outside of Western notions of alterity and difference.

with the ultimate effect of creating “a fantasy of a simple, primitive Japan” (Fraser 2011, 41) that appealed to foreign tastes.

The images created by studio photographers in Japan were not altogether dissimilar from colonial photography created by anthropologists – as the “native type” photograph became synonymous with Japan, Beato’s direct successor, Baron von Stillfried, further typified the visual aesthetic with his studio portraits, making particular use of blank studio backgrounds which purposely removed his subjects from their cultural context. This is both visually and objectively comparable to colonial photography – just as the use of gridded backdrops within anthropometric photography sought to “transform the presence of unique bodies into what we might think of as somatic prototypes” (Pinney 2012, 13), studio photographers wanted to create a set of “native types” for the consumption of Western audiences. As Kress and van Leeuwen have discussed, this trend in anthropometric photography decontextualizes the subject, creating a racialized generic, “a ‘typical’ example, rather than particular” (Kress and Leeuwen 2006, 165); the populist creation and consumption of Japanese studio photography created a genre of primitive “types” that “enabled Westerners to control how they pictured this newly discovered place”. (Hight 2011, 1)

Beato’s far-reaching influence on photography in Japan, as well as his perpetuation of racialized tropes of Japanese natives, have created persistently lingering stereotypes of Japan-as-primitive that have endured well into the 20th century. (Fraser 2011, 42) The protraction of this trope can be understood through the conceptualization of photography as inherently truthful, with photographs as factual evidence (a subject I examine in more depth in chapter 5). Given the belief in the camera’s capacity for authenticity and truth, the earliest photographers were “considered scientists rather than artists.” (ibid: 13) This conviction, paired with the Western appetite for the racialized type, propagated primitive, Orientalist tropes of Japan through photographs as “seeming conveyers of fact” (Hight 2011, 3), that appeared to provide the West with what was perceived to be an authentic insight into Asian culture.



Ryuzo Torii, Portrait of Taiwanese Aborigine, c. 1900 (Fraser 2001, 51)

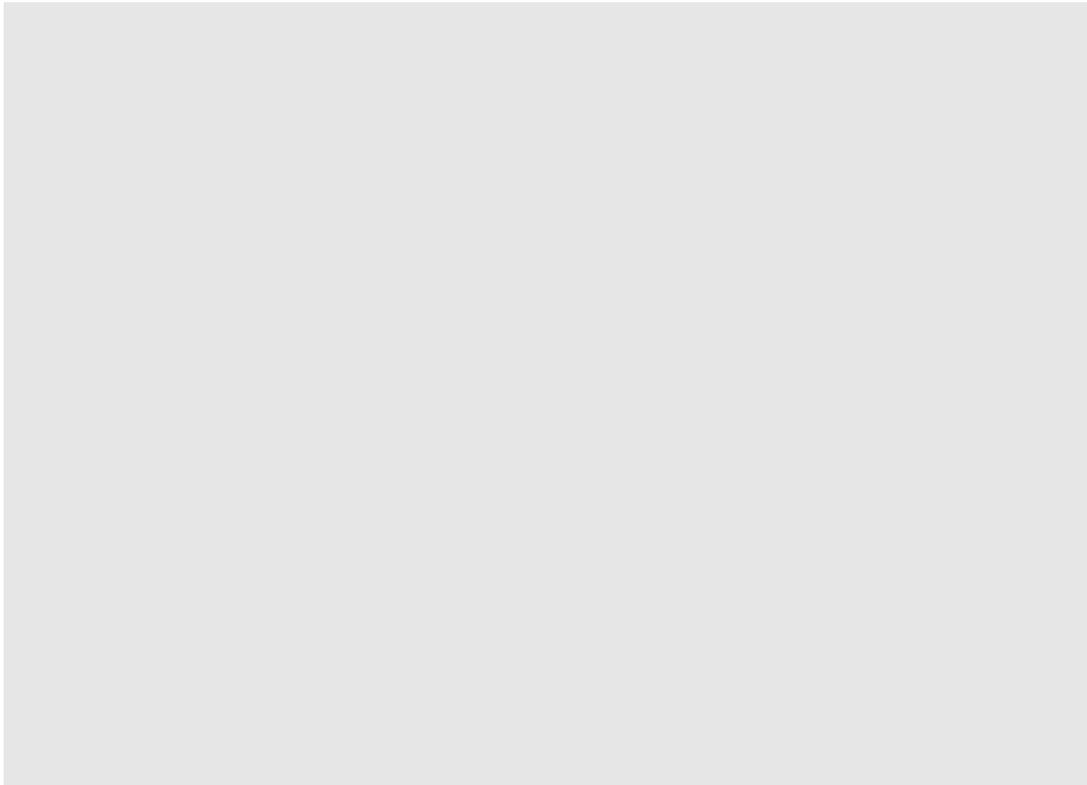
Colonial photography was not just enacted upon Japan – as the country began to expand its own colonial efforts, Japanese anthropologists utilized photography as a tool to capture and control indigenous groups both within Japan and other parts of East Asia. In the 1870s, the Meiji government’s expansion to the north of Japan resulted in the deliberate displacement of the indigenous Ainu group native to Hokkaido, and photography was employed in their mandated assimilation – these photographs played a significant part in the development of a modern Japanese national identity. (Fraser 2011, 49) As these photographs underscored their ‘primitive’ nature, they “deliberately highlighted the differences between the Ainu and the Japanese in order to reinforce the cultured and civilized credentials of the latter.” (ibid) The Japanese government submitted the photographs for display at the Vienna World Exposition in 1873, to help document and support Japan’s “colonialist credentials” (ibid:50).

Other Japanese anthropologists undertook similar photographic efforts, most notably Ryuzo Torii’s ethnographic work in Taiwan at the turn of the century. These were an explicit colonial effort, marked by the government’s attempts to expand geographic

territory – the images he took of Taiwanese aborigines “testify to the importance of racial and cultural identity” (ibid:50), further emphasizing the importance of photographs in helping to construct this imperialist message. Both these and the photographs of the Ainu were created with the same objective in mind – providing a visual comparison with the primitive ‘Other’, and “confirming the Japanese domination over the ‘Other’ through visual means” (ibid), effectively constructing a new Japanese colonialist identity for the 19th century.

Anthropology and photography were utilized as a scientific method of understanding the presence of others in the world (MacDougall 2006, 1), but also of governing others with that understanding. Photography as a tool has tangible power in this regard, because visual knowledge “...provides one of our primary means of comprehending the experience of other people” (ibid, 6), with sight as a basic, intuitive method of conceptualization. Photography was used as an apparatus in this enterprise to domesticate and organize vision (ibid, 3), to construct a mode of seeing with a clear colonial agenda. It is important to recognize this historical connection, not only to give a context to the uses of photography, but also to the photographs themselves. A larger conceptualization of the histories of anthropology and photography, and the “broader economic and imperialistic contexts” (Morton and Edwards 2009, 8) from which they emerged, gives a framework for understanding the colonial forces that assisted the “acquisition of anthropology’s visual legacy” (ibid).

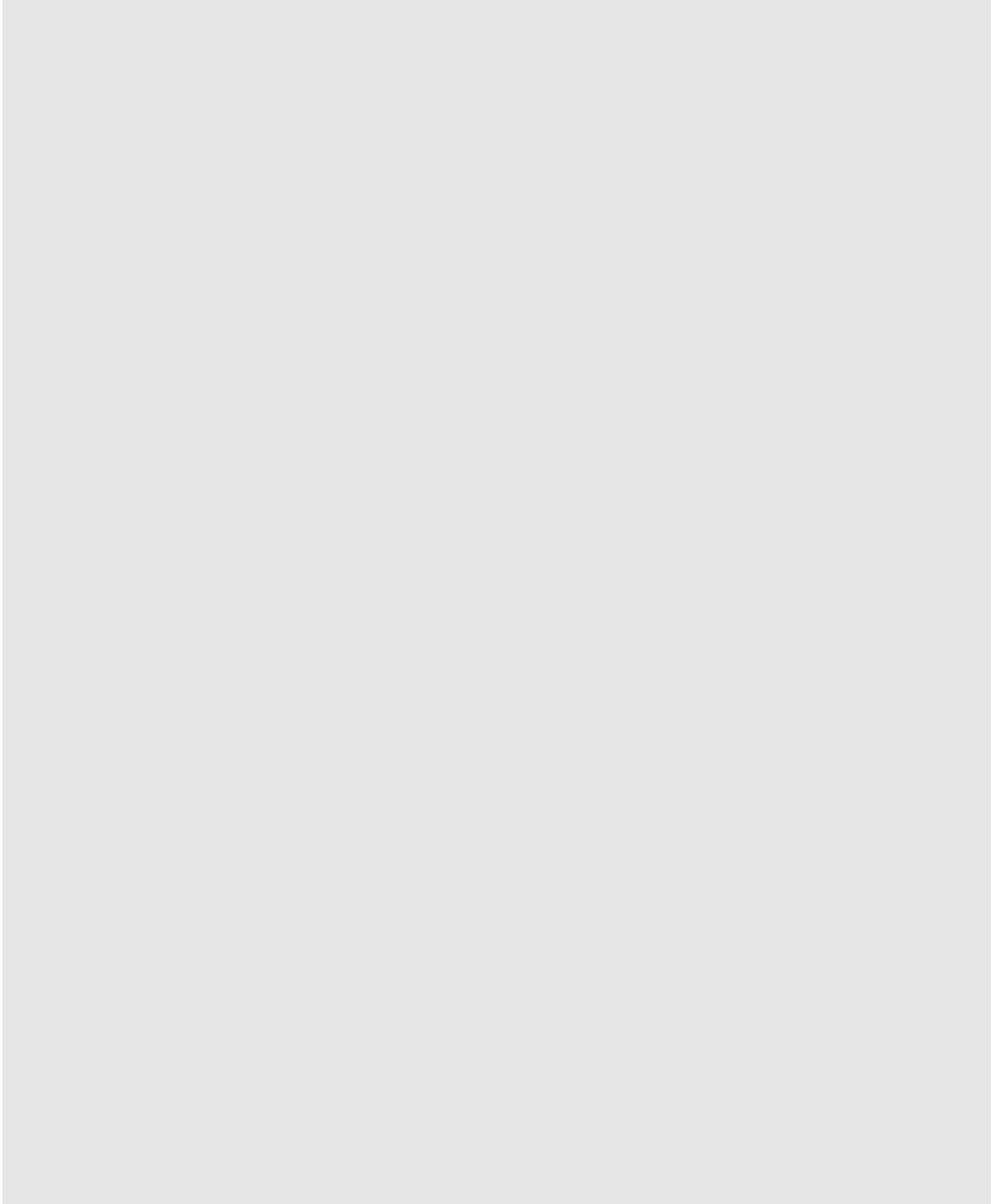
PRIMITIVISING GIRLS



Usamaru Furuya – Short Cuts (2002)

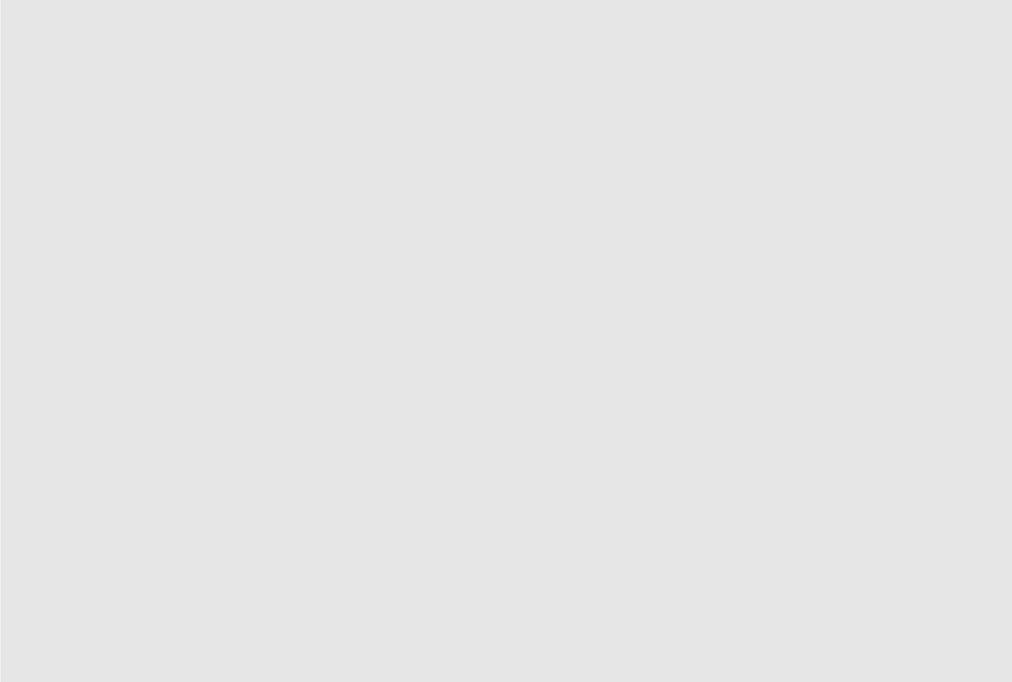
In the work of historian Kerry Ross, she stresses the importance of understanding photography and cameras in the context of their popularization during the rise of modern consumer culture in Japan (Ross 2015, 15), an industry that by the 1920s was already five decades old. (Ibid:11) By the early twentieth century, photography was a part of everyday life for the average Japanese consumer, a business with its own thriving domestic industry in the sale of cameras, accoutrements, magazines and how-to books, which “embedded the camera in everyday life as both consumer object and documentation device, linking photographic technology to the practical understanding of modernity” (Ibid:12). It is worth noting that, in this particular context, the ‘average Japanese consumer’ often meant the average *male* consumer – photography was considered a male-dominated field at this time, and attempts at diversification were treated with contempt, even by manufacturers.

When discussing women and photographic technology, “even the simplest of actions were depicted as too difficult to be left in the hands of a woman” (ibid:48), as in this satirical comic from 1930 (below). This comic depicts “a typical reaction to women who take control of technology, a response not so surprising during a time when controversies raged over the role of women in society” (Ibid:54), making tacit reference to the “modern girl” or *moga* of the early twentieth century who I will discuss in greater depth in chapter 5. A direct comparison can be drawn between this same defensive stance, against “women who take control of technology” (ibid), and the ways in which young women making use of vernacular photography – particularly purikura machines – have been discussed throughout the years.

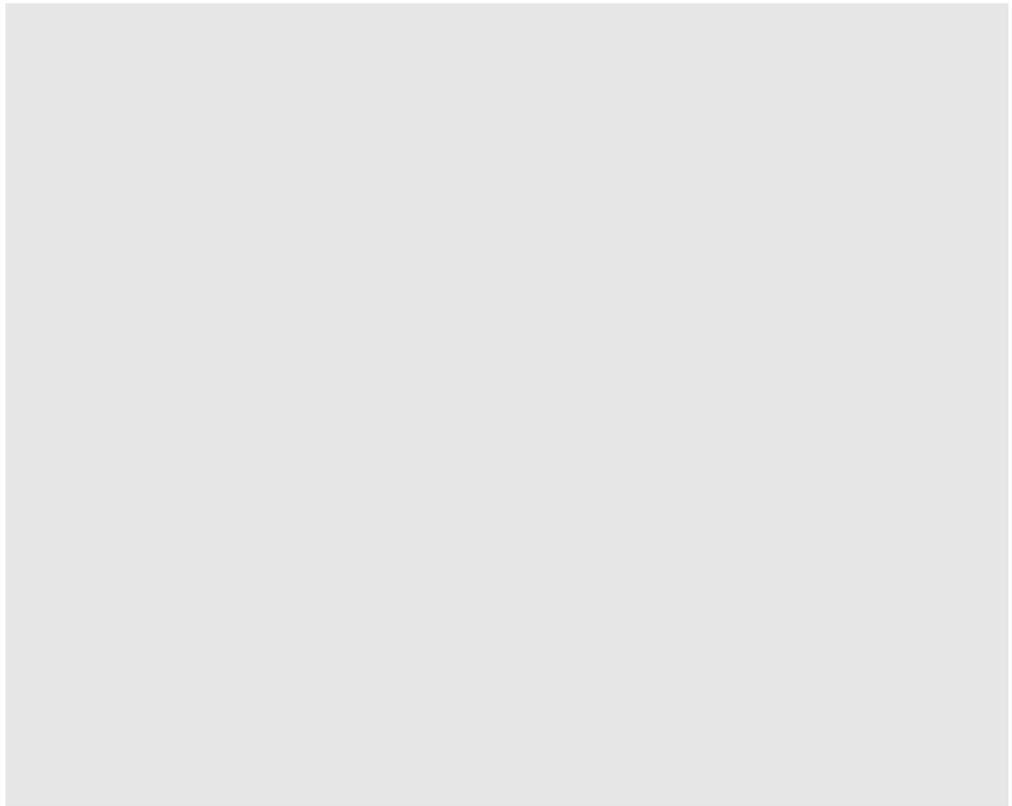


“A group of young, fashionable people are out for a day of fun at the beach. What better occasion to photograph? The young lady with her curly locks takes out a camera; her friends pose for the shot. She’s done a fine job setting up the pose. But when she sees the photo she took, lo and behold—a mass of curly locks! ... She holds her head in disbelief. Never put a woman behind a camera.” (Asahi Kamera 10, no. 2 August 1930: 216, cited in Ross 2015: 48)

During this time, a much-lauded aspect of photographic technologies was their ease of use, which was heralded by Takakuwa Katsuo as the gateway to “a people’s art form [*minshū geijutsu*]” (ibid, 42), while author Yasukochi Ji’ichiro further asserted that “Civilized people [*bunmeijin*] and the camera can no longer be separated.” (ibid, 46). In a roundtable discussion with domestic camera manufacturers in the April 1936 issue of *Asahi Kamera*, when asked about the lack of women in the field of amateur photography, the participants’ responses only referred to a perceived superficiality on the part of women, limiting their life experience to their future roles as wives and mothers, and ultimately stating “Let’s face it; Japan is still feudal. Photography does not fall into the realm of women’s activities.” (Ibid, 50) These statements contribute to a larger narrative of women as ‘primitive Other’, less developed than her male counterpart – relegating women outside of the categories of modernity and civility in their incompetence, and further barring them from participation in any form of national discourse or formation of the arts, such as *minshū geijutsu*. This is in direct contrast with a special article for *Asahi Kamera* from 1935 titled “The March of the Female Photographer”, wherein pioneering female photographers discussed their careers and experiences in the field – “most women defend their transgression into the masculine world of hobby photography by explaining that the days when the activity was only an option for men have finally ended.” (Ibid, 53)



Untitled (1998) – Miyashita Maki



Self Portrait (2001) – Nagashima Yurie

Jumping forward to the end of the 20th century, a sudden surge in the visibility of female photographers was felt in the art world of Japan, where “for the first time, female photographers [had] a significant presence” (Fraser 2011, 27), a development that coincided with the rise of purikura in the early 1990s². Critics dubbed them the “girly movement” (Asiaweek 1999), and categorized the style as “girl photography” (L. Miller 2005, 134) by ‘girl photographers’ – many of the women relegated to this heading, such as Hiromix, Nagashima Yurie and Miyashita Maki, created work which featured “intensely personal imagery” (Fraser 2011, 5), frequently with intentional deliberations on gender roles, which was often ridiculed and disregarded as “too narcissistic [and] lacking in content.” (Asiaweek 1999)

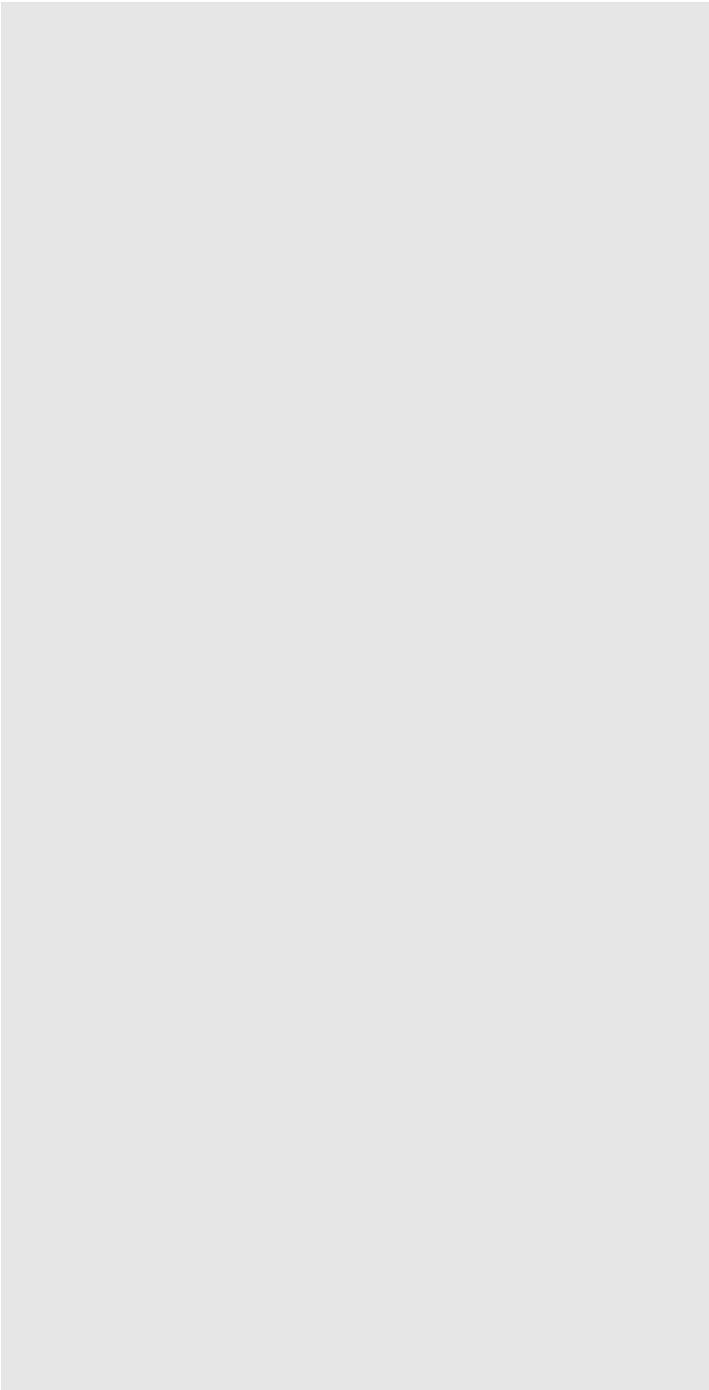
Much like their 1930s counterpart, contemporary critics of female photographers of the 1990s seem unable to imagine the use of cameras outside of a rigid set of normative gendered stereotypes – in attempting to explain the seemingly abrupt arrival of so many female photographers in the 1990s, it is telling that one theorist’s rationalization is based on technical advancements making cameras easy enough for women to use: “Perhaps one of the reasons for this shift is related to the camera becoming automatic: therefore being mechanically-minded is no longer required to be a photographer.”

² As this thesis is on vernacular photography by non-professionals, I have here focused primarily on the work of female photographers deemed to be part of the ‘girl photographer’ movement for their rise in prominence in the 1990s, as it coincided with a general increase in amateur photography by young women, in conjunction with the rise of purikura itself. As this chapter is only intended as a brief exploration of the history of photography in Japan, for the sake of brevity I was not able to expand on more of the contributions of professional female photographers from Japan throughout time, which this abrupt chronological skip does not seek to ignore. From pioneers such as late-Tokugawa era Shima Ryū (1823-1900), or Japan’s first female photojournalist, Tsuneko Sasamoto (b.1914), to Yamazawa Eiko (1899-1995) whose storied career spans both the pre- and post-war period - lest we forget the stark post-war photography of Tokiwa Toyoko (1928-2019) who depicted the red light district of post-occupation Yokohama, Watanabe Hitomi (b.1939) whose work depicts the raw, desolate aftermath of state violence and rioting during the student movements of the 1960s and 70s, or the *are-bure* (grainy-blurry) ruminations on trauma, scarring and the passage of time of Ishiuchi Miyako (b.1947), to name only a few.

(Fuku 1998, 1) The original Japanese phrase, *onnanoko shashinka* (literally, ‘girl photographer’), as well as its implied stance on female photographers, has received backlash from those who it has been used to describe – Nagashima Yurie has stated that,

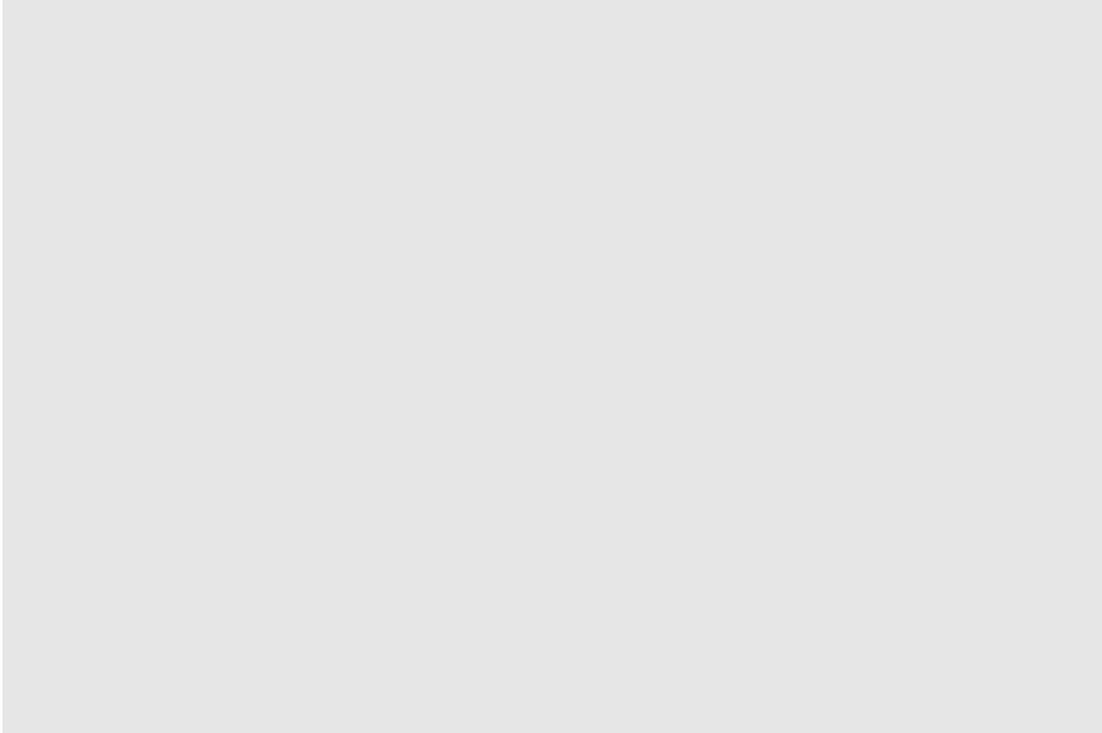
“I thought it was a crazy way to describe what I was doing from the beginning. It was so stupid, I thought there was no way that interpretation would be accepted by the world at large ... onnanoko shashinka was the label given to all women photographers in that era. It was horrifying ... we didn’t choose snapshot photography because of a lack of skills, or because we weren’t physically strong enough to handle larger camera equipment. It was because the portability of those cameras suited our work” (2018).

Even when ‘girl photography’ has been praised, it is often predicated on perceived qualities of inherent candidness, gleaned from their immediacy and lack of thought. Commenting on the photography of Hiromix, photographer Nobuyoshi Araki praised the ‘girl photographer’ movement by stating, “Girls tend to hold nothing back, and don’t think too much. Without thinking too much, they let their feelings rule their actions.” (cited in Miller 2005, 127) Photography historian Iizawa Kotaro similarly praised their work as “powerful” because of their instinctual nature and lack of studied proficiency – “while men tend to emphasize concept and technique ... female photographers are inspired more by their senses” (cited in Asiaweek 1999).



Considerations of ‘girl photography’ are comparable to larger Western evaluations of photographers in Japan which rely on stereotypical assumptions, often Orientalist in nature – a frequently recurring trope of Japan is their “‘innate’ connection to nature that is manifested in Japanese visual culture” (Fraser 2011, 7). These assessments are inherently primitivistic, rooted in notions of impulsivity and immediacy as “‘savage’ ... closer to the genuine and authentic in man” (Rony 1996, 27), a rhetoric that has been utilized when describing the primitive “Other”, the object of colonial anthropology.

Excerpt from promotional material for an early machine that allowed users to print their own photographs as purikura by inserting a proprietary DIGIO digital camera floppy disk (Seventeen Magazine - March 1997)



High school students queuing to use a purikura machine, 1997 (via Bunshun 2021)

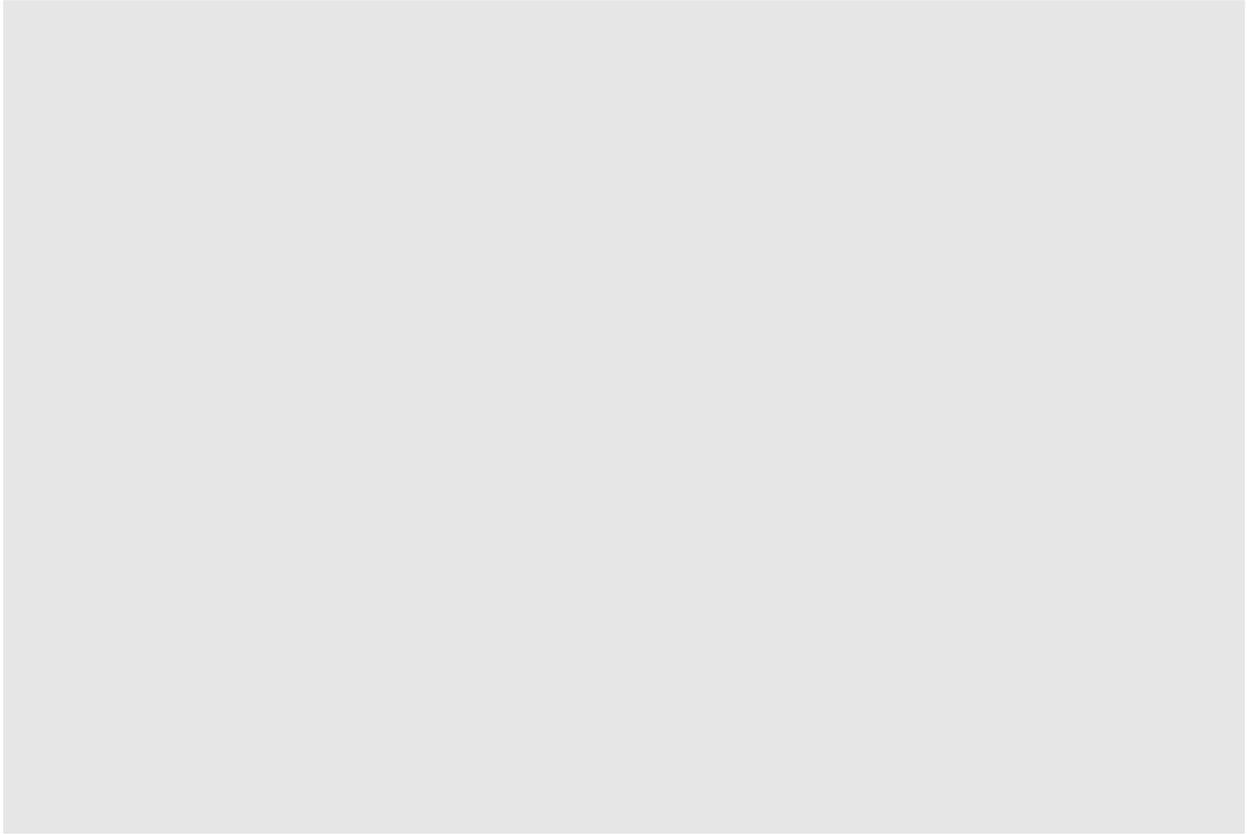
In describing purikura users, Donald Richie defines the photographs as “a statement of group identity” (Richie 2003, 62), further asserting that purikura production and cute consumption are effectively utilized to craft a group identity as “the small, the inoffensive, the affectedly attractive, as in a child or small animal” (Ibid) - repeated comparisons by theorists between girls and animals are further evidence of primitivism, which places young women “almost outside the category of humanity” (MacDougall 2006, 85). Brian McVeigh similarly tackles the ‘cute’ aspect of girls’ culture, making an explicit comparison between young women and domesticated animals:

“A common and important element in cute ... is animals. Why their use in the cultural discourse on cuteness? ... as living, breathing, active things, they exist somewhere in between being human but not quite human, controllable but not too controllable ... Women, as beings that for many men need to be ‘protected, cuddled, held and ‘controlled’, are ... associated with animals.” (McVeigh 1996, 295)

This is not dissimilar from the colonial rhetoric of early anthropology, which saw the 'primitive' as "missing links' between man and the animal kingdom" (Rony 1996, 27). Many of the foundational anthropological associations were established just as Darwin's *Origin of Species* was published in 1859, with the result that then-contemporary anthropology "conceived of the races as being almost species-like" (ibid). This evolutionary notion was the driving force behind much colonial photography, towards a racial hierarchy – the measurement and photographic recording of bodies was standard practice among Social Darwinists because it "allowed visual comparisons to be made between the so-called different 'races', which could in turn be used to justify imperialism." (Maxwell 2013, 125)

Though it was neither the first instant nor automatic photographic machine, in 1925, the inventor Anatol Josepho patented what would become the most prevalent form of photo booth to have enduring worldwide success, the Photomaton. (Pellicer 2011) The introduction of the Photomaton helped to democratize photographic representation by providing users with a cheap, readily available resource that inadvertently "eliminated the eye of the photographer" (ibid, 8), allowing users both intimacy and agency in their photographic exploits. These Photomaton strips quickly became "one of the standard forms of identity imagery" (ibid), being used in passports, visas and other forms of official identification. Governmental institutions had been utilizing photographs for the rapid identification of criminals since the late 19th century, and by the early 1930s the Photomaton had become the standard photographic identification portrait for police forces across Europe as a form of regulatory disciplinary authority. (ibid, 81) Roland Barthes has commented on this process as creating an icon of criminality, whereby "the Photomat always turns you into a criminal type, wanted by the police" (Barthes 1981, 12), not unlike the racialized 'types' of colonial photography. As an affordable photographic medium that allows users access to forms of visual agency, purikura has also been utilized by critics to further cultivate the kogal typology, serving a similar role to that of the Photomaton.

ESCAPISM AND THE CULT OF CUTE



(Estèbe 2020c)

“The masturbatory attitude of confining oneself in a world of one’s own creation might be seen as a retreat to the safe haven of fantasy and a narcissistic indulgence”

(Iida 2001, 228)

A defining feature of girls' culture in Japan is "*kawaii*", or cuteness – purikura in particular has been noted for its ties with the aesthetic (Chalfen and Murui 2004; Sandbye 2013), which some critics have described as an "obsession" (McVeigh 1996, 292) among Japanese women. Cuteness, Brian McVeigh proclaims, is overwhelming and unavoidable – "in Japan, one simply cannot escape" (ibid).

Descriptions of cute culture – frequently referred to as a 'cult' (Chalfen & Murui 2004; McVeigh 1996; Granot, Alejandro, and Russell 2014; Locher 2007; Okazaki 2013; Marcus 2002; McVeigh 2000) – often rely on tropes of diminution and infantilism, which are frequently used in the context of primitivism. "Cuteness" is largely understood by academia to be "immature and small" (Okazaki 2013, 7) – in particular, Granot et al summarize that the Japanese notion of cuteness "originates from 'babyness'" and is intrinsically female (Granot, Alejandro, and Russell 2014, 70). McVeigh further delineates a primary feature of cuteness as "having features of an infant" (McVeigh 1996, 295), which Kinsella expands, stating "cute fashion in Japan ... was all about 'becoming' the cute object itself by acting infantile" (Kinsella 1995, 237).

These descriptions of cute culture, whereby females are equivalent to children (Goffman 1979, 5), feed into the broader theme of primitivization in the characterization of young women in Japan. This association is only further strengthened by the notion that "cute is associated with childlike innocence, a naïve spontaneity" (Granot, Alejandro, and Russell 2014, 71), which is similar to critiques of 'girl photographers' as "too naïve and self-conscious." (Asiaweek 1999) Many analyses of young women in Japan rely on these tropes – a common notion of Japanese girls' culture as childlike, which can be further linked to notions of the primitive as "intellectually inferior and childlike" (Rony 1996, 27). Considering David MacDougall's assertion that since the denunciation of racial theories of progress, children have "taken over the position of 'primitives' in anthropology" (MacDougall 2006, 85), it is worth approaching these themes with caution, and attempting to produce a contextualizing counter-narrative which incorporates the perspectives of the young women in question.

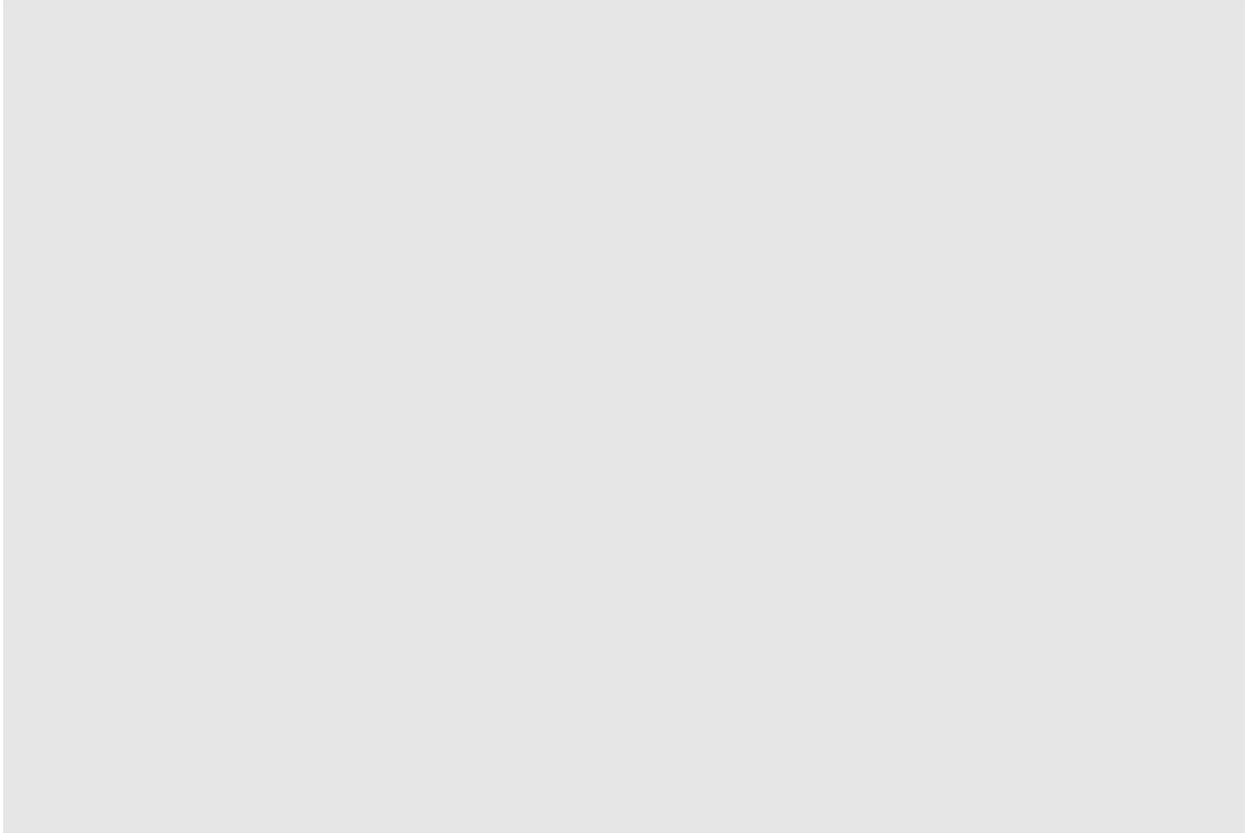
Feminists have long criticized the usage of juvenile reference terms as patronizing, because they frame women as being "immature, powerless, and not needing to be

taken seriously” (Lazar 2009, 390). However, those that are critical of cute culture contend that young women in this ‘cult of cute’ are not just *presented* as immature and powerless, but are willfully rendering themselves so by refusing to be adults at all. Cute culture is seen as being “employed by young women to evade adulthood” (Gwynne 2013, 333; Newitz 2002), or as a “rebellion from adulthood” (Granot, Alejandro, and Russell 2014, 77) – young women are “quite obviously ... aspiring to not grow up at all [by] immersing themselves in cute culture” (Kinsella 1995, 247), leaving them “emotionally underdeveloped” (McVeigh 1996, 231). Kinsella further characterizes cute culture as a fundamentally disabling (ibid 1995, 236) aesthetic:

“Being cute meant behaving childlike - which involved an act of self-mutilation, posing with pigeon toes, pulling wide-eyed innocent expressions, dieting, acting stupid ... in cute culture, young people became popular according to their apparent weakness, dependence and inability”
(ibid: 237)

This reveals a new dimension to this typology of young women, deceived by “cuteness [which] glamorizes babyish, mindless behavior in women” (Granot, Alejandro, and Russell 2014, 82). Iida further argues that it is young women themselves who are actively perpetuating the kogal typology by identifying with it, “eager to replicate its signatory images” (Iida 2001:230) and damaging their own ‘true selves’:

“The girls market themselves by becoming pure and empty signs ... [they] erase the traits of their ‘true’ personalities ... by virtue of identifying themselves with the anonymous social type of the [kogal], the girls act out an imagined identity ... all the while thinking that their ‘true selves’ remain unaffected”
(Iida 2001:232)



Fujifilm camera advertisement (*Seventeen Magazine* - January 1996)

Kogal typologies of young women are in many respects comparable to those produced by colonial photography – just as ethnographic and anthropometric photography treated their subjects as interchangeable, anonymous types, these girls are seen as “practically mute. They are there to be acted *upon*, not to act.” (MacDougall 2006:70) This muteness is also remarked upon in Kinsella’s work – she acknowledges the silence, but hypothesizes it is cuteness itself that is silencing young women - “cute things can’t walk, can’t talk, can’t in fact do anything at all for themselves” (Kinsella 1995, 236). By this measure, much like the colonial subjects of old, young women have become objects of knowledge, “represented as, and wishfully rendered, incapable of speaking, acting or organizing for themselves” (Tagg 1988, 11), a missed opportunity to engage with young women or acknowledge the ways in which they might enact agency in their own representation.



(Purikura machine exterior - author's own 2016)



(Purikura advertisement - author's own 2016)

The rhetoric of escapism and illusory control is also prevalent in discussions of cute culture – in lamenting “the societal infantilization that [cute] culture represents” (Garger 2007), some even blame it for creating “a generation of youth unable to face reality.” (Ibid) Similarly, cuteness has been delineated as a site for the imaginary (Granot, Alejandro, and Russell 2014, 70) where young women “inhabit a sugary world of make-believe” (McVeigh 1996, 305). Granot et al state unequivocally that the consumption of cute goods “provides an escape for the consumers” (Granot, Alejandro, and Russell 2014, 80), echoed in Kinsella, who posits that cute culture is “almost entirely devoted to an escape from reality” (Kinsella 1995, 252). While it has been further argued that “the fantastical nature of cute culture itself contains so few references to real life and society that there is in any case little way of understanding it in terms of everyday life” (ibid: 245), as part of the everyday lived experience of the young women I worked with, purikura and cute consumption are more mundane than they are ‘fantastical’. Through the use of ethnographic methodologies, it is possible to view these activities with the nuanced perspectives of those who actively participate rather than disregarding them as incomprehensible.

PURIKURA AND ETHNOGRAPHY

Most ethnographic enterprises did not employ participant observation until its widespread use in the 1940s - during the 19th century, little thought was given to the concept that “the people’s own voices, in their own words, should be heard and listened to.” (Okley 2013, 17) These colonial roots cannot be disregarded as anachronisms of a previous era (Hardin and Clarke 2012, 6) – the same formative echoes remain ever present in anthropological work conducted to this day, often “transmuted into new domains of exploration and exploitation.” (Ibid)

Gordon Mathews has delved into the topic of colonial strains in the current ethnographic research conducted in Japan at some length, proposing that there is a divide between the anthropological representations of Japan as written by native and non-native researchers. He explains that the research questions proposed, and the presentation of

data is hugely different depending on the nationality of the researcher. (Mathews 2004, 114) Kuwayama Takami has stated that many Japanese anthropologists “reject outright” books on Japan written in English (Kuwayama 1997, 56), which Mathews proposes is because “what is attractive to these [American] scholars is alterity, difference, and otherness.” (Mathews 2004, 114) This difference in perspective, Mathews believes, is rooted in the colonial foundations of the field:

“The discipline of anthropology has been largely the prerogative of colonizers studying the colonized; anthropology has traditionally consisted of Americans and Europeans doing research in and writing about other societies, often societies they had colonized or otherwise dominated.”
(Mathews 2004, 115)

This underlying context of ‘othering’ and alterity still holds some sway in the anthropological study of Japan, where Japanese anthropology seems to continue to hold “the stance of the colonized.” (Ibid) William Kelly has postulated that this arises from a popular and scholarly rhetoric that measures Japan against an idealized West, finding it “deficient, deviant, or just puzzling” (W. W. Kelly 1991, 396), a discursive Orientalism that renders Japan “no more than the source of raw materials for the refinements of the American and European theoretical mill.” (Mathews 2004, 125) The anthropological study of purikura has been, to this point, positioned firmly in an academic environment where the United States and Great Britain have the power to dictate the knowledge that is found within the academic field. (Kuwayama 1997)

Prior to my own fieldwork in 2016, research on purikura had previously been undertaken by several anthropologists, whose work I will be discussing as part of an analysis of anthropological methodologies, particularly that of participant observation. Renowned as a significant, formative methodology of anthropology, participant observation has been noted by James Clifford as a hallmark of the discipline (Clifford 1988), and is largely understood to be “accepted almost universally as the central and defining method of research in cultural anthropology” (DeWalt and DeWalt 2011, 1). I would like to consider this methodology, and its proposed “special” nature (Geertz 2012), in the

context of previous anthropological research that has been conducted on purikura. This exploration will further elucidate the history of participant observation as a methodology, its contexts within colonialism, and current theoretical critiques of its usage.

Richard Chalfen and Mai Murui conducted some of the first research on purikura - though specific dates remain absent from the written piece, it appears from their citations, and the degree of technological development (sticker innovation limited to frames and backgrounds), that their research was conducted sometime in the late 1990s. Their work focuses on what they deem “issues of consumerism, youth culture and gender as related to the social order.” (Chalfen and Murui 2004, 55) They theorize that use of the machines can be divided into private and public (Chalfen and Murui 2004, 63) spheres – which consist of ‘private’ distribution within peer groups, and ‘public’ display by sticking photographs onto belongings. They elaborate that, through the private and public exhibition of purikura stickers, there exist negotiations of “personal and social affiliation” (Chalfen and Murui 2004, 59), which they posit is a “statement of relationship, group membership and belonging” (Chalfen and Murui 2004, 66). The methodologies employed by Chalfen and Murui consisted of survey questionnaires given to 20 high school students in the Shizuoka area of Japan, but do not mention whether any participant observation was used. They also state that they interviewed a “small sample” of college students studying at Temple University in Philadelphia, an unknown number of American college students, “mostly” students at Ohio State University, and a similarly unknown number of American graduate students who had previously lived in Japan. (Chalfen and Murui 2004, 72)

The following year, research on purikura was published by Laura Miller, though no specific dates are given for when the research was conducted. As with Chalfen and Murui, she notes that the primary purpose of purikura “is to strengthen friendship networks by commemorating social groupings and events” (L. Miller 2005, 128). Her work predominantly stresses the “female-centered innovation” (ibid) of the practice, which she believes reveals forms of gender transgression that are the result of “female-driven technological developments that stimulate new forms of consumption.” (Ibid) Similarly to Chalfen and Murui, Miller points out the importance of private and public display of purikura images - with the technological advancements of the machines

clearly shown in her work, Chalfen and Murui's "public" limitations of stickers displayed on belongings has opened to a much wider audience via the internet, eroding the distinction between private and public. (Haraway 1991)

Miller, a linguistic anthropologist, focuses the majority of her work on a technological advancement called *rakugaki* (graffiti, scribbles), which allows users to digitally draw on the photographs, where "within girls' culture a photograph is considered bare and unfinished until it has been marked up with text" (L. Miller 2005, 131). Miller's research methodologies are limited to archival research, particularly of girls' fashion magazines (Egg, Popteen and Cawaii), of which the data is largely drawn from "non-scientific mini-polls" (L. Miller 2005, 130). Her work contains no quotes from users other than those cited in magazines, and she states that "all photo graffiti and magazine quotes were originally published in Japanese" (L. Miller 2005, 139), but does not elaborate further on her sources - as such, it is not clear whether she conducted any participant observation.

The next set of researchers to tackle purikura were Daisuke Okabe, Mizuko Ito, Aico Shimizu and Jan Chipchase, who conducted their research between 2006 and 2007. They framed their work around themes of "visual archiving and communication" (Okabe et al. 2009, 73), with a particular focus on *puricho*, albums of collected purikura photographs. They state that their research goal was "to describe everyday practices of purikura taking, archiving, and sharing" (Okabe et al. 2009, 74), which they define as "a mechanism for young people to document and display their personal identities, social status and networks". (Ibid) Their research took place during three days in the summer of 2006, where they "observed game centers with purikura booths" (Okabe et al. 2009, 76), and additionally "conducted spot interviews with 18 users exiting the booths" (ibid), employing carefully chosen questions which they delineate within their work. During this time, they also interviewed "a staff member at each of the three game centers" (ibid), as well as interviewing "a representative of a purikura booth manufacturer" (ibid), though neither of these appears in the final piece. In addition to these observations and spot interviews, between 2006 and 2007 they "conducted in-depth interviews and shadowed young women ... who were frequent purikura users", totaling 16 between the ages of 15 and 21. It does not appear that they used participant observation as such – although they mention taking purikura with their interlocutors on one occasion, they specifically

describe it as occurring after the interview, and do not describe it as being part of their methodological practice. (Okabe et al. 2009, 84)

Mette Sandbye conducted some of the most recent research surrounding purikura in 2010, which she further elaborated on in 2018, describing purikura as “affective, aesthetic labor.” (Sandbye 2018, 305) Like other previous work, she acknowledges the social and communicative elements of the photographs, describing their uses as “social capital” (Sandbye 2013, 117), exchanged “as a means of strengthening social bonds, friendship ties and group belonging.” (Sandbye 2013, 111) Her work focuses mainly on the materiality of the images, explaining that “materiality has a profound impact on the way photographs are read, used and understood” (ibid), and stating that this materiality is “considered to be of major importance to the users.” (Ibid) Her work, as such, largely concentrates on the *puricho* (collected purikura albums) that her interlocutors shared with her, which thematically fits with her body of past research on materiality and photo albums. (Sandbye 2009; 2011)

Sandbye states that her methodology consisted of interviewing 10 female purikura users between the ages of 18 and 23, all of whom were junior college and undergraduate students in the Tokyo Metropolitan area. (Sandbye 2013, 114) As mentioned above, her work examines the collected albums of purikura users, which largely seems to have occurred in years gone by rather than the more recent past. She does not mention using participant observation at any stage, and none seems evident from the content of the written piece – however, she does mention several times that she has herself taken purikura, which leads her at one point to state that she can confirm having felt the same “‘high tension’ during the production” (Sandbye 2013, 123) as described by interviewees.

Another limitation of Sandbye’s work is in her choice to only interview young women about their collected albums and past use. (Sandbye 2013, 114) As such, her interpretation of the social uses of purikura are firmly placed as a “memory activity” (Sandbye 2013, 117), making consistent reference to the form as something occurring in the past, with no sense of the everyday experience of current users – in contradiction, she describes purikura as “more ... an activity or a ‘doing’ than as images related to a

nostalgic freezing or mummification of a moment ‘that has been’” (Sandbye 2013, 116). The concentrated nostalgia of the women she worked with seeps through this analysis, however, as summarized by one informant’s description of her purikura album as “a diary of happy memories.” (Sandbye 2013, 117)

Richard Chalfen and Mai Murui’s 2004 work, as mentioned previously, did not appear to feature any participant observation - as indicated by all other accounts, taking purikura is a group activity, where “purikura are rarely, if ever, taken alone” (Okabe et al. 2009, 77), a theme consistently repeated in Miller (2005, 131), Sandbye (2013, 119), and in Chalfen and Murui’s own work. They describe purikura as “an image and statement of relationship, group membership and belonging” (Chalfen and Murui 2004, 177), and additionally state that, “purikura practice tends to solidify a social network of friendships with proof that people were together” (Chalfen and Murui 2004, 181). As a “social tool” (ibid), Chalfen’s non-participant use of purikura does, in fact, do its job – “[purikura] tends to enhance a sense of literal visibility, in that social relations become visible in new ways” (Chalfen and Murui 2004, 176). In Chalfen’s case, what this “literal visibility” makes clear is a lack of social relations with purikura users.

A confusing element within the work of Chalfen and Murui is their use of data drawn from non-Japanese interviewees, noted only as “American graduate students ... who worked in Japan” (Chalfen and Murui 2004, 185), particularly a comment assembled from an American colleague of Chalfen’s. Purikura, they explain, “...is best summarized by a statement made by an American colleague who has lived and worked in Japan for over 18 years” (Chalfen and Murui 2004, 177) – his commentary is as follows:

“If I were to speculate – really right off the top of my head – on the popularity of [purikura]...They present themselves as adorable, cuddly little things, desperate to preserve this one instant when they are genuinely cute. What better way than to accumulate a cute little notebook full of cute little images of themselves and their girl friends, mugging into the camera and looking cute.’ (George Deux, personal communication September 1998)”

While it still remains unclear why purikura – a Japanese, female-centered, youth-driven phenomenon – is “best summarized” (ibid) by an adult, male, American, the more particular issue here is the condescending nature of his commentary. His own notation that his opinion is merely “speculation” (ibid) is in opposition to the basic tenets of participant observation, whereby “...researchers are concerned with the meanings people attach to things in their lives ... understanding people from their own frames of reference and experiencing reality as they experience it.” (Taylor and Bogdan 1998, 7) The evident contempt this American man feels for purikura users – and, by association, Japanese girls – is at odds with a methodology that requires researchers to “empathize and identify with the people they study in order to understand how those people see things.” (ibid) Early in their work, Chalfen and Murui pose the question, “What are [purikura] users saying about themselves and their identities as members of Japanese culture?” (Chalfen and Murui 2004, 56) An answer, perhaps, would have been better gleaned from the users themselves.

Use of purikura machines has been described variously as “female-centered” (Miller 2005, 187), “part of girl culture” (Sandbye 2013, 111), and “overwhelmingly female” (Okabe et al. 2009, 78) – Chalfen & Murui also take note of what they deem “female bias” (Chalfen and Murui 2004, 178). Even beyond marketing “directed towards attracting female users” (Chalfen and Murui 2004, 168), Miller notes that during the late 1990s, some game centers “excluded unaccompanied boys from entering” (L. Miller 2005, 134), a fact Chalfen and Murui confirm, (Chalfen and Murui 2004, 183) and which was still true of most dedicated purikura establishments during my fieldwork in 2016. Had Chalfen and Murui investigated this trend further, they may not have made the assertion that this was endorsed to “gain more profit by focusing on women” (ibid), as multiple sources indicate that this gendered separation was a preventative measure enacted following the sexual harassment of purikura users. (L. Miller 2005, 134; Ashcraft 2009)

Participant observation seeks to bridge the gap between the observer and the observed, whereby “researchers adopt strategies that parallel how people act in the course of daily life” interacting with informants in an unobtrusive manner. (Taylor and Bogdan 1998, 8; Lincoln and Guba 1985) A consideration of the lack of participant

observation in Chalfen and Murui's work raises additional concerns about their indifference regarding the emotional security of the young women they studied. The position of the social scientist as they are located in the field cannot go unobserved by those that are themselves the apparent object of observation – this presumed “invisibility and detachment” (Okely 2013, 15) is an impossibility.



Gender segregated purikura establishment (author's own 2012)

CONTESTED VISIBILITY

Prior to my fieldwork in 2016, I had previously lived in Tokyo attending an intensive Japanese language course over the summer of 2012. During the first day's induction seminar, our cohort of university students were instructed at great length about what was deemed appropriate and inappropriate behavior for polite participation in Japanese society. Our instructor took particular care when explaining what were perceived to be basic, if unstated, standards regarding the use of public transport, of which trains took

precedence. We were cautioned to not eat while riding the train, to be gracious when playing music through headphones, to always offer seats to the elderly - and if refused, to continue offering until accepted, as a matter of course. After a pause before moving on to the next facet of our crash course in courtesy, our instructor stuttered, clearing his throat, seemingly uncomfortable with whatever topic came next. "These rules are, ah, regarding our female students" he intoned, nervously gesturing towards our desks.

His trepidation seemed somewhat unfounded when he began to list off the school's recommended code of conduct - he first instructed us that it was inappropriate to apply makeup while on the train, saying only that it would make others around us uncomfortable, and was therefore inadvisably rude (a subject I will return to in chapter 5). Following this, he turned to the whiteboard sheepishly, where he squeakily drew an upright triangle, seemingly held aloft by a loop - a hand strap. Pointing with his dry erase marker, he asked - "when you've ridden the train in the past, have you held on to one of these before?" I looked around me, confused, before slowly nodding in unison with many of my female compatriots. Our instructor gestured in front of himself, a sweeping motion towards his knees, and queried further - "and you've been aware of the people sitting in front of you, while you stand?" We again nodded, a confused murmur spreading across the room. The instructor seemed to sag, as he turned again to the whiteboard, this time drawing what appeared to be a camera inside of a bag, pointing upwards. "When holding on to the hand straps on trains, there are some people that may, that is to say, attempt to take pictures of you. From below." He paused, slightly, before recommending that if possible, we just steer clear of any cameramen we spot with their lens cap off - or, failing that, to wear "safety shorts" under any skirts or dresses. In the silence that followed, he moved on, writing in brisk capitals - "*CHIKAN*", followed by the Japanese (痴漢・ちかん) for *molester*. "If you hear or see this word mentioned anywhere, please know that it is actually very serious..." He faltered, seemingly lost for words, as he tried to explain something that appeared to make him very uncomfortable. "Sometimes there are men on trains who will try and touch you. Without your permission." He coughed before continuing - "I would avoid rush hour trains, if possible. Or, you may find the women-only train cars preferable."



(author's own 2016)

These women-only train cars have existed in Japan since 1912, where they were initially introduced as a form of gender segregation for commuting students. Since then, similar train cars have appeared periodically across the country, with increased prevalence for the express purpose of preventing molestation and sexual harassment, beginning in the year 2000. (Railway Journal 2002; Horii and Burgess 2012) While local government and railway companies have cooperated to combat the problem through awareness campaigns and harsher sentences, this has not had a noticeable impact on the trend (U.S. Department Of State 2003), as exemplified by the threefold increase in reported gropings over an 8 year period, as cited by Tokyo police in 2004. (Joyce 2005) When introduced to the concept of these train cars and their stated purpose during my induction seminar, I did not yet fully understand the need for such women-only spaces - I have always avoided taking rush hour trains anyway, so I didn't really see the danger as such. I accepted the warnings from our instructor, but I did not understand how accurately this introductory session would end up reflecting many of my experiences living in Japan, particularly during my later fieldwork in 2016. In practice, the lived reality of traveling through the world as a woman in Japan frequently entails a simultaneously pervasive and mundane negotiation of the non-consensual sexualization of the female body, especially on public transport, and often through photographic means.

I recall queuing for a mid-morning connection at Kichijoji station when the crowd of waiting passengers I was among were startled by a clamorous ruckus as two men were escorted off a train that had just arrived. One of the two, his arm held firmly by a station employee, was being violently pummeled by the other, scattering shocked commuters in their wake. Both men were dressed identically in black suits with briefcases, the standard dress code for *salaryman*, and the station employee did not intervene as the man he was carting off continued to be assaulted by the other, only going so far as to stop and wait while the aggressor mashed his target's head repeatedly into the window of the passenger car they alighted from. The employee attempted to gently lead the two towards the station office while the assault continued, and we all peered after the trio in shock as they made their way up the escalator, punches raining down on the cowed head of his apparent victim.

Getting on the train in the shocked aftermath of the incident, as people chattered quietly amongst themselves, I gleaned that between the two, the man who was being assaulted had in fact himself been caught sexually assaulting a female passenger. This incident stuck with me afterwards, for obvious reasons - but this memory was in many ways an outlier, in large part for the particularity of its intensity and violence. On reflection, the aspects of this incident that make it worth mentioning are not so much the bombastic ones, but the surrounding mundanity - what makes this memory comparable to the majority of my experiences of similar situations is not its brutality, but how quickly the world moved on. Within minutes of the incident occurring, the crowd of morning commuters returned to their former solitary contemplations. Had you gotten on at the next station, you would not have known anything had happened at all.



(author's own 2016)

ち かん

「痴漢です！」

被害者の方も、周りの方も、勇気と声を出して痴漢をなくそう。

私たちは、痴漢行為を許しません。
 駅や電車内で、痴漢被害にあわれた方は、駅係員、車掌、
 警備員または警察官までお知らせください。

各都県の鉄道警察隊でも被害相談をお受けしています。
JR東日本・東武・西武・京成・京王・小田急・東急・京急・東京メトロ・相鉄・新京成・東京都交通局・
 北総・りんかい線・東京モノレール・つくばエクスプレス・多摩モノレール・ゆりかもめ・横浜高速
 警察庁・警視庁・埼玉県警察・千葉県警察・神奈川県警察

痴漢被害にあった際の通報は、**110番** 痴漢被害の悩みや対策の相談は、警察相談ダイヤル **#9110**

(author's own 2016)

“Molester!”

Let's prevent molesters with the courageous voices of victims and those around them.
 We do not allow molestation. If you are affected by a molester in a station or train, please inform the
 station staff, conductor, guard or police officer.”



(author's own 2016)

"Molestation is a crime"

These encounters were not exclusively experienced in the context of rush hour trains, but often occurred during calm, mid-day train journeys. Once, while riding a half-full train to Shibuya at lunchtime, a woman seated next to me suddenly got up and moved down our train car. The man who had been next to her casually placed his hand out in the center of the seat that had been vacated, splaying his fingers as he gradually leaned his weight towards me. Glancing nervously around, I saw other women across from me also clock his behavior, and I could see that his hand was gradually inching across the seat as he let out an exaggerated yawn to lean on his own arm, further sliding it my way. Feeling thoroughly unnerved, I abruptly stood, following my former seat-mate to walk down the train car to another available space. By this point, in some sort of unspoken exodus, the rest of the women in his row also stood and vacated the area surrounding our listing 'handyman', leaving him stranded, alone. At the stations that followed, when other women alighted and saw that no other female passengers were seated next to the offender, I watched as they silently, unanimously opted for different seating options.

On another occasion, while waiting for train doors to open, a man in his late 60s 'accidentally' tripped while exiting the train, his outstretched palm landing square on my left breast, before giving it an aggressive squeeze. I staggered backward, shocked, while he raised his hands, pretending to be dizzy - as if I had bumped into *him*. The surrounding passengers stared at me in disapproval, and several people glared at me while reaching out to help my dazed assailant, who swooned dramatically. I felt winded, nauseated, and yet somehow I was being blamed for the incident - all without a word being said.



Police mascots Pipo-kun and Piko-chan warn would-be criminals:

“WARNING!!

Non-consensual photography and molestation are crimes!!

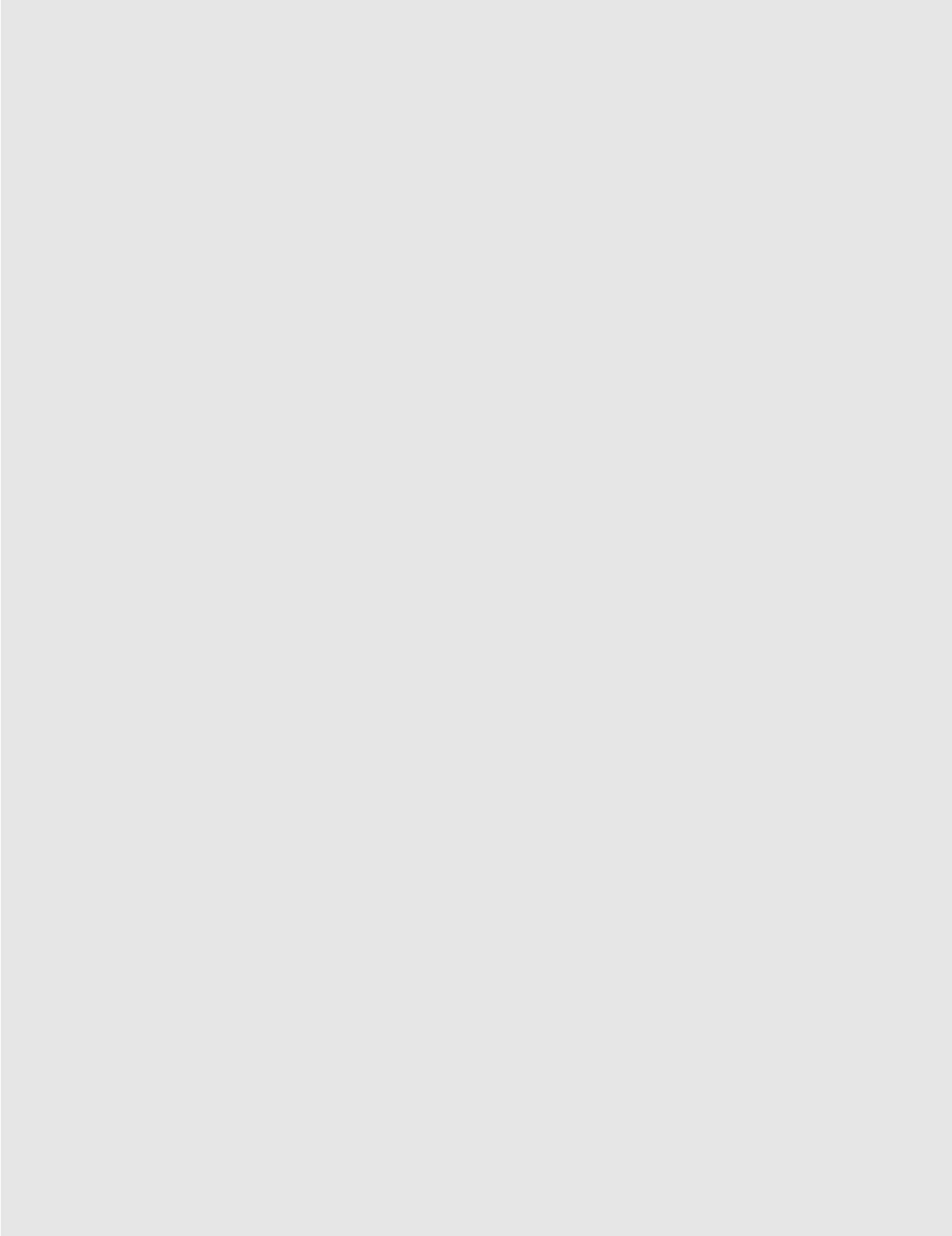
Stop it. Society will not forgive you.”

(author’s own 2016)



(author's own 2016)

Over the breadth of my fieldwork there were many instances of men surreptitiously taking my photograph on trains and escalators with their phones, a fact I was only made aware of because of the egregiously loud shutter noise. Intended as a deterrent to covert photography, the shutter sound on mobile phones sold in Japan cannot be turned off (M. Smith 2016), though in my experience this served less as a discouragement to photographers than as a warning to those photographed. However, the plausible deniability granted to those taking photographs with their mobile phones created in myself a sense of paranoia I couldn't shake - surely they weren't taking *my* picture? If I were to accuse them (incorrectly or otherwise), I would look like a narcissist, or at the very least a 'crazy foreigner' - and how could I even prove it? Grab their phone? Force them to get off at the next station and have a staff member deal with it? I have often wondered if it would even be possible to deal with this kind of incident without derailing your own day entirely. These men seemed to thrive on these difficulties, allowing for the unabashed, unremarked frequency of these transgressions to become part of the wearisome monotony of day-to-day life as a woman in public spaces.



(Araki 2005)

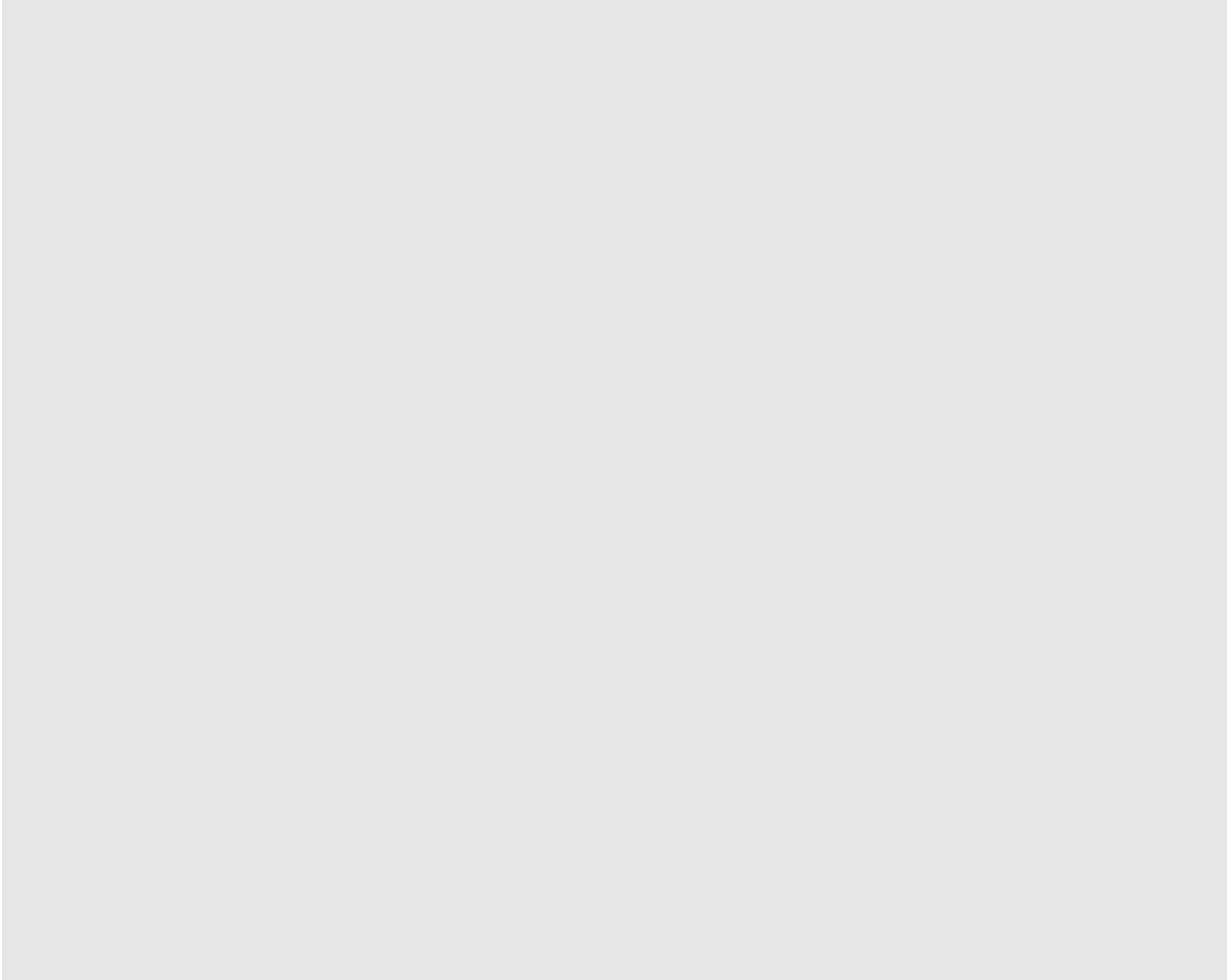
In thinking through these experiences, it is worth noting that there are parallels that can be drawn with the world of Japanese art photography - Nobuyoshi Araki, “one of Japan's most celebrated erotic photographers,” (BBC News 2018) famed purveyor of shock-and-awe works that play with the boundaries between art and pornography, is no stranger to controversy over his depiction of the female form. Beginning at the age of 23, a young Araki “obsessively photographed fellow passengers during his daily trips to and from work on the Tokyo subway” (Araki 2005), continuing the surreptitious practice for a nearly 10 year period from 1963 through 1972. While the portraits seen across the entirety of the collected works of that period show a broad variety of ages and genders, the ways in which Araki has described his tactics and aims for this project are unnervingly similar to the shared experiences of myself and my interlocutors regarding *tousatsu* (non-consensual photography) on trains. In the interview that accompanies the book of collected photos, *Subway Love (2005)*, Araki makes repeated reference to his scopophilic predilection for viewing and photographing female bodies without their consent - in describing the origins of the project, he prefaces:

“You know what it’s like, right? You get on the train, and so does everybody else too: piling in, sitting down. You need guts to take a good look at whoever’s there, sitting in front of you. So what I’d do first was look at the ads, you know. I’d do that, and then, oh-so-very-slowly, I’d take a look at the person in front of me. Now, some women sit like this [he spreads his legs], so I think to myself, ‘I’ll grab myself an eyeful of that.’ But I can’t keep gawping forever” (ibid:202).

He states outright that “It’s the things that people *don’t* want photographed that are interesting” (ibid:207), his preoccupation with upskirt-optics remaining apparent as he elaborates, laughing:

“The thing is, right, you doze off and your legs just open naturally. And because I was shooting from this angle [indicates his lap] I could always see

the goods. Yeah, I know I took loads of shots like that. Maybe I still do! Ha-ha-ha!" (ibid:203)



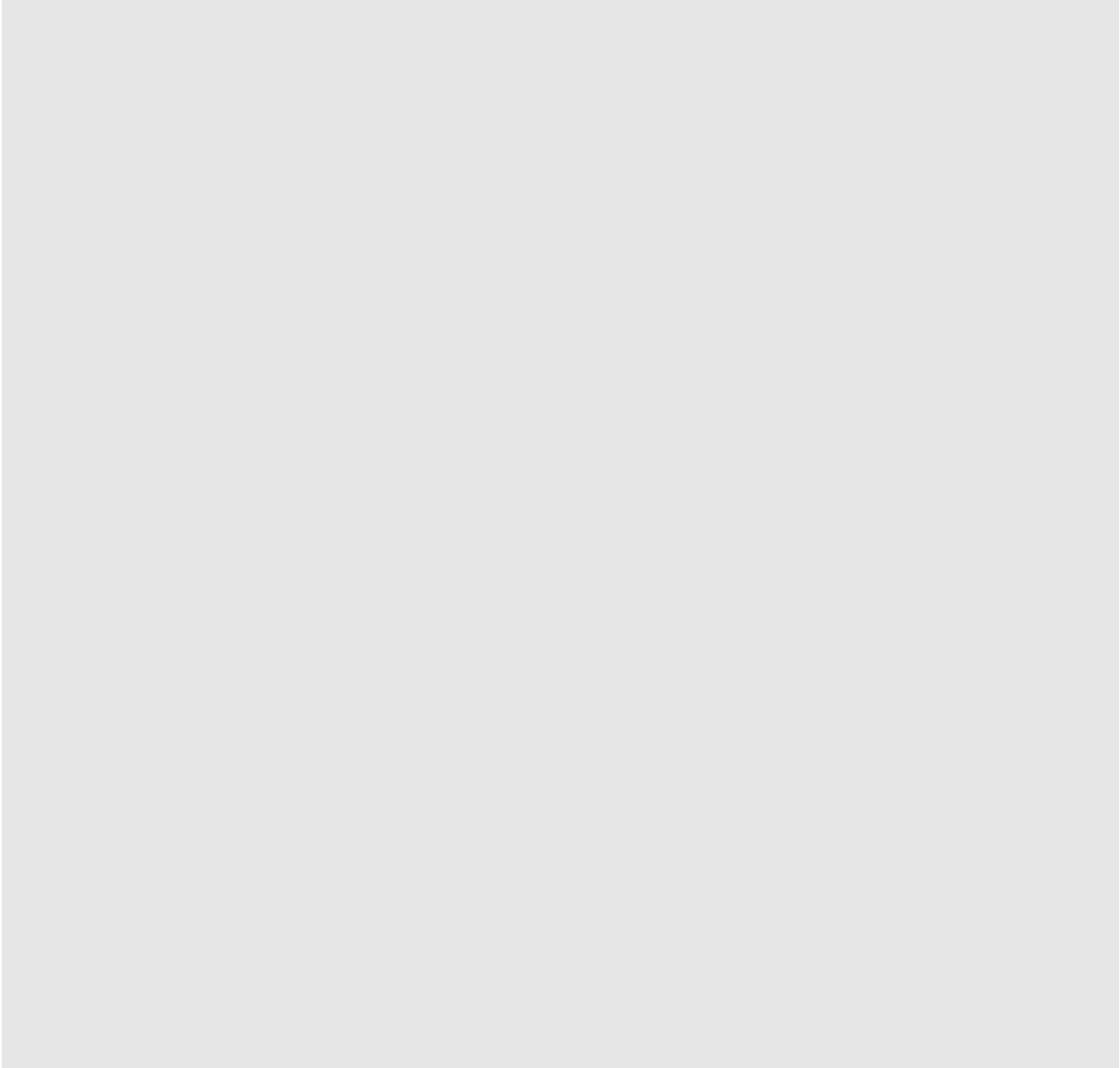
(Araki 2005)

"Look at this one (p.59). It's amazing. I was shooting from every direction, not just from the front, trying to get in there. But, no doubt about it, I ended up aiming for the crotch." (ibid:203)

He elaborates on his technique, praising the Nikon SP as his favorite camera to use for this purpose - "a fabulous camera. And I'll tell you why: because people always heard the shutter noise of the other one. But the Nikon didn't make a sound" (ibid:202). He reassures us that the noise was no problem for an artisan such as himself: "They make

a lot of noise, but I'm a technician. So what I'd do is, I'd press the shutter when the train clanked and juddered. Nobody knew what I was up to - masterful technique by yours truly. Time the shot with the train noise and nobody's the wiser." (ibid:207) His experiences with being caught also track with those of the hobbyist voyeurs I encountered, an experience he responded to with some indignation:

"...someone noticed that I was taking photos, and I ended up being dragged off to a police box! The woman I was actually shooting - a middle-aged woman - had no idea ... the geezer next to her, he tells her: "That guy there, he's taking your picture." So I'm thinking: "It's none of your business, mate! Who're you trying to impress?" Then she said: "What do you think you're doing, taking my pictures like that?" And they made me get off the train at the next stop. I was taken to a police box - whichever one was nearest - so many times." (ibid:203)

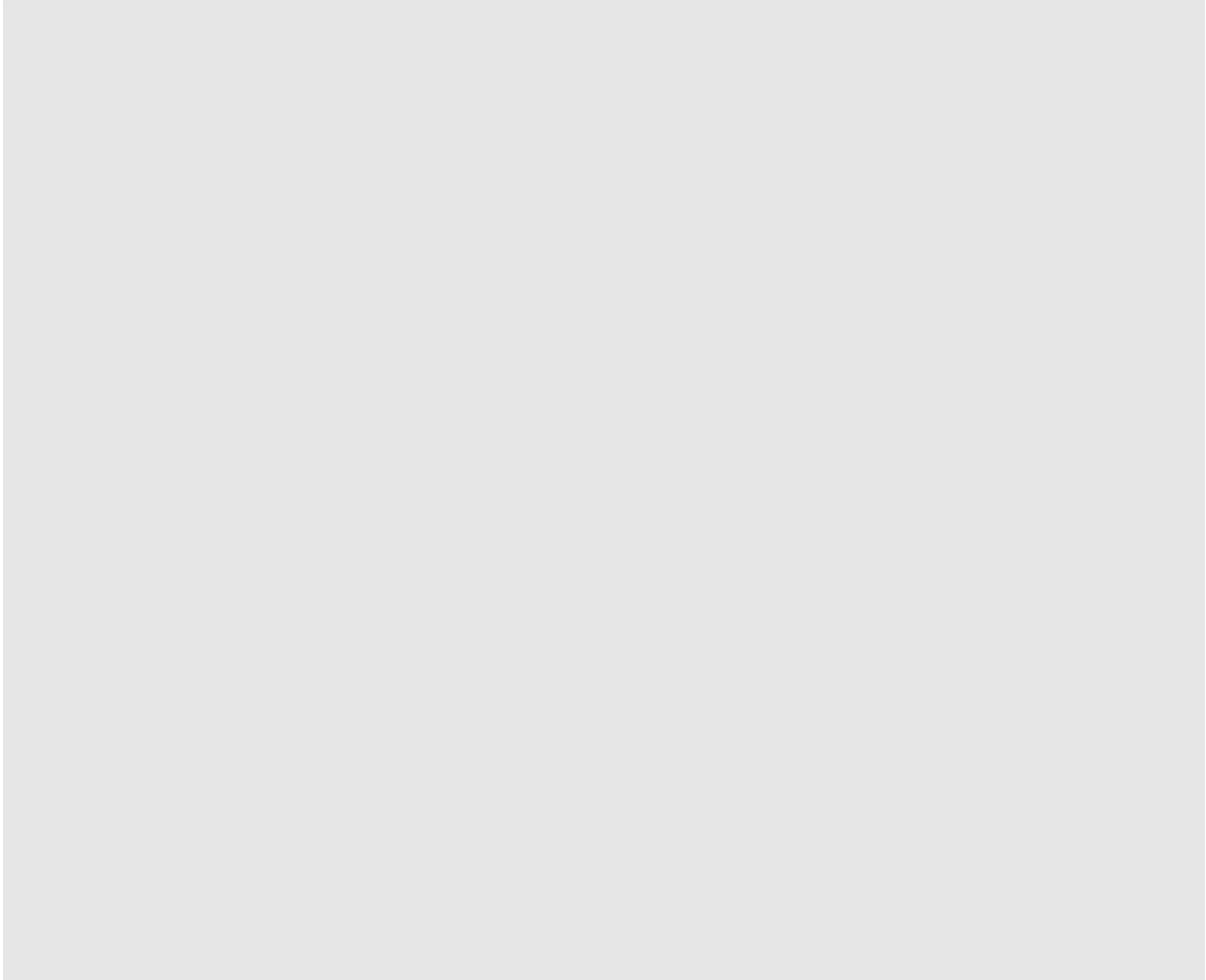


(Araki 2005)

While Araki's work has faced criticism in the past for its frank exploration of the pornographic image in an art context, to discredit his body of work as merely sexist or demeaning in its objectification of women would be a simplistic interpretation, a notion he dismisses. (BBC News 2018) The element of his work that I feel is relevant to this discussion has little to do with definitions of obscenity, but much to do with the power dynamic between the photographer and the photographed. In 2018, a model who goes by the mononym Kaori, spoke out against Araki - having worked for the artist as his "muse" for 16 years, she felt empowered by the #MeToo movement to come forward

with accusations regarding his exploitative behavior over the course of their time working together. Kaori has stated that Araki “never signed her to a professional contract; ignored her requests for privacy during [nude] photo shoots; neglected to inform her when pictures of her were published or displayed; and often did not pay her” (Rich 2018), further stating that “He treated me like an object” (ibid). In 2017, when she requested that he cease the further exhibition or publication of certain photographs featuring her, he responded with a letter that warned her she had no rights - “I will decide which publication, which exhibition, when to publish and what kind of products I will give permission to use my work. It’s all up to me.” (ibid)

At the time of Kaori’s accusations, a new exhibition of Araki’s work had just begun at the Museum of Sex in New York City, titled *The Incomplete Araki*. In an interview with the New York Times, Maggie Mustard - co-curator of the exhibition - stated that the allegations would open a larger conversation regarding models’ rights - “This gives us the opportunity to talk about what happens to a muse — and I use that word with air quotes — when she doesn’t have a contract or a sense of economic or legal agency about how her image was used” (ibid). The exhibition materials that accompany the work make reference to anonymous allegations by another model regarding “inappropriate sexual contact” by Araki, noting that “the controversy surrounding Araki’s work has almost exclusively been about reception and meaning, and far less about the issues of consent and the potential abuses of power that can be at the foundation of artistic practice and artistic production.” (ibid)



(Araki 2005)

*“If you look closely at the women I photograph, they are satisfied’ Araki said, in his own defense. ‘My behavior, my words are a form of caress that glorifies women. In return, they give me loving expressions. They are not troubled at all.’” (Araki interview in *The New York Times*, 2003)*

There is resonance in the questions raised surrounding consent and power in both Araki’s body of work and the experiences of women that are subjected to *tousatsu* photography, particularly the non-consensual photography found in *Subway Love*. In my own experience, the only time that I felt I could justifiably retaliate against this happening to myself occurred when a middle-aged man seated across from me started

taking my picture with a small digital camera, shooting from the hip. Heart racing, I quickly took out my own camera, intentionally making myself as obvious as possible as I returned fire. I captured him glaring at me, arms crossed, as we pulled into the next station - shortly before he stood bolt upright and scuttled off the train entirely. I felt elated, yet crestfallen - I had gotten him to leave me alone, but was left with his image seared into both my mind and my memory card.

There's no real mystery about this man's intentions in taking my photograph - "Surreptitious filming or taking of pictures ... has long made headlines throughout Japan. A whole subgenre of magazines exist for Peeping Toms who earn their living by taking photos on the sly, while the Internet has created unprecedented opportunities for getting photos and video out to the peeping public." (Johnston 2014) What gives me pause is, what do *I* do with an image like that? What purpose does it serve, for me? When relaying the tale to my Japanese friends, colleagues and classmates in the days and weeks following, I would find that by and large, women would laughingly congratulate me on my success, while men would often question whether I was confused about the situation. Some wondered what I had been wearing, or jokingly suggested I circumvent the issue in future by making myself unappealing by pulling faces or picking my nose for the camera. Even when I showed them the photo, many would politely give the invasive photographer the benefit of the doubt - was I *sure* I knew what he'd been photographing? Perhaps *I* had been the nuisance (*meiwaku*) by taking *his* photograph, which is why he had left the train.



(author's own 2016)

In the interview accompanying *Subway Love*, Araki describes the documentary process as “to look deeply at reality’ or ‘to gaze unflinchingly at a thing for a long time” (Araki 2005:206), something I find I am still unable to do with this particular photograph. When

I have had occasion to come across it again, I am always struck by how nauseated it still makes me feel - I felt vaguely victorious in the moment of retaliation, but I am unsure if I actually managed to shift the power dynamic at all. Perhaps I flinch at the thought of "looking deeply" at the reality of what I actually captured - not so much a reversal of power as it is a reflection of the power I lacked, and lack still. The photo languishes in my iPhoto, an odd reminder of an experience I don't particularly care to remember - the reverberation from his non-consensual shot to mine where, as Araki puts it, "taking a picture is a momentary connection between two people" (ibid:211).

I wonder, did he feel a connection to me, when he took *my* photograph? Am I, too, burnt into his memory - disrupting his day at the moment of recollection? It would be an interesting thought, but I doubt the interaction was any more than a fleeting panic at the prospect of being caught, quickly dispersed upon escaping the train. It is possible to consider this in the context of Nicholas Mirzoeff's theories on the "right to look" (2011), a term which concerns itself not with "seeing" but with a mutual acknowledgement that affirms the autonomy of both parties. Rather than individualism or voyeurism, the "right to look" requires that "You, or your group, allow another to find you, and, in so doing, you find both the other and yourself. It means requiring the recognition of the other in order to have a place from which to claim rights and to determine what is right. It is the claim to a subjectivity that has the autonomy to arrange the relations of the visible and the sayable." (Mirzoeff 2011, 1) Perhaps ironically, Araki himself takes issue with the non-consensual capturing of his own image -

"People are always taking my picture with their mobiles ... that pisses me off, I tell you. It's not that I'm anti-digital. But I don't like it if people are photographing me right up the arsehole. It's not right for shadows to become bright." (Araki 2005, 211)



A security guard outside of a Shinjuku purikura establishment, to prevent the entry of male customers.

(author's own 2016)



(author's own 2016)

READING THE ROOM

Of course, my experiences must be self-reflexively outlined - for various reasons that will not be visually obvious to a reader, I am bound to stand out somewhat while living in Japan, for better or worse. I am unequivocally Caucasian, with auburn hair that was often commented on as unusual during my fieldwork. While it may be extrapolated that my personal experiences were out of the ordinary, much as I myself was, these instances of palpable voyeurism were a frequent point of connection between myself and the women I worked with. When bringing up these instances in conversation, they were most often remarked upon not as unusual, but as relatable, and every woman I spoke to had stories to tell of comparable experiences happening to themselves, their friends, or other female passengers. Even when something had just occurred and I was feeling distraught, commiseration rather than shock was the standard response. After one such occasion, I vented my frustrations to a friend, and asked her if she thought it happened because I was a *gaijin* ('foreigner', from the root *gai* [outside] + *jin* [person]). She responded, "No, I don't think so - it happens to me all the time." She laughed before adding, "The less subtle ones are often taken *by* gaijin!"



(author's own 2016)

"The floors beyond this point are

women-only"

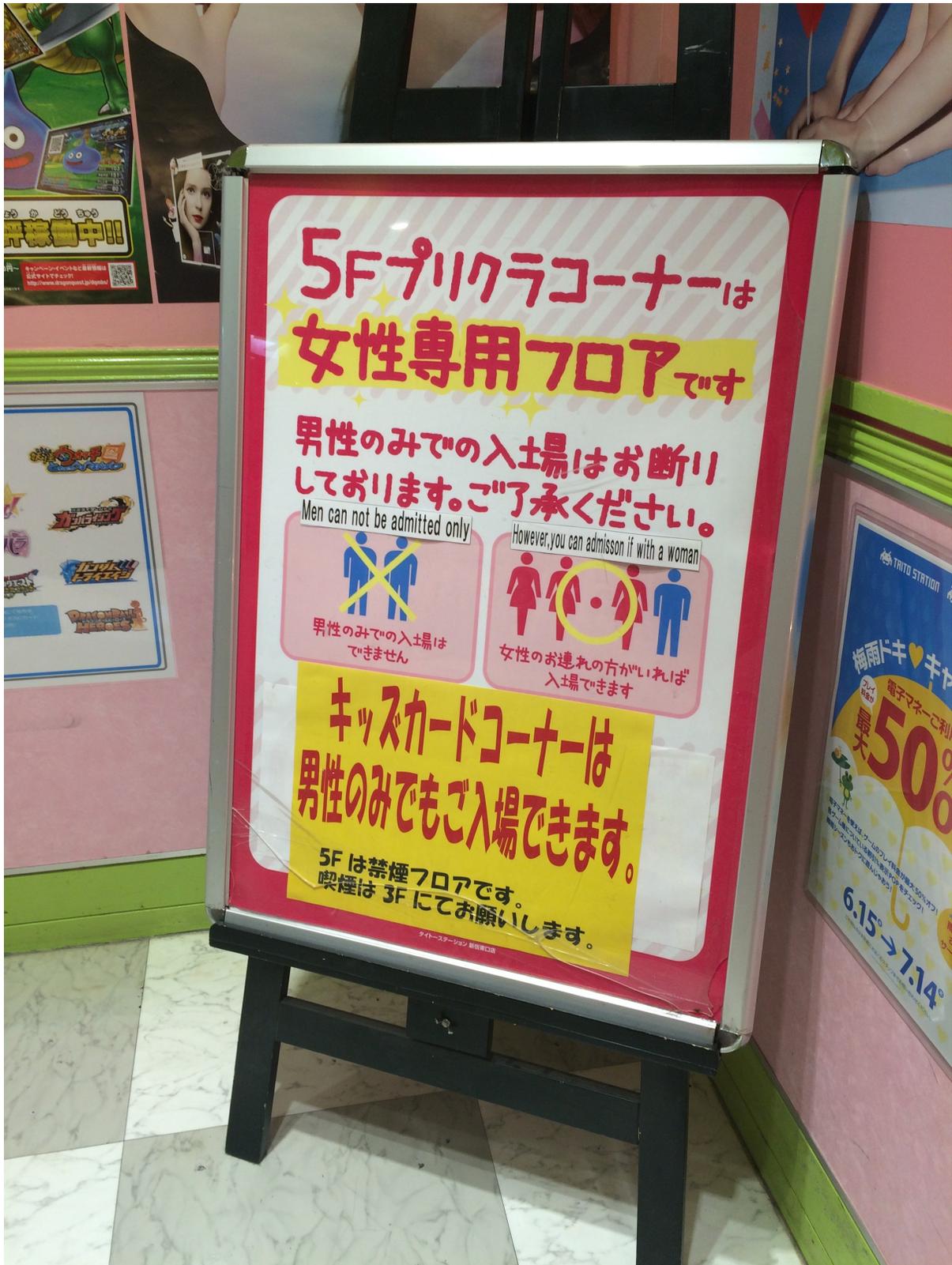


(author's own 2016)

My experiences negotiating visibility on public transport are comparable to the specific site of my fieldwork in many ways. The vast majority of purikura-specific establishments, or video game arcades with floors that are catered to the machines, are gender segregated, either only allowing men if accompanied by women, or for women only (*josei sen'you*). The signage that articulated these rules would differ by establishment, but covered the same basic principles - no male-only parties or solo men allowed, to explicitly prevent *tousatsu* (non-consensual photography), *chikan* (molestation), and *nanpa* or *kan'yū* (aggressive flirtation or solicitation; 'skirt chasing'), while some establishments further did not allow for photographs to be taken on the premises at all, outside of the purikura machines themselves. The frequency with which such signage appeared during my research was only matched by their proliferation on trains or in train stations, which constantly warned women or admonished men for the same objectionable behaviors listed above.

I often asked women that I worked with if they felt that these were adequate measures, to which the response was generally positive. While some women said that they wouldn't go out of their way to seek out a women-only establishment if they were doing purikura spontaneously, the overwhelming majority felt that the gender-segregated option was indeed preferable - many expressed a sense that these spaces felt welcoming and safe, especially when they had been in high school. Considering my own unpleasant experiences with non-consensual photography and *chikan* on public transport, I was inclined to agree - however, it was with this in mind that I felt it was inappropriate for me to enter these spaces only to then take photographs without the consent of those I sought to capture.

While benefitting from the safety and comfort of women-only spaces, I began to feel it was important that I, as an outsider, treat them respectfully in turn. As such, I felt it prudent to not take photographs of strangers within purikura establishments without their consent, and to seek out the permission of management before I took photographs of signage or equipment. While the scarcity of images taken inside such establishments may appear - within the context of a visual anthropology thesis - to be a dearth of data, it is important that this is understood as an intentional choice on my part, as dictated by my own experiences in the field. A written analysis of these experiences is no less valuable for an absence of visual material - my analysis is predicated on a non-invasive engagement with the rules and boundaries surrounding photography in these women-only spaces, whereby the limitations on when and how I could collect visual material are in many ways just as 'illustrative' of the importance of these spaces for the young women involved.



5F プリクラコーナーは
女性専用フロアです

男性のみでの入場はお断り
しております。ご了承ください。

Men can not be admitted only



男性のみでの入場は
できません

However, you can admission if with a woman



女性のお連れの方がいれば
入場できます

キッズカードコーナーは
男性のみでもご入場できます。

5F は禁煙フロアです。
喫煙は 3F にてお願いします。

メトロ駅 新大塚駅

(author's own 2016)



(author's own 2016)

営業時間

OPEN HOUR

11:00 ~ 24:00

お客さまにお願い

INFORMATION



女性
Lady



女性と同伴の男性
Couple



男性
Man



店内は禁煙です
No Smoking



アルコール類のお持込みは
できません
No Alcohols Allowed



店内での撮影は
ご遠慮ください
No Photographs Allowed



財布やカバン等貴重品から
目を離さないでください
Beware of Theft



当店にトイレは
ありません
No Toilet

注意

お客さま又はお子様が過去、光刺激や
テレビゲームにより、けいれんや痙攣
を失うなどの症状を起した、もしくは
その恐れのある場合は、機器のご利用
にあたって十分ご注意ください。
ゲーム中に気分が悪くなった場合には、
すぐに中断し休憩をお取りください。

機器へのいたずら・不正行為を発見した場合、
退店していただくことがありますのでご注意ください。

The abuse of any equipment on site will result in your automatic expulsion from the arcade.



How to make photo stickers

大头贴的拍摄方法 스티커사진을 찍는 방법

1

Please put money! 请投入硬币! 동전을 넣어 주세요!

Hop in the photo booth and put the money in the coin slot!

进入摄影区域后请投入硬币!

촬영코너에 들어가신 다음 동전을 넣어주세요!



2

Pose for the camera! 摆好姿势! 자, 제일 멋진 포즈를!

Choose the Mode, Backgrounds, etc. on the touch screen.

After setting up the options, pose for the camera!

请在触摸屏上选择[拍摄模式]与[背景]. 选择好之后请摆姿势!

터치패널에서 [촬영모드] [배경] 등을 선택해주세요. 선택이 끝나면 포즈를 취하십시오!



3

Decorate your photo stickers! 让我们来涂鸦吧! 디자인을 합시다!

When you finish taking the photos, please go outside and move to the decoration area!

Have fun decorating the photos!

拍摄结束后请按照指示前往涂鸦区! 在拍好的大头贴上涂鸦吧!

촬영이 끝나면 지시된 디자인코너로 이동합니다! 촬영한 사진에 디자인을 합시다!



4

Finished! 大头贴完成! 스티커의 완성!

When you finish decorating the photos, please move to the print area.

Please wait a few minutes until the pictures come out!

涂鸦结束后请在大头贴机的外边等待. 只需要2-3分钟大头贴就能完成了哦!

디자인이 끝나면 스티커사진기의 밖에서 기다려주세요. 2~3분에 스티커가 완성됩니다!



Please feel free to ask service crews if you need any help!

如果有任何不明白的地方, 请向店员咨询!

다른 질문사항이 있으면 점원한테 확인해주세요!



Notice of use of the photo sticker booth area 在使用大头贴机时请注意以下几点 스티커사진기를 이용시의 주의점

- *We are sorry, all-men group is NOT allowed to use the photo sticker booth area.
- *Don't disturb others who are using the photo booth.
- *When crowded, please kindly wait for your turn.
- *남성유지만의 스티커사진기 이용은 금지하고 있습니다.
- *다른 고객님이 촬영하실 때는 방해하거나 몰아보는 행위는 삼가해주세요.
- *혼잡시에는 순서를 지켜 이용해주세요.
- *禁止只有男性成员的大头贴拍摄.
- *在其他客人使用大头贴机的时候, 请不要偷看以及妨碍他人拍摄.
- *客人拥挤时请大家按照顺序排队使用, 谢谢大家的合作.



(author's own 2016)



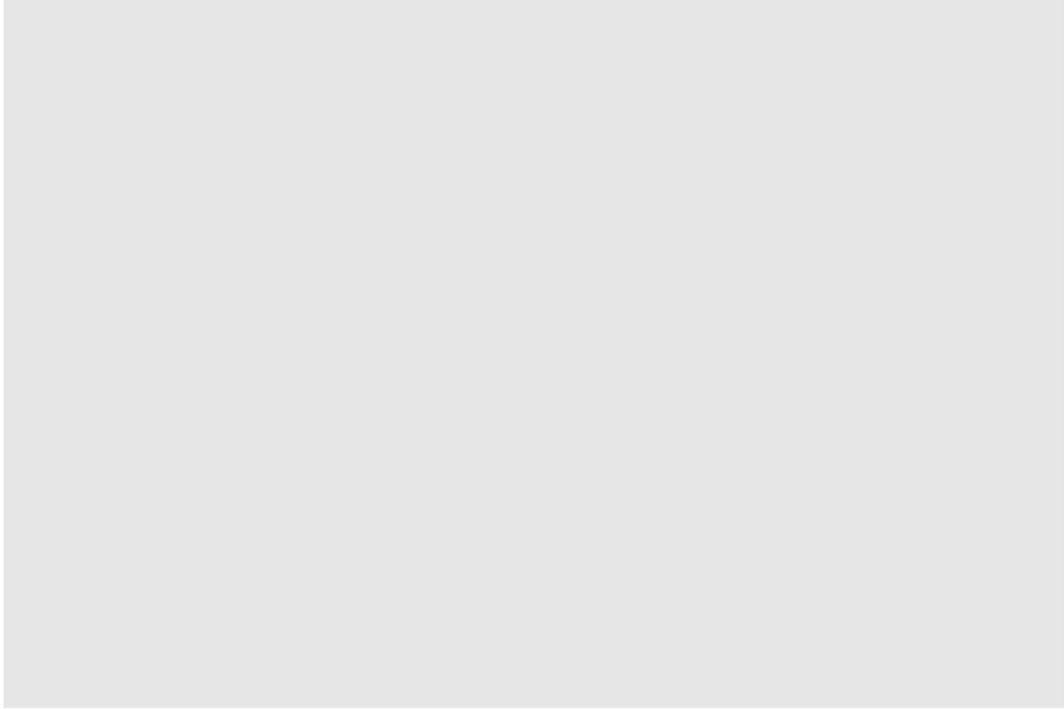
(author's own 2016)

Another factor in my caution is the legality of photographing strangers without their consent, particularly in public spaces. In Japan, the legal precedent for photographing individuals is delineated by the notions of privacy and “portrait rights” - “the right not to be photographed or filmed without good reason” (Hijikata 2015), as well as the right to refuse to be photographed. While rights to privacy are not explicitly defined by Japanese law, it is still recognized as a fundamental human right, whereby individuals have “the right to be left alone, and for their own affairs or seclusion to be respected, not violated.” (T. Ito 2017) While these rights are not strongly protected in public spaces, this does not mean they are entirely waived - “ordinances forbidding covert filming do exist for public places such as shopping centers, railway stations, trains and buses,” (Johnston 2014) however, the scope of the legal protection is limited to punishments “deemed by police and legal experts as often insufficient to deter perpetrators even if they do get caught.” (ibid) In many instances, the covert nature of tousatsu photography

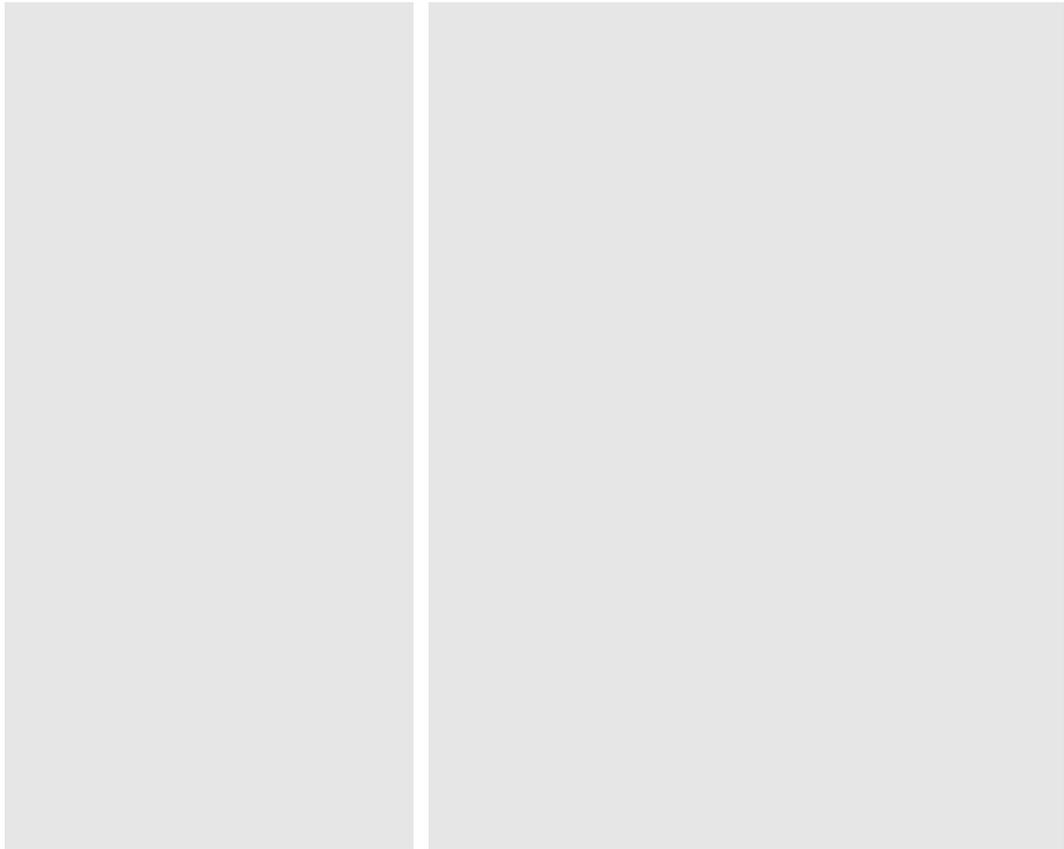
is both the element that titillates its perpetrators, and their saving grace - “practically, of course, you cannot be accused of violating these rights unless people realize that they are being recorded”. (Ito 2017)

In some instances, *overt* rather than covert photography is what may cause legal trouble. In a 2005 case, the Tokyo District Court ruled in favor of a woman who had been photographed on the street, stating that it was an invasion of her portrait rights - “the judgment stated that focusing on a particular passerby and taking a picture of her figure including her face is considerably burdensome to her.” (ibid) Though this is differentiated from photographing scenery that may include passerby or larger groups of people, “Theoretically, violation of someone’s right to privacy or their portrait rights occurs at the very moment that you record public behavior” (ibid). The lack of consequences for the obvious - and oblivious - frequency with which foreign tourists made life difficult for many of the women that I worked with through invasive photography indicates some level of leniency regarding the legality of their snaps. However, through conversations with the women in question I felt it was better to be respectful of others when gathering my own visual materials in the field.

In other, subtler ways I was given the impression that, as a foreigner, taking photographs with abandon was both common and invasive, and was as such to be avoided. I recall numerous instances of young women complaining about tourists taking pictures of them without their consent, often invading their personal space to do so - but this was also in combination with a sense that *gaijin* were bumbling and culturally inept. In many respects, there was an interesting inversion of that tired, racist trope that comes up with some pernicious frequency, of the Japanese tourist snapping away. ‘*Gaijin*’ tourists - getting in the way with their DSLRs and their bizarre obsessions with the minutiae of everyday life in Japan - were something of an inside joke among most women I worked with. The echo present here, of the colonial tourist photography discussed previously - with its fascination for an exotic and strange Japan - does not escape me. One incident that elicited laughter and some amount of scorn occurred when a group of tourists gleefully held up a bathroom queue to film the high-tech public toilets - as a foreign researcher who wished to learn more about things I did not understand, I felt that keeping a lower profile would be in my best interest.



(author's own purikura 2016)



Karaoke and drinks – typical purikura leisure activities (author's own 2016)

In the course of my field research, I conducted participant observation in the taking and making of purikura photography, as well as the leisure activities that surround it, by working with young women who I formed friendships with over a sustained period of time. As such, names and identifying details have been changed where necessary, and photographs censored upon request. Along with this, I have opted to be vigilant in inquiring after consent for the use of the resulting images within this thesis - in many instances, their display within the text of the document was politely refused. When my acquaintances demurred, it was with a playful, lighthearted air, and was most often because they felt it would be embarrassing (*hazukashii*).

Somewhat early on in my field research, before introducing me to some of her friends, a young woman that I knew well warned me via text message to play it cool when first meeting them. With some dread, I asked what she meant - to which she responded that I shouldn't start off by asking if I could use any photos that we would inevitably take in my thesis. Somewhat cryptically, she then replied "KY 笑". While 笑, the kanji character for laughter, functions as 'lol', *KY* is slang for *kuuki yomenai*, literally someone who can't "read the air", thereby spoiling the atmosphere or "killing the mood". Overt instances of academic inquiry or 'methodology' on my part were often seen as an intrusion on a good time, and in consideration of those around me, I didn't press the issue when told 'no'.

Much of my field research was conducted in collaboration with young women who associated themselves with a variety of different subcultural groups, in particular *gosurori* (see chapter 3) and *gyaru*, both known for their overtly intense fashion stylings, which I will elaborate on more across future chapters. In particular, *gyaru* fashion is understood to be the continuation of the *kogal* trend discussed earlier - however, where the term 'kogal' did not belong to the community it described (Miller 2004, 225), *gyaru* has been firmly embraced by the young women that enact it. Unlike much of the literature discussing *kogals*, which fail to engage with the young women they discuss while still categorizing them with an outsider label, I felt it was appropriate to use the

label 'gyaru'³ when discussing larger phenomena surrounding the subcultures the young women I worked with were a part of, as it was a label they readily affiliated themselves with. While the term 'kogal' was most associated with high school-aged adolescents, in my experience those that described themselves as gyaru could range from young teens to late 20s, but were most often associated with age-restricted activities - such as drinking, smoking or general partying - that necessitated being past the age of 20. Gyaru is an umbrella term for many sub-styles, such as the glamorous and sexy *agejo* or the effusively feminine *hime* (princess) gyaru, to the more mature *onee/ane* (older sister) gyaru, all of which may lean more *kaji* (casual) or dark, with *rokku* or *goshikku* (rock, gothic) stylings.

It is worth stressing that not all young women make use of purikura machines - the intention of this work is to explore, through participant observation, the perspectives of purikura users (who are primarily young women) through their use and engagement with said machines, but I would not claim that this work can speak to the experiences of all Japanese women as "monolithic and unchanging" (Shamoon 2012, 8). Similarly, as an outsider, there were many areas of their lives I did not have access to - it is important to understand that this research is part of a larger field of study regarding the experiences of Japanese women, of which I hope that this thesis may serve as a contribution to.

My fieldwork was situated primarily in Tokyo, and as such the conclusions that can be drawn from my research involve a degree of specificity - while some of the young women that I worked with were native Tokyoites, many had moved away from smaller towns to seek out 'better' (whether higher paid, or more fulfilling) employment, community or cultural amenities that they believed would be available in the larger metropolitan area. While I cannot definitively speak on the differences in engagement with the machines in major cities in other parts of the country (as I did not dedicate a significant portion of my research time to these locations), I do believe it is possible to

³ While the term can be transliterated from the Japanese as 'gal', further associating it with 'kogal', I have opted to use 'gyaru' as this came up more frequently during my fieldwork.

extrapolate certain factors, based on an understanding of how purikura machines tend to be located. As I discuss across future chapters, purikura is most often understood as a commemorative leisure activity, and the machines are usually placed near other similar activities - tourist spots, shopping centers, bowling alleys, cinemas, video game arcades and amusement parks will likely have at least one machine⁴, if not more, but if a city or town lacks these locations it is also unlikely that you will find many purikura machines - let alone the dedicated boutiques with dozens of machines - as can be found across major cities.

This thesis is by no means the definitive, all-encompassing evaluation of purikura - there are many avenues for discussion that I have not explored, and I both welcome and look forward to the perspectives of others who will tackle the subject in future. In emphasizing visual anthropological methodologies during my fieldwork, I found that I was drawn more to the consumption of purikura as a form of vernacular photography rather than the production of the machines. Having previously worked in corporate environments in an academic capacity, I appreciated the limits imposed on discussing technological and design elements, especially once the information gleaned goes beyond shallow promotional materials and into the depths of trade secrets - the more you know, the less you can say. Given the duration of my fieldwork, as well as its proposed scope, I felt it would be most effective to engage with the areas I had most ready access to, to allow myself the time and space to adequately build a depth of rapport with my interlocutors - the consumers of purikura - rather than its producers.

Future work on purikura may choose to explore the consumption-production continuum in greater depth, as in the works of Natasha Schull (2012) and Alison Hulme (2020) – similarly, while I engage with the work of Michael Taussig (1993) briefly in chapter 2, future work may seek to analyze themes within purikura of mimesis, identity and magical transformation in greater detail. Alternative perspectives might also consider

⁴ While the number of machines that feature in such locations has dropped on a technical level, this is not necessarily an indication of a lessening in popularity, as newer machines take up a larger amount of space.

the potential participation of purikura machines within such social phenomena as quasi-humans (Mitchell 2005); a material-semiotic school of thought could explore the capacity of these machines as quasi-objects to weave networks connectively (Latour 2005), further questioning the subject-object paradigm. A pessimistic examination might consider purikura within its context of leisure and beauty practices as a product of a “culture industry”, a system of capitalist production that “hems [consumers] in so tightly, in body and soul, that they unresistingly succumb to whatever is proffered to them” (Adorno & Horkheimer 1972, 106), wherein the young women who utilize the machines “insist unwaveringly on the ideology by which they are enslaved” (ibid) - a “pernicious love of the common people for the harm done to them” (ibid). However, this is a conclusion that this thesis does not arrive at – by engaging with consumers themselves through participant observation, I have attempted to provide a degree of nuance, complicating the notion of a passive, satiated consumer.

The terms *purinto kurabu* (プリント倶楽部) and *purikura* (プリクラ) are registered trademarks of Atlus Co., Ltd., a subsidiary of the SEGA corporation, and as such, other companies which produce similar photo booths will use different terminology to describe them, most often ‘print seal’ (プリントシール - print sticker). In practice, the photo booths are colloquially known as purikura, both among users and establishments that run the machines (though the latter may opt for the English ‘print club’ on occasion), and as such ‘purikura’ is how I will refer to it throughout this thesis. This colloquial particularity may give the false impression that Atlus and its parent company SEGA have a larger hand in the purikura business than they do in reality; Atlus withdrew from the production of arcade games and purikura machines in 2009 (ceasing repair support for their machines in 2017), and due to the high turnover of purikura machines there were few, if any, Atlus/SEGA units present during my fieldwork in 2015-16.

The SEGA corporation, which fully acquired Atlus in 2013, itself withdrew from the home video game console market in 2001, instead focusing on their video game arcade locations and machines - as such, the primary way that SEGA was involved in the purikura market during my fieldwork was in housing the machines in their branded video game arcades. However, this is by no means the only place one might find a purikura

machine - a significant portion of my fieldwork took place in other locations that were not limited to SEGA-affiliated video game arcades. Purikura machines can be found in small clusters in train stations, clothing shops and cinemas, or in larger congregations in amusement parks or other independently run establishments, such as purikura-centric boutiques in popular shopping districts such as Harajuku, Shinjuku or Shibuya, which may house as many - if not more - machines than a SEGA arcade would make space for. At the time of my fieldwork, one of the primary manufacturers of such photo booths, FuRyu Corporation, were themselves beginning to enter the purikura boutique market with their range of *Girls Mignon* locations (as discussed in chapter 2).



(author's own 2016)



(author's own 2016)

2015 WINTER DEBUT

フリーモデルの仕上がり

この写り、間違いない。

2015 SUPER CUTE DESIGNS

KATY

IN THIS WINTER, IT'S APPARENT. "KATY" WHICH CAUSES A GREAT SATISFACTION IN PURI IS DEBUT AT LAST.

FurRyu

1 2 3 4 5
6 7 8 9 10

ポイント
フリクラポイントカード

Purikura Point Card
フリクラポイントカード

入会費・年会費無料
5ポイントで半額
10ポイントで1回無料

フリクラを切る前にスタッフにご提示ください。
フリクラ1枚で1ポイント押印いたします。

①複数枚のカードのポイントを1枚のカードに合算することはできません。
②キャンペーンは予告なく内容の変更・終了させていただく場合がございます。あらかじめご了承くださいませ。

コスズリスタジネくるチェン! 新宿ALTA
新宿スポーツランド本館・セガ池袋G100・クラブセガ渋谷の4店舗共通で使えます。

フリクラポイント

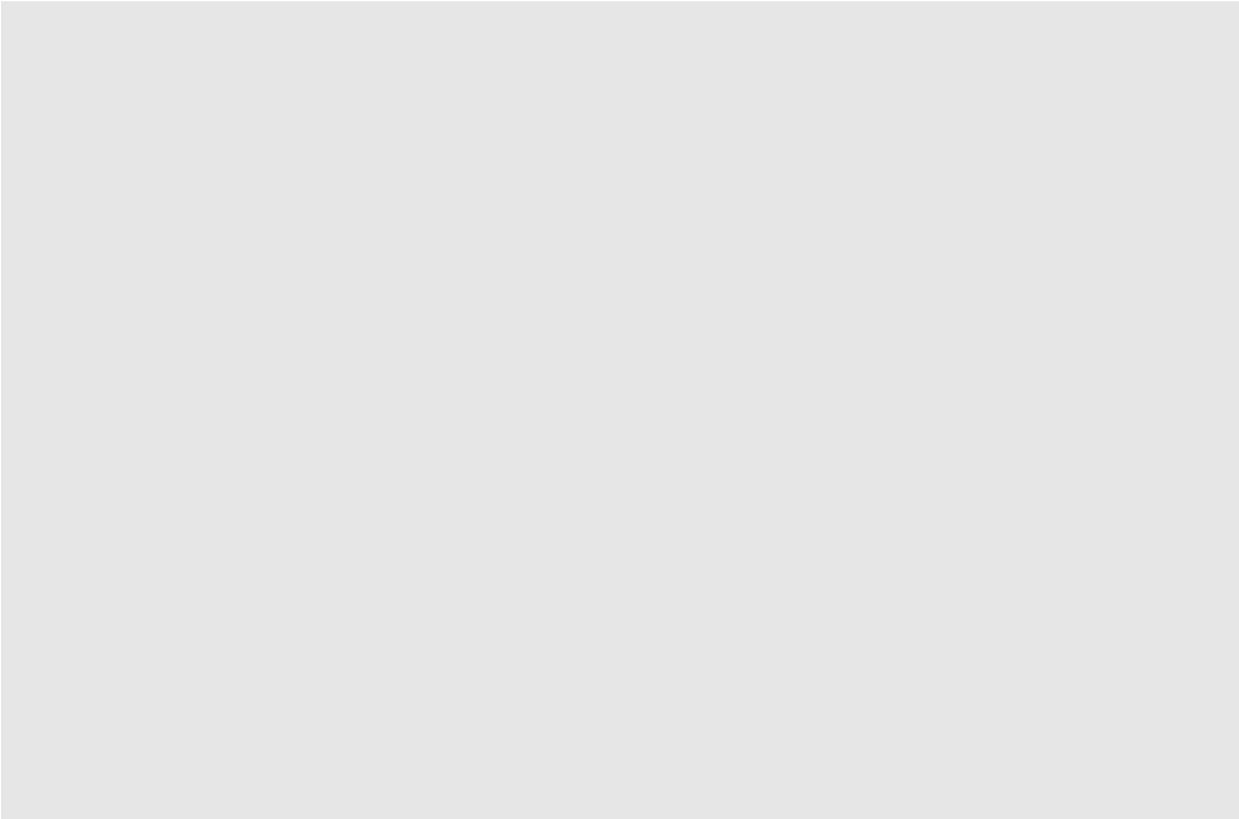
FurRyu

(author's own 2016)

From its 19th century beginnings, photography was used to categorize, control and discipline, particularly by academic institutions. In effect, those studied were becoming literal objects through these photographic enterprises – simplified and reduced to data, utilized as typologies for a racial hierarchy. Much like colonial photography, which transformed unique bodies into “somatic prototypes” (Pinney 2012:29), the typology of the kogal has been exploited for the purposes of disparaging and restricting young women’s ability to represent themselves. In this sense, the prototypical kogals become the “objects of knowledge” (Tagg 1988:11), who are “subjected to a scrutinizing gaze, forced to emit signs, yet cut off from command of meaning” (ibid). Kogal typologies, whereby young women have been “debated, stereotyped, fictionalized and caricatured” (L. Miller 2004b, 238), can be seen as analogous to colonial prototypes. It must be understood that women do not emerge as types – it is a process of construction, perpetuated by shallow classificatory rhetoric. We would do well to remember that “there is no such thing as the prototypical Japanese woman; only particular women exist, situated in particular contexts”. (Tamanoi 1990, 21)

By looking at the social and technological facilitations of gender performance and representation found in purikura and the media nexus of its participants, this thesis aims to further elucidate the variety of gendered sociality purikura re/produces and engages with. By thinking through purikura, my research seeks to consider how vernacular and personal photography actively shape social relationships, and how these gendered negotiations can be understood in a larger anthropological context. Personal photography, as explored by Van House, has been described as “multiple, overlapping technologies: of memory; relationships; self-representation; and self expression,” (Van House 2011) - with technological advances, this has increasingly become a form of digital storytelling (Vivienne and Burgess 2013) where the visual has not only “become an essential part of daily communication” (Wang and Haapio-Kirk 2021), but “is increasingly becoming a tool for an individual's identity formation” (Dijck 2008). In researching the interweaving trajectories of technological innovation and sustained use surrounding purikura we can gain a greater understanding of the popularity of vernacular photography and captured images, and of research that sustains interest in the public imaginary worldwide.

Practice Makes Puri



(R. Lee 2018)

Shortly after meeting up, Chii turns to me, clapping her hands in front of her face – “let’s do puri before the event!” she exclaims. It makes no difference that we aren’t familiar with the neighborhood – within minutes, she’s motioning me into a 5-story video game arcade, where we make our circuitous way towards the escalators, lit only by the fluorescent screens of chain-smoking gamers. We crest towards the 4th floor, and Chii points – “see, purikura! There’s always purikura in places like this.”

Indeed, the top two floors of the arcade were exclusively filled with purikura machines, and the shift in both décor and clientele was immediately noticeable. Both floors were overflowing with young women - a minority with dates in tow - queuing and excitedly chatting amongst themselves. Each floor held somewhere between 15-20 machines, each boisterously touting their own capabilities through colorful signage and voiceover. Different music raucously leapt from each machine – combined with the cheerful crowd and exuberant visual promotion, I was left spinning and disoriented.

Chii seemed unfazed by the cacophony and gestured towards the array of photo booths available – where to start? I balked, shrugging, and said I was fine with whatever.

Grinning, she pulled me towards a sleek white machine, accented with royal blue and orange. The queue for this machine seemed to be at least twice as long as the others, which Chii acknowledged – “this machine is new, so I’m excited to try it out”. The model gracing the machine’s exterior stood in profile, with a sleek, high-swept ponytail and dramatic eyeliner. Chii tapped the exterior, explaining that the popularity was probably due to the model herself. “Her name is Emma - she’s a model for ViVi magazine, so people are excited to take pictures styled by her. When a machine has a popular purimo, you know it’ll also be popular.” Purimo, she elaborated, was a portmanteau of purikura + model, who serve as an increasingly vital element of machine promotion. “They don’t just promote the machines, you know? The machines are meant to fit their style, their aesthetic. It’s more like the machines are modeled after THEM!”

As we neared the front of the line, the trio of girls before us entered the booth, and it became apparent that we were meant to pay in advance – Chii quickly slipped four ¥100 coins into the slot, the machine correspondingly bleeping at her. She deftly lifted the attached stylus, motioning for me to do the same. Aware of the gaze of those in line

behind me, I grabbed it, flustered – what was I meant to do? Chii was already making selections in quick succession before pausing to look at me. “Your name”, she intoned quizzically, and I scrambled to find the corresponding letters in the katakana alphabet. I noted in the corner a timer – we had about a minute total to make our selections. I panicked as the options available to me became increasingly specific – what color scheme did we want the background, what angle did we want the photographs to be? A wide array of face and eye shapes splayed out before me, and as my heartbeat outpaced the timer I simply chose whatever popped up first.

The trio ahead of us finished taking photographs what seemed like moments later and exited laughing, heading past the queue and into one of the editing suites located at the back of the machine. Chii quickly parted the booth’s curtains, and we entered a tiny, claustrophobic compartment with green-screen walls and five gigantic soft box lights circling a camera with a small screen. Chii shrugged off her bag and jacket, placing them underneath the screen and I hurried to do the same. Similarly, I followed Chii’s lead as she promptly stood in the middle of the room facing the camera, toes edging up against one of two black lines. Through the harsh overlap of music from the surrounding booths, our own chirped at us that shooting would soon begin, while elegant stills of the purimo Emma floated across the screen. “That’s her voice!” Chii intoned as a second timer ticked down from 3. She leaned in to vogue for the camera, which flashed jarringly. As the flashes continued, I only managed to make a few peace signs, a nervous grin on my face as I stood stock still in the periphery of the images, letting Chii take center stage. She seemed perturbed by this, and as we grabbed our things and exited towards the back, she bluntly queried – “why didn’t you pose?”

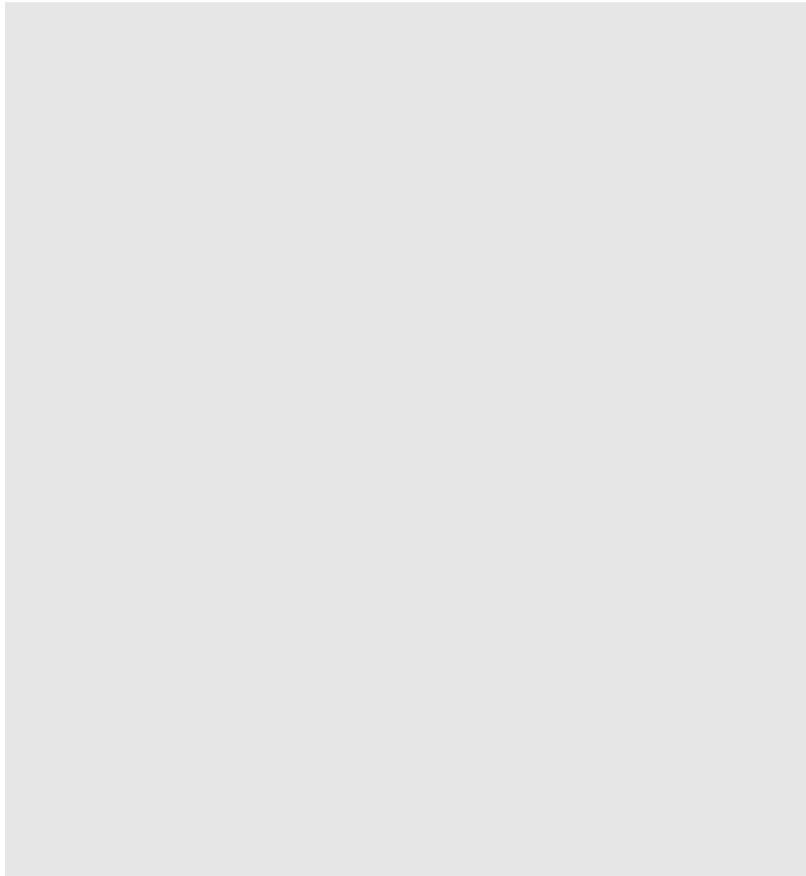
As was quickly made apparent, posing is everything in purikura. In the editing booth, Chii cheerfully admonished me as my mistake sank in. Our photographs appeared on two large, flat screens with attached styluses, one of which she used to highlight the error of my ways, tapping away. A third timer in the corner indicated that we had a mere three minutes to edit, and Chii sighed humorously – “these are no good, anyways. You look so stiff – I can’t believe you didn’t pose at all!” She points at the distance between us – much too far for friends – and did her best to quickly fill the gap with themed stamps. “See how I posed? It’s best if you do it that way – especially if you match the

other person.” She tapped through the menu adeptly, ignoring the timer and indicating that we wanted them to print immediately. She laughed - “Let’s try again – but we’ll practice first this time.”



(author's own 2016)

TWINNING

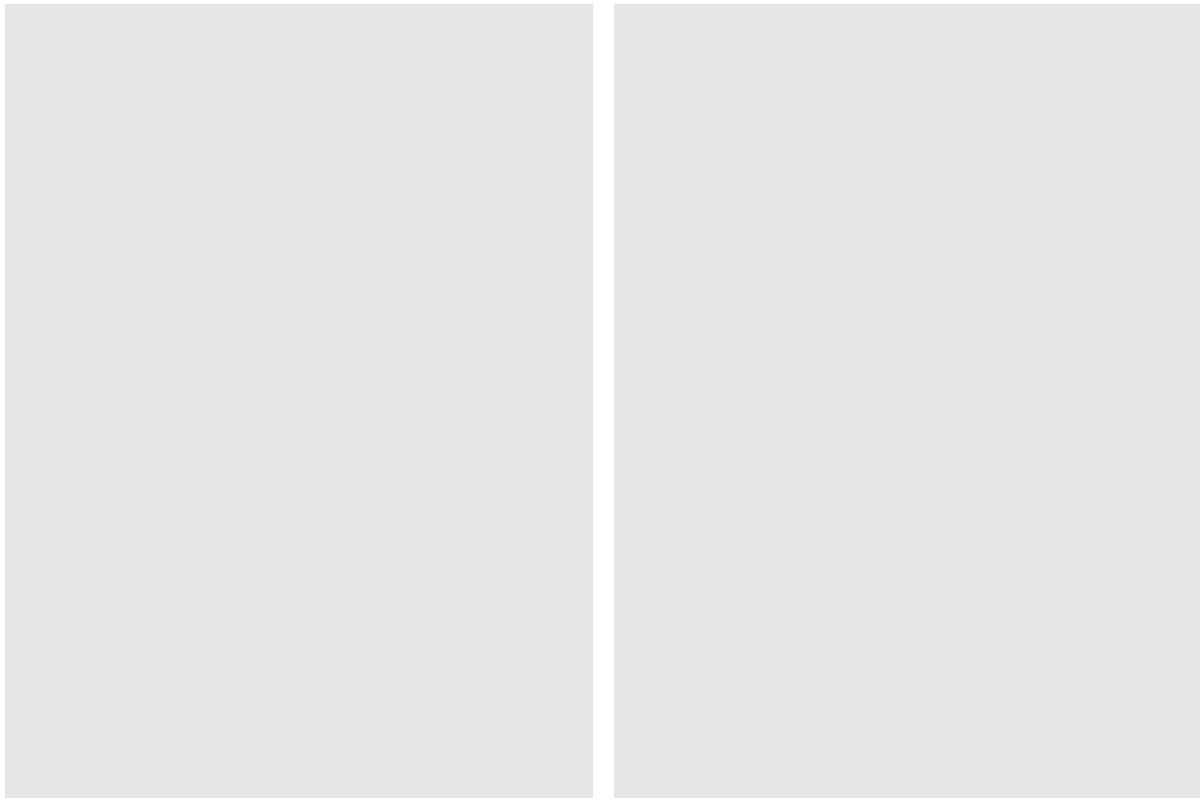


promotional materials for mimmam's Girls Mignon event

Chii and I were meeting up in Machida, a 45-minute train journey west of central Tokyo, to attend a promotional event being held by the purikura boutique chain Girls Mignon. The event was promoting the arrival of a new machine, heralded by the twin sisters cast as purimo – we would be attending a “hair arrangement tutorial session” with the sisters, followed by a meet and greet afterwards. The sisters, mim and mam (often stylized as mimmam), both in their early 20s, are models who work almost exclusively as a pair – they have worked for magazines CUTiE, Popteen, Kera, and Zipper, among others, as well as many collaboration ad campaigns for clothing and cosmetic products. “They’re *super* popular right now”, Chii tells me, stressing the ‘super’ – “I tried to dress up like them for this event because they’re very stylish – everyone else will be trying to show off, so I have to try my best as well.” mimmam’s style is sometimes dubbed

“yumekawa”, short for “yume kawaii”, or “dreamy cute”. They focus on pastel color-blocking, pleated skirts and platform shoes, usually matched to each other in complimentary colors. Chii indicates elements of her outfit that she chose and why, elaborating on her love of the sisters –

“I like them because they’re not just burikko (faking-it cute), they seem really real. But they are cute! They just don’t act the way some models do, being cheerful all the time. I feel connected to them because of that, like we could be friends.”

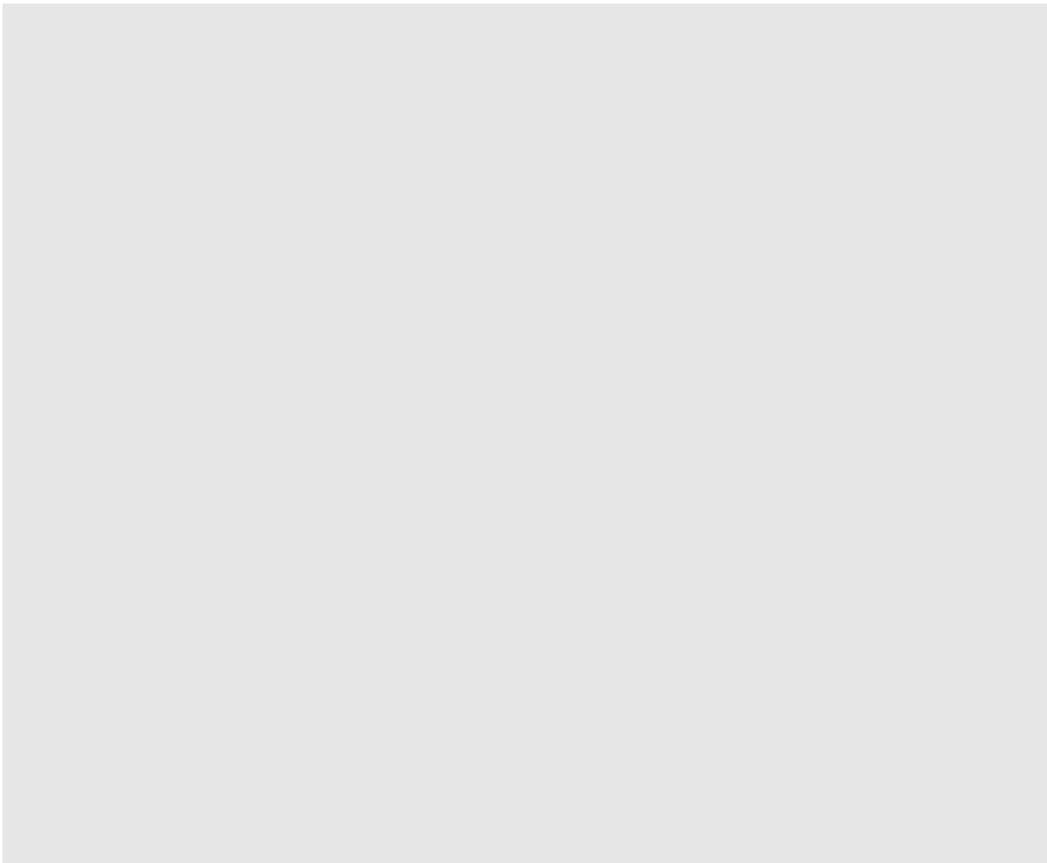


mimmam style tutorials from Zipper magazine (February 2014; November 2014)

Working as models for magazines, mimmam are celebrated for their personal style rather than utilized merely as mannequins – this is a commonality of Japanese fashion magazine employment, where models are often chosen for their popularity as trendsetters, and consequently given a large degree of creative control. Keiko Clarence-Smith further explores this in her research on Japanese magazines - “what is

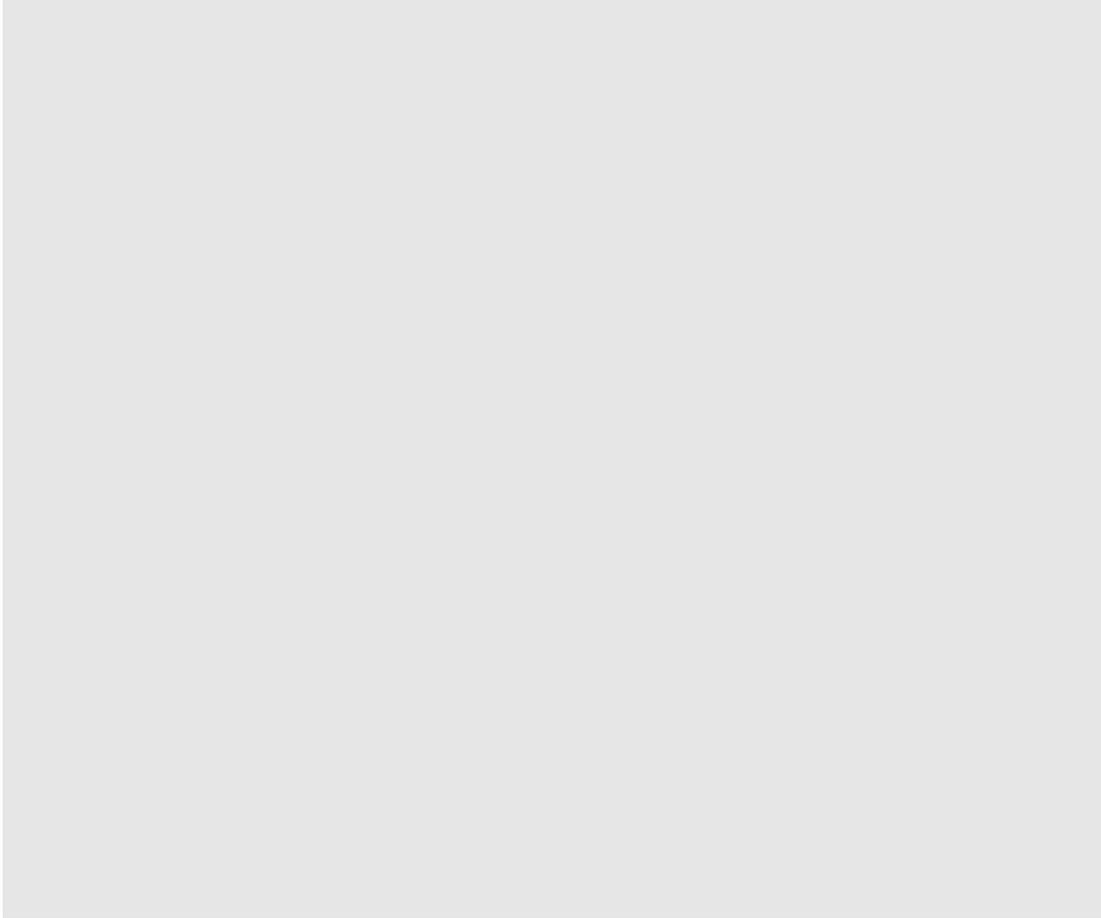
increasingly common is the use of fashion models exclusively employed by magazines” (Clarence-Smith 2007:60), who do feature spreads on how to dress in their style. Magazines which succeed in gaining exclusive contracts with particularly trendy it-girls often perform better than their competitors. (ibid)

Comparably, purimo are also chosen for their popularity predicated on personal style, and machines are themed correspondingly for the models’ tastes. The prevalence of purimo is a somewhat new marketing technique – prior to 2010, machines were kitted out with signage limited to text and illustration, albeit often effusive and colorful in nature. A scant few machines promoted using photographs of models, until early 2010 with the arrival of BF Manual (below), which utilized Tsubasa Masuwaka in the role of “image model”. Dubbed by the press as “the 10 Billion Yen Gyarū” (Yomiuri Shimbun 2009) for her immense ability to sway fashion trends, this was a turning point for purikura promotion, drafting a mode of advertising that is the norm to this day.



I had been invited to the event by Chii, who won tickets in a raffle – as such, attendance was somewhat exclusive, limited to around 50. Despite arriving at the venue an hour early, we were confronted by a snaking queue at the entrance, populated exclusively by young women ranging in age from teenagers to mid-20s, all in immaculately planned outfits. We joined the end of the queue while attempting to stay out of shot of several girls taking a group selfie, bobbing our heads in apology. I watched as a young woman in an oversized sweater and pencil skirt left her bag with a friend and approached someone further up the line, asking if she could take their picture. This happened several more times with different groups, all chipper and complimentary - the camaraderie was infectious. Many attendees were dressed to match a friend or several; some in identical outfits, while others wore matching items in contrasting or complimentary colors. I asked Chii if this was because mimmam were twins, and she shook her head. “While they are twins (*futago*), ‘twinning’ (*tsuin*, from the English) outfits is common in most fashion styles.” She paused, considering. “Matching with your friends shows that you’re in sync, that you both like the same things. It’s like a best friend necklace – it’s a really obvious way to show everyone else how close you are.”

Chii and I had taken purikura several more times before arriving, where I was strictly coached on my posing technique. As I was uncoordinated and inexperienced, I was unable to intuit the correct way to posture myself to effectively mirror my partner – after another failed attempt at following her lead in the moment, we switched to planning the poses ahead of time, practicing them in a nearby mirror. In line for the event, Chii looked over the photographs, laughing. She took out her phone, searching for something, before waving me over to look. She held up her phone to show a series of tutorials on how to pose for purikura, created by mimmam – she explained that it was yet another part of the promotional procedure for their new machine. I pored over the page, scrolling past step-by-step instructions for how best to pose with a friend, and wondered if others had as much trouble with this as I did. Chii indicated that this tutorial worked best for coordinated posing with a friend, rather than being innovative – “you don’t even have the basics, so this should work for you”.



“Pose with a friend!

Mimmam-chan challenges you to pose identically with your friend!! When taking purikura with a friend, please choose the 2-person course.

Pose 1: toothache pose

Just grab your cheek! Even though it's easy, it's a cute pose. Make a point of being symmetrical!”

(FuRyu press release)



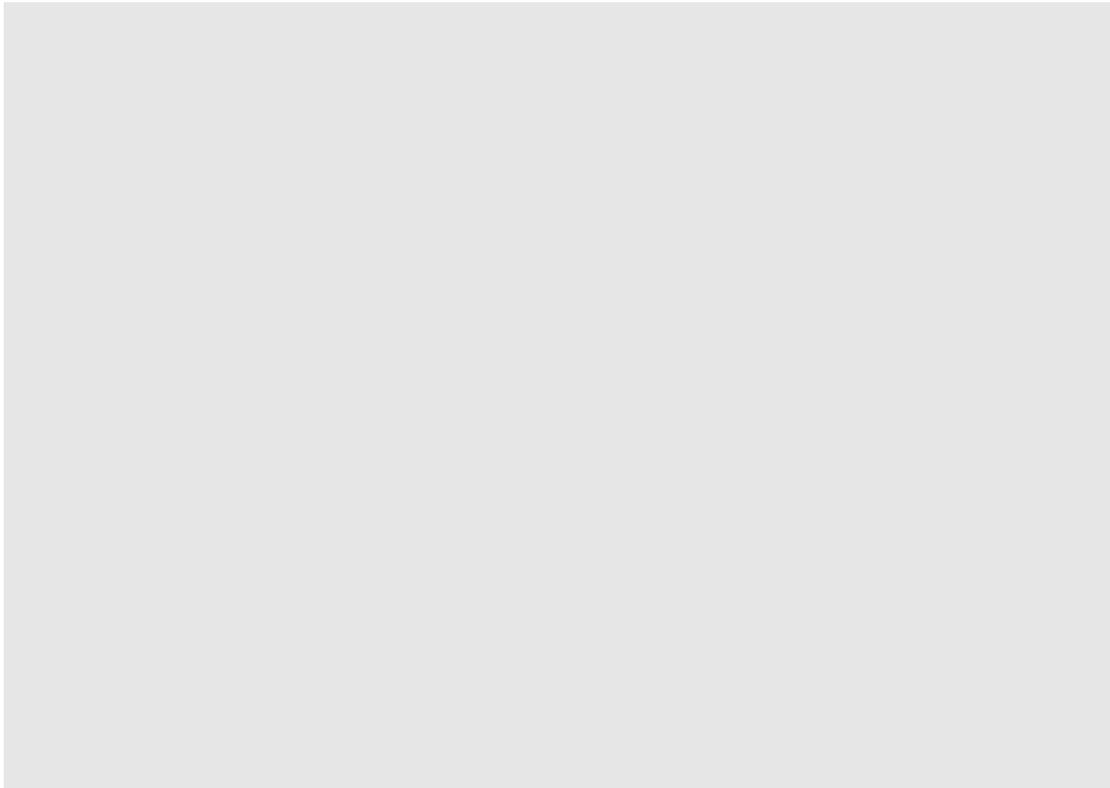
(author's own 2016)

The importance of dutiful, trained posing as found in purikura is comparable to Kelly's (2005) work on karaoke in Japan, whereby a significant margin of consumers trained through tutorials and classes to better their karaoke abilities. In particular, Kelly stresses that "an emphasis on form and on disciplined training ... is a distinctive feature of

Japan's cultural pastimes" (ibid:152), which he ascribes to the cultural importance of *kata*. *Kata* is a term – used initially in martial arts - to describe the highly choreographed methods of teaching and performing specific movements and techniques. The term has linguistically expanded to mean a 'way of doing', emphasizing mastery of different forms of behaviors and methods through sustained practice. Kelly states that *kata* is not relegated to martial arts alone, but can be further extrapolated to "not only the practice of so-called traditional Japanese arts - tea, flower arrangement ... but also contemporary forms of popular/mass culture" (ibid). Keiko Clarence-Smith concurs, stating that *kata* form "...a significant part of formal education and general principles of learning in Japan" (Clarence-Smith 2007:52).

Within Kelly's research, it can be seen that the intense training that karaoke users go through is less about personal betterment for one's own enjoyment, and more for the social benefit of others. In choosing the correct songs, posturing your body effectively and singing well, you create a pleasant experience for those doing karaoke with you. (Kelly 2005:158) Edgar Schein similarly posits that *kata* characterizes group culture, and serves as a means of sustaining group harmony. (Schein 1985:57). This aligns well with my experience of fieldwork on purikura, where my inability to intuit or perform the correct poses needed indicated to those I worked with that I was not in sync with the group, which disrupted the experience. As Clarence-Smith elaborates, "*kata-nashi* (without *kata*) is bad, but *kata-yaburi* (breaking-*kata*) is good" (2007:56) – you can't break the rules until you know them.

HABITUS

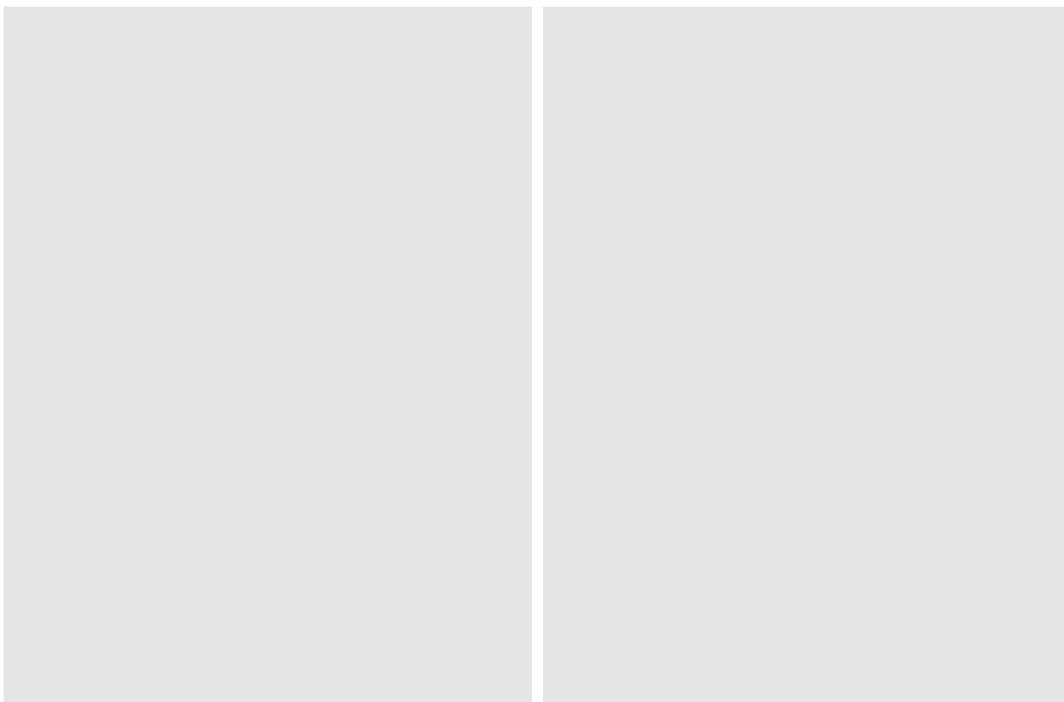


(FuRyu Girls Mignon Press Release)

The event promptly opened its doors at the given time, and we began shuffling our way indoors. The boutique was well lit, an expanse of white with multicolored bunting harboring around 10 machines; though less than the arcade, they were a curated batch of the newest and most popular machines, and a significant amount of space was dedicated to rows of vanity mirrors equipped with curling irons and hair straighteners. A staff member directed our group towards a cordoned off area with makeshift seats set up for mimmam, where we quietly sat down to await the guests of honor. The excitably flustered chatter around me, punctuated by the sounds of camera shutters, came to an abrupt halt as the sisters approached, slightly bowing to the sudden cheers that erupted at their arrival. After introductions, the twins were asked to take a seat by the hair stylist, who proceeded to deftly provide them both with neat French braids, starting high on the crown, and ending with a smattering of bows. The audience looked on in rapt

concentration, seeming to take away more from the experience than merely instructions for a hair-do.

Ikuta (1987:25) equates kata with Marcel Mauss's (1934) theories surrounding habitus, those 'body techniques' that one culturally learns from birth that dictate daily practices, postures, tastes and other seemingly instinctive habits. Mauss describes this as "a prestigious imitation ... the individual borrows the series of movements which constitute it from the action executed in front of him or with him by others" (ibid:73). This notion of habitus is elaborated on by Bourdieu (1977), stressing that it is formed and performed less as an outright imitation, and more of an innate capacity underlying our social world – "the source of cognition without consciousness, intentionality without intention, and a practical mastery of the world's regularities which allows one to anticipate the future" (ibid:22). Kata, then, can be better understood as a *part* of the cultural habitus of Japan - not as habitus itself, but as a culturally specific, heightened form of learning and teaching, whereby "the attention to detail and earnestness with which instruction is both sought and given suggests a seriousness ... which is much more pronounced in Japan than in other societies." (Kelly 2005:153)



left: promotional material for Nicorun event at Girls Mignon
right: promotional material for Nicorun purikura machine 'cheek'

Ryu

“チーク”でプリを撮って ステッカーをGETしよう♥

先着順だよ!!

にこるんVer.



ゆるるんVer.



2種類あるよ♥

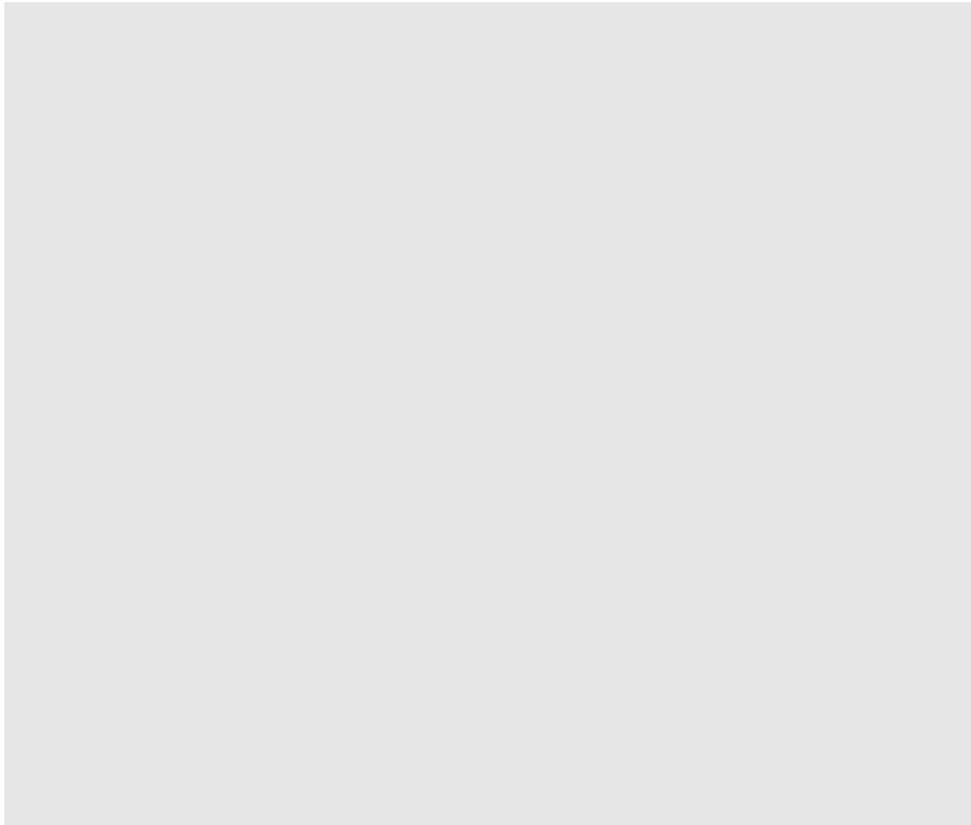
名公認

(author's own 2016)



Interlocutor excitedly singing Nicorun's praises while explaining an upcoming event she wanted to attend
(author's own, 2016)

Another, similar event held at Girls Mignon to promote a different purikura machine was helmed by its purimo, Nicole Fujita, more often stylized as “Nicorun”. Much like mimmam, Nicorun is a hugely popular model, in this case exclusively for Popteen magazine, crafting a fashion sub-style with dedicated tutorials on how to dress like her. This exclusivity has heightened, rather than hampered her fame, which shows in the pages of the magazine. Tutorials on how to dress, act and eat like Nicorun are staple content for the publication, which has extended her career to clothing, makeup, and colored contact collaborations, as well as her pop music debut. Nicorun’s career is of particular importance to my research with purikura, in no small part because of her role as purimo - in addition to producing tutorials on how best to pose for purikura, Nicorun has also contributed to the kata of purikura as a member of the Puri Rangers, a team of six well-liked models assembled by the purikura manufacturer FuRyu, who “gather to solve everyone’s purikura troubles! Under the direction of the Rangers, confront your problems one after the other!” (Let Me 2015)

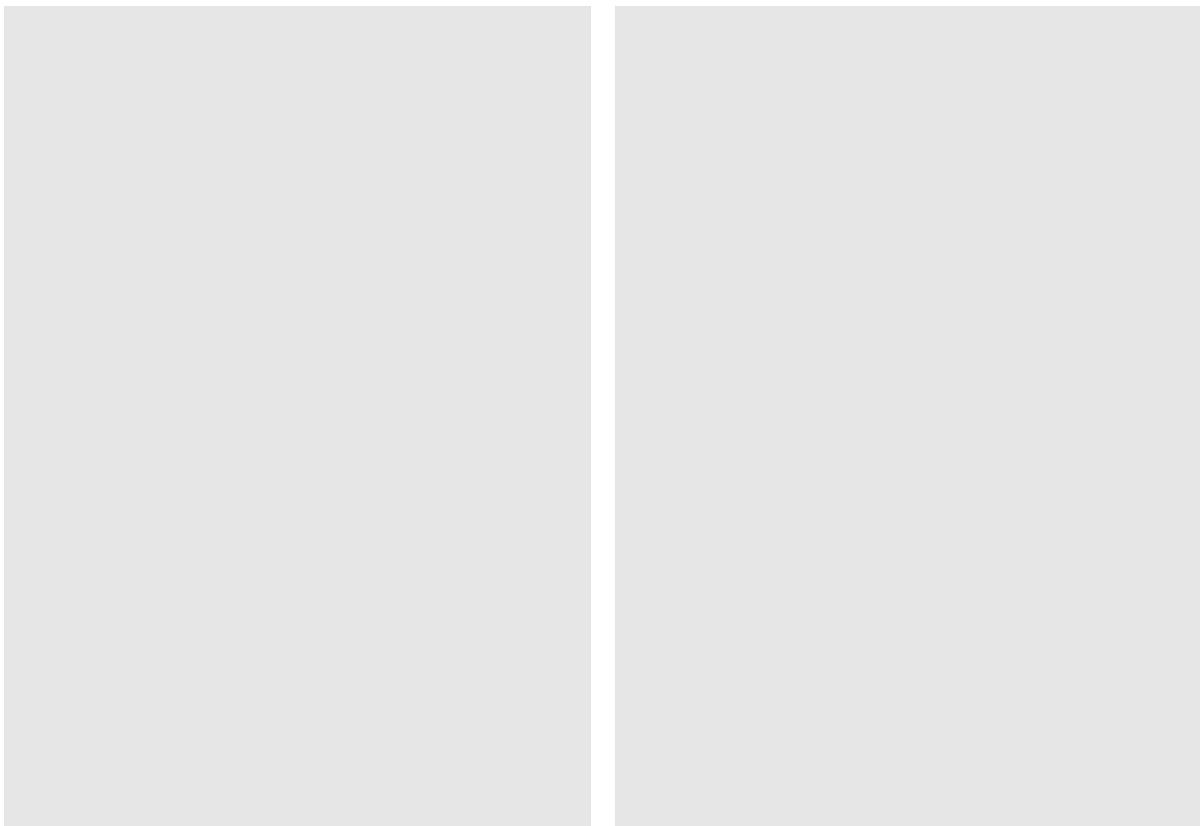




(author's own 2016)

The Puri Rangers travel to shopping centers and purikura boutiques, giving demonstrations on different aspects of purikura – poses, *rakugaki* (drawing on puri; lit. scribbles or graffiti), stamping, styling – in addition to fielding questions from the audience on the different elements of purikura they struggle with. Each ranger professes their own specialty - barring the 'general commander' Aya Suzuki (pictured in naval hat above), from right to left the team aims to help with the following; Suzuka

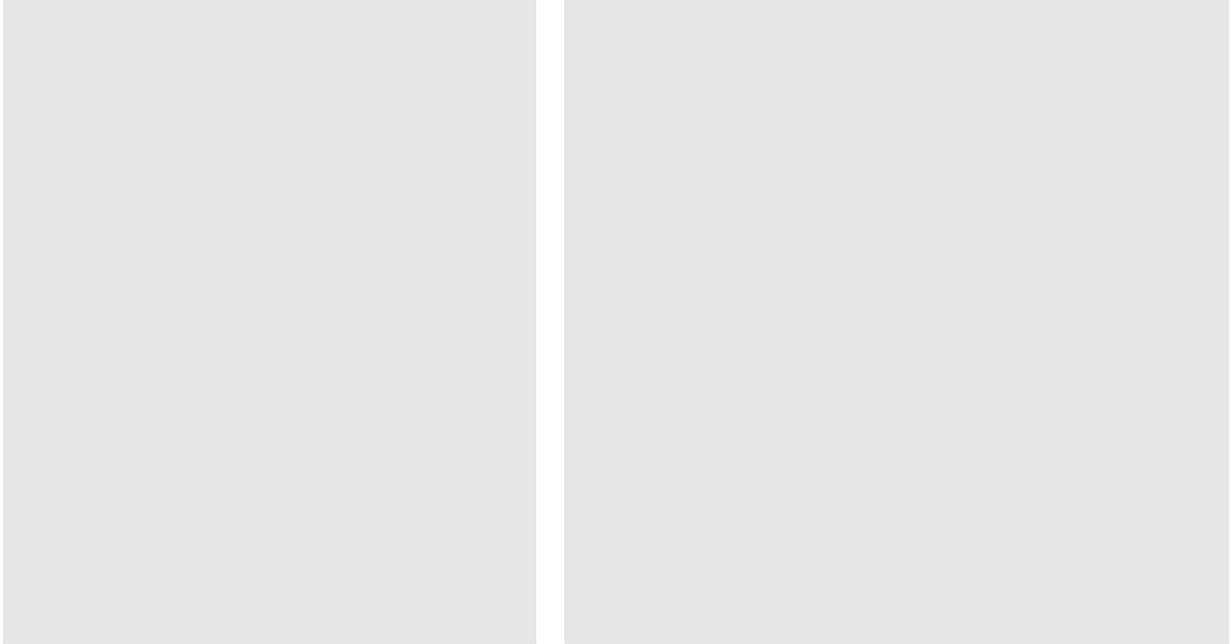
Matsumoto is best at rakugaki, aiming to “help those who can’t doodle well”; Chisato Yoshiki (better known as chiipopo, also a purimo) is best at stylish photos that keep up with trends, helping to make images that can be posted on SNS (social networking services); Yohdi Kondo helps with creating photos to be used as reaction images for instant messages; and Nozomi Maeda states that she is best at expressing herself through posing, and wants to help people “find the cutest pose”. Nicorun, pictured on the far left, states that she wishes to “help people solve the problem of wanting to take delightful pictures with their best friends who they get along with”. (109 News 2015) Prior to being part of the Puri Rangers, Nicorun was a known trendsetter for purikura posing, particularly as thousands of fans echoed her signature pose “Nicorun Beam” – this was repeated at the Girls Mignon event, where she and the entire audience posed together.



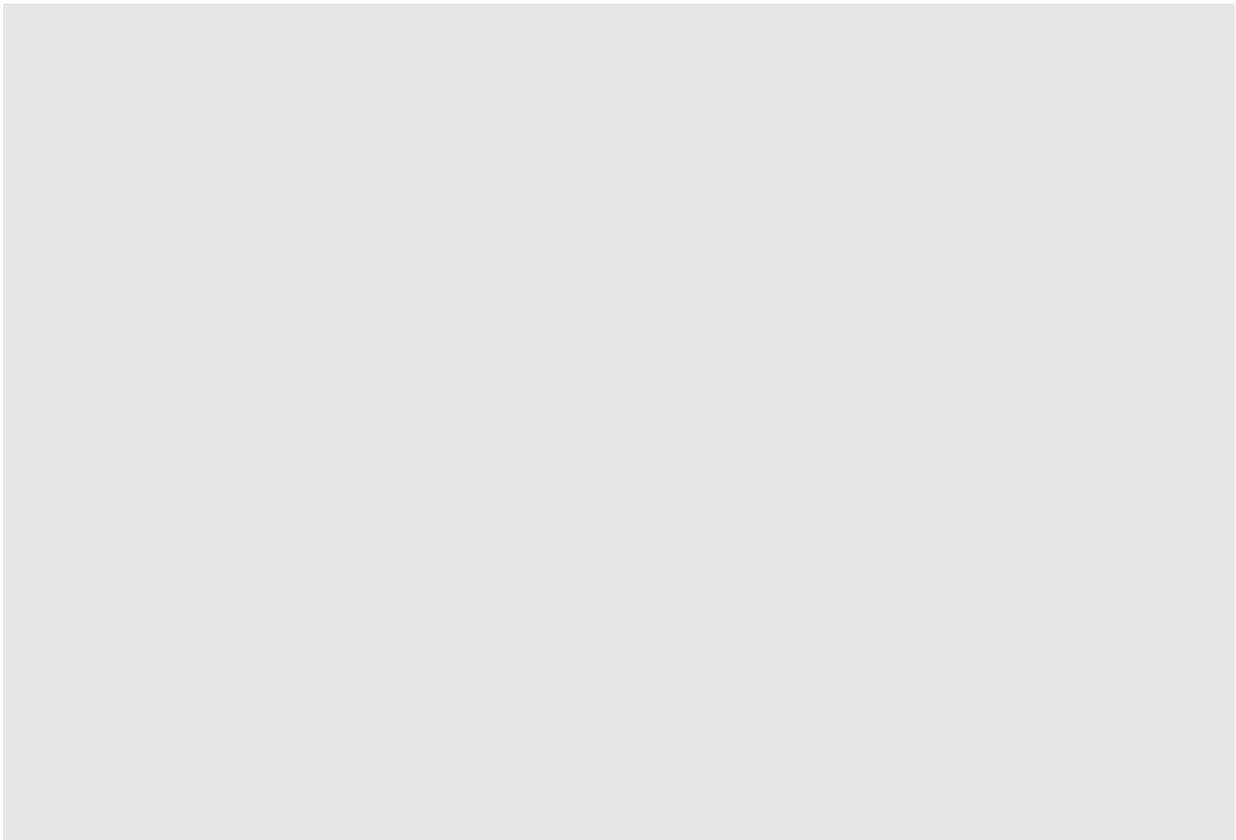
examples of the “Nicorun Beam” outside of purikura

left: fashion tutorial spread from Popteen magazine on how to dress like Nicorun (2015)

right: an ad for a Pokémon-themed clothing line designed in collaboration with Nicorun and SPINNS (2015)



left: Nicorun's purikura; right: fan purikura (from twitter user @nicole__0221)



Nicorun (bottom center) and fans at Girls Mignon event

The intensity with which young women approach purikura and fashion sub-styles may seem daunting to an outsider, but it is important to understand it in the context of subcultures and leisure – in comparison with Kelly’s work on karaoke, “the seriousness with which *karaoke* is experienced does not imply ... a lack of amusement. To stay in the right place in disciplined order and smooth harmony gives a sense of security, of excitement, and great satisfaction [during] leisure time” (Hendry and Raveri 2005:25). This is further comparable with Clarke’s research on subcultures, where he discusses the prevalence of regimented style and technique, what he describes as a “combination of both release from, and reproduction of, the rhythms of work in the apparently free activities of leisure” (Clarke 1975:176) This is where kata diverges from habitus – rather than an innately learned set of characteristics and mannerisms, the kata found in purikura and fashion subcultures are a learned set of skills which users *choose* to incorporate into their daily lives. This is evidenced by the abundance of purikura tutorials, and especially the Puri Rangers – purikura users are not socially imbued with any instinctive knowledge, but instead actively seek out guidance and training. My experiences were similarly corroborated in Yuka Kobo’s research on purikura, stating: “most of these girls talk a lot about how ‘taking good purikura requires training’ ... According to most girls, a skilled purikura model will have to use the same machine several times and learn its habits before she’ll know the right way to pose.” (Kobo 2016)

(author's own purikura 2016)

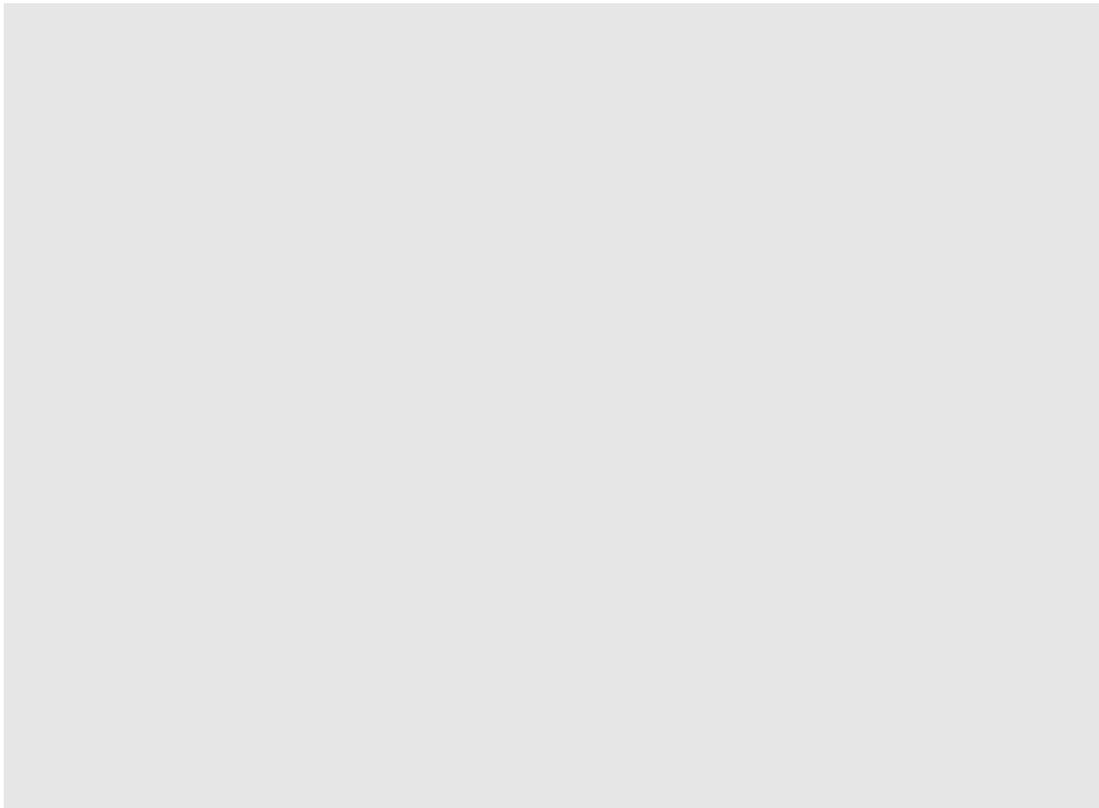
READER MODELS

Taking purikura is itself a social act, used to commemorate and affirm rapport, whereby “purikura are expressions of personal identity and relationships ... mechanisms to negotiate social status and distinction” (Okabe et al. 2006:86). However, this social dimension is not limited to the taking of photographs alone – it is also in the act of learning and performing kata that bonds are formed. Much like Kelly’s research, karaoke users sought out training not only to gain skills for later activities, but also to experience camaraderie in the act of learning – “one of the primary functions of [training] in this context is social - they provide both a structured forum and a pretext for interaction ... which seems to be the major motivation for participation.” (2005:158)

Purikura persists as a leisure activity characterized by disciplined training and aesthetic groupings - much like the working class subcultures discussed by Hall & Jefferson, “Through dress, activities, leisure pursuits and life-style, they may project a different cultural response or ‘solution’ to the problems posed for them by their material and social class position and experience” (Hall and Jefferson 1975:15). It is of particular importance to reiterate that purikura is primarily a female-dominated activity, from which it is possible to better understand the leisure activities of young women in Japan as transgressive in nature. During the Meiji Era (1868-1912), the Japanese government declared that “the role of woman in the new Japan was clearly and officially defined as benefiting the nation by being wives and mothers” (Goldstein-Gidoni 2008:154), a political movement helmed by the ideology of *ryosai kenbo*, or “good wife, wise mother”. While no longer the active doctrine of the government, it is still an ideology that is enthusiastically promoted by contemporary male politicians who wish to relegate women to the domestic roles of child rearing and household management. (ibid:163)

Through fashion subcultures and purikura, young women gain a degree of agency over their contested roles, especially as regards marriage and motherhood - fashion magazines in particular present “an alternative to the discourse of ideas and practices presented to young women by dominant institutions such as family, school and work.” (Rosenberger 1995:143) While a comparison can be drawn to the ‘relative autonomy’

afforded to young women in the Mod communities of the 1960s, young women in Japan are actively pushing back against their lack of career prospects (Clarke 1975:218) – leisure, here, is more than just an “attempt to infuse into this bleak world excitement and colour during the short respite between school and settling down into marriage and adulthood” (Brake 1973:36). Young women in fashion subcultures participate partly through the consumption of magazines that “offer ideas and images of independence and freedom, [therefore] they represent an alternative to the dominant morality that is sympathetic to trends towards leisure activities before marriage, later marriage, and later, less frequent childbirth” (Rosenburger 1995:143), which can be linked to the country’s sharply declining birth rates (The Independent 2017), a subject I will explore in greater depth across later chapters.



mimmam posing with machine at Girls Mignon event

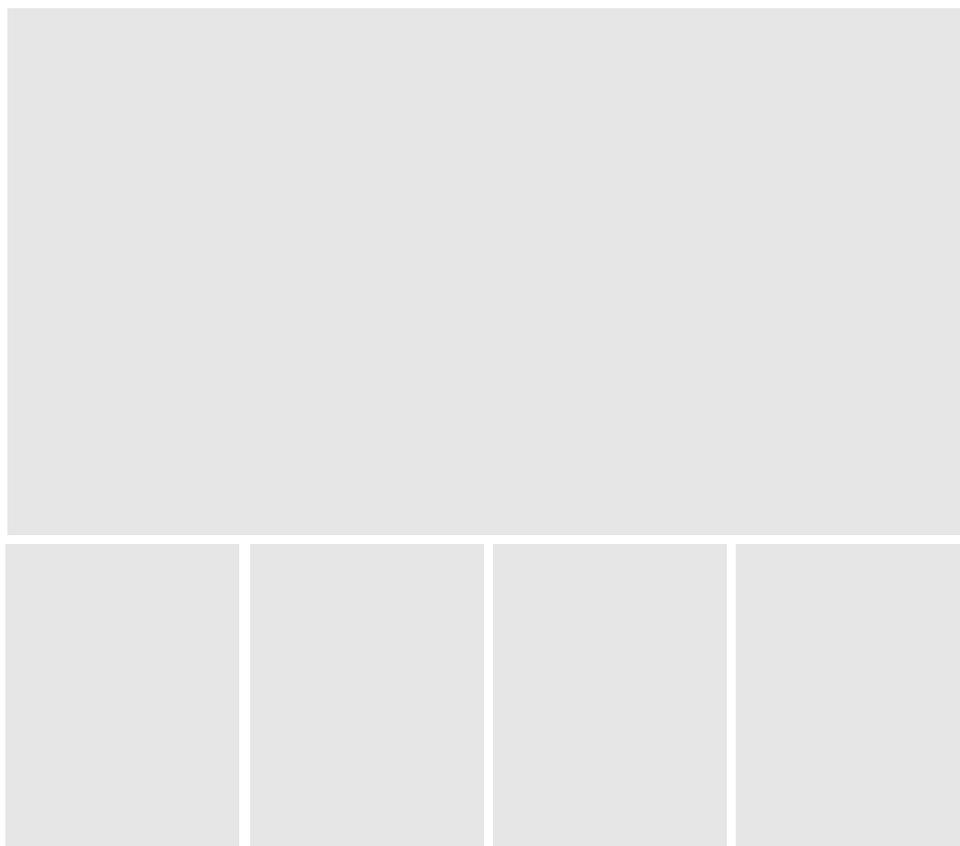
After the stylist had finished doing mimmam’s hair, a chipper staff member indicated that the meet and greet would soon begin, and politely asked if the group would join another orderly queue along a back wall. As the audience members rose, the chatter

among us gave a sense of palpable anticipation. The sisters remained on stage, smiling and speaking to a manager. As the queue finished forming, the same staff member announced that there would be a special event today – another raffle was being held based on ticket number, and a select few would be able to do purikura with mimmam after the meet and greet had finished. The crowd seemed elated as audible gasps rang out, friends turning to each other in excitement. I watched as numerous young women approached mimmam, presenting them with handmade cards and gifts, which the twins graciously accepted; some were brought to tears by the experience, clearly overwhelmed.

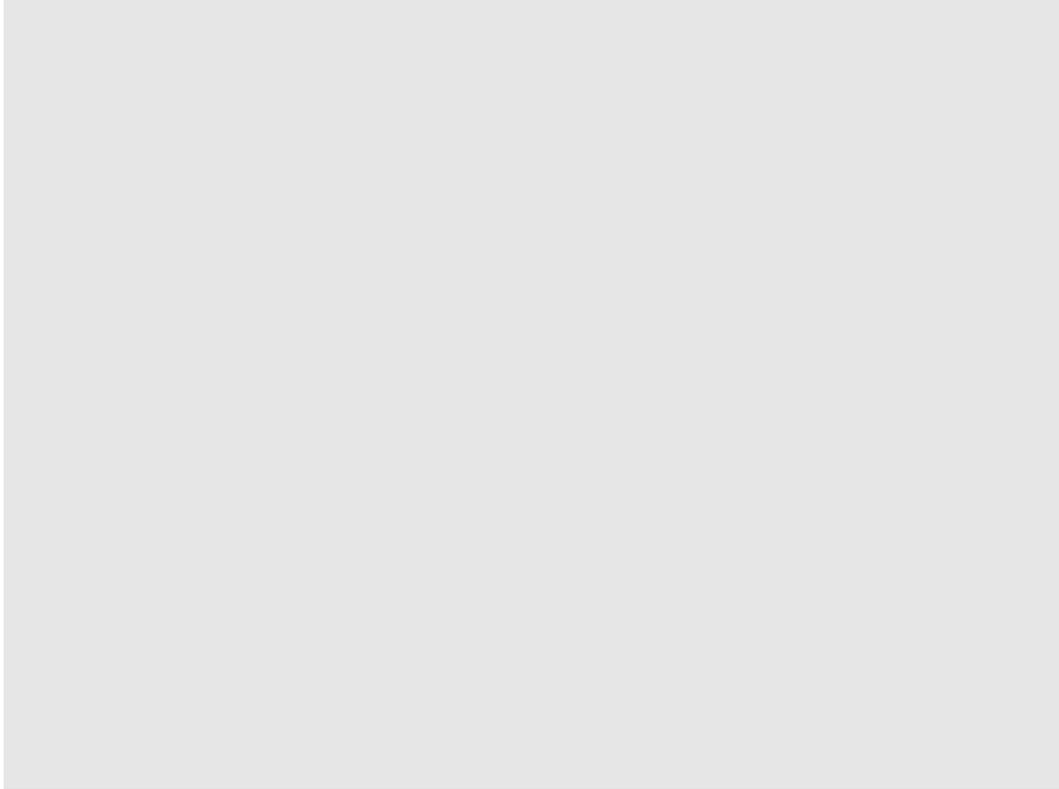
To take purikura with a celebrity is to commemorate the experience – this is no different than with friends, and in a sense creates a tangible social link between those pictured. Rather than aligning with Okabe et al’s analysis of “rare-puri”, where the rarity is established because “girls seldom take purikura with ... people outside their friend networks” (Okabe et al. 2006, 84), with fan purikura, the social capital attached to an image comes from the rarity of the encounter, which effectively places the celebrity within the scope of the fans’ friend network. Purikura manufacturers have attempted to synthesize this effect in various ways – for instance, pre-made purikura of the Puri Rangers are widely available at WEGO clothing outlets where the team have toured, however, these only include individual members, and not the buyer. Since its inception, purikura manufacturers have produced sticker sheets with frames featuring celebrities – for Chalfen & Murui, “in these cases the object is to get oneself into a group picture with a person or group of people of celebrity status” (Chalfen and Murui 2004, 59). Purikura frames like this persist in popularity to this day, ranging from pop idols to sumo wrestlers – however, recent trends have gone beyond using people merely as a decorative element. Both mimmam and Nicorun have been models for a new purikura framing technique that attempts to produce the effect of having taken purikura *with* the model in question. By utilizing the kata of purikura, the static image of “half” a pose allows users to take purikura “with” their favorite model.



Pre-made purikura of the Puri Rangers (author's own 2016)



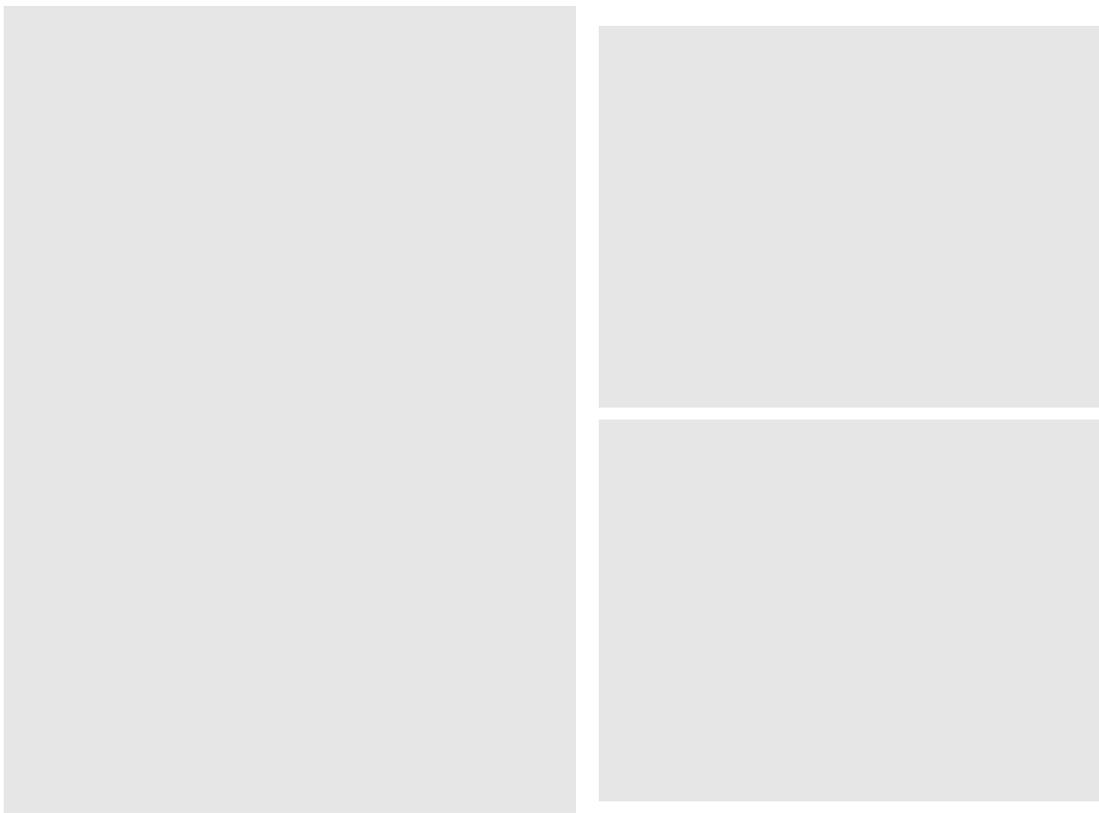
Sumo puri via @aratana753, @rikayamarikasuke, @kimonokimo, @sumokyokai



Frames of mimmam and Nicorun, allowing users to complete poses such as forming a heart with their hands, the toothache pose, or being hugged by Nicorun.

This isn't merely celebrity worship – this is an extension of both the current social uses of purikura, as well as a larger trend found in fashion magazines. Within publications that promote models for their personality and style, photo spreads will often feature scenarios that depict friendships between the young women. The veracity of these relationships is affirmed through behind-the-scenes photos and videos of group pranks, goofy outtakes and boisterous play. The degree to which the models interact with each other, and fans, on social media establishes a publicly performed depiction of friendship networks that is analogous to that of their fans, fictive or not. Moreover, nearly all fashion magazines prominently crowdsource for models – common fixtures in magazines are application forms that can be cut out and sent in, model search contests, as well as “street snap” articles which feature stylish youth who have been approached on the street (a topic I will discuss in more depth in chapter 6). Most popular models, including mimmam, made their start this way - either by applying as a reader (*dokusha/doku moderu*, or ‘reader models’) or being ‘discovered’ on the street. The

popularity of the magazines, and models, is predicated on this – by sourcing models from the readers, magazines effectively create a community of fans that feel they have a genuine connection, while also aspirationally styling themselves in the hopes of becoming models themselves. The recursive nature of fashion magazine production is comparable to Jennifer S. Prough’s research on the *shōjo manga* (girls’ comics) magazine industry in Japan, where the majority of authors are culled from their own readership – “In the Foucauldian sense, *shōjo manga* can be understood as a system of texts that describe and circumscribe their subjects, girls, but not without the input from girls themselves” (Prough 2011:4)



left: fashion spread from Popteen (2016), featuring Nicorun (middle) and fellow models Yura Yura (left) and Michopa (right)

right: Nicorun, Yura Yura and Michopa on Nicorun’s personal Instagram

In the stages of kata learning, the primary result is that of *katachi*, or the ‘shape’ of the practiced movement – replication of this *katachi* is what allows the learner to achieve kata, “when what they have learned is internalized and an individual understanding of

the meaning of what has been imitated is achieved” (Clarence-Smith 2007:55). As young women emulate their favorite models, as directed by tutorials in the magazines themselves, they are performing and honing *kata* as a means to connect with them as peers. Just as “a person is what she wears and may become another person by sartorial imitation” (ibid:59), they are also reinforcing a mimetic link between themselves and the models they admire. For the young women that I worked with, “photography does not seek to impose a category of identity plucked from a pre-existing structure but emerges rather as a creative space in which new aspirant identities and personae can be conjured” (Pinney 1997, 85). Through *katachi* and *kata*, young women are connecting with those they mimic on a personal level - “the significance of learning *kata* lies in the fact that by copying an external, physical form - that is, *katachi* - you recreate the internal *kata* - that is, the feelings and emotions of another” (ibid:56).

Since the beginning, *purikura* has depended on the creative input of young women – as discussed by Laura Miller, “the development of [*purikura*] technology demonstrates a finely-tuned and close interconnection between girls’ patterns of use and developers’ attempts to keep up with these” (L. Miller 2005, 131), while in Best & Suzuki’s estimation, “It is no overstatement to say we cannot talk about contemporary marketing without studying the hit commodities created by [young women]” (Suzuki and Best 2003:75). This is comparable to Kawamura’s work in Shibuya - salesgirls who are chosen for their style influence are often so popular and emblematic of the brand they are employed by that they are often asked to design products (Kawamura 2012:56). According to Kawamura, “The companies need [the salesgirls’] ideas for their businesses to survive” (ibid). The established connection between *purikura* manufacturers, who adopt *purimo* from fashion magazine models, who were initially readers, indicates that young women command more influence than just fanaticism and imitation. As young women make use of *purikura* as a tool for documentation and display of friendship networks and personal identity, they perform the *kata* of fashion subcultures such that “to copy, to imitate, to yield into and to become other in such a way that the copy draws power and influences the original”. (Taussig 1993, xiii)



mimmam and fans

Cheap Frills

Barbie, Conspicuous Consumption and Emphatic Femininity



Interior of Barbie: Your Doll purikura machine; photograph author's own (2016)



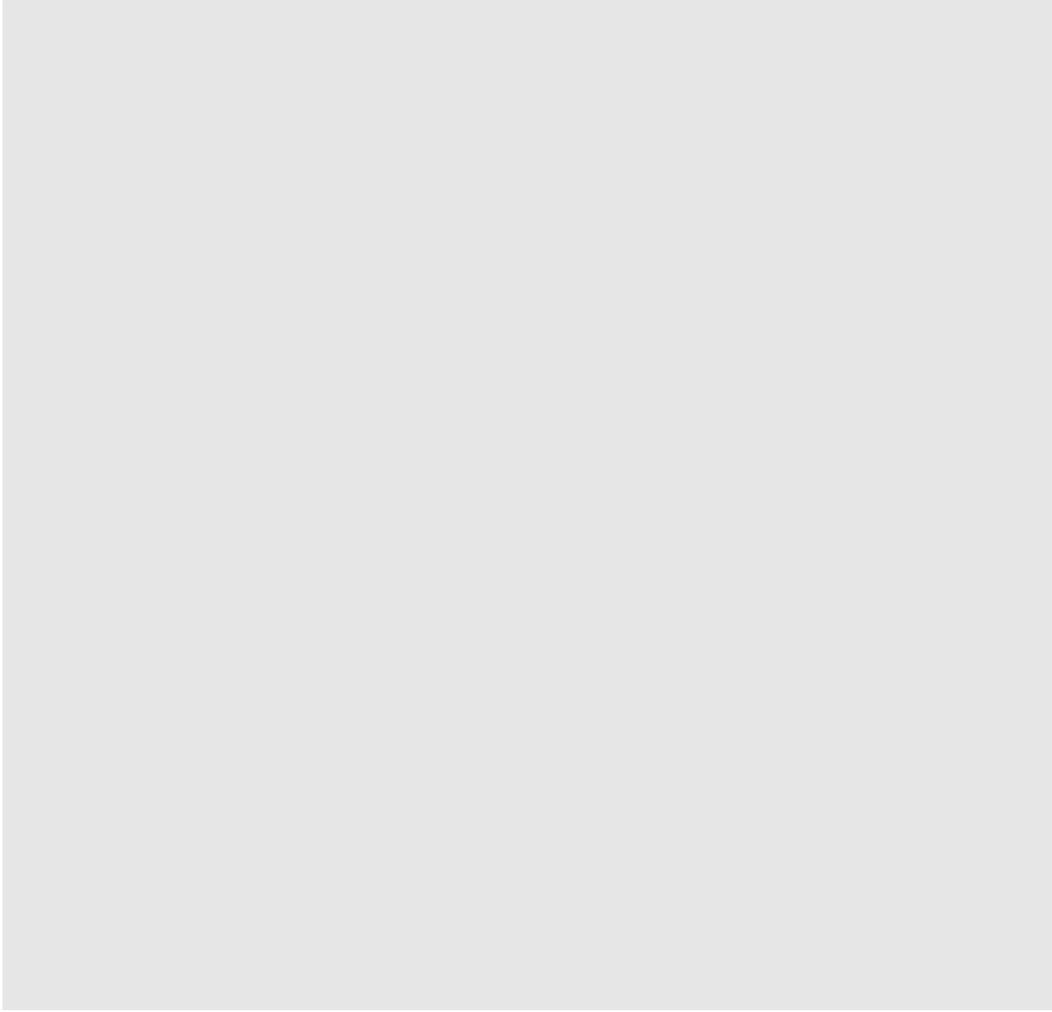
“Dakota Rose – Surely A Doll’s Physique!!!” (Popteen Magazine, April 2014)

Dakota Rose is the stage name for American model Dakota Ostrenga, who lives and works in Japan - after her YouTube makeup tutorials saw viral success in Japan and China, she was offered a contract with modeling agency Bravo in 2012, at the age of 16. For her debut on Japanese television, she was enthusiastically introduced as *“Ultra beautiful girl Dakota Rose – who became explosively popular as an internet celebrity, dubbed ‘Real Barbie!’”* Clad in a lace dress and pink striped bowtie – the sort normally reserved for school uniforms - Dakota demurred, stating: “When I uploaded videos, I didn’t expect to be labeled as ‘Real Barbie doll’ - I didn’t do any kind of CGI effect or anything.” The television commentators all remarked on her beauty, which she accentuated with *gyaru*-styled eye makeup, which enlarges the eyes.

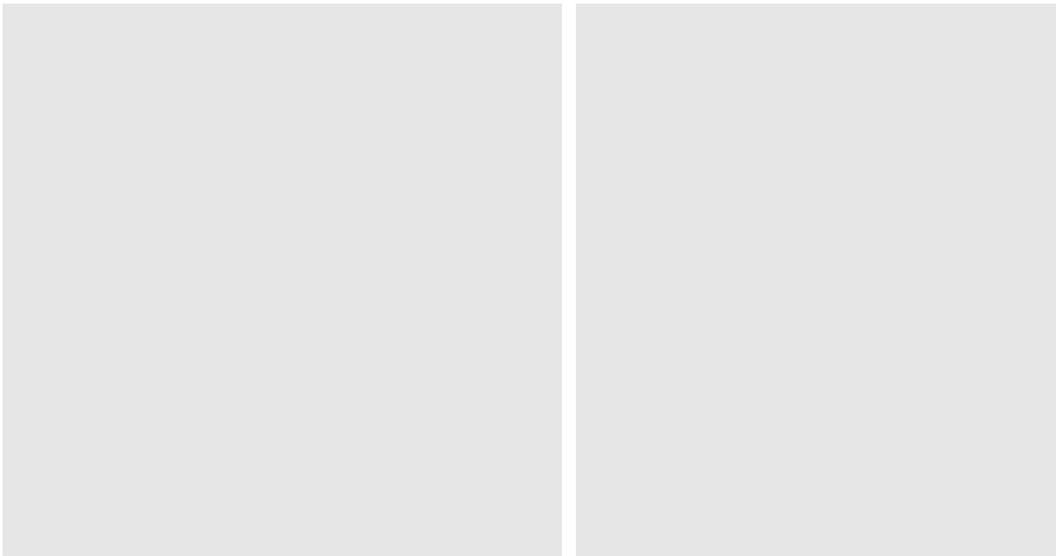
Dakota’s earliest modeling jobs echoed her designation as ‘Real Barbie’. In her first commercial, for Revure shampoo, she acted as a doll in a music box – arms held up, stiff at the wrists and elbows, head tilted to the side as she spun in place. For the makeup brand Dolly Wink, owned by the “the 10 Billion Yen Gyarū” Tsubasa

Masuwaka, she plays several “dolls” for the line CandyDoll, with tutorials on how to achieve each look; in promotional images, she is held aloft by Tsubasa, sitting on her palm. She has also done numerous collaboration campaigns with Mattel, promoting Barbie merchandise. In these campaigns she is cast as a ‘normal’ Japanese high school girl, though ostensibly filling the role as Barbie herself. The products she wears are items that can be worn in conjunction with school uniforms - neck ties, bags, socks - and serve as part of the quintessential Japanese school experience.

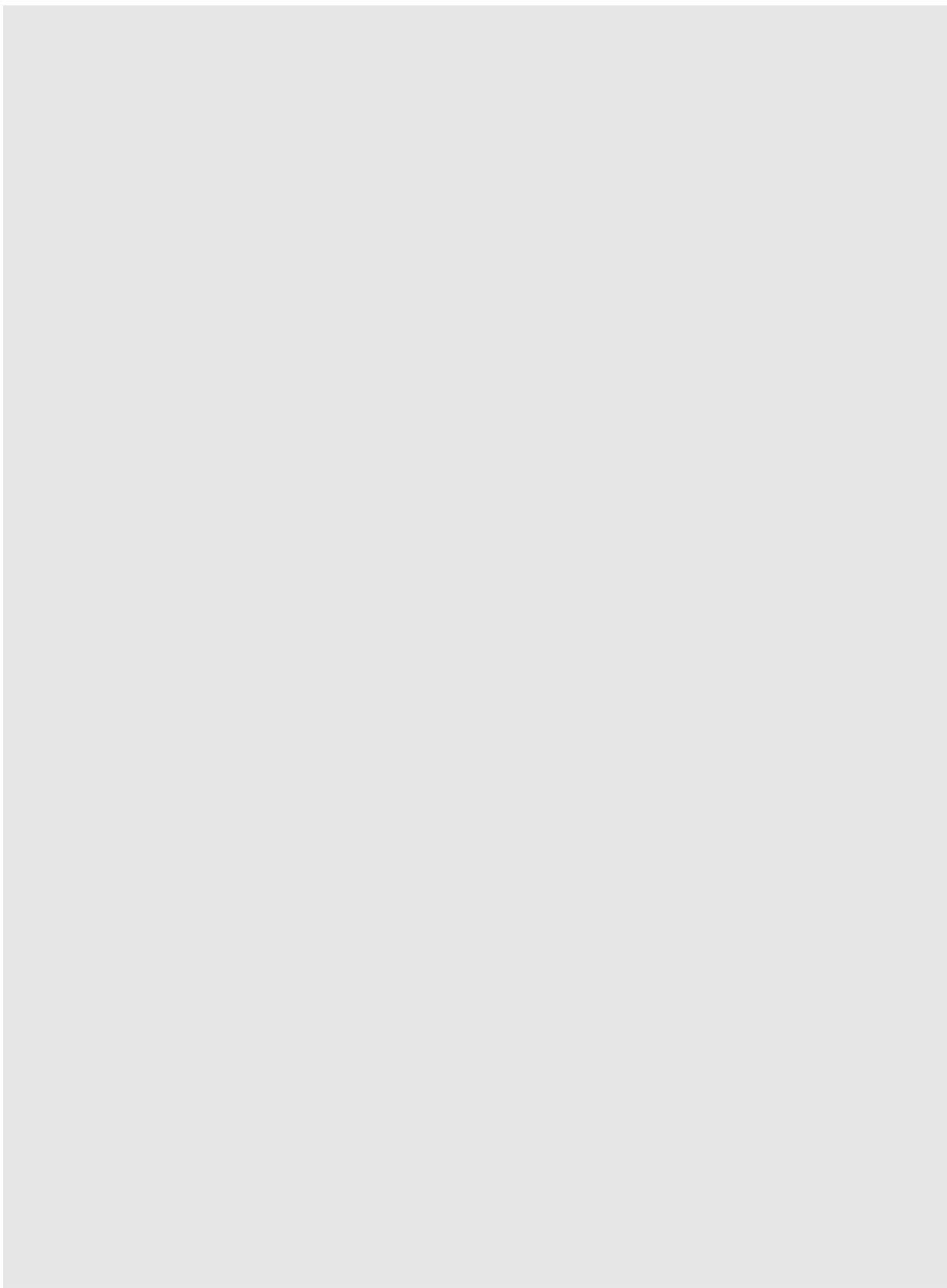
Dakota Rose has also been the *purimo* for 5 different purikura machines, 4 of which portray her as a doll. The machine Rosa Dolce frames all its body morphing abilities around being doll-like, from the body lengthening (either “doll-like” or “super-doll-like”) to “glossy shimmering doll skin”; on the machine’s exterior, she is shown standing rigidly, still in her ‘box’. The purikura machine VIP&GOSSIP, which had three different iterations, touted its transformative abilities for achieving Dakota’s “grown-up doll” appearance – “the perfect, classic doll look can finally be realized”.



Promotional materials for CandyDoll with Tsubasa Masukawa and Dakota Rose



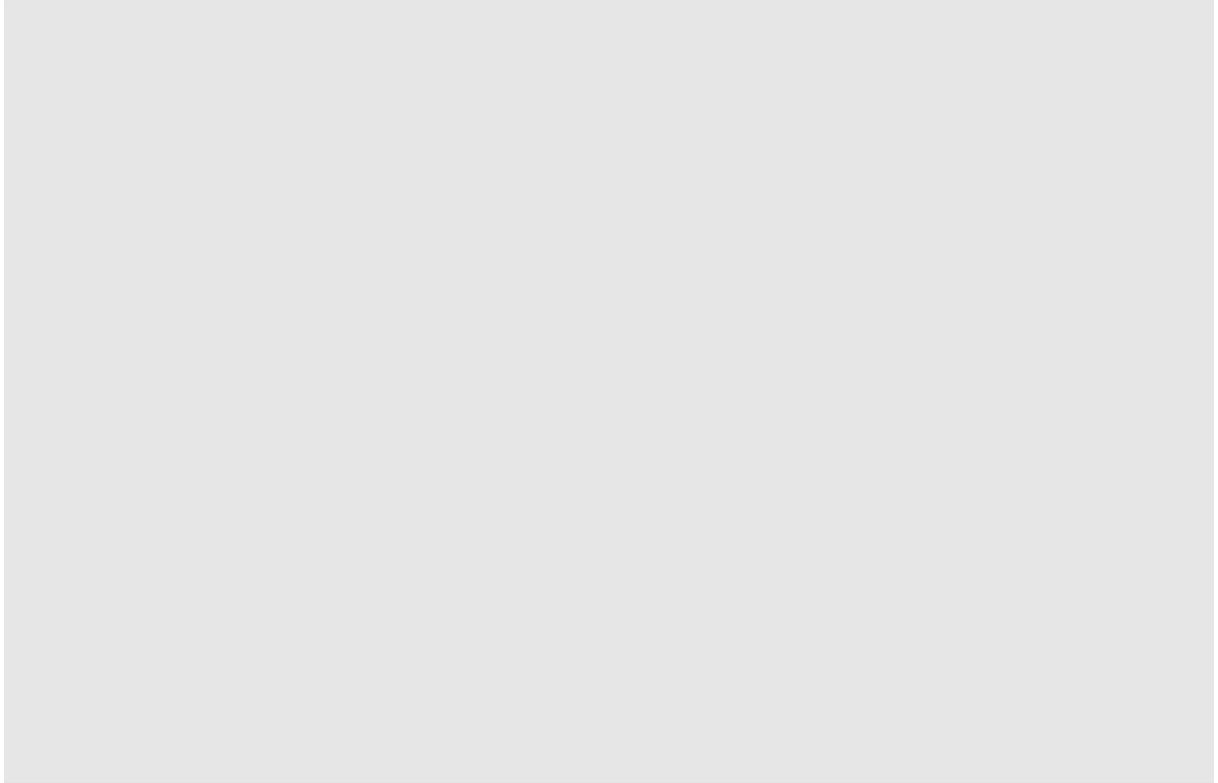
Promotional materials for Rosa Dolce and VIP&GOSSIP



Barbie promotional materials featuring Dakota Rose (Popteen Magazine, April 2014)



Promotional materials for Dakota Rose-fronted purikura machine 'mg' (author's own 2016)



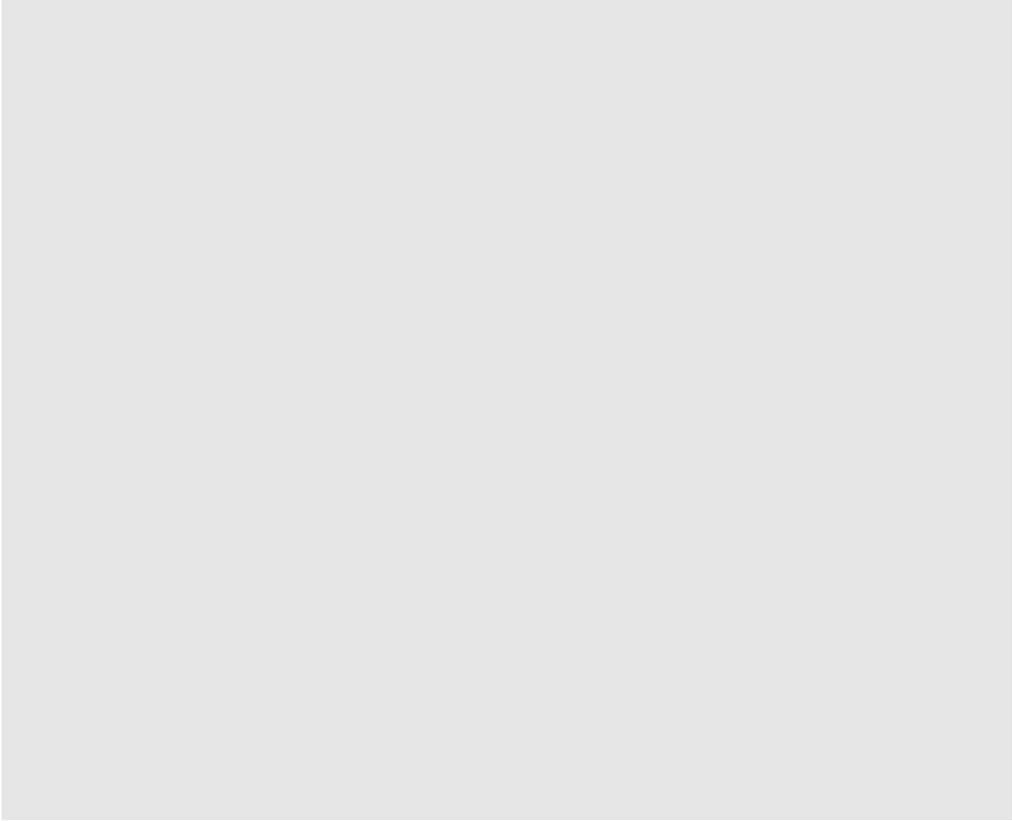
(2013)

Dolls are a frequent theme in fashion magazines and style guides for young women in Japan. In her style book “I am Nicorun”, Nicole Fujita is portrayed as a paper doll - clad in a tank top and bloomers, grinning expectantly with hands held out stiff at her sides; different outfits with dotted line cutouts and paper tabs are strewn across the page for the reader to dress her. A similarly recurrent motif among magazines and guides is that of doll packaging – mimmam, in their eponymous style book, are shown gazing into the distance, standing rigidly in color coordinated boxes and matching outfits, accessories held upright to the walls. Similar to the *kata* demonstrations discussed previously in chapter 2, magazines regularly feature tutorials on how to achieve the ‘look’ or style of a particular doll. As an exclusive model for the gyaru magazine Popteen, Dakota – along with colleagues Nicorun and YuraYura – participated in a series of tutorials on how to emulate the hairstyles and outfits of the Takara Tomy doll Licca - to be more precise, how to emulate the doll’s Twitter account. The account posts photos of Licca out and about in the world as though she were real - stylistically and aesthetically, they are the same as most fashion bloggers - posed in front of blank walls and cafes, she touts a

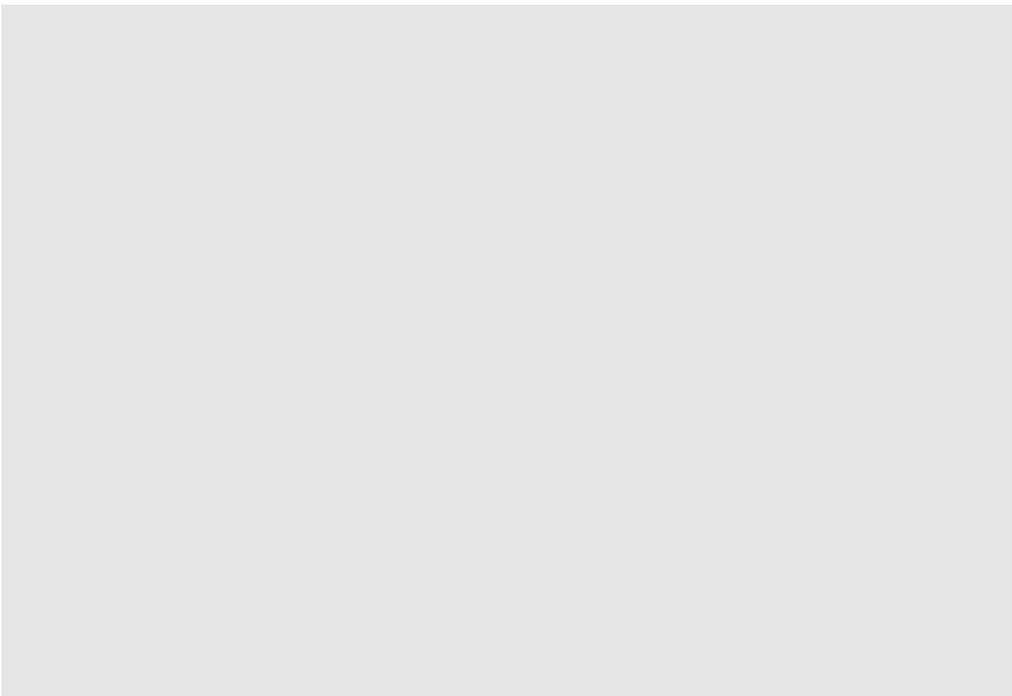
lifestyle as much as an outfit. The article headline reads: “The feminine motivation of Licca-chan’s Twitter is overwhelming!”⁵

During my field research, Barbie was a prevalent figure in the creation and consumption of purikura, particularly with the release of the Barbie: Your Doll machines - due to their popularity, I initially found it difficult to navigate the crowds to use them. What set these chic, hot pink booths apart was ‘*hacopuri*’, or box puri, a framing technique that allowed users to appear, doll-like, in a Barbie box – accessories and all. Since 1959, Barbie has reigned as a cultural icon of unrestrained femininity - while existing as an “incredibly resilient visual and tactile model of femininity” (Urla and Swedlund 2000, 398), she has elicited frequent critique and animosity; she is “the doll scholars love to bash.” (Inness 1999, 178) I would argue that many of the aspects of Barbie that are critiqued are analogous to purikura consumption and girls’ culture in general - in this chapter, I will explore this relationship in depth, focusing in particular on consumerism, cute culture, and the performance of femininity.

⁵ “Twitter のリカちゃん女子力高すぎ♥ - note that 女子力 is a colloquialism that literally translates as “woman power”, but effectively means a woman’s level of motivation in ‘feminine’ arenas - fashion, makeup, style



mimmam style book (2015)



Promotional materials for Barbie: Your Doll



Promotional standee for Barbie: Your Doll puri machine (author's own 2016)



Interior of Barbie: Your Doll machine (author's own 2016)

BISQUE DOLLS AND CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION

To fully understand the cultural influence of Barbie, it is important to begin with an earlier relative – the bisque, or porcelain, doll. Bisque dolls, handmade primarily in France and Germany, were an overwhelmingly popular children’s toy in the 19th century. For young women and girls, they served as both playthings and objects of fashion consumption - in the late 1800s, an entire industry of fashion houses sprang up devoted to crafting detailed wardrobes for these dolls, which were noted for their accuracy in replicating the clothing of the era. Despite their diminutive size, they primarily wore the clothing of young adult women, and were kitted out with superfluous accessories to match. The story their belongings told was one of a mature, independent lifestyle full of adventure, and bisque dolls provided “apprenticeship to knowing about fashion, and the rituals and pleasure of wearing clothes” (Peers 2004, 173). They were at times lauded for their moral guidance of young girls, but simultaneously derided for their role in encouraging fashion consumption. For Peers, these criticisms stem from a place of misogyny, for it is by implication a criticism of female consumers of fashion – utilized to “further render women, their lifestyles and patterns of consumption, ridiculous” (ibid: 64). For critics, the bisque doll served as an analogous placeholder in discussions of women and their upward social mobility – the denunciation of dolls and fashion consumption allowed critics a thinly-veiled “conduit by which unease and uncertainties about movements and advances in female position could be publicly debated” (ibid 67).

In a similar way, for gothic lolita fashion, this still remains a contested area of female visibility. Gothic lolita fashion, better known in Japan as *gosurori* (a portmanteau of gothic + lolita⁶) was first established in the 1990s as a particular Japanese subculture

⁶ In my fieldwork, it was evident that gothic lolita fashion is unrelated to the 1955 novel by Vladimir Nabokov, despite the name – among women who ascribed to the substyle, those who were aware of the book felt that there was no connection, while most were not familiar with the book at all.

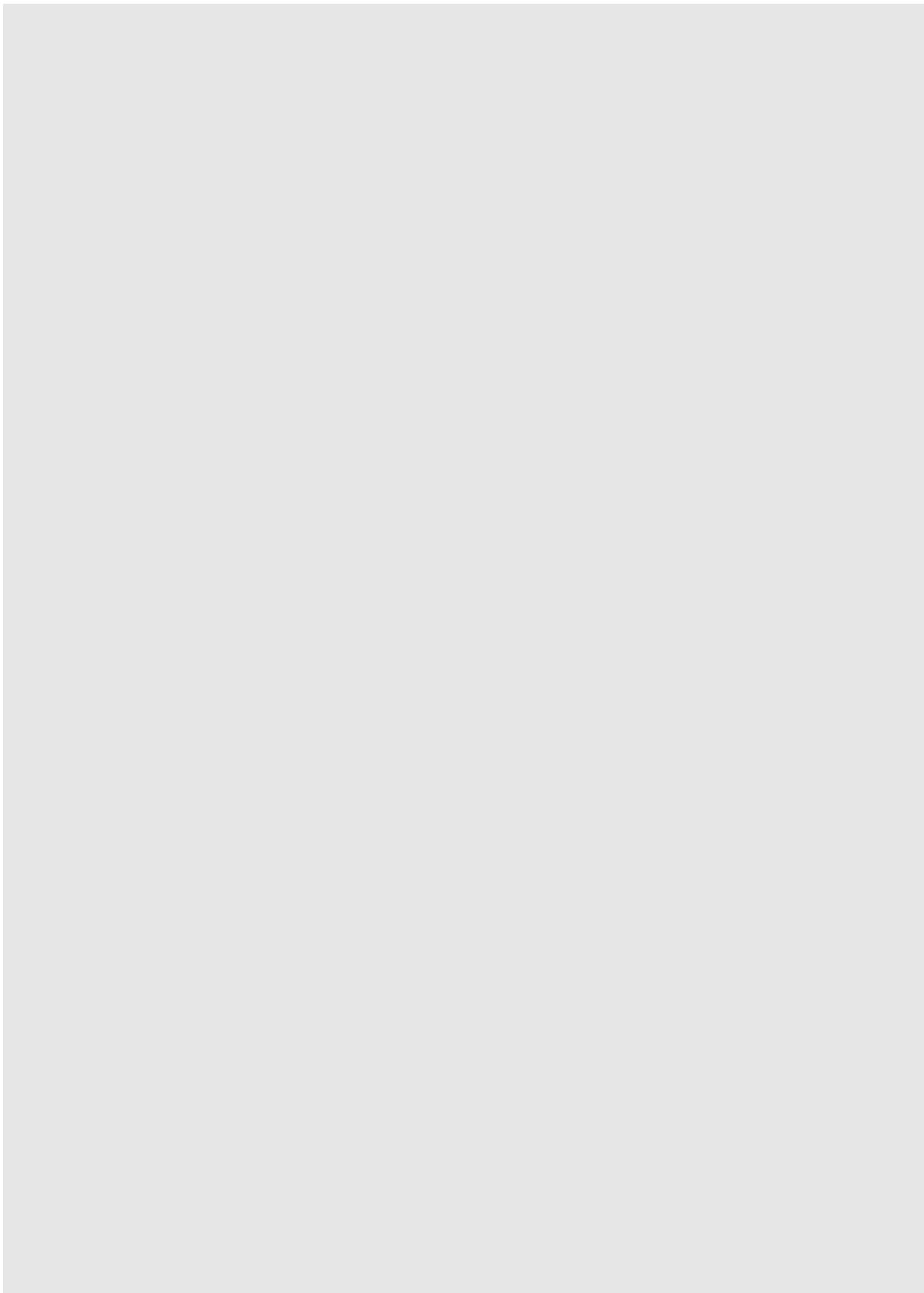
that was inspired by bisque dolls (Monden 2013), and is characterized by extravagant dresses usually consisting of tiers of ruffles, lace and bows on full-skirted dresses. In its origins, it was inspired largely by fashion from the Victorian and Rococo periods, stressing intricate details in a fanciful homage to those historical dresses worn by women and dolls alike. *Gosurori* fashion continues to flourish as a female-centric subculture to this day - but much like its predecessors, it has received an onslaught of vitriol from critics. The style has been criticized by those that see the collection of expensive, impractical clothing as a petulant refusal to grow up, not least of all because the overtly feminine style has been interpreted as making women look like children. (Kinsella 1995; McVeigh 1996)

Many critics of *gosurori* fashion are Western in origin, who see the style through the cultural preconception of feminine and cute adornment as juvenile, and often infantilizing – as such, “fashions with hyperbolic girlishness and sweetness are rarely popular in contemporary Western societies” (Monden 2013, 173). Much like its Victorian antecedents, *gosurori* fashion has also been criticized for its physically restrictive garments, which many feel is symbolic of female oppression for the sake of the male gaze – however, this interpretation does not account for the agency of the wearer. Yuniya Kawamura has noted in her ethnographic research on *gosurori* fashion that for participants, the clothing is not about subserviently appealing to men, but for the sake of self-expression and satisfaction - “on the contrary, these girls do it for themselves or for ... other lolita girls.” (Kawamura 2012, 70) For Valerie Steele, the clothing of Victorian women served an equally complex purpose, as “an aspect of women’s self-development” (Steele 1985, 4), particularly with the bulky size of the full skirts and petticoats providing women with power through visibility (Monden 2013, 167).

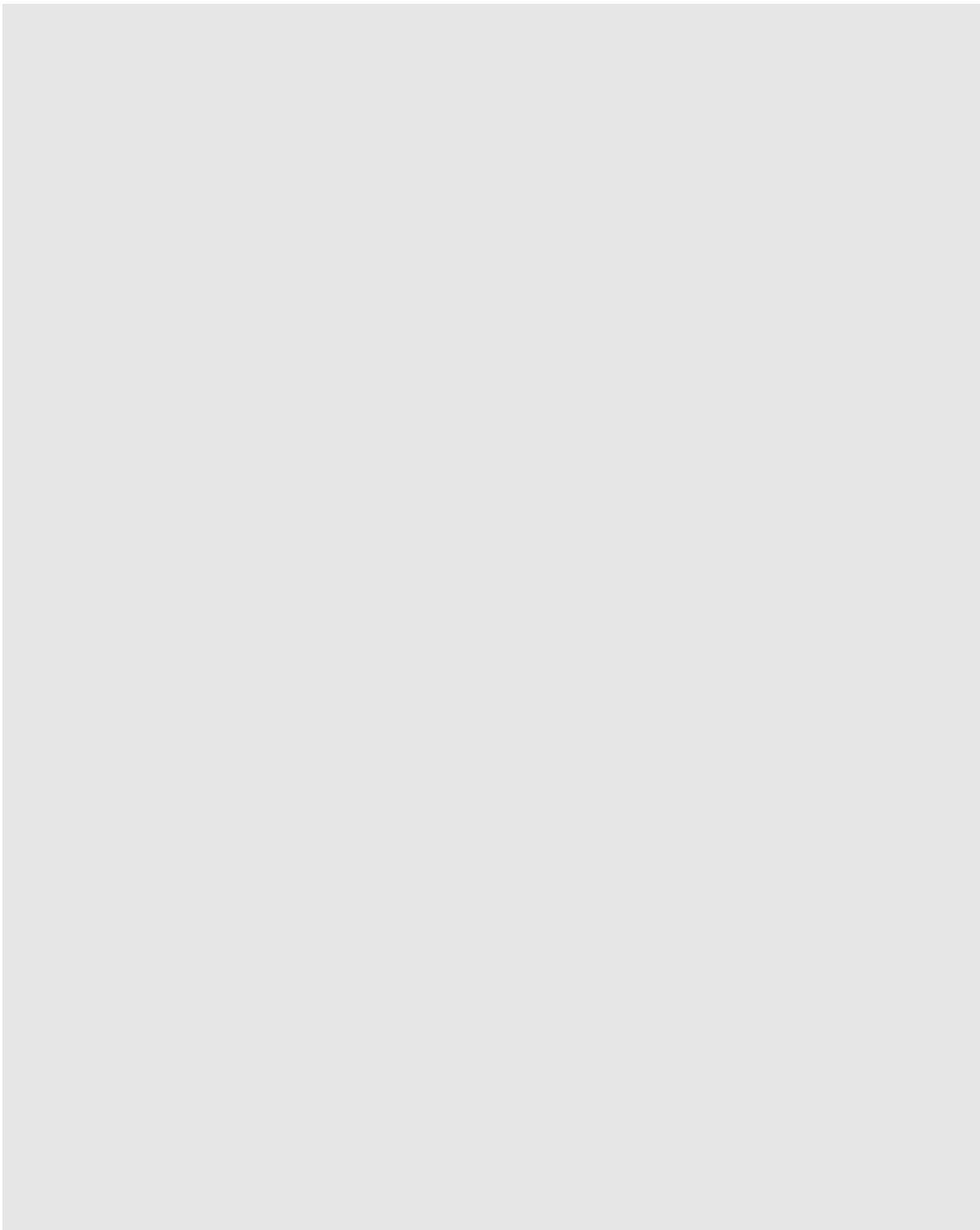
The condemnation of *gosurori* fashion within Japan focuses more particularly on the high cost of what are seen to be impractically feminine garments. In mainstream Japanese society, “personal consumption is portrayed as something rather anti-social and immoral” (Kinsella 1995, 246), a cultural norm which *gosurori* subculture – with its decadent, costly frills – flouts lavishly. In this case, as with many other fashion subcultures in Japan, *gosurori* fashion serves as a form of conspicuous consumption (Veblen 2005) in reaction to a culture that values female selflessness above all else. As

Skov and Moeran elaborate, processes of consumption for young women in Japan are in direct opposition to “the expectation that a ‘Japanese woman’ ought to sacrifice herself to husband and children in marriage.” (Skov & Moeran 1995, 9)

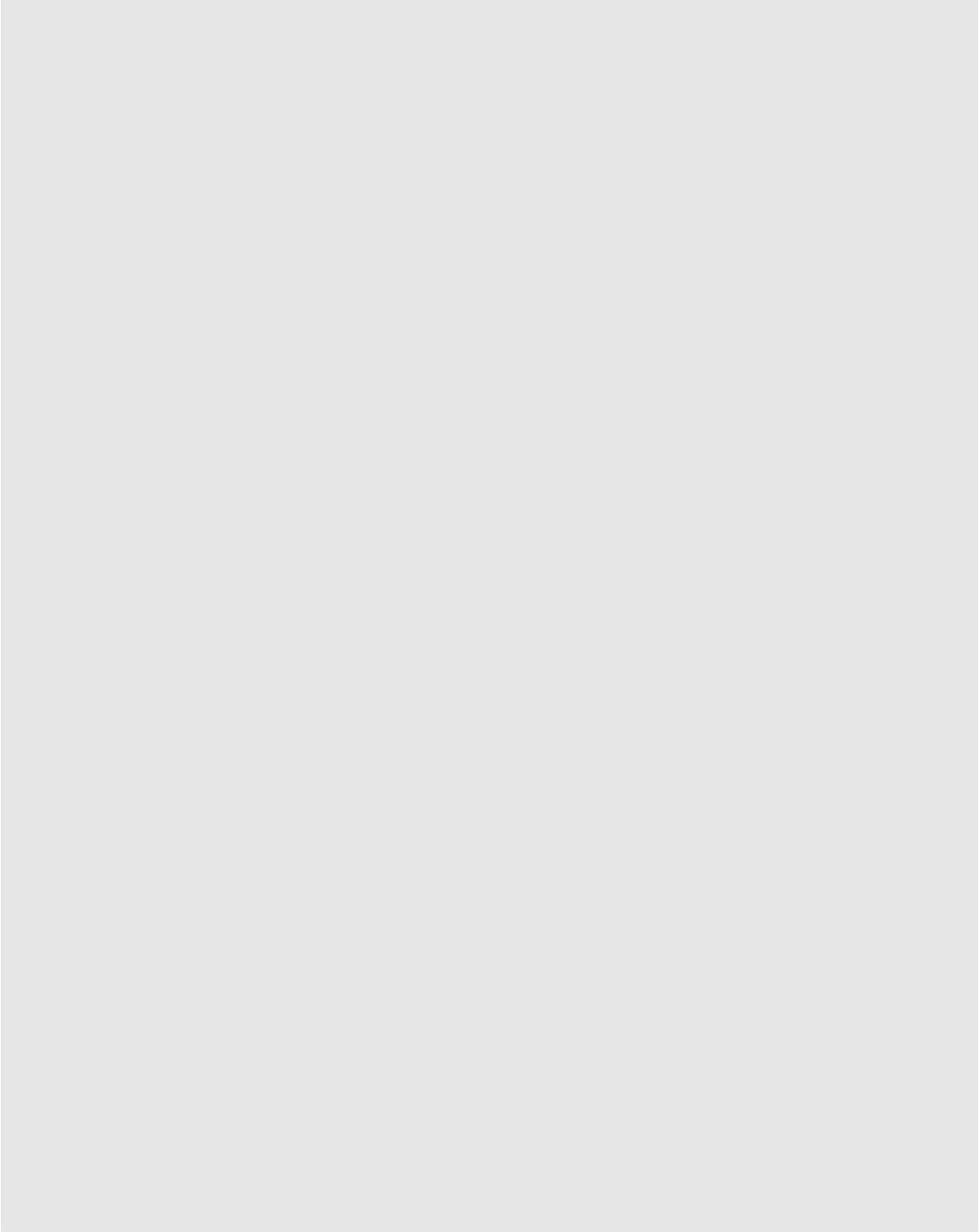
For the purposes of this discussion, it is worth further examining the historically endorsed female trope of the *ryosai kenbo*, or good wife, wise mother (as discussed previously in chapter 2), whose roots coincide with the Victorian era. During this time, Japan was making rapid, deliberate steps towards modernization - with the fall of the Tokugawa Shogunate, the Meiji period was ushered in, and brought with it the *ryosai kenbo* ideology in 1868. Akin to a Japanese “cult of domesticity”, this ideology was a model of female subjectivity instilled within a patriarchal household (Robertson 1998, 14), which relegated women to their roles in the home as wives and mothers. In this system, “females acting on their own behalf outside of the household were regarded by the state as socially disruptive and dangerously anomalous” (ibid), which was still true in Japan through the 1990s, where unmarried women were considered irresponsibly deviant (Tamanoi 1990, 20). As mentioned previously, the good wife, wise mother ideology continues to persist as a conservative doctrine that is enthusiastically touted by modern-day lawmakers, where it is “promoted vigorously by male politicians who define women as domestic managers of households and nurturers of children” (Goldstein-Gidoni 2008, 163). *Ryosai kenbo* is an ideology that uncompromisingly pressures women to be other-directed (L. Miller 2006, 204), with nurturing selflessness as its standard for the ideal Japanese woman.



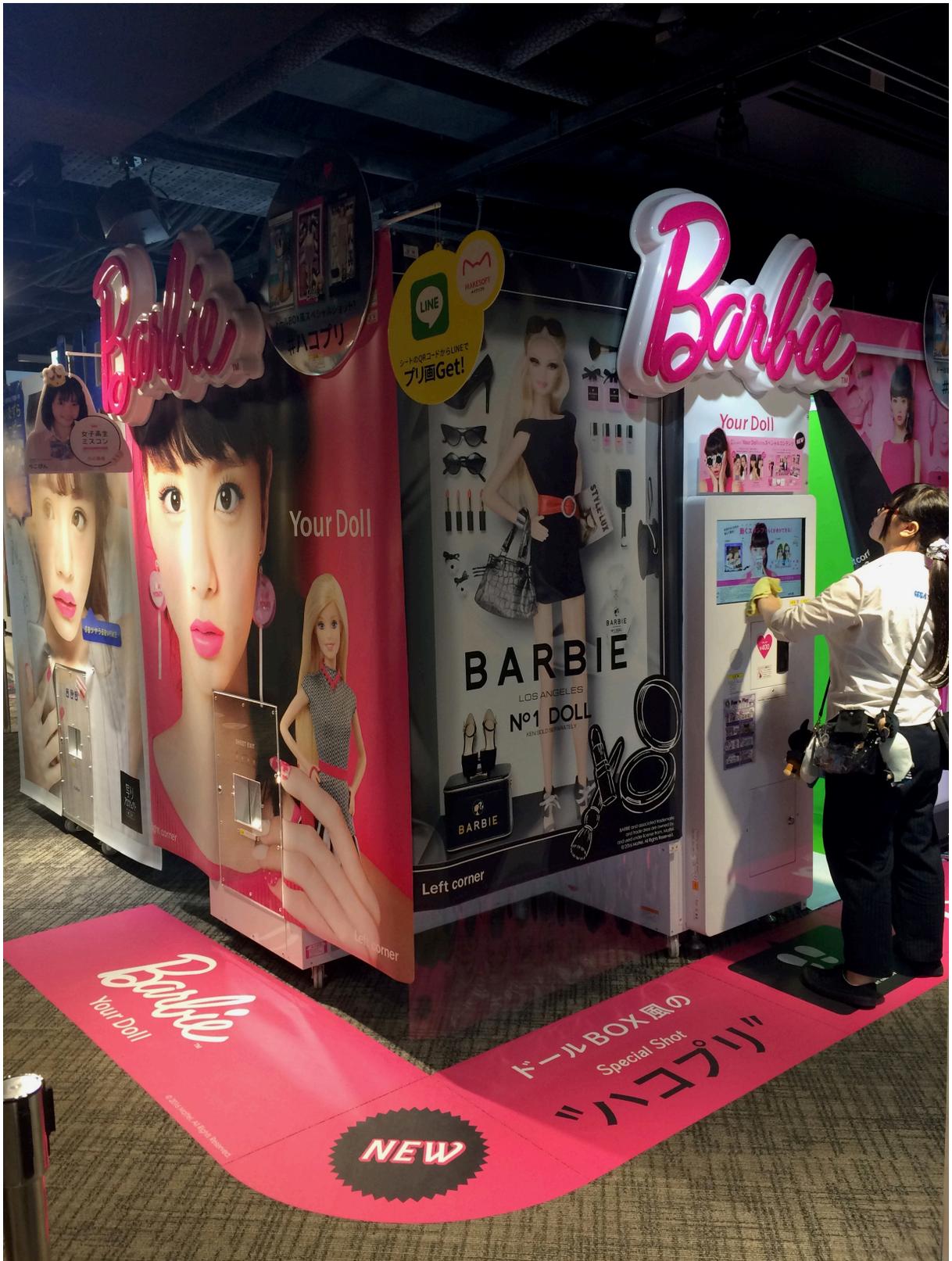
Nicorun for Popteen magazine (February 2017)



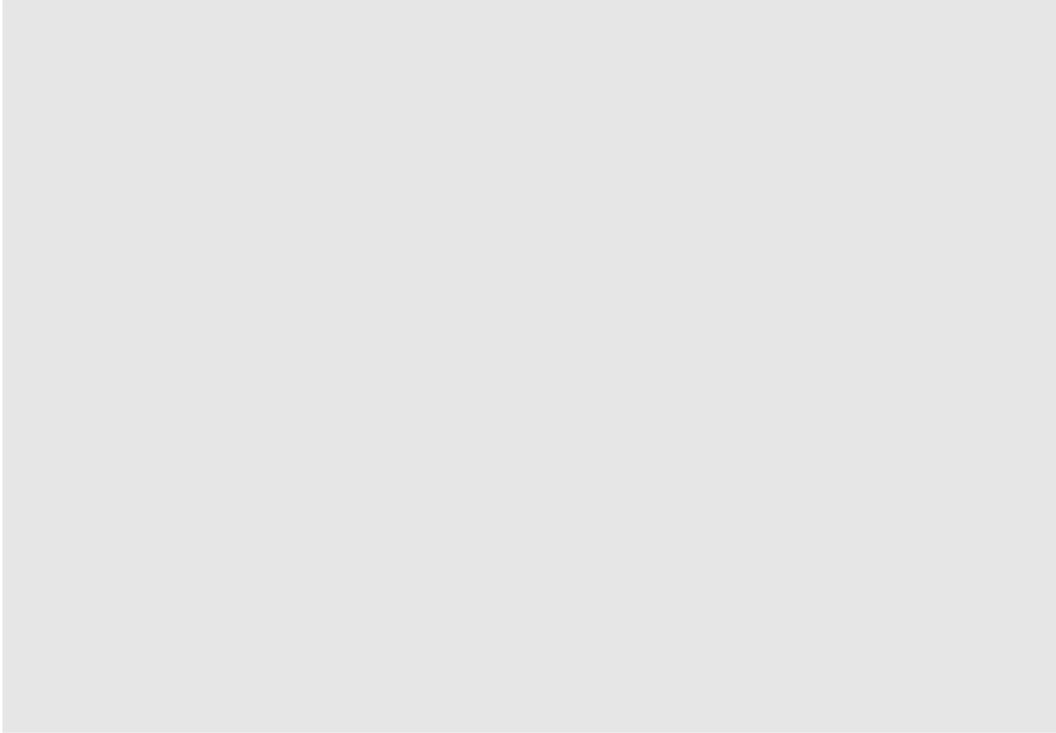
Promotional materials for the Doll Coronet Aria collection by Baby the Stars Shine Bright (Gothic & Lolita Bible 2013)



ViVi Magazine February 2015

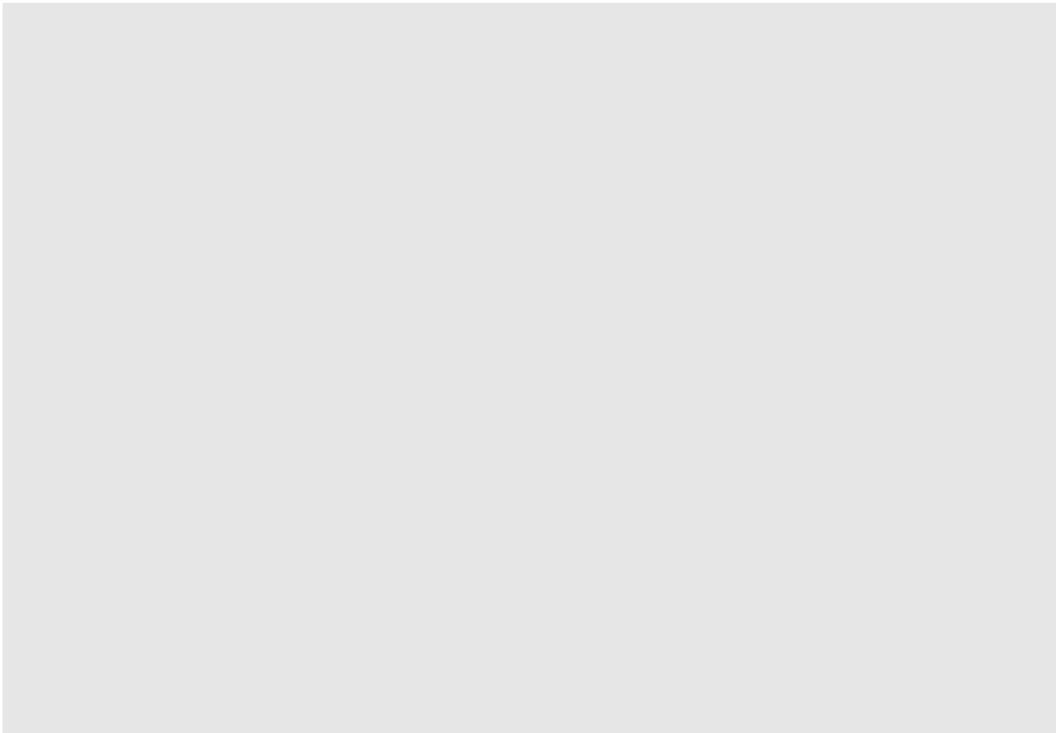


(author's own 2016)



“I want to be a **girl** for the rest of my life ♥ I want to be stylish like my idol, Barbie! **I am Barbie!**”

Tsubasa Masuwaka for Popteen magazine (January 2007)



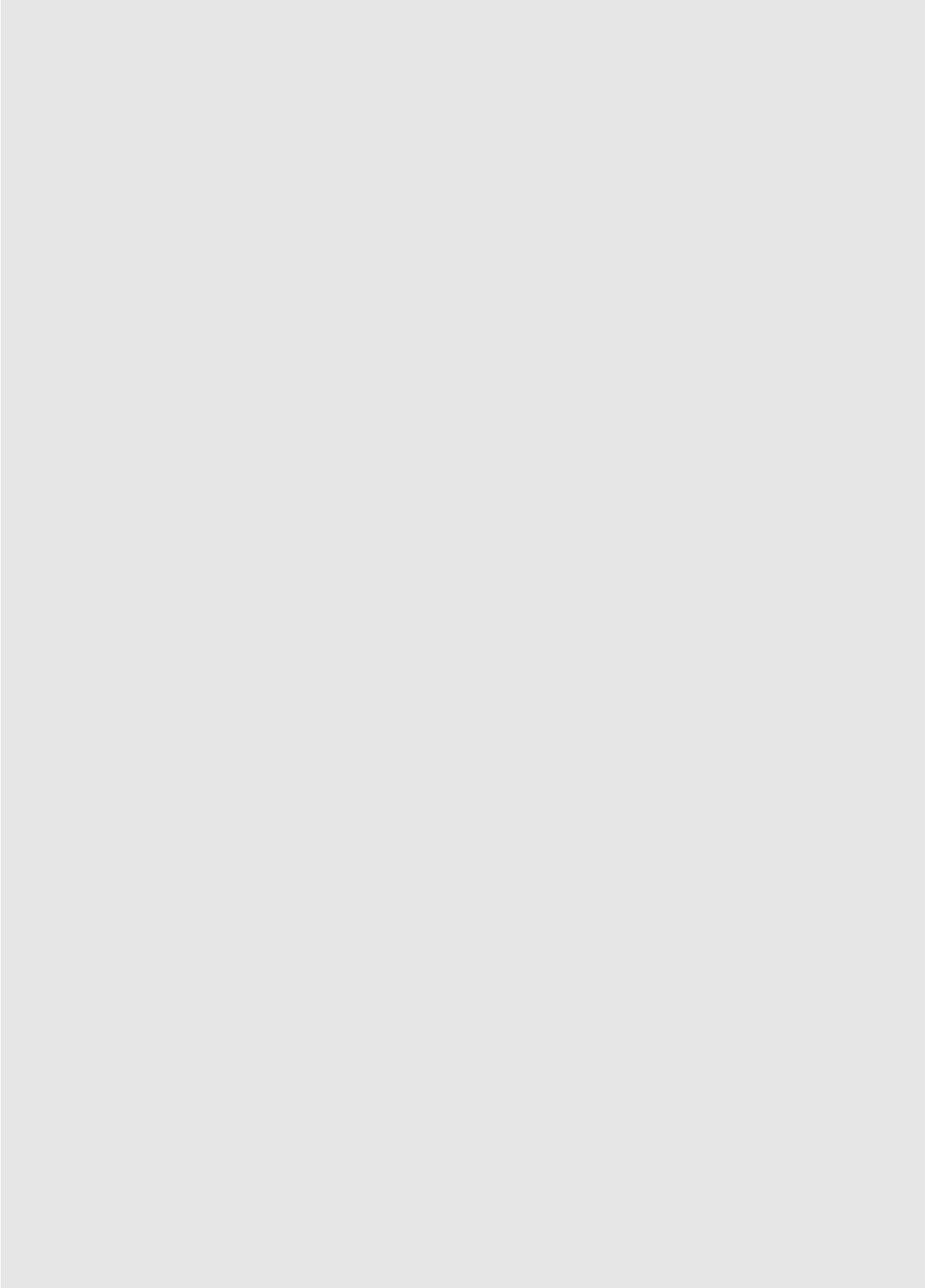
“Just like Kanon, I want to become a girl who is just like Barbie ♥”

Kanon Nonomura for Nicola magazine (June 2017)

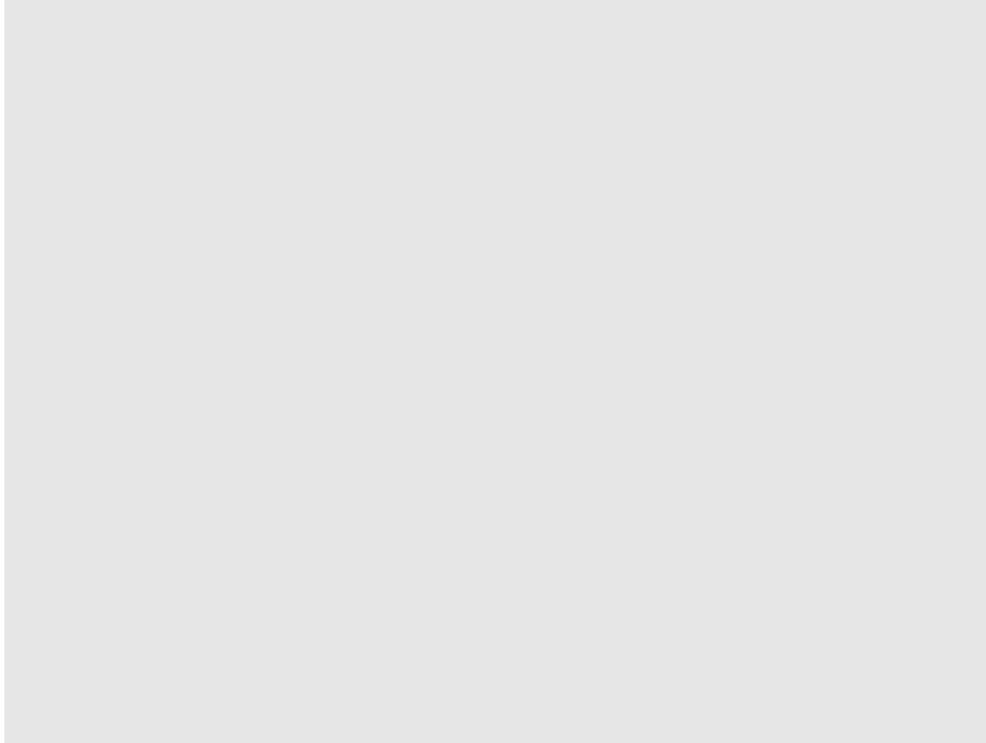
FASHION COMMEMORATION

Fashion holds much significance in the lives of purikura users - throughout the years, this has influenced the design and manufacture of the machines themselves, developing a particular symbiotic relationship between fashion consumption and vernacular photography. In its earliest form in 1995, purikura photographs were limited to grainy, postage stamp sized stickers. To differentiate between various machines, companies quickly developed a variety of pre-made decorative elements that garnished the border of the tiny frame - these ranged from simple ornamental motifs of flowers and text, to more elaborate, humorous layouts. By superimposing over the users' face an illustration of flashing cameras and hands thrusting microphones, a hat and glasses or prison bars, early purikura evoked the face-cutout boards traditionally found at tourist attractions.

While the popularity of these frames initially served as a sustaining business model for manufacturers, many users quickly grew tired of merely collecting the same generic image, only personalized by their presence. Within a year, users began to find ways to creatively augment the stickers - through the use of signage, users individualized the purikura photograph, usually including their names, dates, and the circumstances of the commemoration. In the tutorial below from 1996, users are shown how to utilize clear acetate sheets to note both mundane and important life events - in a journalistic style, first dates, anniversaries, big purchases and successful diets rank among the suggested commemorations. Purikura manufacturers recognized this user innovation, and developed tools for users to digitally write on the photographs, called *rakugaki* (scribbles or graffiti). By 2002, *rakugaki* was an established part of purikura, which users found integral to the process, where photographs without *rakugaki* were considered "bare and unfinished until it has been marked up with text" (L. Miller 2005, 131).

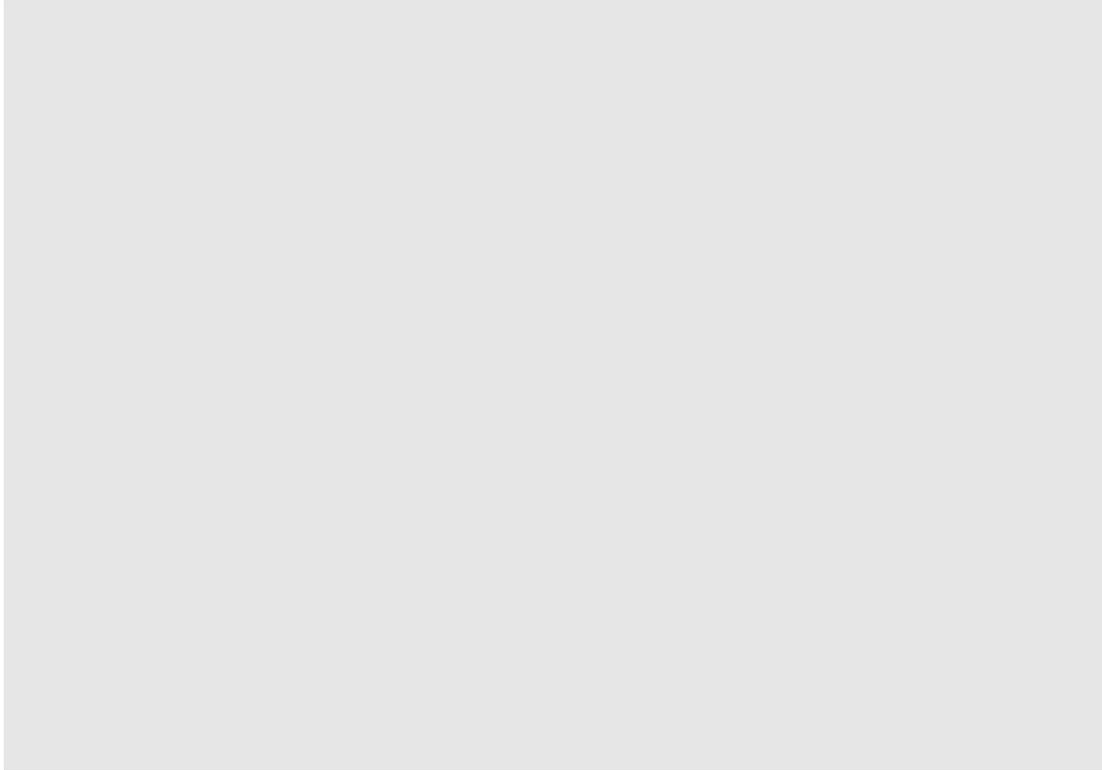


Article from Seventeen magazine (January 1996) stressing the importance of purikura frames, suggesting users decorate plain images with additional stickers to mimic the effect



Early rakugaki with manga-style storytelling and acetate commemoration
(Print Club Super Mastery Book 1996)

Users cited the top three things they wrote on photographs as their name, the date and where they had fun that day, and increasingly, users began noting their purchases and the details of their outfits. Manufacturers again sought to meet user demand by creating pre-made, themed stamps of common rakugaki notations. The earliest instance of camera technology that took full-body photographs rather than merely head and shoulders was the successful 1998 machine *Street Snap* (2008), which also serves as a further linkage between the purikura and the popular magazine format of photography it takes its name from (as discussed in chapters 2 and 6.) During my fieldwork in 2016, these remained mainstays of the purikura booth, with manufacturers competing to craft the most desirable rakugaki stamps and camera capabilities. The vast majority of machines now include pre-written stamps for detailing one's fashion choices, with several machines marketed explicitly around this practice.

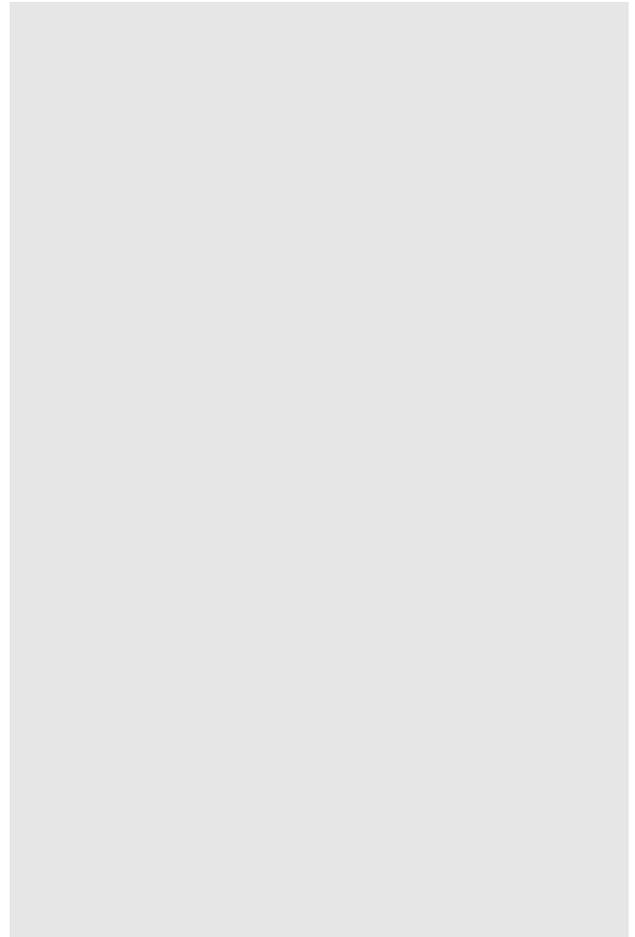


Rakugaki decoration, 2002 (via Hara 2021)

Despite vast advancements in mobile phone camera technology and photo editing applications, among users I spoke to, purikura was preferable to selfies because of their ability to take full-body photographs - especially when friends and outfits were concerned. Using a phone or camera to take photographs at arm's length limits the frame to only a few friends at a time, and even with the aid of selfie sticks, this is further limited to head and shoulders. Purikura booths were ideal because they allow for larger groups of friends to be photographed, from head to toe, without having to ask a stranger to assist. Likewise, for the purposes of outfit notation, purikura was considered more aesthetically pleasing than taking photographs in a mirror, and more practical than the hassle of setting up a tripod.

As a consistent theme throughout my fieldwork, the importance of commemorating both friend groups and fashion choices for young women should be noted as stemming from

more than misguided narcissism or materialism. Barbie has been condemned as a malign symbol of the capitalist system (Urla & Swedlund 2000, 29), whose fashion consumption, critics claim, instructs girls to be docile and materialistic. For detractors, Barbie serves as the perfect figurehead for capitalist constructions of womanhood, whereby the achievement of femininity is only feasible through endless consumerism. (ibid: 401). However, the woman who seeks to circumvent marriage and motherhood - and the implied selflessness required - through hedonistic consumer indulgence, could be seen as threatening to the good wife, wise mother system; “dangerous because they [flaunt] a new agency premised on consumer culture” (Freedman et al., 6).

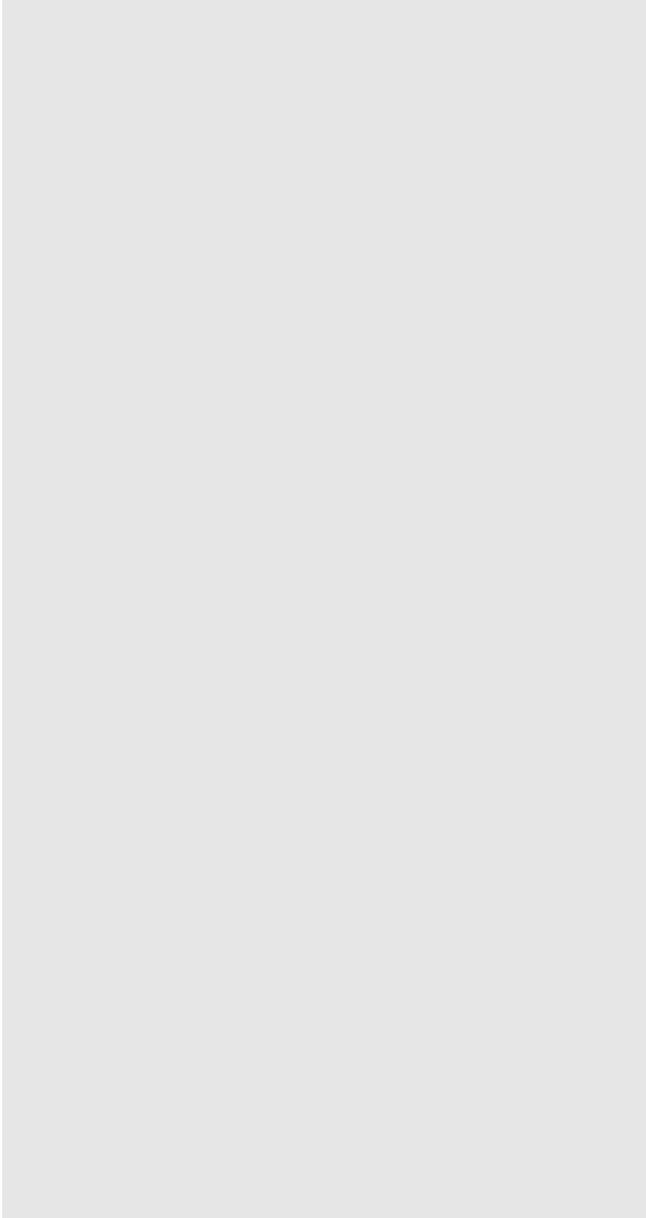


Street Snap purikura machine, 1998 (via Natsuo 2020)

Many criticisms of women’s fashion consumption are rooted in functionalist theory, where fashion is understood to neglect biological necessities, such as protection from the elements, in favor of superfluous decoration that serves no function. It is denounced for “failing to obey the principle of practical utility” (Negrin 2002, 99) - as clothing that has ceased to be functional, it is at best frivolous, and at worst, a sign of women’s stunted evolutionary development:

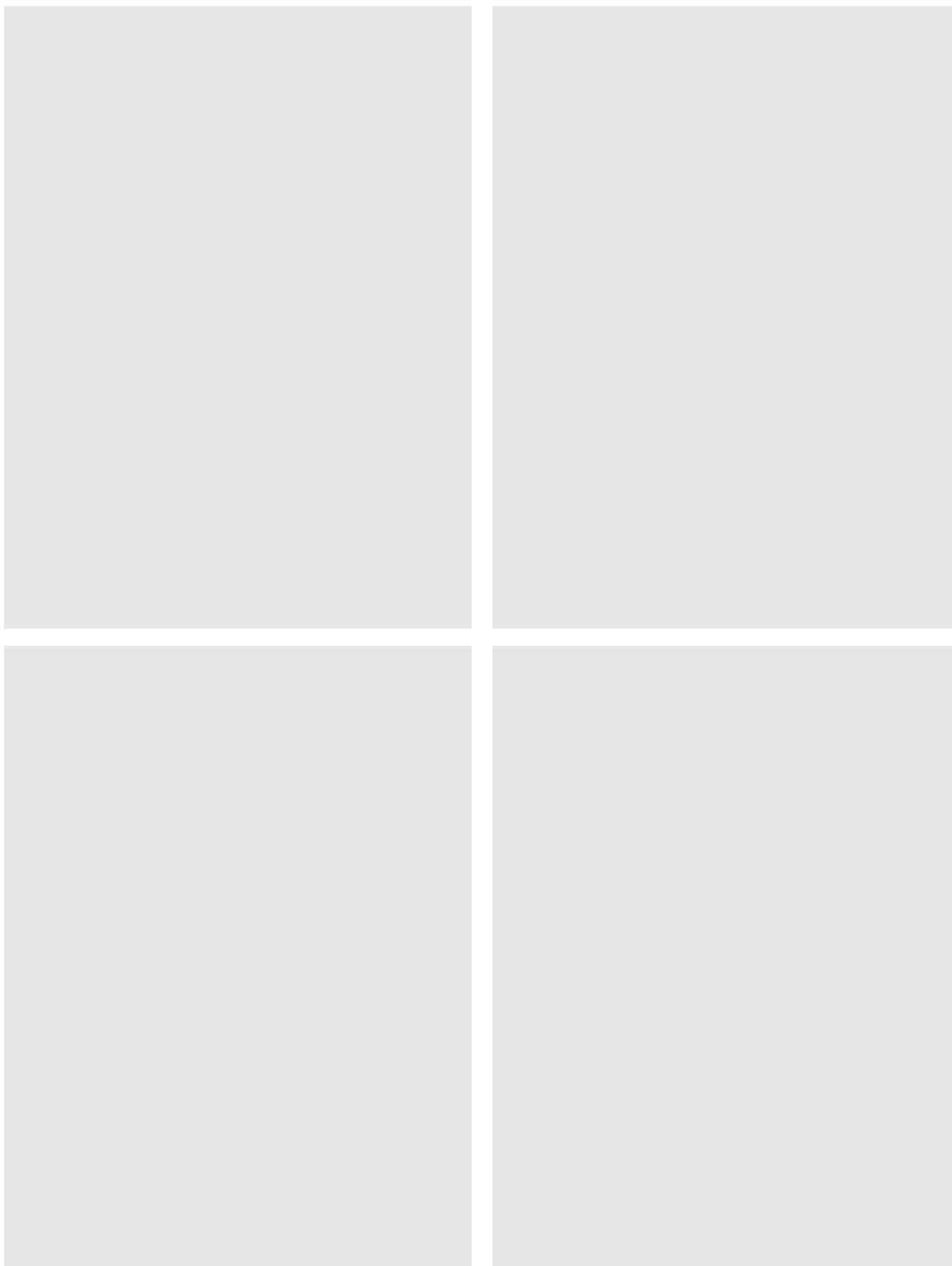
“The clothing of the woman is distinguished externally from that of the man by the preference for the ornamental and colourful effects and by the long skirt that covers the legs completely. These two factors demonstrate to us

*that woman has fallen behind sharply in her development in recent centuries
... The lower the culture, the more apparent the ornament.” (Loos 1982, 102)*



Criticism that dwells on the lack of function in fashion consumption fails to see the underlying cultural use of the overtly impractical nature of these items. Rather than categorizing women as passive consumers - subjected to market manipulation with little or no resistance – a more fitting appraisal might include the agency of consumers themselves, for whom the commemoration and circulation of outfits through purikura serves as a “deeply complex language managed and kept in circulation by initiates” (Peers 2004, 30). Fashion consumption can be understood as a semiological system, with garments serving as literal fashion statements to be read and judged by other participants. Just as clothes accrue “the residues of use and memory ... of desire, of hope and occasion” (Wilson 2004, 383), these elements are further captured and communicated through the purikura image and rakugaki notation.

(author's own purikura 2016)

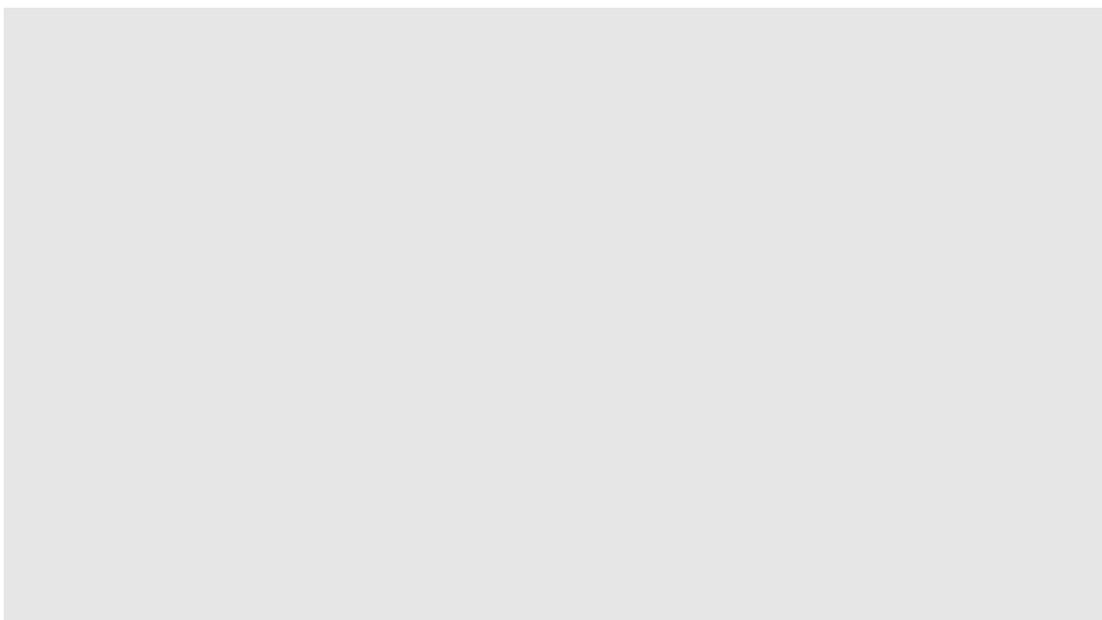


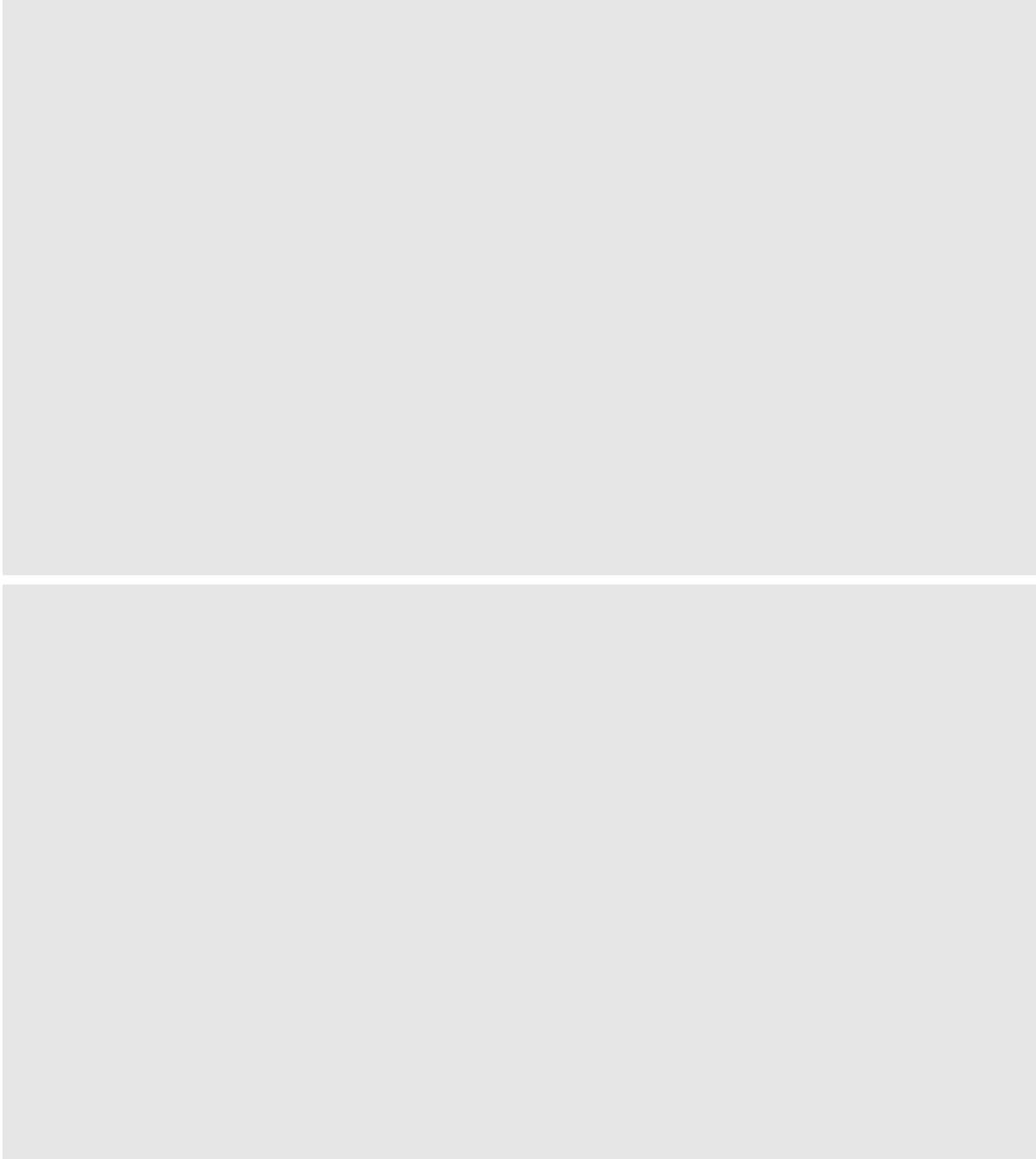
Gosurori fashion commemoration purikura via Twitter users @kmmkr_hnk 2021, @misaneX0323, @takulu0306 & @yua_noko

For critics of *gosurori* fashion within Japan, the clothing items are seen as impractically feminine and costly - within a functionalist context, the lavish full petticoats and frills are

worthy of critique for their lack of utility in practical daily use. The functionalist perspective of fashion is inadequate in this sense because function is itself culturally determined. What serves as non-functional garments in the larger context of Japanese society has been adopted on a subcultural level, where the impracticality and non-functionality serves a sartorial purpose as a dialogue between participants and society at large.

The film *Shimotsuma Monogatari* (2004) follows the exploits of Momoko Ryugasaki, a *gosurori* living in a rural farming town. As a high school student, she struggles to afford her expensive fashion lifestyle, and concocts elaborate schemes to scam money out of people in her local community. As she purchases another dress with money stolen from her father, Momoko queries the audience: “So what if I was deceitful? My happiness was at stake. It’s not wrong to feel good.” *Gosurori* fashion consumption serves as a rejection of the good wife, wise mother mentality of selflessness in its overt self-indulgence, and its girlish style acts in opposition to passivity. Much like their Victorian counterparts, who did more than participate in fashion as a form of oppression (Steele 1985, 4) – “Lolita is self-expression and self-satisfaction ... these girls do it for themselves” (Kawamura 2006, 70). In this respect, it is possible to consider *gosurori* fashion as deliberate, reactionary selfishness in the face of a conformist society that expects selflessness from women.





Stills from Shimotsuma Monogatari (2004)

“I would do anything to own them. So what if I was deceitful? My happiness was at stake. It’s not wrong to feel good.”

CAREER GIRL

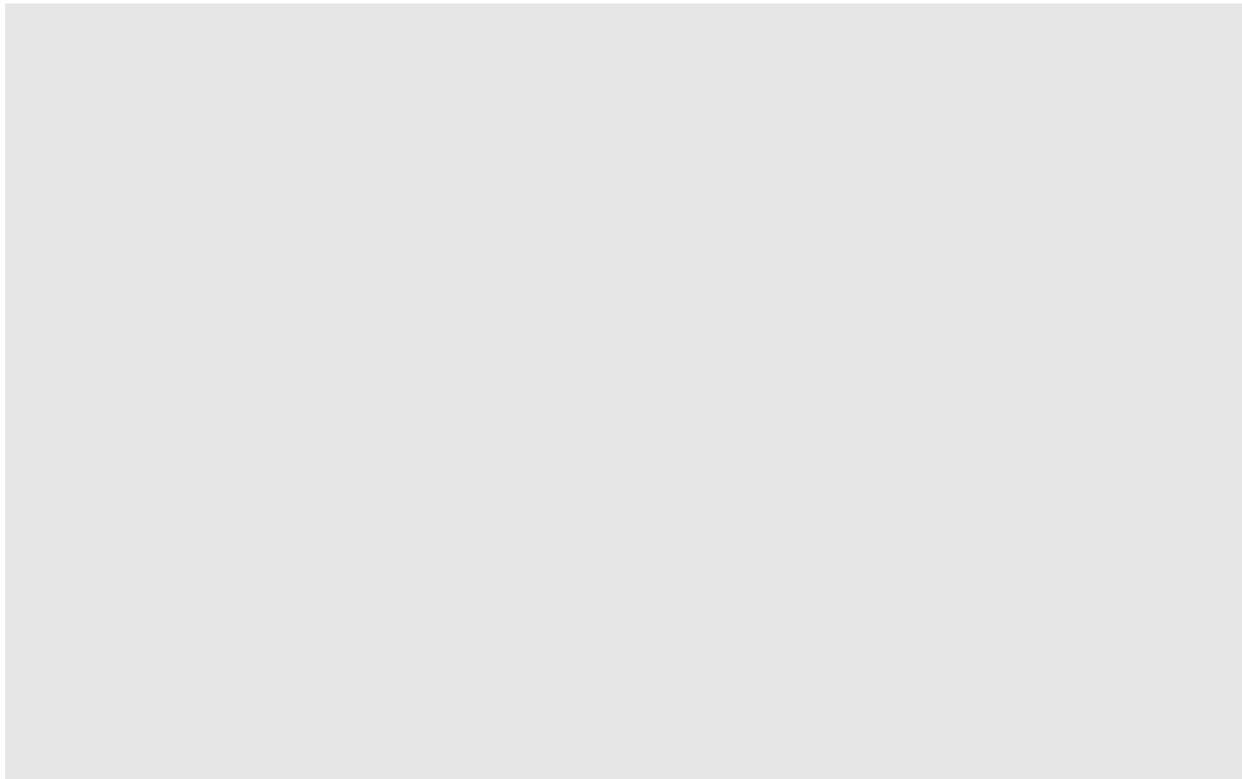
For some, Barbie is the embodiment of vapid consumption and the destructive capacity of capitalism, whose “disproportionate” amount of luxury goods are purchased with “apparently unearned disposable cash” (Rand 1995, 8). However, these criticisms overlook Mattel’s efforts to portray Barbie as a career woman – since the 1960s, she has been a teacher, medical doctor, corporate executive, and even a presidential candidate, among many other occupations. (*Harper’s Magazine* 1990) Mattel’s publicists emphasize that Barbie’s purpose is to “let little girls dream”, through positive examples chosen “to reflect the activities and professions that modern women are involved in” (ibid), which, for some, does not suffice as demonstrably liberating.

Looking back at the earliest years of Barbie’s curriculum vitae, her most frequently held occupation was that of flight attendant, or stewardess⁷. Between 1959 and 1973, she fulfilled this role at both American (’61-4, ’73-5) and Pan American (1966) Airlines (Urla and Swedlund 2000, 403). While Barbie, particularly her career choices, have been the target of much criticism in academia and mainstream media, the frequency with which she has held this position is notable. Mattel strives to choose careers that “reflect the activities and professions that modern women are involved in” (ibid), which tells us something about the cultural importance and appeal of the stewardess during this time. Much like Barbie herself, stewardesses of the 1960s and 70s were contradictory figures of female visibility - lauded for their independence and empowerment, yet simultaneously denounced as subservient objects of male sexual fantasy. The complex gendered negotiation of empowerment and objectification enacted by stewardesses exemplifies the oppositional roles of women in the Jet Age.

Barbie’s position as stewardess must be understood contextually within the tension between expanding Euro-American feminist movements in the face of rampant inequality and sexual harassment. The publication of *Coffee, Tea, or Me: The*

⁷ I will be using the term *stewardess* in this discussion rather than the gender neutral ‘flight attendant’ for continuity with its historical usage

Uninhibited Memoirs of Two Airline Stewardesses (a fictional account ghost written by Donald Bain, 1967) is indicative of the widespread image of the uninhibited, licentious stewardess, toeing the line between servility and sexual liberation. This persona came not only through feverishly voyeuristic fantasy, but was also openly promoted by the airlines themselves. American Airlines ads ranged from the winking nudge of their “Fly Me” campaign (1971) to the below example from 1969, featuring Sandy Norris, 22 - whose smile blurs the line between playfully smirking and knowingly sexual, and copy that reads as somewhat beyond the scope of tongue-in-cheek. “A girl has to have that special attitude. If she does, you get that special service”, they assure us - “if she doesn’t, we both pay”.



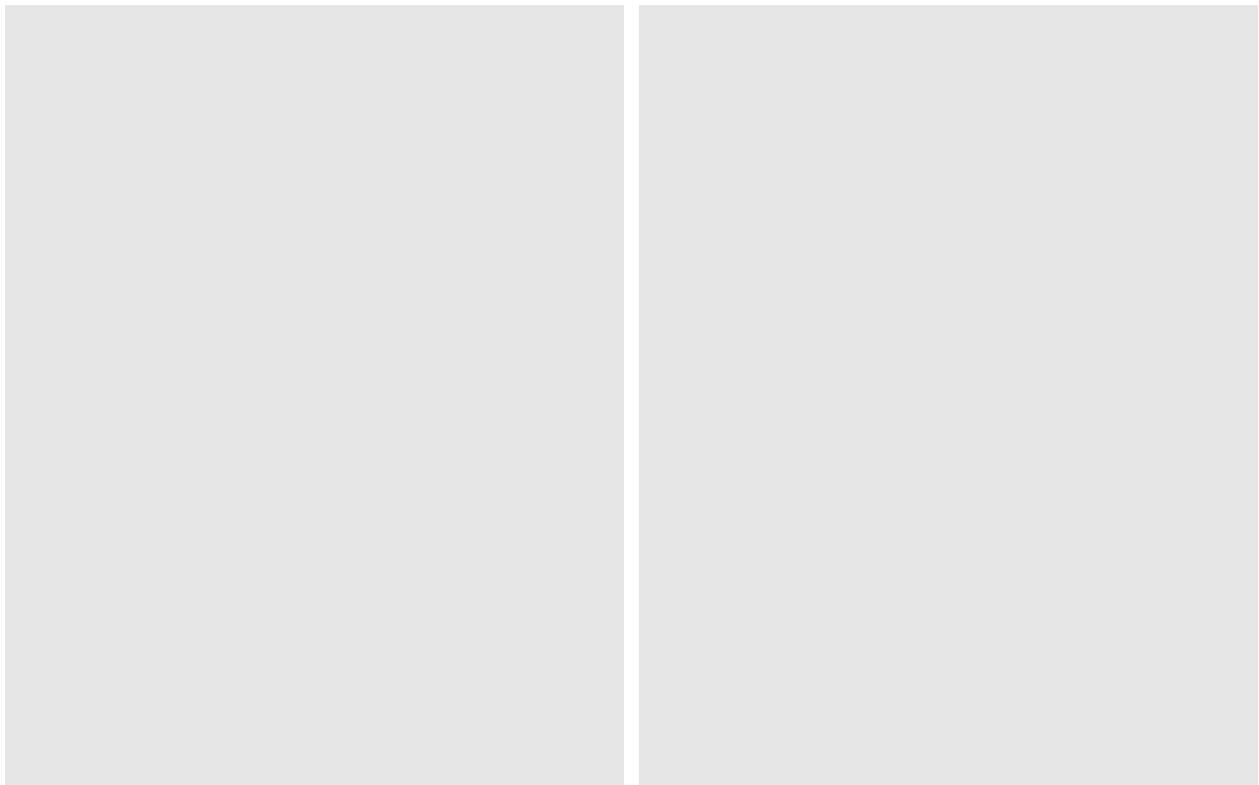
In spite of the rampant sexism they experienced, the job of stewardess was still highly coveted and widely considered to be stylishly cosmopolitan, providing women freedom and mobility to travel the world in a way that was not previously available to them. In many ways, stewardship afforded women unparalleled opportunities for the time. Stewardesses were a highly visible icon of conflicting subservience and liberation, and

their glamorization “helped make cultural sense of women’s movement into paid work” (Barry 2007, 9). For Japanese women, this role held even more significance. In her research on the experiences of Japanese Pan Am stewardesses of the 1960s and 70s, Christine R. Yano describes the company’s hiring process as a form of publicity, dubbed by life magazine as the “Newest Stewardess Fad” (cited in Yano 2013, 85). While the company made efforts to disassociate themselves from the promiscuous image of female employees conjured during this time, this did not prevent them from liberally promoting the women as “flying geisha” (ibid:86), relying heavily on “widespread Western stereotypes of Japanese women as subservient handmaidens to men’s desires” (ibid). The role of stewardess was one of contradictory opportunity, independence and glamor, paired with a gendered set of social expectations, including the stigma attached to women who chose to travel rather than follow their assigned path as wives and mothers.

It is worth noting that, prior to 1964, the Japanese government imposed stringent international travel restrictions following the Allied Occupation. The hosting of the 1964 Summer Olympics in Tokyo holds significant importance in the gradually shifting economic and social mobility of the country, and the lifting of the international travel ban was hardly coincidental - from the costly overhaul of the city’s infrastructure to the launch of the first shinkansen train services, the country’s economic recovery from WWII was both symbolically and plainly evident. (A. Martin 2013) Enhanced by rising incomes, international travel was now opened to the wider public - but it was not until 1971 that the number of foreign travelers to Japan was exceeded by the number of outbound Japanese citizens - conspicuously, the vast majority of whom were businessmen. (Yano 2013, 88) During this time, stewardesses were a career at the forefront of the era, and Pan Am was “the undisputed leader, trendsetter, and symbol of prestige in global aviation” (ibid:86) - as some of the only women to be able to travel internationally, they exemplified modernity.

In negotiating their racialized position as “flying geisha”, Pan Am’s Japanese stewardesses turned subordination to their advantage, taking part in forms of cosmopolitan global citizenship that had previously only been the privilege of men. Their occupation allowed them to inhabit “complex sites of prestige and transgression”

(ibid:105), not least of all because of their high salaries - stewardesses from Pan Am earned significantly more than their equally educated male peers. (ibid:96) To better understand the importance of the independence afforded to stewardesses, we must also consider the issue of marriage and motherhood in the good wife, wise mother ideology. For these women, their “primary social responsibility was to marry” (ibid), a life trajectory that did not factor in paid employment, let alone international travel. The career path of a stewardess kept women “temporarily out of circulation as a potential marriage choice” (ibid), delaying their seemingly inevitable future as wives and mothers. The marital reprieve afforded to stewardesses by their careers was largely unheard of in the 1960s - a social transgression that may have paved the way for increased acceptance of employment opportunities for women, but perhaps not as anything beyond a brief respite.



Ray magazine; left: August 2017, right: November 2017



Interlocutors using Barbie: Your Doll machine (author's own 2016)



Interlocutors using Barbie: Your Doll machine (author's own 2016)

CHRISTMAS CAKE WOMEN

For critics, the careers Barbie has held are merely aesthetic choices, whereby “the difference between occupation and outfit has never been entirely clear”, and the underlying message of her lifestyle is still one of rampant consumption. (Urla and Swedlund 2000, 404) It is an interesting contradiction that Barbie is simultaneously disparaged for her leisure and spending habits, while her career choices are disregarded, resulting in the notion that her salary is “unearned”. Young women in contemporary Japan are similarly derided, ridiculed for their consumer lifestyles while ignoring the source of their income – without husbands, they must be “parasite singles” (Yamada 1999; cited in Robertson 2010, 10) who continue to leech off their parents into adulthood. In reality, the source of this money is often not so mysterious - the majority of Japanese women in their 20s and 30s choose to continue to work instead of marrying. (ibid)

In my discussions with purikura users during my fieldwork, this was largely substantiated. Over parfaits with a group of friends, a raucous conversation turned towards the subject as Nozomi, 24, complained that her parents were nagging about her spending habits. Grimacing, she explained that she still lived at home to save on rent, as an apartment was beyond her limited salary as a barista, but that her parents were constantly scolding her for buying new clothes or eating out at restaurants.

“They want me to save up for a *house* of all things - for *marriage*. Why shouldn’t I spend money if I made it?” The group groaned, nodding in sympathy. She continued, slumping back on her stool - “I just want to work and take things easy, you know? Why can’t I spend my money however I want without getting hounded about marriage?”

She lamented the fact that she couldn’t get more hours at work before Mitsue, 27, interrupted her, exclaiming that she had three part-time jobs to be able to afford her studio apartment.

“What I’d like is more time! This is my first day off in weeks - I spend all my time working or sleeping. It’d be nice to be able to go on dates, but with my schedule?” She crossed her arms, shaking her head, before being cut off by Nozomi.

“Sure, having a boyfriend is nice, but then what? Marriage? You’re not *dating* once you’re married - my older sister is basically just her husband’s mom.”

Rika, 25, shrugged pragmatically, and quipped “*shikata ga nai*”, or ‘it can’t be helped’ - a phrase which “indicates cultural norms over which one has little control” (Storrs 2004, 113) - a Japanese *c’est la vie*. She continued, gesturing at the others with her spoon - “It’s not like I want to stop working, but I do want to fall in love, and have a boyfriend - that means marriage, eventually.”

Nozomi, tossing a balled-up napkin at her, booed mockingly - “says the *Christmas cake*.”

Confused at the resulting laughter, I asked her what she meant - elbowing me in the ribs jovially, she replied, “you know, a Christmas cake - you can’t sell it past the 25th?” Rika, at 25 years old, sneered comedically at her before joining in the laughter, but Mitsue groaned.

“No! I’m not a Christmas cake, I’m *mochi*!”

I turned quizzically to Nozomi, who smirked - “New Year’s mochi - good until the 31st.”

The phrase “*nijyuu go nichi sugita kurisumasu keeki*” roughly translates to “a Christmas cake past the 25th”, or “a Christmas cake past its sell-by date”. The notion of a “Christmas cake woman” (*kurisumasu keeki onna*) was explained to me as a pervasive, if largely ineffectual, jibe directed at unmarried women in their late twenties. Mitsue’s self-definition as New Year’s mochi does reflect that couples are statistically marrying later - the average marriage age for Japanese women has increased from 24 years in 1970 to 29.4 in 2016. (*The Economist* 2016) There has been a similar increase in marital age in most affluent countries, as well as a general decline in marriage altogether as couples forgo nuptials while living together in committed relationships. However, there has seemingly been little increase in the cohabitation of unmarried couples in Japan, at only 1.6% in 2016. Women in Japan have found financial independence by pursuing careers, which has been linked to the increasing length of time before marriage (ibid). As marriage in Japan is highly associated with the bearing

and rearing of children, this lack of cohabitation aligns with a similarly low birthrate for couples that do not marry - while 40% of children in Britain and America are born outside marriage, Japan holds a strikingly low 2%. (ibid)

Conspicuous consumption serves as an alternative to a prevailing cultural norm that values female self-sacrifice within the bounds of marriage and childrearing. For Mary F. Rogers, Barbie “is no self-sacrificing, other-oriented woman who puts her own dreams on hold for the sake of a marriage and motherhood” (Rogers 1999, 16), and her conspicuous consumption figures largely in this - “What’s the sense of being single and child-free if you can’t have a lot of things and live a little ... in material as well as social ways?” (Ibid 40) Peers has also suggested that baby dolls are far more reductive of female roles than Barbie is, being prescriptive of the future responsibilities that young women might hold as a wife and mother. (Peers 2004, 194)

Contemporary careers for young women in Japan, as such, must be understood in the context of the good wife, wise mother ideology - although women may hold jobs in the workforce, this is often with the expectation that they will stop entirely once they marry and have children. With little or no upward mobility in the jobs available to them, young women are primarily limited to jobs as OLs (Office Ladies), who serve mostly as glorified secretaries – “restricted to clerical or administrative work for a few short years until they began their careers as housewives” (Fraser 2011, 77). Much like the conspicuous consumption of luxury goods, to seek out and continue to remain in employment is often seen as willfully selfish, and women in the labor force are frequently accused of both “deliberately vying with men for good jobs and simultaneously denying them marriage partners” (Kinsella 1995, 249). However, it is not altogether unsurprising that women would want to remain in employment rather than marry – research has shown that Japanese women will lose up to two-thirds of their income upon marriage, which results in a severely lowered standard of living. (Robertson 2010, 10)

Despite attempts in the 1980s to combat the issue of gender inequality in the workplace, little progress has been made in the intervening time. The passing of legislation such as the Equal Opportunity Law (1985) has lacked sufficient legal clout to make any change

in the system; though intended to prohibit discrimination against female employees, the law does not issue any penalties for companies that do not comply. (Murase 2006, 27) In response, companies created a 'double-track management system' to circumvent the issue of discrimination. Effectively, companies offer two possible routes to prospective employees; a career track job, which allows for promotion but requires exorbitant overtime and frequent job transfers to other cities or countries, or non-career track which has less brutal expectations for job transfers, but minimal to non-existent promotion opportunities.

This double-track management system is extremely prevalent in Japan, with over 50% of all companies exceeding 5,000 employees utilizing it. (Murase 2005: 198) Due to the expectation for women to cease employment upon marriage, and the inflexibility of the hours required for career track employees, many women are forced to choose the path with no advancement in pay or promotion - this double-track employment system effectively creates a double bind for women who cannot fulfill the gendered social expectations put upon them while maintaining a career track job. Among companies that use the system, less than 4% of employees on the career track are women, and women hold only 9% of managerial positions, further contributing to the overall disproportionately-gendered wage gap. (ibid:24) Despite the pressure to choose non-career track employment, women themselves are blamed for this disparity due to their own "lack of commitment" to their jobs. (ibid:25) This has resulted in a skewed workforce, whereby senior management positions are only given to career-track employees, of whom the majority are men, while female employees are left on the periphery with no chance of career advancement.

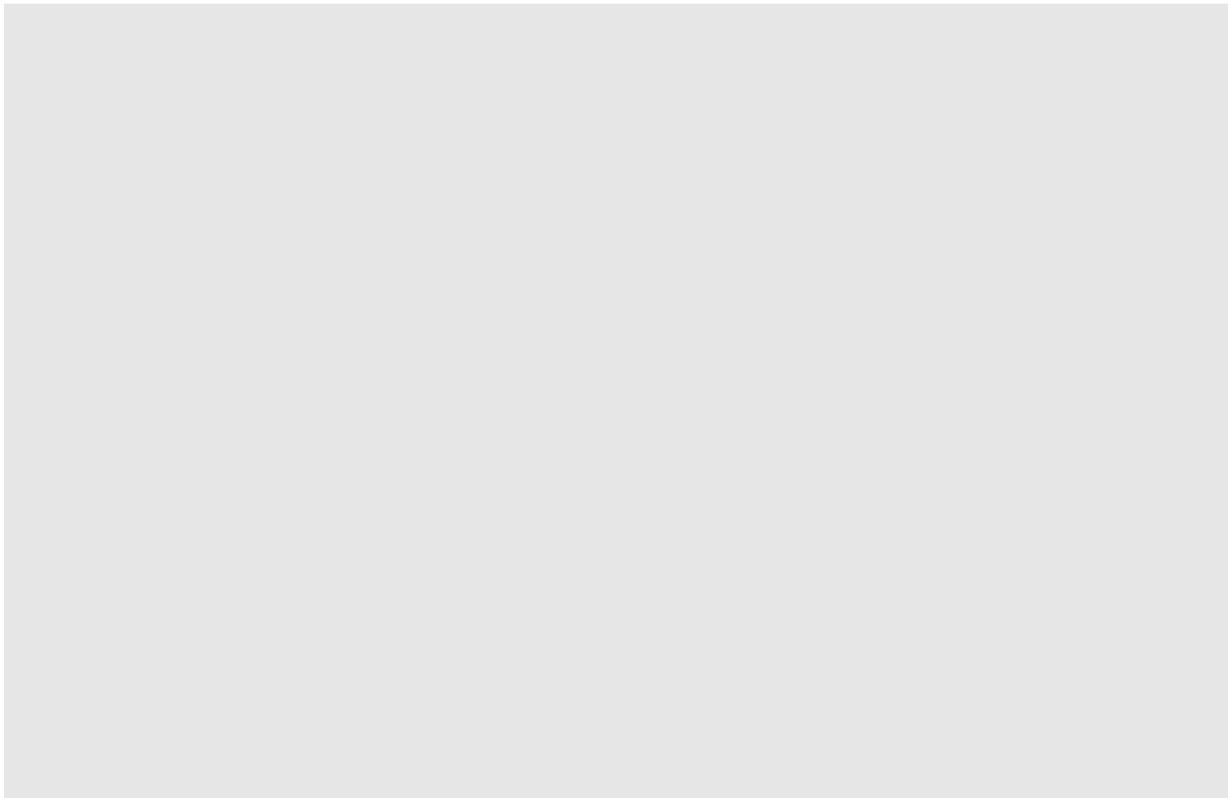
The persistence of this traditional view of marriage, and its attendant motherhood, has created an infrastructural lack of support for mothers in full-time careers. While in office, former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe cited an increase in the overall number of working mothers as the cause for nationwide shortages in daycare facilities, leading to a waiting list in excess of 23,000 children (*The Japan Times* 2016). However, since 2007, capacity growth at these facilities has slowed largely due to lack of government support, rather than merely an increase in working mothers - this has been attributed to increased conservative power among the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, who primarily

advocate for mothers to cease employment to raise their children. (ibid) Frustration and outrage at the daycare shortage from working parents has led to protests at the National Diet Building in Tokyo, prompting confusion from the LDP, to which their representative responded: “It used to be only natural that a mother would quit her job to deliver her baby, and would never get so furious about day care.” (ibid) The cultural expectation for married couples to have children shortly after marriage, paired with the governmentally advocated good wife, wise mother ideology that women must forgo careers for the sake of raising them, leads to a natural incentive to delay marriage, and with it, parenthood.

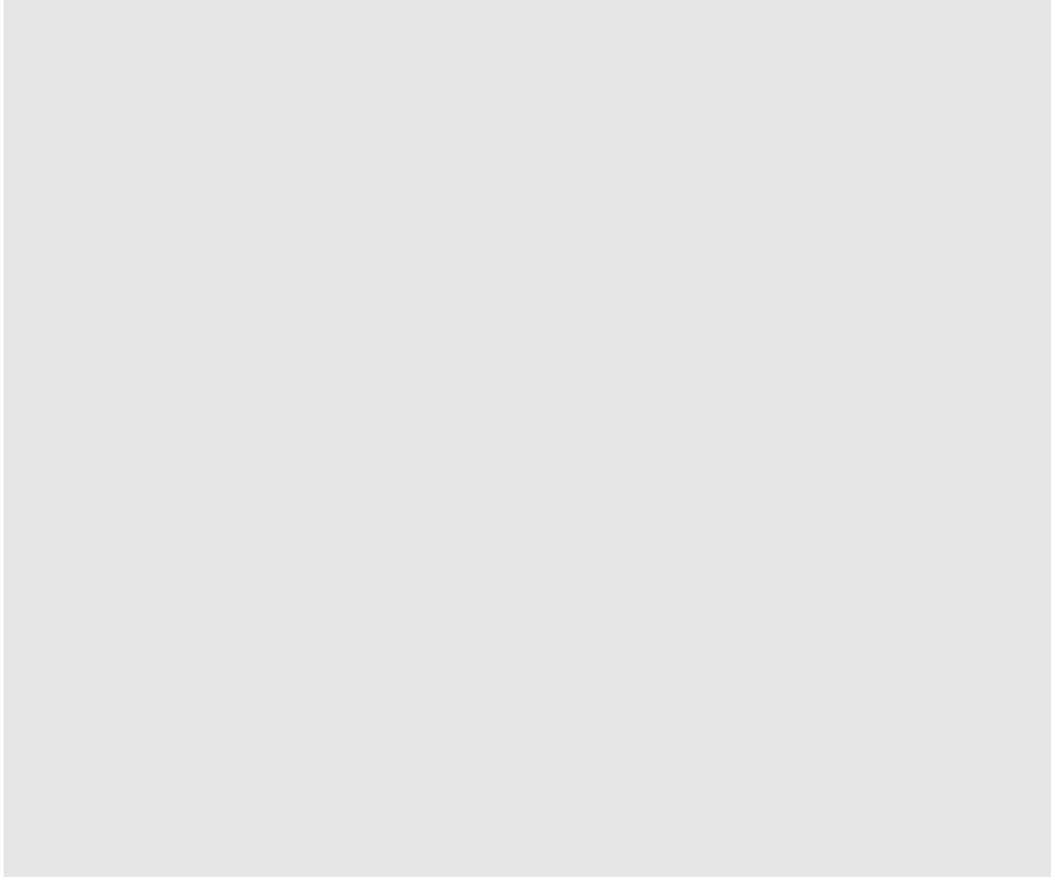
In her research on the department store employee, or “shop girl” of 1920s and 30s Japan, Elise K. Tipton describes similar debates surrounding the figure of the career woman. The shop girl was a newly emergent life path for women who still often faced a life of self-sacrificing devotion within the bounds of marriage and motherhood, to the point of confinement – unable to leave the home without a chaperone. (Tipton 2013, 22) While restricted to the home as wife and mother they served the nation, but taking up paid work allowed women to move into the public arena of social life, challenging the gendered division of labor between home and the workplace (ibid 23). After World War I, the role of the shop girl became one of the most desirable and highly sought occupations for young women, which remains equally true for many young women in the Japan of today. As mentioned previously, the position of shop girl in the fashion subcultures discussed is a highly sought and revered occupation amongst participants, despite low pay and little career stability or chance of promotion. (Kawamura 2012, 56) These shortcomings are symptomatic of the entrenched sexism constructed and perpetuated by the good wife, wise mother ideology, and as such, “women’s labor continues to be seen as temporary and supplementary, and women’s mobility in public spaces outside the home continues to evoke ambivalence and controversy.” (Tipton 2013, 39)

For women in Japan, normative modes of gender performance require marriage and motherhood. This governmentally advocated stance has created a self-perpetuating cycle whereby mothers of young children lack the appropriate support to maintain full-time employment, upholding the stereotype that both motherhood, and femininity, are incompatible with careers. As noted by Nishi & Kan (2006) and Usui (2005), the

increasing tendency for women to marry late, along with the lowered birthrate can be attributed to a form of resistance against a system that does not provide them the independence to freely make their own life choices. As is evidenced by the organized protests of working parents outraged at the lack of daycare facilities (Japan Times, 2016), this reluctance to follow their prescribed life trajectory as wives and mothers can be understood as a reaction against “a social system that continues to regard women as second-class citizens” (Robertson 2010, 10).



CUTiE Magazine (January 2015)

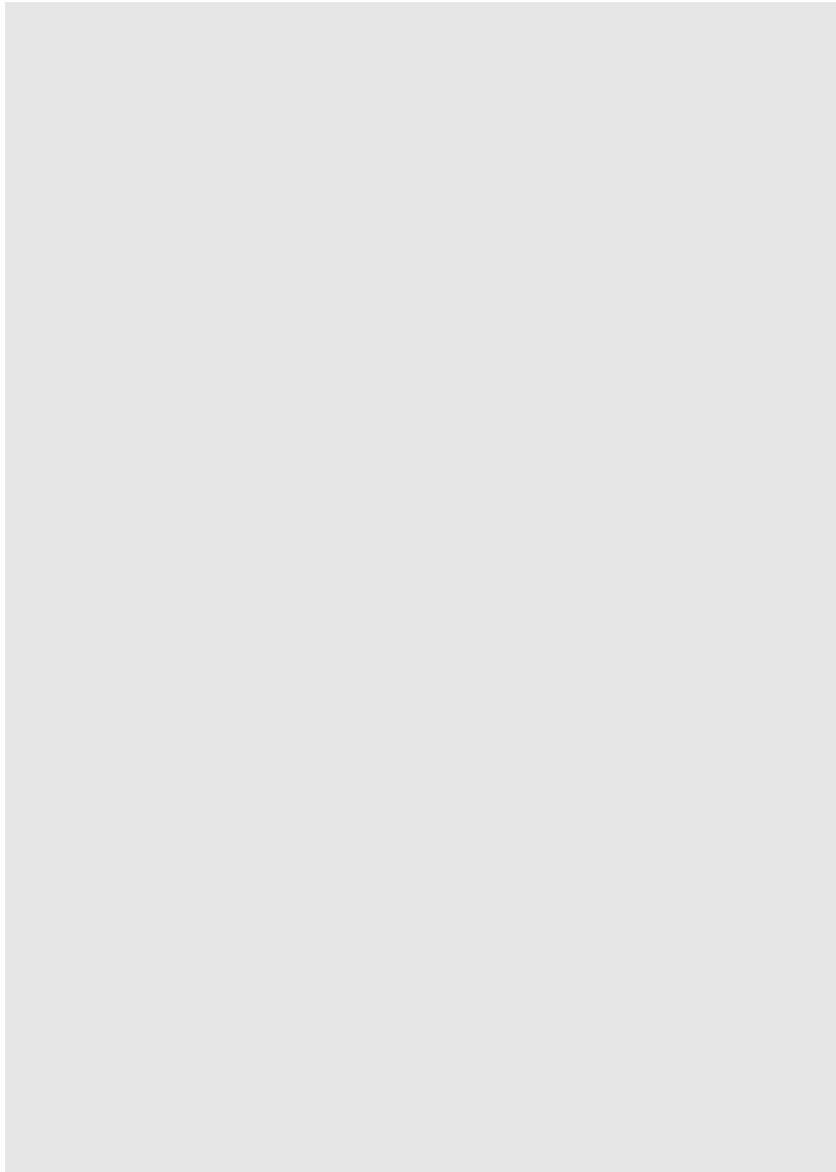


Gyaru makeup tutorial (Ranzuki Magazine, 2010)

EMPHATIC FEMININITY AND THE SURREAL

The incompatibility of normative gender performance for women who remain in employment is not limited to marriage and motherhood, but further extends to their appearance - it is seen as deviant to seek out, let alone maintain a successful career while being seen as performing femininity through clothing and cosmetic adornment. An example of this is the popular 2004 manga and anime *Hataraki Man*, by Moyoco Anno. Following the life of magazine editor Hiroko Matsukata, who, to succeed in her male-dominated workplace, will enter *hataraki man mode*, or “working man mode”, where she ceases to care about her appearance, clothing, hygiene, or romantic relationships. Those factors are deemed too “feminine” to exist in a “working man’s world”, and must be cast aside. An important aspect of Barbie in this context is her ability to act

transgressively as a role model where career women can “exhibit all the signs of traditional femininity ...and smoothly succeed in masculine domains while remaining steadfastly feminine” (Rogers 1999, 17). Through the authority of style, Barbie presents a highly visible example of women “taking [their] rightful place in the public arena”. (Peers 2004, 194)



Hataraki Man (2004) - Moyoco Anno

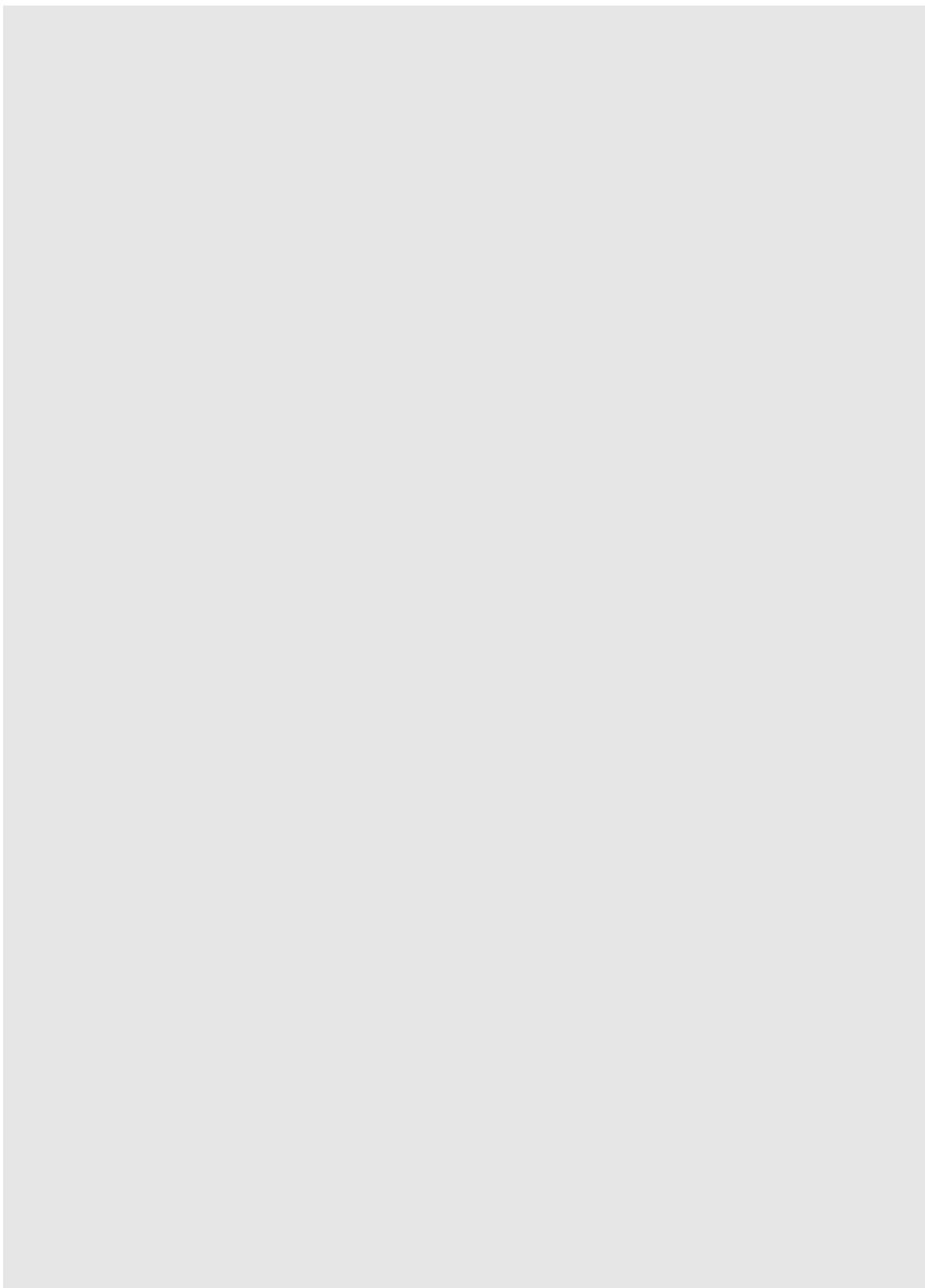
“WORKING MAN! In ‘Working Man’ mode, I work with three times my normal strength. All thoughts of eating, sleeping, love, clothes, looks, hygiene... disappear”

A feature of Barbie's enduring icon status is her prodigious capacity for overtly feminine attire and self-presentation. Unlike the everyday performance of femininity described by R.W. Connell as "emphasized femininity" (Connell 1987), Barbie's is not what you would describe as a widely accepted mode of gender performance. Her intense, overwhelmingly girlish style is what Rogers has dubbed "emphatic femininity" (ibid), or that which takes the performance of feminine aesthetics to "unsustainable extremes" (ibid) – however, I would argue that many young women in Japan have actually adopted this seemingly "unsustainable" form of adornment as part of their own beauty practices. Along with the conspicuous consumption seen in *gyaru* and *gosurori* subcultures, young women utilize emphatic femininity as a form of subversive rejection of societal gender norms. Within Japan, the criticism lobbied against *gosurori* fashion has frequently seen it as a rejection of gender normativity - in this case, *gosurori* signifies "a form of subversion and resistance to assumed norms" (Monden 2013, 174) through the conspicuous consumption of extravagantly feminine commodities. The normative mode of femininity is challenged by *gosurori* fashion, where participation transforms the wearer, much like dolls, into "an out-of-the-ordinary vision of the feminine" (Peers 2004, 83).

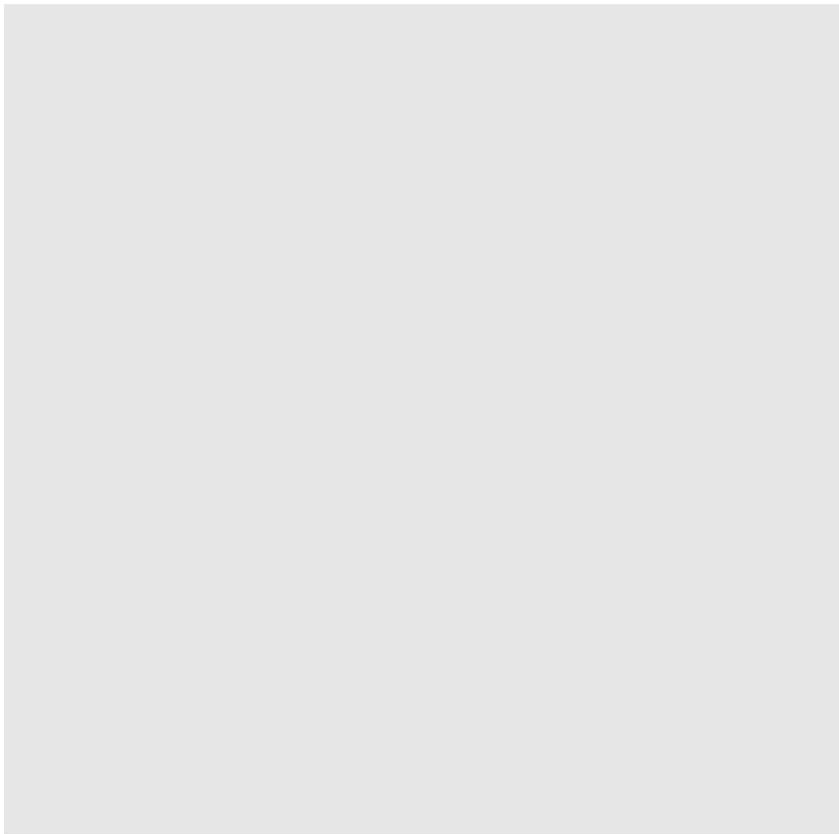
One dimension of Barbie's fantastical femininity that is particularly relevant to the discussion of *purikura* is her accentuated and expressive eyes - much like the *bisque* dolls before her, with their "over life-sized eyes" (ibid 56) and intense gaze. Through the late 1970s, Barbie's overall 'look' began to shift towards "increasingly strange, exaggerated and unnatural make-up. The eyes were particularly abstracted; pupils were purples, pinks, greens, greys, ambers, taupes, highlights were emphasized and were often painted as stars, comets and lightning flashes." (Peers 2004, 186) This style of hyperbolic beautification is the norm in *gyaru* fashion, characterized by colored contact lenses to increase the size of the iris, as well as the dense layering of false eyelashes and eye makeup to create an intense, exaggerated look, from the verb *mori* (盛り) for 'piling on'. This is comparable to the emphatic femininity of Barbie, as described by Peers, which includes "intense and complex designs in eye make-up, extended eyelashes and eyeshadow" (ibid). While the intensity with which Barbie's emphatic femininity is articulated through her eye makeup "[exceeds] acceptable practice

amongst humans” (ibid), gyaru’s unashamed eye embellishment often surpasses that of even Barbie. I would argue that it is the very unacceptability of this practice that gyaru are utilizing as a form of subversive mockery of established gender normativity.

Purikura figures largely in this, as one of its foremost capabilities is that of virtual eye enlargement, a feature explicitly produced to meet the demand of gyaru consumers. By 2008, with the release of *Jewella Eye – Big Eye Revolution*, the technological enhancement of bodies became the primary developmental focus of purikura machines. Jewella assured users that “through beautiful purikura, your eyes will become 120% larger”. In an interview with Okamoto Chisaku, a representative from the company that manufactured the machine, he stated that the *dekame* (large eye) capabilities were introduced as a direct response to girls’ contemporary patterns of use – “when we listened to girls, we found that they were already doing their eye makeup like this before shooting photos. We thought, better to make a machine that does it – now they can create big eyes more naturally.” (2008) Through purikura, young women utilize emphatic femininity as a form of virtually-mediated gender performance, as “techniques of the body” (Mauss 1934) - whereby gender performance is imbued and made manifest through the purikura image.



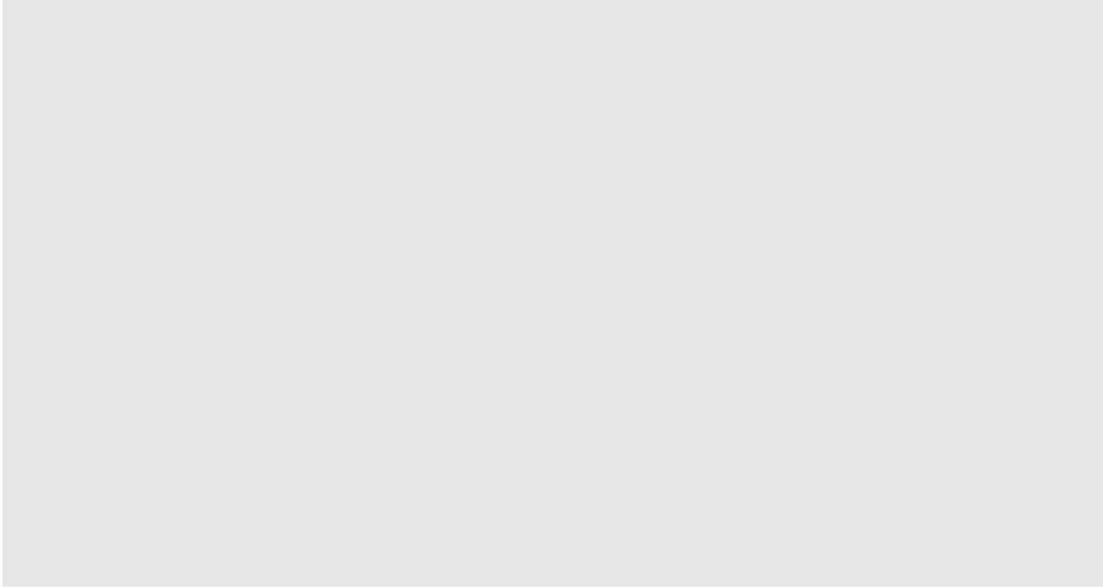
Gyaru dekame makeup tutorial
(Ranzuki Magazine, 2010)



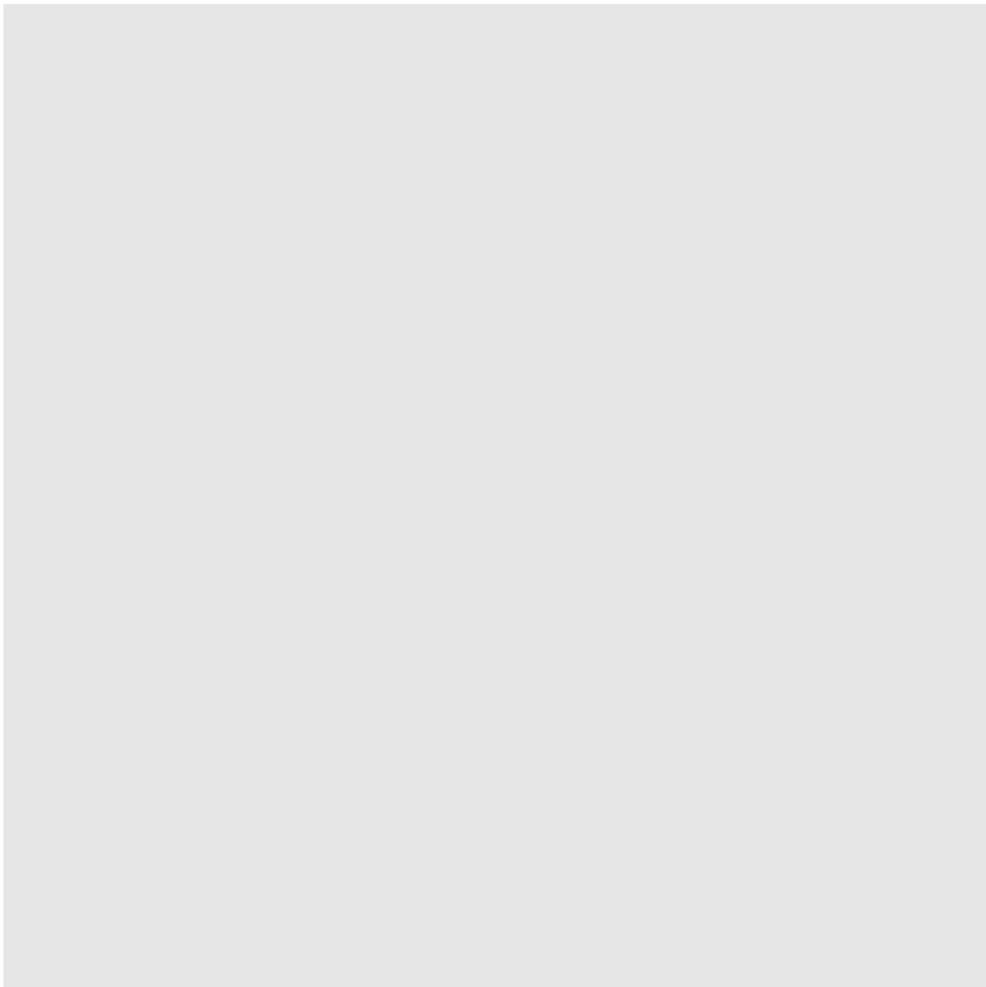
Sanrio branded 'Characon' (a play on words – 'character' [kyara] + 'colored contacts' [karakon])



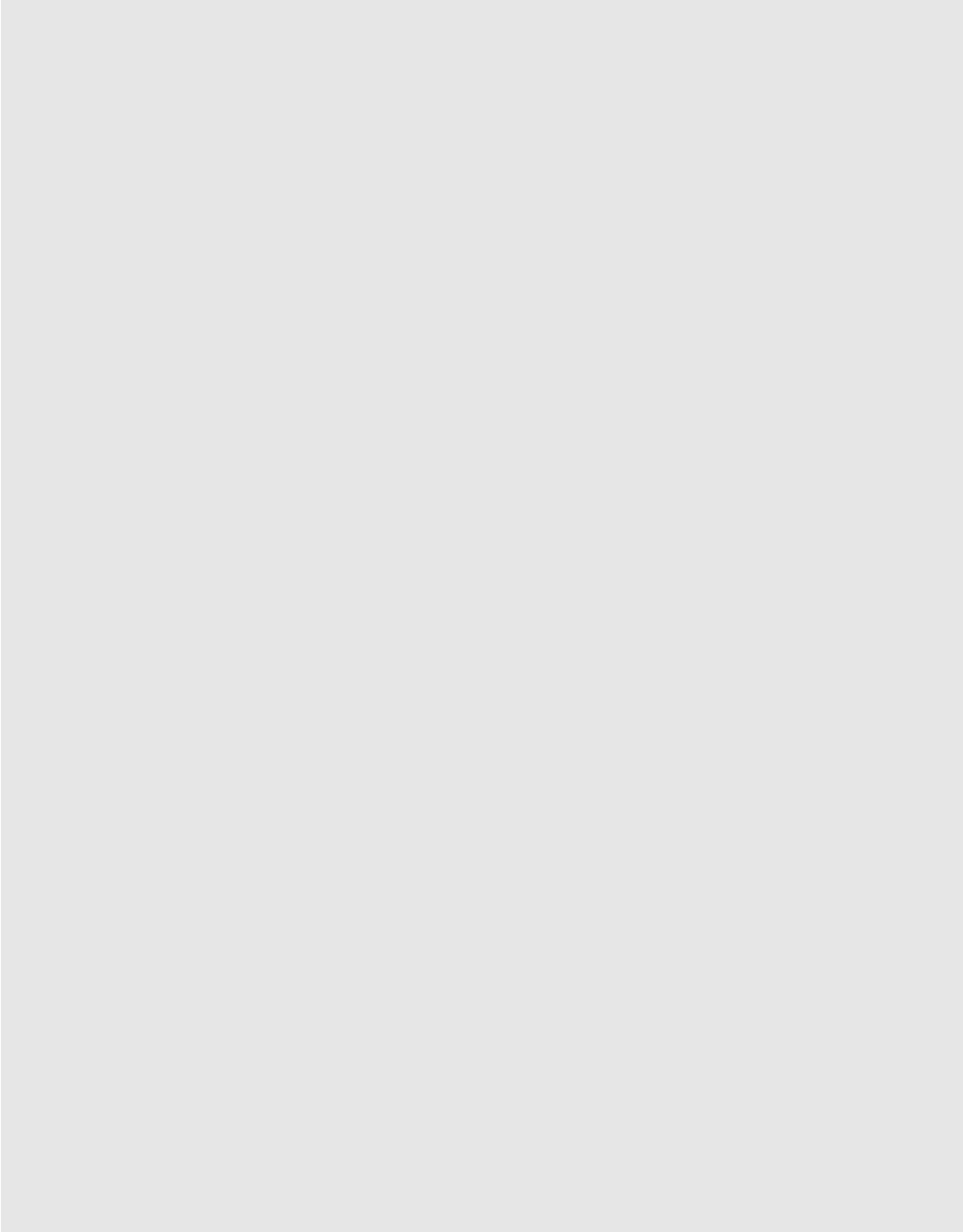
Licca doll branded false eyelashes (author's own 2016)



(Ninagawa 2012)

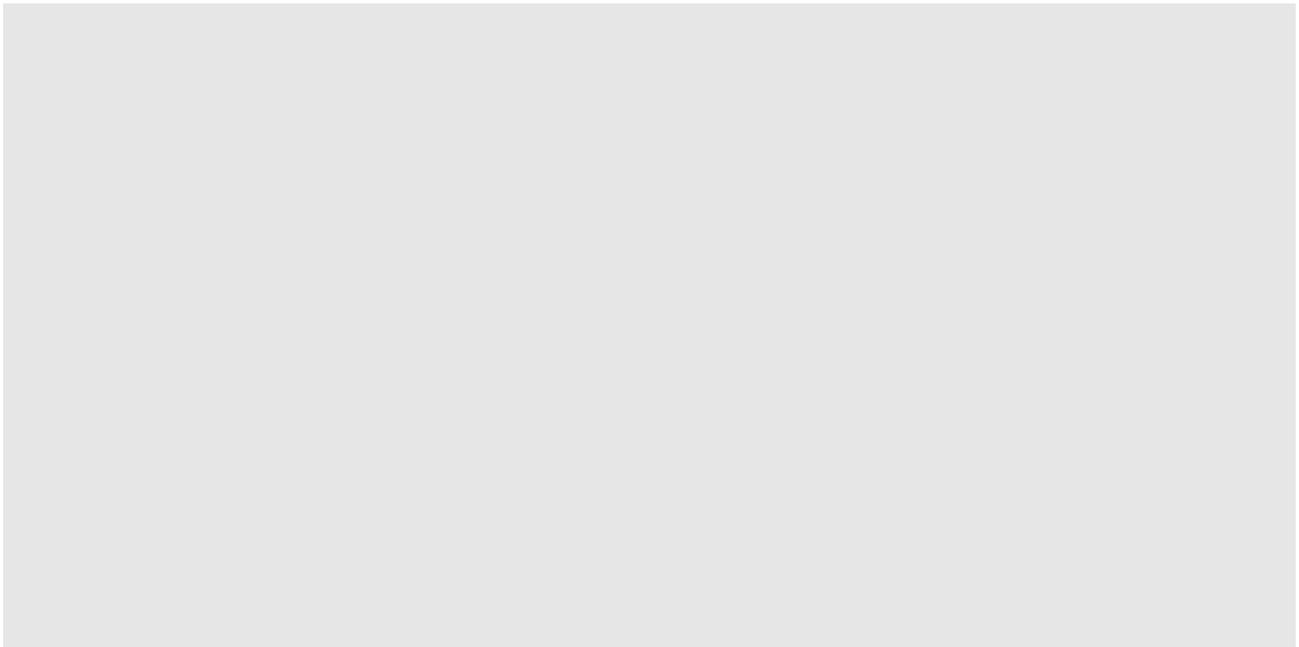


Promotional materials for the Eyemazing false eyelashes produced by Kyary Pamyu Pamyu, above in Barbie shirt

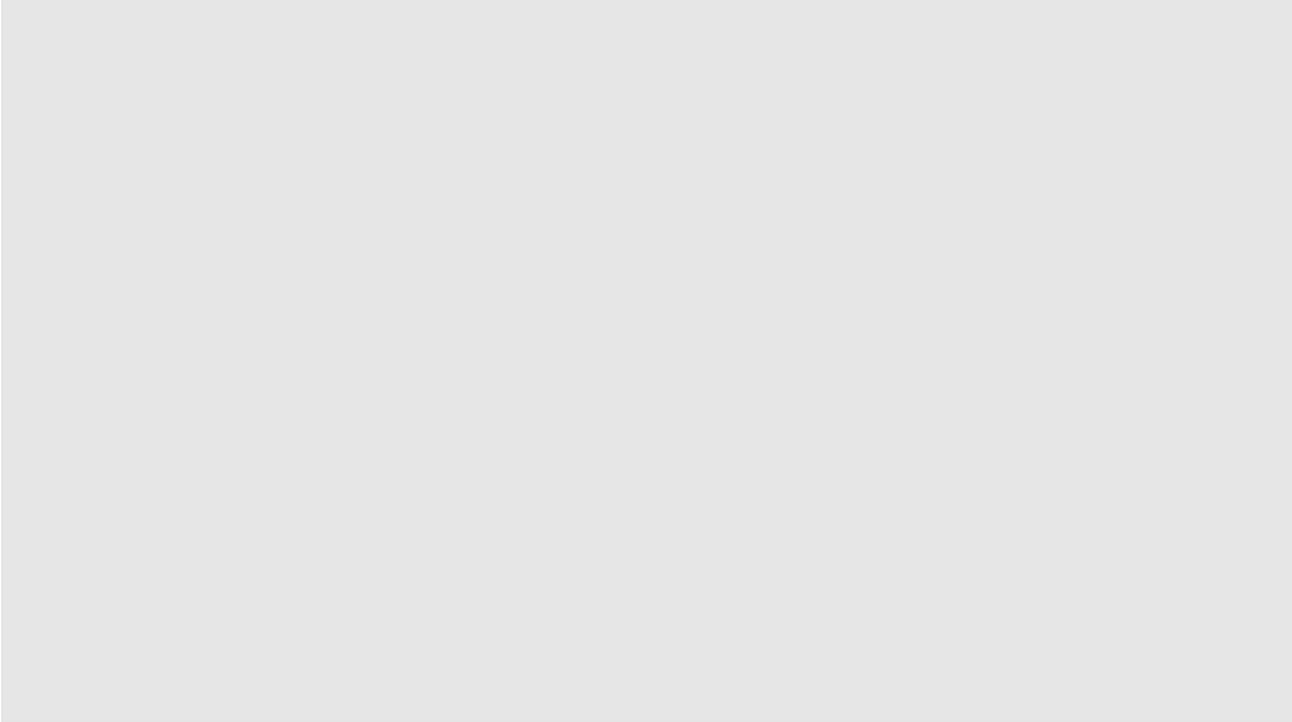


Kyary Pamyu Pamyu for the cover of Zipper Magazine, October 2011.

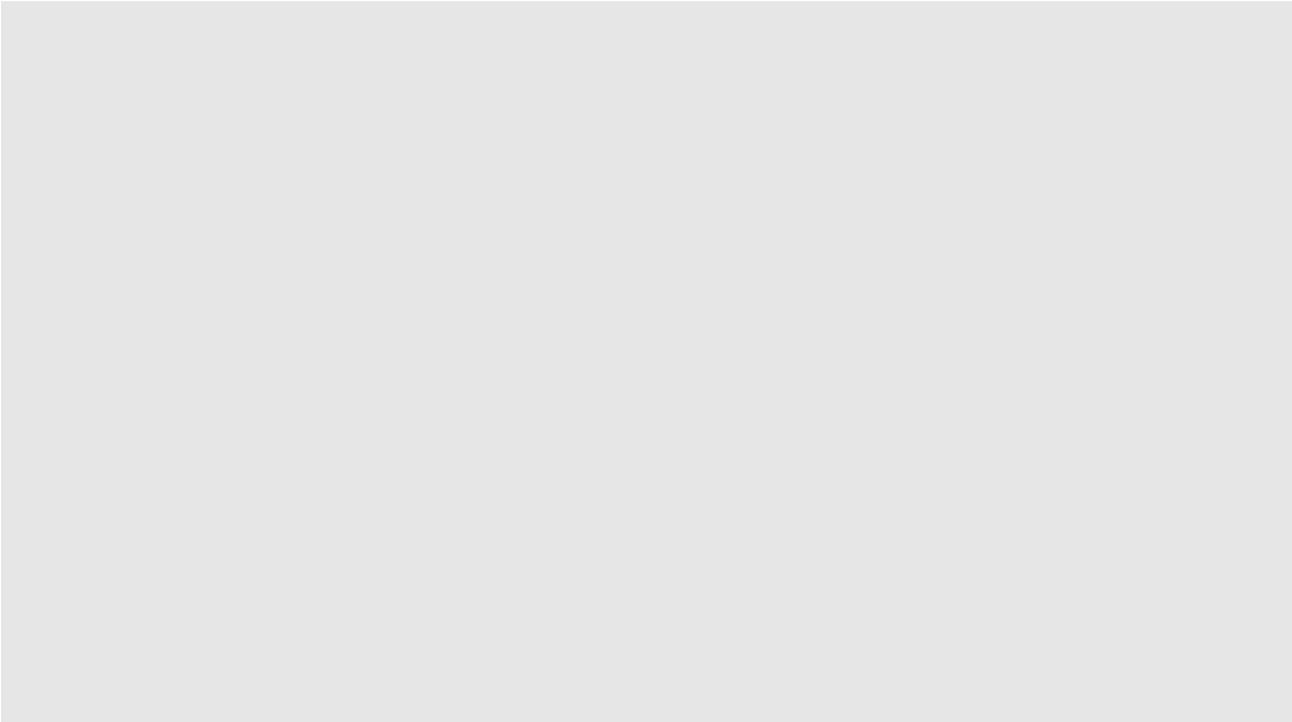
Kyary Pamyu Pamyu is the celebrity persona of Kiriko Takemura, a pop star whose work resonated with many of the young women I worked with. Kyary began her career as a fashion blogger and street snap model before being picked up as a regularly featured talent in a variety of magazines known for their over-the-top fashion, along with their further association with *kawaii* (cute) culture, such as KERA and Zipper. As with many of the fashion models referenced in previous chapters, Kyary's humble beginning as a street snap model was seen as authentic, admirable, as well as achievable, further adding to the allure of following her *kata* of self-presentation. Her popularity and meteoric rise to fame, as explained to me by several young women, was in part her willingness to experiment with such intense stylings – particularly, it was pointed out, her use of voluminous false eyelashes, of which she even produced several lines for the brand Eyemazing. False lashes, which are an important component of *dekame* (big eye) makeup, frequently came up in conversations with many of the young women I worked with, several of whom pointed me towards Kyary's (2011) hit single *Tsukematsukeru* ('putting on false lashes') to further understand their feelings towards wearing them. As one young woman queried, "Why shouldn't I wear them? Why shouldn't I be cute? They're fun! They make me feel good!"



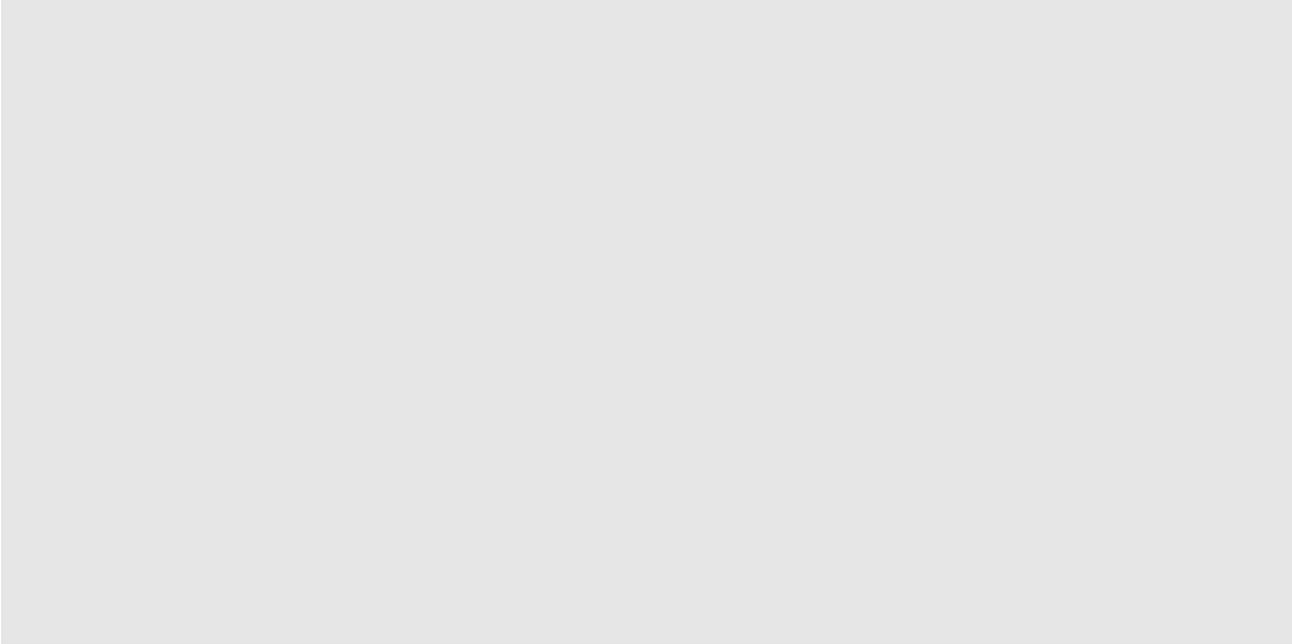
"Blink-blink, trying on fake lashes"



“It’s magic for whoever wears them”



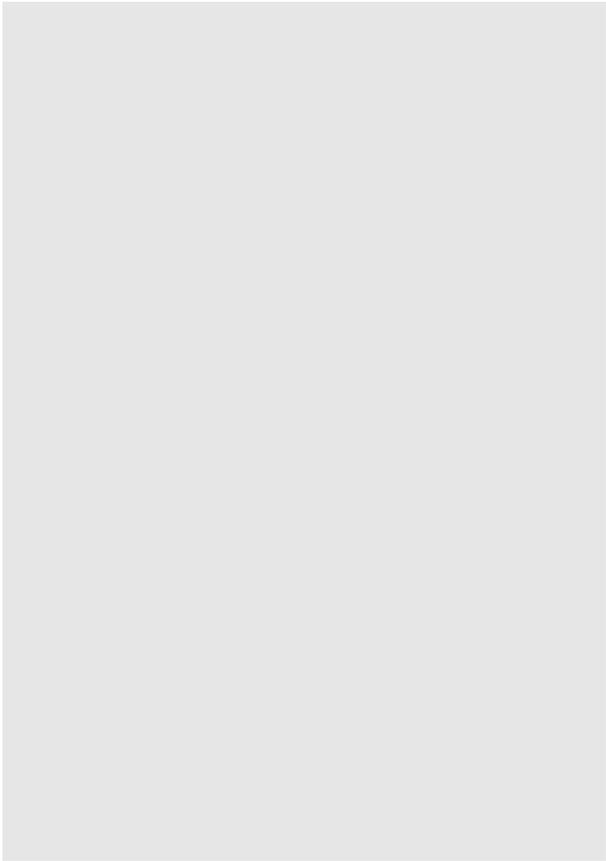
“When you’re confident in yourself,”



“you might see the world differently”

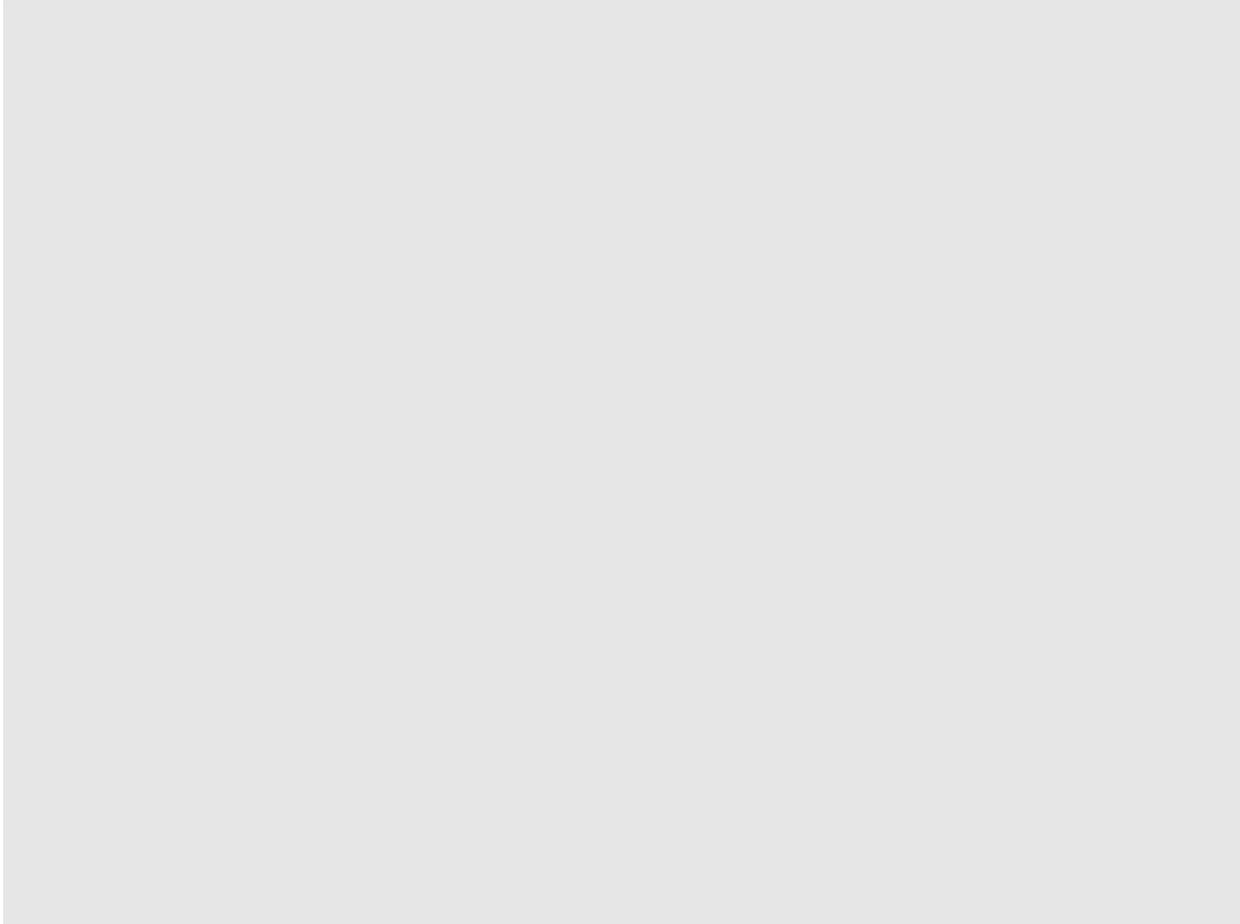
Emphatic femininity serves its function in the fact of its non-functionality, whereby young women utilize the non-utility of their garments and cosmetic adornment semiotically as a statement of confounding resistance. For those that ascribe to the functionalist perspective, emphatic femininity serves to “confound those who demand the logical and orderly in the semiotic messages around their lives” (Peers 2004, 89), a contrast so irrational that it lends itself to the surreal. This forcing of objects and practices into contrast with larger social norms and expectations of women is further comparable to the aims and articulations of the Surrealist movement, seen through the juxtaposition of “jarringly arbitrary and unexpected images and objects”. (J. Kelly 2008, 24) Cute consumption has been theorized by some as “an act of self-mutilation” (Kinsella 1995, 237), which is made all the more comparable to the Surrealist movement, for whom fashion served as the “most compelling friction between the ordinary and extraordinary, between disfigurement and embellishment, body and concept, artifice and the real” (Martin 1987, 9).

The primary role played by dolls is that of fashion interlocutor, providing instruction in modes of feminine presentation and “apprenticeship to knowing about fashion, and the rituals and pleasure of wearing clothes” (Peers 2004, 173). For Juliette Peers, dolls - as



Early Licca doll purikura machine (2002)

“impossibly stereotyped feminine” (ibid:89) - exist as similarly surreal fashion objects, through extraordinary self-presentation and emphatic femininity. As a “complex mix of limitation and liberation, of maternity and allure, of pleasure versus duty,” (ibid:150) the figure of the doll creates a set of contradictory meanings that can be read, simultaneously, as jarringly surreal. Dolls as fashion objects are denounced for their exaggeratedly feminine nature, and similarly, young women seek visibility through conspicuous consumption of fashion, producing a surreal juxtaposition that elicits a negative response from many detractors. The surreal found in both these cases is further amplified through their combination, whereby young women seek to emulate dolls through fashion consumption and cosmetic adornment.

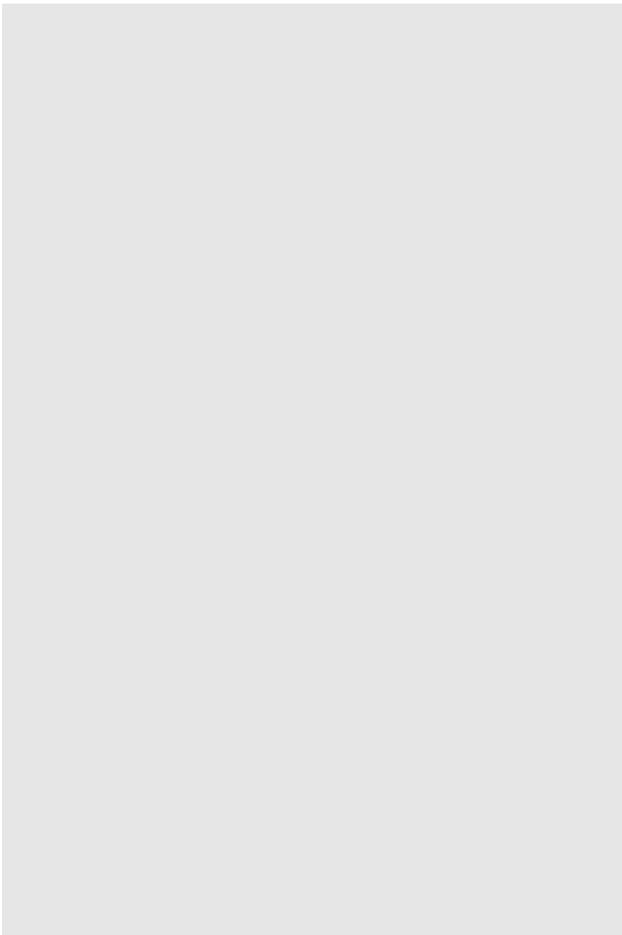


“Doll eye make-up” *dekame* tutorial from Dakota’s style book “Dakota Rose のすべて” (2013)

For Simone de Beauvoir, a preoccupation with fashion and beauty culture diminishes women, as an act of self-objectification wherein “the woman of fashion ... has chosen to make herself into a thing” (de Beauvoir 1949, 512). While the nuance of this sentiment shifts dramatically in the context of the sartorial emulation of dolls, it is important to examine it on a culturally specific level. Some theorists claim that the “cuteness” found in fashion consumption in Japan is diminutive, linking femininity with motherhood, whereby “cute objects are attractive to women because they link an affinity for babies and being a good mother to children (and by extension, a good husband)” (McVeigh 1996, 304), which does not align with the divergent life path of young women who seek out conspicuous consumption of emphatically feminine garments. More often, fashion is derided as being an artificial violation of their “essential nature”, as “a force that alienates girls/women from mothering” (Peers 2004, 35) - the dolls emulated through

emphatic femininity are not merely things, but *playthings*, symbolizing women enjoying freedom and leisure, and for whom marriage and motherhood do not figure in their play value. (Mandeville 1996, 9)

The notion of “*asobi*”, or play, was frequently invoked during my fieldwork - while the term is largely associated in western cultures with children, in Japan it is mutually employed in reference to recreational pleasure and enjoyment for adults. Play can be interpreted as “a liminal situation in which received ideas, conformist sentiments and traditional norms are fragmented and rearranged in a bricolage of fascinating and fragile combinations” (Raveri 2005, 4), and this element of play resonates with the surreal elicited by emphatic femininity and purikura photography. The public vitriol against the relative freedom of young women may arise because of the inherently surreal nature of women who shirk motherhood, a role that is generally considered their functional purpose in Japanese society.



Dakota Rose serves as a crossing point between these themes – dubbed the ‘Real Barbie’, she has helmed purikura machines whose popularity was predicated on the emulation of her ‘doll-like’ features and status. While modeling for the gyaru magazine Popteen, they frequently produced tutorials and advertising that drew overt comparisons between Dakota and both Barbie and Licca dolls. She appears in television and print media, performing the ostensible role of doll, mimicking their established postures and packaging - notably, she has also been a recurring model for the foremost *gosurori* clothing brand Baby the Stars Shine Bright (above). Through her own makeup tutorials, she details her

techniques for the stylistic enhancement of the eye - by utilizing white eyeliner on her waterline, expansive winged eyeliner, and reproducing her lower lashes several millimeters below their true origin, she produces her larger-than-life appearance, instructing young women in her *kata* of emphatic femininity.

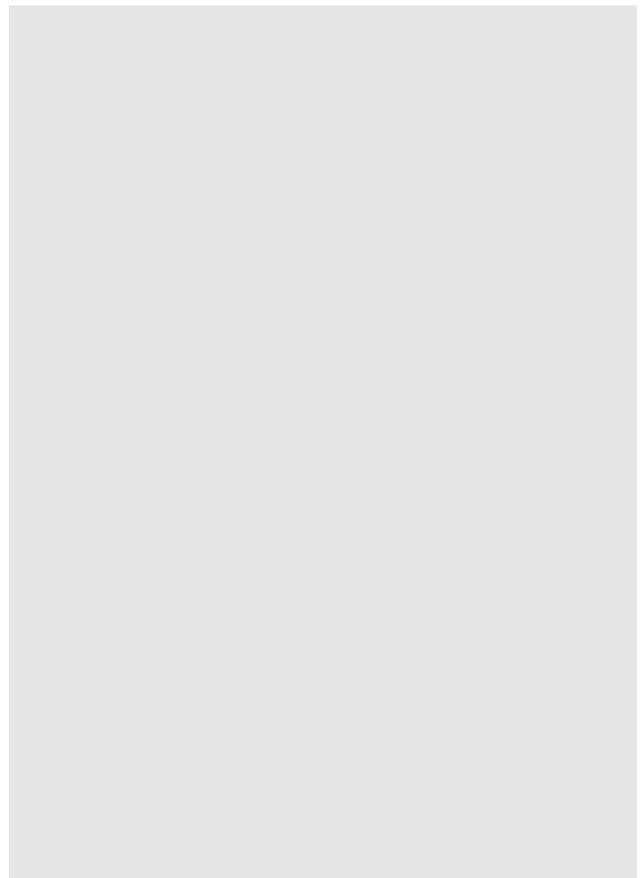
HEROINES

The enormous, opulent eyes seen in gyaru subculture and purikura shares their roots with a different medium – that of *shōjo manga*, or girls’ comics. This genre has existed since the early 1900s, with its origins in illustrated literary fiction in magazines aimed at young women. While 75% of contemporary *shōjo* manga editors are men, 99% of its creators are women, an unusually high margin in the industry - as such, it is a genre by, for and about women, and remains “inextricably linked to the subculture of the girls and young women who both produce and consume it”. (Takahashi 2008, 114)

The term *shōjo* translates roughly to “girl” or “young woman”, but was not in common usage before the late 19th century

(Takahashi 2008, 115) - a category created

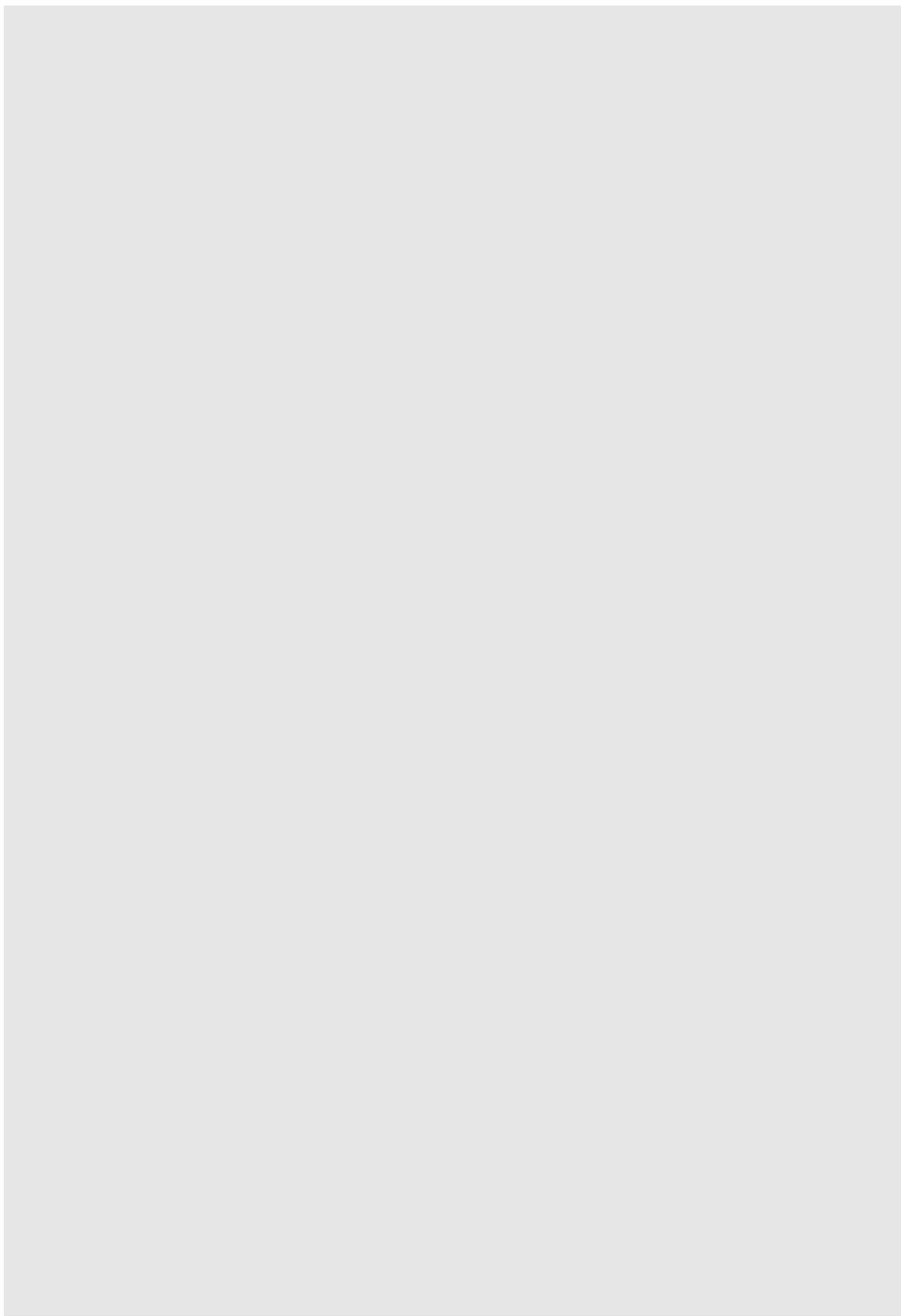
to differentiate between young people on the basis of gender, and “utilized to justify the emerging state-sanctioned patriarchal hierarchy that privileged boys over girls”. (ibid) In its origins, *shōjo* was defined as a socially conservative gender role dictated by the emergence of formative educational models in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, particularly the new educational law of 1887. This law, known as the



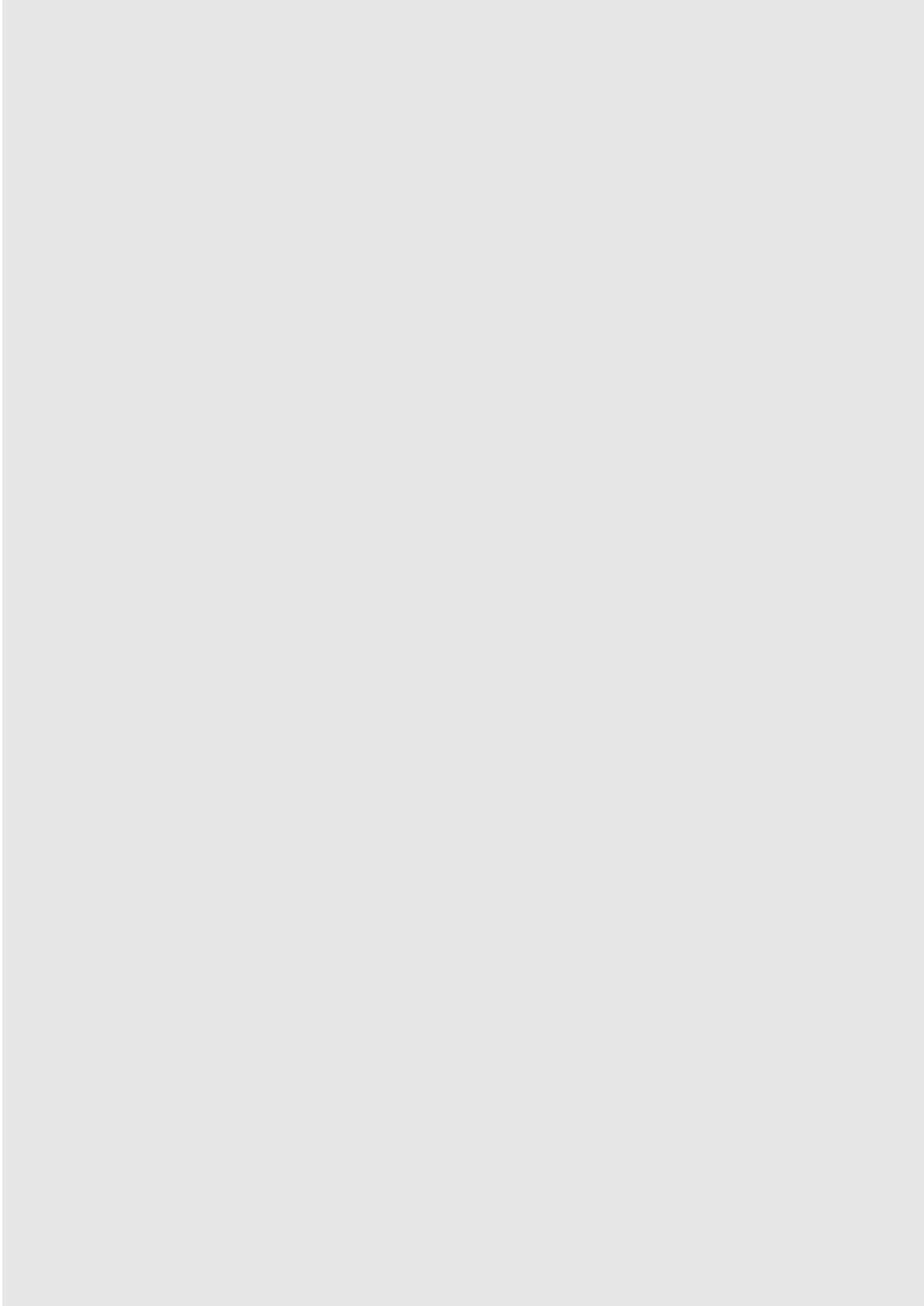
Gothic & Lolita Bible cover by Riyoko Ikeda (2004)

chūtōgakkō (the junior high school law), helped in providing education for boys while simultaneously systematically denying the same to girls - within the good wife, wise mother system, future housewives “did not need an advanced education”. (ibid: 116) While later legislation, such as the *kōtōgakkō rei* (the high school law) of 1899 paved the way for girls’ higher education, it consisted only of a limited curriculum “focused on the training of good wife, wise mother” (ibid), and was only accessible to the middle and upper classes. The education provided by these schools “did not teach young women how to function independently as adults” (ibid), and the “shōjo ideal” put forth during this time by educationalists and shōjo genre magazines personified desirable feminine virtues as future brides-to-be.

Primarily targeted at teens and young women, shōjo manga has always consisted of female-centric narratives and expressive artwork, and is predominantly recognizable for its emphasis on the large, emotive eyes of its heroines. In the early 20th century, shōjo magazines and literature focused on the lives and feelings of their female protagonists - the emphatic eyes are a particular mainstay of the genre, where they function as a narrative tool for the expression of inner emotions of characters. The prescriptive, virtuous nature of early shōjo – primarily dominated by male authors and illustrators – simultaneously allowed young women access to a genre of storytelling that privileged stories of female protagonists through emotive, feminine aesthetics, and whose significance lies in the creation of “a private space for girls to support each other through adolescence” (Shamoon 2012, 141).



Shōjo no Tomo manga magazine cover by Jun'Ichi Nakahara (1938)



Shōjo manga Lemon & Cherry (1966) by Yoshiko Nishitani

By the early 1970s, shōjo manga began to fully assert itself as a mainstream genre, largely due to the authority of a sudden influx of innovative female creators. Known collectively as the *24 nen'gumi* for the year they were born - Showa 24, or 1949 - these

women revitalized the shōjo genre, creating groundbreaking works that are widely considered classics to this day. (Nakajima 1991) These works experimented widely with new settings and plot devices - from hot-blooded sports to sci-fi and fantasy, the genre was propelled towards dramatic new heights, expanding beyond the good wife, wise mother mentality that had plagued shōjo previously. However, it is notable that what remained unchanged as the genre expanded were the exaggerated, sparkling eyes of its heroines - the preservation of this visual convention, which persists to this day, says much about its importance. The *24 nen'gumi* grew up reading the shōjo manga of the 1950s, and in enlarging the eyes even further (Prough 2011, 49), appropriated this visual style from its good wife, wise mother origins, using “the aesthetic idiom of prewar illustration to create complex stories that addressed the psychological development of teenage girls” (Takahashi 2008, 136). As female creators took over, the heroines of this genre went from an “innocent, sweet, obedient” ideal, as was primarily drawn by men, to being “fashionable, adventurous, open-minded and a lot more diverse” (Bauwens-Sugimoto & Inomata 2013, 25)

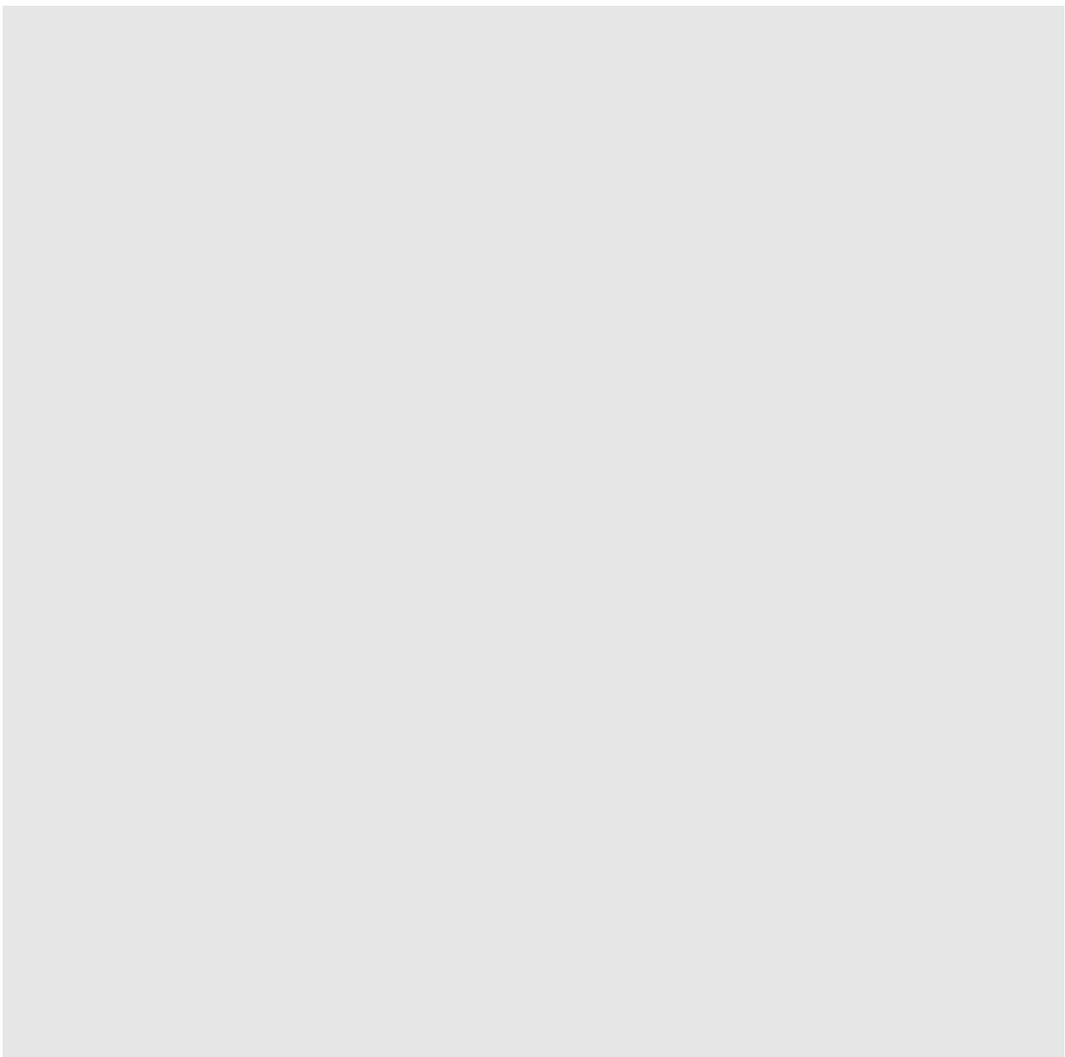
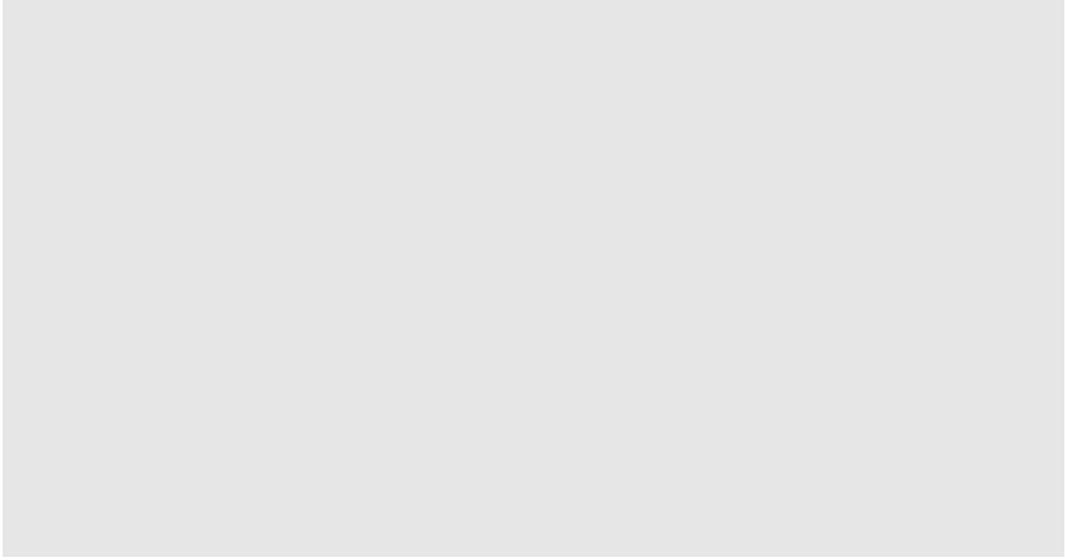
Among members of the *24 nen'gumi*, the works of Riyoko Ikeda stand out as particularly influential with the young women I worked with, and her illustrative techniques were frequently shown to me as being the quintessential shōjo ‘look’. Riyoko Ikeda’s 1972 series *The Rose of Versailles*, which remains one of the bestselling shōjo series of all time (Takahashi 2008, 132), focuses on the life of Oscar François de Jarjayes - a woman raised as a man to succeed in her father’s place as leader of the palace guards to Marie Antoinette. Through the performance of masculinity, Oscar is allowed to follow her desired life path as a talented combatant, but is conflicted at her inability to lead a military career while also identifying as a woman through the performance of femininity. As one woman described to me,

“Oscar is able to live the life of a man, to have the privileges and freedoms of a man, but only so long as she dresses and acts like a man - you can really feel the inner struggle through her eyes”.

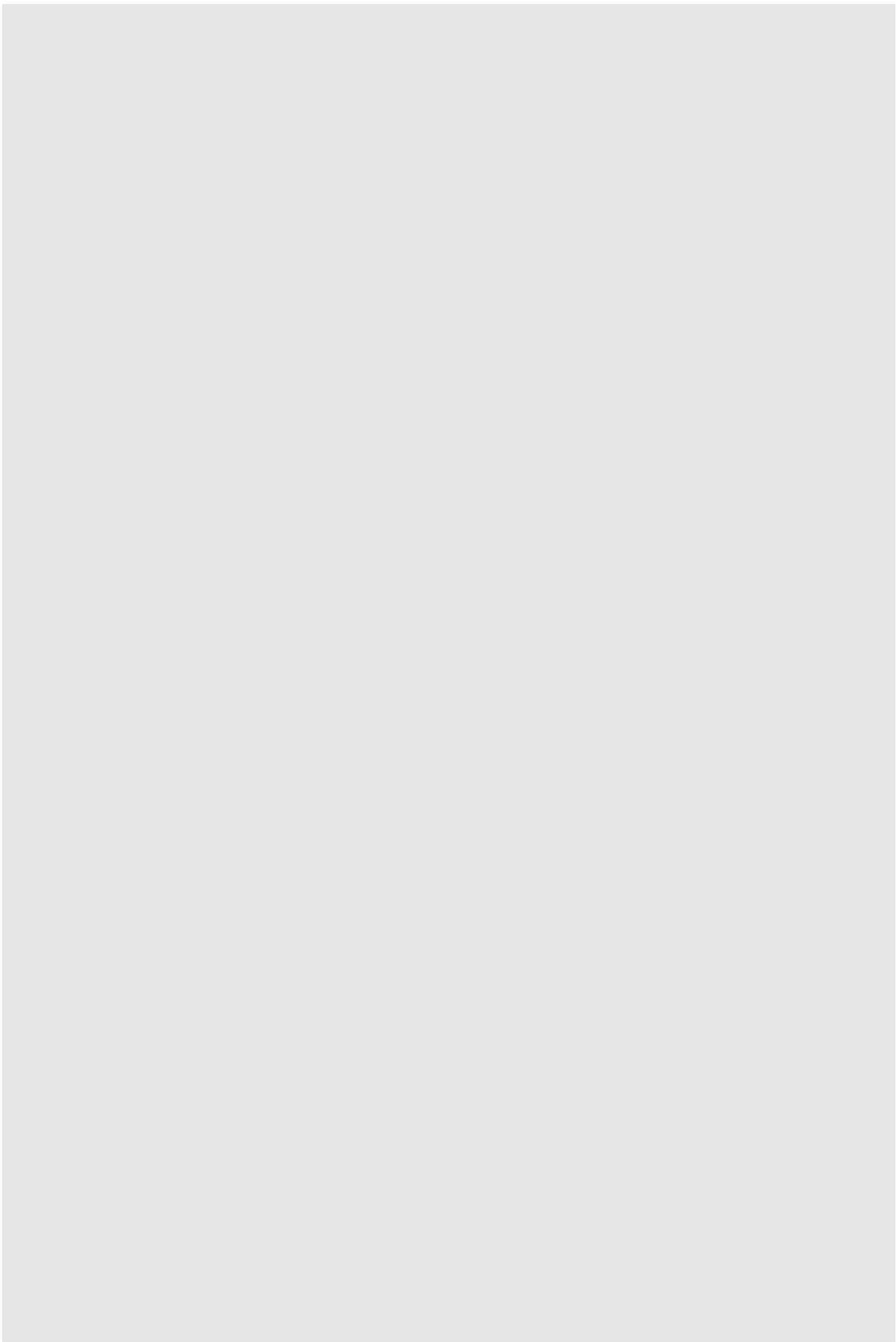
The eyes in *The Rose of Versailles* have been especially influential; even four decades later an entire line of makeup purporting to allow users to achieve their look is still a bestseller. For most purikura users I spoke with, Riyoko Ikeda's illustrations were the standard for sumptuous *shōjo* eyes - for *gosurori* especially, her work was particularly formative to their personal style and tastes. Posited as 'windows to the soul', readers can engage with the emotions and experiences of *shōjo* protagonists 'through' their eyes, where "using oversized eyes ... is a key technique used by the *shōjo* artist to evoke empathy from the readers." (Takahashi 2008, 124) These methods of visualization focus on interiority, communicating inner thoughts and feelings, and allow viewers to engage with the characters' experiences and emotions as though they were their own. The emphatic femininity found in *gyaru* culture and purikura consumption serves a similar purpose to that of the expressive eyes of *shōjo* manga – where glittering, larger-than-life eyes delineate the subject of the purikura photograph as the heroine of her own narrative.

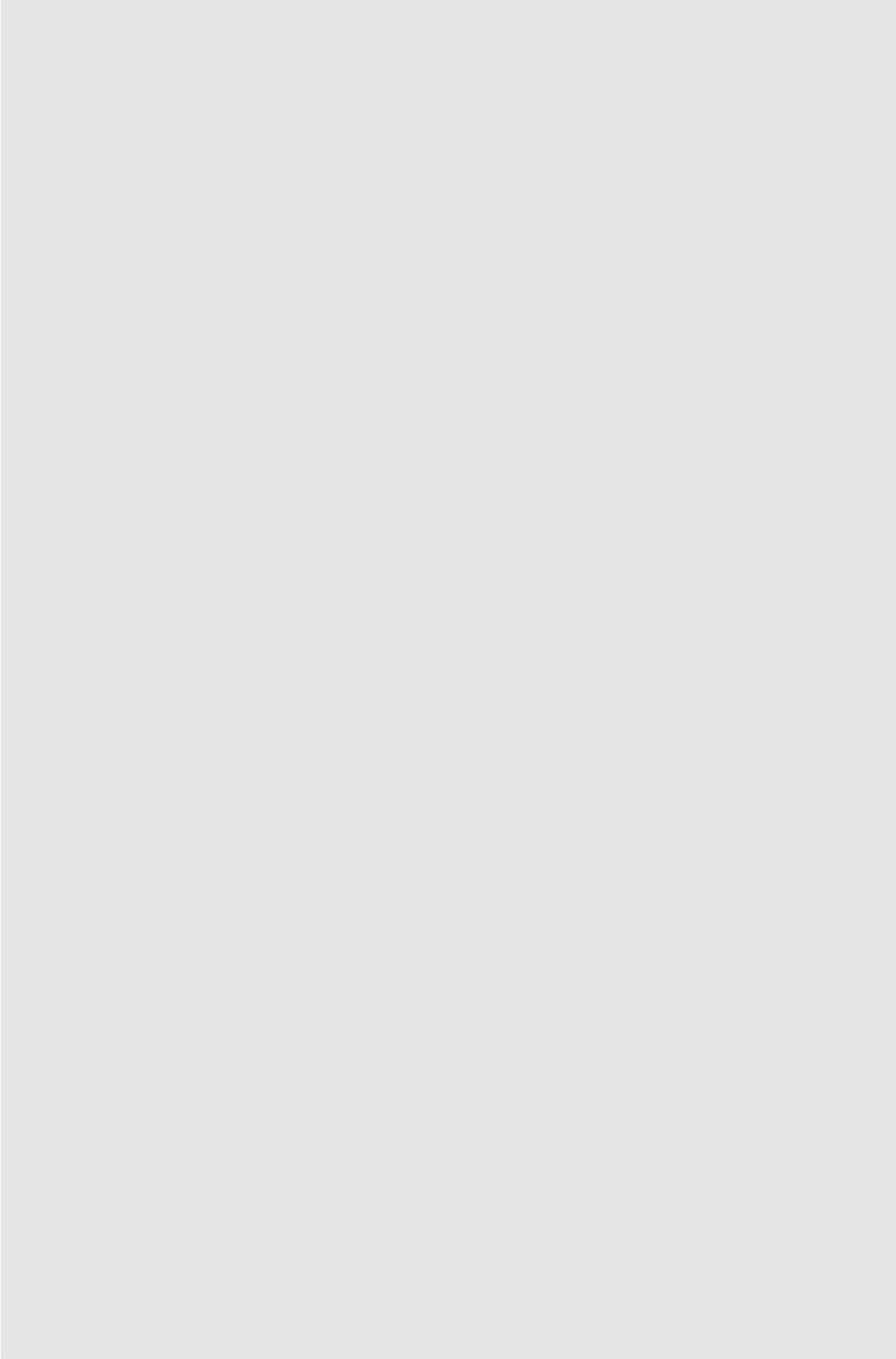


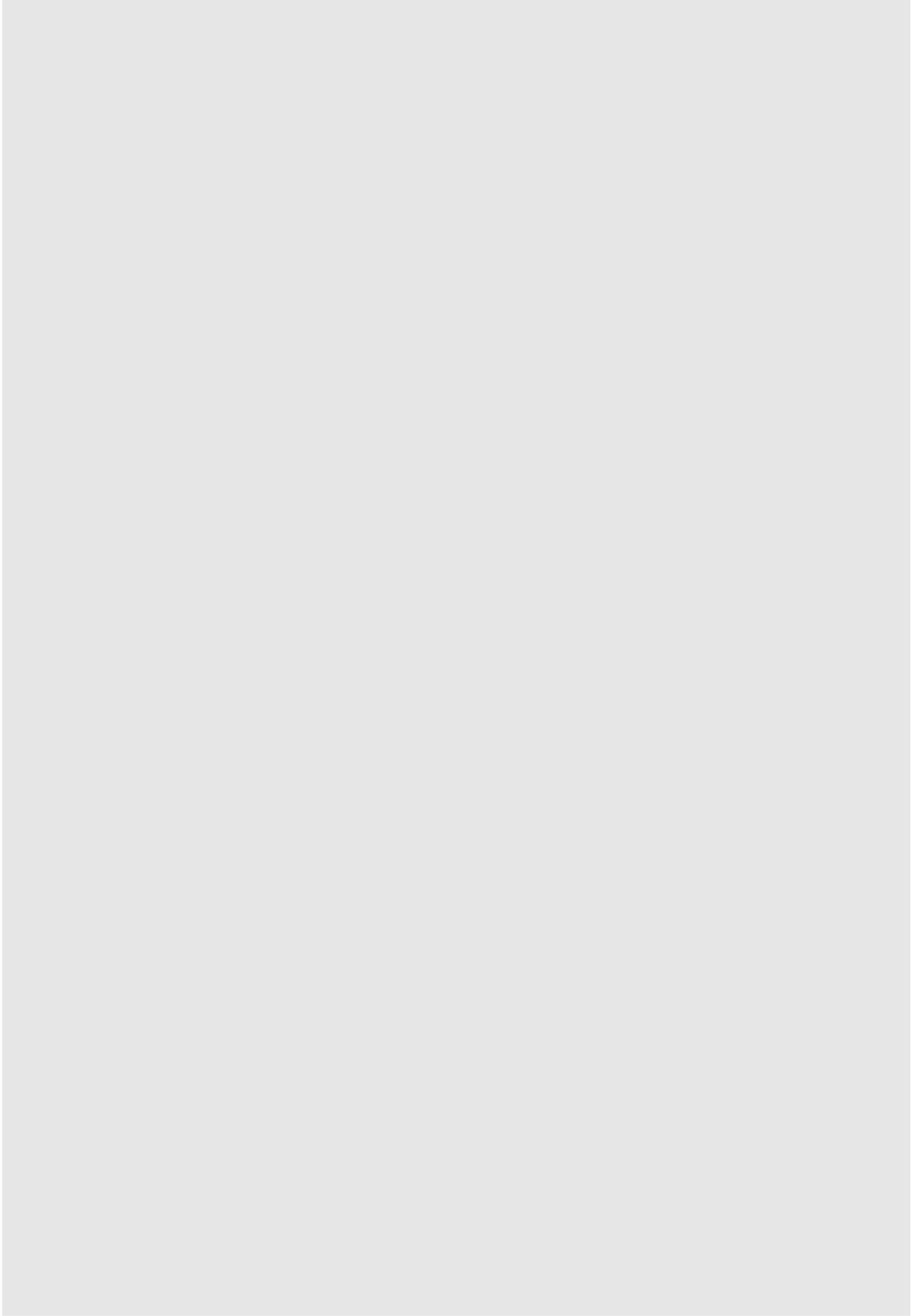
Rose of Versailles mascara, eyeliner and karakon promoted for their use in 'heroine-make'
(photo author's own 2016)



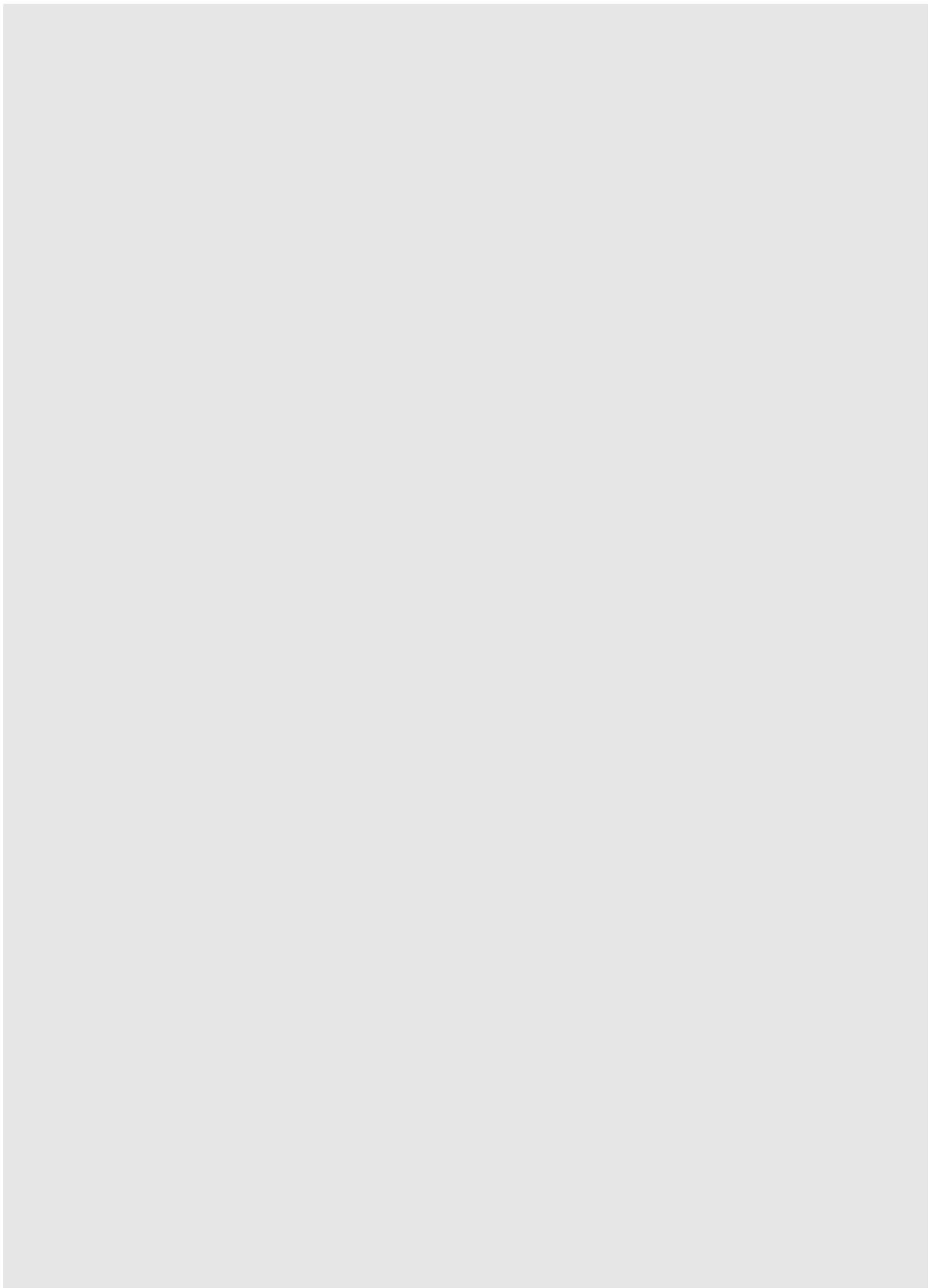
Rose of Versailles branded mascara and karakon







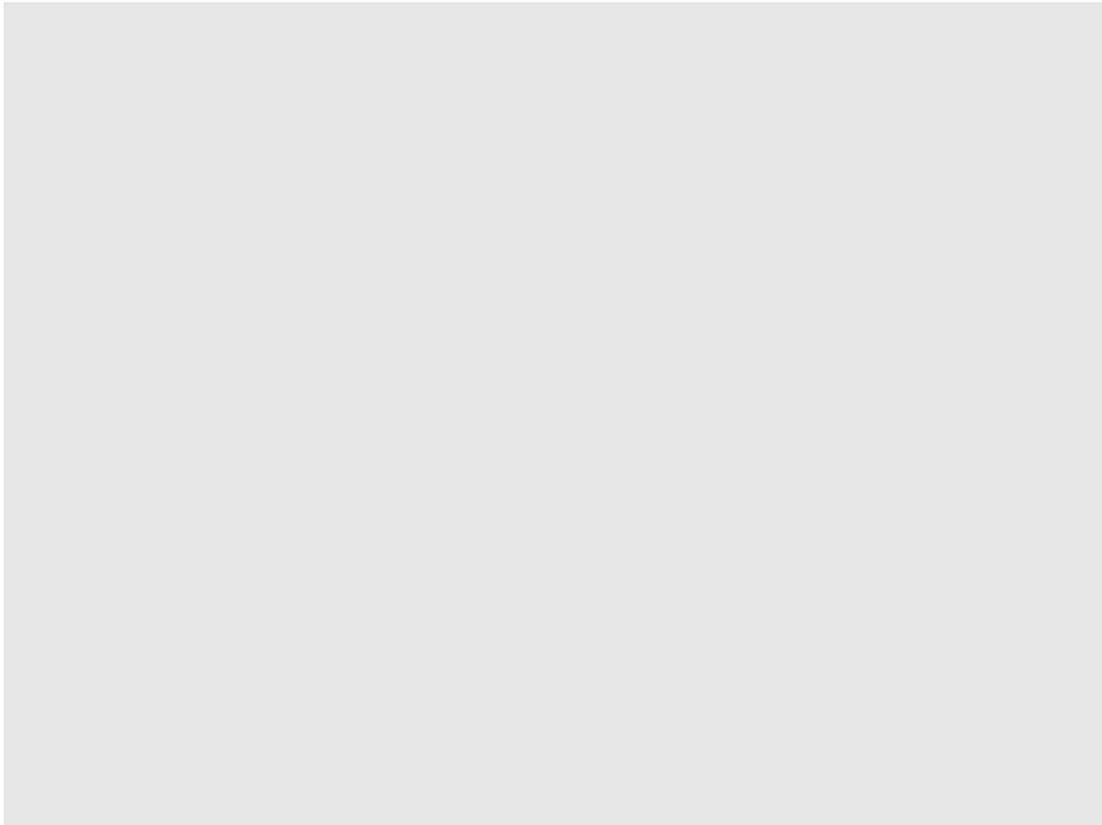
Rose of Versailles – Riyoko Ikeda (1972)



Shōjo manga-style storytelling in the February 2017 issue of Popteen, portraying Nicorun as an 'average' high school girl, with purikura among her favorite activities.



Excerpt from another shōjo manga narrative from the March 2017 issue of Popteen, portraying a school uniform-clad 'average high school girl' Nicorun taking purikura while on a date, using a purikura machine (Shirayuki) that featured her as purimo



(2016)

The history of shōjo manga corresponds and interweaves with the struggles of young women in Japan; while they have transgressively resisted a social system that perpetually regards women as second-class citizens (Robertson 2010, 10), shōjo manga are similarly regarded as second-class citizens in the manga world (Takahashi 2008, 14). By virtue of its feminine status, shōjo manga has been marginalized and overlooked by cultural critics, where it is “derided as cheap trash ... Men dismissed shōjo manga not on literary grounds, but because of sexism, and a disregard for the world of women” (Nakajima 1991, 89). Reflected in this criticism is a lack of understanding of the aesthetic codes of the medium - much like fashion itself, shōjo manga makes use of a visual aesthetic that serves as a semiological language accessible only to informed consumers, and “illegible” to detractors. (Takahashi 2008, 130)

While manga as a whole is known for its innovative layouts that flow cinematically across the page, shōjo manga makes frequent use of the full-body portrait, a particular narrative tool that is often criticized as “clumsy” and “unsophisticated” (Ibid: 125). Comparable to the full-body photography found in purikura, the importance of this illustrative style lies in its relation to clothing, where “part of the allure ... has always been that [shōjo manga] were all about fashion”. (Ibid) Shōjo manga and fashion became intertwined in the postwar period because of a lack of fashion magazines aimed at teens - as such, “stylish illustrations which depicted full-body shots became an important element of shōjo magazines” (Bauwens-Sugimoto and Inomata 2013, 25), which only increased as the shōjo manga industry became more dominated by female creators. (Okazaki & Johnson 2013) Current fashion magazines now, recursively, make use of shōjo tropes in the form of manga-style arrangements - with comic layouts, speech bubbles and photographs of models serving as the heroines, stories are in large part told through the clothing they wear. Through purikura and vernacular photography, young women utilize the “shamelessly subjective” (Iwaya 1980, 136) visual tools of shōjo manga to willfully carve a space for themselves as the protagonists of their own life stories.



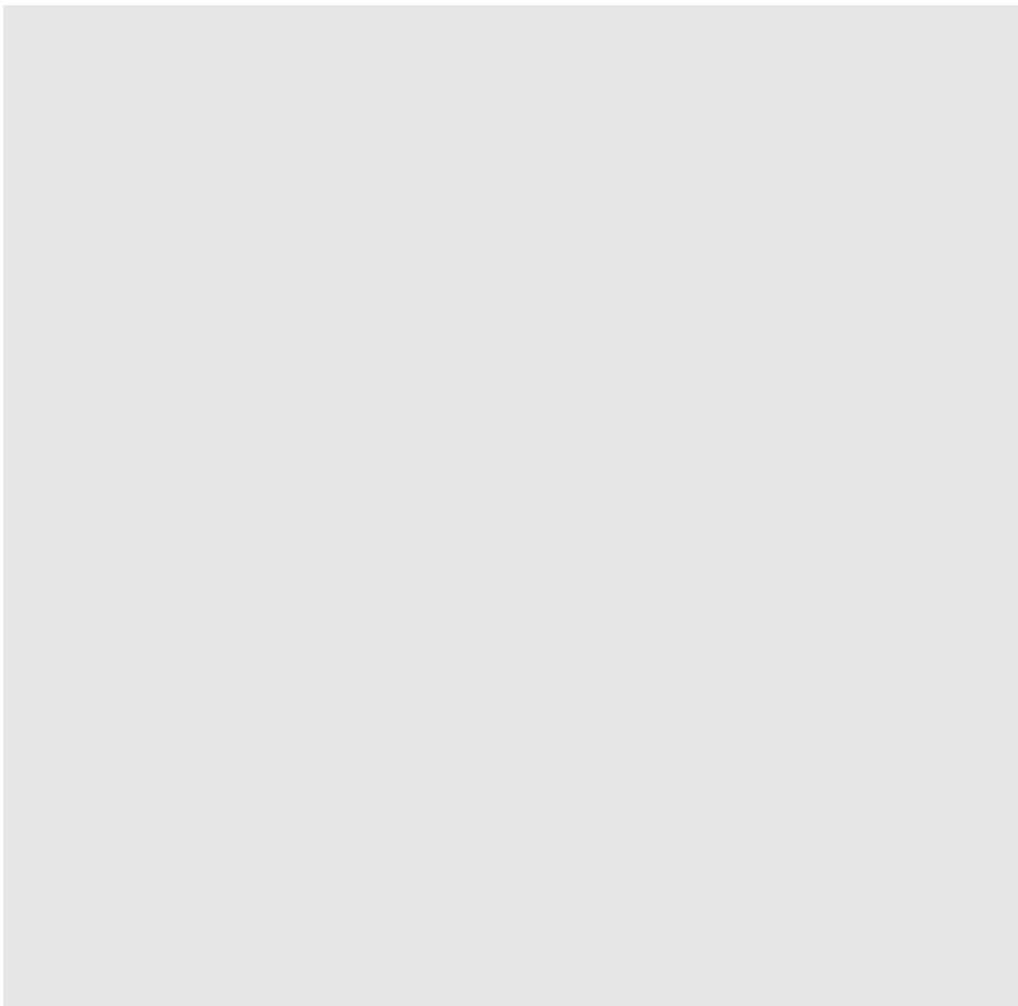
(author's own 2016)

“Manga puri?! Really make an impression with manga backgrounds and stamps ♥”

*Middle panel: “In 2D [as manga]!! We’re **CENTER STAGE!!**”*

It's not All White

Purikura and Mixed-Race Identity Politics



Promotional materials for purikura machine MY COSME

Among the various aesthetic body modification practices enacted through cosmetics or cosmetic surgery by young women in Japan, several in particular are noteworthy for their virtual replication in purikura machines – these include, but are not limited to: skin lightening and evening of tone, texture; hair color changes, colored eye contacts, alterations to the shape of the face and facial features such as the nose or mouth, as well as modifying the eyelid to add a crease on the upper lid. In academic discussions of these trends, they are usually understood to be problematic, often as an issue of globalization, whereby colonial entities have shifted local beauty standards. At times, they are portrayed as being indicative of a desire on the part of Japanese women to either be or appear to be Caucasian. However, to only judge Japanese women as victims swayed by colonial forces based on their aesthetic choices and preferences doesn't consider their agency, or the ways that these aesthetic qualities are read outside of Western contexts. An important distinction to make is that many of these qualities, such as preferred eyelid shape and lighter skin, have local historical significance and specificity that cannot necessarily be summarized merely by globalization. Similarly, other localized beauty standards that do not exist in the West also take precedence - this chapter will include an in-depth discussion of some of these standards in an attempt to better understand the nuances of the value derived from beauty practices by purikura users. Building off of previous chapters, I will also discuss the complicated relationship between fashion magazines, their models and their readership in the context of the "*hafu boom*", "*hafu-gao*" and "*hafu-make*", the popularity and commonplace practice of emulating *hafu* (from the English "half"), or mixed-race individuals through beauty practices. Through a discussion of tutorials from magazines, online publications and makeup artists, as well as products designed for the explicit purpose of emulating what is seen as ethnic difference, this chapter will further examine the cultural value of glamor through ethnic performativity, problematizing the notion that Japanese women seek to be, or appear, Caucasian. In this chapter, I will explore a variety of ways in which ethnicity, beauty practices and gender performance have crossed paths and continue to evolve, as well as the role purikura plays in this process.

BEAUTY PRACTICES

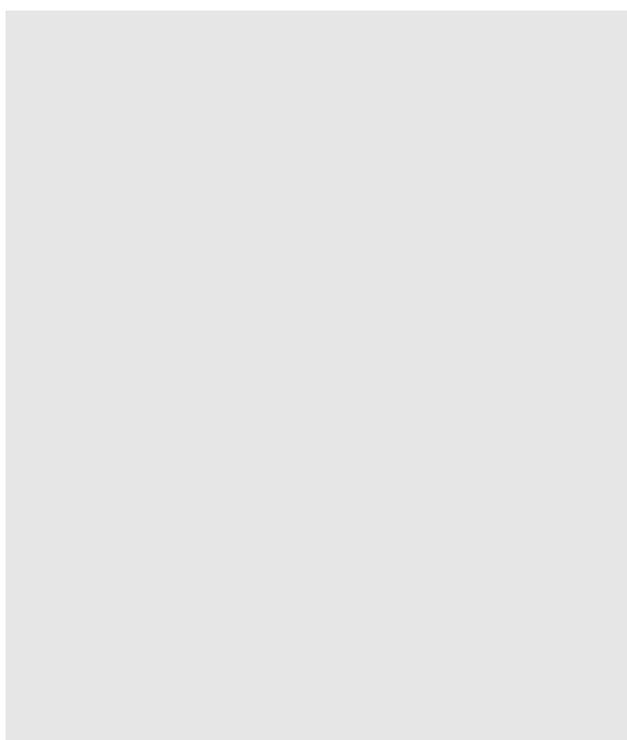
Purikura machines function as part of larger aesthetic practices for Japanese women - they both mimic and enhance these practices, as well as the ways in which users utilize makeup to follow beauty trends, and are thus somewhat reflective of larger beauty standards both among this group and in Japan as a whole. For some, these beauty standards are further reflective of globalization, whereby “the rapid flows of capital, people, goods, images, and ideologies” (Inda and Rosaldo 2002, 4) have created vast interconnections across the globe, while negotiating the pervasive influence of larger hegemonic Western beauty ideals. Much of the previous academic work discussing beauty standards and practices in Japan and other parts of East Asia that has come from the West portrays these practices as being either influenced or overrun by these globalizing forces, particularly stressing a global standard of white beauty, (Kawazoe 2004; 1997; Kaw 1993; Gilman 1999; Hua 2013) whereby “looking beautiful is interpreted, very frequently, as looking Western” (Kristof 1987)⁸. Laura Miller notes in her research in Japan that, among those who are critical of beauty practices, many of these aesthetic choices are “seen as obvious evidence of the dominance of a Euroamerican beauty ideal” (Miller 2006:116) especially those involving any augmentation or exaggeration of the eye, a common element of purikura beauty practices. An example of one such beauty practice that features in purikura machines is the supplementation of double eyelids - Miller notes that:

"Critics of double-eyelid beauty work are eager to dismiss the claims of Japanese women themselves, who say they are not creating the extra fold in order to appear Western. Scholars insist that these women have already internalized the white-woman beauty ideal and that, although they say they

⁸ While this quote is taken from a piece of writing on beauty standards in China, the author further extrapolates their analysis to include Japan.

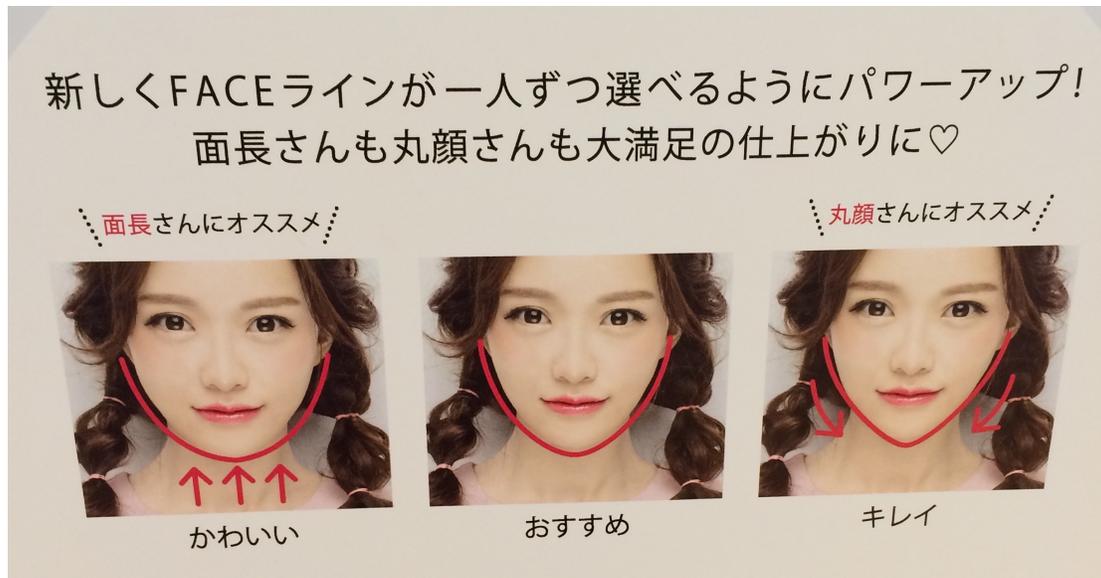
like the bigger eye shape because it looks “more awake” or “younger,” what they really mean is that it looks more “white.” (Miller 2006:119)

Contrary to these criticisms, my experience of beauty practices in the field revealed distinctly local preferences - significantly, the general makeup styles that were popular during my fieldwork were different from the locations whose styles I was more familiar with (the UK and US) - the highly specified makeup trends of both places resulted in uniquely differentiated looks, and as such, “the meanings of beauty practices need to be analyzed in different personal, national and international settings.” (Hua 2013, 204)



Gradient Lip

Putting aside subcultural styles momentarily, the general trend in Japan at the time of my fieldwork was to have a smaller mouth – the trend in 2016 was gradient lips, which used layers of increasingly lighter lipstick spreading from the middle of the mouth out to edges made blank with foundation, creating the illusion of much smaller lips, somewhat mimicking the look of a feudal princess or geisha. Contrastingly, in the west at the time, the look was overdrawn lips, where lip liner and lipstick are applied outside the normal bounds of one’s mouth to create the effect of a much larger pout, often with rigorous use of lip plumpers or even surgical fillers and injections.

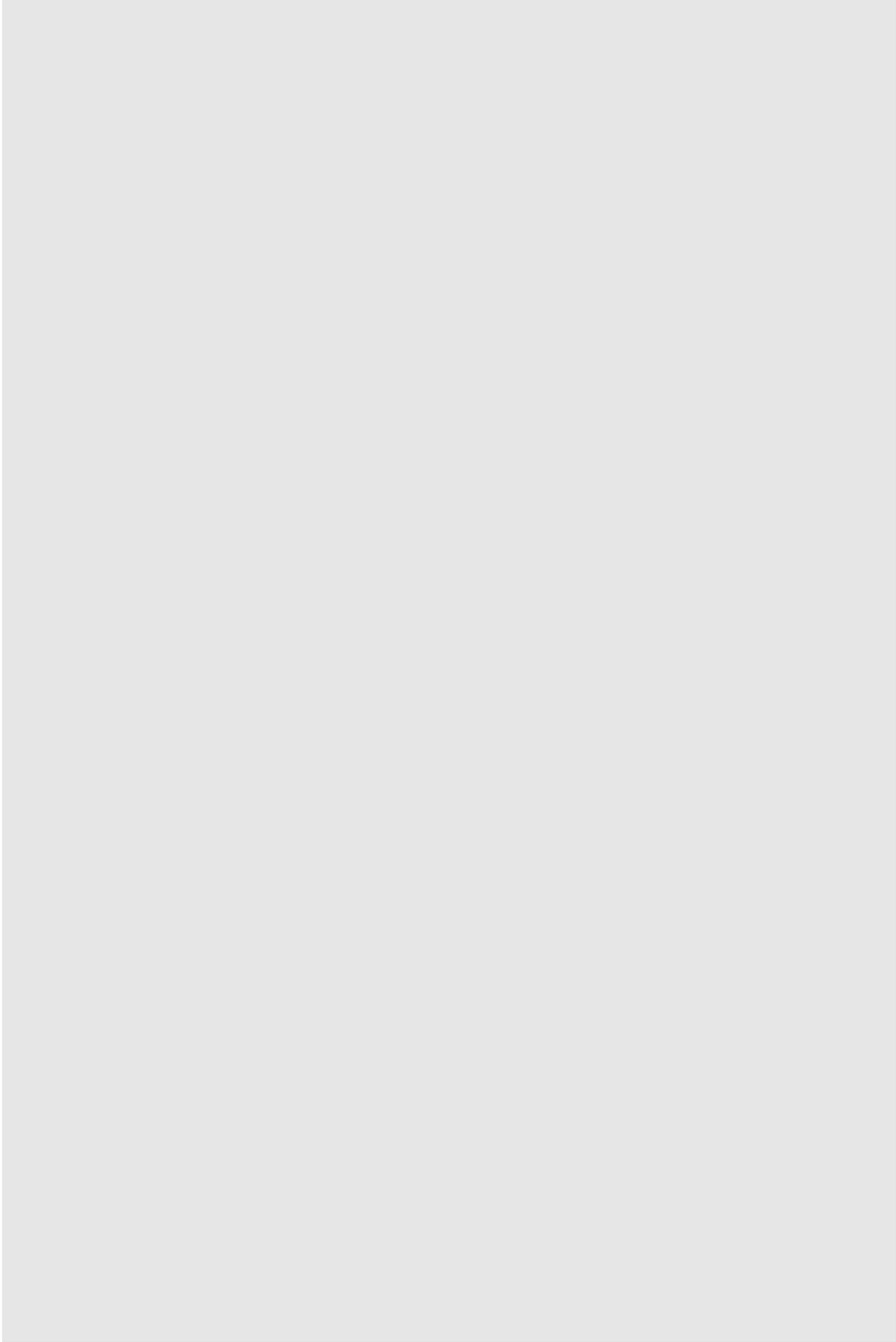


Recommended face shapes (“face line”) for those with round (*maru gao*) and oval (*omonaga*) faces, from the KATY2 purikura machine (photograph author’s own 2016)

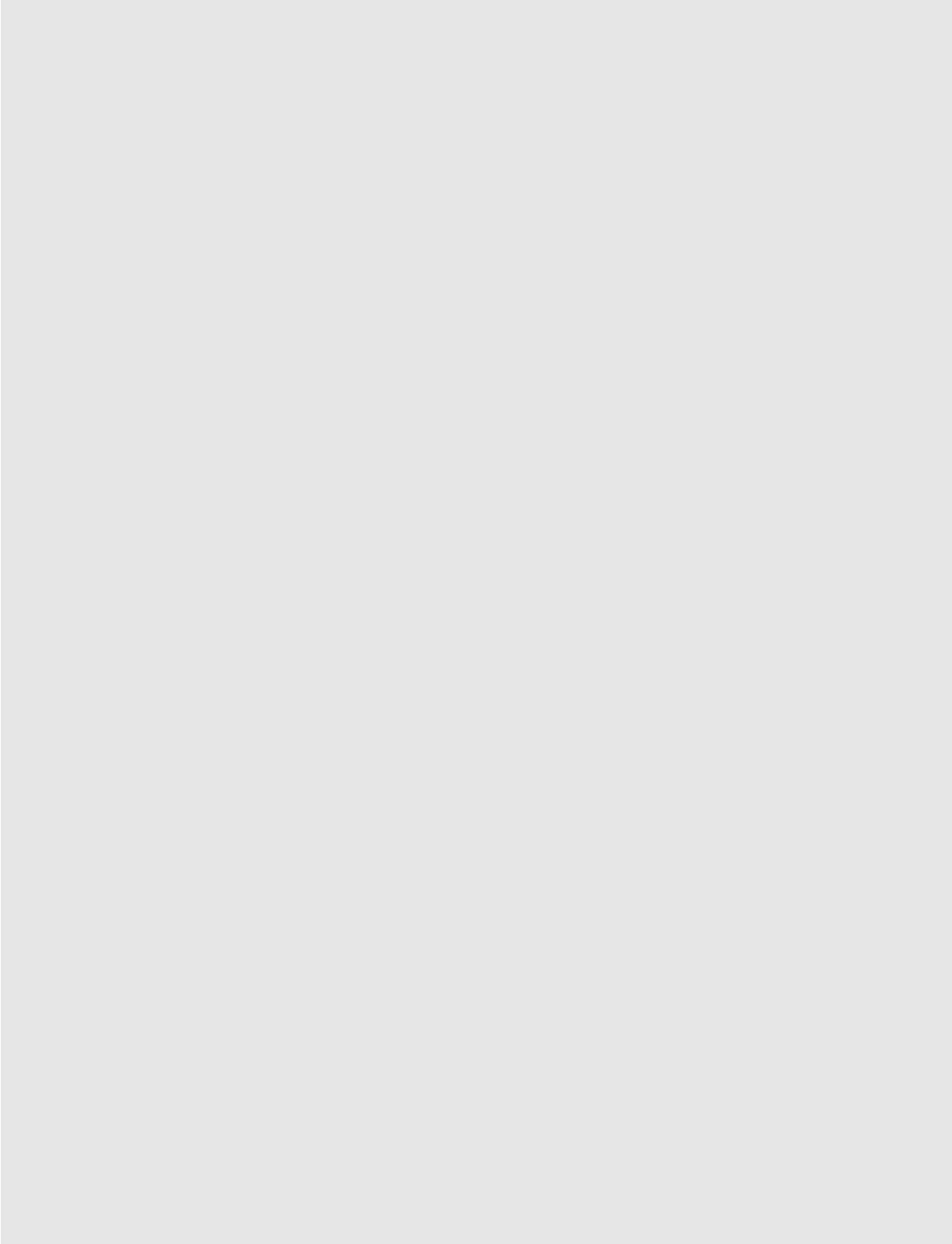
Makeup trends also differed in terms of the preferred face shapes available - whether that applies to chins or noses, the standards sought by my participants were rarely the same as what I was familiar with in the west. At the time, contouring was particularly popular in the UK and the United States, where various shades of brown and beige makeup are used to create areas of contrast on the nose, cheeks and chin to create the effect of depth and shadow, creating the illusion of sharper or more defined noses and cheekbones, or ‘strengthening’ a weak chin. Whereas in Japan, what was popular was a ‘v’ shaped chin and a “small” face. To achieve these, a variety of means were available, but were often not created through makeup – usually the products that were used were massaging tools or face “shaping” products that claimed to reduce or change the size of the face permanently, though results were not verifiable. Surgery is an option to change the shape of ones’ *face line*, however, none of the women that I worked with had undergone any procedures, nor seemed to feel it was a necessity.

The beauty practice most often understood to be a symptom of a globalized shift towards a “wretched imitation” (Mercer 1990:247, as cited in Miller 2006:122) of the hegemonic Western ideal, is that of eyelid surgery. This is often understood as a form of “deracialization”, whereby “the Japanese woman paying for the face job has had a race change ... She has altered her appearance until she appears to be white” (Halberstam

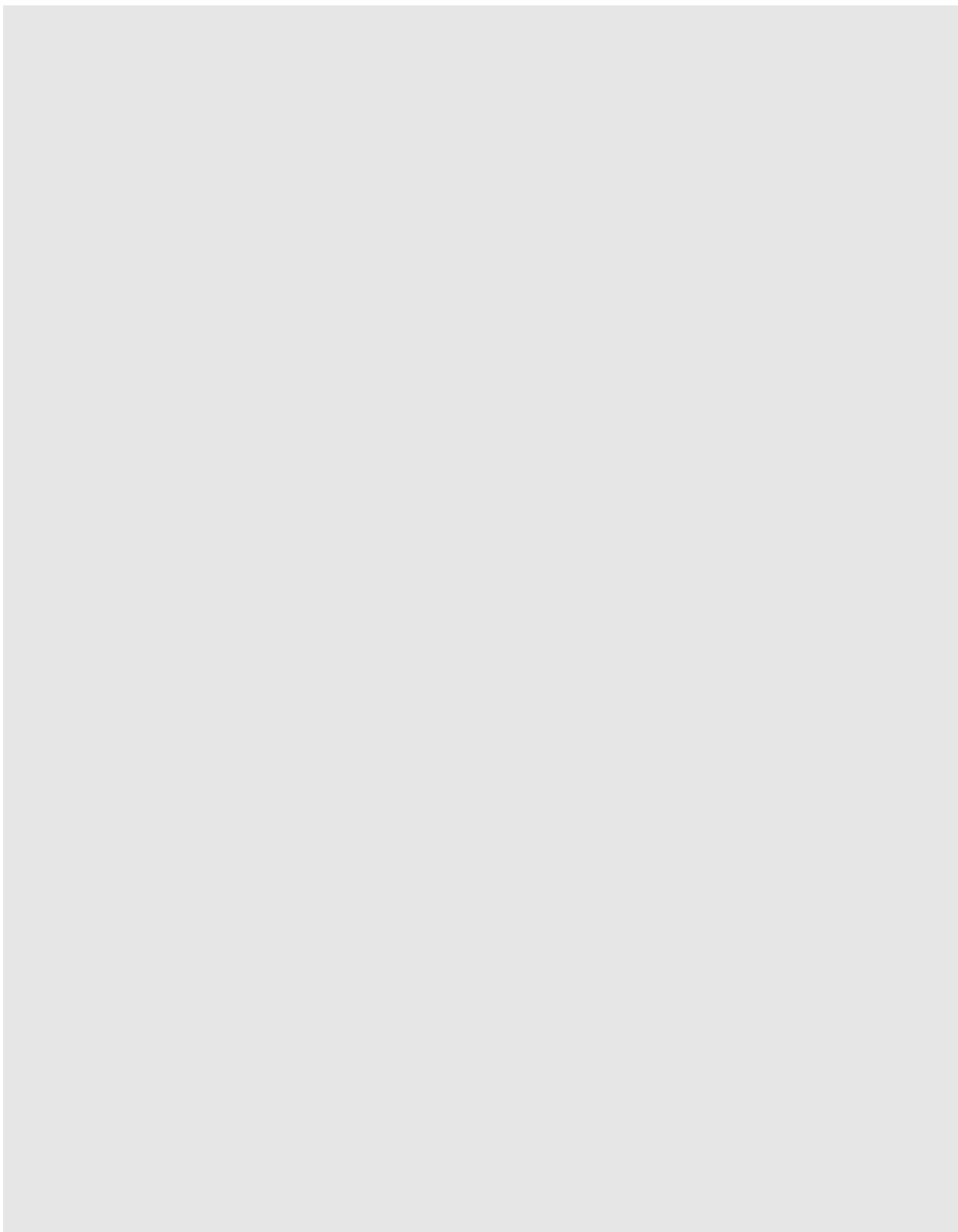
1999, 131). “Double eyelid surgery” is the more colloquial name for Blepharoplasty, which is a procedure to lift the skin around the upper eyelids. While this is often done to reduce the appearance of loose or sagging skin caused by aging regardless of ethnicity, it is also a procedure done to create the effect of a ‘double eyelid’, or a crease in the upper lid, to reduce the appearance of a ‘monolid’, a physical characteristic common among Asian populations. The procedure may take around twenty minutes in an outpatient clinic, requiring either a small (2.3mm) incision to be made and re-sewn, or an alternative 10-minute process involving a non-cutting suturing method where a non-absorbable thread is sewn into the lid, creating a crease. This procedure is often classified as a form of *puchi seiki*, or “petite surgery”, (*Mainichi Shimbun* 2003), where it is comparatively understood to be “trivial and not extreme, and ... therefore more acceptable than ‘real’ surgery”. (L. Miller 2006, 119) More commonly in Japan, particularly among the women that I worked with, the same effect can also be made by using a broad range of cosmetic products to temporarily create a small crease, usually employing a minuscule disposable sticker or glue similar to that used for false eyelashes, applied with a small plastic wand designed for the purpose. Notably, along with the *dekame* enlargement of the eye more generally, purikura machines can also digitally create a double eyelid for those photographed.



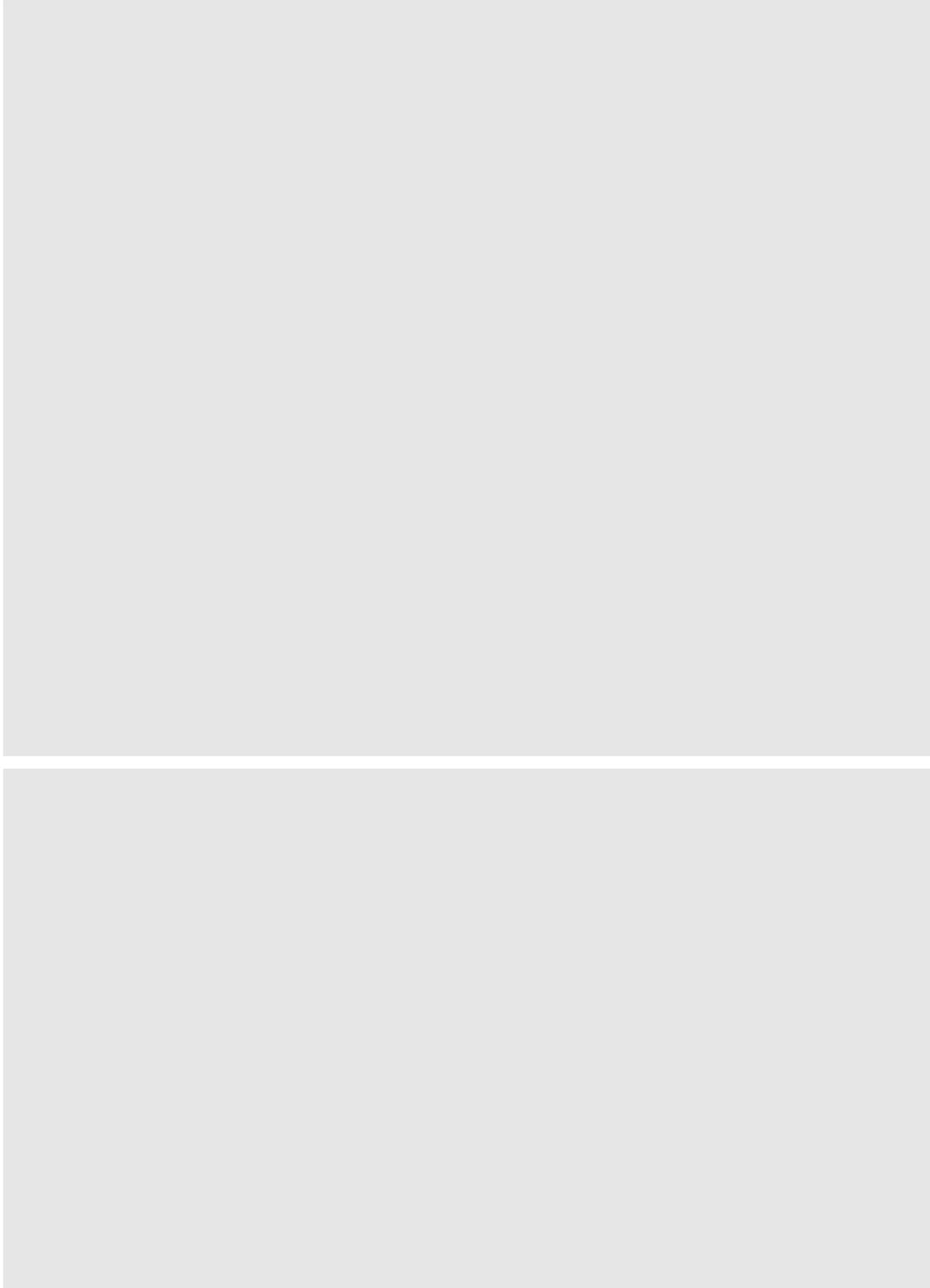
Article stressing the importance of big eyes (dekame) and a small face (kogao) (ViVi Magazine Nov 2013)



Ad for a nostril-reduction device Hana Puchi (Petite Nose) which advertises its utility in
“hafu-face transformation makeup”

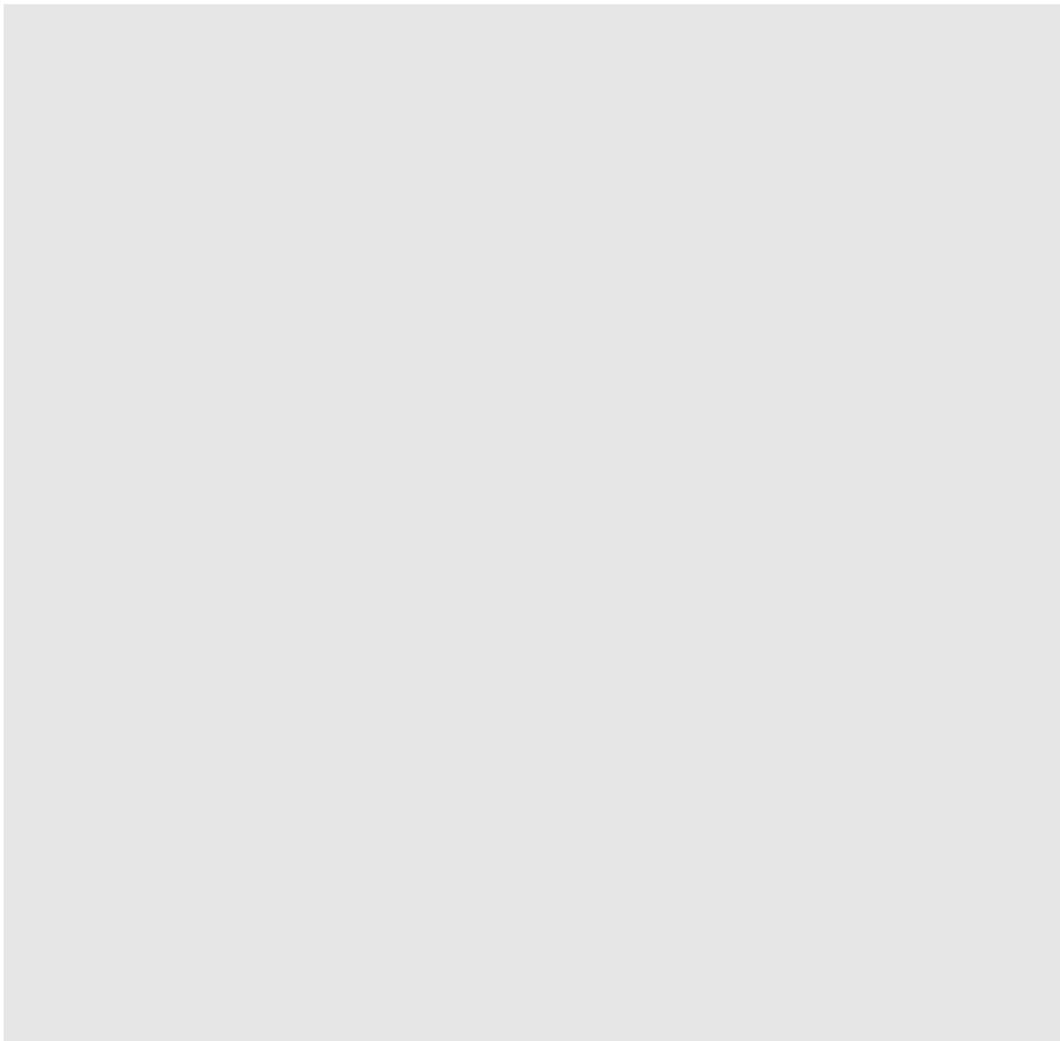


Advertisement for Girl's Maker brand double eyelid tape



Promotional materials for purikura machine CAOLABO featuring hafu model Ayana Shibata, which allows users to change their eye color, as well as add tear bags and a double eyelid. The name is a play on words – kao (face) + labo (laboratory). This is furthermore a reference to ‘*collabo*’, from the English ‘collaboration’, implying that the use of the machine to alter one’s face is a collaborative endeavor

This surgery was introduced in Japan in 1896, when the procedure was first performed by the surgeon Mikamo on a woman who had only one double eyelid to create a sense of symmetry (Sergile and Obata 1997; Shirakabe 1990) - rather than attempting to recreate a Western beauty ideal made flesh, Mikamo strove to “maintain a Japanese-style double eyelid, one that resembled the portion of the population that naturally had this feature.” (Miller 2006, 118) As in Miller (L. Miller 2004a), among those I worked with, it was seen as unattractive or “weird-looking” to remove as much fat from the upper lid as would be in what was considered a ‘Western’ eye.



‘tear bag’ tutorial from Shiseido (2021)

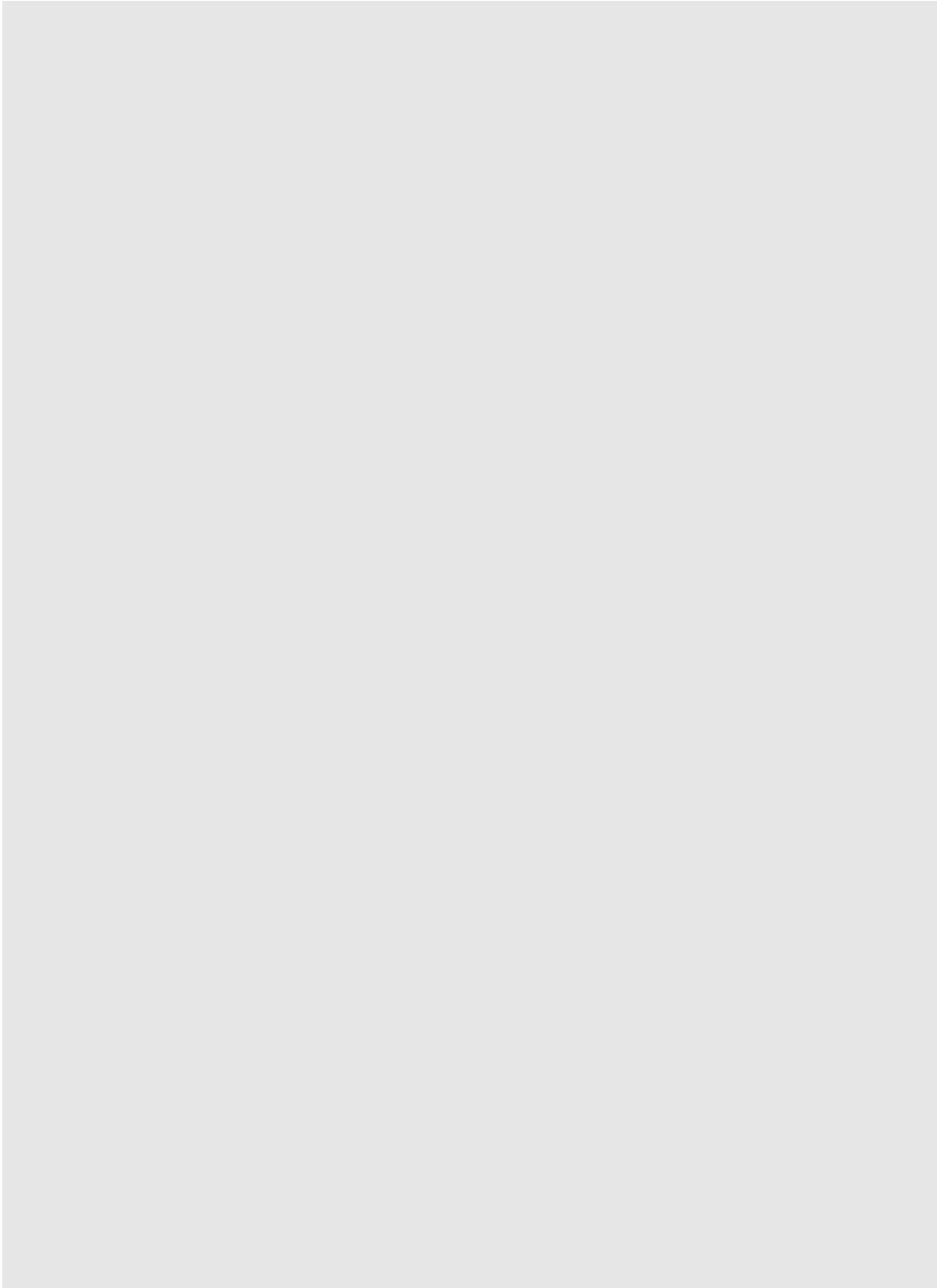
Similarly, at the time of my research, the preferred eye shape among those I worked with also focused on the under-eye area, with a preference for a protruding bulge called

a 'tear bag' (涙袋, *namida bukuro*). This puffy look would have been considered unattractive in the West - in fact, it would be the exact look many women use a significant amount of makeup to distract from, if this were the natural state of a person's face. However, I was to find that the intended look covered up dark circles under one's eyes while either accentuating or adding wholesale a pronounced bump on the bottom lid using either eye shadow for shading or (less regularly) a product such as capsaicin or other irritants to puff the area.

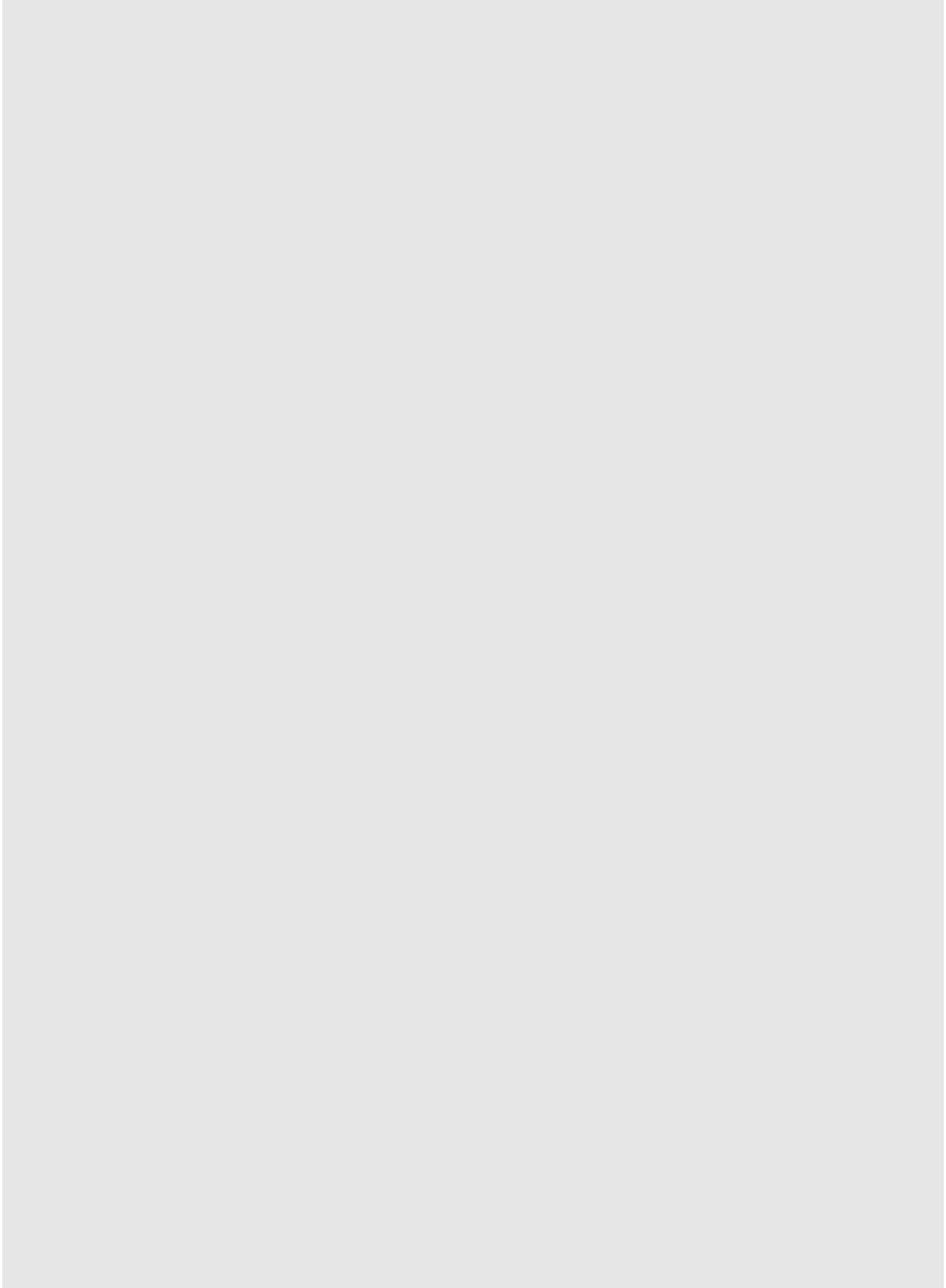
As described to me by several interlocutors, the appeal of this look was that it may give any number of impressions - the puffiness gave the illusion of larger eyeballs, while also seeming either to mimic the look of scrunched eyes as when smiling, to create an impression that one has just been crying (hence, 'tear' bags), or even to appear somewhat forlorn, depending on who I asked. The latter category was most popular among those who subscribed - both literally and figuratively - to the looks popularized by the fashion magazine *Larme* (*rarumu*; from the French word for tears). Founded in 2012, the magazine consists of a shifting but largely recognizable group of substyles of fashion for young women, variously venn-diagrammed as offshoots of *gosurori*, *gyaru* and 'girly'.

More than a few makeup fads and substyles have utilized tear bags in their looks, from 'hangover makeup' (*futsukayoi-make*) which as the name implies focuses on trying to look like you're hungover, using blush to create slight redness around the eye and gelling the hair to look like it's wet or unwashed, to *yami kawaii* ('sick cute') which is in many ways an intensified version of the previous but with blown out, neon blush all the way from the eye outwards. Other variations on this style exist, such as *cult party kei*, *ketsuiro-make* (blood-colored or ruddy), *ennui-make* (*an'nui*, from the French) and *igari-make*, named for Shinobu Igari, the makeup artist who popularized it. Early *Larme* makeup looks focused on creating a deep tear bag to accentuate a sparkling center, sometimes even incorporating small plastic gemstones, creating the effect of glistening, dewy tears as seen on *shōjo* heroines or *bisque* dolls, as discussed in chapter 3. When creating these looks, "the Japanese girl or woman is probably not thinking of Britney

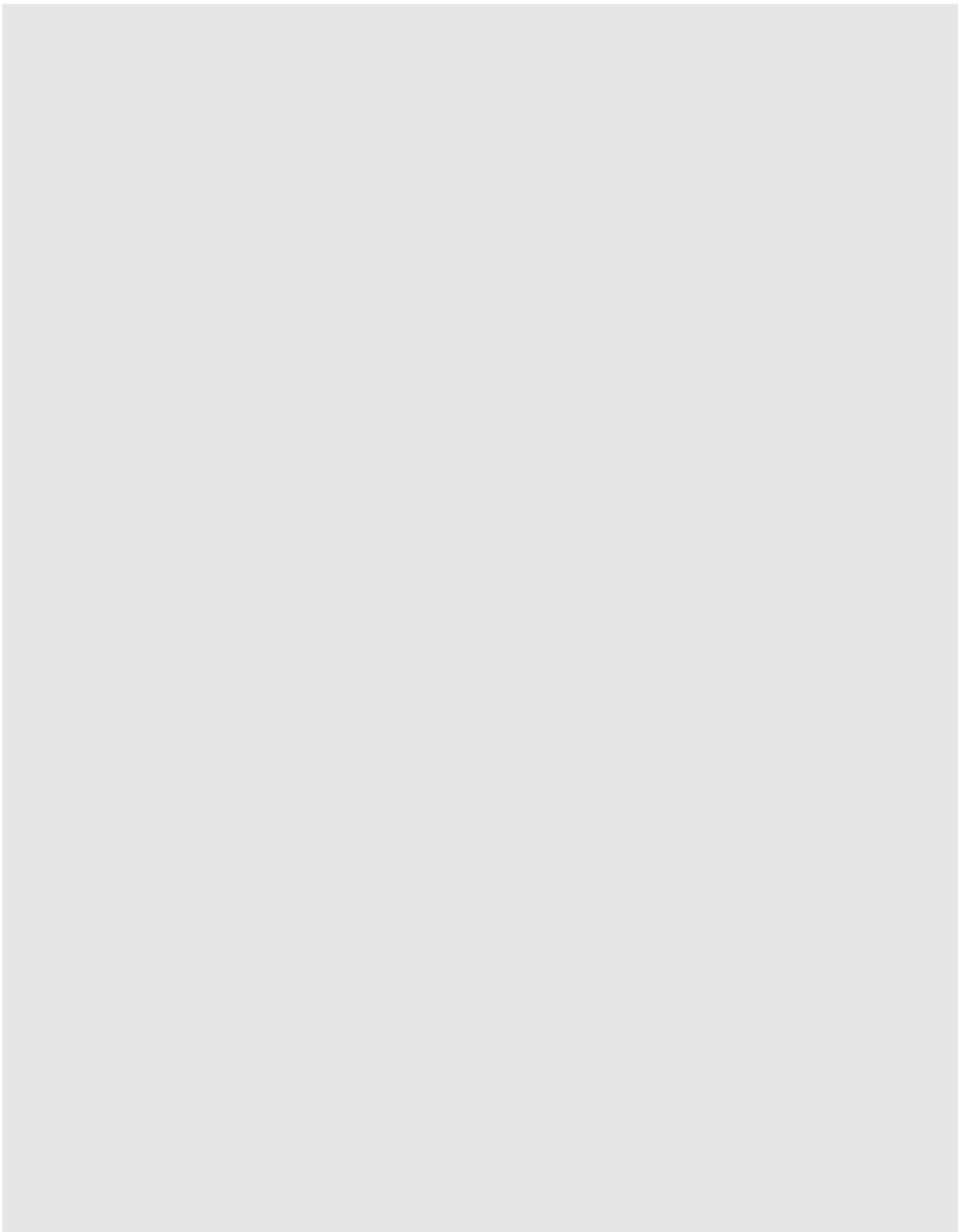
Spears, but of the ... enormous saccharine pools of emotion found on her favorite manga characters” (Miller 2006, 121).



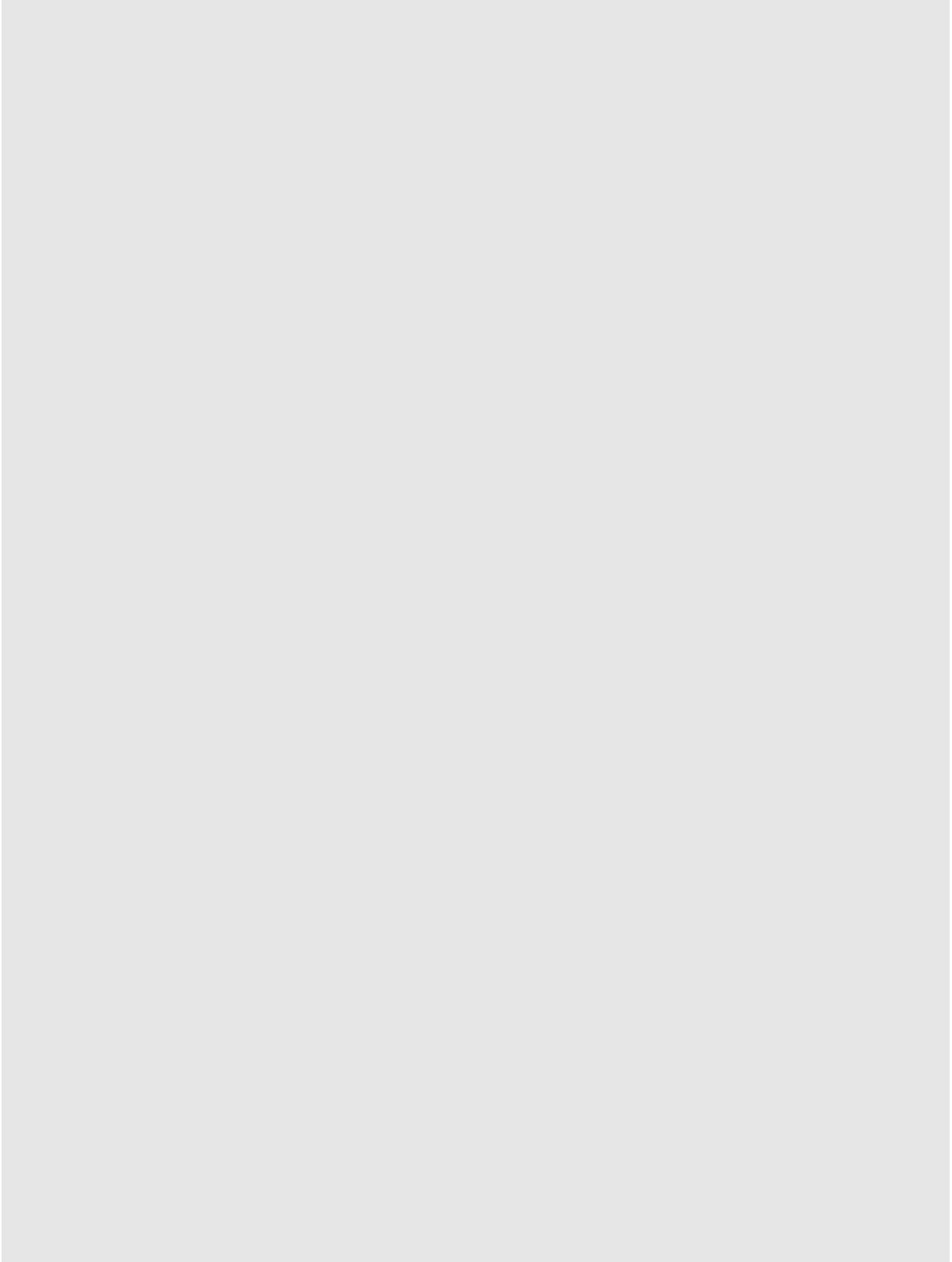
Hafu model Erica sporting an ennui-make look (ViVi Magazine April 2020)



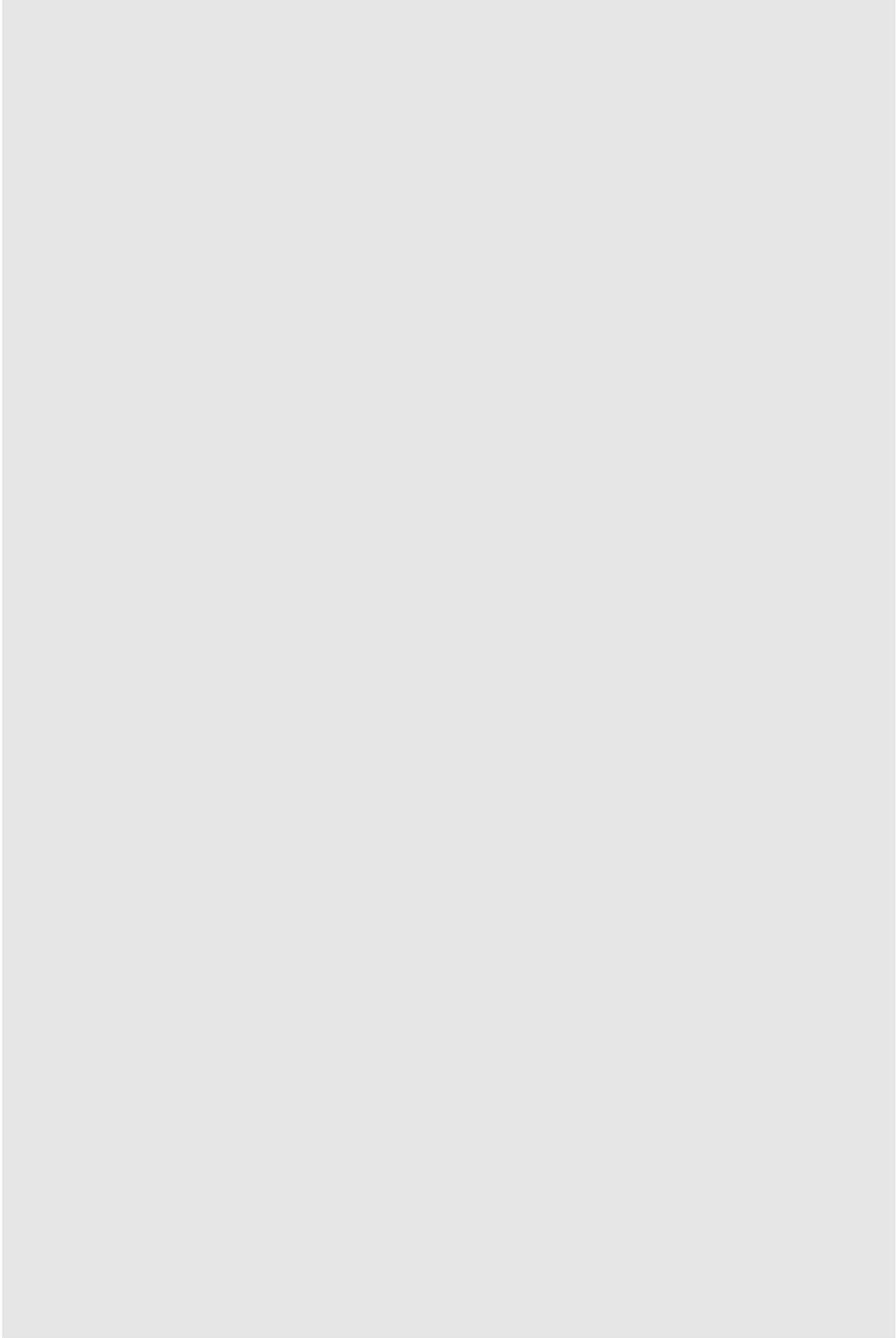
Model Remi Sakamoto in a hangover-make look (Jelly Magazine, June 2015)



LARME magazine #12 (2014), featuring models Risa Nakamura (purimo for purikura machine USAGI) and Mai Shiraishi. This issue is also notable for its photo feature by HIROMIX, a photographer highlighted in chapter 1 as important in the female-led photography movement of the 1990s that coincided with the beginnings of purikura

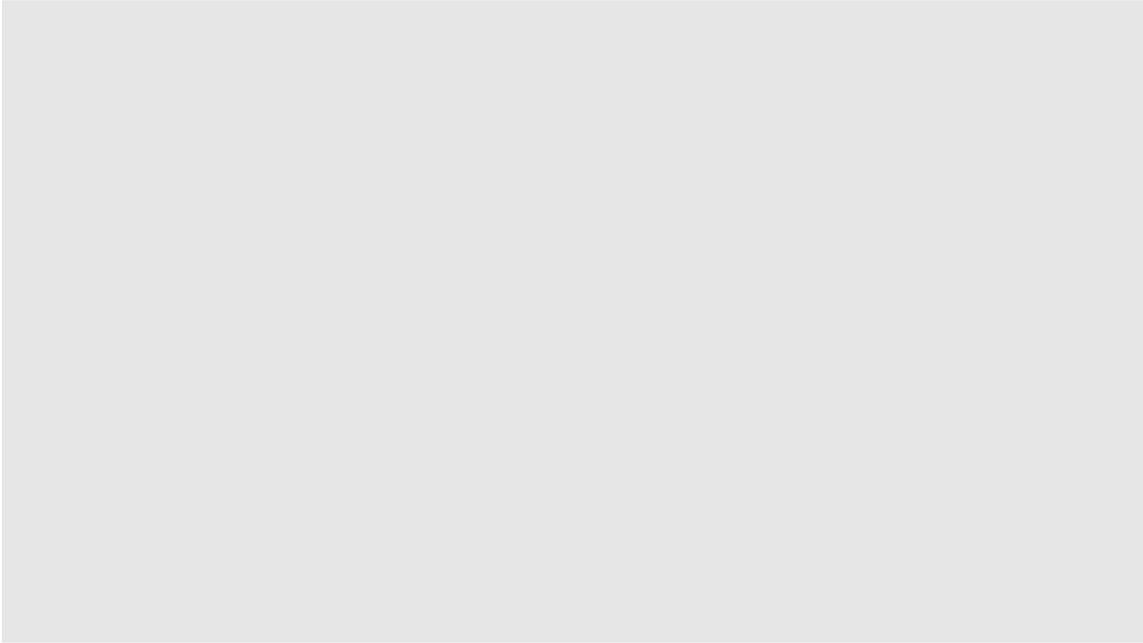


Hafu model and purimo Nana Kato for LARME #29 (2017)



Street snap featuring Chun in cult party kei (Tokyo Fashion 2013)

COLOR CONTEXTS



User interface for purikura machine MY COSME featuring hafu model Nana Kato, which recreates the “piling on” of makeup discussed in chapters 3 and 5, as well as virtual *karakon*

As discussed previously in chapter 3, the sartorial enlargement of eyes is a widespread beauty practice among young women in Japan, particularly within purikura machines. This manifests in a variety of ways, from the use of eyeshadow and false lashes to the enlargement of the iris and pupil themselves with the use of colored eye contacts, or *karakon*, which can also be utilized to change the color of the eyes either naturalistically or to fantastic extremes, with impossible hues and/or sparkling stars. Along with their standard eye enlargement capabilities, *karakon* are also present within purikura machines, whereby users can drag-and-drop virtual contacts onto their photographs to change the color of their eyes from one shot to the next. During my fieldwork, *karakon* were ubiquitous - they could be found at any pharmacy, convenience store or shopping center, and were available in a range of prescriptions for those that required it. They were so common that they were seen as unremarkable to everyone I worked with - at most, a novel accessory. Beyond their application for more extreme forms of costumery such as cosplay, *karakon* are readily available as an option for more mundane daily aesthetic practices, not unlike eyeshadow or mascara.

Given that *karakon* (color contacts) feature so prominently in the beauty practices enacted in and around purikura, it is worth discussing the analysis of color contacts made by cultural studies professor Susan Bordo in her 1990 paper "*Material Girl*": *The Effacements of Postmodern Culture*, where she approached the color contact lenses of the 1980s from a body studies perspective. Within her piece, she describes an episode of the Phil Donahue show from 1988 where viewers and the live studio audience were shown a commercial for colored contact lenses before being posed the question - "is this ad racist?" (Bordo 1990, 657). The ad in question explicitly promoted its product as being a curative for brown eyes, whereby DuraSoft wearers might "get brown eyes a second look" (ibid). The explicit framing of brown eyes as unattractive was the impetus for the discussion, though the particular wording of the ad served merely as a jumping off point for the audience to discuss the political correctness of color contacts themselves. The audience of this particular episode - among a spread of both Caucasian women and women of color - almost unanimously agreed that color contacts served as a form of harmless fun, no different to them than makeup or doing their hair. (ibid 658) For Bordo, however, color contacts exist as part of a larger set of normative beauty practices expected of women of color - particularly Black women - that seek to deracialize Black bodies, "instructing the female body in a pedagogy of personal inadequacy and lack" (ibid 660).

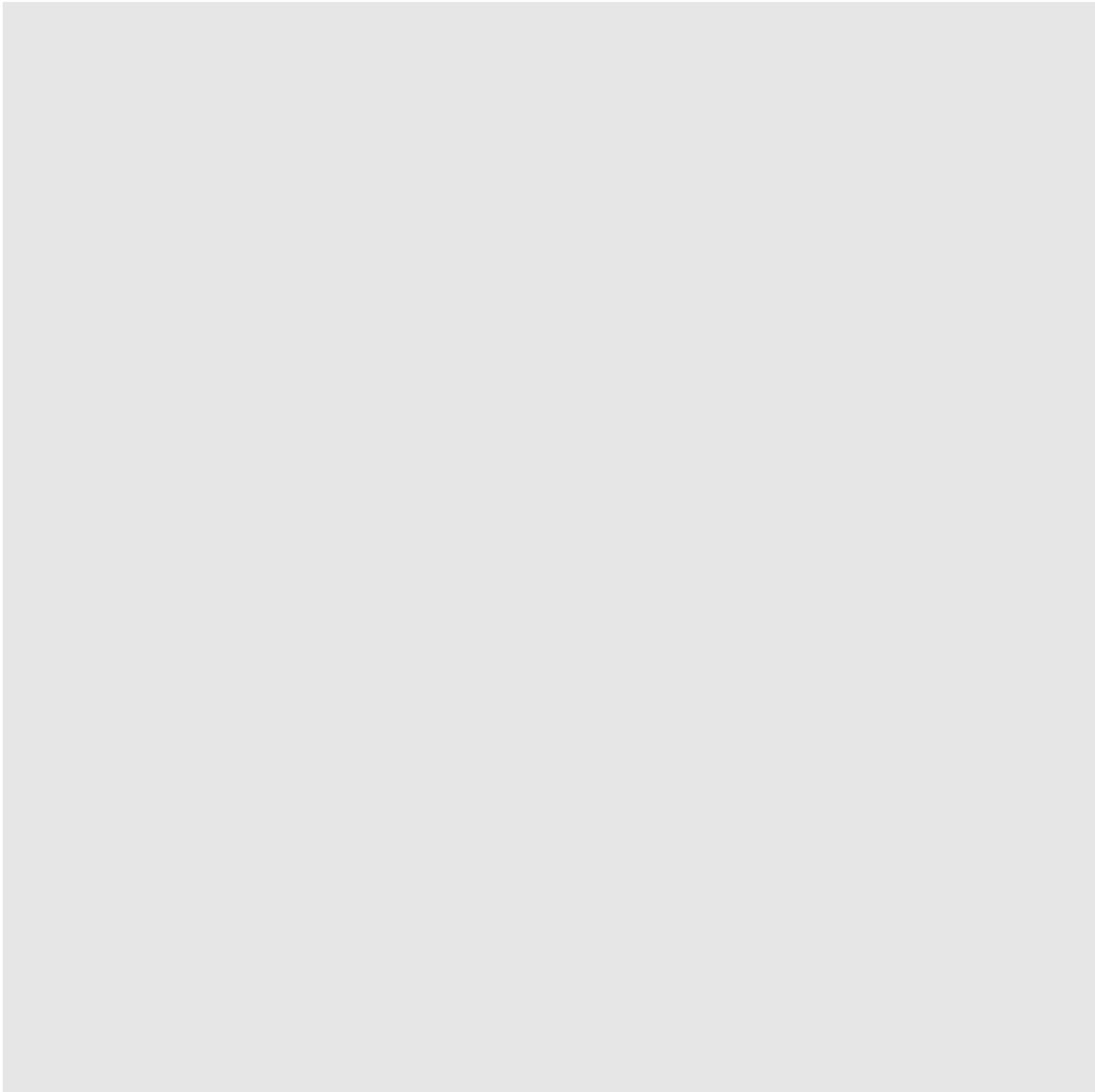
Nearly three decades later, the conversation surrounding color contacts is further complicated by their proliferation and use as an everyday product in Japan. To follow Bordo's logic, it is possible to view *karakon* as further perpetuating the "tyranny of fashion" (ibid), which is predicated on the inadequacy of female bodies. Certainly, it could even be argued that, within the context of globalization, to change one's eye color is to further assimilate within the Euroamerican, nominally white hegemonic beauty ideal, similar to the social expectations placed on women of color with practices such as hair straightening. However, I believe that both of these arguments are predicated on an uncomplicated understanding of the experience of colored contact wearers the world over. Even for Bordo, who states that the majority of those questioned both on the Phil Donahue show and in her own research, which included women of color, responded that they felt color contacts were "just for fun ... nothing too serious" (ibid 658), in turn

questioning why it “[had] to be a political question” at all (ibid). This was remarkably similar to my own research, where young women seemed merely quizzical when I asked about *karakon*, frequently citing the versatility and pleasure of changing ones’ appearance.

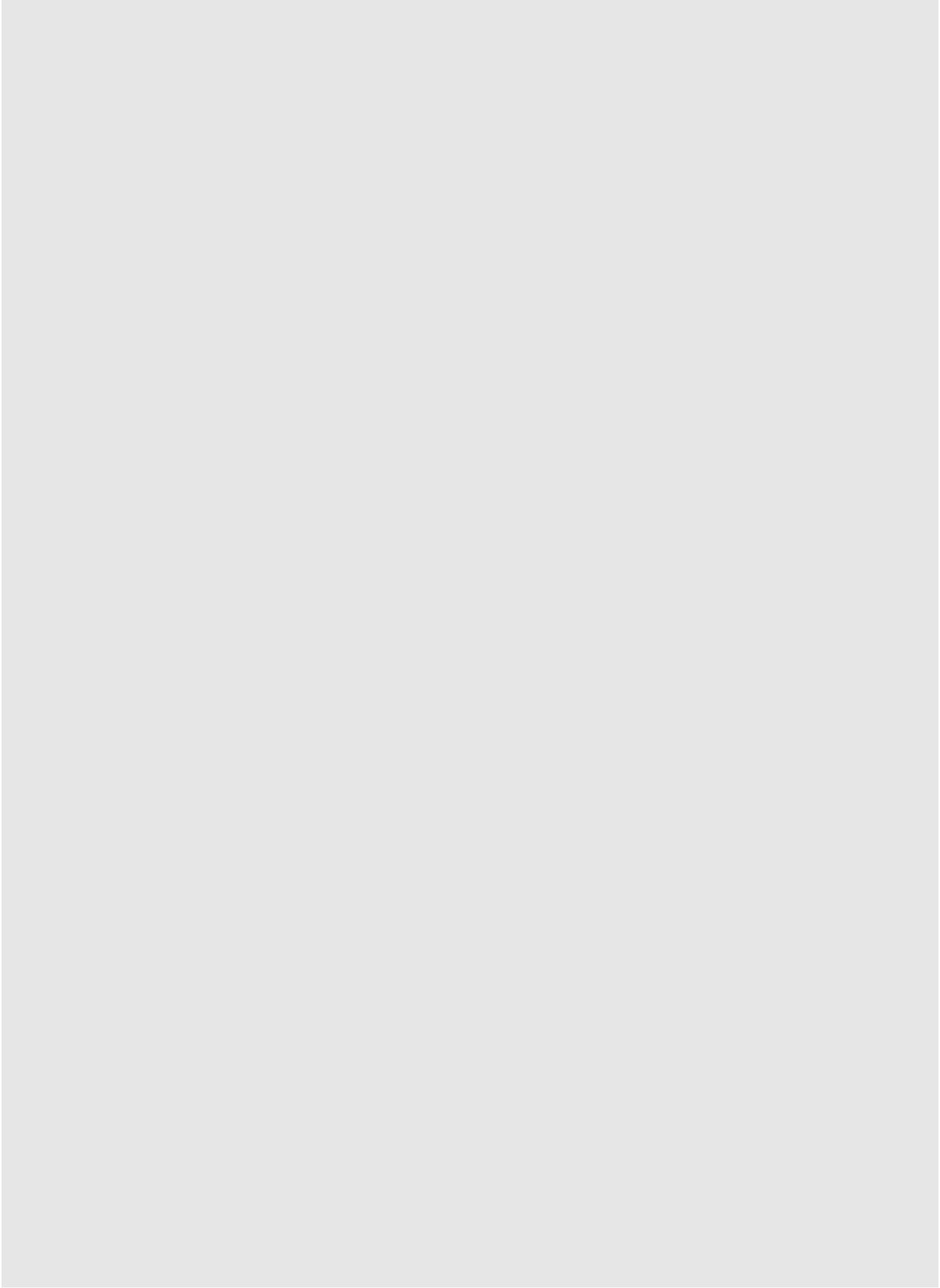
Much like Bordo’s discussants, the young women that I worked with did not find *karakon* to be ‘tyrannical’ – most often they were described to me as being something that was considered negatively by outsiders to *purikura*. Rather than a beauty practice that was expected of them or imposed upon them, it was delineated by detractors as being “too much” or “going too far”, as part of their emphatic beauty practices. *Karakon*, for the young women that I worked with, were considered a means of visually distancing themselves from an older generation, who did not react positively to this dissociation. For Bordo, this notion of beauty practices as “fun, a matter of creative expression” (ibid) only suffices to trivialize and distract women from more important matters, a “whimsical ... supply of endless amusement for woman’s eternally superficial lives” (ibid) when they are understood as politically neutral. Whether Bordo meant this literally or with tongue firmly in cheek, to step back from the overly hyperbolic aspects of her statement, it is important to consider that last point more closely - what of this supposed “political neutrality”, of *karakon* in particular? Rather than rejecting or belittling the assertions of the young women I worked with as “superficial”, I will consider the particular historical and social contexts in which the normalcy of these cosmetic adornments is anything but neutral.

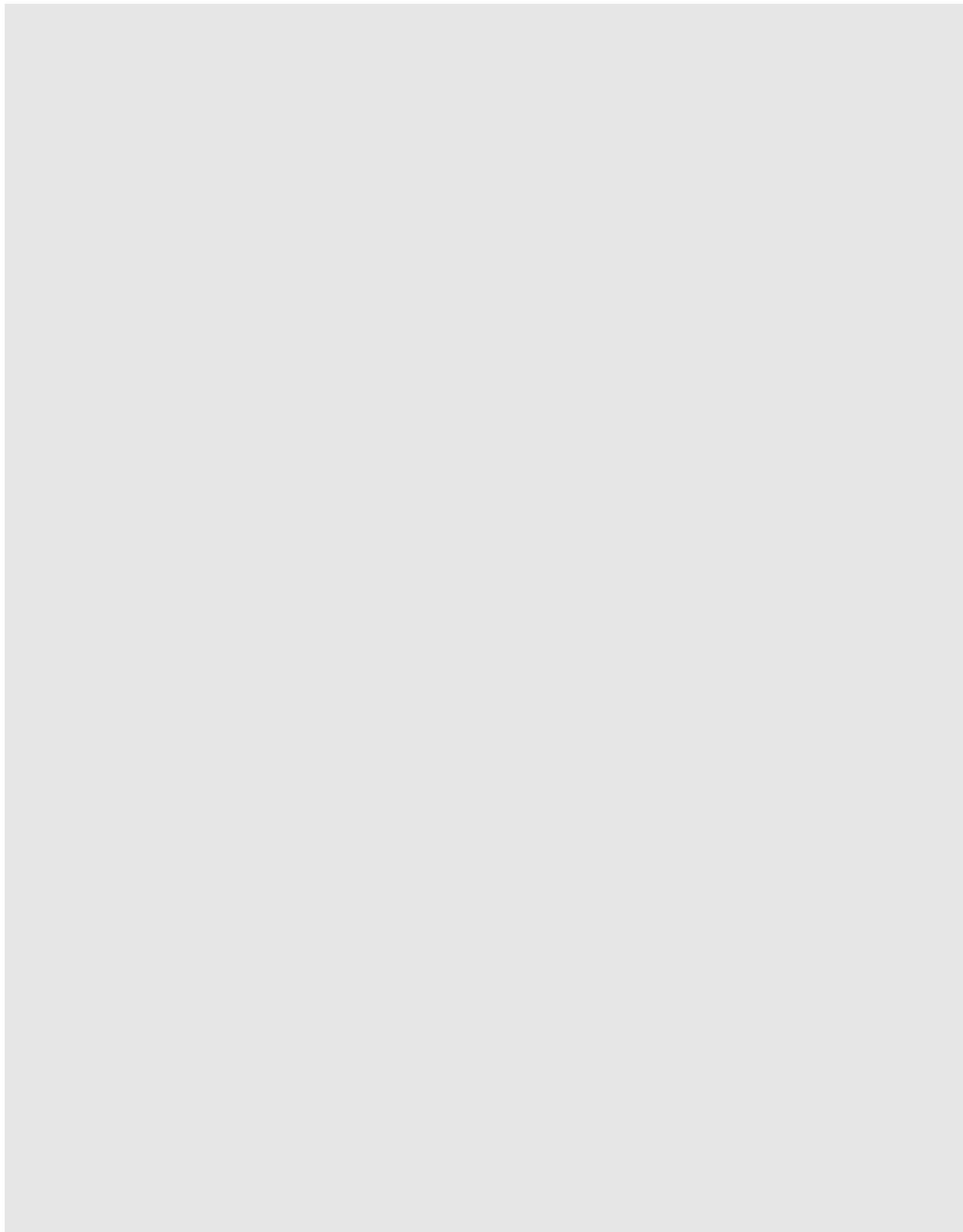
In exploring the notion of colored contacts as a corrective globalizing force to further homogenize beauty standards to a Euroamerican ideal, it is difficult to assert this claim without looking at the broad range of colors and styles available. These often attempt an inhuman splendor rather than an “avid imitation” (L. Miller 2006, 4) of Western import, with an impossible range of shades from cotton candy pastels to lurid neons, or ballooning the iris to enormous proportions, as previously discussed in chapter 3. In many cases, however, *karakon* come in more life-like shades, many of which seek to “enhance” rather than hide eye colors commonly present in the population, unlike the DuraSoft advertising present in Bordo which framed brown eyes as subpar by nature. This style of *karakon* again complicates the notion proposed by Bordo of placing colored

contacts within the realm of “racist body-discriminations” (Bordo 1990, 659) that women of color are subjected to. Bordo’s consideration of color contacts as part of a racially inflected augmentation is not entirely off-base, but is in many respects complicated by notions of performative racial ambiguity, a subject I will explore in greater depth across this chapter.

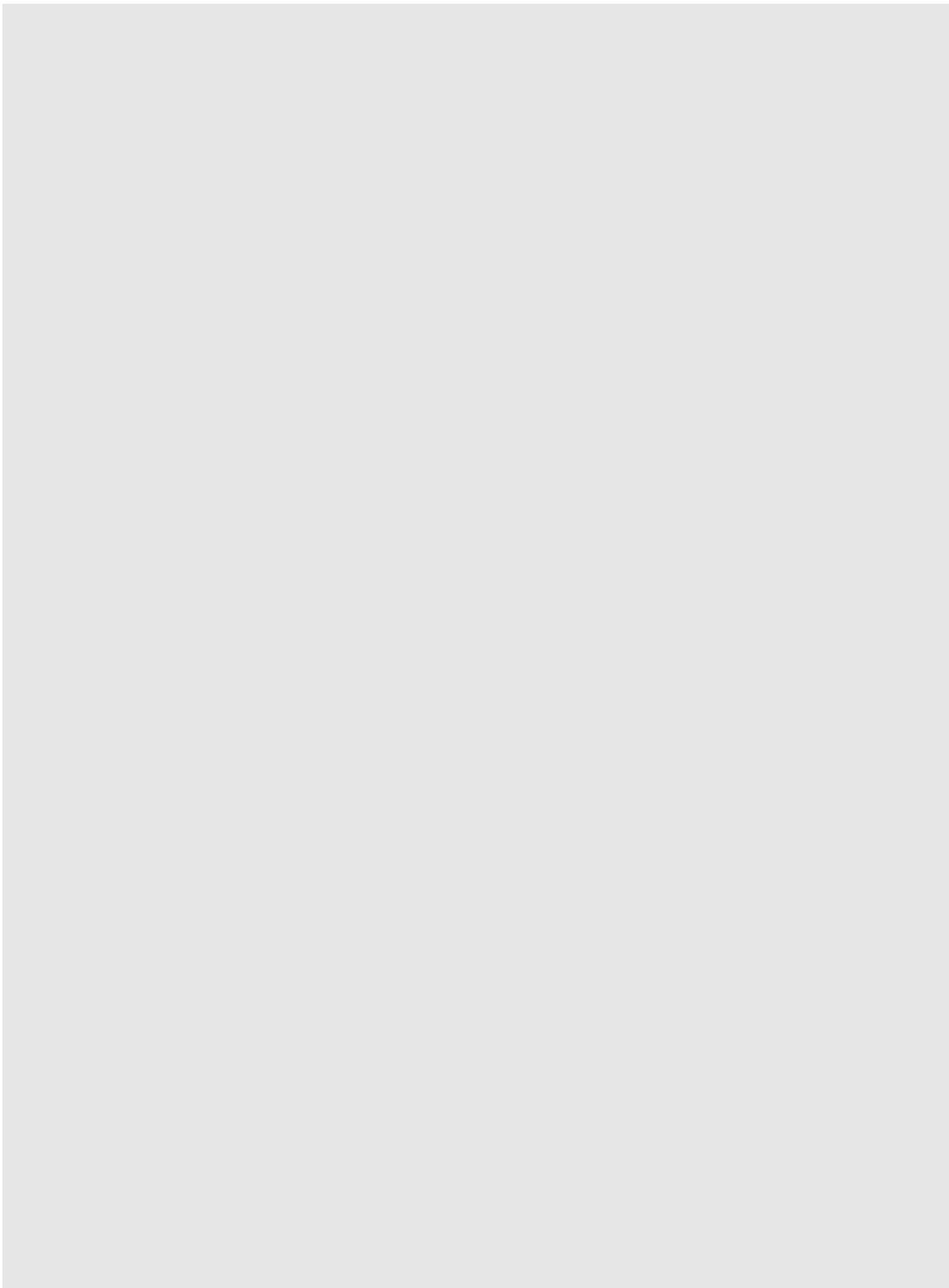


Karakon ads for Flower Eyes featuring mimmam (2014)





Model Haruna Kojima in promotional materials for FAIRY 1day Shimmering karakon, which incorporates holographic materials to create a sparkling effect



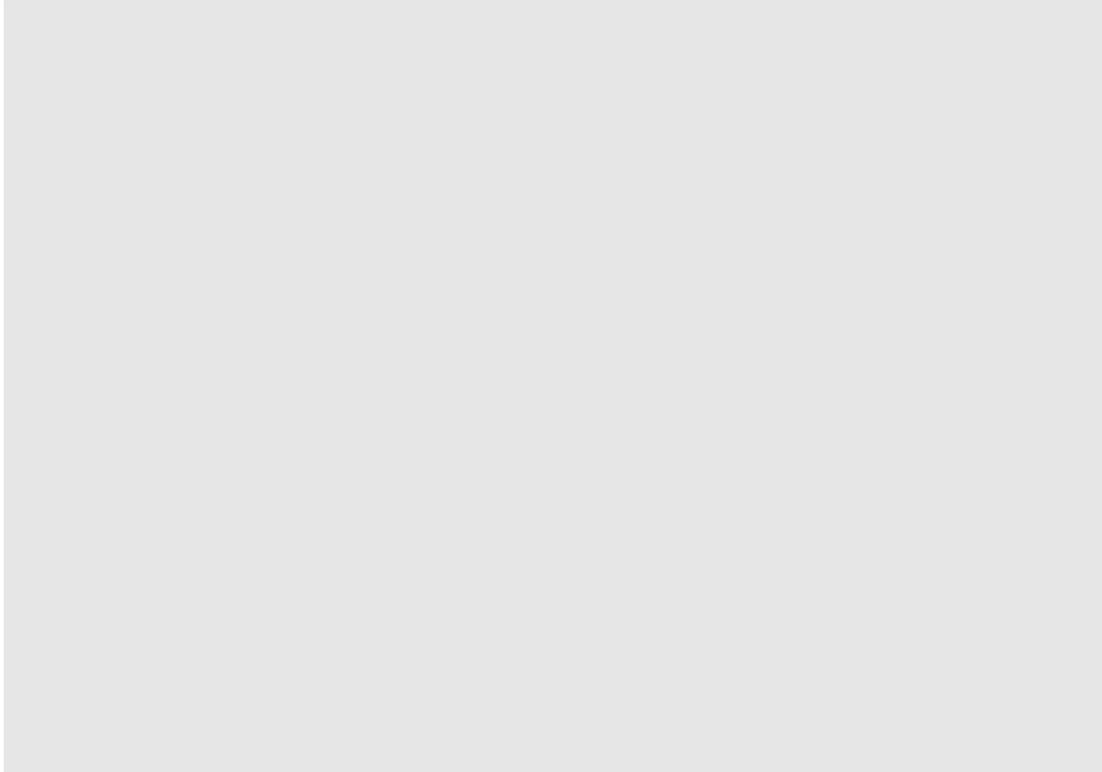
HAFU TIME

In an advertisement for the karakon manufacturer Little Honeyys (above), three young women bedecked in pastel ribbons and gauzy frocks look intently at the camera - the lenses they sport are subtle enough you might not guess they wore any at all, giving the effect of bright, sparkling, brown eyes. The products advertised on the lower half of the page show a range of colors from subdued greys and browns to yellow-flecked auburns and green tinged hazels. These colors are further categorized into three ranges - the 'popular series', the 'natural series' and the 'half series'. Though you could be forgiven for failing to see much of a difference between the various groupings, this latter category is worth noting for its part in the "hafu-make" cosmetic trend, built around the emulation of mixed-race individuals. Among the models present, two out of the three - both Matsumoto Ai, or Maapipi (left) and Fujii Sachi (right) - are *hafu*, from the English "half", the word primarily used to describe mixed-race Japanese individuals.

From the middle of the 19th century onwards, the linguistic history of racial terminology in Japan is complex and often fraught - a further examination of the shifts in terminology for mixed-race individuals in particular allows a broader understanding of social change in Japan over time. The term *hafu* is a more recent form of racial terminology, emerging in the public consciousness in the late 1960s. During the late 1800s, the preferred term was *ainoko*, a derogatory term meaning "child [born] between [parents of different breeds]", emphasizing what was understood as their in-between or hybrid nature, later shifting to *konketsu* or *konketsuji*, meaning mixed blood, or mixed-blood offspring. (Okamura 2017, 43) By the 1960s, the term *hafu* came to the fore, later popularized by the 1970s girl group Golden Half - while the origins of this term remain murky, it has been theorized to come from an abbreviation of half-blood or half-caste (ibid 44), and is "not only the dominant word for people perceived as racially-mixed, but has become a synonym for 'exotic'" (ibid 43).

Hafu models have become a mainstay of print and online media, appearing in everything from magazines and newspapers to television and subway ads, frequently

appearing as purikura face models. Many of the most popular models who work exclusively for specific fashion magazines are hafu, and are promoted as such, performatively leaning into the characterization which further embodies a cosmopolitan, glamorous lifestyle beyond that of your typical fashion model. Tutorials to create the look of a “hafu face” (*hafu-gao*) through *hafu-make* (hafu makeup) have existed since at least the mid 1980s (Okamura 2017, 54), where they appear with somewhat erratic frequency throughout fashion magazines targeted at young women as a “quasi-perennial theme” (ibid) that editors recycle cyclically. Hafu-make is part of the larger *dekame* (big eyes) trend of beauty practices that helped to influence the development of purikura technology, and often feature *karakon* to help create the look. (ibid 55) Hafu-make exists among a variety of beauty practices that intentionally question the boundaries of ethnicity and performance for young women in Japan, particularly in the *gyaru* subculture, among which purikura features as a key player.



“A makeup look even I can do that’ll have people saying ‘Wow, you look so hafu!’

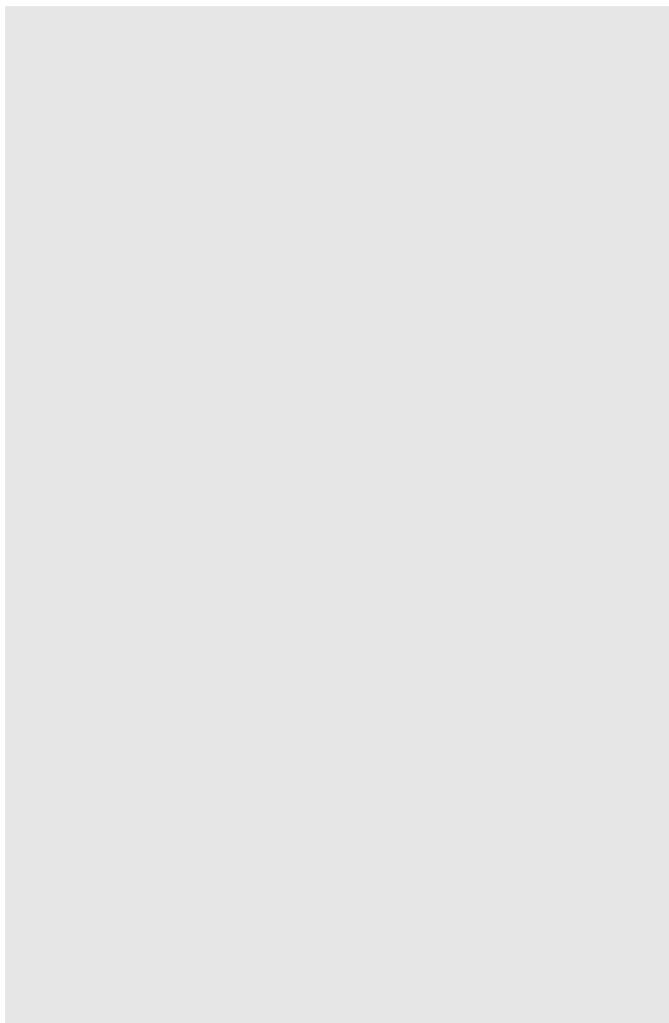
The no.1 face everyone longs for!!

The kata to make a hafu-gao that anyone can do!

Foundations - Practice - The perfect manual for stepping up your look”

As in the above tutorial from the January 2016 issue of Popteen magazine, the hafu look presented in *hafu-gao* (hafu face) tutorials is seen as something someone of any ethnicity can achieve by following the correct steps, or *tsukuri-kata* (kata, or way, of making). The outlined steps cover a variety of areas of the face, particularly the bridge of the nose, the space between the upper eye and eyebrow, and most notably the eye itself. Stressing the importance of *karakon*, the article insists that those following the tutorial *“ultimately, rely on karakon! The power of karakon is tremendous! pick up a pair of karakon that will make your eyes look hafu just by putting them on.”*

BIHAKU-CARE



(Ura Peach Girl Vol. 3, 2006)

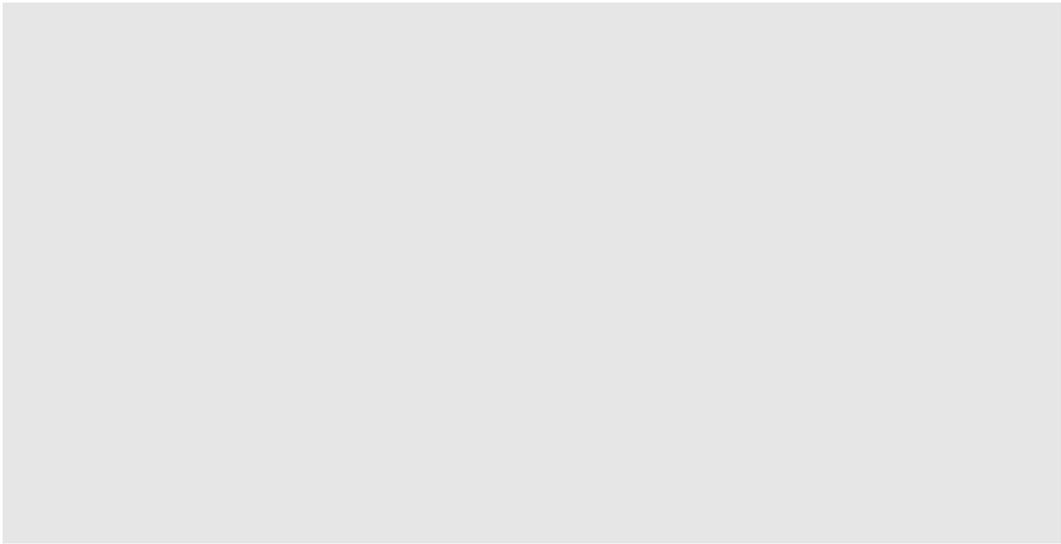
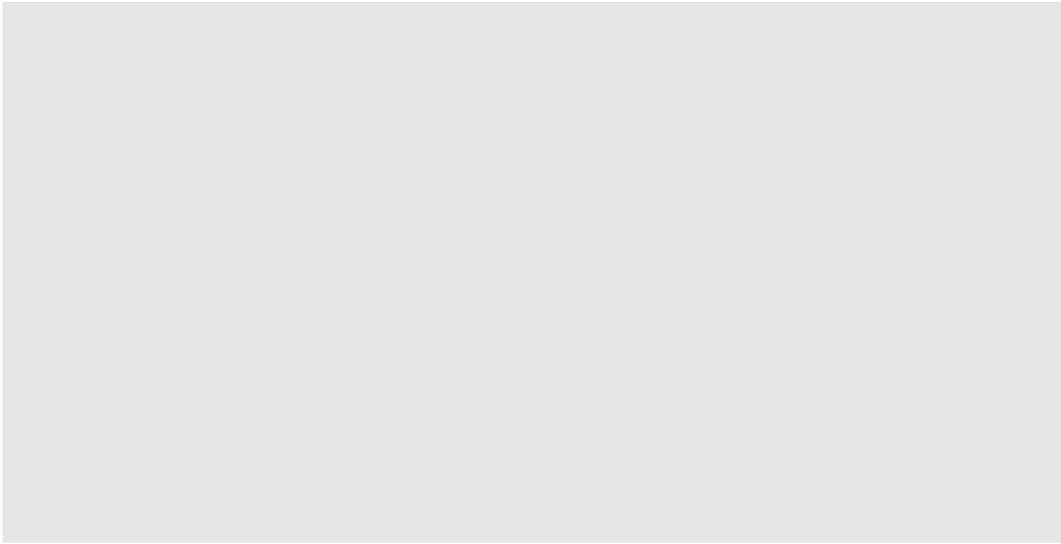
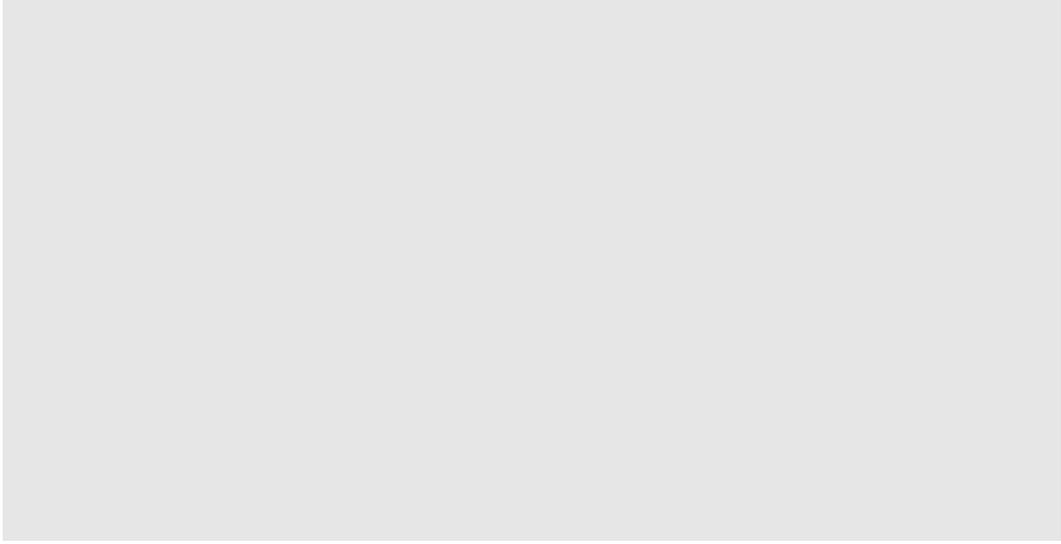
Momo Adachi, heroine of the shojo manga series Peach Girl by Miwa Ueda, is no stranger to the stresses put on young women for their looks. Published in the magazine Bessatsu Friend from 1998 to 2003, the series follows Momo through her experiences in high school and university, chronicling her intense friendships, rivalries and romantic exploits. The original series was well-liked among the women I worked with, who often cited it nostalgically, in part for the fashion-forward gyaru stylings of its protagonist. While conducting my fieldwork, a sequel to the manga debuted that followed Momo 10 years after the events of the first, aligning her life experiences with many of the women I worked with. Additionally, around the same time, the original

series received a live action film adaptation that was heavily advertised, allowing the media franchise as a whole to serve as a conversational reference point for many of the themes of my research.

The live action film followed the plot of the original manga closely in many respects, indicating that the experiences of its protagonist are still understood to be relevant to audiences today, nearly twenty years later. What initially stood out among the plot points that remained unchanged from the original manga to the live action adaptation is the importance that Momo places on the purikura photograph she receives from the boy

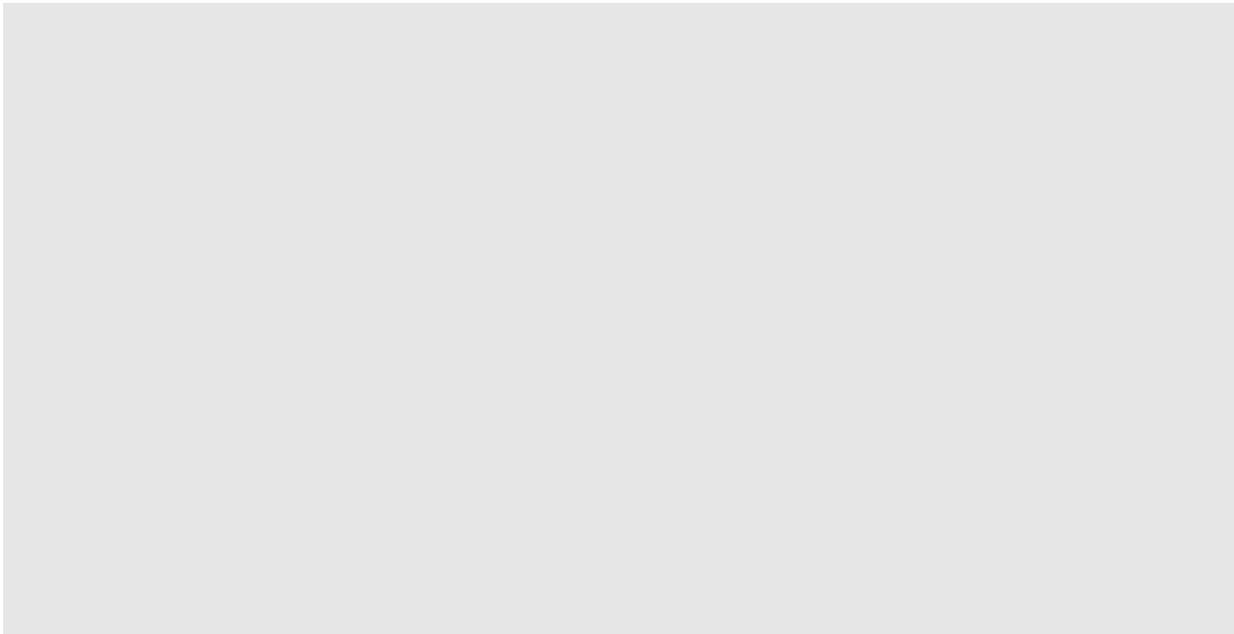
she has a crush on. She even goes so far as to threaten a group of girls with violence when they, in an act of bullying, attempt to trample the objects she placed the stickers on. The quality of preciousness imbued in the purikura photograph, through the social connections they portray, has not changed since the manga was first released in 1998, during the heyday of purikura's initial popularity. Even in the 2017 film, purikura photographs were cherished by Peach Girl's protagonist, indicating their enduring relevance in popular culture.

However, the most noticeable plot similarities between the original manga and its film adaptation centers around Momo's struggles concerning the color - or more specifically, shade - of her skin. In both versions of the series, Momo is portrayed as tanning easily, a fact she is desperate to change through a variety of extremes. She is shown to be fixated on lightening her skin - always on the hunt for a newer, stronger SPF, even going so far as excusing herself from swimming in the outdoor pool during gym class despite being a talented swimmer. Many of the women that I worked with found this relatable to their own experiences in high school, stating that being ostracized or criticized for having darker skin, even as the result of playing sports, was a common bullying tactic among girls or even teachers. The film adaptation takes this even further, introducing its main character's first arrival as a frenzied, harrowing sprint through the sun to reach the shade of the indoors, whispering frantically under her breath, "*Crap crap crap, I'll be burnt to a crisp, hurry hurry hurry - the sun's burning me!*" Zipping through crowds of her peers, parasol (*higasa*, or sun umbrella) outstretched, she bursts into her school foyer with a sweaty gasp before hurriedly disrobing her extra layers of protective leggings and gloves. Momo appears genuinely distressed as she checks her body for any apparent tanning accrued during her brief stint outdoors in the summer sun, repeating "*Did I get burnt? Did I get burnt?*" over and over. Several of the women I spoke to found this humorous, but certainly relatable – as one young woman stated, "It's a bit much, but I do feel the same way fairly often."



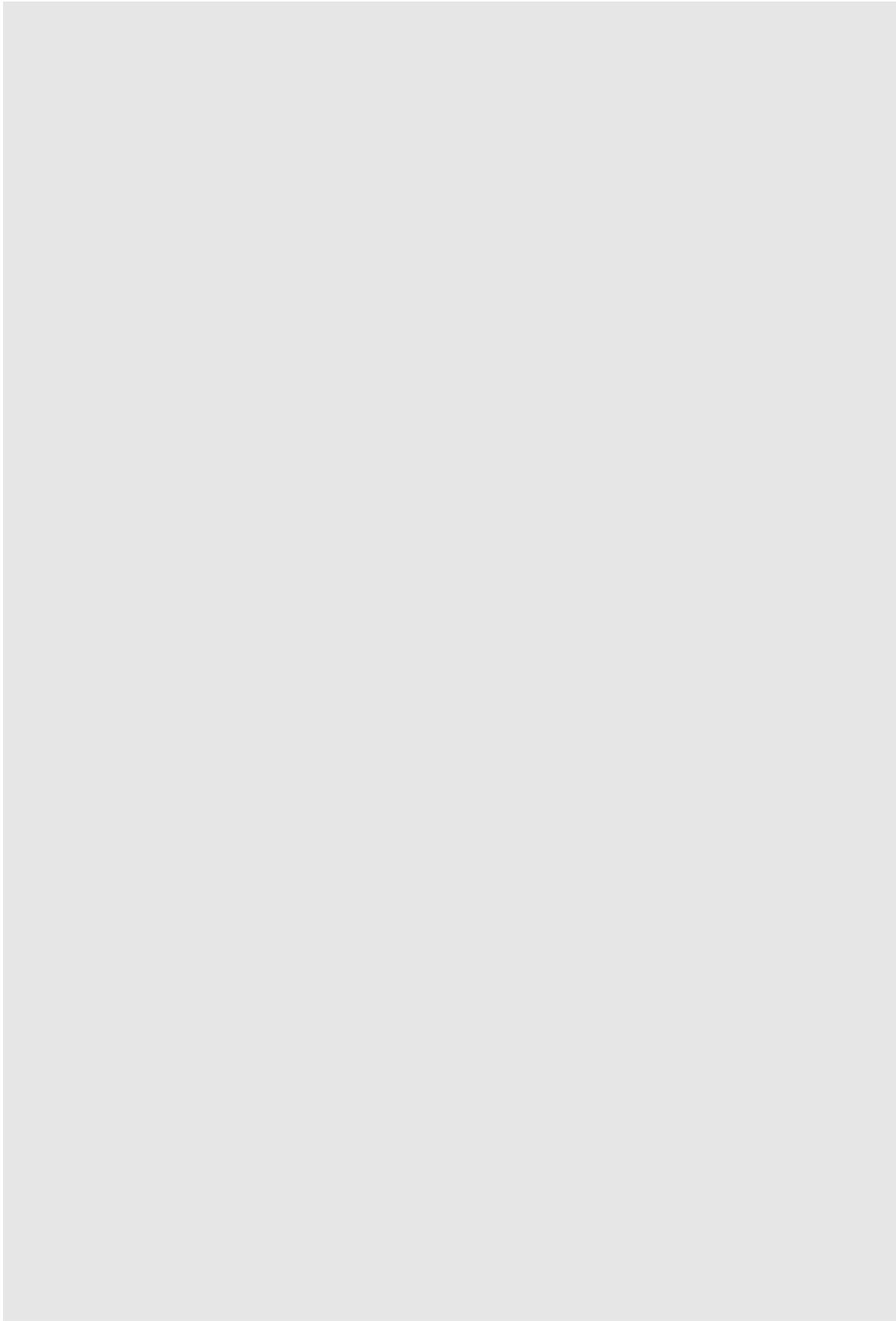
(Peach Girl 2017)

In the manga, we are introduced to Momo in media res as she screams at a middle-aged man who has propositioned her in public. As she leaves him shocked and fuming, Momo starts to narrate a list of her qualities for which she is judged by outsiders - “blonde hair everyone thinks is bleached, big, alluring eyes”, but not least of all, her “*kuroi hada*”, or black skin. These features, she surmises, lead people to treat her as though she is a “slut”. Momo sighs, lamenting that her looks always cause her problems, before being greeted by Sae, an acquaintance who laughs mockingly upon hearing the events of her morning. *“That is so gross. But I can see why they ask you that. I mean, you kind of look like the type of girl who might do that.”* The manga largely centers around this comparative dynamic between the two girls - Momo, who is deemed unworthy of respect because of the color of her skin, and Sae, who is cruel, conniving and manipulative, but is well-liked and lauded for being “petite and fair-skinned”, everything Momo is not.



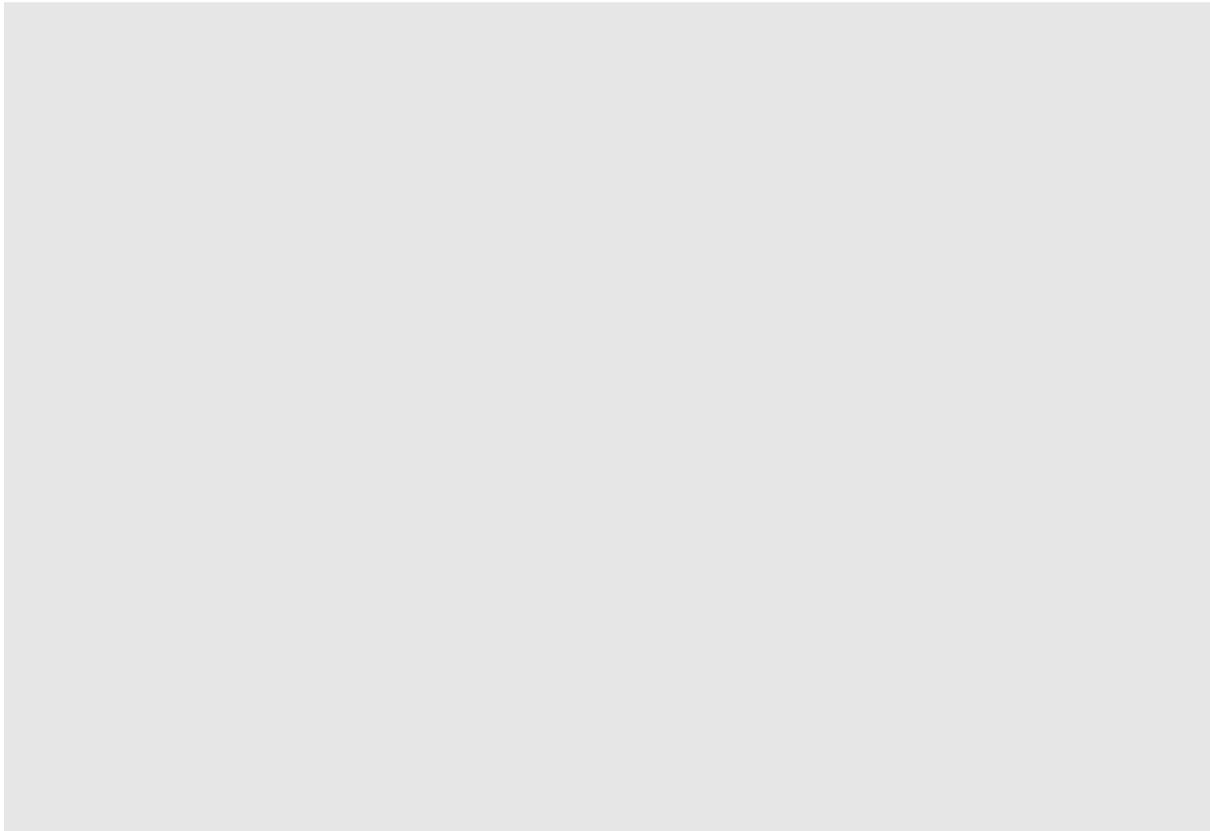
Still from *Peach Girl* (2017)

“I wanna hurry and get white skin!”



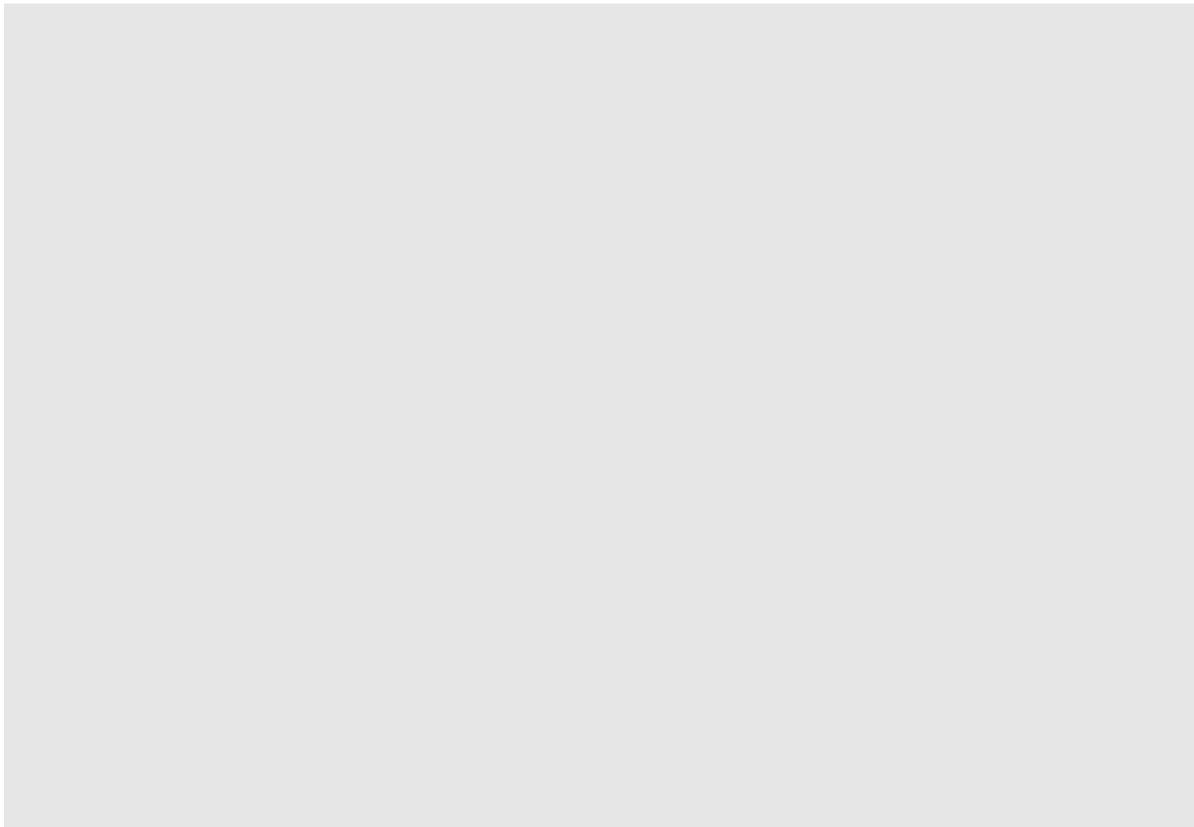
(Miwa Ueda 1998; 2018)

Later, Momo overhears a group of male classmates gossiping about why her skin is so dark (“*nande an’nani kuroi no?*”, literally, ‘why is she so black?’). “*I heard she goes to a tanning salon like, all the time*” responds one boy, to which another affirms “*for sure for sure, and I heard she parties like, a LOT*”. Laughing, a third boy quips lasciviously, “*Maybe she’ll ‘party’ with me sometime*”. The word used here for “party”, *asonderu*, is a variation on the verb I have discussed previously in chapter 3, *asobi* - to play - and is also the same phrasing used by Momo to describe how she is mistreated for appearing “slutty”. For Momo, this mistreatment is in part why she attempts so diligently to return to her “normal skin tone”, religiously coating herself in sunblock throughout the day. When she explains her hope of reverting her skin to an ‘original’, paler tone, Sae responds with shock - “*I thought your skin was naturally jiguro!*” The phrase used here can be translated as “ultra-tan”, but literally means “dirt black” and is used in a derogatory sense to describe individuals whose skin is a darker shade regardless of how much time they spend in the sun.



(Nicola Magazine 2017)

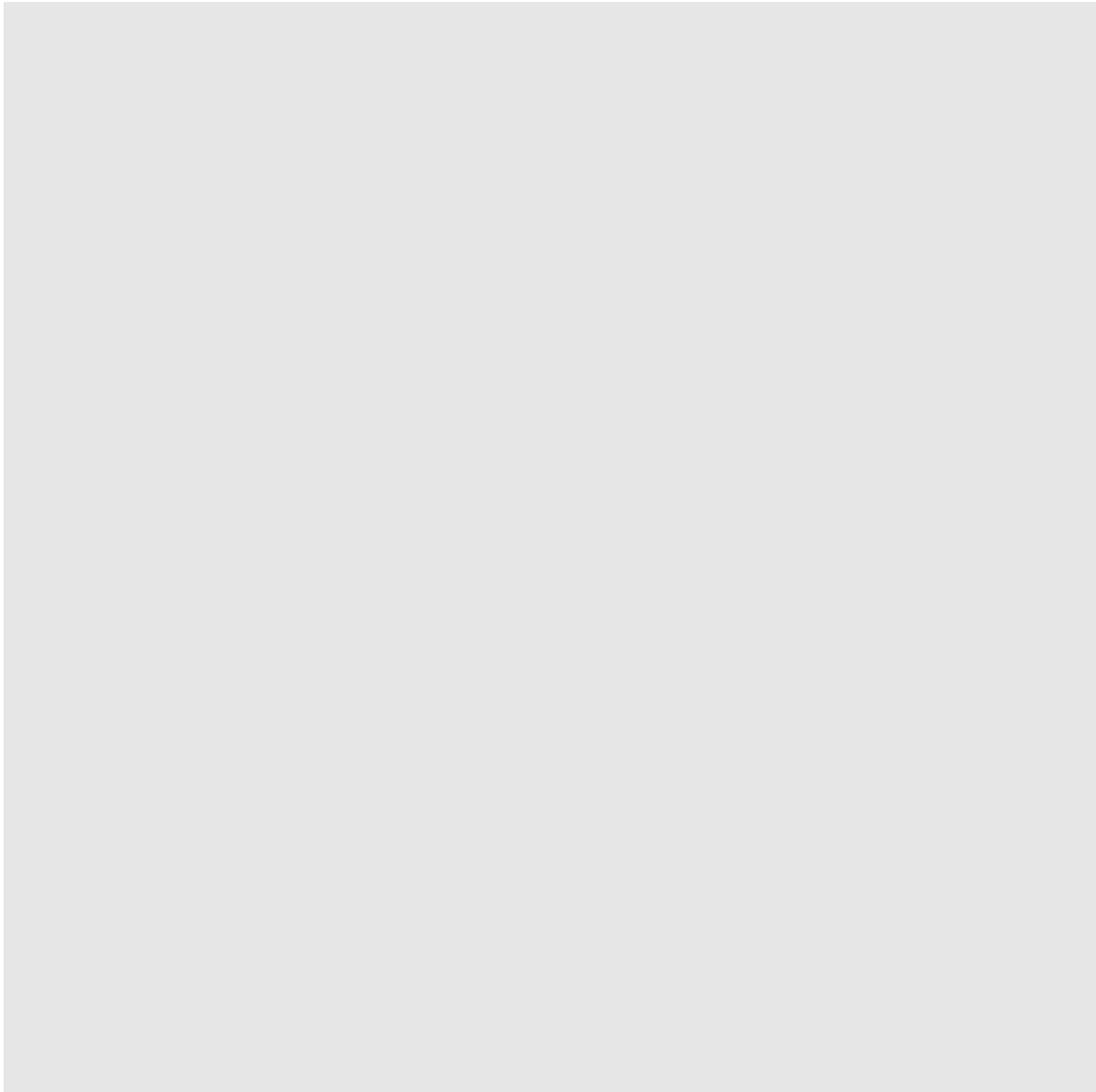
The above spread from Nicola magazine was produced as part of a promotional tie-in for the release of the Peach Girl movie in 2017, and details the various queries that their readers are presumed to have about skin whitening, as answered by Dr Junko Arikawa of the Arikawa Skin Clinic. Rather than aligning with Peach Girl's protagonist, we are instructed instead by Momo's nemesis Sae, whose villainy is consistently overlooked because of her normative beauty – particularly her fair skin – which is presented within this article as aspirational. At the top of the page she exuberantly professes, *“once you've become white, you can be as cute as me!”* - while Momo responds to this with scorn, telling the reader to ignore Sae, she also affirms that we should all do our best together to whiten our skin. Model Shiori Akita, standing in for both girls, is seen at the center of the page, back to back with her bronzed doppelganger, with surrounding text that reads, *“from crispy black-skinned peach girl to lustrous white-skinned peach girl ♥”*.



“You think you can get white in a day? Don't be naïve!”

In her Sae avatar, Shiori accusatorily points at the reader, shouting - *“You think you can get white in a day? Don’t be naïve!!”*, setting the tone of the Q&A to follow. Along with recommending long-sleeved shirts, UV protective face masks and sunscreens of varying degrees of SPF, Dr. Arikawa also advocates the use of a range of skin-whitening face washes, body creams and vitamins of dubious efficacy - *“The snacks you eat can also affect your skin color!”*, the reader is further cautioned, highlighting the positives of fresh fruit and fermented foods while warning firmly against the dangers of junk food. In response to the question, *“How long until I become white?”*, Dr. Arikawa responds *“Bihaku-care (beautiful white skin care) must be continued **for the rest of your life**. While it varies from person to person, it is possible to return to one’s original skin tone from a temporary sunburn with adequate care in 2~4 weeks. However, bihaku-care is of the utmost importance year-round!”* With a smirking “humph!” sound effect and crossed arms, Shiori’s Sae stand-in sneers - *“One mustn’t go near windows – unlike Momo-chan, I don’t have much melanin ♥”*.

WILD GIRLS



Gyaru posing with copies of Peach Girl
“Momo-chan, do your best!” (Egg Magazine - April 2002)

Considering Peach Girl within the context of its publication in the late 1990s, we can further understand the ways in which Momo is categorized and mistreated by those around her for her skin color. When Sae states that Momo looks like “the type of girl” who might take an older man up on the offer of a paid sexual encounter, this is not

merely an apropos comment intended to wound, but rather, serves to place Momo's appearance within the category of the kogal. At the time, the kogal - a precursor term that has since been shortened to gyaru - were frequently associated with voyeuristic anxiety in mainstream media of the late 1990s with *enjo kosai*. Various translations as "subsidized companionship" and "compensated dating", the trend involved high school girls (kogals) who would meet up with older men for dates, which may involve sex, in exchange for gifts or money. Like Momo, "Kogals often complain that men on the street walk up to them and offer money for sex, assuming that they have no agenda other than prostituting themselves" (L. Miller 2004b, 239), something she blames on her appearance. But as Momo notes, she and Sae wear the same uniform - even the same accessories - so why is she singled out as being a kogal, and thus more amenable to "partying" with her male classmates, or to compensated dating with someone old enough to be her father? In part, this comes down to the darkness of Momo's skin, which was for many kogal of the time a sartorial choice. When her classmate stated that he heard she went to tanning salons to achieve her skin tone, this is a further exterior categorization of Momo into the kogal demographic while also belittling her for what he perceives as a sign of vanity.

When Momo applies sunscreen multiple times a day, avoids the outdoors, wearing layers and using a parasol in summer, she hopes to lighten her skin to its "former" tone, further seeking to distance herself from this categorization. However, Sae's pointed remark that she assumed Momo's skin was always that dark makes a further distinction between the kogal aesthetic where tanning is intentional, and the more racist, colorist and classist assumptions surrounding individuals with darker skin that have a long history in Japan. As mentioned previously, the good wife, wise mother ideology set forth in the Meiji era explicitly delineated middle-class housewives as an essential symbol of traditional Japanese values - a distinction made to disenfranchise lower-class and indigenous women from the cultural narrative. Part of this distinction came in the form of the celebration of the fair skin of women who did not leave the home to work, unlike their lower-class counterparts who "had to keep working outside the home, as farmers, miners, or factory workers ... coarse, vulgar, loud, quarrelsome, and sexually promiscuous, from the middle-class point of view." (Ashikari 2003, 10) By comparison,

the kogals of the 1990s that Momo was categorized among for her darker skin were often described by the press as “impertinent, vulgar or indecent, egocentric, lacking manners, absurd or devoid of common sense, garish, and without perseverance.” (L. Miller 2004b, 238)

This distinction between the fair-skinned, overtly middle-class category of good wife, wise mother and what is considered the darker skin of the working class and indigenous populations of Japan is comparable to a larger theme within studies concerning colorism. In the work of Nina Kullrich on skin color politics and social stratification in India (Kullrich 2019), she found that interviewees “commonly associated lighter shades with the Indian north, upper castes and classes ... as well as with modernity and cosmopolitanism; whereas darker shades were attributed to southern India, lower castes, working migrants or rural Indians.” (ibid 248) While the good wife, wise mother stood for affluence within the middle-class home, this distinction between cosmopolitan fairness and its agrarian, indigenous counterpart has its own place within Japanese conceptualizations of skin color, being “(re)produced as a political signifier and embodied materiality of social, primarily class and gender, relations.” (ibid 246)

Just as working class and indigenous women of the Meiji era were considered sexually promiscuous (Ashikari 2003, 10), the kogal of the 1990s was characterized in the press as being sexually provocative and lascivious, in part for her association with the darker skin of her forebears. While this perceived quality of an innately promiscuous nature may have allowed the press to blame young women for the social ills of compensated dating, rather than the older men who procured their services, it is interesting to note that the expectation of payment for her sexual encounters indicates less of a free-love openness than the more working class path of sex work, a career path that ought never be followed by a middle-class good wife, wise mother. In reality, it appears that their sexual experimentation for monetary gain served as an expression of power over their patriarchal patrons, where many of the kogals interviewed regarding compensated dating, “often express disdain, pity, or contempt for the men they see themselves as exploiting, rather than the other way around” (L. Miller 2004b, 239).

This perceived link between darker skin and overt sexuality can also be seen as being in opposition to the ideal model of womanhood that is associated with fairer skin and chastity. In the work of Ashikari, she notes that the middle-class women she spoke to often categorized women with darker skin as “wild” (*wairudo*, from the English):

“My informants ... had a particular image of how "wild" women should look: dark skin ... What was emphasized in the physical image of the "wild" woman was that she looked sexy. The sexual attractiveness of "wild" women is characterized by the fact that their sexuality is not passive but provocative; they do not deny their sexual desires, and they are open to relationships with men that will not necessarily lead to institutional marriage in the future. As sexual purity and chastity are one of the most important features of traditional ideal womanhood, "wild" women conflict with the dominant femininity.”
(Ashikari 2003, 24)

Whether being utilized by detractors as a means to boost their own image of ideal womanhood or being fetishistically celebrated by fans, this notion of “wild” serves a dual role when contrasted with dominant forms of femininity, strategically keeping them in a separate category from mainstream notions of beauty. As in the work of Ashikari, “one 25-year-old informant said, “I adore women with a deep tan. They are 'wild.' But the thing is that there are very few Japanese women who look right with dark skin” (ibid), a sentiment that was often touched upon in my own fieldwork. As one woman explained, “I don’t think being tan is a problem, exactly, I just don’t think it suits me? In the same way I would choose a haircut to suit my face, I would try and keep my *original* skin tone.” For many, the notion of tanned skin was understood as something to be managed or avoided, where another informant stated, “most Japanese are fair [*shiro*, literally ‘white’] to begin with, so if you get tanned, it’s something you could have avoided - it shows a lack of self-management, I suppose? Particularly for women.”

In Laura Miller's work on beauty practices in Japan, she summarizes *bihaku* skincare as a form of "beauty gentrification":

"It is a rejection of the unwholesome connotations of subcultural styles ... and a return to more conventional beauty norms. Because white, translucent skin has been imagined as a specifically Japanese ideal of femininity, for Office Ladies and good girls from the middle class, the bihaku mode is a type of restorative of traditional values. Bihaku allows the greatest gender and class contrast with the leathery skin of the laborer, with his "laborer sunburn" (rêdêyake). These conventional norms are also deeply nationalistic, so the return to pale skin is a return to old-fashioned Japaneseness, a type of beauty nationalism."

(L. Miller 2006, 37)

PALE IN COMPARISON

One sweltering August afternoon, I hurriedly made my way through a turnstile in the labyrinthine underground of the Shibuya metro station. Already 20 minutes late, I glanced at the overhead signage in a panic, unsure as to which of the myriad exits I was meant to head for - when I eventually made my way above-ground, my panic-induced cold sweat soon left me clammy and uncomfortable in the muggy 37C heat, and I realized that the exit I had taken had dropped me nowhere near where I needed to be. I trudged on, eventually careening towards the group of friends I was nearly an hour late in meeting with an embarrassed, apologetic gasp.

I was greeted by the group as I hustled forward, overwhelmed by the humidity and crowding, and we agreed to set off towards a nearby cafe to discuss next steps. As we headed out, I noticed with some amount of sweaty embarrassment that I appeared extremely under-dressed in comparison to my companions, who all had both their arms and legs fully covered. I was not built for this heat, and had tried to dress accordingly, but my bare arms and legs appeared wholly out of place - not only in comparison to the

young women I was meeting up with, but seemingly with the majority among the surrounding crowd of shoppers that seemed to waver in the overbearing midday sun. While several wore long, flowy linen dresses and skirts, I noticed that some even had on layers, incorporating leggings and knits. Falling in step with Kaede, a 19-year-old college student, I casually pointed at her cardigan and asked if she wasn't too hot. Glancing down, she shook her head in a puzzled way - holding up her wrist for me to see, she explained that this fabric was designed to be breathable. In return, she pointed at my exposed arms, and asked me if I wasn't worried about getting a sunburn. "You're so pale already, it would be such a shame to lose that. You'll tan, you know!"

On another occasion, while meeting two friends for lunch at a bustling restaurant in Shimokitazawa, our conversation steered towards our nighttime skin regimens. I wondered after something that might help with the dark under-eye circles I'd noticed developing after many nights working late - Yuki, a 21-year-old who waitressed in an upscale *izakaya*, suggested I try a new moisturizer she'd been using, before mentioning how envious she was of my pale skin. Our companion Megumi, Yuki's friend from work, interjected cheerfully that she felt the same way. I balked, politely waving away the compliments, but they insisted, laughingly holding up their arms to compare across the table. "The foreigners you see in movies usually have such tan skin, I just don't see the appeal. But you're so lucky you don't tan at all", Yuki opined. Megumi let out an excited "ah!" before bending over to rustle through her purse, resurfacing with a tube of skin lightening cream. "But you've got to try this - it'll totally get rid of those freckles" she said, gesturing my way.

I was unfazed by the frequency with which my skin tone was a topic of conversation - I have always had unusually pale skin (though not for lack of going outdoors) and it has often been something that was brought up by strangers, even before my fieldwork in Japan. I come from a family of Finnish and Irish immigrants to the United States, and the most melanin I can muster - as might be expected - is a slapdash crop of freckles after a vicious sunburn. What was surprising, however, was the inversion of the comments received - before moving to Japan, I had never had the paleness of my skin be addressed in a positive, let alone *complimentary*, light.

In my limited experience as a young woman who has lived through an adolescence split between the United States and the United Kingdom (having moved to England at age 14), within the mainstream beauty standards presented to me, being pale has not been considered attractive or appealing in the slightest. I wouldn't go so far as to say I have dealt with anything close to the discrimination faced by people of color on a daily basis - that is, of course, not my intention. I haven't previously felt the need to ruminate on the various ways in which the color or shade of my skin has been perceived by those around me throughout my life because they have been part of a mundane, privileged existence where being taunted for being pale is about as bad as it gets. It is only upon reflection that I recall these experiences, because, by and large, they have not had a tremendous impact on my ability to make my way through life.

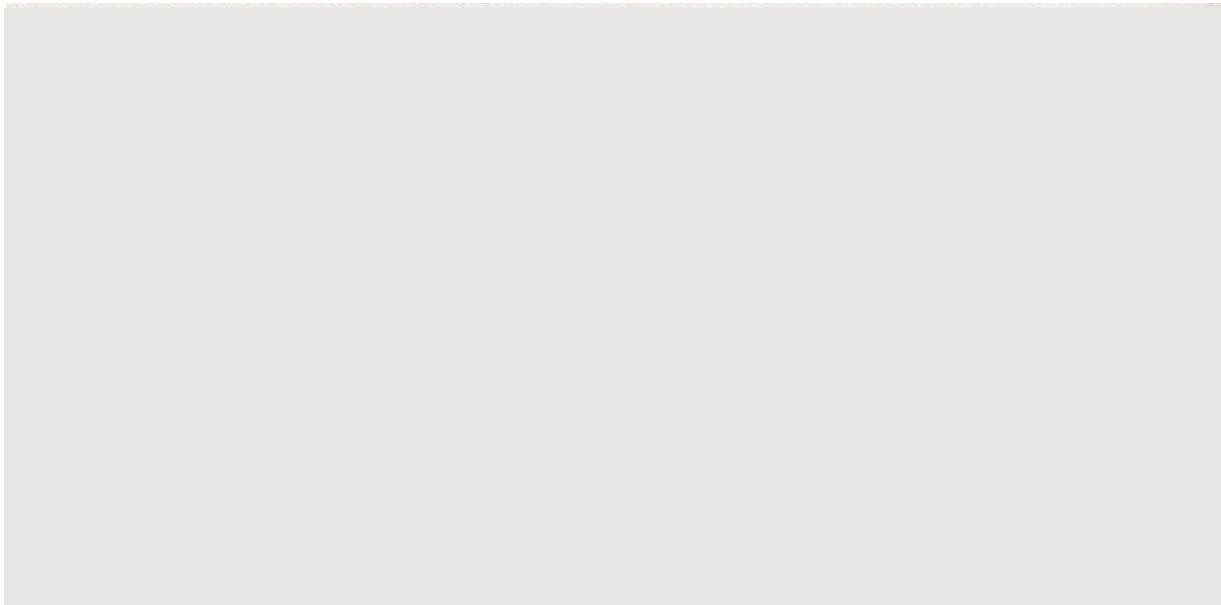
Throughout my childhood, having tanned skin was the ostensibly sartorial ideal, at least for the Caucasian women and mainstream media I was surrounded by - I remember on one occasion attempting to use a fake tanning spray along with a friend, pilfered from her mother's bathroom drawer, who was then aghast at the sight of our streaky legs and stained bathtub. There were snide jabs from other children at school, remarks from teachers (whether out of humor or concern), often in front of my peers, wondering after my stubbornly pallid complexion upon returning from summer vacation. Though I am now past the age of petty adolescent tyranny, even to this day I am regularly offered seats on public transport thanks to my wan expression, which I have been told reads as "anemic" at the best of times, and I am sometimes asked - more often than one might expect - if I am a goth or a vampire (I am neither, to the best of my knowledge).

Other than a regular smattering of concern from colleagues and well-wishers among the general populace, the primary way in which I am impacted by my pallor is in the difficulties I face finding foundation or concealer that matches my skin tone. Few, if any, makeup brands produce anything even close to where I swatch in, and I've spent more than my 'fair share' of hours (pun intended) trawling through niche online communities for advice from comparably pale individuals. By and large, within the mainstream beauty standards in the West that I have experienced since childhood, being pale is, at best, an inconvenience, and is certainly not something one strives for. This shift in the evaluation of my skin and appearance during my fieldwork has prompted me to further question the

notion that, as mentioned previously, beauty standards in Japan sycophantically follow Western trends or attempt to mimic physical characteristics. These compliments were predicated not on my inherent “whiteness”, but on my *fairness* - namely, my ability to participate in localized forms of beauty standards, *despite* being an outsider.

MUKOKUSEKI

For gyaru, as well as their 1990s counterpart kogals, their sartorial choices have always been controversial. However, in the work of Laura Miller, she explains that “the unique stylistic sampling of kogal and other Japanese subcultural groups is reduced to a comic or inept effort to copy American or other foreign appearance.” (L. Miller 2004a, 84) Rather than an inept imitation of Euroamerican fashion trends and beauty standards, many of the various items and styles incorporated into the gyaru look are discussed by Miller as “*mukokuseki*” (lacking nationality), the end result being a “total ensemble that represents no specific place, time, or ethnicity.” (ibid). However, to see youth fashion of this type as an entirely “suprahistorical” (ibid 32) sampling which seemingly references no particular place or ethnicity in its amalgamation of cultural elements oversimplifies many beauty practices that I came across in my research.



In the above makeup tutorial from CUTiE magazine (2014), the *hiyake* (tanned skin) look, with its overdrawn white lips, is explicitly referenced within the tutorial as “ganguro style” (a subcategory of gyaru) - we are further instructed in how to achieve a look “that will absolutely make you stand out on the street” with what they dub “*ethno-make*”. It is worth noting the importance of *hiyake* (tanned skin) in the *ethno-make* tutorial, and its further overlapping qualities with the gyaru and ganguro subcultural looks. This tutorial, in its non-specific categorization of “ethnic” style, simultaneously participates in *mukokuseki* statelessness, incorporating various pieces of jewelry and clothing from pointedly foreign sources in combination with deliberately darkened skin and fictionally exotic face markings, while also outlining itself as utilizing “Indian makeup methods in a modern style”. The apparent effect of *mukokuseki*, then, is a statelessness garnered from difference - the specific culture being referenced doesn’t matter so much as the “ethnic” *difference* itself.

The importance of fair skin in Japan, particularly as a marker of normative femininity, is one often confused by outsiders as being an attempt to appear “white” - as discussed by Nina Kullrich (2019), fairness and skin shade have little to do with local notions of self in reference to the West, whereby “whiteness” is more about colorism than about appearing Caucasian. The importance of fair skin in Japan has its roots well before contact with the West - as noted by Wagatsuma and Yoneyama, whitening powder had been used since the Nara period (710-794), and prior to 1868, it was the norm for both male and female nobility to wear heavy white powder on their faces (Ashikari 2003, 9). This was then complicated by the Meiji Restoration beginning in 1867, when representation of gendered bodies were “differently modernized and Westernized” (ibid). It is important to note that this modernization did not place fair skin in the category of “Western”, but was in fact the opposite - during this time, men were discouraged from use of white facial powder, and further encouraged to cut their hair in a performatively Western style when entering the workforce outside of the home. At this time, the notion of fair skin became one of the symbols of ideal, “traditional” womanhood, seen in the good wife, wise mother ideology, which differentiated her from her Westernized male counterpart, as “an essential symbol of tradition and native culture, not only as distinct

from Western women but also from lower-class "indigenous and backward" women."
(ibid 9)

One of the ways in which this Meiji Restoration ideology continues to translate into a modern context is through this notion of 'whiteness' as a normative class divider, where ones' complexion is understood as a way of fitting in rather than standing out. In the work of Ashikari, a pale complexion is an expected feature of a "normal" middle-class housewife - "through this standardized white face, making themselves look "normal" in public is one of the important functions of everyday makeup." (Ashikari 2003, 13) When compared to the hiyake youth subcultures of gyaru or ganguro, noted in the press for their crass, in-your-face style, it is easy to understand Miller's assertion that "young Japanese are experimenting with different surface identities, not primarily in an attempt at deracialization but to underscore severance from the older generation" (Miller 2006, 124). What, then, of ethno-make, a sartorial styling that explicitly relies on racial difference?

In the above ethno-make tutorial, they assure readers it will "absolutely make [one] stand out in the street" - though the title is given as generically "ethnic style", it is particular in noting that it "utilizes Indian makeup methods in a modern style." This distinction is worth noting, as the ethnic category given - Indian - is actually "*indo*", as in from India, rather than "Indian" meaning Native American. With this in mind, it is interesting to consider the way in which this tutorial represents these apparently "modern" Indian makeup styles that darken the skin, especially when fairness is such a fraught topic in the non-exoticized, real-world India.

In contemporary India, skin whitening is a multibillion-dollar industry, ranging from creams and ointments to outright bleaching, with product offerings from a wide array of major cosmetic corporations, including – but not limited to – Dove, Nivea, Garnier, Neutrogena and Olay. (Dark Is Beautiful) This rivals Japan's own *bihaku* (beautiful white skin) skin whitening industry, whose worth is also estimated into the billions of dollars (TPC Bibliotech 2014). While many believe that this industry and its concurrent colorism stem from the country's history of British colonial rule, whereby "darker skinned individuals were socially and economically disadvantaged" ("Colourism In India · Dark Is

Beautiful”), it is important to understand the desire for fair skin as part of a larger discourse that relates to local understandings of beauty through both religious and caste identities. As with my discussion of beauty practices in Japan, ‘fairness’ in India should not be understood as merely a “legacy of colonialism and/or an imitation of Western ideals of beauty” (Kullrich 2019, 246), as this ignores both non-Western and pre-colonial standards of beauty. The emphasis in ethno-make tutorials on darkening the skin to achieve a “modern Indian look”, which has no basis in the reality of Indian beauty practices, ultimately categorizes a fictionalized “ethnic other” through the differentiation of darker *hiyake* skin with what is seen as the “normal” Japanese *shiroi* (white, pale, fair) skin. Despite this, there are many similarities between understandings of skin shade and colorism in both Japan and India.

The placement of *hiyake* skin as an outsider category through the “ethnic other” is further reflected in the work of Ashikari, who stresses that paler shades of foundation, which are generally only worn outside of the home, are a signifier that the wearer fits into a normative category of femininity - the appearance of pale skin is a standardized means of appearing “normal”, figuring into group membership among middle-class Japanese women. (Ashikari 2003, 13) For Ashikari, this “standardized white face” (ibid) has its roots in the good wife, wise mother ideal dictated by the Meiji nationalist project that outlined the normatively middle-class housewife as being a symbol of both tradition and modern Japanese culture, distinct from lower-class “indigenous and backward” women (ibid 9), in part through their pale skin as the standard ideal, in opposition to the *hiyake* skin seen as lower-class and substandard.

Similarly, the practice of skin bleaching in India is considered a form of “normalization” (L. J. Davis 1995; Gimlin 2002) – this can be understood as both a means of striving for social acceptance (Kullrich 2019, 248), but also as a way of understanding what is considered ‘normal’. In the work of Kullrich, skin bleaching as a practice is most often understood to be done to return to an original, lighter skin tone that has been made darker by the sun - “de-tanning ... a cosmetic practice with the aim of preserving the supposedly ‘original’ or ‘natural’ tone.” (Kullrich 2019, 262). The ways in which modern India relate to contemporary Japan are more linear than they are exotic - much like how the good wife, wise mother doctrine of the Meiji Restoration demarcated white skin as

the ideal norm for Japanese womanhood, the characterization of skin bleaching as a naturalizing “de-tanning” process creates a socially constructed notion of fair skin as a “normal” that one might stray from, but ought to return to.

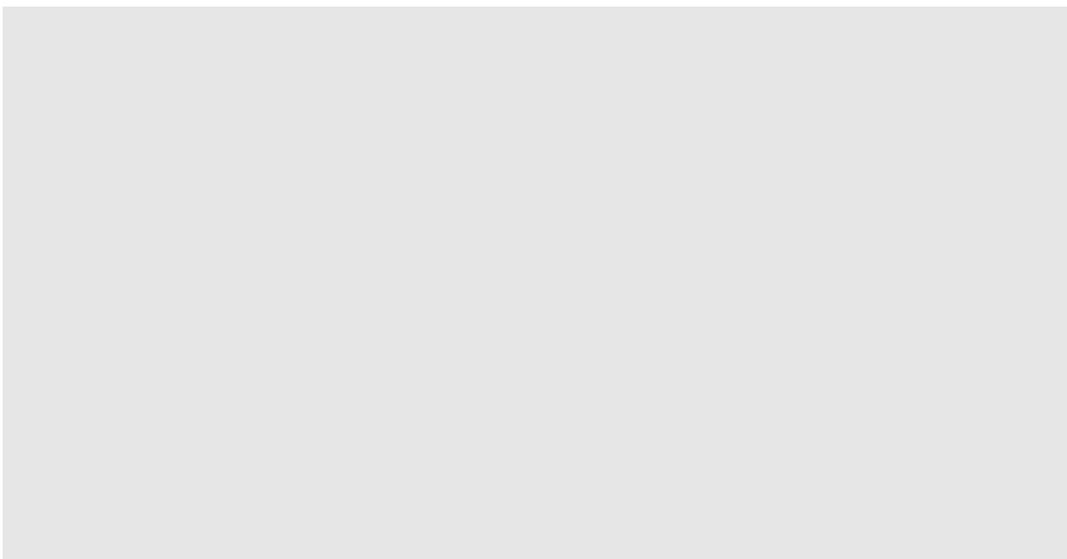
“BLACK IS COOL, UNLESS YOU’RE ACTUALLY BLACK”

In November of 2018, journalist Wanna Thompson created a Twitter thread to “post all of the white girls cosplaying as black women on Instagram”, a thread which quickly went viral, garnering almost 30,000 retweets. In a slew of responses, thousands of screenshots were posted from across the social media landscape which presented a stark conundrum - young, seemingly white women, dramatically transformed into what appeared to be an entirely different ethnicity than their own. This phenomenon, later dubbed “blackfishing”, refers to more than just sporting a tan - it is the cosmetic enhancement through makeup, surgery, digital filters, as well as cultural signifiers such as hairstyles and clothing, that creates the appearance of Black (or, in many cases, Latina) heritage. Cultural symbols such as Black hair textures in the form of afro wigs, braids and braid rings, or laying edges (slicking down baby hairs) persist among the many styles that are co-opted by influencers and celebrities, at best gentrifying the looks in a “ghetto until fashionable” (Lijadu 2020) process, or worse, contributing to a racial ambiguity that benefits white creators at the expense of women of color. As Johanna Yaovi of The Curl Talk Project explains, “It’s about picking and choosing common black traits and characteristics for one’s benefit while we continue to face discrimination on a day to day basis”. (Elan 2020) In this context, hairstyles and textures are particularly fraught, where “black women face discrimination in work and in securing employment because they are told their braids and natural hair look unprofessional” (Lijadu 2020), a direct contrast with the social capital and ‘clout’ gained from the appearance of Blackness and/or racial ambiguity.

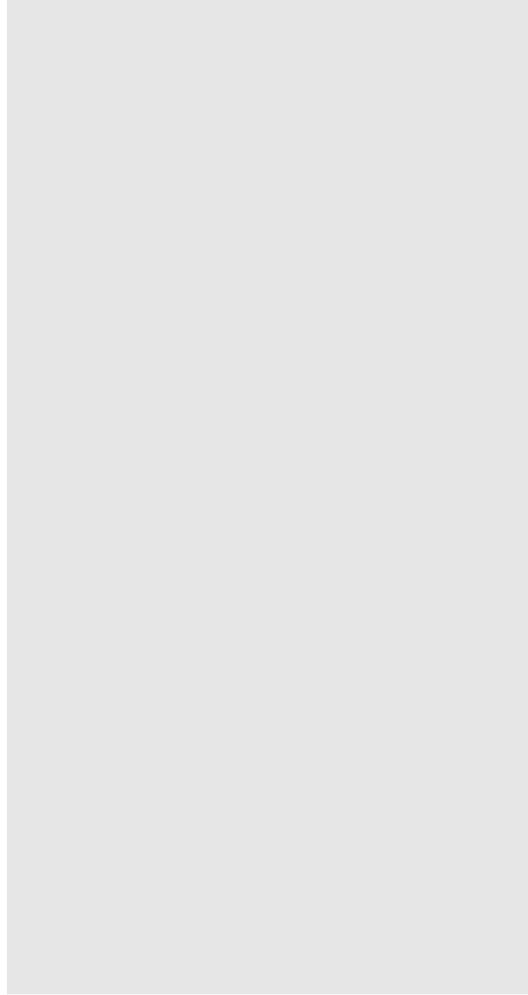
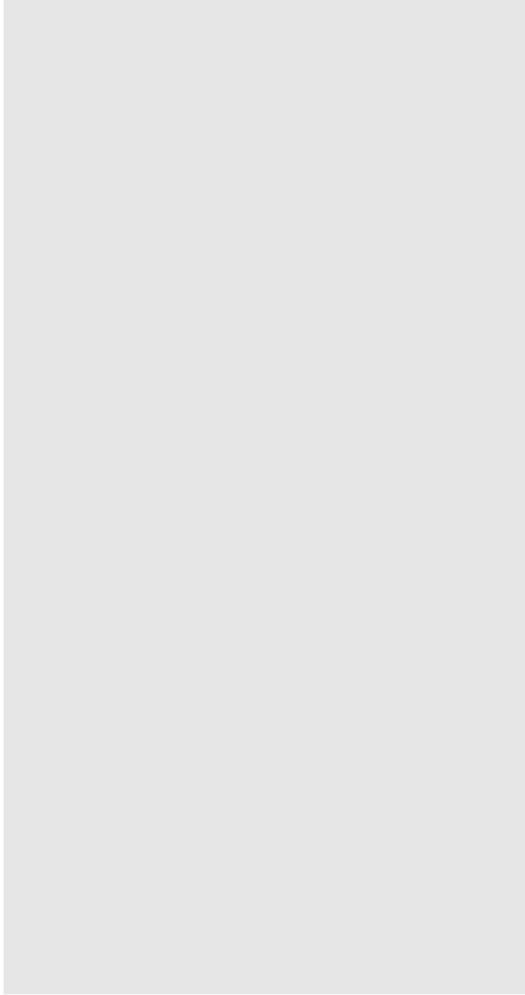
Various accusations of blackfishing from Thompson's twitter thread:



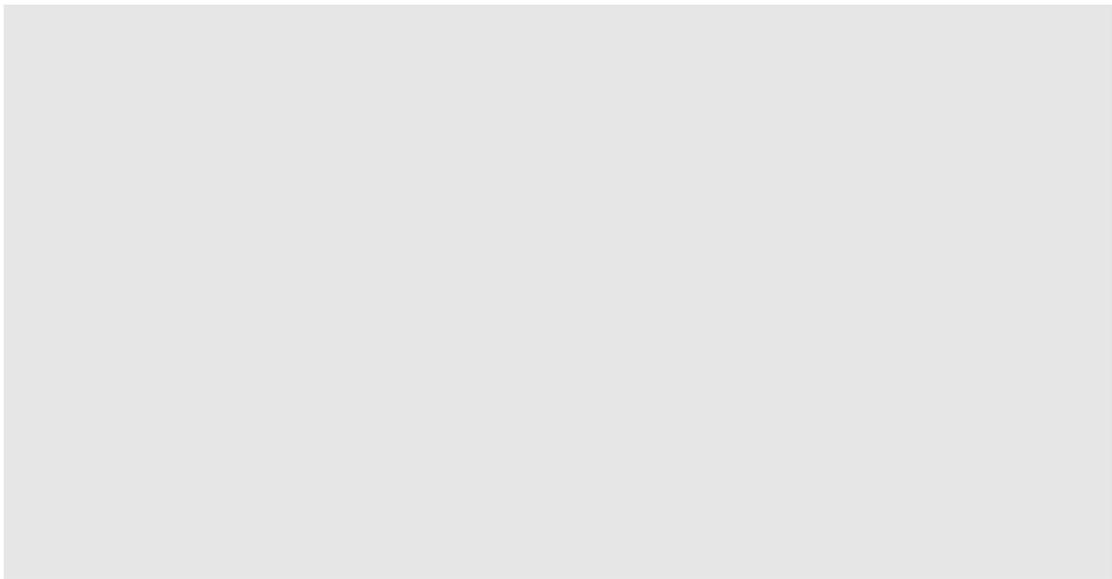
Influencer Mika Francis



Swedish influencer Emma Hallberg



Ariana Grande



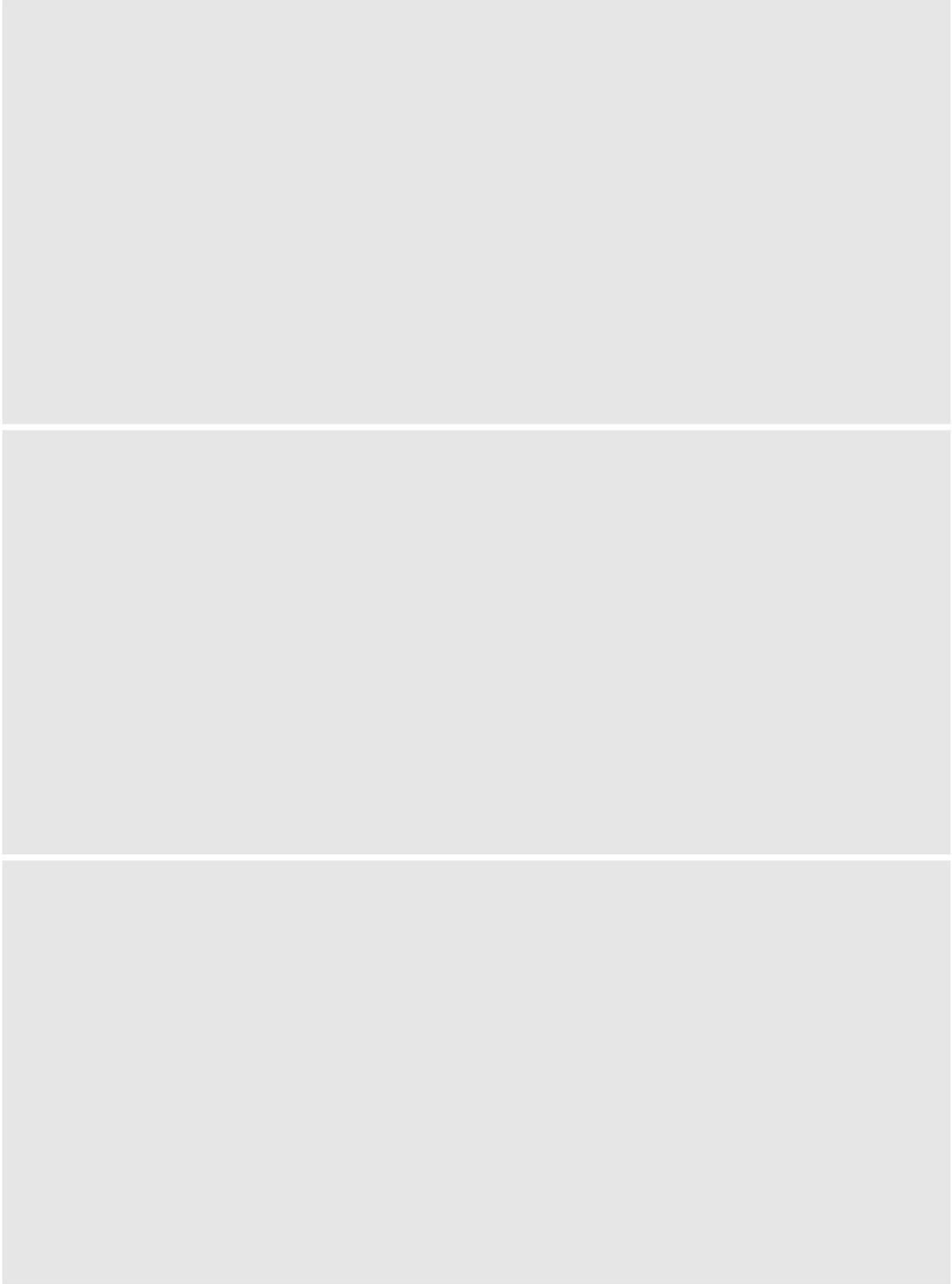
Rita Ora

More than just Instagram models and influencers benefit from the racial ambiguity of blackfishing, and many celebrities have been called out for leaning into the misconception that they are women of color, including Ariana Grande, Iggy Azalea, and Rita Ora. Kim Kardashian and her family have been particularly cited as a mainstream example of “normalising blackfishing” (Elan 2020) - as explained by Karen Attiah, the Washington Post’s global opinions editor, “Her proximity to and appropriation of blackness has gotten her (and her family) paid. Handsomely.” (Cited in *ibid*)

Blackfishing, however, goes beyond “[falling] off the cultural-appropriation tightrope” (Kornhaber 2019) - more than just a gentrification of Black cultural symbols, many of those who enact blackfishing do so knowing full well that they will benefit from the mistaken racial ambiguity. Aga Brzostowska, a white Polish Instagram model in her 20s, was accused of blackfishing in part for her use of makeup that was significantly different from her own skin tone. While never claiming to be Black, she has insisted that her use of darker makeup was not intended maliciously, and did not see why she should stop - “I don’t feel like I need to stop doing something because... why would I stop doing something that’s benefiting me or that I enjoy doing?” (Virk and McGregor 2018) Rita Ora, the British-Albanian pop star, has also come under fire for intentionally performative Blackness - notably, when asked in 2014 if she was Black, she responded “Yeah, I might as well be. A lot of people think that. But, y’know, I like that - it gets me places.” (Milan 2020)

Within Japan, there are instances of “race-faking” with direct parallels to blackfishing - B-Girls (and their attendant B-Style crowd, which includes many men) persist as a subculture which openly attempts to emulate Black culture, often through the use of racial and cultural signifiers such as braids and skin darkening. B-Style, a portmanteau of Black Lifestyle, is “a subculture of young Japanese people who love American hip-hop culture so much that they do everything in their power to look as African American as possible.” (Stoffels 2014) Baby Shoop - situated in the trendy department store Shibuya 109 - is a shop that caters to the B-Style look, notably with the tagline “Black For Life”. Hina, an employee of the shop, stated in an interview with Dutch public broadcast service VPRO, that she felt the style “is a tribute to Black culture and also their music, fashion and dance.” (VPRO Metropolis 2011)

Sporting tightly braided hair and a dark tan, Hina explained that all Baby Shoop employees regularly go to tanning salons - usually once a week - and use darker foundation to achieve the look. "Black people look so great and stylish ... When I looked at Black artists, I found them very cool." (ibid) For Hina and other B-Stylers, this subcultural look is a fun way to express themselves through the emulation of another culture they admire. However, as Tim Wise explains, "mimicry is not solidarity" (Wise 2015) - what B-Stylers feel is an appropriate means of ardent appreciation is in many respects another form of blackfishing, whereby it "involves a non-black person directly benefiting from black culture without facing the negative realities that come with being black." (Lijadu 2020) As outlined by Wanna Thompson, "With extensive lip fillers, dark tans and attempts to manipulate their hair texture, white women wear Black women's features like a costume" (W. Thompson 2018), it is difficult to see much of a difference between B-Style emulation and blackfishing.



In Baby Shoop their slogan is: Black for life.

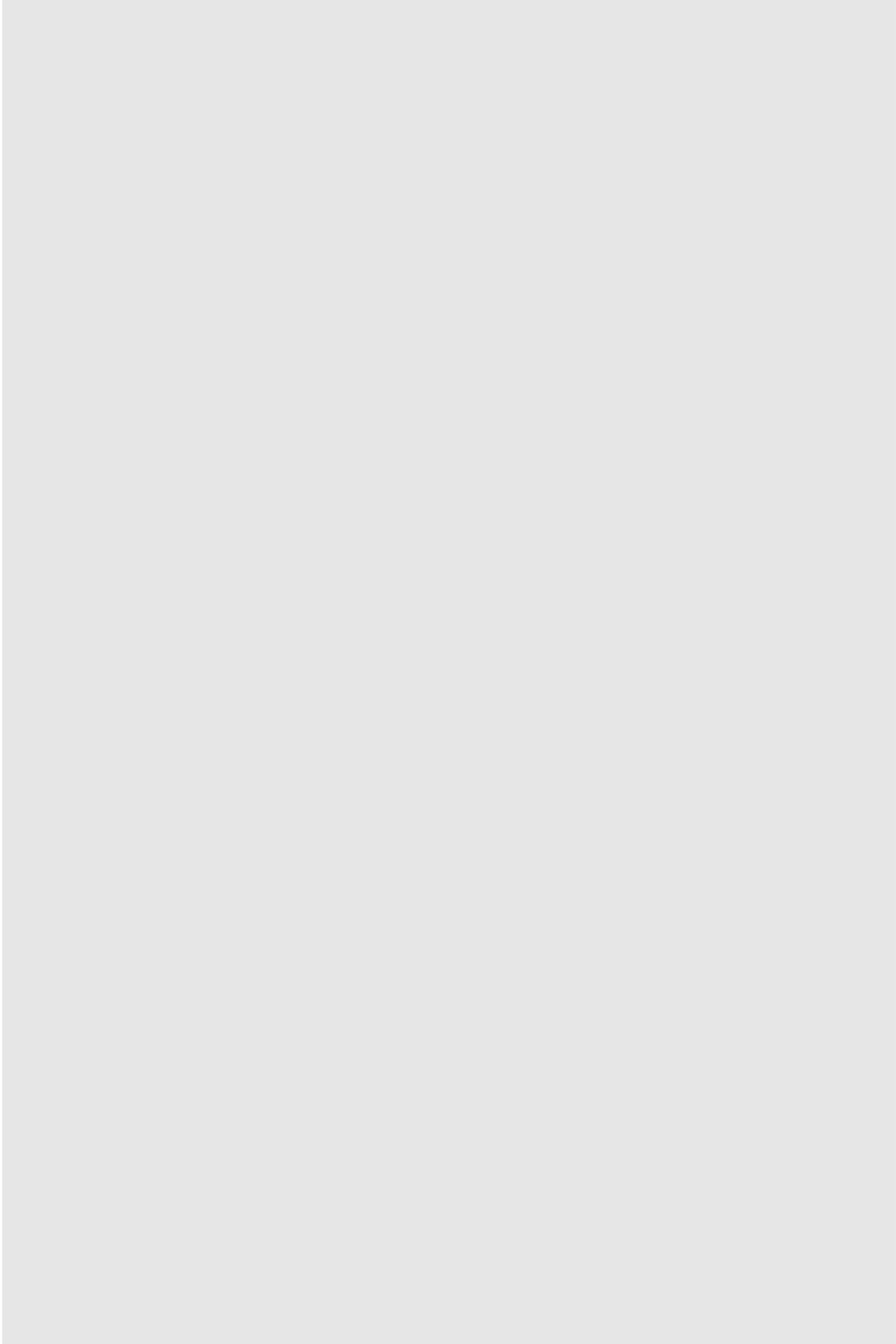
“It is a tribute to black culture and also to their music, fashion and dance.”

“Part of B-Style is that you do not look Japanese.”

VPRO 2011

In many respects, hafu-make also shares much in common with blackfishing, particularly its reliance on racial ambiguity. At its core, B-Style relies on not looking Japanese at all (VPRO 2011), both from a racial and cultural standpoint, whereas in many cases, blackfishing makes use of the gradual appropriation of cultural signifiers and “cool factor” associated with Blackness to create a mystique of mixed heritage, especially when combined with skin-darkening cosmetics. While hafu-make may seem to diverge from blackfishing in this respect, as it primarily valorizes Caucasian-leaning features and fair skin, it is important to stress here that hafu-make is not about wanting to be, or appear to be, “white”, but is, as blackfishing can often be, about the ephemeral appeal of appearing “mixed”.

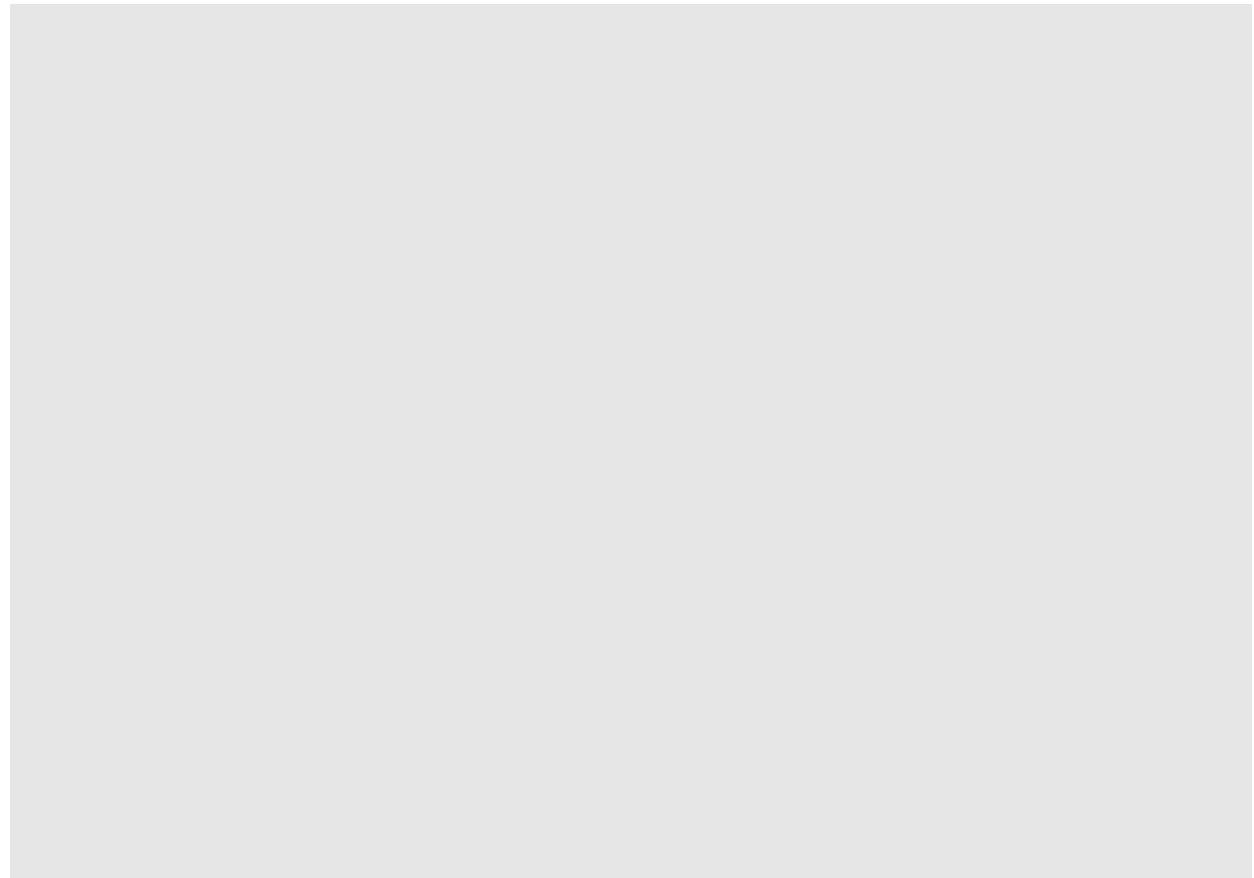
Where blackfishing allows white women to benefit from “some sort of racial ambiguity without fully dealing with the consequences of blackness” (Thompson via Rasool 2018), hafu-make allows Japanese women to partake of the perceived benefits of certain forms of hafu status without acknowledging or facing the prejudice that hafu individuals are subject to on a daily basis. Hafu as a category is primarily celebrated where certain Euroamerican features coincide with extant Japanese beauty standards, to the further exclusion of those who do not fit either. Rather than understanding hafu-make as merely an attempt to appear Caucasian, I feel it is beneficial to consider it, like blackfishing, as a way of benefitting from perceived racial ambiguity without the consequences of alienation.



Promotional materials for purikura machine Winc3 (2018) featuring hafu model Maria Tani which promoted both virtual and real-world karakon and a “skin whitening course” which users can adjust on a sliding scale

JE NE SUIS PAS PARISIENNE

Within kogal and later gyaru culture, the appeal of *hiyake* tanned skin, along with its cosmetic enhancement through tanning salons or makeup, largely peaked in the mid- to late 2000s, going the way of many passing trends as it was overtaken by the *bihaku boom* (beautiful white skin boom) that persists to this day. Purikura machines of the time adapted to reflect this, opting to develop their technologies to enhance or outright alter the appearance of one's skin as belonging to the normative category of fair *shiroi* Japanese beauty standards.

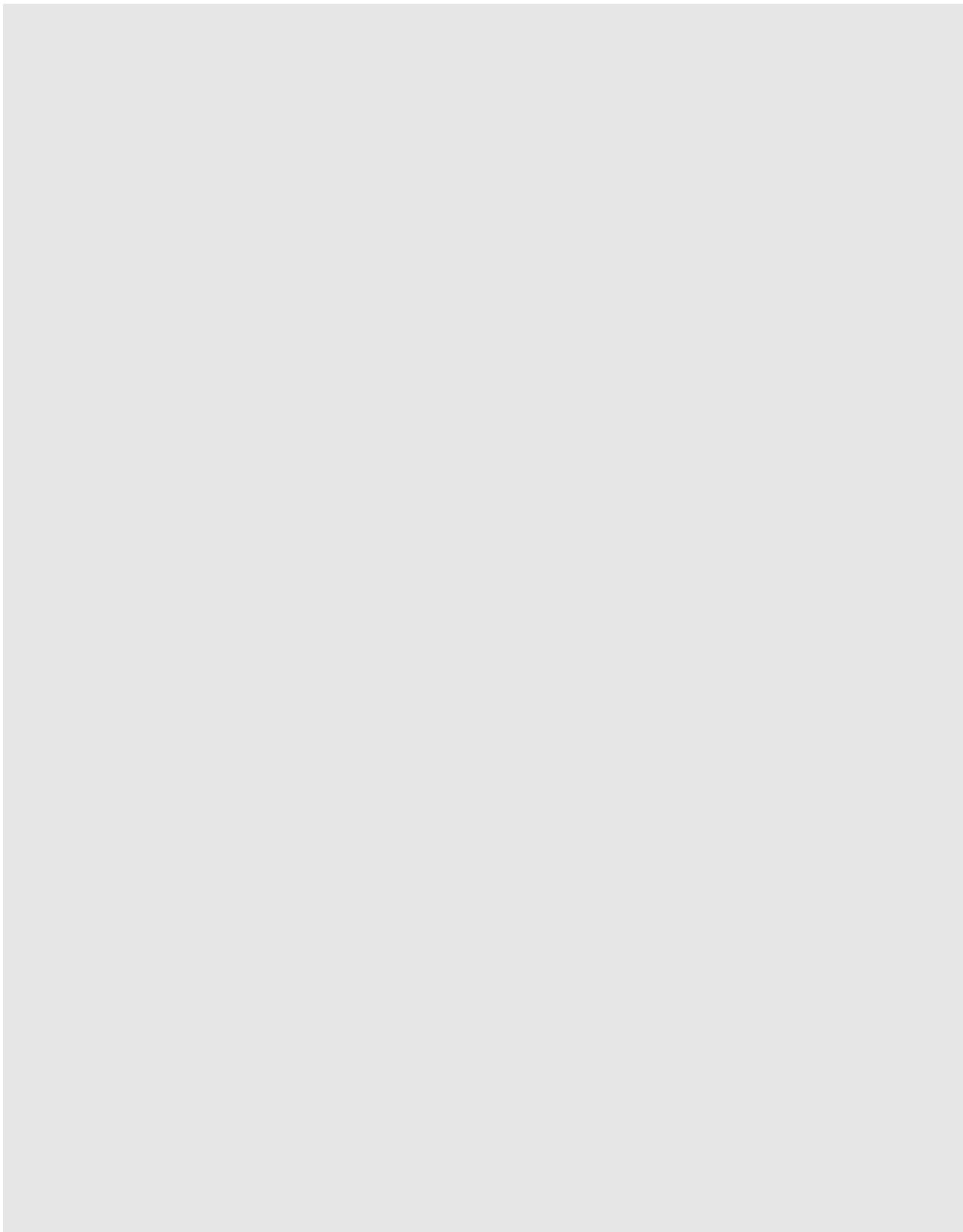


In contrast to the ethno-make trend, which established itself on a fictive exoticized other with no real-world referent, a commonly recurring style that relies on the emulation of the perceived stylings of another country is that of the French Girl, or the *Parisienne*. In this tutorial, also from CUTiE magazine (2014), we are introduced to the hair and

makeup stylings of the Parisienne which, we are instructed, must be considered in relation to French culture. Unlike the ethno-make tutorial, where culture is implied but has no basis in reality, cultural history is what is most important for the French Girl look. This French Girl trope is not unique to Japan, but instead exists in the cultural imaginary of most Euroamerican countries as a perennial symbol of cosmopolitan, chic femininity – while also limiting itself to a cliché of affluent whiteness.

For journalist Alice Pfeiffer, the trope of the Parisienne excludes the majority of French women from the national narrative, presented to international audiences “as an undifferentiated mass” (Collins 2019). In her book *Je Ne Suis Pas Parisienne* (I am Not a Parisienne), Pfeiffer traces the creation of the Parisienne as an international phenomenon to the Paris Exposition of 1900, where she was symbolically epitomized in a twenty-foot statue by Paul Moreau-Vauthier, who historian Dominique Lobstein states represented all that was modern, as “a young urban woman who evoked only the present” (ibid). In the postwar years, French cinema further popularized the trope, attaching her by default to the soft power chic of Brigitte Bardot, Anna Karina and the cinematic oeuvres of French New Wave directors such as François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard.

For Lauren Collins, the aesthetics established by French New Wave cinema that continue to define the Parisienne are exploited by capitalism, creating a “generational lag to make Paris seem less globalized, and therefore more exotic, than it really is.” (Collins 2019) While the above tutorial from CUTiE magazine states that it is important to refer to French culture through their art and films, this focus relies heavily on outdated media that disregards the perspectives of French people of color as on the periphery and not representative of a cultural norm. However, by contrast, the popularity of the Parisienne - as well as both ethno-make and mukokuseki styles - subsist on their ability to challenge notions of ethnic homogeneity within Japan, through the exotic othering of other cultures.



Hafu model Erica's personal style is presented as simultaneously hafu, Parisian and achievable through kata (ViVi Magazine, April 2021)

What both the mukokuseki and ethno substyles allow for is a form of “[experimentation] with different surface identities ... to upset rigid racial categorization” (L. Miller 2004a, 95) in a country that is largely understood to be ethnically homogenous, which disregards the diverse population that does exist in Japan, among whom are hafu, or mixed-race individuals. Where mukokuseki and ethno-make substyles cross paths with the Parisienne, there is the hafu-make substyle. While the Parisienne is cosmopolitan and cultured, the idealized hafu strikes a balance between being both foreign and Japanese in a delicate equilibrium - as discussed by Watarai (2014), being hafu is, in practice, less of a descriptive category for all mixed-race Japanese, but more of a performative role that must be learned.

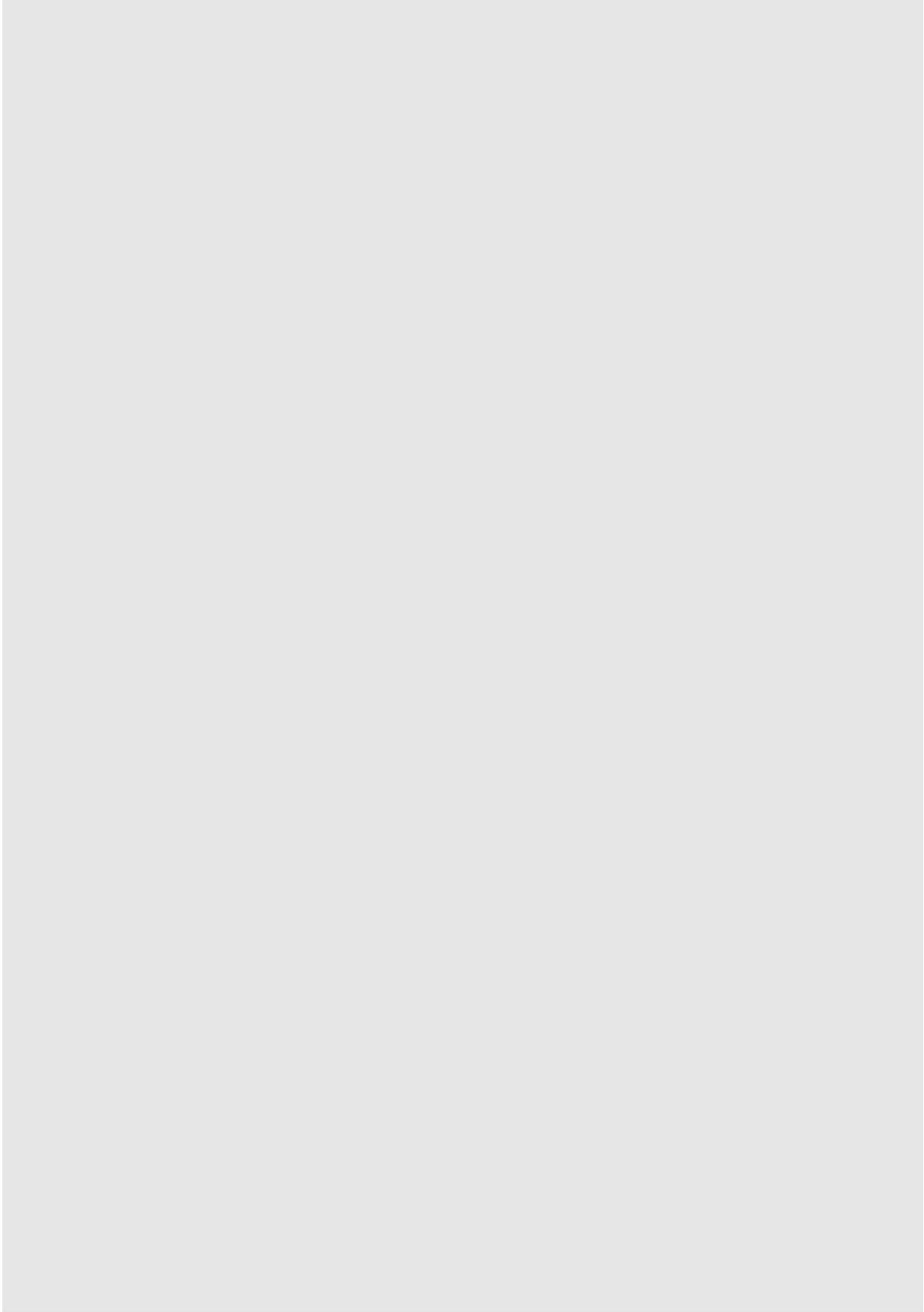
HAFU AS KATA

The term ‘hafu’, which can be understood to mean any Japanese person with a mixed-race background, often means something more complicated in the real lived experience of mixed-race individuals. In the work of Tamaki Watarai, who researched the experiences of Japanese-Brazilian female models who migrate to Japan for work, the conceptualization of the term ‘hafu’ was in practice something that was not an innate quality, but rather a performative role that was learned, much like kata. Upon arriving in Japan, these *mestiça*, or mixed-race women, find that the performance of hafu traits differentiates them from the less prestigious categories they are otherwise relegated to, such as *burajirujin* (Brazilian), *nikkei-burajirujin*, or *gaijin* (foreigner)”. (ibid 670) The ‘*nikkei*’ classification refers to the issuing of three-year residence visas by the Japanese government, starting in 1990, “to Japanese descendants, or *nikkei*, who were non-Japanese nationals” (ibid 664), following on from the mass influx of labor migration from Brazil to Japan in the 1980s “in order to solve the shortage of unskilled labour.” (ibid) It could be argued that this visa category, which “has incorporated Japanese-Brazilian migrants into the lower socio-economic classes of Japanese society” (ibid), may play its part in relegating *mestiça*, by default, from the category of the more affluent concept of hafu.

What, then, differentiates hafu from the rest? For mestiça models, the factors that talent agencies deem “deficient” (ibid 667) in their heritage is the relative “purity” of their hafu status, whereby “they were not born in Japan and they do not have a Japanese nationality, and more importantly, they lack ‘Japaneseness’ and relatively higher-class status associated with it.” (ibid) In learning how to perform a level of “Japaneseness”, precariously balanced with the racialized, foreign role of “Brazilian” – “only in as much as it accords to the internationally recognised favourable image of ‘Brazil’” (ibid 670) – the mestiça is valorized as a hafu, performatively representing a palatable level of cosmopolitan foreignness.



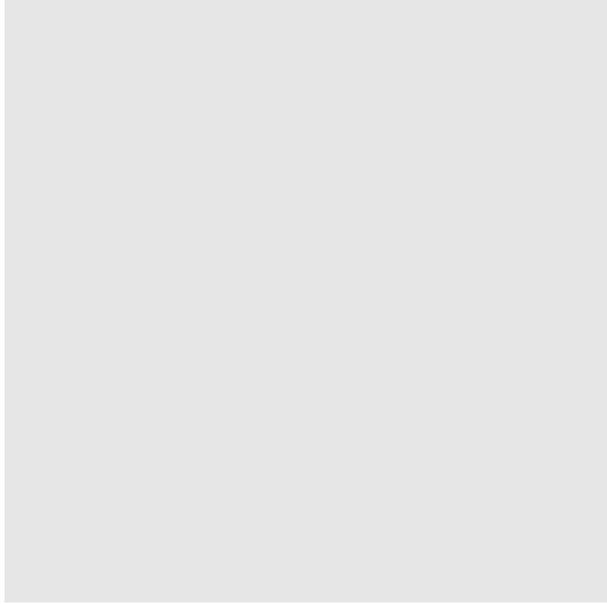
Photograph author's own, 2016



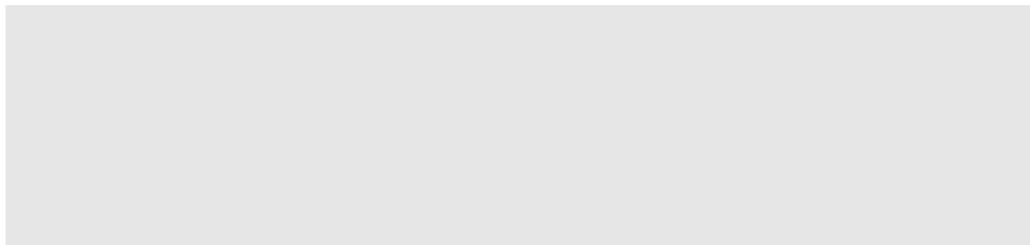
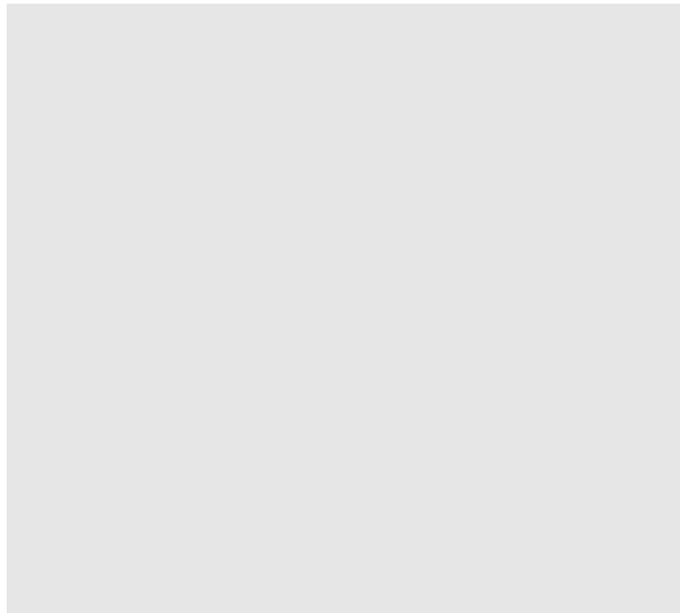
Hafu model Arisa Yagi for Canmake 'Secret Color Eyes' palette

The ways in which the *hafu-gao* trend, or *hafu-make* plays with notions of ethnicity is more complex than merely a sartorial imitation of whiteness, as the models chosen to feature in the tutorials and advertisements for cosmetics indicates. Among the models chosen for the Honey's *karakon* ad mentioned previously (p.203), two out of the three models are hafu, while the other is not. Similarly, Arisa Yagi, the spokesmodel for the Canmake 'Secret Color Eyes' palette - a product which claims to create the effect of both hafu eyes and face - is also hafu. The use of hafu models to advertise products that claim to make one look hafu seems counterintuitive, in that the models themselves shouldn't need these products to look like their own "innate" hafu status. Rather than showing how well the products work by transforming a non-hafu model to look different enough that the product is worth buying, the use of hafu models to promote hafu products instead connotes a sense that their look, as genuinely mixed-race, is still part of the larger performative articulations of beauty practices for non-hafu.

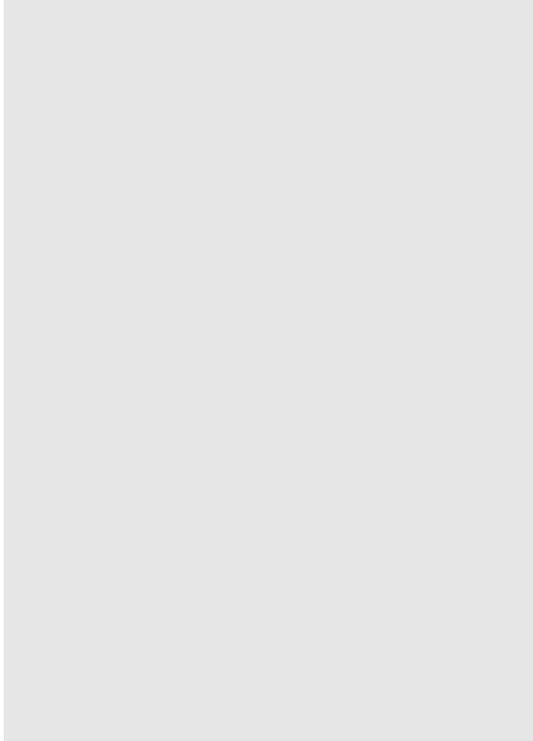
Similarly, when a hafu model is used for both hafu-make and non-hafu-make tutorials, it confuses the boundaries of between hafu emulation and *kata*. A primary example of this would be Nicorun, a hafu model I have discussed in previous chapters, and the ways in which she is utilized by magazines as both a model and a symbolic figurehead. I discussed Nicorun's career as a model previously in chapter 2 regarding *kata*, whereby the practiced and methodical posing for *purikura* was further symptomatic of a larger cultural norm of emulation and repetition. Furthermore, I used her as an example of a popular model whose style and mannerisms were copied by many young women aspirationally - both in an attempt to be her friend, but also to live the lifestyle she's shown as leading through her magazine spreads. Makeup tutorials which feature Nicorun utilize her both for hafu-make looks, as well as having a particular emphasis on looking like her as an individual - where tutorials shift with ease between "I want a hafu face!" (*hafu gao ni naritai*) and "I want Nicorun's face!" (*Nicorun kao ni naritai*), with other tutorials similarly assuring readers that they show how Nicorun herself does her own makeup.



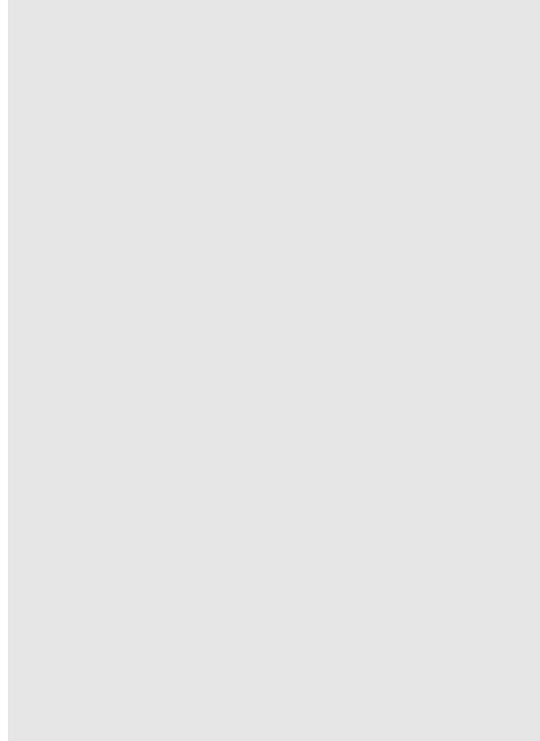
Beautiful Skin Planet purikura machine from 2002 which stressed the skin-whitening and beautification capabilities of its “professional lighting and high-quality cameras”



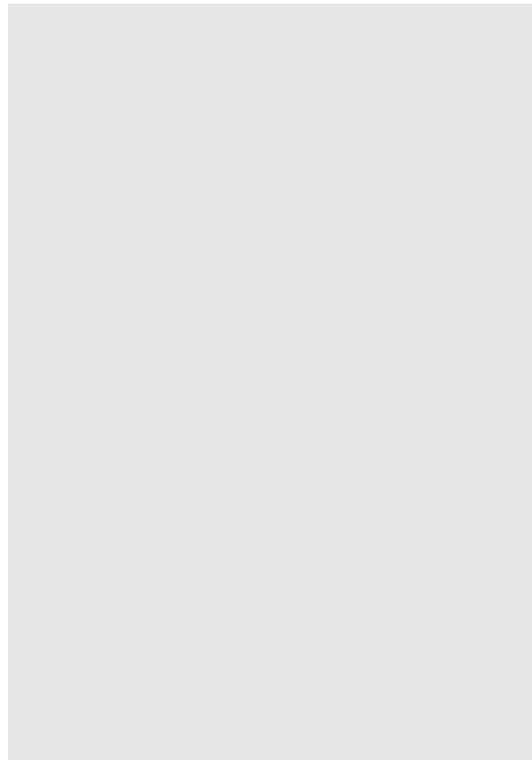
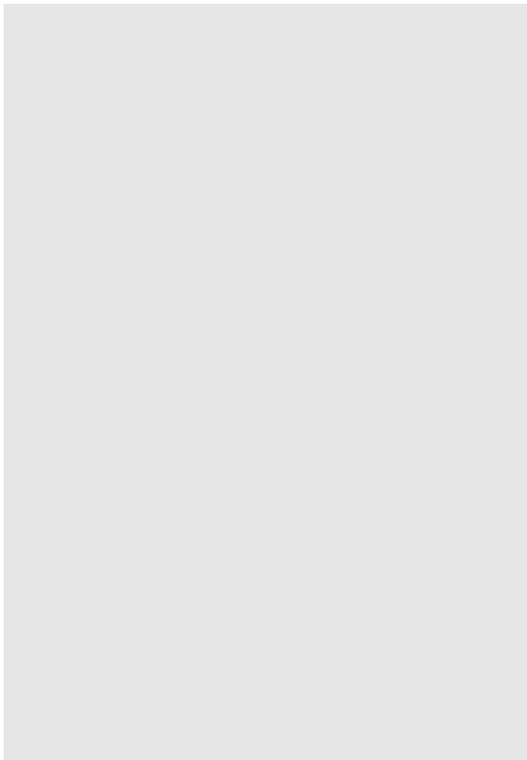
Promotional materials for purikura machine Salon Air2 (2018) featuring Nicorun, highlighting eye shape options



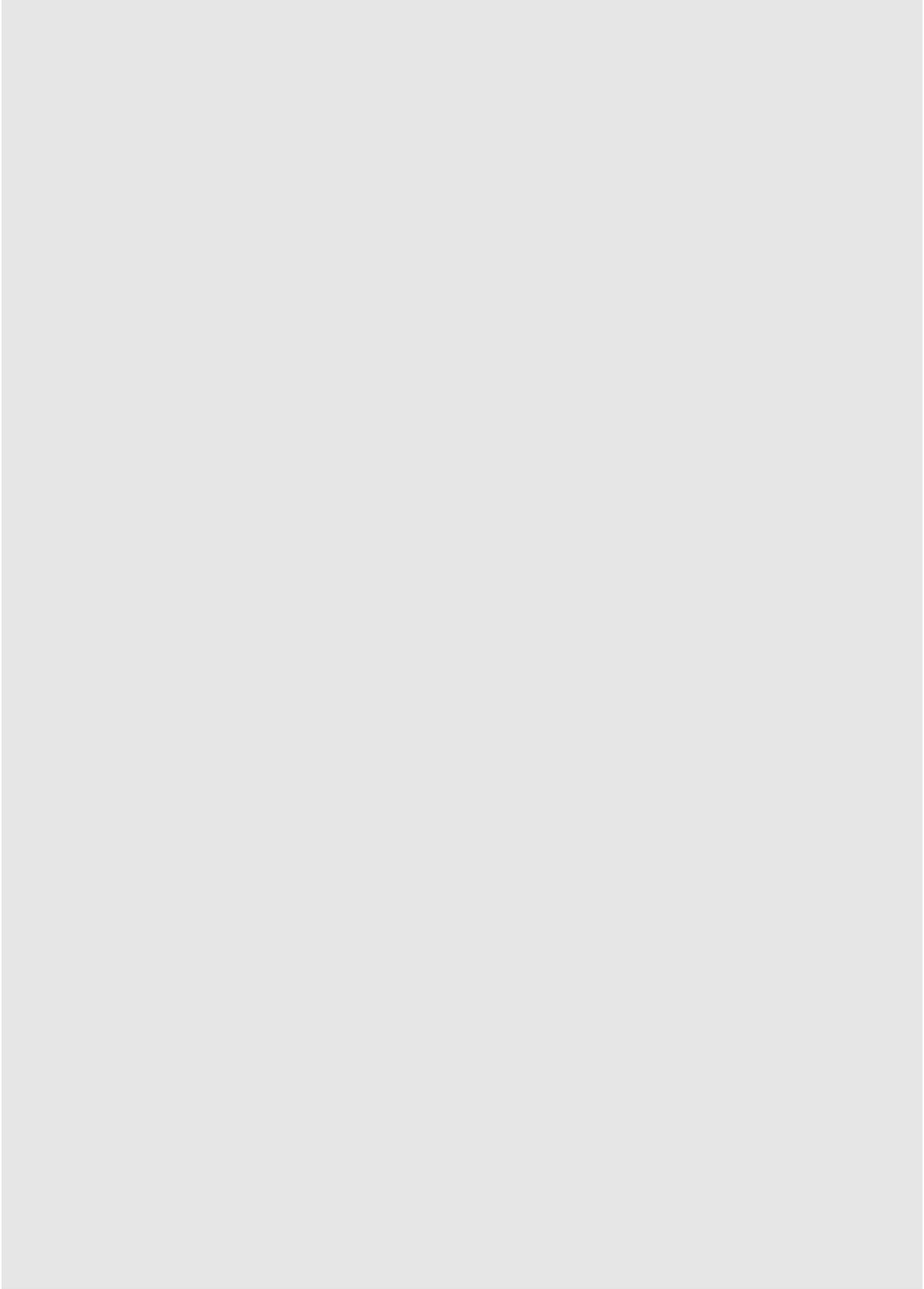
Left: hafu-make tutorial featuring Nicorun (Popteen Magazine, March 2015)



Right: tutorial to follow Nicorun's own 'self-make' makeup techniques/kata (Popteen Magazine, February 2015)



Karakon produced and styled by spokesmodel Nicorun



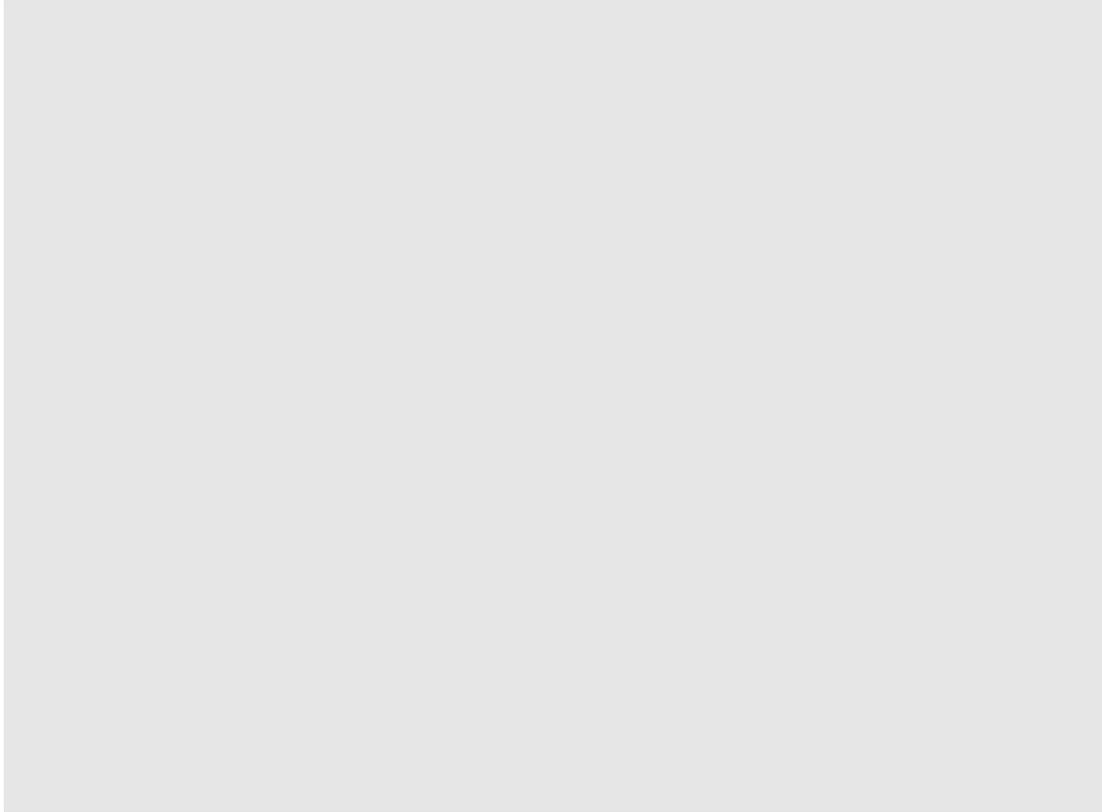
"I Want Nicorun's Face!" (Popteen Magazine, April 2017)

Nicorun, who has dyed her hair any number of shades ranging from standard black and browns to bright pastels and muted greys, also makes liberal use of *dekame* (big eye) techniques, featuring all the usual hallmarks of the look, including *mori* 'piled on' layers of mascara and false lashes as well as a wide array of *karakon*. In her own style book 'I Am Nicorun', she recommends using *karakon* that enlarge the appearance of the eye further, even for more bare faced looks, to remedy what she perceives to be her own inadequately small irises. In many ways, the tutorials and advertisements featuring Nicorun attempt to create a look that is both performatively unique and exotic, while also seen as a reasonably normal look for any non-hafu Japanese girl to try and achieve – by using the same beauty practices as her peers, Nicorun is performatively engaging in in-group cosmetic enhancement.

As discussed in chapters 2 and 3, while a regular high school student Nicorun managed to reach immense popularity as a model, part of a larger mythos built up by the magazines she modelled in, where she was shown advertising school uniforms and cute outfits in photoshoots made to look like they were taken in real life situations. Hafu models, Nicorun among them, are most often portrayed as having been raised in Japan, and are ostensibly understood to have lived the same lives as most of the girls who seek to emulate them. Their primary cultural identity is that of Japanese, while being hafu is a bit of cosmopolitan, international flair that sometimes results in a physically manifest difference. This "difference" is usually the most important aspect of the aspirational hafu - it serves as a way of standing out, similar to fashion statements or particularly outstanding talents or beauty. For her fans, becoming models for these magazines isn't an unrealistic dream, so 'copying' her style or mannerisms is a way of practicing the same *kata*.

“ISN'T IT FINE IF IT'S FUN?”

One defining characteristic expected of hafu is that they be both bicultural and bilingual, an exoticism that further serves as social capital in contemporary Japan. (Watarai 668) To further problematize this notion, however, the experiences of hafu differ based on other contextual factors within which linguistic ability is fostered, such as their level of education and the social status of their parents (Mori Want 2017, 171) - all forms of social capital rooted in class and, more often than not, comparative wealth. As discussed previously, where the good wife, wise mother placed middle-class women as “an essential symbol of tradition and native [Japanese] culture”, this class-centric ideal differentiated itself not only as distinct from Western women but also from lower-class “indigenous and backward” women (Ashikari 2003, 9), further associating foreignness with cultural ineptitude. Language fluency is frequently utilized as a means for national exclusion, at times lethally. In the case of the 1923 Kanto massacre, whereby upwards of six thousand Koreans residing in Japan were executed by the Japanese military, police and vigilantes – one means of determining nationality utilized ad-hoc checkpoints where suspected Koreans “had their cultural and linguistic skills tested” (Silverberg 2009, 40). For many hafu, the expectation is both that they be bilingual, but also that their Japanese skills are below average - when combined with the notion that many hafu are considered “not Japanese enough” (Mori Want 2017 164), the importance of “adequate” linguistic ability further places them into the outsider category of backwards foreignness.



(NBC News 2015)

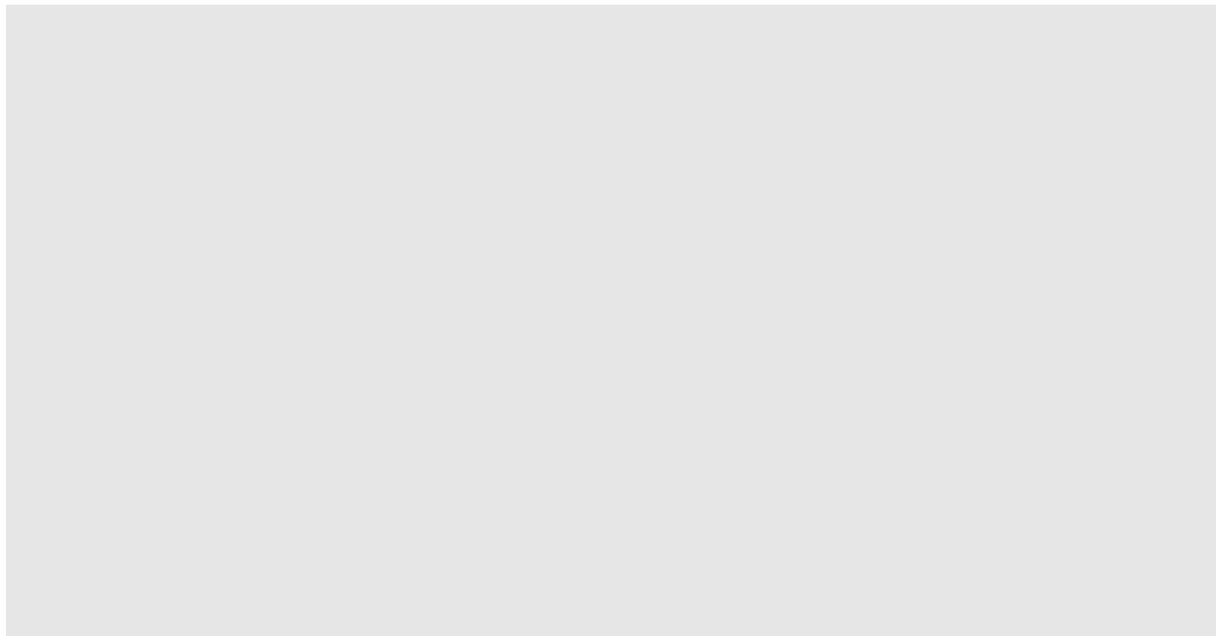
Born in 1994 and raised primarily in Sasebo, Nagasaki, Ariana Miyamoto is the titleholder for the Miss Universe Japan 2015 beauty pageant, and is the first hafu woman to be crowned with the title. Beauty pageants, it has been noted, are often sites for the exploration of gender and nation as racialized categories (Banet-Weiser 1999), and as such Miyamoto's role as Miss Japan is particularly noteworthy - prior to 2015, the title was only ever held by individuals who matched an imagined ethnic category of "Japanese". Despite her cultural knowledge, competence and Japanese citizenship, Miyamoto's win disrupted the previously linear categories of nationality and ethnicity in Japan, destabilizing the correlation between 'race' and national identity (Crick-Friesen 2016, 25). Since being crowned Miss Japan, Miyamoto has spoken out about discrimination that she has faced, and has subsequently stated that going forward, she will use her fame to help combat racial prejudice, making use of her platform to campaign for increased awareness of racial discrimination and its consequences in Japan.

Ariana Miyamoto's nomination and subsequent win as Miss Universe Japan was met with a lackluster response from the general public which frequently delved into territory that can be construed as racist. Posts on social media queried, *"Is it OK to select a hafu to represent Japan?"*; *"Miss Universe Japan is...what? What kind of person is she? She's not Japanese, right?"*; and *"Even though she's Miss Universe Japan, her face is foreign no matter how you look at it."* (Wesby 2015) As a Black hafu individual, Miyamoto has struggled to gain acceptance as a representative of Japan, and much like the exclusionary tactics of the Meiji-era good wife, wise mother ideology, she is understood by many to not be an appropriate exemplar for normative Japanese femininity based on her skin color and mixed heritage. Despite the perceived limitations of her hafu status, when Miyamoto has addressed this perceived gap between ethnicity and cultural identity, she states that she believes the term hafu allows mixed-race individuals in Japan to participate in society, even if only in a limited capacity that primarily remains an outsider category:

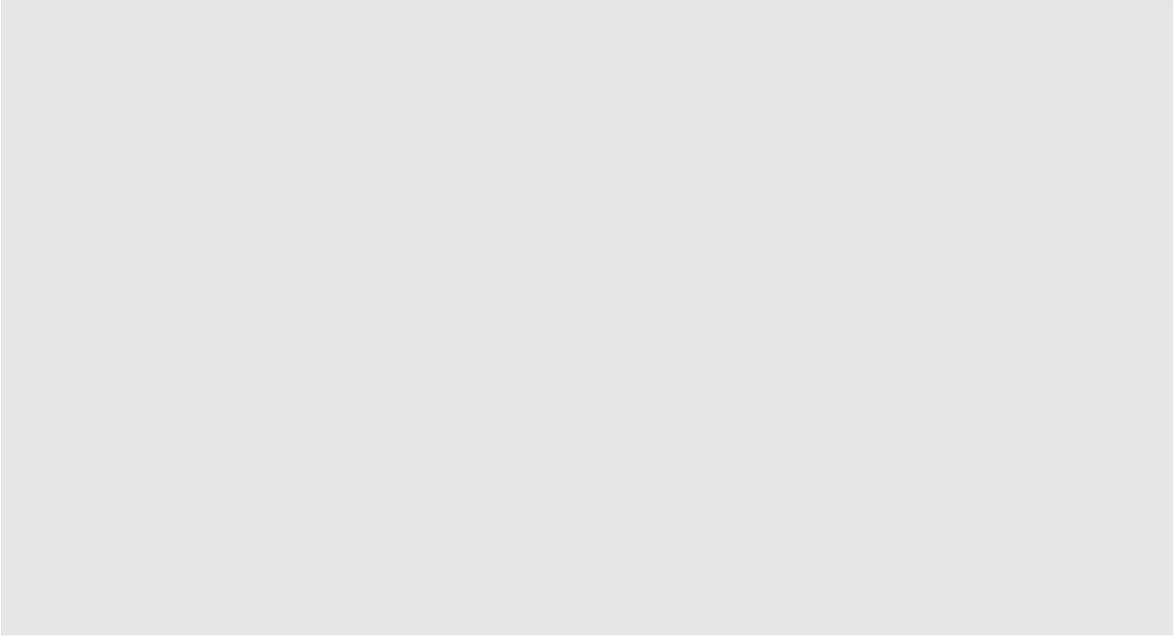
"If it was not for the word hafu, it would be very hard to describe who I am, what kind of person I am in Japan ... If I say I am 'Japanese' the reply would be: 'No, you can't be'. People will not believe that. But if I say I am 'hafu', people agree. There is no word like hafu outside Japan, but I think we need it here. In order for us mixed kids to live in Japan, it is indispensable" (BBC News 2015)

As a guest on the comedy variety program Downtown DX (2016), Miyamoto broached the subject of common misconceptions she faces as a mixed-race individual - in particular, she questioned why, despite having been born and raised in Japan, it is assumed that she wouldn't understand how to navigate the various levels of honorific Japanese, and will be met with surprise when showing a minimum level of competence in this area. She elaborated on some of the ways in which hafu are treated as 'stupid', or less capable of understanding the Japanese language and cultural norms because of their 'foreign' status. Miyamoto explained that her belief is that this misconception is perpetuated by other popular hafu models, such as her fellow guests Karen Takizawa

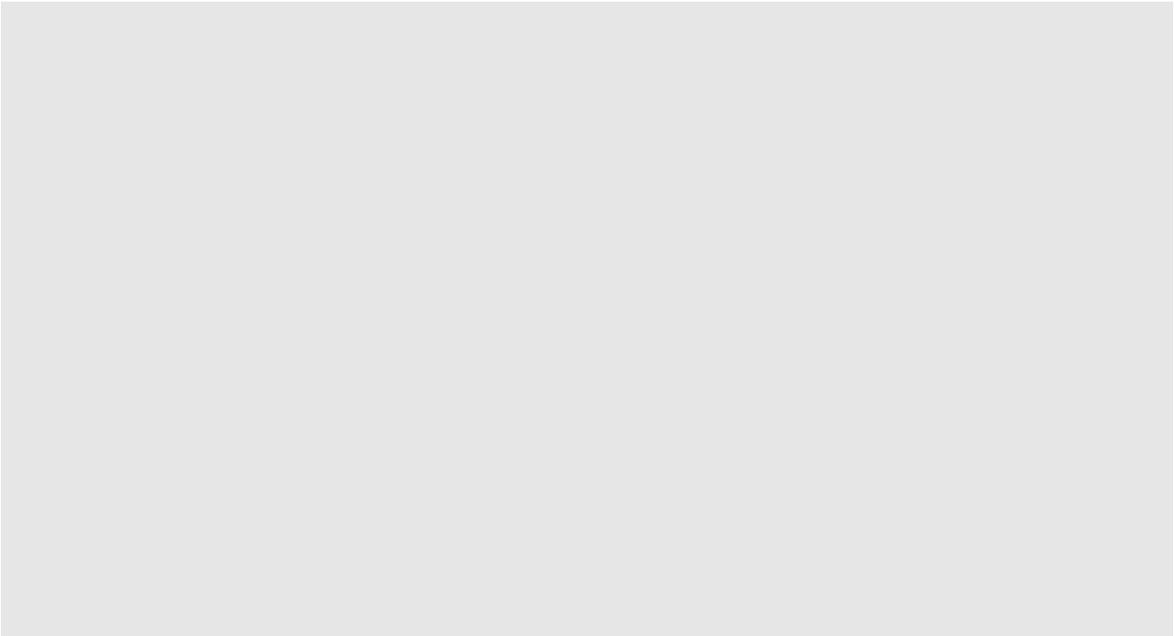
and Nicole Fujita, or Nicorun. Gesturing lightheartedly, she prompted them with the assertion that they are responsible for the widely held notion that hafu are “*baka*”, a term that can range from foolish to idiotic in its meaning, and that this is in large part due to their intentional misuse of the Japanese language in strange ways, playing into a trope of foreignness or ineptitude. In response, Nicorun laughed, drawing further laughter from the studio audience and guests - “isn’t it fine if it’s fun?”



Popular Model M (Miyamoto)’s CLAIM: “It’s Nicorun’s fault that all hafu are considered stupid”



“We were both born and raised in Japan”



“Yet the way you speak is strange”



“Isn’t it fine if it’s fun?”

When compared to Nicorun’s jovial response, Miyamoto’s challenge may seem initially stuffy or heavy-handed, particularly for the comedy program they were guests on. However, her concerns stem not only from her experiences as a mixed-race individual in Japan, but more particularly from her status as the daughter of a Japanese mother and African American father. With her slim figure and straightened hair, Miyamoto largely fits into the hegemonic categories of beauty and femininity perpetuated by beauty pageants - despite this, her status as a Black woman transgresses these categories in ways that many popular hafu celebrities do not.

Miyamoto has spoken about her experiences of the discrimination she faced as a Black hafu raised in Japan from early childhood, where her classmates would frequently refuse to touch her or refuse to swim in the pool with her for fear of her skin color rubbing off on them – “Whenever the teacher told us to hold hands, other children thought my black skin would rub off on them, so they said, 'Don't touch me'" (CBS News 2015). She recalls being ostracized for her skin color and curly hair, where “classmates and their parents referred to her as *kurombo*, the Japanese equivalent of the N-word.” (Wesby 2015) Her experiences differ in this regard from that of Nicorun or Karen

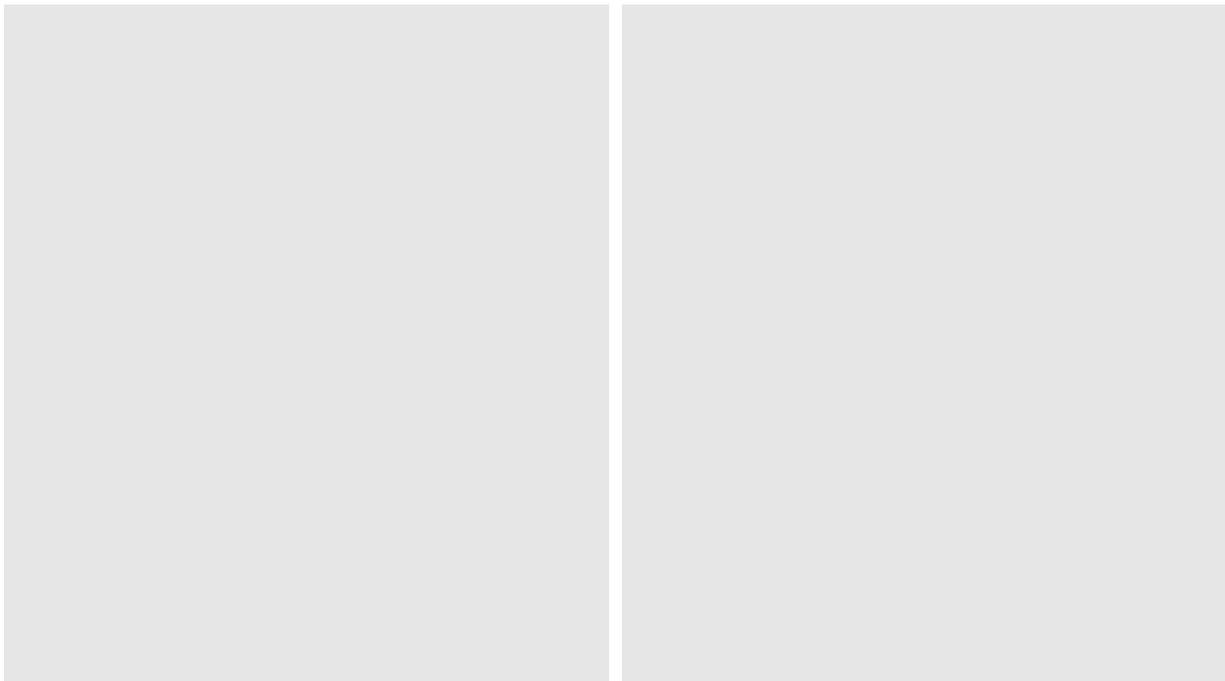
Takizawa, as they fit a more normative model of Japanese beauty standards, particularly regarding skin color.

Rather than interpreting Nicorun's response as stupid or immature, it's possible to see that Nicorun is utilizing her status as a hafu to play dumb, somewhat, with emphasis on 'play' - whereby her popularity is seemingly predicated on this playfulness, especially among the young women that I worked with. By virtue of being hafu, Nicorun is effectively able to question Japanese culture without the same social repercussions, naively or perhaps knowingly questioning why she ought to show deference to elders through honorific speech, or at the very least why she shouldn't have fun - this builds off themes discussed in chapter 3 surrounding conspicuous consumption and emphatic femininity as aspects of female selfishness that serve as forms of everyday resistance against a cultural expectation of female selflessness. Rather than the normative category of the good wife, wise mother, hafu-make exists among a variety of ways to stand out as 'different'. It is possible to argue that when girls emulate Nicorun's way of dressing, or her mannerisms, or more particularly, her hafu features through colored contacts or hair dye, they're trying to gain access to the same privileges Nicorun is afforded by her hafu status – while at the same time, non-hafu women in Japan are in a position of privilege, because they can play with notions of race and identity whereas those they mimic often cannot.

“I GUESS SHE ISN'T REALLY JAPANESE, AFTER ALL”

Despite being a population that boasts a diverse range of skin tones, this understanding of an “original” fair tone that should be maintained both disenfranchises many from normative standards of beauty in Japan, but further, from that of normative “Japaneseness” (*nihonjin-rashii*), especially for non-Caucasian hafu. The tenuous balance of acceptance and ridicule that many hafu with darker skin - particularly women - face is exemplified in the career of professional tennis player Naomi Osaka. Osaka, who

boasts four Grand Slam singles championships and is the reigning champion of both the US and Australian Open, among other accolades, was born in Japan to a Haitian father and Japanese mother before moving to the United States at age three. As the first Asian player to hold the top ranking in singles, ranked No. 1 by the Women's Tennis Association, the 23-year-old has since elected to give up her U.S. citizenship to represent Japan in the Tokyo Summer Olympics, (Boren 2019) stating, "I always represent Japan when I play". (M. Hara 2020)



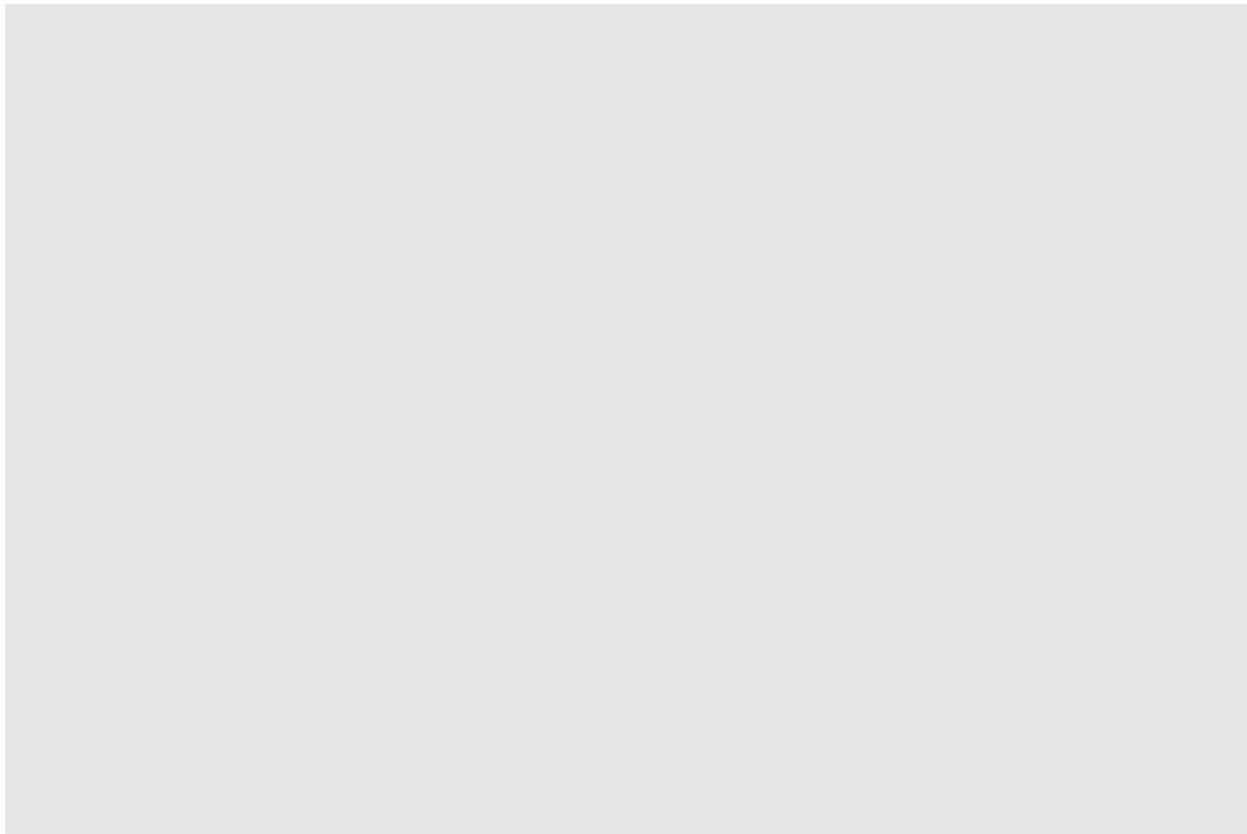
However, despite her commitment to her Japanese heritage, the star athlete has faced persistent racism and colorism from within Japan. In January of 2019, the Cup Noodle giant Nissin featured Osaka in their Hungry to Win ad campaign (above left) with pale skin, light brown hair and "Caucasian facial features" (McCurry 2019) to much backlash, being accused of whitewashing the athlete to make her more commercially "appealing" to Japanese audiences. (Ibid; McNeil 2019) Following an apology from a Nissin spokesperson who stated "There is no intention of whitewashing ... We accept that we are not sensitive enough and will pay more attention to diversity issues in the future", the ad campaign was pulled from the air and the company's YouTube channel. Later that year, in September of 2019, Japanese comedy duo A Masso were forced to

apologize to Osaka for comments made during a live broadcast regarding her skin tone, stating that “she is too sunburnt” and “needed some bleach”. Along with the pair’s apology, their management company, Watanabe Entertainment, stated that they would also like to apologize for “remarks inconsiderate of diversity in an era where diversity is respected,” (*Yahoo Sport* 2019), a response that lacks a degree of consideration and respect for Naomi Osaka herself, rather than the mere concept of diversity.

On August 27th of 2020, following the shooting of Jacob Blake by police in Kenosha, Wisconsin, Naomi Osaka stated publicly that she would be suspending her participation in the Western & Southern Open tennis tournament, along with numerous other athletes who staged protests to show their support against racial injustice and continued police violence. She wrote on her Twitter, “Before I am [an] athlete, I am a black woman ... I don’t expect anything drastic to happen with me not playing, but if I can get a conversation started in a majority white sport I consider that a step in the right direction.” (*BBC News* 2020b) Following an announcement from the tournament organizers, who stated that “As a sport, tennis is collectively taking a stance against racial inequality and social injustice [by postponing the event]” (*Sky Sports* 2020), Osaka returned to the tournament clad in a Black Lives Matter t-shirt. She further showed her support for the Black Lives Matter cause by wearing seven different face masks to each of her matches during the US Open in September 2020, each highlighting a different Black victim of racial injustice and police brutality, particularly Breonna Taylor, Elijah McClain, Ahmaud Arbery, Trayvon Martin, George Floyd, Philando Castle and Tamir Rice.

Following the announcement of her boycott of the Western & Southern Open tennis tournament and her further support of the Black Lives Matter movement, Osaka received a slew of backlash from Japanese commenters - as one Twitter user opined, “Naomi Osaka does not seem to be the pride of Japan. This is my own personal view after all, but I now recognize her as a terrorist. In the future I do not want her to get involved in tennis, a sport played by gentlemen.” (Denyer 2020) Another Twitter user even went so far as to state that, “I guess she isn't really Japanese, after all” (N. Thompson 2020). The implication of this statement is that, by showing her support for the Black Lives Matter movement, and by explicitly framing herself as a Black woman,

Naomi Osaka cannot be a Japanese individual, despite both her nationality and her hafu status. Within this framework, it is apparently impossible to be both.

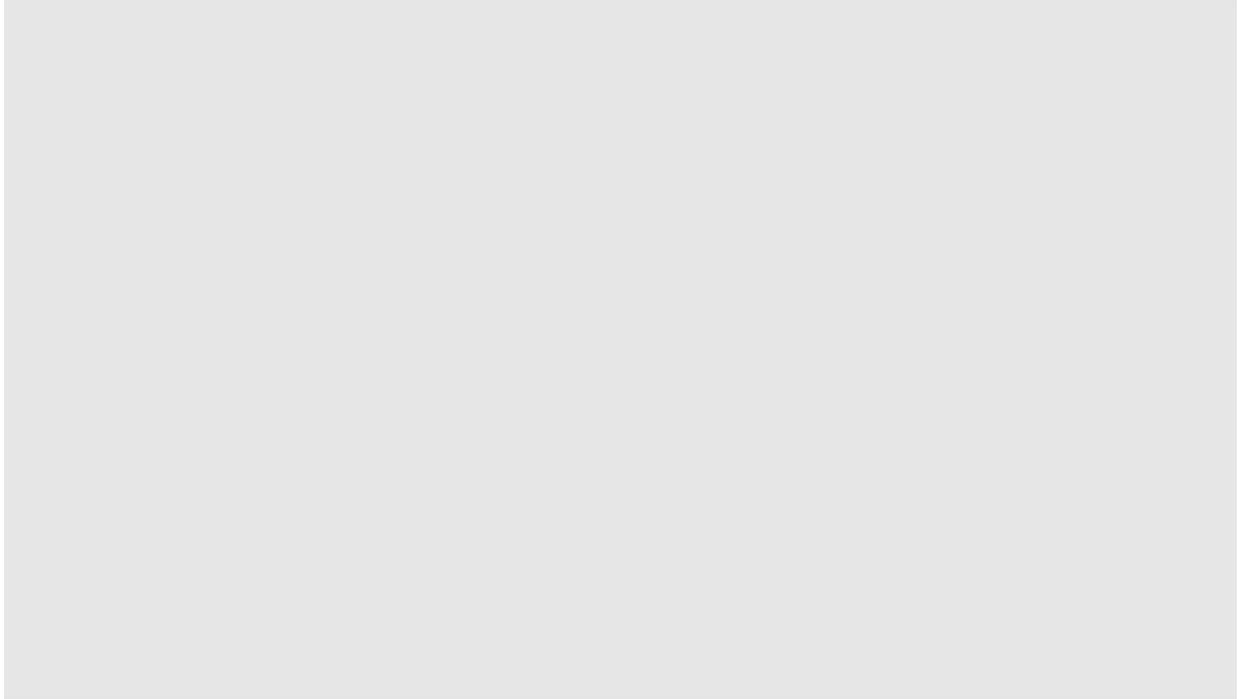


Of course, racism against female athletes of color is nothing new, nor particular to Japan. Following Naomi Osaka's win against Serena Williams in the 2018 US Open, the Australian tabloid the Herald Sun published a strip by cartoonist Mark Knight (above). The strip depicted Osaka in the background, as a thin, blonde, white woman, while Williams is seen in the foreground throwing a tantrum over the results of the game - "a seething, oversized Williams with thick lips and wild, upright hair jumps on her smashed racket, unable to control her rage at losing the championship. Nearby lies a discarded pacifier". (B. Newman 2018) The National Association of Black Journalists deemed the cartoon "repugnant", stating "The Sept 10 cartoon not only exudes racist, sexist caricatures of both women, but Williams' depiction is unnecessarily sambo-like". (Davidson 2018) This depiction, which has been resoundingly criticized as both sexist and racist, is also noted for falling into the visual category of racist illustrations from the Jim Crow era. These comics "depicted African-descended women as simultaneously

comical and frighteningly brutish, with jet-black skin, voluptuous bodies, thick lips and insatiable appetites” (B. Newman 2018), a reassertion of racist and sexist imagery intended for the purposes of marginalization and control of Black individuals.

Serena Williams has been the target of racist and sexist comments for decades, where expressions of bigotry mar her every move, regardless of whether she wins or loses, and where she is frequently “compared to an animal, likened to a man, and deemed frightening and horrifyingly unattractive.” (Desmond-Harris 2017) Even when intended as complimentary, commentary surrounding her athletic prowess is almost inevitably rooted in tropes of Black individuals as animalistic and aggressive, part of what is deemed by James McKay and Helen John to be the “pornographic eroticism and sexual grotesquerie in representations of African American sportswomen”. (McKay & Johnson 2008) Williams’s athleticism is framed as attributable to an inherent quality of her ethnicity, as an “essentialist logic of racial difference, which has long sought to mark the black body as inherently different from other bodies.” (Delia Douglas 2004, cited in Desmond-Harris 2017)

This notion of Black women as “masculine, unattractive, and overly sexual at once” (ibid) also aligns with Japanese notions of acceptable femininity that insist on fair skin. To return to the Japanese trope of the “wild”, even when those with darker skin are categorized as such in a complimentary way, it is always understood as outside the normative feminine - this image of "wild" women conveys forms of femininity and sexuality that are antithetical to the dominant femininity and sexuality. Therefore, the image of "wild" women is only comprehensible in contrast with the ideal image of women”. (Ashikari 2003, 24) Similarly, just as in the ways that Serena Williams’s athleticism is attributed to the innate qualities of her ethnicity, women in Japan who are understood as “wild” are sexually active and provocative, further aligning with notions of Black women as “inherently violent and prone to outbursts of rage and sexual aggression.” (B. Newman 2018)

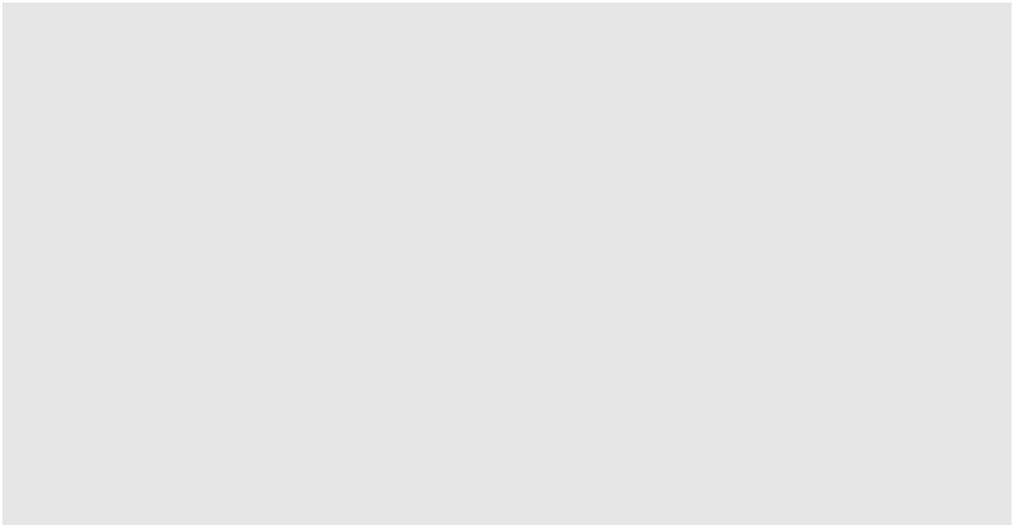
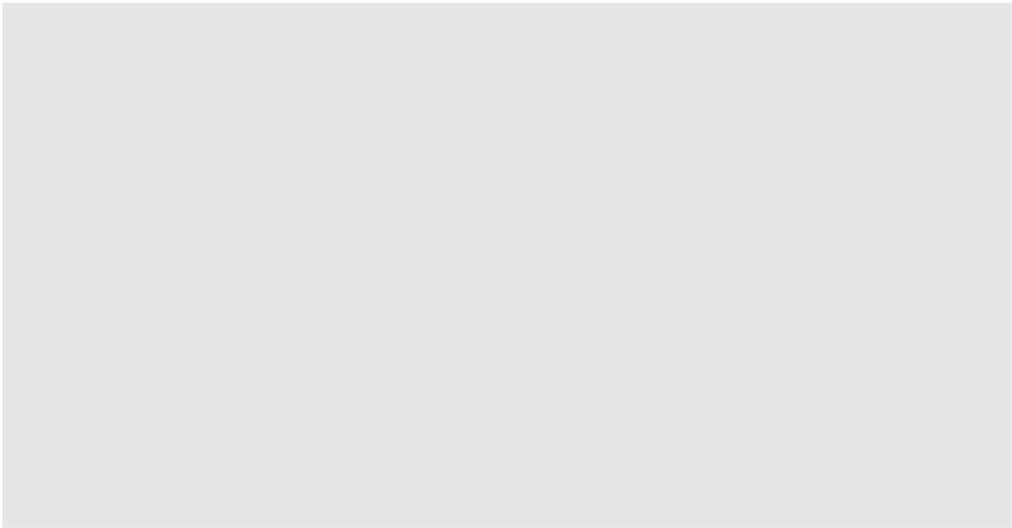
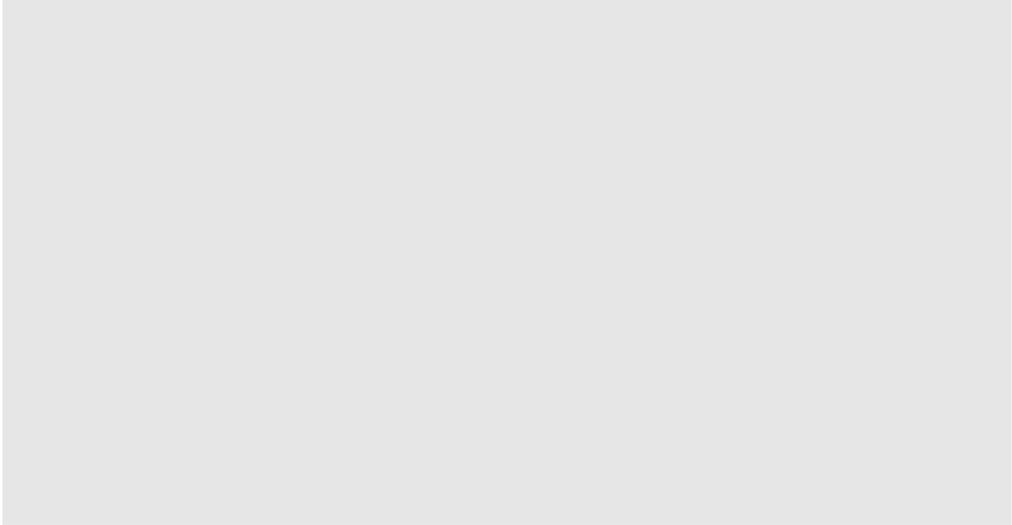


PLAYING THE HEEL

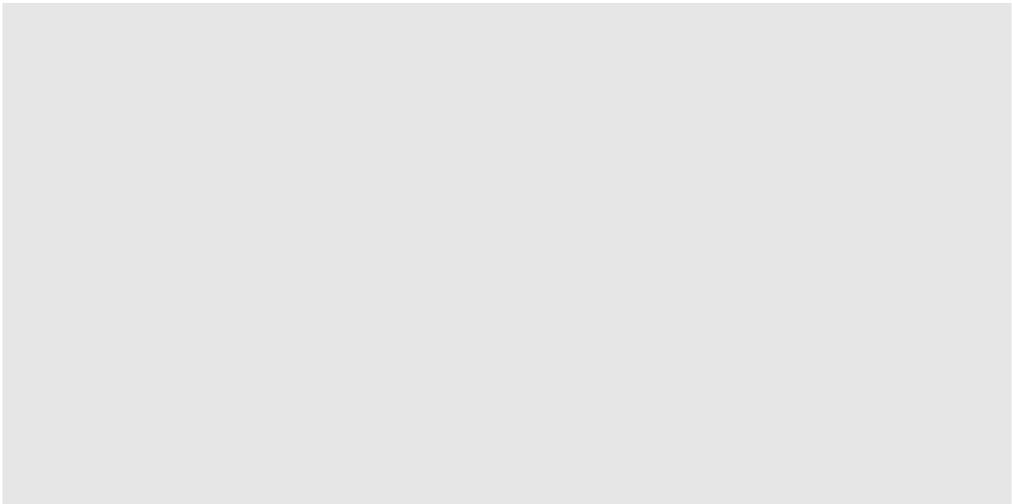
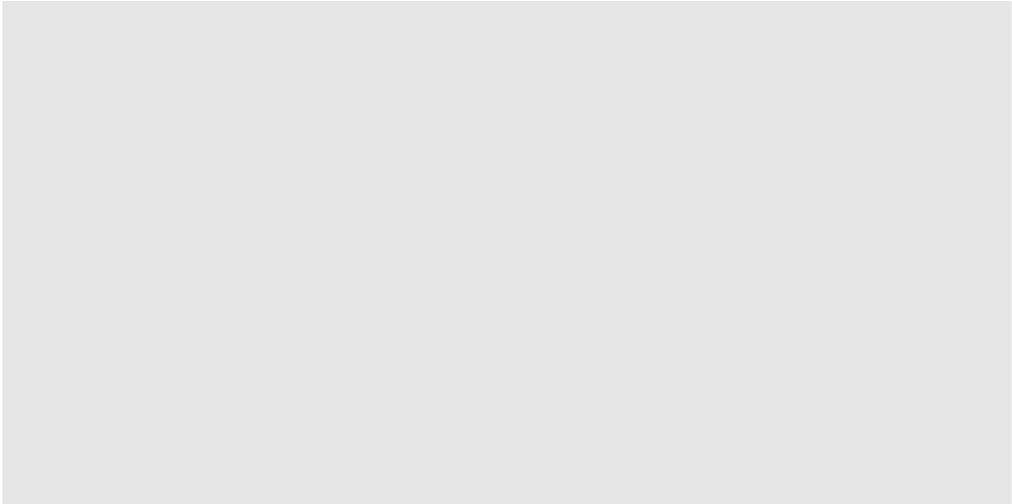
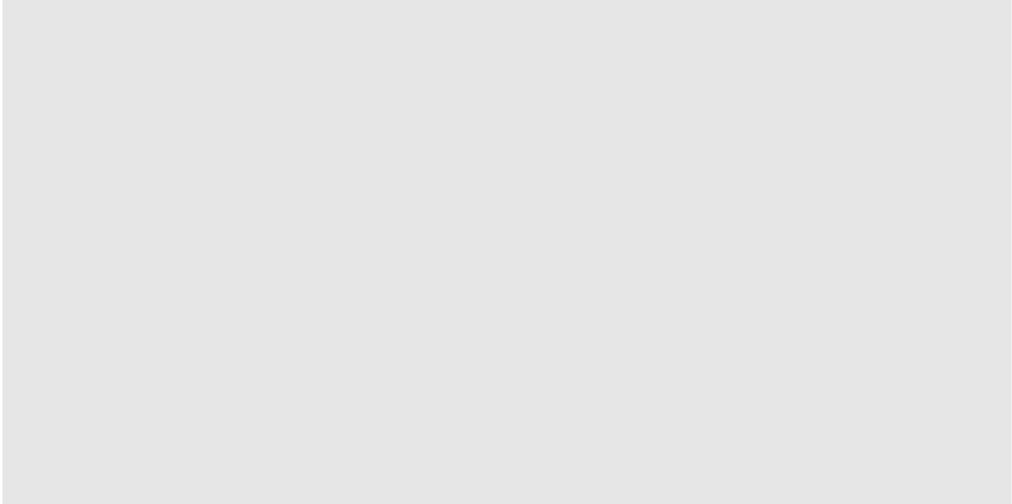
In September 2015, the Fuji Television reality series Terrace House was picked up by Netflix, to be co-produced as a Netflix Original which would air on both the television network in Japan as well as the streaming service in staggered batches of episodes, filmed only months before airing. The show is premised on following the lives of six strangers who cohabitate in an affluently extravagant house while continuing with their daily lives and jobs, with the six housemates rotating as cast members would move on to be replaced by someone new. As the show reiterates every episode, "Terrace House is a show about six strangers, men and women, living together, and we observe how they interact with each other. All that we've prepared is a beautiful home and automobile. As usual, there is no script at all." This first season with Netflix, titled Boys & Girls in the City, gained a cult following, lauded in particular for its sense of mundane realism and lack of ostentatious conflict - writing for The Guardian, Rachel Aroesti stated that "For everybody who has been consistently disappointed with the gulf between the principles of reality TV and the actual reality, Terrace House might be the

genre's saving grace." (Aroesti 2017) Further deemed by Troy Patterson of The New Yorker as "closer to a nature documentary than to the exploitation films that one has come to expect from reality television" (Patterson 2018), others have hailed it as "[fixing] what's broken in reality TV ... Terrace House stands alone by simply letting actual humans be delightfully, heartbreakingly human." (McElroy 2016)

Premiering on May 14th 2019, the fifth season of the franchise - titled Terrace House: Tokyo 2019–2020 - followed the same series structure with a cast of three men and three women temporarily cohabitating in a house, this time in the Setagaya ward of Tokyo. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, production of the show was temporarily halted in April of 2020, but continued airing episodes that had been filmed prior to the suspension of production. In the 38th episode of the series, titled, "Case of The Costume Incident" (air date: March 31st 2020), conflict arose between two of the cast members when Kai Kobayashi, a 25-year-old aspiring comedian, destroyed fellow housemate Hana Kimura's wrestling stage costume by putting it in the dryer. For Hana, a 22-year-old professional wrestler, this costume "was as important as [her] own life", which she struggled to explain to Kai while holding back tears. Following his muted apology, Hana angrily told him to "think about other people for a change", before exiting the room, knocking his hat off of his head on the way out.



“It’s not about the money. It’s as important as my own life. You have no idea what hard work is.”



“What it means to endure pain, breaking bones and shedding blood.”

“You couldn’t understand what that might feel like.”

“Why do I deserve being derailed by you when I work so hard?”

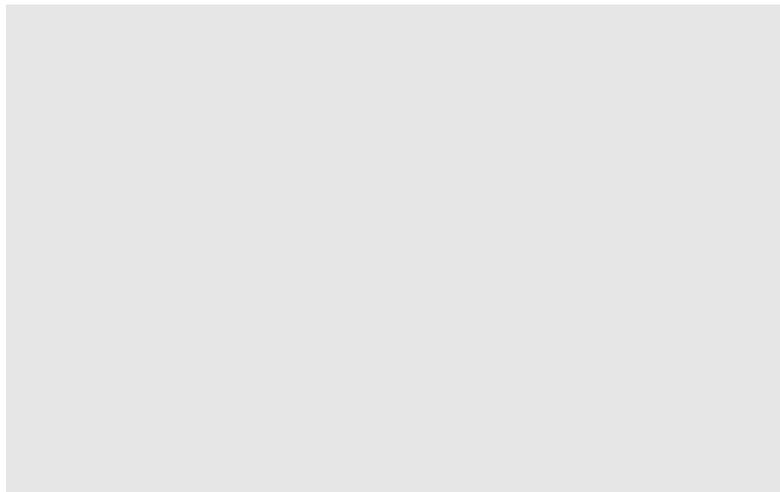
The argument was showcased in teasers for the episode, and an unnamed friend of Hana's has since come forward with text messages she was sent that state "the criticism I'm getting is already awful... even though it hasn't been aired yet..." (*Yomiuri Shimbun* 2021) Responses to the episode were primarily criticisms against Hana, where detractors on social media stated "this barbaric child is the worst", and dubbed her "the most hated member in Terrace House history". (Ibid)

Hana posted publicly on her social media about this harassment, which intensified following the full airing of the episode - friends and family grew concerned when she began posting increasingly erratically to her Instagram story, in response to a tweet targeted at Hana which stated "so fucking gross. please disappear [kill yourself] as soon as possible." She responded, "Hey, I get it. Man, I really want to disappear ... I'm sorry that my face and my inner being is ugly. If I can disappear, I want to disappear quickly ... I'm sorry for being alive. I'm sorry for not being a good person. I'm sorry for making you uncomfortable. If I disappear, will you forgive me? ... If I disappear, will everyone love me?" At 3 A.M. on the 23rd of May 2020, Hana tweeted her last message, which would serve as her suicide note:

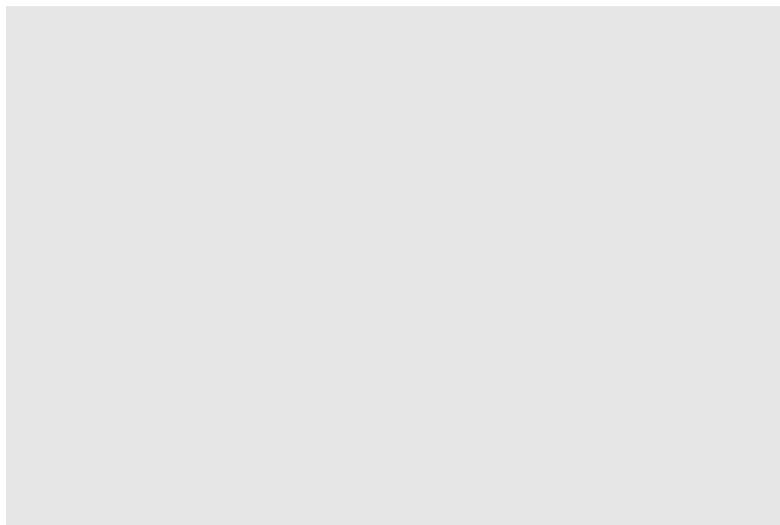
"I get nearly 100 blunt remarks every day. I can't deny feeling hurt. 'Go die, you're disgusting, just disappear' — I think about this more than anyone else. Thanks for giving birth to me, mom. I wanted to be loved in this life. Thank you to everyone close to me who supported me. I love you. Sorry for being weak."

In the immediate aftermath of Hana Kimura's suicide, her mother - also a professional wrestler - spoke out against Fuji Television, filing a complaint with the Japanese Broadcasting Ethics & Program Improvement Organization, and revealing that the argument between her daughter and her housemate Kai had been instigated and staged by the production team for the show, "implicating the show in Kimura's death and alleging that the show depicted Hana as an aggressive and violent person, infringing upon her personal rights" (Margolis 2020), an act she described as forcing her daughter to "play the heel". During her "short but storied career as a professional

wrestler, winning multiple championships and awards” (ibid), Hana Kimura fulfilled the role of the “heel” - what is generally considered the trope of a wrestler who acts out a villainous role, as a companion to the heroic “face”, or ostensible protagonist of a match. The role of heel is to rile up a crowd, intentionally performing an outwardly jeering or contemptuous attitude “to get 'heat,' which means spurring the crowd to obstreperous hatred, and generally involves cheating and pretty much any other manner of socially unacceptable behavior that will get the job done.” (Edison 2017)



(Forbes 2020)



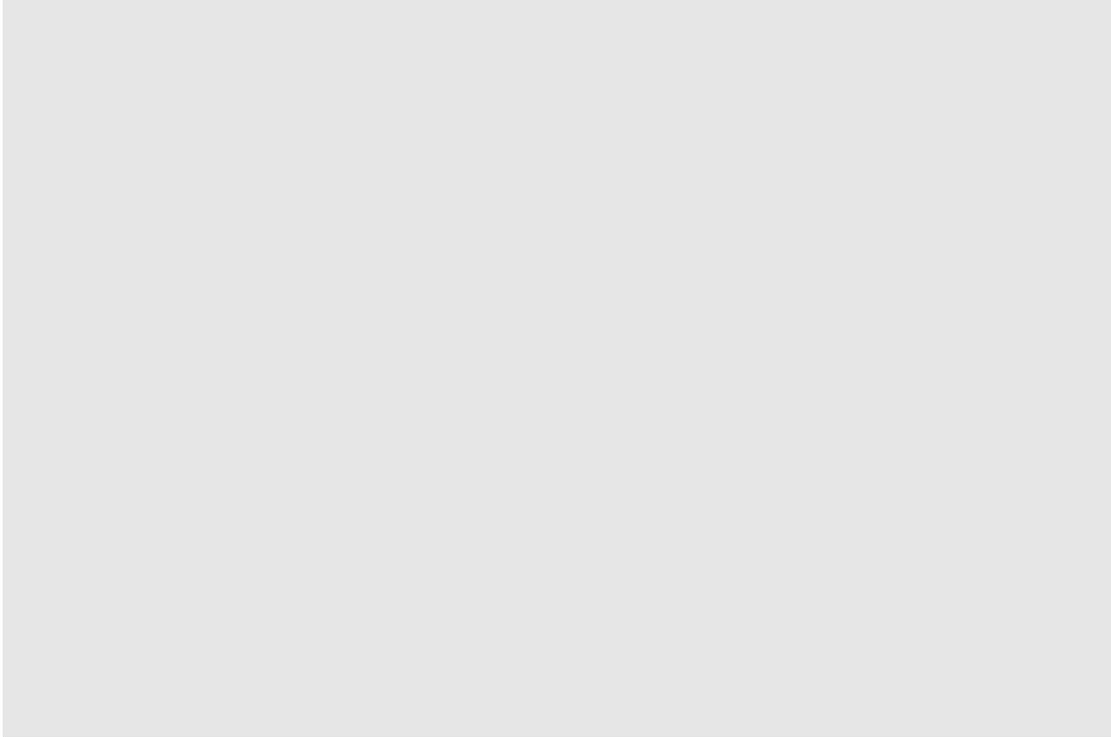
(Pro Wrestling Post 2020)

Within the context of wrestling, this is understood to be part of the “kayfabe”, or suspension of disbelief that what is being portrayed during a match is “real” - while rivalries and feuds between wrestlers may be understood to be real within the context of a match and its promotions, wrestling must also be understood as a performance in front of a live audience, with staged tensions in terms of these face and heel roles that may not translate to real life outside of the ring. Considering this role in the context of reality television, however, tips the precarious balance of the kayfabe necessary in a professional sport where these roles are understood to be a form of acting, resulting in a purportedly “real” representation of a heated argument wherein Hana was forced to act more aggressively than she felt. In text message exchanges that were revealed by friends and family, it was shown that Hana had not wanted to have the fight at all, and was encouraged by the production team to be more violent, even going so far as telling her to assault her housemate, something that she was not comfortable doing - “the staff told me that I should slap him in the face, but I just couldn’t do it,” she explained. “It’s not real,” she wrote - “I really feel terrible about it.” (Margolis 2020)

Hana Kimura’s tragic death has initiated a public debate surrounding the ways in which women are both portrayed in media, as well the backlash they face from the general public when seen to be “acting out”. In Hana’s case, the intense vehemence with which viewers reacted to her argument with her housemate was worsened not only by her acting outside the bounds of appropriate femininity, but was further heightened by her role as both a professional wrestler and a non-Caucasian hafu with darker skin, where “The trolls piled on, telling her to die and criticizing her for her supposed lack of femininity, her muscular build, her outspokenness and the dark skin she inherited from her Indonesian father” (Dooley and Inoue 2020). Being Indonesian on her father’s side, Hana was frequently categorized by others as falling into the category of the “wild” woman, for better or worse - her seemingly “wild” nature was something she was able to utilize to her advantage as a professional wrestler, a field known for its performative barbarism. However, as her mother has commented in the aftermath of her death, Hana was regularly ostracized and bullied for her perceived ethnic difference - this persisted during her time on the television program, as noted by Japan Times contributor Farrah

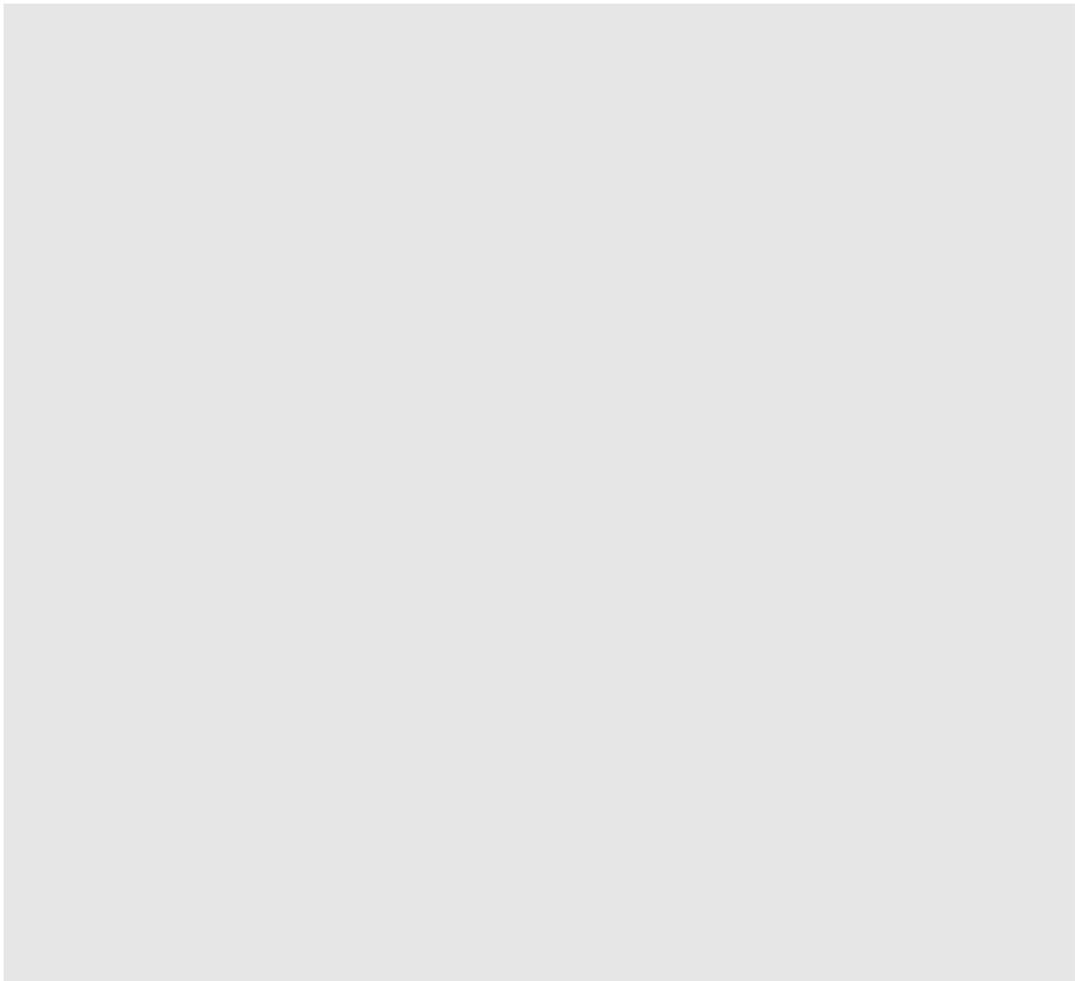
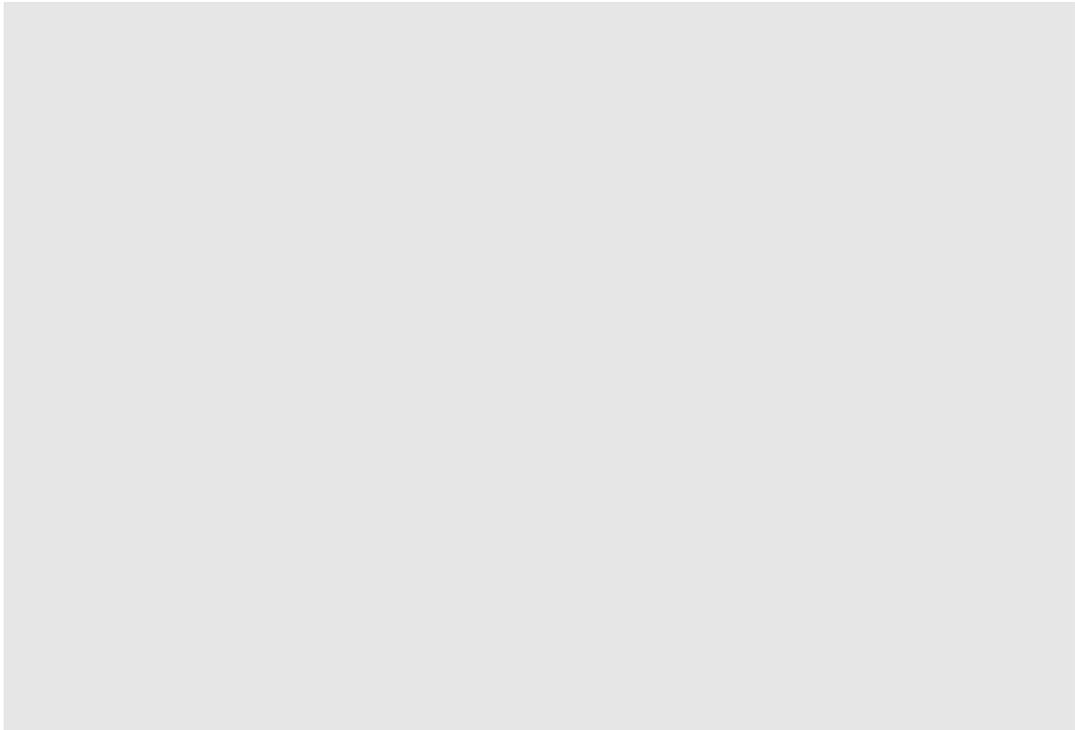
Hasnain: “I remember seeing crudely drawn comics where she was drawn as a gorilla, mocking her darker complexion”. (NYT)

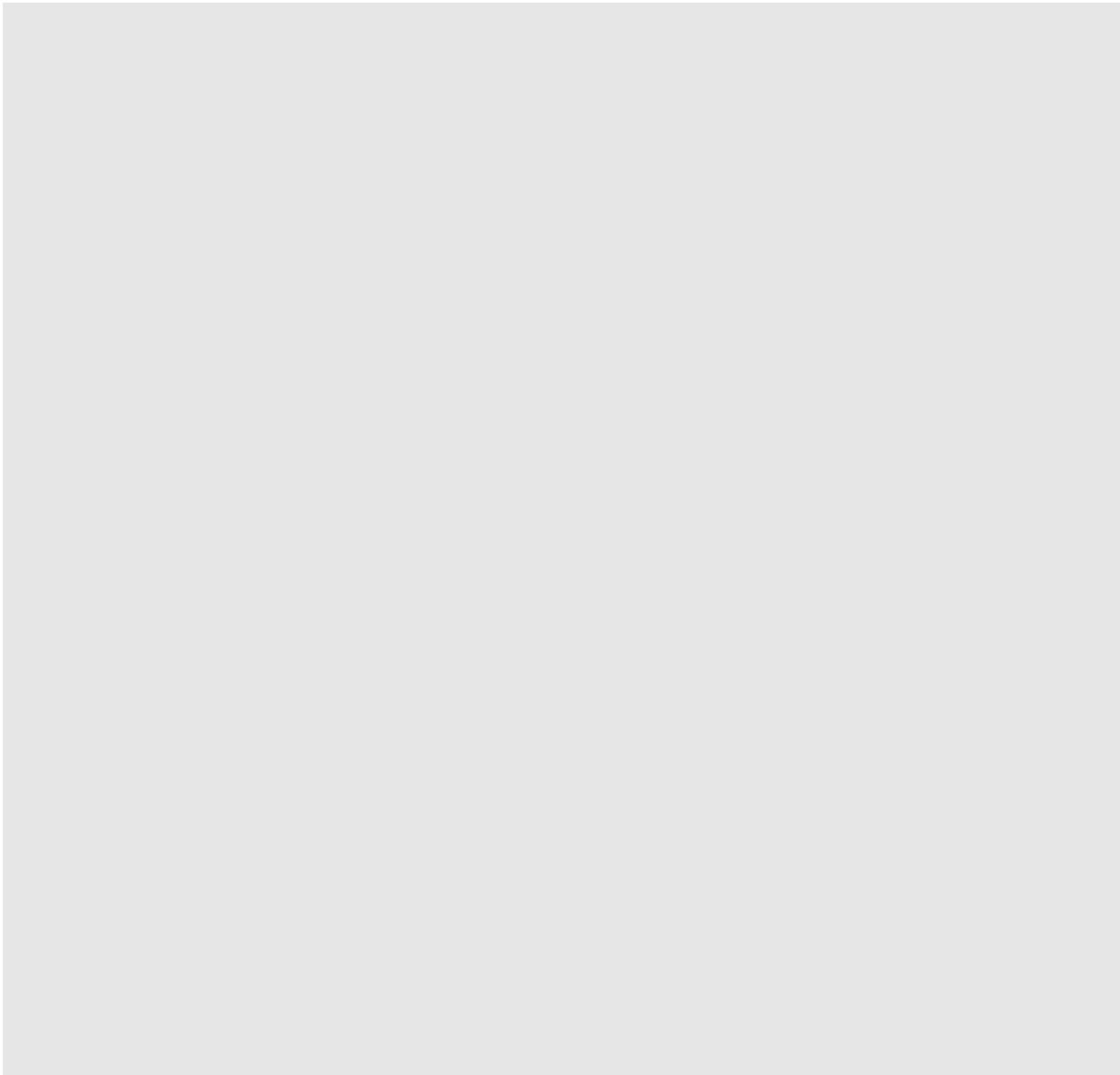
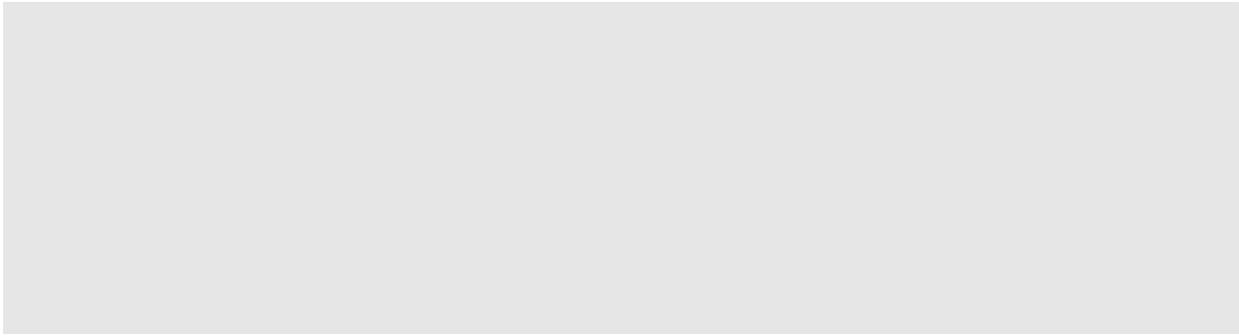
Within the context of the reality television program Terrace House, her actions during The Costume Incident were perceived to be beyond the scope of acceptable, normative femininity, in large part because of her position as both a darker-skinned “wild” woman, and as a professional wrestler. Whether or not the production team knowingly placed her in the role of the heel because of her wrestling career, the backlash that she faced indicates that her hafu, “wild” status figured more prominently in the ways that she was attacked, where her “half-Indonesian heritage became a target for racists and cyberbullies.” (ibid) Without a sense of kayfabe, the vitriolic comments slung at her most frequently designated her as aggressive, coarse, and above all, ugly. As Hiroaki Mizushima, a literature professor and television critic, commented on the situation, “Because we are told that the show is real, the viewer accepts that it is ... So when someone does something a viewer doesn’t like, the viewer attacks them as a human being.” (ibid) For a young woman who joined a reality show to “find a wonderful romance”, Terrace House was not a wrestling ring - but as a non-Caucasian hafu, she was asked to perform the role of the heel, a role that many viewers were all too ready to accept as reality.

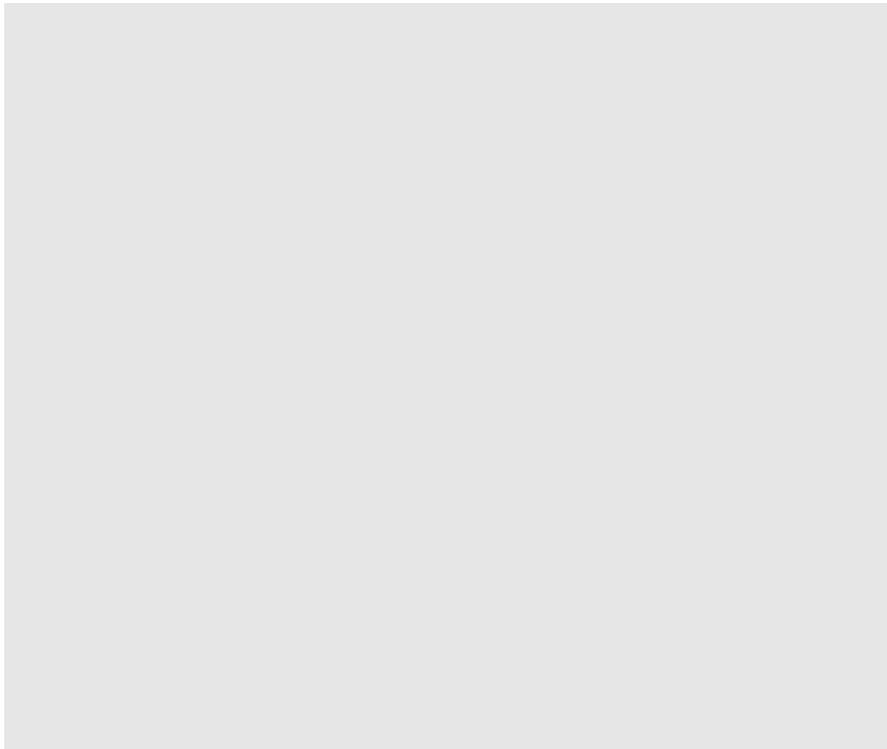
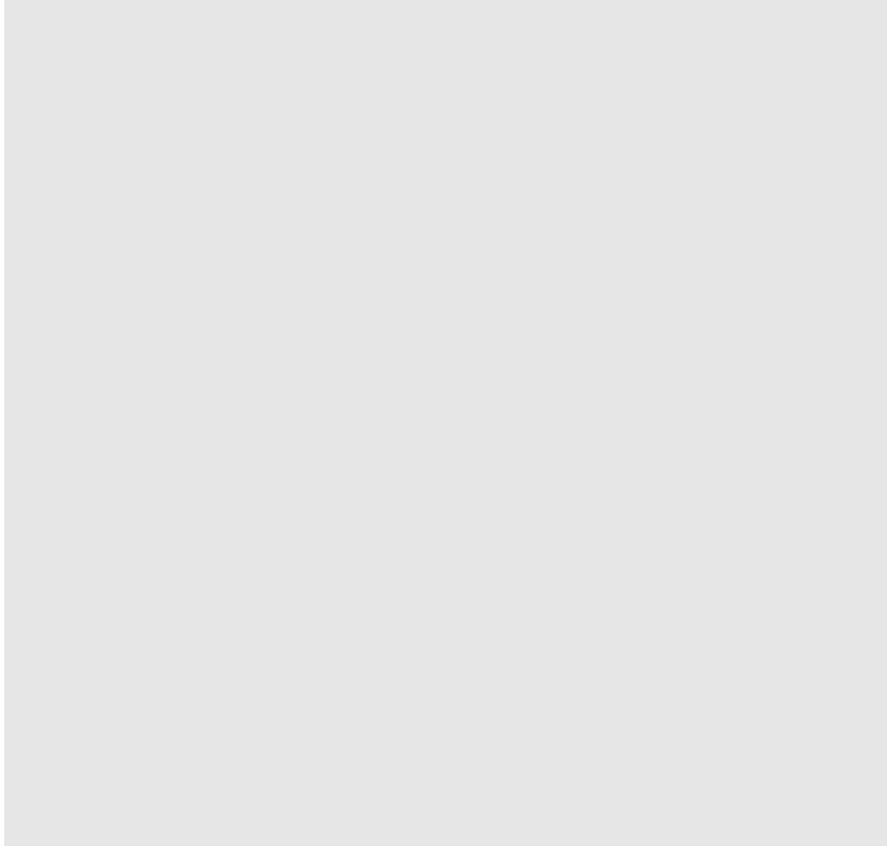


(BBC News 2020a)

In previous chapters, I have discussed the ways in which Japanese women utilize beauty practices to place themselves as central characters in their own narratives. Through sartorial imitation of shōjo heroines with *dekame* (big eye) stylings, young women are framing their own life stories through vernacular photography as a way of making space for themselves as protagonists. In this context, the role of the heel must also be understood in contrast with the role of the ‘face’, or protagonist of a match. For Hana Kimura, this heel role persisted outside of the ring in part because of the public’s refusal to allow a non-Caucasian hafu with darker skin to be categorized as normatively beautiful or feminine, and much of the abusive onslaught she faced online was in regards to her appearance. Much like the heel is to the face, “ugliness” is not in a vacuum - it is always in opposition to what is considered “beautiful”.







Promotional materials for purikura machines Silky, Oh My Girl II and Bijyo ['Beautiful Girl'] Cocktail featuring hafu model Reina Triendl as purimo

While Terrace House was known for having a diverse cast of housemates throughout its run, including both hafu and non-Japanese individuals, it is worth noting that one of the only permanent cast members of Terrace House, the presenter Reina Triendl, is an Austrian-Japanese hafu model who came up frequently during my field research into purikura. More than attempting to rhetorically pit these women against each other, Reina Triendl bears mentioning because of the frequency with which she was held up as a standard of idealized hafu beauty in magazines and among the women I worked with, prior to my knowledge of her role on the television program Terrace House. Reina Triendl has been a mainstay of print media in Japan since she was first scouted at 15 years old, working broadly as a model across many publications, as well as an exclusive model for the popular magazines JJ, ViVi and With, along with her forays into acting - not to mention her sizable follower count on Instagram, at over 1.6 million. Most notably, Reina has been the *purimo*, or “face model” for at least 5 different purikura machines, serving as both spokesperson and inspiration for their theming as discussed in chapter 2.

Reina Triendl is particularly noted for her sweet and pure image, and is often categorized positively as a “babyface” (*be—bi—feisu*, from the English), which is seen as synonymous with “Tori-chan *Fuu*” (Tori-chan style) from the adoringly diminutive nickname given to her by fans. (GLAM LENS) This “babyface” image, connoting both a style and a more general vibe, is contrasted with the “cool” or, more often, “wild” image that many other hafu - including Hana Kimura - are categorized into. Interestingly, the wrestling term “face” shares some of the same inherent meaning, whereby it is an abbreviated term for “babyface”, connoting a pure, rule-abidingly good nature, particularly in comparison to a heel. (Wong 2018) However, it deserves reiterating here that, in making a comparison between these two women, I am not attempting to place them in the roles of heel and face for the two to metaphorically wrestle in an attempt to strengthen my argument. It is not my intention to use Hana Kimura’s death to tear Reina Triendl down, and it would be irresponsible to do so.

The comparison I am attempting to make is not plucked out of thin air, but was chosen for their proximity as cast members on the same television show who have been treated very differently based on their hafu status. In noting the linguistic similarity between the

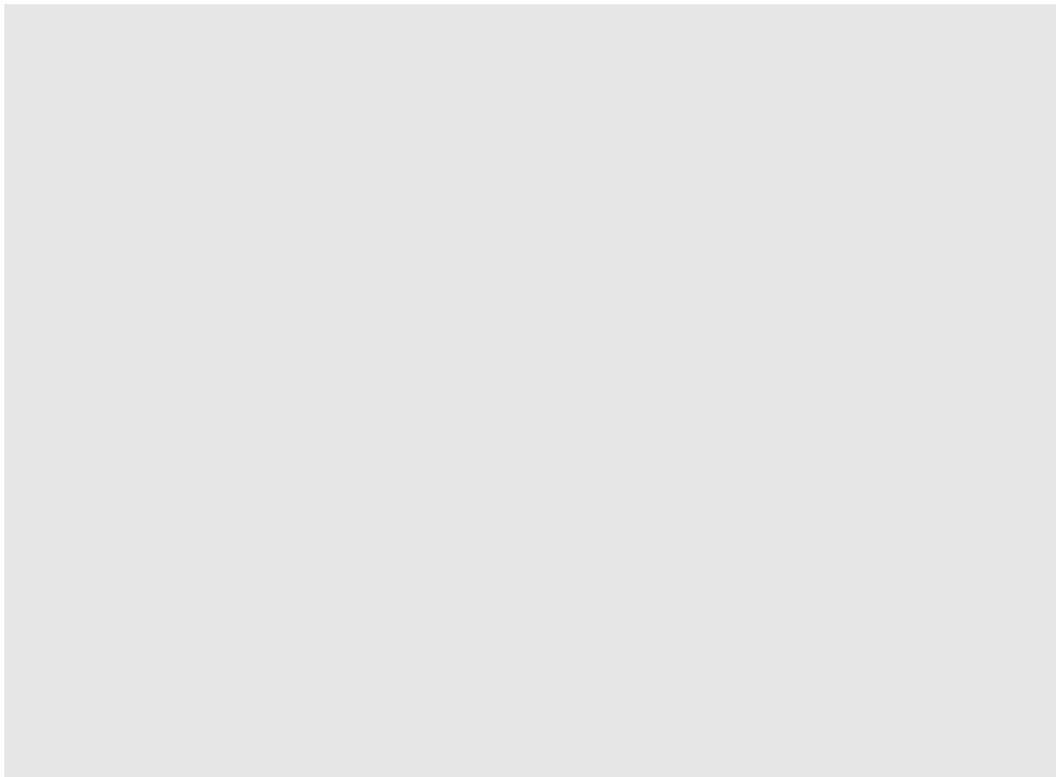
categorization of Reina as a “babyface” and the root origin of the “face” role in professional wrestling, I am not implying that I believe Reina and Hana were in some way pitted against each other in the context of the television show specifically. Instead, I am trying to show that in a larger sense, the visual and performative qualities of Reina’s Euroamerican hafu status meant that she is welcomed into the normative arena of idealized femininity, and is therefore allowed to fulfill the “face” role on a broader cultural level. Beyond the specificity of Terrace House, the opportunities and popularity afforded to Reina Triendl show that, in many respects, she is understood to be the appropriate choice as the (visual) “face”, literally - as a model, spokesperson and television presenter - but also in the figurative wrestling sense, whereby she is an ostensible protagonist. As I have argued previously, the role of models as presented in magazines and through purikura machine theming is one that is both celebrated and mimicked through kata as a means to become a heroine - a protagonist - in one’s own life. However, in the exclusion of individuals from normative femininity on the basis of their skin color or ethnic background, it is inevitable that they are not only unable to be seen as protagonists, but are further placed as social “heels” by default.

The “hafu boom”, shown in the proliferation and popularity of mixed-race celebrities in Japan, might suggest “a shift in Japanese consciousness towards greater diversity and multiculturalism”, in contrast to a precipitous rise in nationalism that favors homogeneity. (Crick-Friesen 2016, 14) The popularity of trends which incorporate “ethnic appropriations” from other cultures “suggests the transnational nature” of many youth styles, which Miller notes should not be taken as “‘failed versions’ of Euroamerican styles but rather express a separately developed aesthetic” (L. Miller 2006, 32). Similarly, hafu-gao makeup is, in many ways, intended as a divergence from mainstream homogeneity, whereby young women “use new beauty technologies to make their bodies look different from those of their parents” (ibid 7). However, for Tessa Morris-Suzuki, this can only be described as “cosmetic multiculturalism” (Morris-Suzuki 2001), where culture is commodified and consumed - a “superficial celebration of cultural diversity” that neglects to address the political and economic rights of minority groups (Crick-Friesen 2016, 15).

The lived experience of hafu individuals makes for a uniquely complex intersection between colorism, racism and exoticism. As in the case of Peach Girl's Momo - and corroborated by many of the women I worked with - having darker skin is something to be avoided. This emphasis on "avoidability" through the use of SPF, parasols, hats, layers of clothing or even "de-tanning" procedures such as skin bleaching carries with it a notion of an innately fair skin tone that can, and should, be maintained. This colorist differentiation between those who are seen to be unable or unwilling to maintain their fair skin is rooted in the good wife, wise mother ideology that sought to disenfranchise working class and indigenous women from both the normative ideal of femininity, along with colonialist notions of exemplary Japanese citizenship and ethnicity. This extant beauty standard which privileges fair skin, which is both upheld and further perpetuated by purikura, creates a bias in the ways that hafu individuals are treated - hafu with darker skin face both colorism through the valorization of fair skin within their own ethnic group, which is compounded as racism through the valorization of one ethnicity over another.

Duplicitious Dupes

Beauty Practices, Photo Manipulation and Cyborg Selfhood



Promotional materials for Beauty Muse 2, featuring hafu model Tamashiro Tina

UGLY TO SEE

In September of 2016, the private Japanese rail company Tokyu Corp began a series of train etiquette advertisements following a college-aged woman as she traverses their train routes, titled “My Tokyu Line School Commute Diary”. The young woman, portrayed by Sawa Nimura, faces a variety of everyday frustrations on her commute, which she confronts through internal monologue, in-your-face dancing and catchy, sing-song rebukes that go unnoticed by those around her. These were paired with posters in stations and on trains that summarized the gripes she addresses, cutting the song and dance down to a succinct 2-3 image distillation of her appalled and disappointed reactions. The range of ads, designed to educate passengers on the rules and etiquette of using the line, cover a variety of common commuter experiences, such as inconveniencing other passengers while carrying large bags or playing loud music. In one ad, she is frustrated with a man who almost knocks her over at a station, quipping in a breathy voiceover, *“this isn’t some romantic meet-cute where two people run into each other like on TV - rather than a fated encounter, he’s just looking at his phone.”* Paired with her mournful glower, the ad warns *“walking while looking at your phone is dangerous”*.

In another one of the ads, we see our heroine seated across from two women happily chatting. Her voiceover opines, *“Women in the city are all beautiful”* - this is followed by a staggered pause, watching the pair as they begin to adjust their lipstick and mascara, before stating, *“but sometimes, they’re ugly”*. The camera lingers on her mouth as she repeats the end of the voiceover out loud – *“mittomonai”* – echoing the intensity of her disgust. *“Please refrain from applying makeup while riding the train”*, the ad concludes. The phrase used, *‘mittomonai’*, implies not just that the women are ‘ugly to see’, but can be translated variously as shameful, disgraceful, indecent, unbecoming or improper, and it is the only ad among the set to be noted for such direct wording in its admonishment.

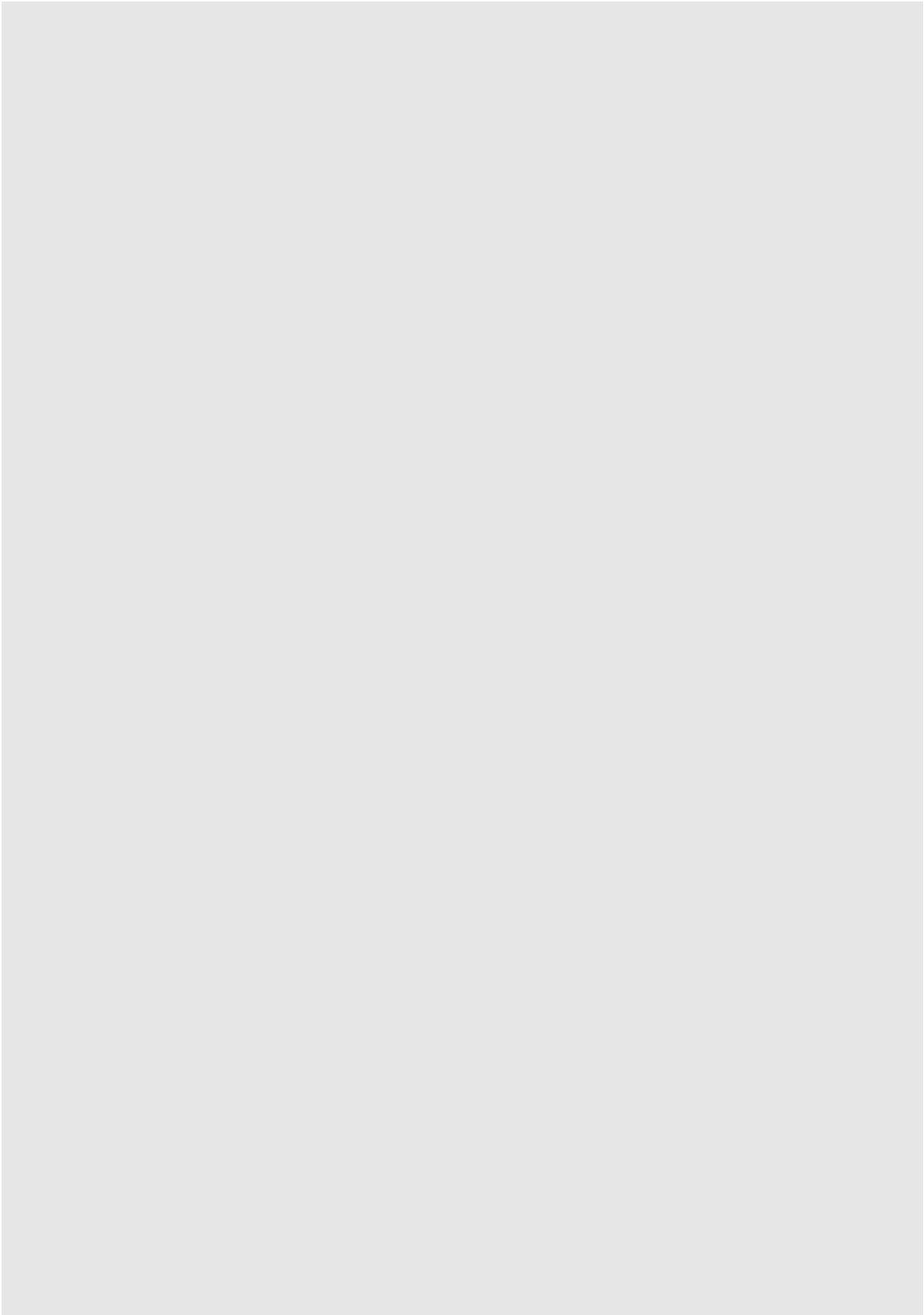
While Tokyu Corp has stated that the subject of each advertisement was chosen based on the results of a survey of passenger complaints done by the Association of Japanese

Private Railways (BBC News 2016), this ad in particular drew the ire of many women online for its pointed sexism. As one twitter user, ryudokaorudo, stated:

“Of course I’d understand if they’d said, if you put make up on the train the powder might scatter, the scent might be strong, things might soil the car or other people’s clothing and would cause trouble for others, but there’s no reason I should be told by a rail company whether I look pretty or unseemly.”
(ibid)



(2016)



In Japan, the application of makeup in public spaces such as trains is a contentious subject, whereby “women who are pressed for time can find themselves having to choose between a neat-looking complexion and being on time for work or an appointment.” (McGee 2016) While the ad received some backlash, “We have actually received more positive feedback [about the makeup ad] than negative,” Tokyu spokesman Masayuki Yanagisawa stated. (*Branding in Asia Magazine* 2016) Many older passengers also stated that “such behavior is absurd or lacking common sense” (Bardsley and Miller 2011, 229), with some of those in favor of the ad even going so far as to compare applying makeup in public to defecation. (BBC News 2016)

When I discussed the ad with the women I worked with in the field, they expressed concern, and in particular frustration at the fact that they were still expected to wear makeup at work despite being told that they were a public nuisance for applying it. As they related, it just wasn’t feasible for them to go to work without makeup, as they would be ostracized, reprimanded, or seen as “eccentric”, “strange”, even “rude”. When asked about the consequences of not wearing makeup to work, the most common refrain was that it was “*muri*” (impossible, pointless) or “*dame, desho!*” (not okay, obviously!) For several women, wearing makeup in the workplace was a requirement of their work contracts, which they explained was due to their public-facing positions where they interacted with customers and clientele. For many women in Japan, this is the norm, as “many companies require, either through official policies or unspoken rules, that female employees put on at least some cosmetics before coming to the office” (Baseel 2016). This is similarly confirmed in the research of Mikiko Ashikari, whose work with urban middle-class Japanese women provides a variety of examples of informal enforcement of this rule. As one informant related to her, the makeup requirement is not only applicable when dealing with customers:

“I did not realize that I was the only woman who was not wearing makeup at the meeting. Rather, I paid no attention to whether other women wore makeup or not. Next day, my male boss came to me and told me in a serious tone of voice to wear makeup when I next attended a meeting. According to my boss, several male departmental managers who saw me at the meeting

had criticized him because I had not been wearing makeup. ... I was really shocked and from then onwards I began to wear makeup whenever I had to see somebody from outside my group.” (Ashikari 2003, 13)

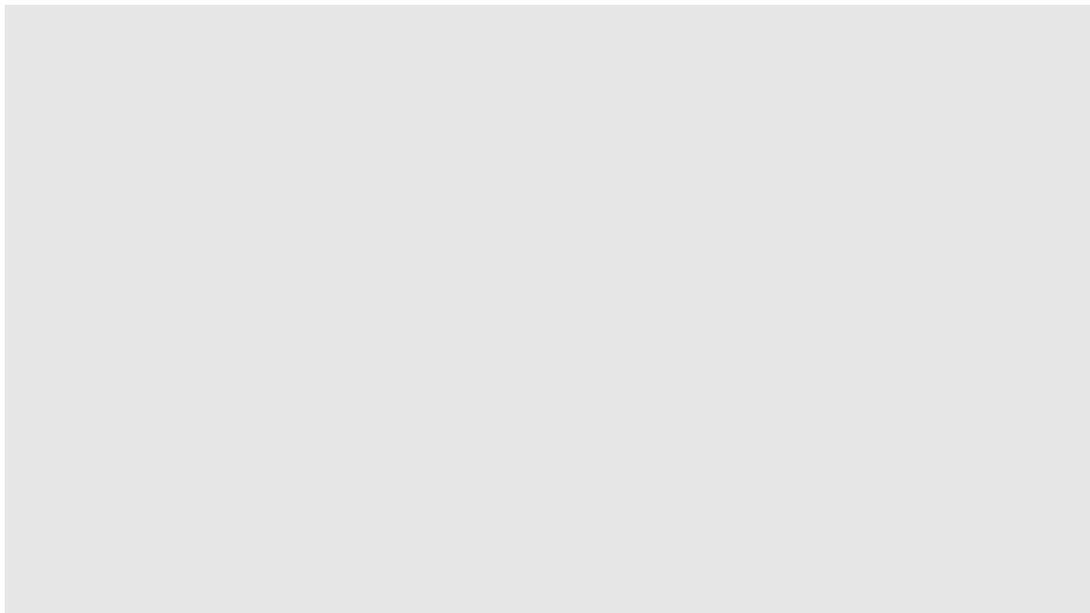
“LET BEAUTY WORK FOR YOU”



“Have a web video conference, but no time for makeup? Not to worry. For the first time ever, others can see you as if you have makeup on, even if you don’t wear any. ... Be the boss of your own time. Let beauty work for you.”

(TeleBeauty press release 2016)

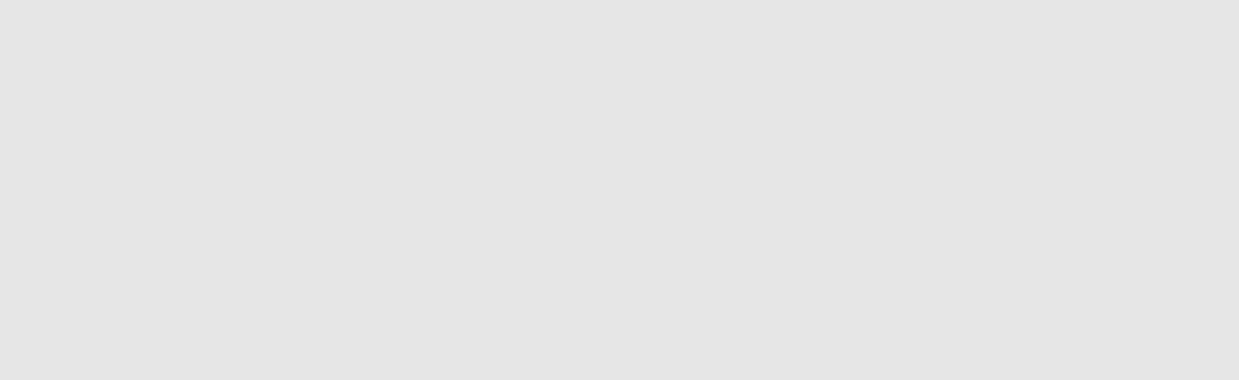
During my fieldwork in 2016, Shiseido - the largest cosmetics firm in Japan, and the fifth largest worldwide (The Wall Street Journal 2010) - announced a collaboration with Microsoft Japan to develop TeleBeauty, an integrated Skype application that “automatically calibrates skin tone and applies digital makeup to the face during video-conferencing” (TeleBeauty press release 2016). Shiseido states that this application was developed to help women who “telecommute” or work remotely primarily through video conferencing. Since the announcement of this collaboration in 2016, many applications have been created to simulate the effect of wearing makeup in both photos and video using augmented reality (AR), particularly as filters for the apps Snapchat and Instagram. The filters aren’t limited to the simulation of makeup, and a vast array of surreal filters have been created utilizing Spark AR, Facebook’s tool for building augmented reality effects since it was opened to the public in 2019, allowing anyone to create and upload custom face filters to Instagram for other users to download and use. (Lee 2019) More recently, as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increase in working from home and a reliance on video conferencing, with many seeking solutions to issues with bandwidth, compression and video quality. One solution provided by NVIDIA, a graphics processing company, is Maxine, an AI-powered video streaming platform that, along with compressing video while upscaling it to look higher quality, will also use CGI to simulate eye contact:



“Face alignment enables faces to be automatically adjusted so that people appear to be facing each other during a call, while gaze correction helps simulate eye contact, even if the camera isn’t aligned with the user’s screen. With video conferencing growing by 10x since the beginning of the year, these features help people stay engaged in the conversation rather than looking at their camera.” (NVIDIA 2020)

The ways in which video conferencing technologies have progressed in this short amount of time has much to tell us about the social encounters they both facilitate and are further informed by. The “automated makeup” in TeleBeauty, as developed by Shiseido and Microsoft Japan in 2016, highlights the importance of a “satisfying appearance” (Shiseido Co Ltd. 2016) for women in the workplace. Where “online meetings offer us the ability to deepen communications by talking face to face”, the app was developed as “a tool to smoothly and visually carry out the meeting, hoping to help women work actively with confidence” (ibid). When I asked one informant about this app, showing her the examples of makeup looks it offered, she scoffed - pointing to the “trendy makeup” look, which featured comparatively darker lipstick than the other options, she stated:

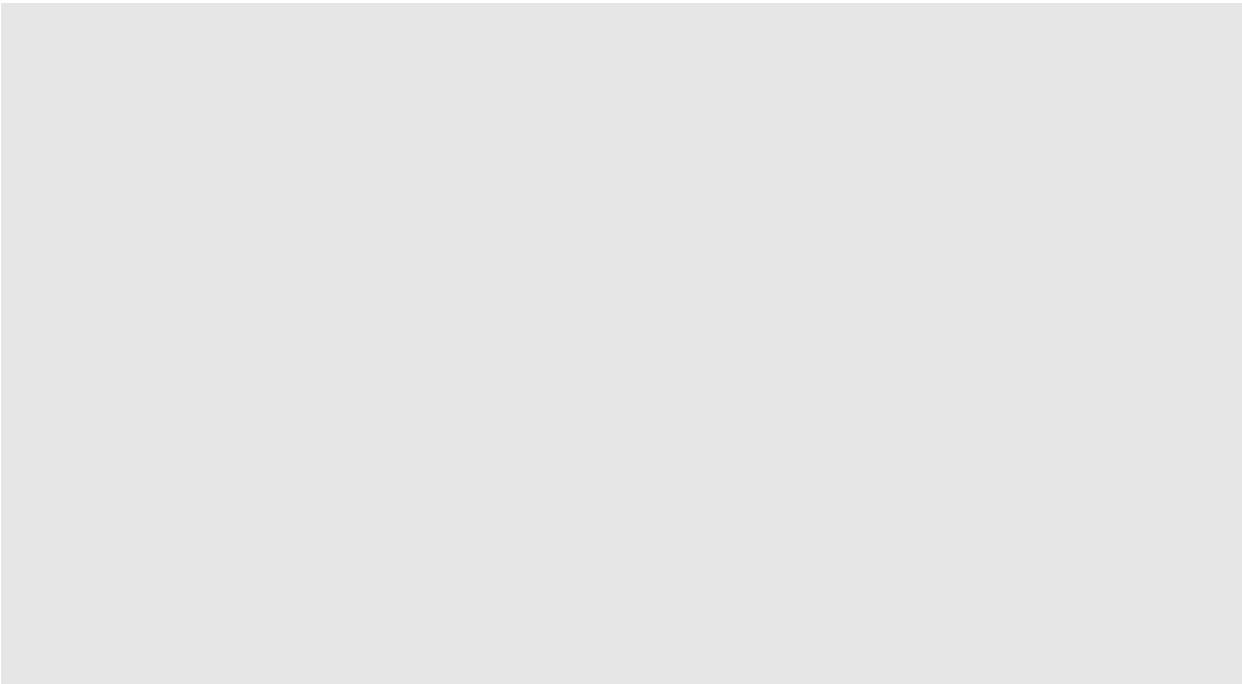
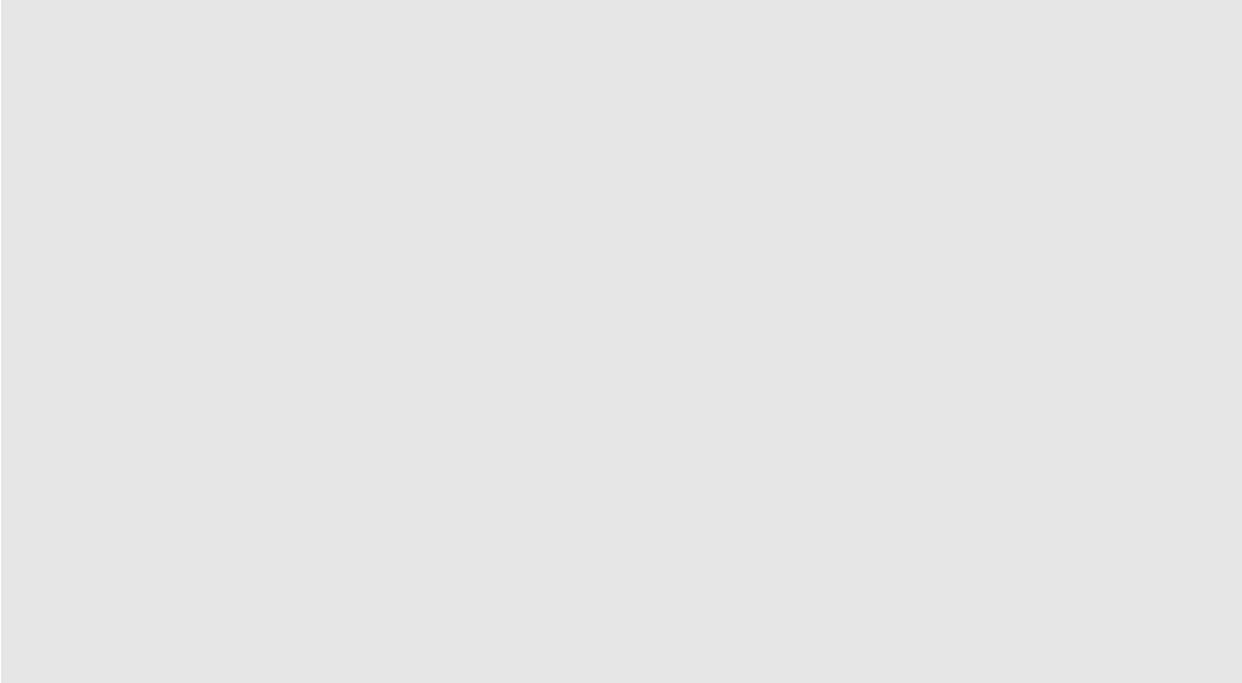
“These all look the same! That one [trendy] is the most you could get away with, as far as makeup goes at work. They tell you to wear makeup, but they don’t really want to ‘know’ you’re wearing it – they call it ‘natural’, but it’s still obviously makeup, which is so annoying ... You’re supposed to look ‘right’, not the way you actually want to look. No makeup is bad, but too much is worse.”

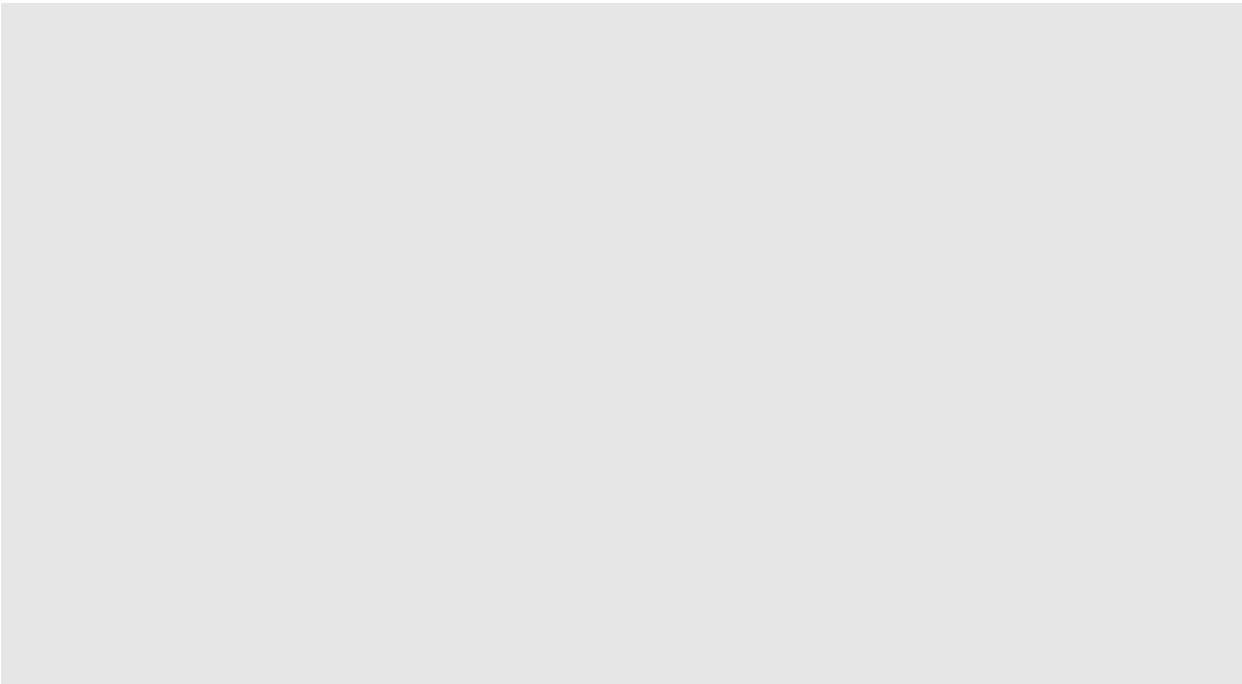
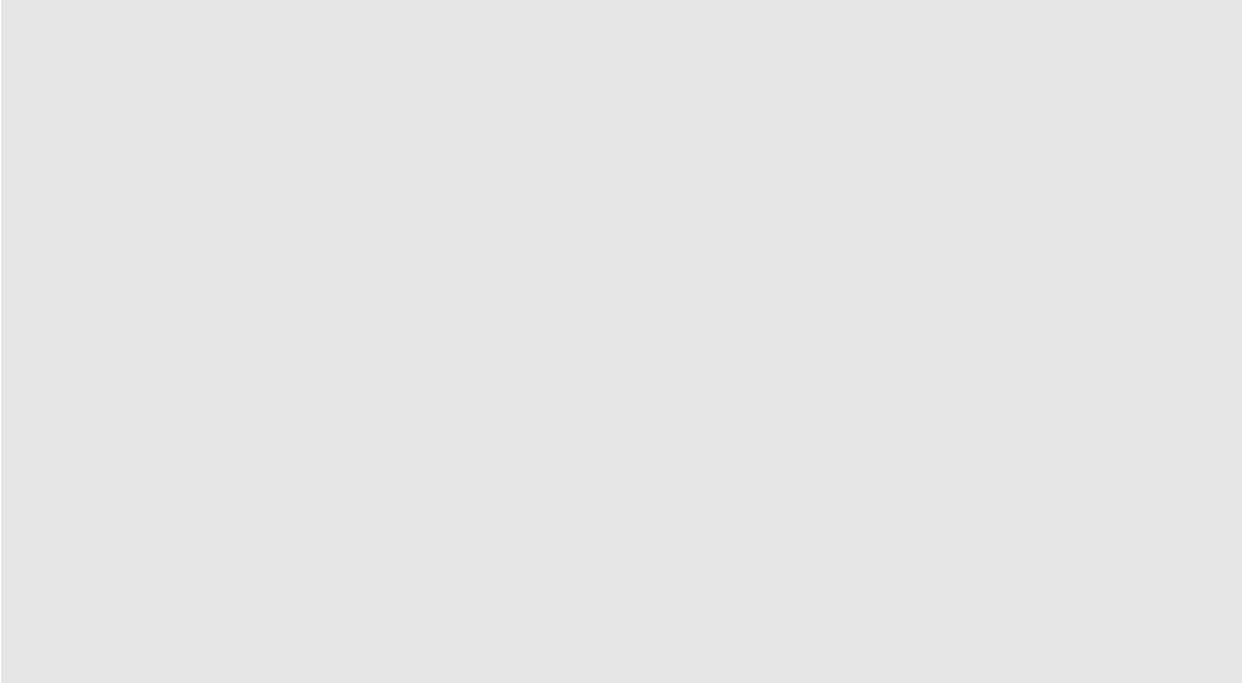


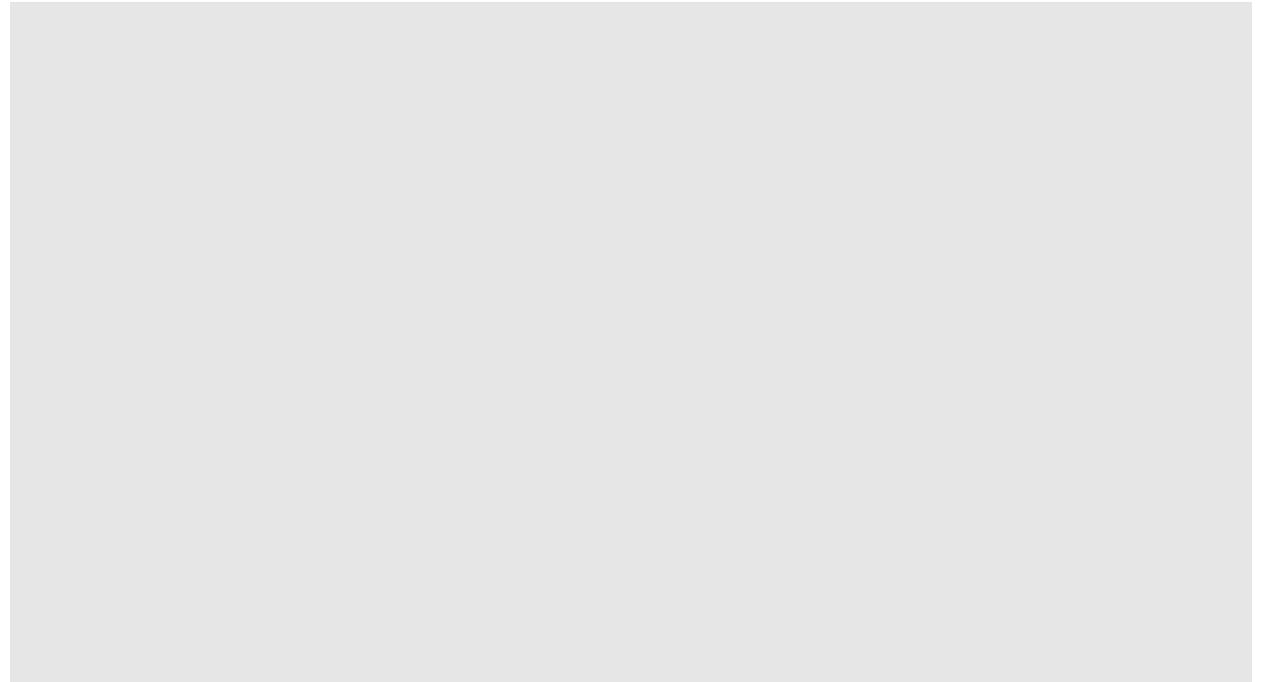
TeleBeauty Press release 2016

TeleBeauty is intended as a way for telecommuters to save both time and effort, “as the makeup smoothly follows the user’s facial movements, it is hard to guess that it is a simulation and not real makeup.” (ibid). For offline commuters, the time and effort spent doing makeup is understood as something that should not be seen, as outlined in the Tokyu Line School Commute Diary advertisements for train etiquette. As described above, the advertisements featured a young woman - in minimal, ‘natural’ styled makeup, much like that seen in the TeleBeauty app - who glares disdainfully at a pair of women applying makeup on the train, dubbing them “disgraceful” and “ugly to see”. Along with this pronouncement, the young woman then performs an angry, wildly gesticulated song and dance in front of the women, which remains unnoticed by her fellow passengers. She sings,

“Why can’t you do that before you get on the train? You get your eyebrows back, you somehow have more eyelashes than before - your looks have changed, and the transformation is there for all to see” (Branding in Asia Magazine 2016)







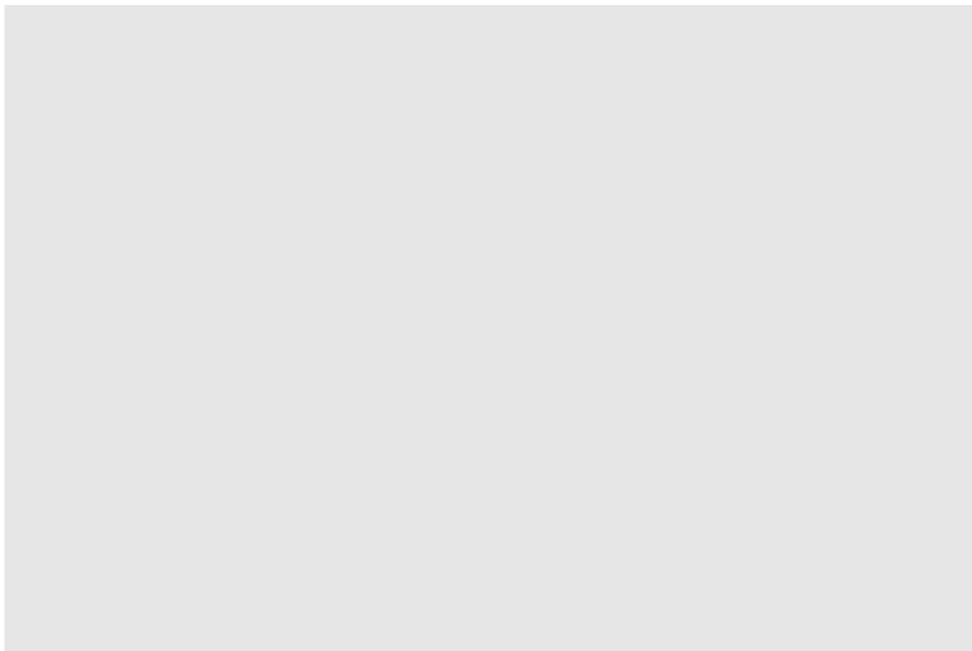
The song stresses that the “transformation” of putting on makeup is something that should not be seen, which makes the tenuous balancing act Japanese women must perform that much clearer. The unease surrounding women’s public beauty work may reside in this transformative aspect, as “it exposes the degree to which gender performance is culturally achieved behavior, one that requires ongoing effort and shoring up.” (Bardsley and Miller 2011, 230) In the work of Laura Miller, she notes that in Japan “there is an expectation that a truly feminine woman never reveals the cost and energy that contribute to her gender performance,” (ibid) an expectation that requires a narrow view of modest femininity that is non-disruptive.

Expected to both wear makeup - but not too much - and certainly not to apply it in public, was described variously by the women I spoke to as “*mendokusai*” (a pain, bothersome), “*kuyashii*” (irritating, frustrating), and “*kurushii*” (painful, difficult, distressing). As one woman pointed out, after getting off work that day she had changed into different clothes in a public restroom - she explained that many public restroom cubicles in train stations and department stores have pull-out panels at floor level, similar to those for changing diapers, for women to stand on while changing into other

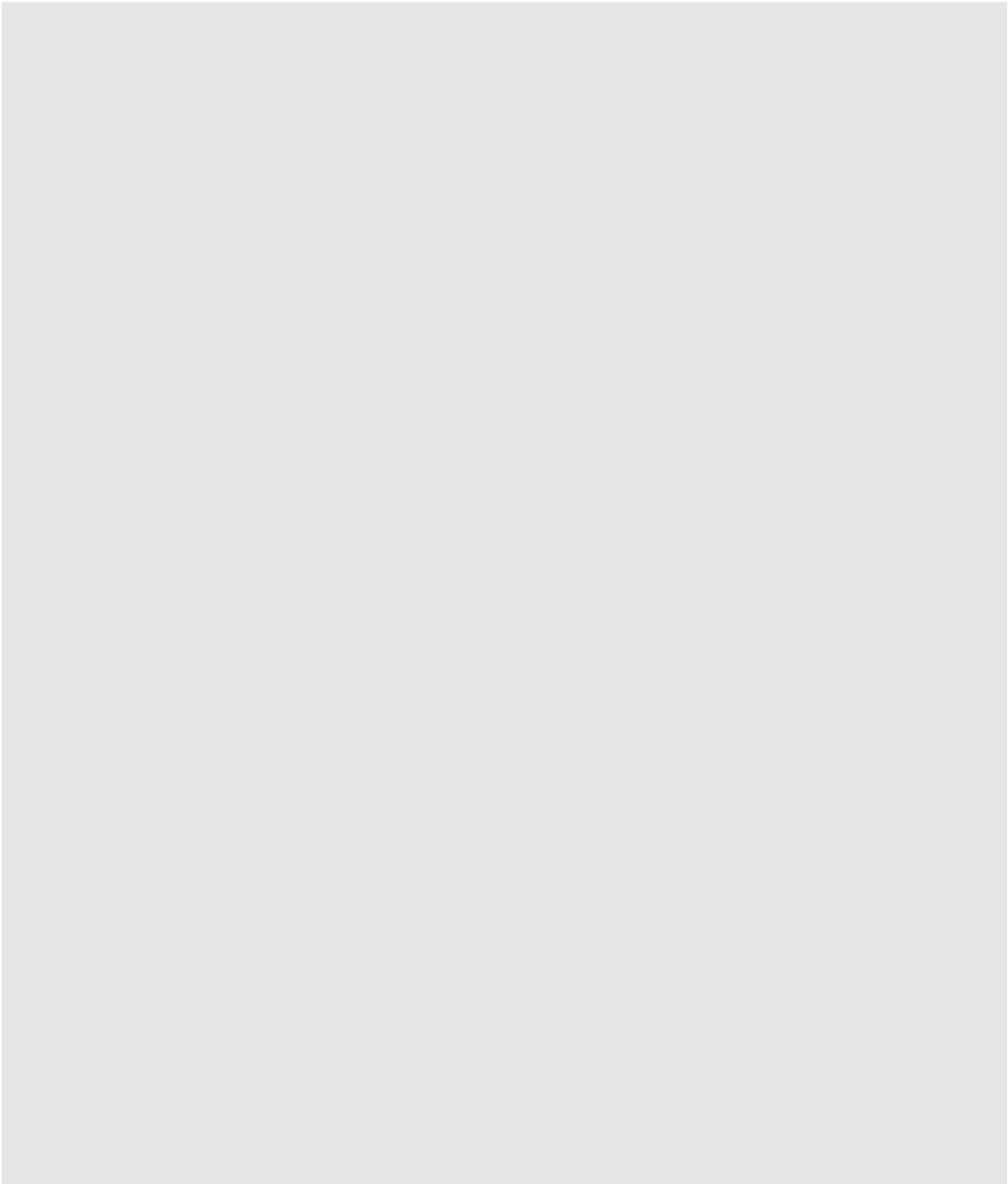
clothes, and that she was able to apply different makeup than what she would have worn in the workplace in the mirror of a purikura establishment:

“I dress up and wear this makeup for fun, to be myself. I’m done with work, I want to hang out with my friends and have fun, relax - I wouldn’t wear my office clothes to do that. But that’s normal.”

Another young woman, who made a point of wearing overtly glammed up makeup and clothes outside of work, laughingly told me that she “always put [her] all into both work and play” (*shigoto mo asobi mo issho kenmei ni*), which could also be translated more simply as “work hard, play hard”. During these meetups, purikura was used to commemorate leisure activities outside of work – hanging out with friends for a movie, shopping, eating out – and wearing makeup and clothes that evoked this sense of ‘*asobi*’ (play) was seen as an important factor. This further relates to the emphatic femininity discussed in chapter 3, whereby these overtly intense stylings can be seen as an intentional means of questioning the boundaries of what is seen as the appropriate or “right” way of performing femininity, playfully navigating the limitations they find themselves constrained by.



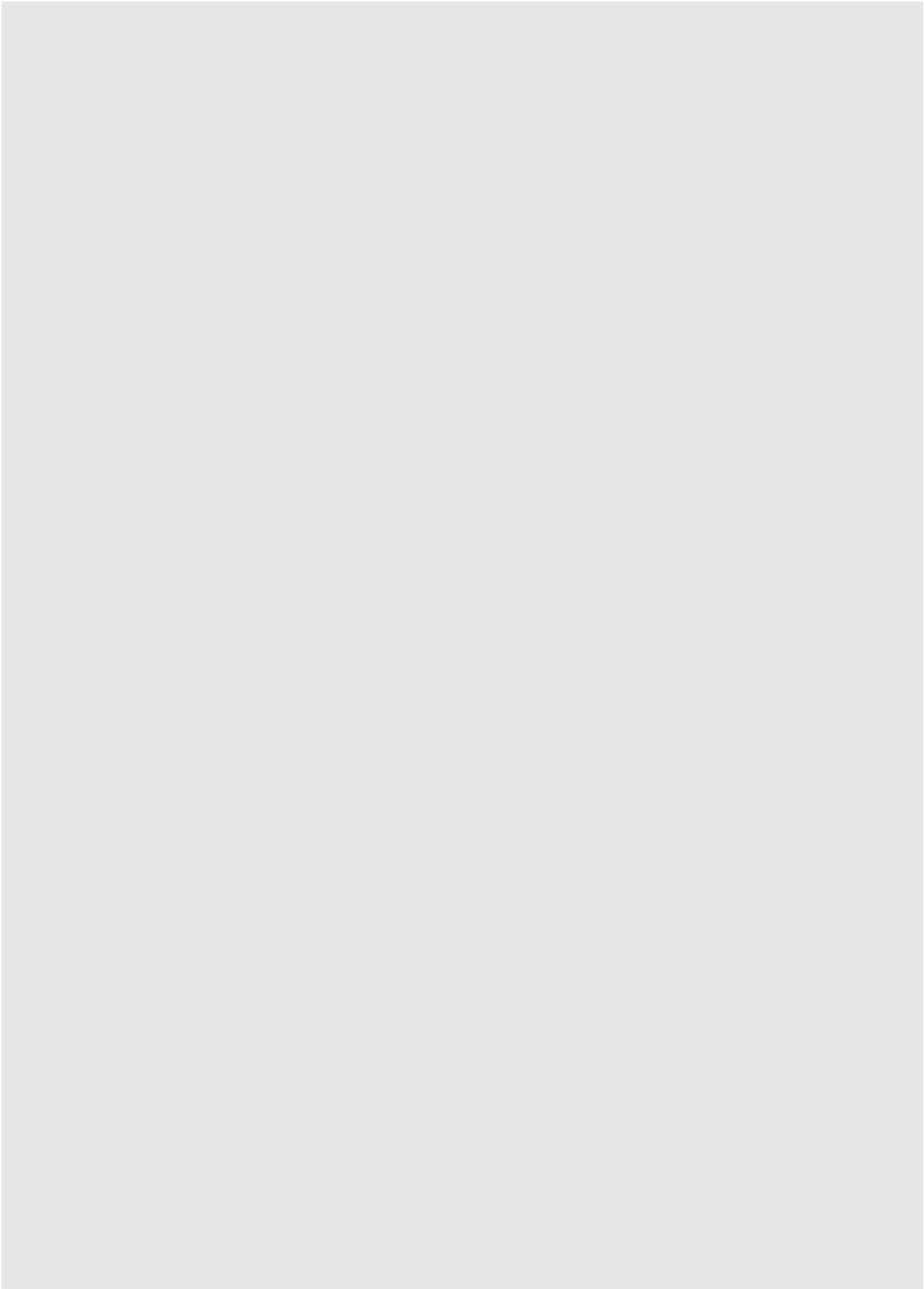
(Estèbe 2020a)

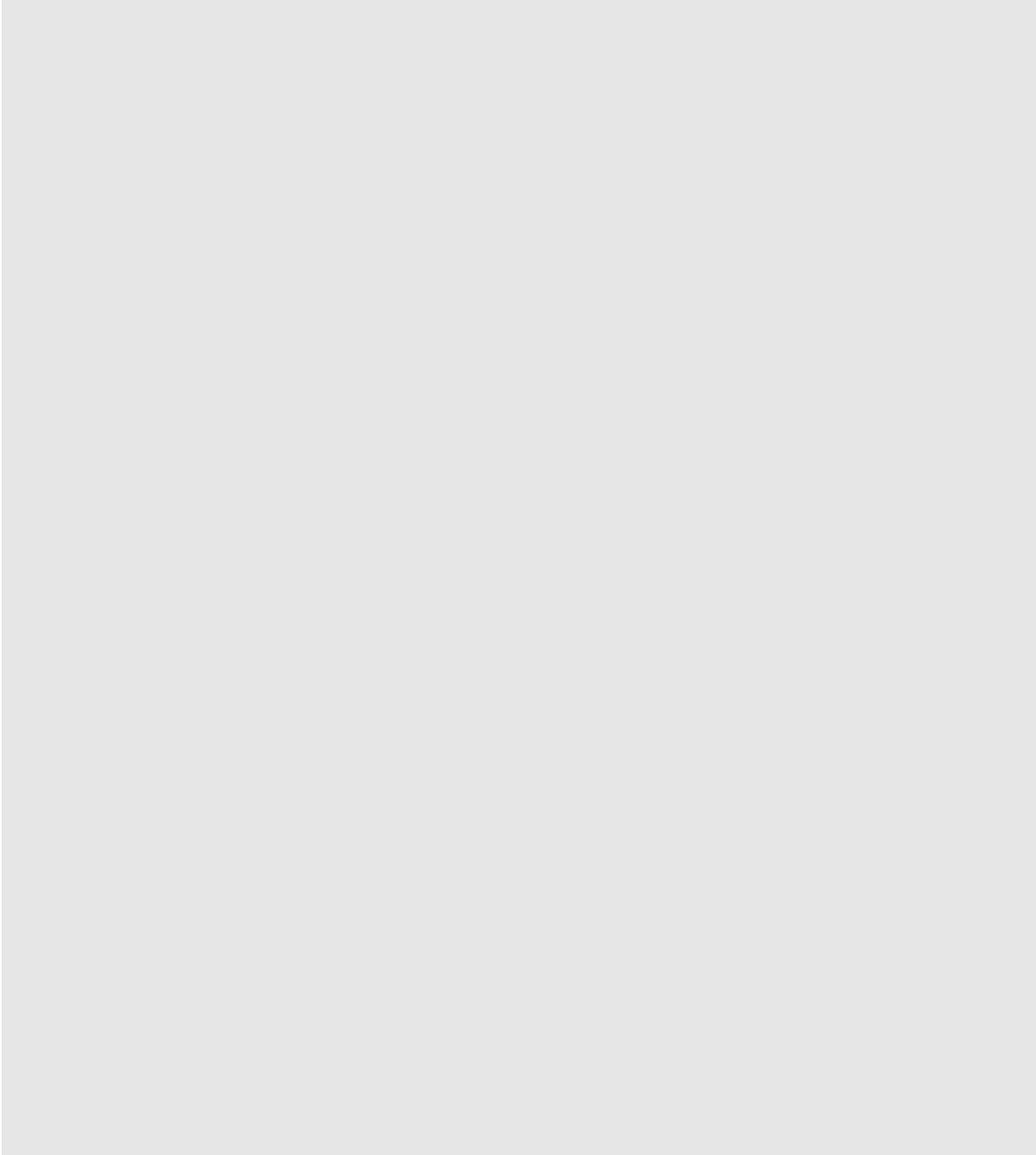


(@lushico 2019)



Curling irons for customer use at a purikura establishment
(author's own, 2016)



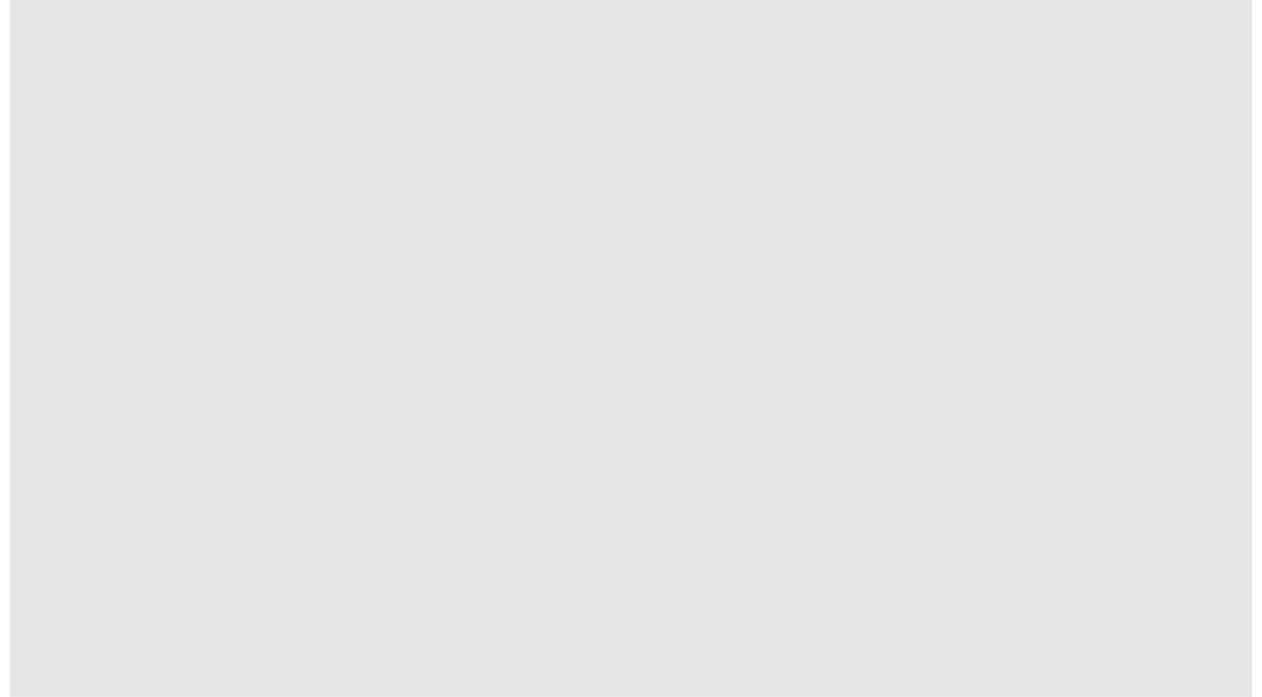


Shukatsu makeup and etiquette guide (Non-No Magazine, February 2016)

SHUKATSU SEXISM

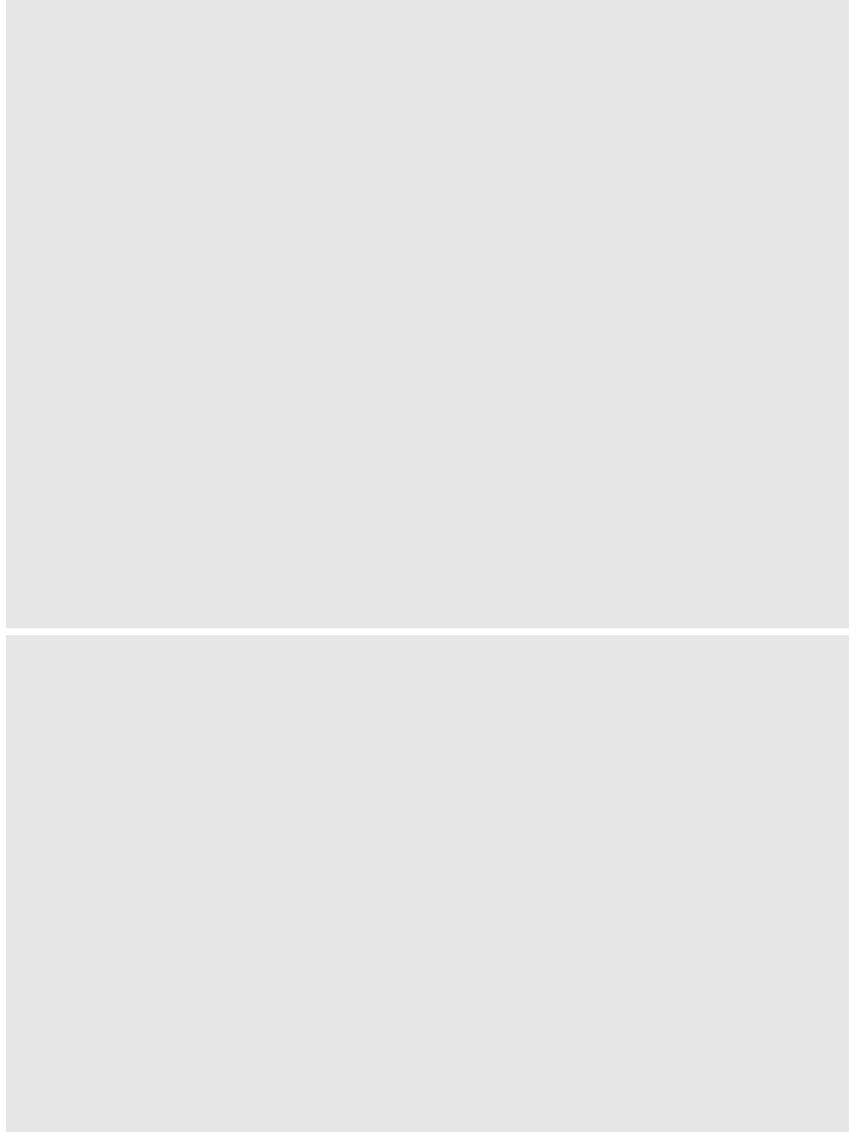
The constraints on female appearance found in the average workplace aren't limited to those who are employed by a given company, but can be further extrapolated to young high school and college graduates who apply for jobs during the intense, year-long jobhunting season known as *shushoku katsudo*, or *shukatsu* for short. This simultaneous, periodic recruiting of new graduates (*shinsotsu-ikkatsu-saiyō*) is a custom unique to Japan whereby new hires at major companies are all newly graduated individuals who go through a rigidly set interview and hiring process. Starting a year before graduation, students will begin hunting for jobs in the hopes of securing formal (*naitei*) or informal (*nainaitai*) offers of employment before they graduate. Since 2010, this practice has become exclusive to Japan, after a South Korean age discrimination law was enforced to ban discrimination against jobseekers who are not recent graduates. While no such law exists in Japan, the Japan Business Federation – which represents a significant portion of Japan's big business companies – announced that their members would not be required to follow *shushoku* recruitment from 2021 onwards. The competition for such positions is intense, with some surveys indicating that nearly 80% of recent graduates struggled to apply for entry-level positions. (Mynavi 2014)

One result of this intensely competitive hunt for jobs is the highly ritualized expectations for how jobseekers will be clothed, not least of all how gender is performed. Before receiving a job offer, young women are “instructed in conduct deemed critical to feminine gender performance and are advised on everything from putting on makeup in the office to using the correct voice pitch and intonation” (Bardsley and Miller 2011, 227), behaviors that will be further expected of them in the workplace upon securing a position. As Dr Kumiko Kawashima, an expert in Japan's working culture stated to the BBC, “In the name of etiquette, Shukatsu 'experts' teach a rigid gender performance where being masculine is the opposite of being feminine and nothing in between or outside of the binary exists ... Students have little choice but to conform to those styles so as not to jeopardise their chances of landing a good job.” (Bateman 2021)



Just as the women I spoke with related, the expectations for personal appearance given in shukatsu, particularly for women, demand a very specific amount and style of cosmetic adornment that is neither barefaced, nor “piled on”. The term used to describe the inappropriate “piling on” of makeup, *mori* (盛り), as discussed in chapters 3 and 4, frequently comes up in gyaru publications and makeup tutorials for those who wanted a more elevated, eye-enhancing dekame look, and I was assured that this was likely not a coincidence. Similarly, common recommendations for cosmetic products that are “NG” (no good) for job-seeking are false eyelashes and eyelash extensions, lip gloss or any darker shades of lipstick (including red), overly orange or red blusher, and “unnatural” double eyelid tape, many of which are utilized in emphatic feminine performance, as discussed in chapters 3 and 4. As in the above job-seeker makeup tutorial, it is worth stressing the importance of the “NG” column and its recommendations, as “In books and magazines, NG is a code that is understood as indicating the forbidden.” (Bardsley and Miller 2011, 430) Along with strict guidelines as to the type of makeup and amount used, these regulations also require a specific “recruit suit” of “a women's suit with a skirt, white blouse and a jacket that's cinched in at the waist”, (Bateman 2021) with specific lengths and heights for both skirt and heel, as well as a low ponytail and side-

parted bangs. In a discussion on twitter sparked by a group photo of a sea of identically coiffed jobseekers, several users quipped that they looked like “clone troopers” and “factory produced”. (McGee 2018, image above)



In September 2018, the haircare brand Pantene began running a series of ads on train lines in Japan, featuring the profile image of a young woman with a low ponytail, an ad intended to create a debate around the required uniformity for new job recruits (above). This could be seen as being less than altruistic, or lacking any kind of feminist leaning, when coming from a corporation with a vested interest in selling products – a less charitable perspective would see it as an attempt to insert their name into an already

hotly debated topic. The initial ad copy read, “What should a work hairstyle be like? Looking at the raw opinions of 1,000 job hunters, their collective voices reveal the oppression of job-hunting hair and call for freedom of hairstyles. It’s a difficult problem to push for more freedom in job hunting, but this is the current thought of Pantene.” It further concludes, “Hoping that looking for a job without a ponytail becomes a natural thing for this country.” (Ibid) The prototypical jobseeker was made up of a gradient of the remarks of 1,000 women surveyed by Pantene on the subject, including:

“If I attend the company recruitment ceremony with my own hairstyle, will my job offer be taken away?”

“I wanted to get the job so I wore a ponytail even though the style didn’t suit me.”

“I thought it was strange that everyone had the same style but I didn’t want to be the only one cut off from the group so I had to do it.”

“This mass-produced hairdo makes me feel like there’s no me.”

“I had to dye my naturally brown hair black.”

It is not surprising that gender performance would be mediated by outside forces through hair, as this has particular historical precedent in Japan. As discussed previously, the concerted efforts of the Meiji (1868-1912) government to strive towards a modern nation, predicated on a Western ideal, introduced strict gendered dress regulations that aligned with the good wife, wise mother (*ryosai kenbo*) ideology, placing increasingly binary roles for men in modern, Western attire and women in kimono as stand-ins for tradition, where “the role of women in the new Japan was clearly and officially defined as benefiting the nation by being wives and mothers”. (Goldstein-Gidoni 2008, 154)

These “new regulations related primarily to Western–Japanese/male– female distinctions” (ibid 155) were not limited to clothing, but also included an assimilatory push for cropped hair, where “the government’s resolve was firm, with fines for men who did not follow the new fashion and certificates of merit given to village mayors who successfully promoted the haircut in their jurisdictions.” (ibid). The short cut, or

danpatsu, symbolized early efforts on the part of the state to inculcate a form of modernity limited explicitly to men. However, this push for men to cut their hair short created a fad among Tokyoite women to do the same, further creating a public furor – as recounted in a March 1872 magazine article, “Recently in the city we have seen women with close-cropped hair. Such is not the Japanese custom ... The sight of this ugly fashion is unbearable” (quoted in Yanagida 1957, 29). Government intervention soon followed, and in April of the same year a strict ban on short haircuts for women was passed, (Goldstein-Gidoni 2008, 155) a state ordinance enacted because “in cutting her hair, ‘the essence of a woman's beauty would be destroyed.’” (Sato 2003, 53)

By the 1920s, a range of new roles for women outside of the home began appearing in the media, symbolizing new forms of modernity as waitresses, dancers, shop girls and department store mannequins. Popularly dubbed the “modern girl”, or *moga*, these new images of femininity “challenged a previously existing widespread mythology of a monolithic Japanese woman” (Sato 2003, 1) restricted by her responsibilities as good wife, wise mother, and preserver of Japanese tradition. Along with her expanded job opportunities, the *moga* further symbolized a cultural shift through her ways of dressing, especially her newly fashionable bobbed haircut, mirroring her Western counterpart, the flapper. The revived popularity of the *danpatsu* haircut for women suggests that “women who had been largely excluded from such symbols of change were acknowledging a desire to question the old aesthetic” (ibid 53), a disruption to the status quo that “could not help but result in social tensions.” (ibid) While the bobbed haircut was fashionable in many places worldwide at the time, the specificity of its significance in Japan must be stressed, as those young women brave enough to sport it “[defied] the ensuing criticism and outright ostracism.” (ibid) As Mochizuki Yuriko, an aspiring novelist, wrote of her experiences in the 1920s of cutting her hair short,

"You cannot imagine the shock it gave to the people around me. My mother took one look at me and cried out in indignation, 'You must be crazy!' ... I remember another instance after I returned to my family home in the country. I ran into two girls, fifteen and sixteen, living in the neighborhood who had

had a short cut [danpatsu]. Ours was an extremely provincial, tradition-bound village, and it caused a great sensation. The girls were punished severely and their mothers sobbed and wailed, carrying on as if they were lunatics. My own mother confronted me and said, 'It is your fault that this dreadful thing has happened. You have lost face with everyone in the neighborhood. I wish that you would just go right back to Tokyo.' In no time I packed my bag and returned to Tokyo feeling as if I was escaping. ... When I think back ... the painful experiences far outnumbered the comic situations. Even today, it is appalling how many idiots jeer and hiss at me" (ibid)

In 1920s Japan, bobbed hair was often characterized and criticized in the press as “representing various forms of dangerous modernization, unfeminine appearance, and uncontrolled behavior”, (Frederick 2005, 67), as well as being “construed as a sign of social disorder and sex-and- gender confusion” (J. Robertson 2008, 201). It is interesting to note that, while short hair on men “signified the rationalization of everyday life” (ibid), it was seen as dangerously modern (Frederick 2005, 67) for women to have the same hairstyle, stepping too far outside of their role as arbiter of tradition through the good wife, wise mother. As in 1872, “the outlawing of short hair on women ... suggests the danger associated with that style choice” (ibid), which was only further challenged by the moga’s bobbed hairstyle of the 1920s.

These rigid expectations for gender performance persist in various forms in the modern Japanese workplace. As I have discussed throughout this chapter and previous, emphatic femininity is one way in which women in Japan are pushing back against what they feel are unfair standards that stifle their true identities - however, these standards are not just troubling for cisgender women. For Yumi Mizuno, who identifies as nonbinary, the shukatsu job-seeking process was terrifying, as the provided etiquette instructions from companies are predicated on a gender binary of male and female that they felt they didn’t fit into. (Bateman 2021) When attempting to attend a mass job interview while wearing the uniform expected of male applicants, Yumi ended up being unable to go through with it out of fear of being rejected.

"It was very scary, I felt I couldn't take the risk. I went to the station bathroom and I took off my tie, put on makeup, changed my shoes from flats to high heels ... Even after I changed my clothes at the station, I was still afraid because I had a bag that's for boys. I was scared, what if the interviewers judge me for having the wrong bag?"

This experience was harrowing for Yumi, who chose to drop out of the shukatsu process: "I thought, 'I'm losing my identity', so I started to cover myself up. I couldn't go out at that time. I locked myself up in my apartment for three months." Since then, Yumi has fought to create a more inclusive work environment and hiring process, including a petition that has gathered over 13,000 signatures. (Ibid) Created with the belief that the current system causes strife for all, "The campaign is not only for LGBT+ people, because what's wrong is this gender binary" (ibid), a push for change that would include the recognition of a greater diversity of gender performance and presentation.

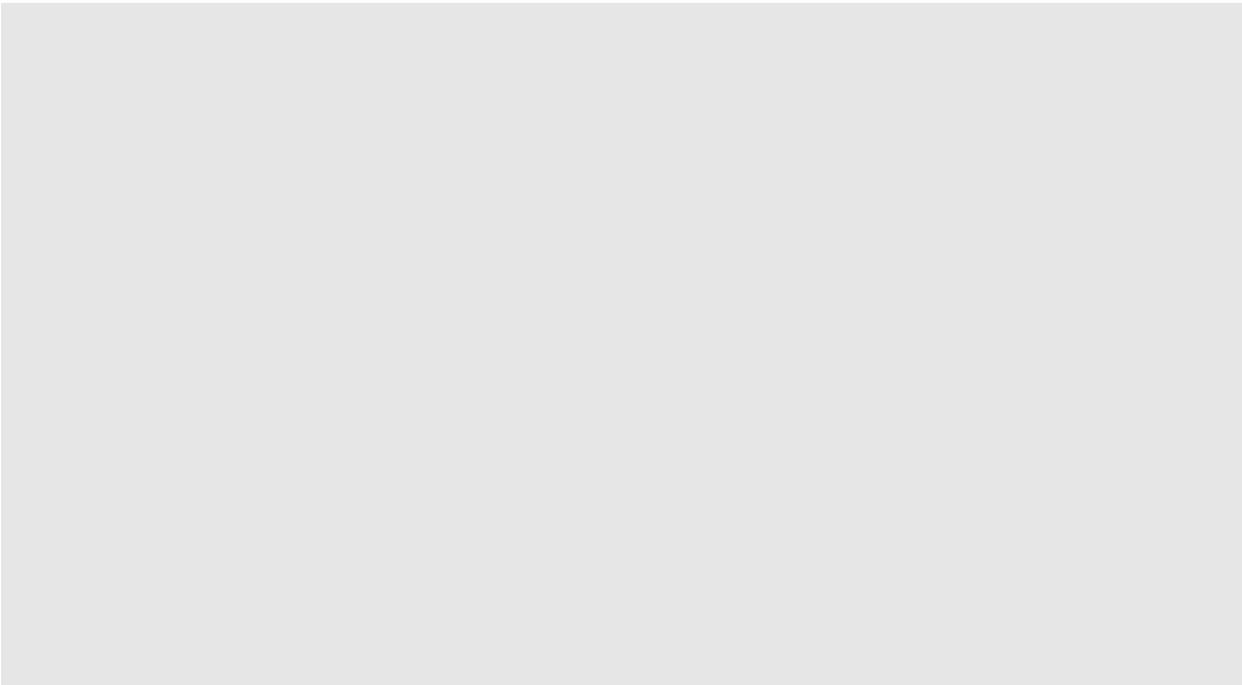
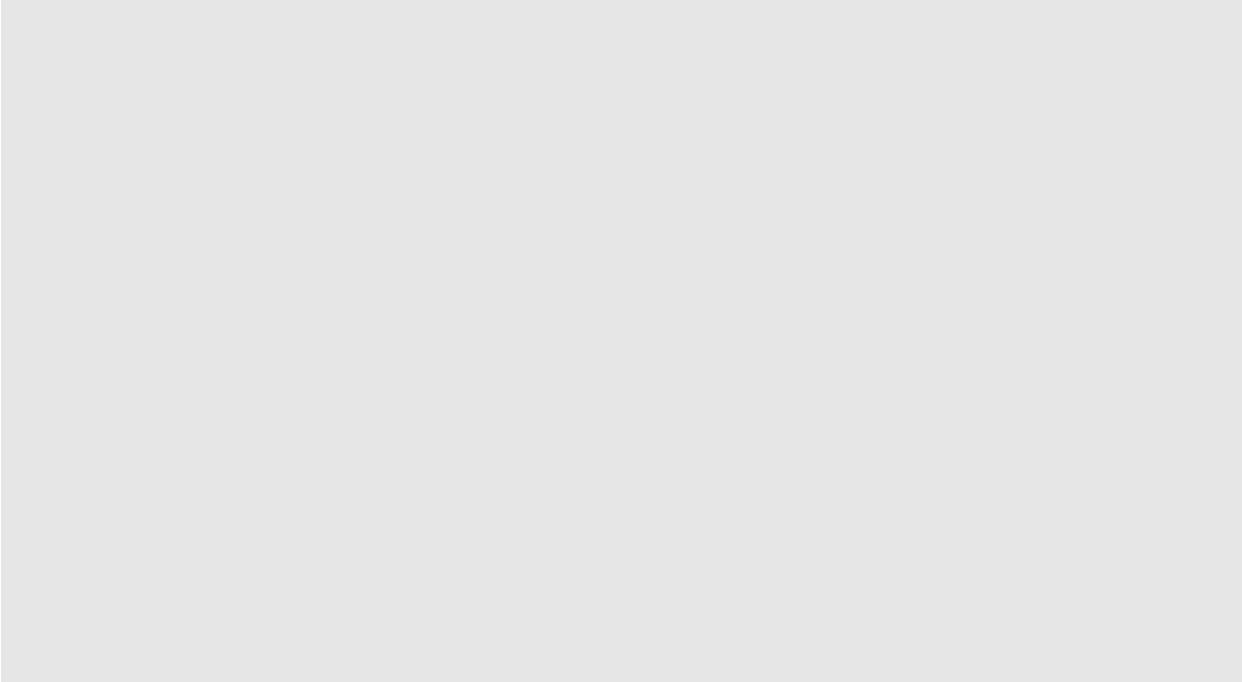
For many of the women I worked with, "the social pressures to preserve the ways of the past" (Sato 2003, 53) through gender presentation in the workplace are far greater than what was expected of their male colleagues. Much like the moga's bobbed hair of the 1920s, by exploring non-acceptable forms of gender performance through cosmetic adornment and digital manipulation, women are challenging the limitations placed on not only what can or should be worn in the workplace, but also on their larger role as models of tradition.

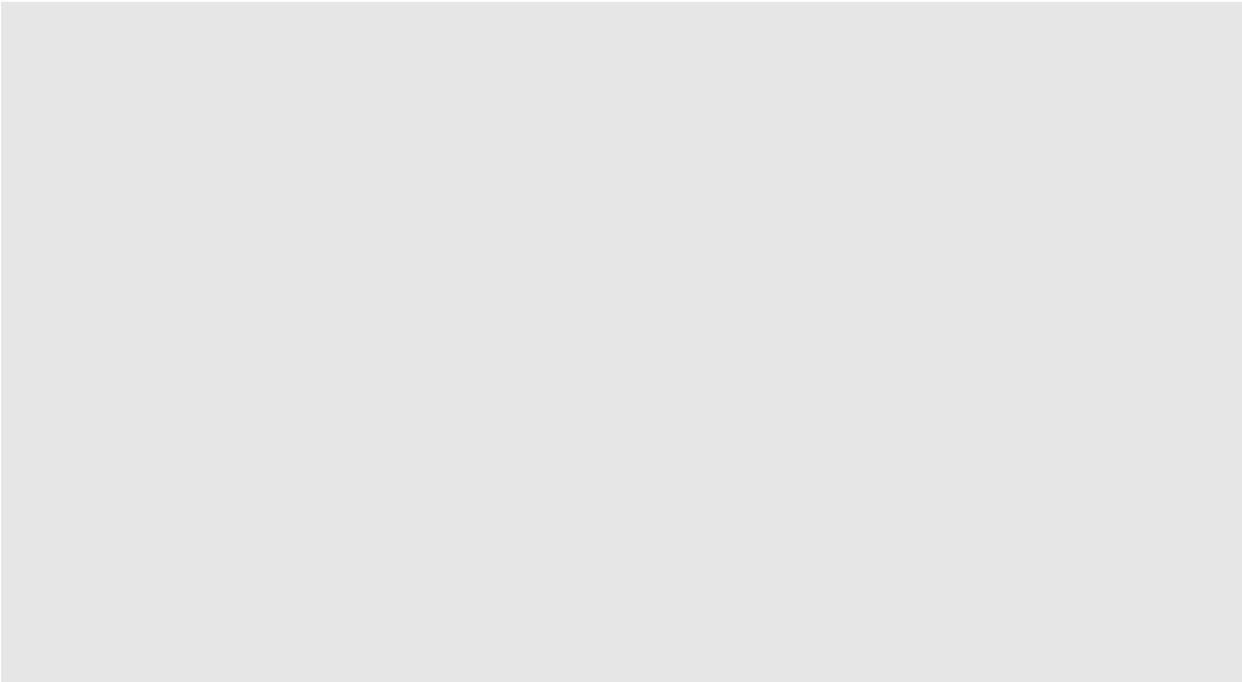
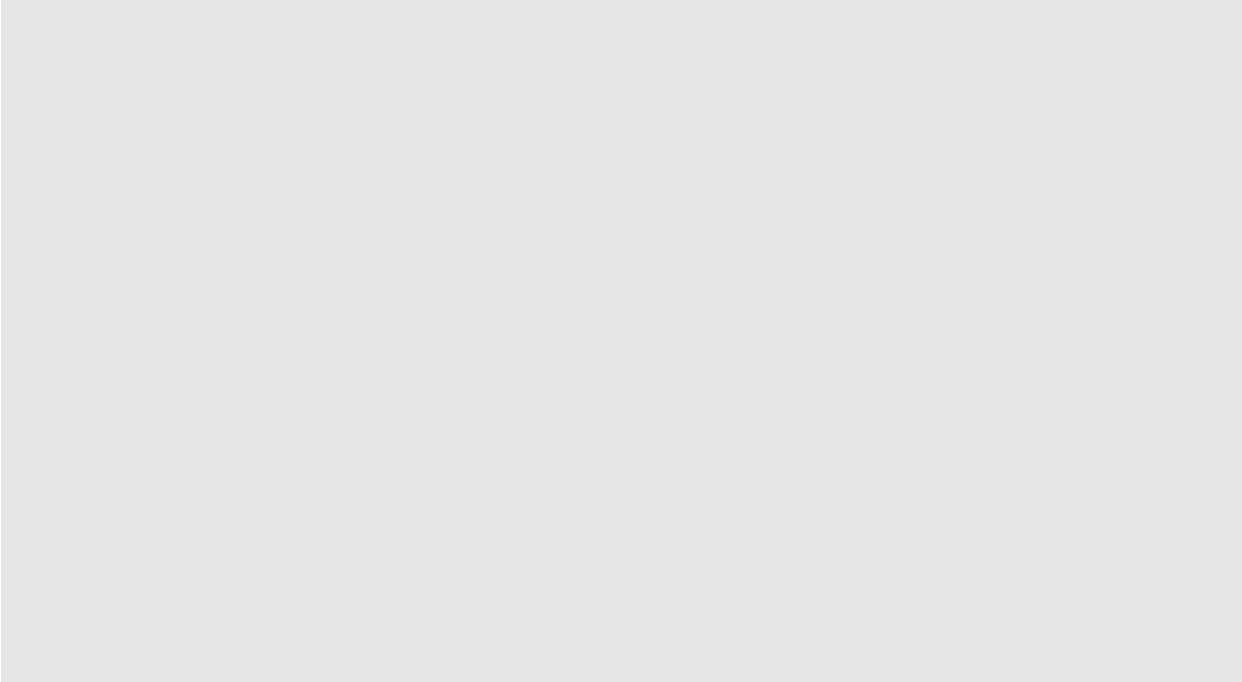
FURISODATION

Clad in a voluminous dress and gigantic bow in striking red and white, a nod to the *kohaku maku* celebratory colors in Japan, sits Kyary Pamyu Pamyu, nestled among a line of backup dancers at an equally monochromatic banquet setup. As discussed in chapter 3, Kyary - before making headway as a pop music sensation - was a popular Harajuku street-snap model turned fashion magazine darling, now known best for her music videos featuring colorfully elaborate, quirky set pieces. Dancing along with her

companions, she sings a spirited introduction - *"Hello! On this very special day, I'd like to thank you from the bottom of my heart/It's normally too embarrassing to say it, but this important day happens only once"*. Released on January 30th 2013, the song marked both the artist's twentieth birthday several days before, as well as her "coming of age" - themed around the Japanese Coming of Age Ceremony (*seijin-shiki*) which is held in January, the song and music video ponder the experiences of turning twenty, reaching adulthood and its attendant privileges and setbacks.

Following a jolly chorus where she cheers, *"I'm twenty, I'm twenty, am I only twenty?/Yes, that's me - I'm twenty, my furisodation"*, Kyary follows with a more melancholy bridge - *"Will I be happy as an adult? Will I be sad as an adult?/What do I do? What can I do?/Can I only do them now?"*, sung over footage of the artist at various "levels" of drunkenness. Beginning with a calm glass of wine at level 1 and gradually becoming more intoxicated as the levels increase - drinking straight from the bottle by level 3, lying on the table with a coy wink as she upturns her glass for the last drop before collapsing face-first by level 6. In combining scenes of Kyary drunkenly carousing with the more sobering questions surrounding adulthood, the song expresses both happiness and apprehension at the limited window in which young women in Japan can still "play" (*asobi*) as adults before they are confronted by societal expectations of marriage and parenthood.

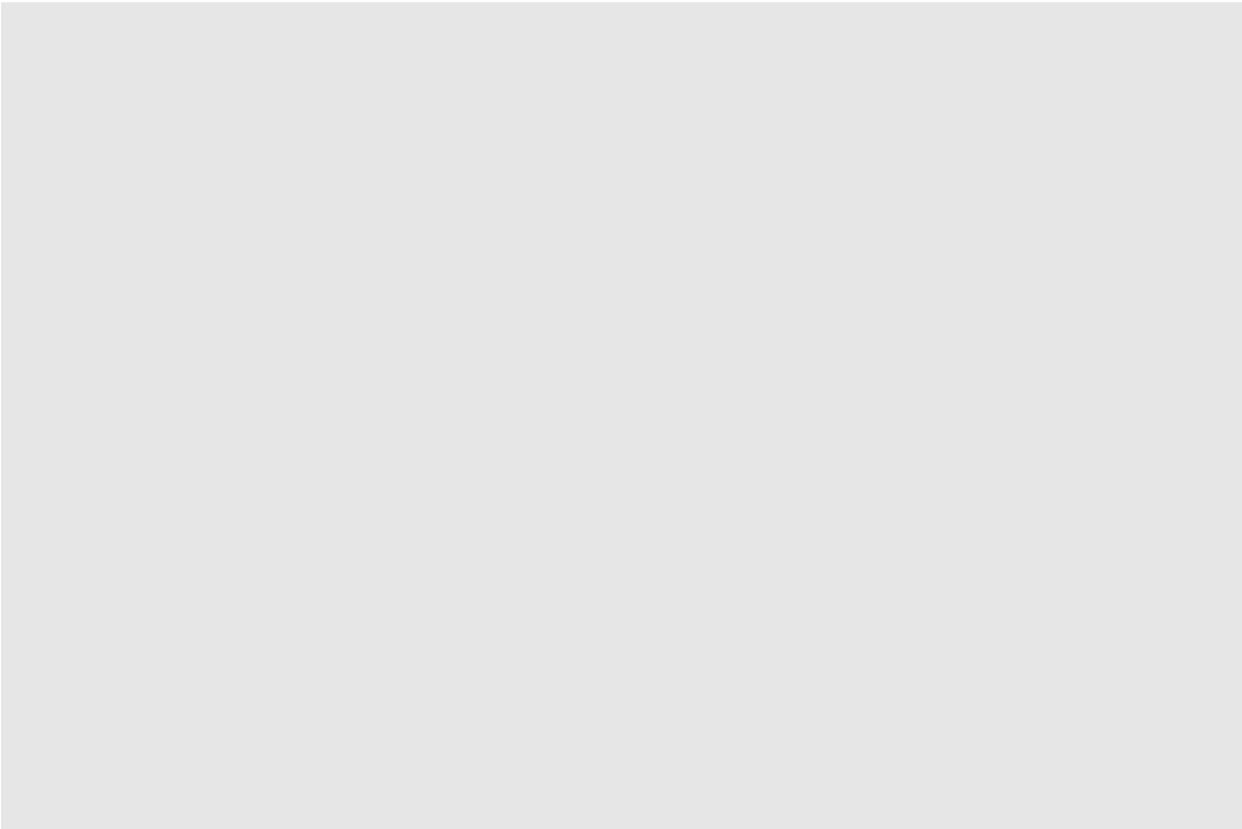
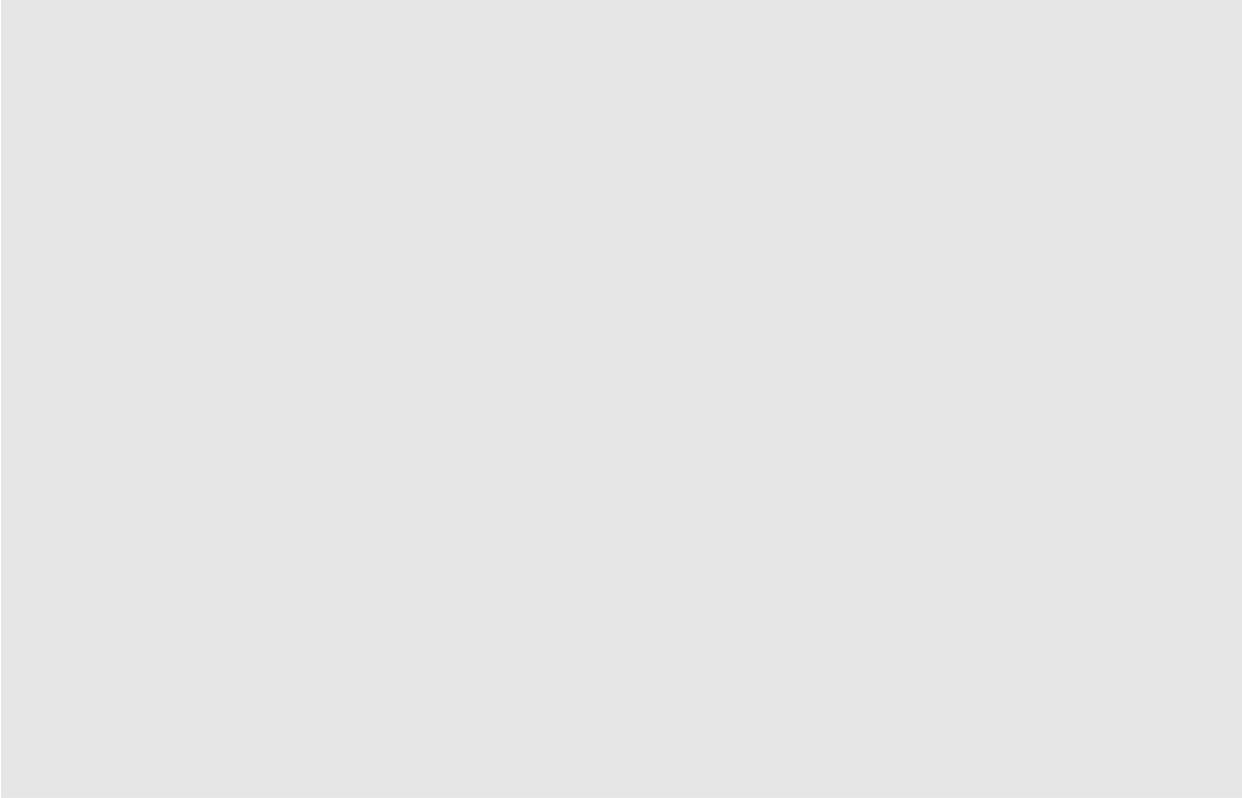




The titular “*furisodation*” refers to the *furisode*, the most formal style of kimono that are worn by young women for their coming-of-age ceremony, held on January 15th of the year they turn twenty years old. The bright colors and longer sleeves (reaching up to 114cm/45in) signify the wearer’s youth, while the high cost of materials can make them prohibitively expensive to buy. Since WWII, the coming-of-age day has been a national holiday (Goldstein-Gidoni 2008, 157), with predominately gendered distinctions between the ways that young men and women are expected to dress. While young men primarily wear formal suits - often the suit that they will wear for their *shukatsu* job-seeking – young women are encouraged to wear furisode. In the work of Ofra Goldstein-Gidoni, this serves as more than an issue of fashion or preference, as the kimono has become a national symbol of traditionality (ibid 153), serving as part of the “complex process of the construction of cultural identity in modern Japan”. (ibid)

As a life cycle ritual, the coming-of-age ceremony bears particular importance for the parents, rather than the young women in question - with the attendant attire the main focus of the event. The high cost of the furisode - up to ¥1,000,000 - is regarded by many to be “a kind of a social must” (ibid 159), which parents will insist on as a performative display of affluence and success. As one teacher from a kimono school stated,

“for the parents it is like a proof [akashi]. If they have the possibility of dressing their daughter in a ¥1,000,000 kimono it is proof that they have worked hard all their lives and can afford it. It is the result of their life work. If they don’t dress her it is as if they couldn’t reach this stage. They are watched by the people around. It is a display for the neighborhood. While other girls in the neighborhood wear furisode in their seijinshiki [coming-of-age ceremony] and only their daughter doesn’t, they are ashamed. This kind of feeling has been left. But the girls do not always understand their parents’ feelings” (ibid 160)



(Hong 2020; Kori 2020)

What is worth noting here is the coming-of-age ceremony as “an opportunity to be seen” (ibid 157) - as a symbolic representation of their parents’ success and stability. Where “having the economic means to dress one’s daughter in an expensive kimono for her coming-of-age ceremony is considered important for the public image of the modern Japanese household”, this success is displayed not only through the ceremony itself, but also through studio portraiture of the event that is distributed to relatives as custom requires (ibid 160). The wearing of furisode requires a degree of *kata*, creating an “emphasis on cultivation of form and on appearance related to Japanese women” (ibid 164), which helps to expand on the significance placed on the coming-of-age photograph. Goldstein-Gidoni notes in her work that this event, and the photographs of it, serve as a way of upholding *sekentei*, or “the honorable appearance as viewed by the surrounding world” (ibid), a responsibility that falls primarily on the mother of a given household. For one mother of a 20-year-old girl, going to great lengths to convince her daughter to wear the furisode and attend the ceremony was worthwhile, as “it saved her from the embarrassment she would have faced if photographs of the kimono-clad daughter had not been sent to thank all the congratulating relatives.” (ibid)

The importance of this *sekentei* can shed light on the frustration felt by parents and elders when young women are ‘seen’ acting outside the norm through sartorial and cosmetic enhancement, as this could be understood as undermining the appearance of normative stability and success. Just as the circulation of studio photographs of young women in furisode among relatives and colleagues has the potential to uphold family standing, photographs that display anything outside these normative categories could do just the opposite. Vernacular photography such as purikura, particularly those distributed on social media, are utilized by young women to uphold their own in-group social standing much like *sekentei*, but are understood by outsiders to portray an identity that is not beholden to affirming their proper role in Japanese society. Just as Kyary Pamyu Pamyu questions in *Furisdiction*, among the young woman that I worked with, the impulse is to let loose and party once they come of age - an inclination towards *asobi* (play) that is foreshortened by the roles they are expected to fill in future.

UCHI/SOTO

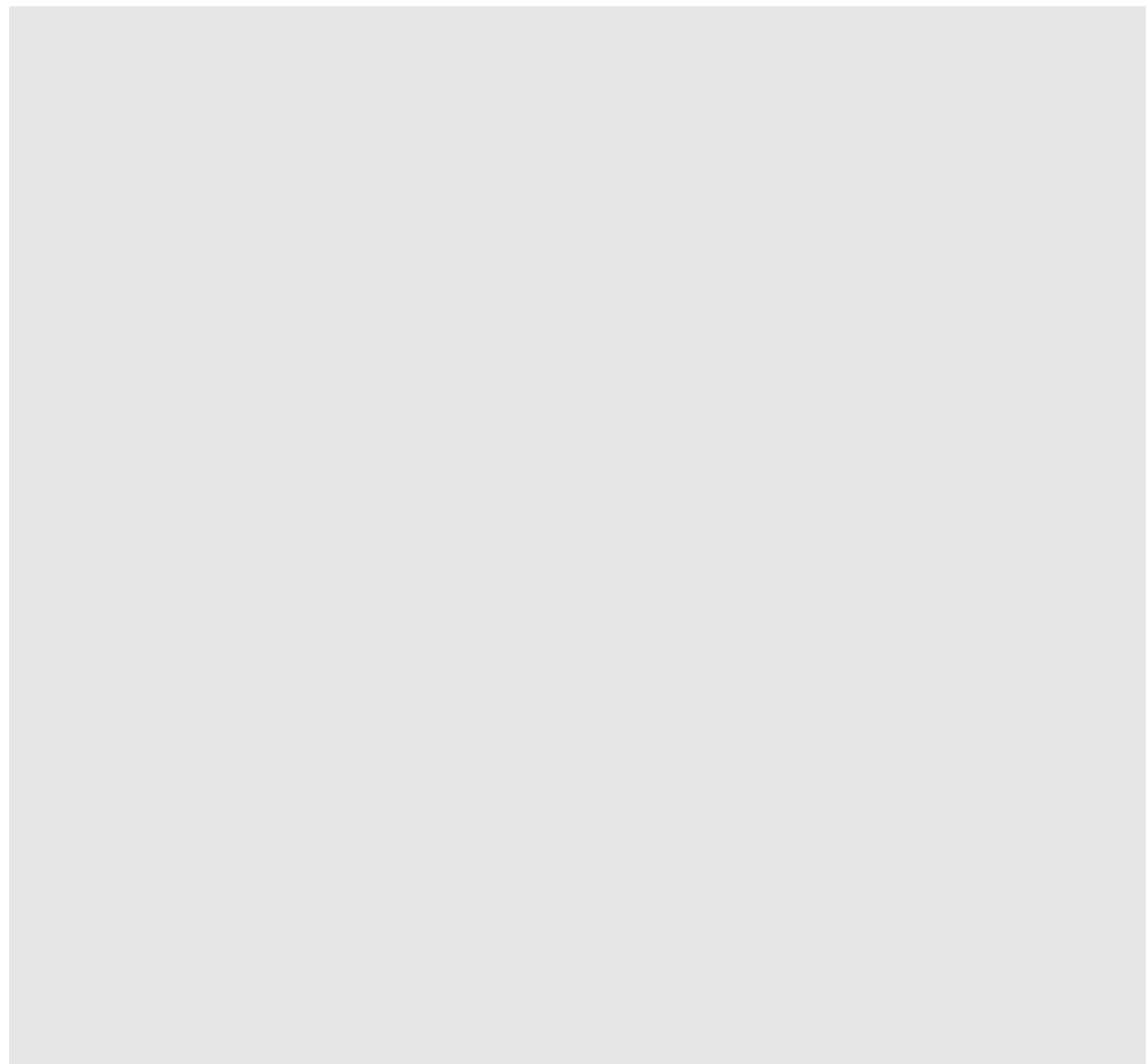
As mentioned previously, the length, cut and styling of hair formed part of the delineation of gendered roles in the Meiji era as dictated by government intervention - this was similarly enacted through the encouragement of western-style suits for men, and kimono for women. As noted by Goldstein-Gidoni, the furisode and kimono more generally remain symbolically linked to this notion of women as “models of tradition [through] the maintenance of the precious household (*ie*)” (Goldstein-Gidoni 2008, 154). For many, this good wife, wise mother ideology remains a prevalent ideal to strive for - as one kimono school owner stated, she hoped that the education she provided would better allow young women to fulfill this role, as “a traditional Japanese pattern ... the splendid woman that guarded the Japanese household (*ie*) over the years” (ofra 163). Placing the stress here firmly on the ‘*house*’ in housewife, the good wife, wise mother has always been understood to be representative of the “ideal womanhood based on the ideological division by gender — *soto* (outside the home)/men and *uchi* (home)/women” (Ashikari 2003, 4).

As mentioned in previous chapters, this ideology - which encouraged women to remain in their homes (*uchi*) - has shifted over time to allow an increasing diversity of roles and careers for women outside of this sphere. In the work of Mikiko Ashikari (as discussed previously in chapter 4), the ways in which Japanese women wear makeup, particularly face-whitening foundation outside of the home, “refutes the traditional image of the Japanese women who are confined to the home by the division of gender, emphasizing the more liberated reality of the lives of these middle-class women.” (ibid 6) As discussed previously, following the Meiji era came the Taisho (1912-1926), and with it saw the further expansion of roles for middle-class women in the workforce and outside of the home. These women - dubbed *shokugyo-fujin*⁹ - were needed by the economy, “but public discourse was generally critical ... [negatively] stereotyping them as ‘new and progressive women’” (ibid 10). As magazines of the time warned, the performance

⁹ *shokugyo* [occupation]; *fujin* [women] - or, middle-class working women

of an ideal, virtuous femininity through cosmetic adornment was necessary for these *shokugyo-fujin* - it is notable that, much like the makeup that is deemed appropriate in modern day workplaces, this whitening foundation was not only meant to take the place of a “barefaced” look, but was further contrasted with inappropriate styles of makeup that included eyeliner, eyeshadow and false eyelashes. (Ashikari 2003, 11) Whitening foundation, in this case, served as a way for women who worked outside of the home to both symbolically represent the feminine virtues of the *uchi* while participating in the workforce of the *soto*, “in order to display her “modesty and chastity” through her appearance in public” (ibid 11, Tsuda & Murata 1993, 44-48).

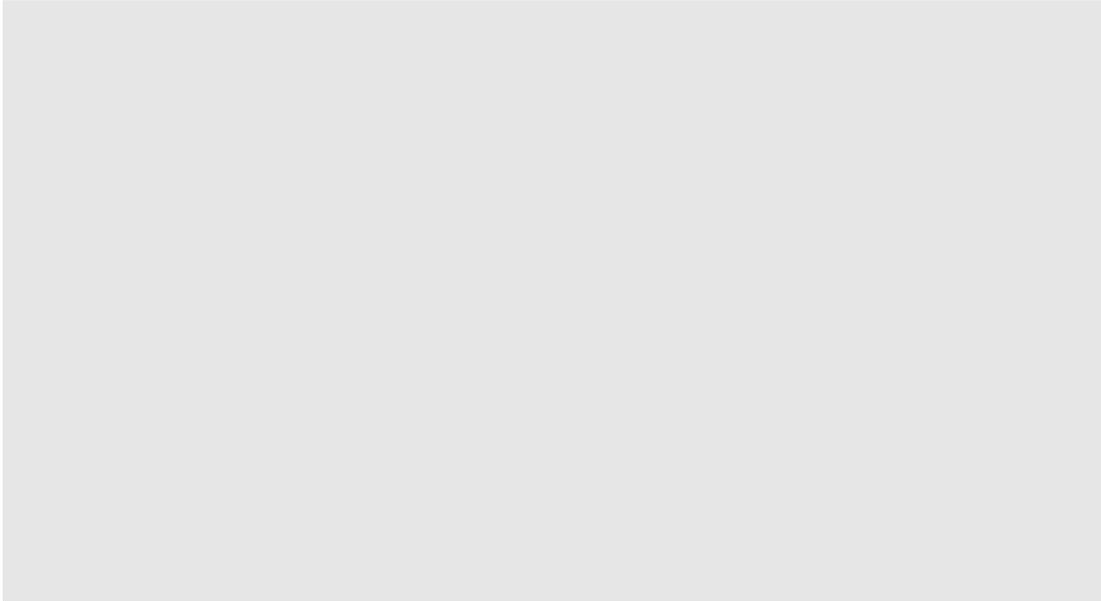
Much like working women of the Taisho era, for contemporary middle-class Japanese women, the use of makeup which upholds normative standards of beauty and modesty persists to this day as a means of accessing opportunities outside of the home and participating in the workforce. Makeup which is generally not worn at home, within the domain of *uchi*, is utilized primarily when going outside - “they claim that they put on foundation before they go to *soto* [outside] because wearing foundation in public places is ‘etiquette’ or ‘common sense’”. (Ibid 5) The boundedness of this etiquette is further highlighted in the Tokyu Line School Commute Diary series of advertisements discussed above, where the women seen doing their makeup on the train are asked, “*Why can’t you do that before you get on the train?*” In a similar rail etiquette advertisement campaign run by Tokyo Metro in 2008, a series of “manners posters” themed around the phrase “*uchi de yaro*” [“*Why don’t you do it at home!*”] (Bardsley and Miller 2011, 219) similarly addresses the application of makeup on the train. On one poster, showing a woman using an eyelash curler, women are again instructed not to apply makeup in the ‘public’ *soto* space of the train car, highlighting the particularly egregious nature of taking a ‘private’ *uchi* activity into the outside world.



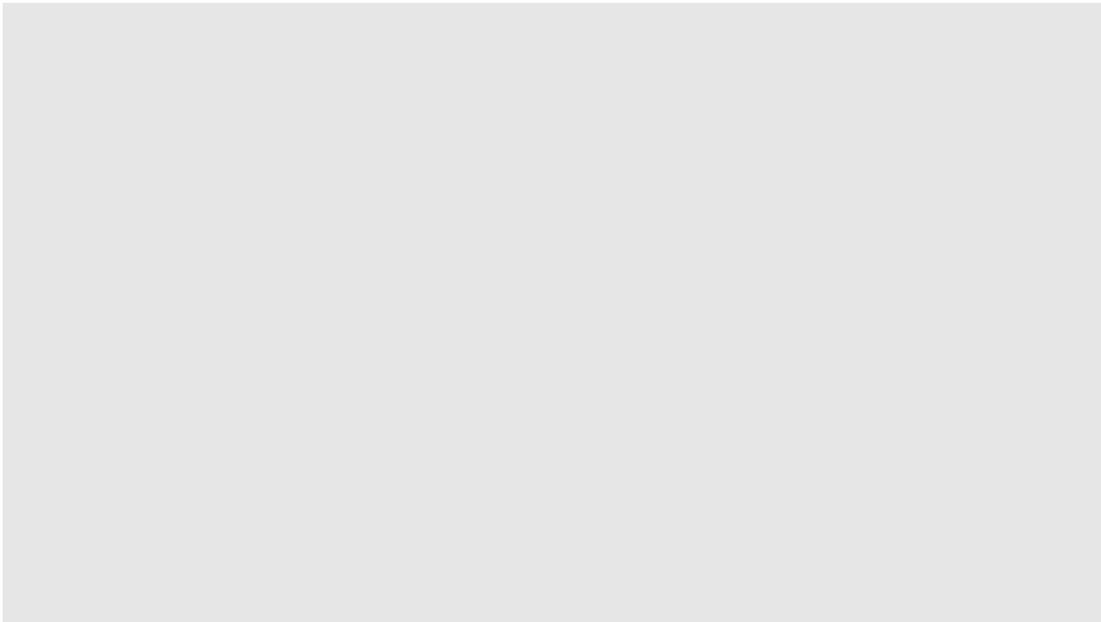
This notion of makeup application as something done in the privacy of the *uchi* can be understood as an act of spatial transgression, where women who do their makeup in public are “blurring the boundaries between public and private spaces”. (Ibid 229) The ways in which technology has continued to develop indicates that this spatial transgression can also be seen in the inverse - despite telecommuting being a gender-neutral activity, the ways in which the TeleBeauty Skype application was developed shows that the facilitation of women working from home (*uchi*) continues to require her to wear makeup, as working is understood primarily as a *soto* (outside) activity. The promotional materials for the application further outline that telecommuting serves both

as a way to allow women to work, but also to allow women to continue to fulfill their roles as caregivers to children and the elderly. It is important to note that these responsibilities, as part of the good wife, wise mother ideology, are here reiterated as explicitly female roles. TeleBeauty is not an application for the generic improvement of lighting and beautification of the home for workers of any gender to utilize while telecommuting, but was explicitly developed for women to be able to maintain their *soto* appearance while remaining in the private sphere of the home, a spatial transgression between public and private through virtual cosmetic adornment that I will discuss at length in the next section of this chapter.

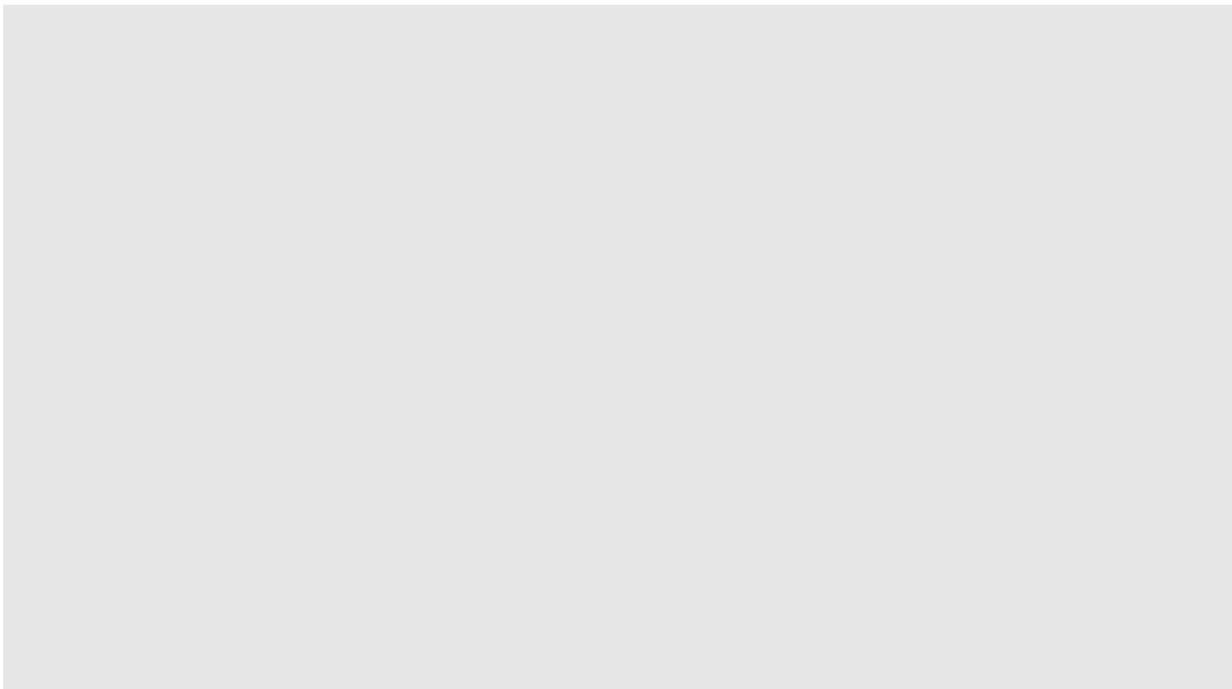
DUPLICITOUS DUPES



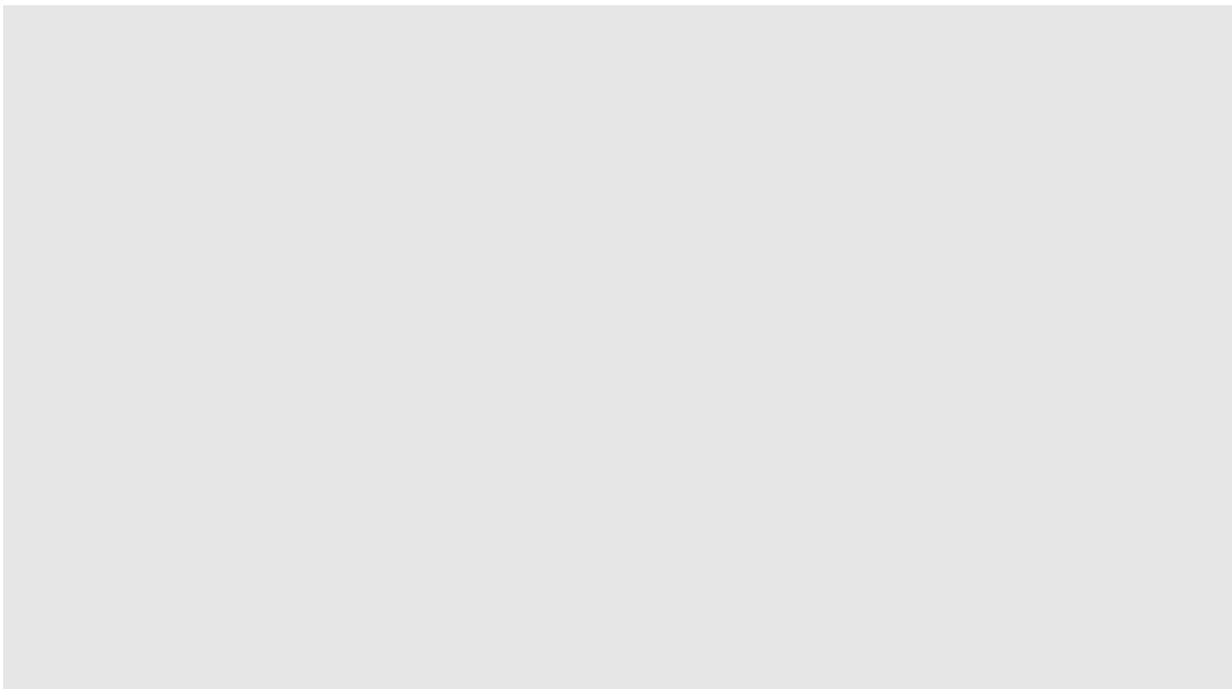
*“Scam point 1:
Eyes can be changed by at least 3 sizes!”*



*“Scam point 2:
Skin color can be changed by at least 5 shades!”*



“What is this?! These aren’t our faces!”



“Wow, isn’t this too far? Purikura is scary.”

In a YouTube video uploaded in December of 2014, Morusan, a fashionable Japanese man in his early twenties, stands in front of a row of purikura machines. Upon greeting his viewership, he explains that his visit to the game center that day was an investigation - *“the faces they give you - well, they make you a completely different person than you are”*, he states, gesturing at the machines with a smirk. Turning towards his friend, Ucchi, who waves at the camera cheerily, Morusan announces, *“today, we two men will be investigating and verifying the rumored fraud of purikura machines!”*

The video progresses as the two young men proceed to jokingly fumble their way through the process. They angrily admit that it took them five minutes to figure out how to insert money, after which Morusan yelps in frustration at the myriad options provided by the user interface - *“what the heck is this! I totally have no clue.”* After taking their photographs, the two proceed to the editing console, where they narrate the process, aghast at the results. *“What IS this? This is like, absolutely not your face”*, Morusan groans, pointing at the screen with a stylus. *“This face is beyond different, it’s dangerous! This is intense - purikura is scary.”*

At over 500,000 views, the video is largely representative of the reactions to purikura from individuals that did not make use of the machines that I experienced during my fieldwork. During discussions with users, they frequently expressed frustration with these kinds of criticisms - as one woman stated, “people tell me, ‘you don’t look like that, that’s not really you, you should learn to love yourself as you are’, but they just don’t understand.” Similarly, during my fieldwork, when first meeting non-users and the subject of my work arose, I was inevitably greeted with confusion that ranged from nervous laughter to disdainful incredulity. Most were jovially snide, dismissive, even cautionary towards the practice, while a significant number responded, bemused - “but why would you study *that?*”

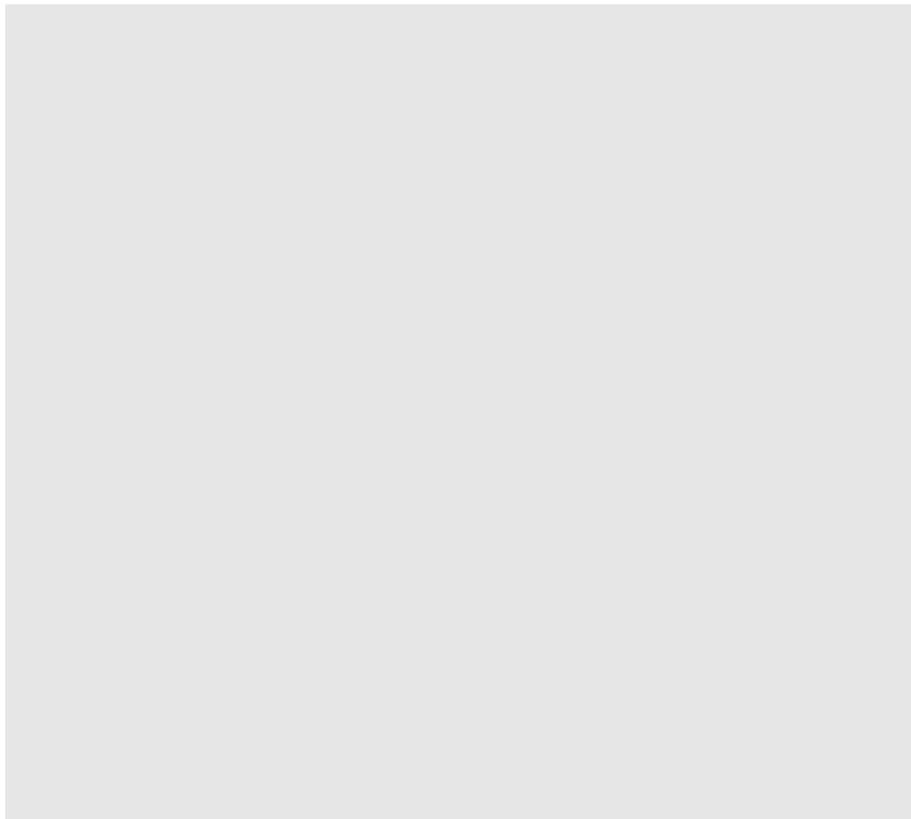
As a medium that captures a visual piece of information, photography can be used to quickly identify others – as discussed in chapter 1, this aspect of photography has allowed it to be utilized as a tool for the categorization and control of others. Some are critical of those who choose to manipulate the content of a photograph, whether through

analog, digital or physical changes, as it is believed that this will obscure the identification of those pictured. Beauty practices, which garner significant disregard from those who see them as deceptive or harmful, go hand-in-hand with purikura, a form of vernacular photography that utilizes virtual cosmetic processes. As such, many are critical of purikura, a photographic medium predicated on cosmetic manipulation.

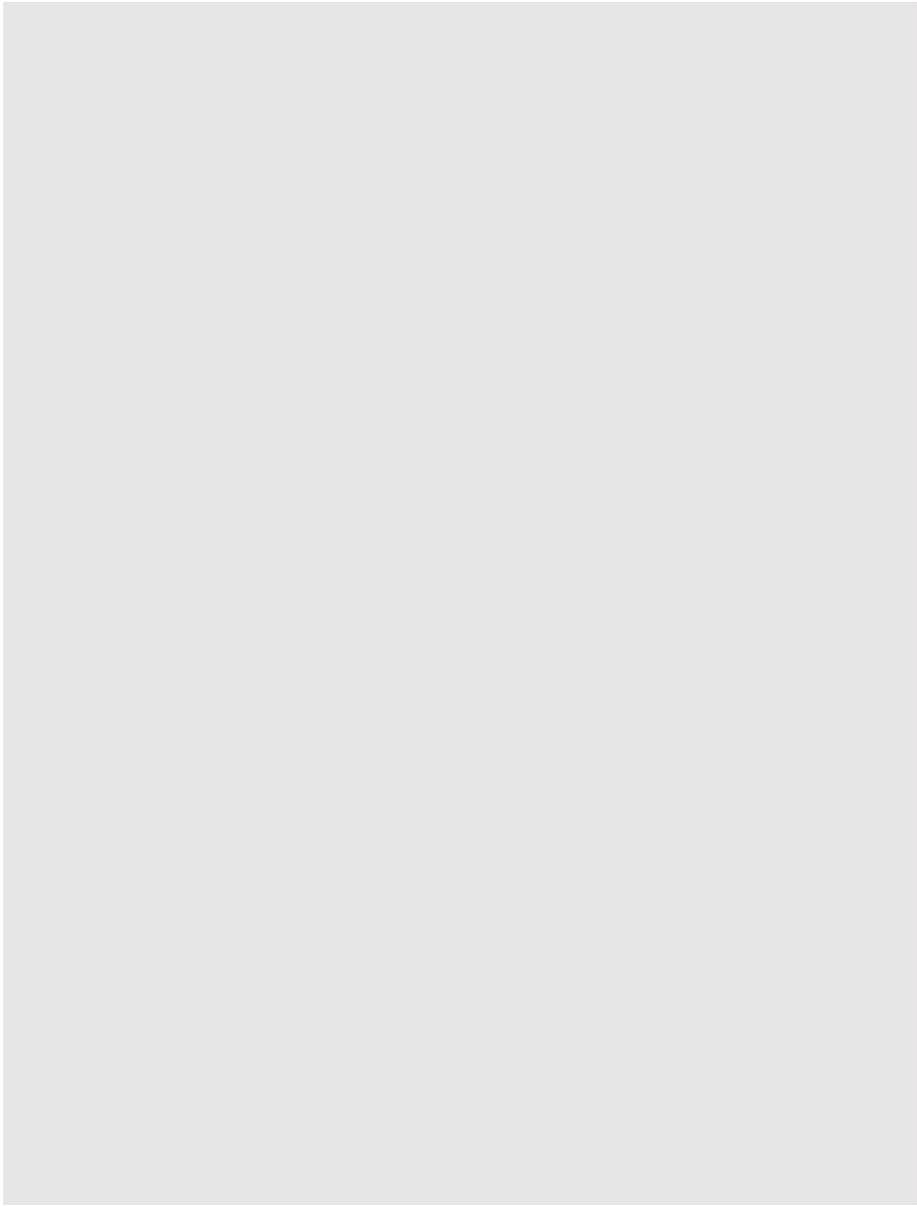
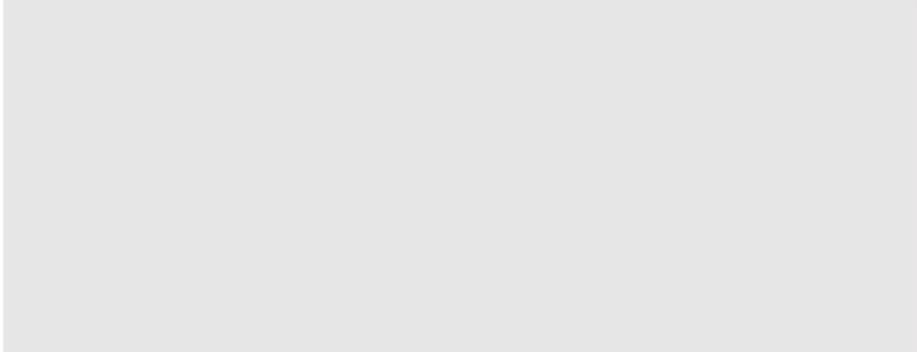
As discussed previously in chapters 1 and 3, the first purikura machines in the mid 1990s only produced pixelated, postage stamp-sized photographs - the early appeal of these rested on the collection of multitudes of decorative frames that users sought to obtain, usually kept in *puricho* (purikura albums). By the mid 1990s purikura had become firmly associated with *kogals*, a term that loosely describes fashionable young women in their teens and 20s - as discussed previously in chapters 1 and 3, purikura machines began to mimic various fashion and beauty practices that were popular among this demographic, especially that of eye enlargement. As the picture quality of the photographs improved, intense ring lighting was added, which gradually led to the addition of skin-smoothing and lightening presets. Since 2003, purikura machines have seen a technological shift towards cosmetic enhancement of skin, eyes and hair, as seen in the release of the “Beautiful Skin Planet” series of machines, which claims to “increase representation of thoroughly beautiful skin”. The proliferation of cosmetic capabilities is particularly seen in the release of Brilliant Beauty Photo, which offered users eye color changes, lipstick, as well as changes to hair color and length. This, along with eye shadow, blush, lipstick and false eyelashes, were the norm for purikura machines I used during my fieldwork in 2016. Similarly, even the most basic, non-fashion-oriented machines located in tourist destinations for the commemoration of a visit were able to somewhat enlarge the eye and improve skin texture.

Since the 1990s purikura machines have continued to utilize the virtual cosmetic process, particularly stressing skin texture, enlarged eyes, makeup, and hair color changes. As discussed previously in chapter 3, largely due to the popularity of fashion commemoration, purikura machines began to expand their photographic capabilities beyond the scope of head and shoulders to include the whole body. Along with this, a newer trend comes in the form of virtual changes to body structure - in the early 2010s, most machines attempted to imply a degree of "thinness" by placing the camera high

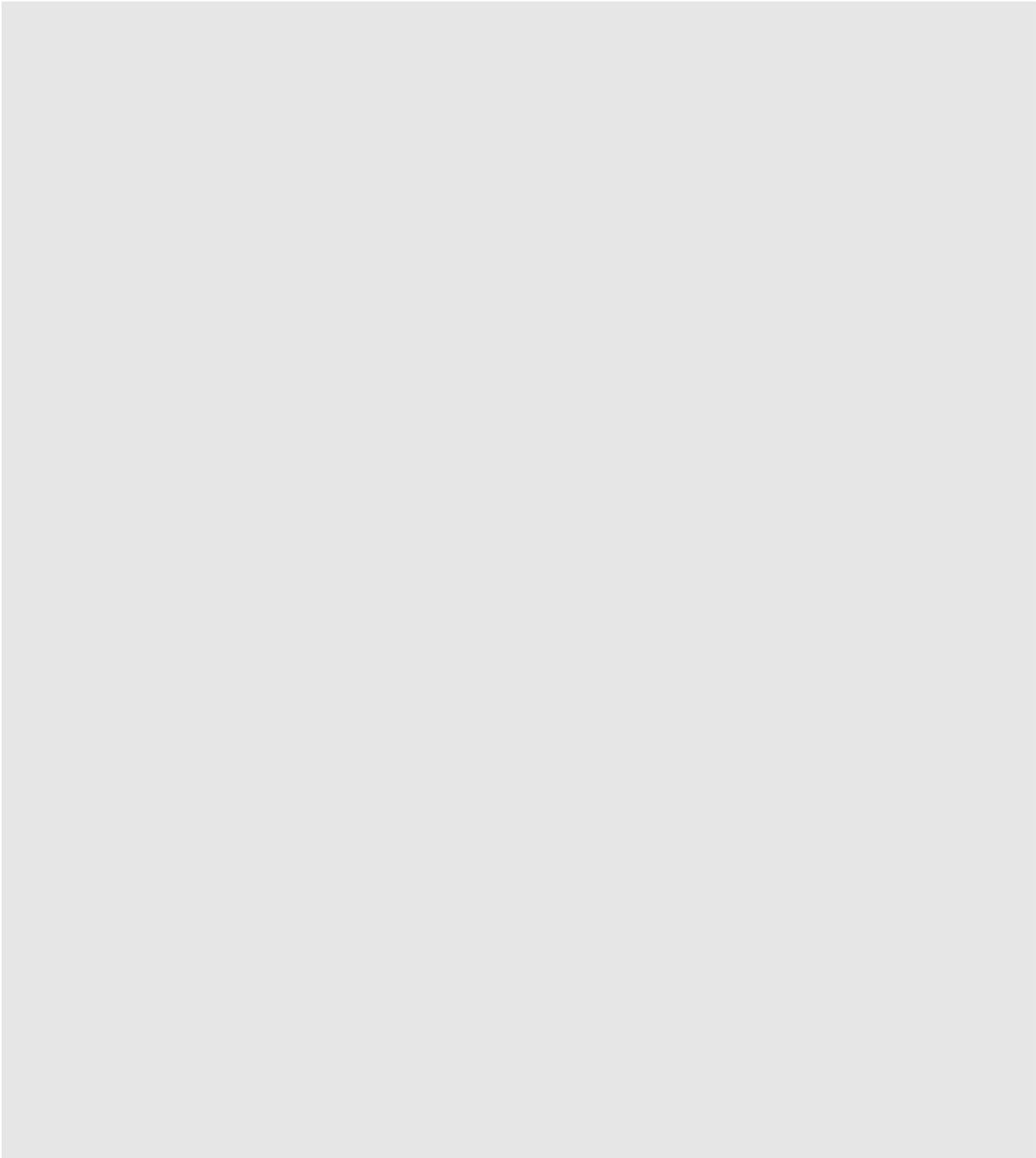
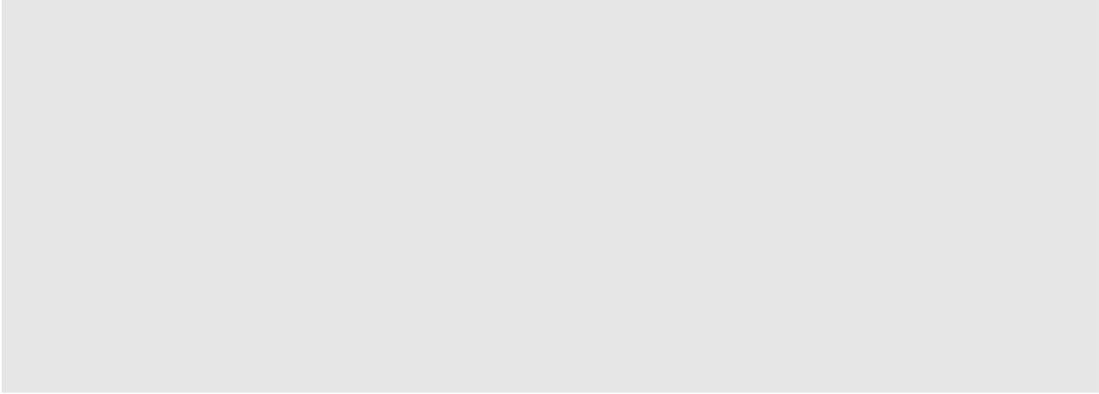
above the head of the users, at an angle that made the legs look minuscule compared to the rest of the body. In 2012, the machine Kirei Navi introduced the ability to 'lengthen' the torso and legs, stretching the lower half of users' photographs, making them appear taller and thinner, and often warping designs on clothing in the process. During my fieldwork in 2016, this was the norm in many machines, along with an array of new modifications to the face and body, paying particular attention to the shape and slimness of the chin, nose, and the inclusion of double eyelids, as discussed in chapters 3 and 4. What began as the virtual lengthening of eyelashes quickly came to encompass the enlargement of the entire eye, mimicking the stylized extremes of both pupils and irises that gyaru accomplished with makeup and colored contact lenses for *dekame* (big eye) *mori* (piled on) looks. The trend of cosmetic enhancements within purikura aligns with and mimics real-world makeup trends, and attempts to provide a comparable toolset for users - more than just facilitating the overall beauty practices of users, purikura has gradually become a beauty practice in itself.



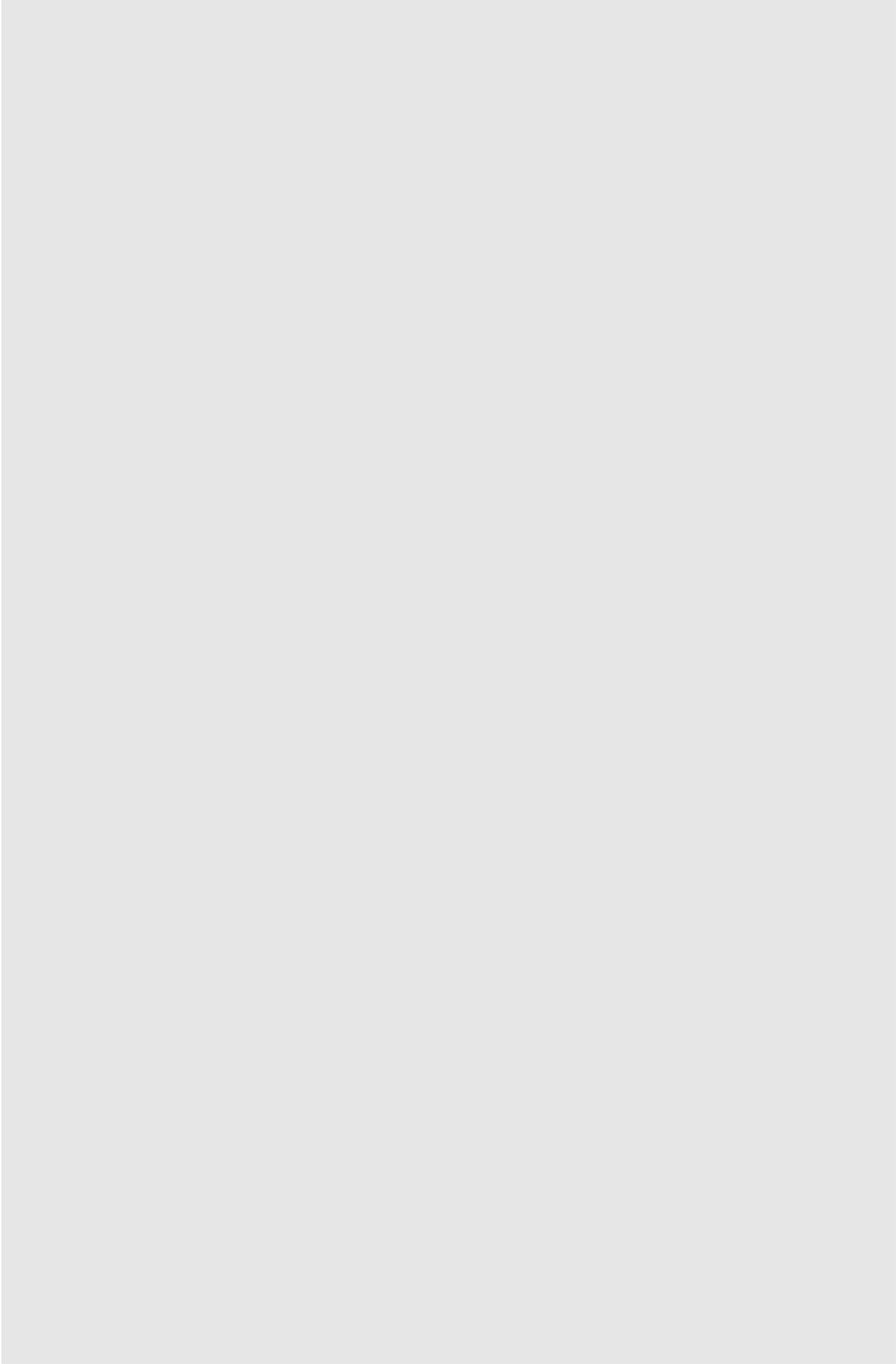
Early purikura frames via Print Club Super Mastery Book (1996)



Promotional materials for purikura machine Kirei Navi 2



Advertising for purikura machine FIL'TER with featured slimming capabilities for nose and body



Promotional materials for the Jewella Eye purikura machine

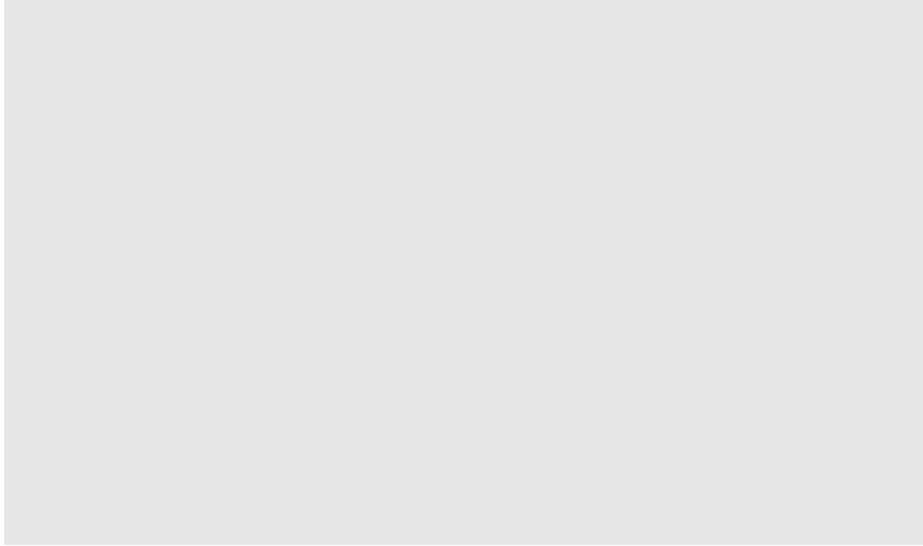
Criticisms of the trend towards cosmetic enhancement within purikura technology aligns with larger critiques of beauty practices, particularly makeup. Caroline Palmer has discussed this culturally engrained disapproval as existing in the West since the early 2nd century AD, where the use of makeup has been consistently cited as “evidence of a general deterioration in moral standards” (Palmer 2008, 198). Second and third wave feminists have been largely critical of beauty practices, particularly author Naomi Wolf - in her book *The Beauty Myth* (Wolf 1990), she posits that beauty practices serve as an ideology that seeks to “undo... all the good things that feminism did for women” (ibid:10). For Wolf, a “dark vein of self-hatred” (ibid:10) underlies the practice of cosmetic adornment - this perspective is reiterated in Tanya Sheehan’s discussion of cosmetic makeovers, where she states that they are “generated out of private feelings of inferiority, inadequacy or an abstract malaise”. (Sheehan 2013:194) This resonates with one of the critiques most commonly related to me by purikura users and non-users alike - use of the machines, and beauty practices in general, are rooted in insecurities, where they are being ‘duped’ by a system that will only further perpetuate their self-hatred.

Another consideration of cosmetic adornment by critics characterizes participants not as dupes, but as duplicitous. The “markedly unnatural mannerisms and gestures that [define] cute” (Cross 2004, 72) are, in the case of purikura, most often performed through digital manipulation of the face and hair, particularly to add virtual makeup, such as lipstick or false eyelashes. Such cosmetic modifications, even when physically manifest, are often deemed superficial (Power 2010, 3) - “to intentionally add - or have added - design or color to oneself is to play with something ‘fake’” (ibid:15). Through use of makeup, theorists claim young women are assembling their artificially cute selves to construct a “fake” identity (Power 2010:4) - by presenting a falsely beautiful self to the world, they are “willful deceivers” (Palmer 2008:197), manipulating those around them with their idealized appearance.

Purikura as a beauty practice is part of a larger notion of cute consumption that is enacted through adornment, behavior and mannerisms, delineated by theorists as cloying and fabricated. It is theorized that cute consumption is about becoming cute oneself – an act that is considered “contrived, cultivated” (Granot, Alejandro, and

Russell 2014, 71) and “extremely artificial” (Kinsella 1995, 240), as outlined in chapters 1, 2 and 3. When criticized, purikura and makeup users are often described as choosing to anonymize themselves through these actions - beyond harming themselves through aesthetic alteration, it is claimed they are also losing all individuality to conform to a larger group. For critics, participants fulfill the role of the duplicitous dupe - saccharinely tricking those around them while simultaneously being duped into allowing their “authentic” selves to be subsumed by the cute typology, “[erasing] the traits of their ‘true’ personalities to become an anonymous social type” (Iida 2001, 232). In characterizing women who utilize beauty practices as anonymous, oppressed and dishonest, what is largely missing from these accounts is the voices of women themselves. Ironically, these accounts further anonymize their subject rather than being grounded in the justifications and experiences of the women discussed. What those who are critical of beauty practices fail to recognize is that the notion of a ‘real’ self that is being covered up, distorted or harmed in the process of beautification disregards the lived experience of those discussed, reduced to an archetypal “authentic female self awaiting liberation under all those layers of make-up” (K. Davis 1991, 26). While “all forms of beauty work, from ancient to modern, entail a degree of artificiality” (Miller 2006:122), for the young women that I worked with, beauty practices were not seen as inauthentic or harmful, but were instead a site for pleasure, camaraderie and imaginative play, offering a shifting, unfixed multiplicity of potential identities.

Beyond a literal interpretation of *uchi/soto* as inside/outside, as in the written material for the transit admonishments discussed previously, this duality has been further explored through the lens of conceptualizations of self and identity in Japanese society. Authors such as Dorinne K. Kondo (1990), Nancy R. Rosenberger (1994), Matthews M. Hamabata, Jane M. Bachnik & Charles J. Quinn Jr. (1994), among others, have complicated the understanding of this dynamic as merely a binary notion of *soto* as outer (or, society) and *uchi* as inner (or, the interiority of the self), but have further described them as a constantly shifting relational social dynamic which lacks a fixed framework of absolutes - what is deemed *uchi* or *soto* may shift depending on degrees of contextual “insiderness” or “outsiderness”.



Promotional materials for purikura machine USAGI featuring purimo Risa Nakamura

MAKE (YOURSELF) UP

“...Photography is an imprint or transfer off the real, it is a photochemically processed trace causally connected to that thing in the world to which it refers in a manner parallel to that of fingerprints or footprints or the rings of water that cold glasses leave on tables. The photograph is thus genetically distinct from painting or sculpture or drawing.” (Krauss 1985, 110)

As purikura was first introduced to the market in the early 1990s, digital cameras became increasingly affordable to the average consumer - these were heralded by a surge of sensationalist disapproval in both academia and mainstream media, particularly against the possibility of digital photographic manipulation. Suddenly, the notion of photography as “unmediating and trustworthy” (Ritchin 1990, 2) was disrupted, leaving theorists to question photography’s “perceived relationship to objectivity and truth” (Sheehan 2013, 188). To properly contextualize the social practice of purikura, it must be seen as existing in this general framework of criticism against all digital photographic manipulation, where “the camera in the digital age has acquired a new capacity to lie” (ibid).

The cosmetic manipulation of photographs is by no means a new phenomenon - from the early 1870s, trade literature from the United States shows that studio photographers routinely made use of strategic posing, lighting and makeup to produce an aesthetically pleasing composition. However, the majority of “doctoring” occurred directly on the photograph or negative itself, usually manipulating the face and body of the sitter. The digital cosmetic manipulations found in purikura precisely align with those evident in the research of Tanya Sheehan, whose discussion of the loss of photographic authority is in regards to cosmetic doctoring. In her research, she deliberates on instances of manipulation as early as 1875:

“The result ... is the appearance of blemish-free skin with even pigmentation, fuller cheeks, a straighter mouth and well-rested eyes - features that contribute to our reading of the subject as youthful, racially white, feminine and middle class” (Sheehan 2013, 182).

These qualities, she surmises, are the heart of photography’s authority – to alter them would be to touch out “features that were deemed essential to her class, race and gender” (ibid:184), rendering the subject’s classification obscured. For Sheehan, “the traditional hallmark of photography’s authority” can be traced to the notion that “the referent adheres to the photographic image” (Sheehan 2013:197). For digital manipulation to interfere with this corporeal adherence is what has eroded photography’s authority - “now the viewer must question the photograph at the basic physical level of fact” (Ritchin 1990:9).

As the virtual embodiedness seen in purikura flourishes, disapproval of digital manipulation of photographs has become a key element in the criticisms lobbied at purikura - as summarized by Copley & Haeffner - “digital imaging has played a role in ‘virtual’ existence, particularly as it has ... contributed to the putative unreality and the unreliability of mass mediated communication” (Copley and Haeffner 2009, 124). As Rosier outlines, “the question at hand is the danger posed to truth by computer-manipulated photographic imagery” (Rosier 1991, 52). While some claim that “digitization abandons even the rhetoric of truth” (Batchen 2001, 134), many theorists

feel that there is an “erosion” of the authority of the photographer (Cobley and Haeffner 2009, 5), and consequently, the erosion of the authority of photography itself.

This stress on “unreality and unreliability” (Cobley and Haeffner 2009, 124) is in line with other interpretations of digital manipulation I have discussed, while also resonant of themes in the study of cute culture as escapist. However, more than just an erosion of photographic authority, these digital manipulations are understood to erode our sense of *self*. As Ritchin has highlighted, “we have faith in the photograph not only because it works on a physically descriptive level, but in a broader sense because it confirms ... the validity of the material world” (Ritchin 1990, 55), a validity which is warped through digital construction. As Kember has succinctly pronounced, the current panic over the status of the image is technologically deterministic, and “masks a more fundamental fear about the status of the self or the subject of photography” (Kember 1996, 146).

In her discussion of purikura, lida has linked it to the construction of artificial identities (lida 2001, 226), “a purely imagined self that has little to do with who one actually is” (ibid:229). She states that this has contributed to “the radical erosion of empirical selfhood” (ibid:209) through the destruction of “fundamentals, such as a sense of self and the body” (ibid:210). In reference to Okuda, who believes that “the self recorded in purikura ... dematerializes and dehistoricizes real time, space and the self” (Okuda 1998), lida unequivocally deliberates on purikura as “an intense and seemingly limitless expansion of virtual images ... which has assaulted and fragmented subjectivity” (lida 2001, 253). For lida and Okuda, virtual images, especially in the form of purikura, corrode our sense of selfhood, which lida surmises is “the greatest source of contemporary danger” (ibid:257).

The majority of the criticisms towards purikura photographs – as a digitally enacted form of cosmetic adornment - are split between the contradictory pairing of both the duped and duplicitous. At once uninformed and conned, they simultaneously use their changed appearance to knowingly manipulate and deceive. The paradoxical duality of the duplicitous dupe - where altering one’s appearance is both fraudulent and harmful to oneself - can be better understood through two different notions of identity construction, as discussed in the work of van der Ploeg and Pridmore (van der Ploeg and Pridmore

2015). In their discussion of identity construction, they highlight the differing notions of self as being defined through two central categories (ibid:4); the narrow category of external, factual information, or through the broader category of internal self-knowledge.

In the narrow category, identity is understood through external, 'factual' information, such as name, age, nationality and various forms of visual physical characteristics and biometric data. This is the concept of identity utilized by governmental bodies and law enforcement, through documentation such as drivers' licenses, passports, visas and criminal records. The broader category of identity encompasses a much wider range of factors, such as "tastes and preferences, one's belief system, one's lifestyle, profession or position in society, one's life story, up to one's deepest dreams and desires" (ibid:5), all somewhat harder to quantify through identity documents. The latter category is often more closely aligned with what is considered to be part of an individual's personality.

It is believed that, through the doctoring of physical characteristics needed for systematic categorization of facts, users are duplicitously masking their "true" faces with cosmetic manipulation, which further harms or distorts internal qualities. Stemming from the issue of dishonesty and fraud, to manipulate one's appearance is understood to no longer align with a "true" visual representation of the self. Those that are critical of beauty practices claim that they are flagrantly inauthentic by their very nature - through the use of cosmetic adornment, young women are "adding the ideal to the real ... the individual is no longer just herself" (Power 2010:2), calling the validity of these identification systems into question. The contradictory nature of this criticism, whereby purikura users are at once duped and duplicitous, can be further understood through the inclusion of the broader category of identity - criticism of purikura users conflates these two categories, whereby the alteration of factual identity through cosmetic adornment harms internal qualities.

In the context of this narrower category of identity construction, it is possible to better understand the criticisms of both beauty practices and purikura. As a form of "social sorting" (van der Ploeg and Pridmore 2015, 12), identification systems rely on a specific set of information in reference to an individual, particularly visual information. The unease surrounding beauty practices follows largely from the conceptualization of

cosmetics as a “socially corrosive force” (Palmer 2008, 199) threatening to allow users to cross boundaries through the misrepresentation of age, class, and ethnicity, as discussed in chapters 3 and 4. As discussed in chapter 1, these same categories are heavily utilized in contemporary identification systems employed by governments and law enforcement - as “a direct, unmediated image of an external reality” (Toffoletti 2007, 45), photographs are a key component for their success.

As discussed in chapter 1, the reliance on photographs as a form of factual identification holds particular significance in the historical context of photography’s earliest uses - this notion of photographic authority, as informed by “a logic of rationality and control” (Robins 1991, 55), is not new. The history of photography as a tool has, since its inception in 1839, been largely utilized in the sciences – particularly the social – as a methodology for the capturing of data and evidence. Prized for its ability to accurately record daily life, photography has been understood as a factual tool for the collection of raw, incontrovertible facts, whereby photographs functioned as “a means of record and a source of evidence” (Tagg 1988, 60). This seemingly permanent record of events (Banks and Morphy 1997, 14) was understood to be “sealed with reality” (Benjamin 1999, 510), providing those who wielded it with “facts about which there were no question” (ibid). In the 19th century, photography was considered a vital tool for the sciences, and the reliable data it produced was recognized as “a crucial mediator” (Pinney 2012, 15) in the process of systematic evaluation - to this day, photography is utilized by state, carceral and institutional bodies to categorize and control others, as a visuality that “classifies by naming, categorizing, and defining” (Mirzoeff 2011, 3).

A contemporary example of the potentially harmful nature of digital manipulation that critics of early digital cameras described is the category of the artificial intelligence-based human synthesis technology colloquially known as Deepfake, which rose to prominence in 2017. (Schwartz 2018) With this technology, it is possible to create counterfeit facial expressions of living persons in near real-time, using a combination of superimposed images and videos to create an infinite variety of potentially malicious hoaxes and harmful material. Early Deepfake hoax videos that were circulated included pornographic material of celebrities, as well as fake news stories featuring political leaders. As these technologies are developed and improved it has become increasingly

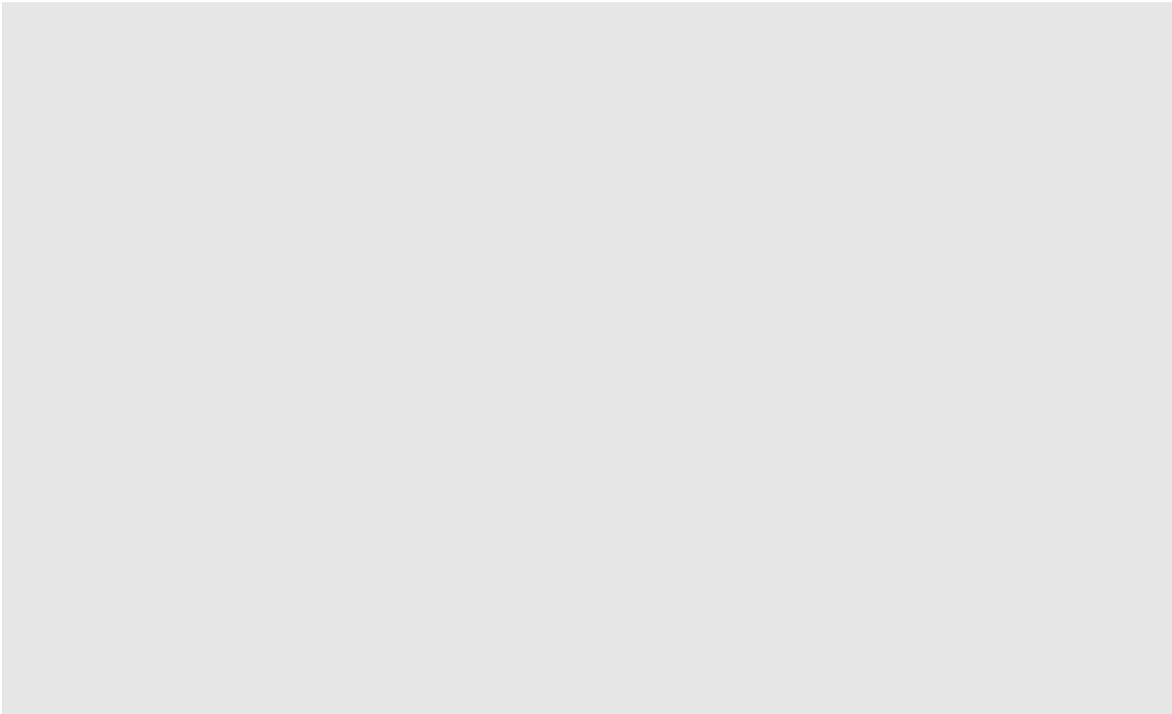
difficult to distinguish between fake and real content - as such, producers of Deepfake material may be prosecuted in the UK for harassment, while many have called for there to be specific legislation against the practice. (Sabbagh and Ankel 2018)

While the criticisms against Deepfake are a valid concern, it is interesting to note where it differs from photographic manipulation as part of beauty practices. In this case, the videos are created of others, often with actively malicious intent - to circulate material that portrays a person's actions that have never occurred can have significant consequences in the lives of those involved. However, in the case of beauty practices - particularly purikura - these manipulations are enacted by those that are pictured, rather than an outsider seeking to cause harm. Similarly, beauty practices do not create an entirely new face - for users that I worked with, these manipulations simply enhanced qualities that were already there, while remaining recognizably themselves. What differentiates criticism of Deepfakes is that they portray 'accurate' faces committing actions that are not, while beauty practices show 'inaccurate' faces that corrode social categories.

Since its origins, photography has frequently been the subject of debate, jostled between the categories of scientific rigor and artistic merit, whereby it was often understood that its documentary capabilities "inevitably removed it from the realm of the arbitrary and conventional in which art functioned." (Pinney 1997, 76) In direct contrast with the critiques found in Sheehan (2013), who dissects the cosmetic doctoring found in a studio portrait from 1875, Christopher Pinney has stressed the importance of "overpainting" in Indian studio photography from the same period of time, the production of which he suggests "was central to most Indian studios' business in the second half of the nineteenth century" (Pinney 1997, 79). While the elements of 'manipulation' criticized by Sheehan were, at the time, the normative model for Euroamerican studio photography - utilizing paint to retouch negatives and enhance color (ibid) - "numerous Indian examples dating from the 1860s deploy paint as much more than a supplement to the photographic image; rather, the overlay of paint completely replaces the photographic image in such a way that all or most of it is 'obscured'." (ibid)

These overpainted images were seen as paradoxical, if not polluted, to European practitioners, for whom the photograph was still considered an entirely documentary object - "within the dominant Western semiotic order, paint seems to be a lower iconic sign and its application to the semiotically superior indexical photograph inverts this hierarchy" (ibid 82). Purikura has similarly struggled with this categorical balancing act between the pictorial and the documentary, deemed fraudulent and harmful for those that take and share them. Despite the increasingly digital nature of photography, the 'manipulations' found in purikura are no different from either of their turn-of-the-century Euroamerican or Indian counterparts - whether cosmetically altering faces or 'overpainting' with rakugaki - and are therefore seen to be tainted by falsity in some way. While they are similarly seen by outsiders to have inverted their hierarchical value such that they cannot function within photographic identification systems, I would argue that the pictorial element of purikura images does not diminish their capacity for documentation, but is instead a fundamental aspect of their creation and distribution as a social tool. Despite the digital manipulations and rakugaki associated in the photographic event of purikura, these photographs are both iconic and indexical - "iconic because they resemble whatever was originally in front of the lens ... indexical because it is the physical act of light bounced off an object through the lens ... which leaves the trace that becomes the image" (Pinney 1997:20). However, it is also possible to see beyond issues of "ontological and indexical truth claims of images" (ibid), instead seeking the social contexts in which images and photographic practices "are situated and acquire meaning ... where we can begin to situate truth ethnographically" (Walton 2016, 1), a communicative modality that, to my interlocutors, is understood - and prized - as both expressive *and* documentary.

PURIKURA AS CYBORG



“UP is the latest [purikura] machine specialized in creating images that photographers want to post to SNS (social networking services) According to research by FuRyu’s research agency GIRLS TREND institute, over 95% of girls who are the main users of puri machines use SNS, and often post their puri photographs there ... for girls who live in the SNS era, puri machine UP will allow them to create images designed especially for social networks - friends will “like” them without even thinking! ... The purikura machine was born in 1995 and celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2015. From the output of stickers and means of exchange to the image processing software that beautifully corrects the face, photos are shared through smartphones and SNS, showing that the means of playing with puri photos continue to evolve with the times”

FuRyu press release for purikura machine UP (2016)

Tom Boellstorff is an anthropologist who completed one of the first long-term ethnographic studies of the online virtual world Second Life (Boellstorff 2008) - created in 2003 by San Francisco-based company Linden Lab, users can become 'residents' of Second Life by accessing the service via computer client, where they can create avatars as virtual representations that can interact with locations, objects and other users. Residents can create 3D modeled content - such as avatars, clothing, furniture and virtual property - that can be bought, rented and sold with in-world currency (the Linden Dollar, which can be exchanged for real world currency), which remains the primary basis for the platform. Though similar in many ways to massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs) such as World of Warcraft, its creators stress that it is a virtual world and not a game, as "there is no manufactured conflict, no set objective" (ibid:134).

In Boellstorff's work, he found that the avatars created by Second Life residents functioned as a form of cyborg selfhood - rather than a transcendence from actual-world embodiment as found in posthumanism, Boellstorff emphasizes that Second Life was indicative of a prosthesis between human and computer, and that the virtual embodiment of users was an extension of themselves as physically embodied persons. (ibid:136) While the lives enacted on the service are understood by many residents to be valuable and fulfilling experiences, for those that are critical of Second Life residents, virtual embodiment is often seen to function only as an incorporeal simulation of actual-world embodiment - similarly, critics of purikura believe that there is an inherent validity and 'truth' in physical embodiment, taking issue with the manipulation of bodies and faces pictured in photographs. This understanding persists despite the many ways actual-world embodiment is "shaped by human intentionality" (ibid:135), such as tattoos and plastic surgery, which further extends to criticisms of makeup and beauty practices as obscuring identity. What differentiates the beauty practices found in purikura is the virtual means by which cosmetic changes in particular are enacted, further confusing the boundaries between physical and digital. The belief that actual-world embodiment is privileged as the only 'real' form of embodiment relies on a notion of "a fixity and integrity [of] bodily (pre-virtual) experience" (Graham 2002, 187), which falls back on a

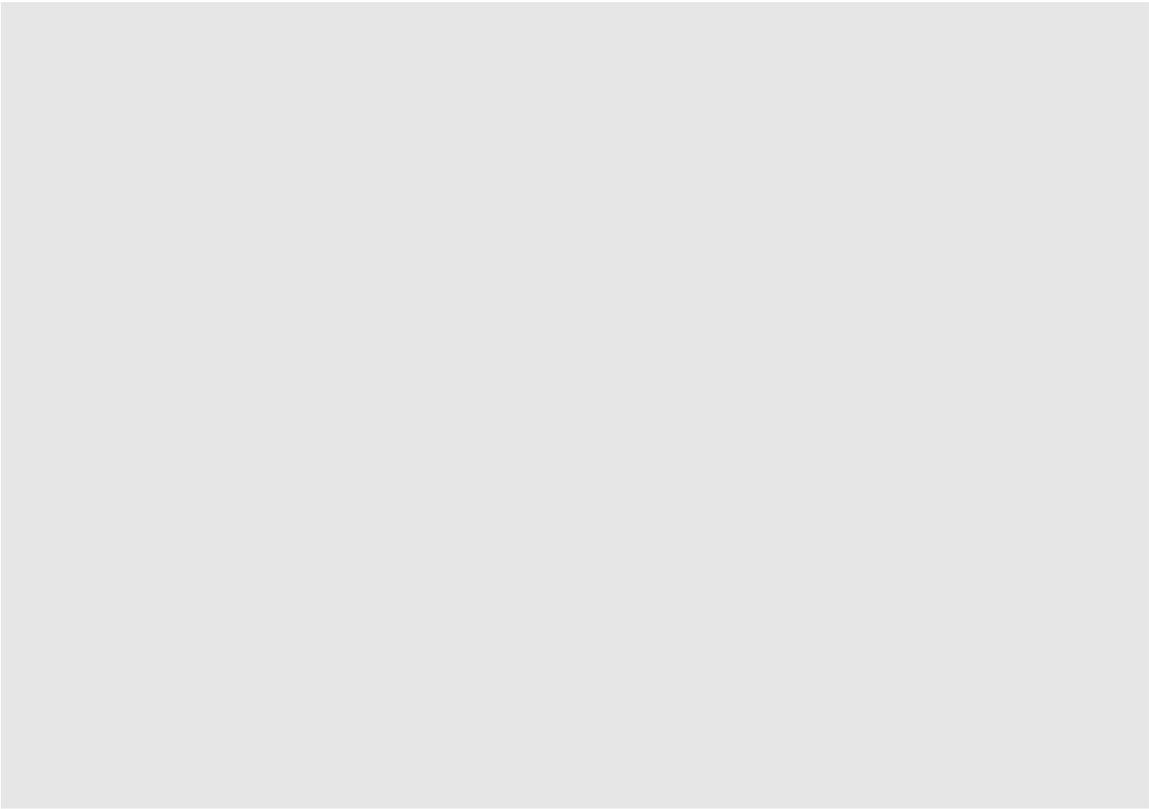
“romantic vision of the unmediated encounter between humans who are assumed in no way to be constituted by technologies of any kind” (ibid).

The cyborg within Haraway’s writing is understood to be a form of selfhood that exists as an ambiguous hybrid of self and the virtual, “a (con)fusion between human and the machine” (Toffoletti 2007, 2) - as internet connectivity has spread exponentially, the term has expanded to describe an imaginative resource that constitutes our social and bodily reality (ibid: 21). However, the embodiment presented by purikura photographs can be considered an element of cyborg selfhood separately from their presence on the internet - as a visual representation of the self that is manipulated by computer technologies, these photographs function as a “prosthetic continuity between human and machine” (Boellstorff 2008, 138). As described by Mark Jurgenson, the increasing prevalence of social media and smartphones - “a small networked computer that is far more likely to always be on or near its owner” (Jurgenson 2019, 12) - particularly those with increasingly sophisticated cameras, serve to further facilitate this networked presence, an extrapolation he delineates as “social photography, where millions of people [are] suddenly taking, sharing, and viewing each other’s photos as part of everyday communication.” (ibid)

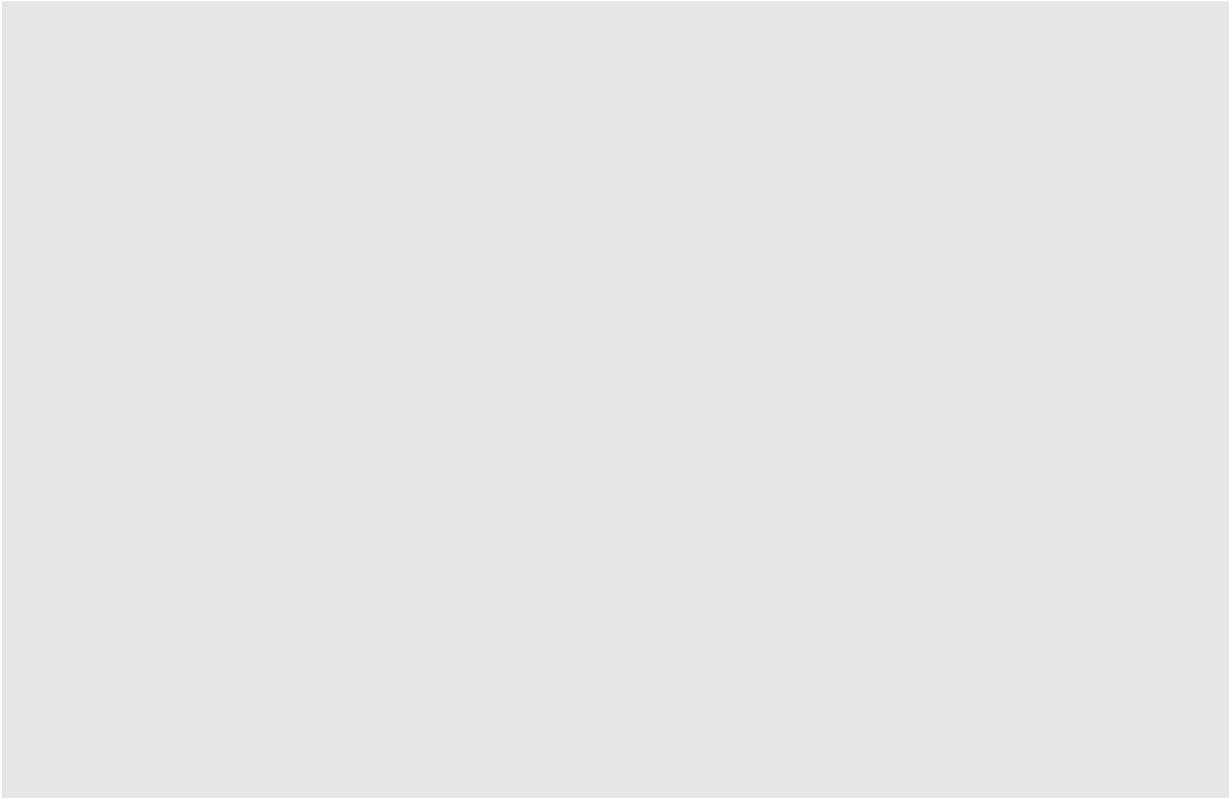
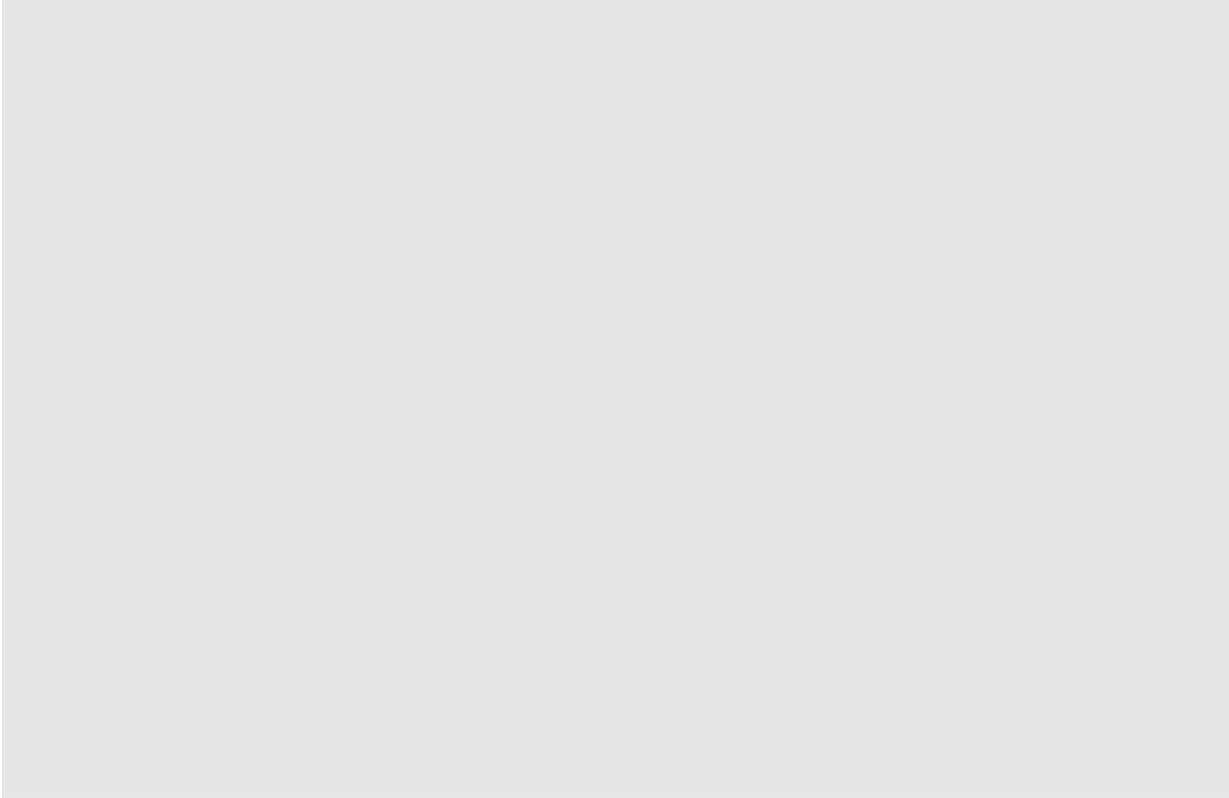
Theorists initially categorized purikura distribution into private and public spheres (Chalfen and Murui 2004); in ‘private’ contexts, photos were exchanged among intimate acquaintances, or kept in personal collections as photo albums, or *puricho*. In ‘public’ contexts, one commentator noted that “kids would tag them onto anything that couldn’t move fast” (Buckton 1998, 18) - photos were displayed on phones, bags, notebooks, or even stuck on the puri machines themselves, a common practice during my fieldwork. Similarly, a commonly recurring public display that persists from the 1990s has users sending photos to magazines, where they are reprinted for the wider readership to share, as discussed in chapters 1 and 2. What initially began as the collection, distribution, and display of small photo stickers, purikura practice has advanced along with the increasingly widespread use of the internet to include social networking services like Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. Social networking services are a major means of distribution and display of purikura, where hundreds of thousands of images circulate among users that may never meet in person, confusing the categories of

'public' and 'private' display, resonant with the previously discussed notion of *uchi* and *soto*.

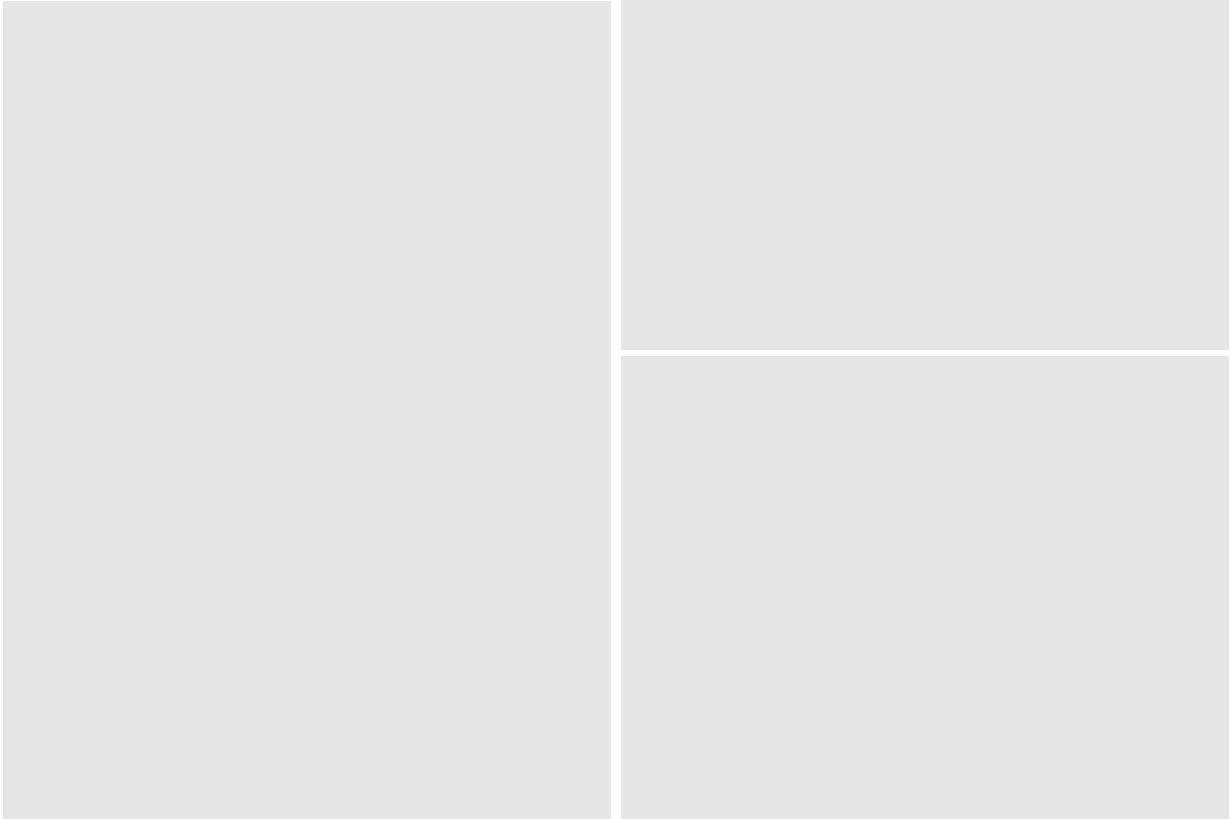
Through its circulation on the internet as a form of 'social photography', purikura functions as a virtually mediated presence, serving as a form of 'cyborg selfhood' that questions "what it means to be embodied in high-tech worlds" (Haraway 1991, 173). As delineated by Donna Haraway, the cyborg has become a theoretical figure used to describe human-machine assemblages, most often through technological integration with the body - however, through a consideration of social networking services, the term can be extrapolated to include a more mundane, everyday form of virtually mediated selfhood. Haraway describes the cyborg as being a potentially feminist entity, whereby technological interfacing challenges traditional notions of femininity and physicality. As a form of selfhood that is actively constructed by communication networks (Balsamo 1996, 34), the cyborg's ability to disperse our presence via technological means questions the notion of a distinction between public and private in our daily lives, whereby internet technologies suggest a "profusion of spaces and identities and the permeability of boundaries in the personal body and the body politic" (Haraway 1991, 170). This "networking" aligns with the confusion between the early 'private' and 'public' spheres of purikura distribution as they have adapted with modern technologies and social networking services, as well as the private/public spheres of *uchi/soto*.



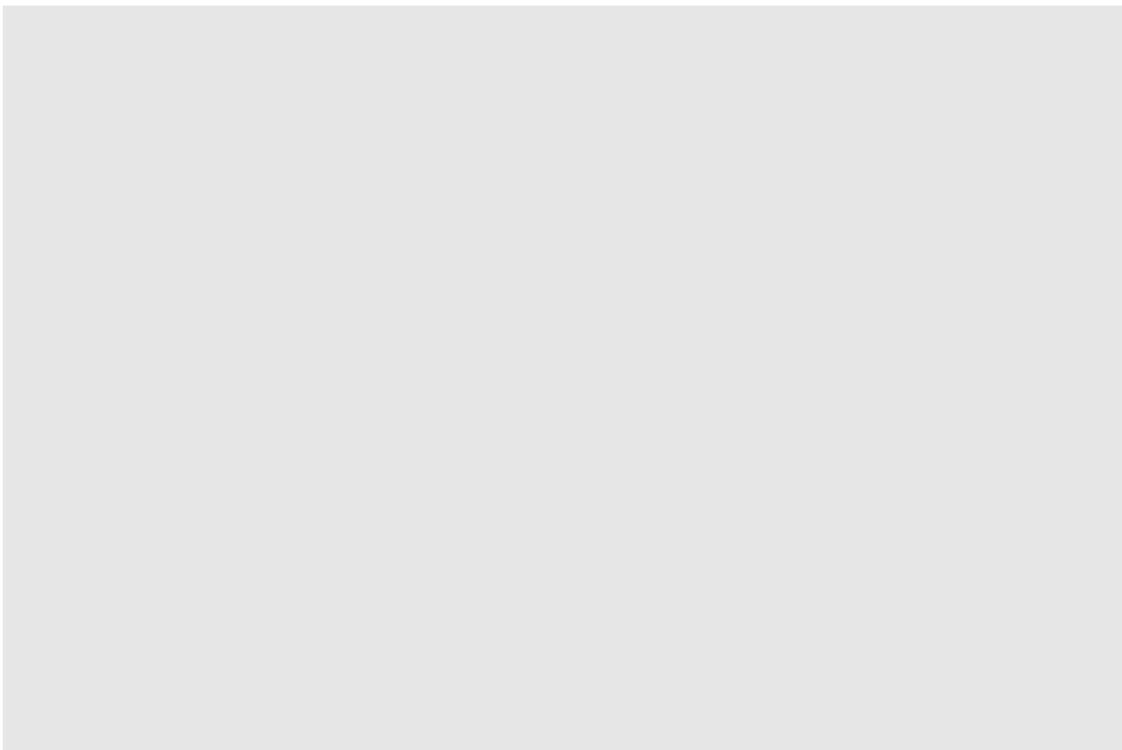
Heisei-era puricho (via Roomie 2019)



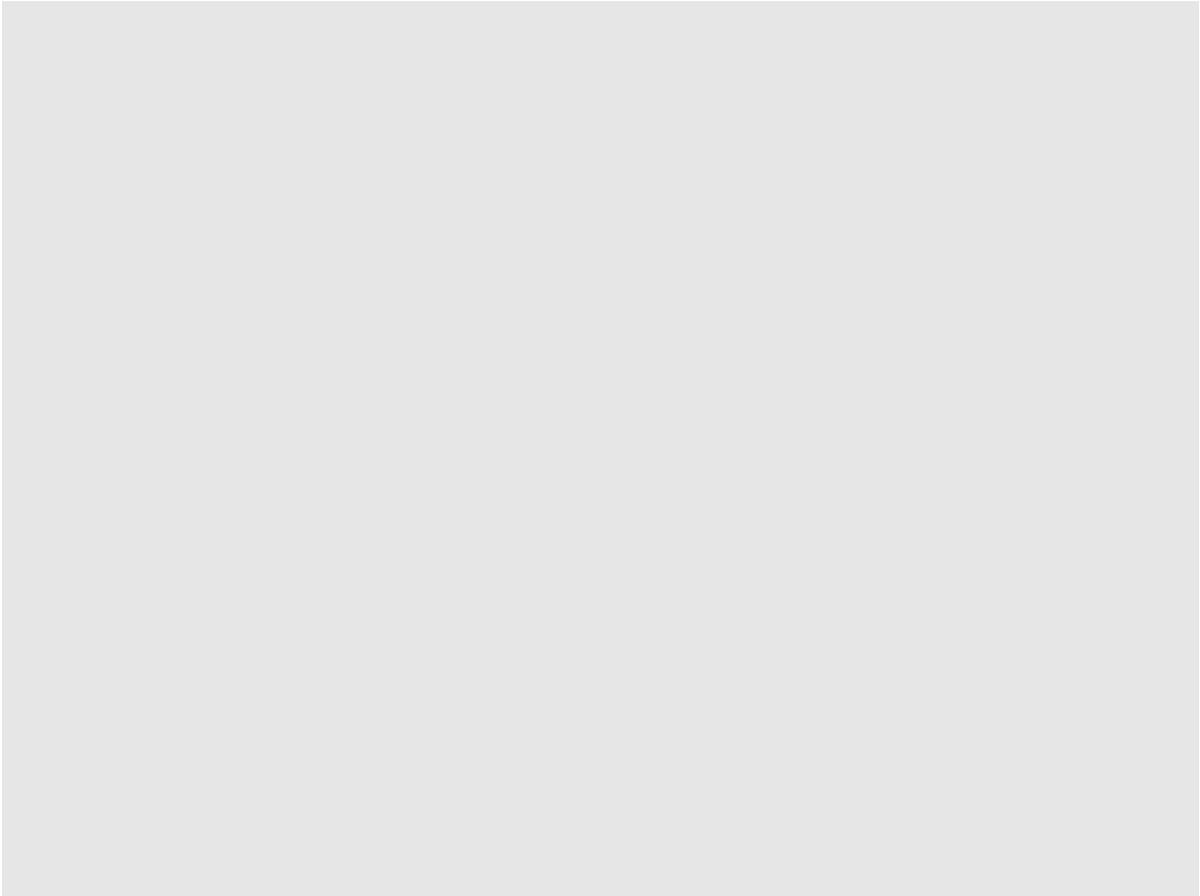
Puricho (via Shibuya109 Lab 2020)



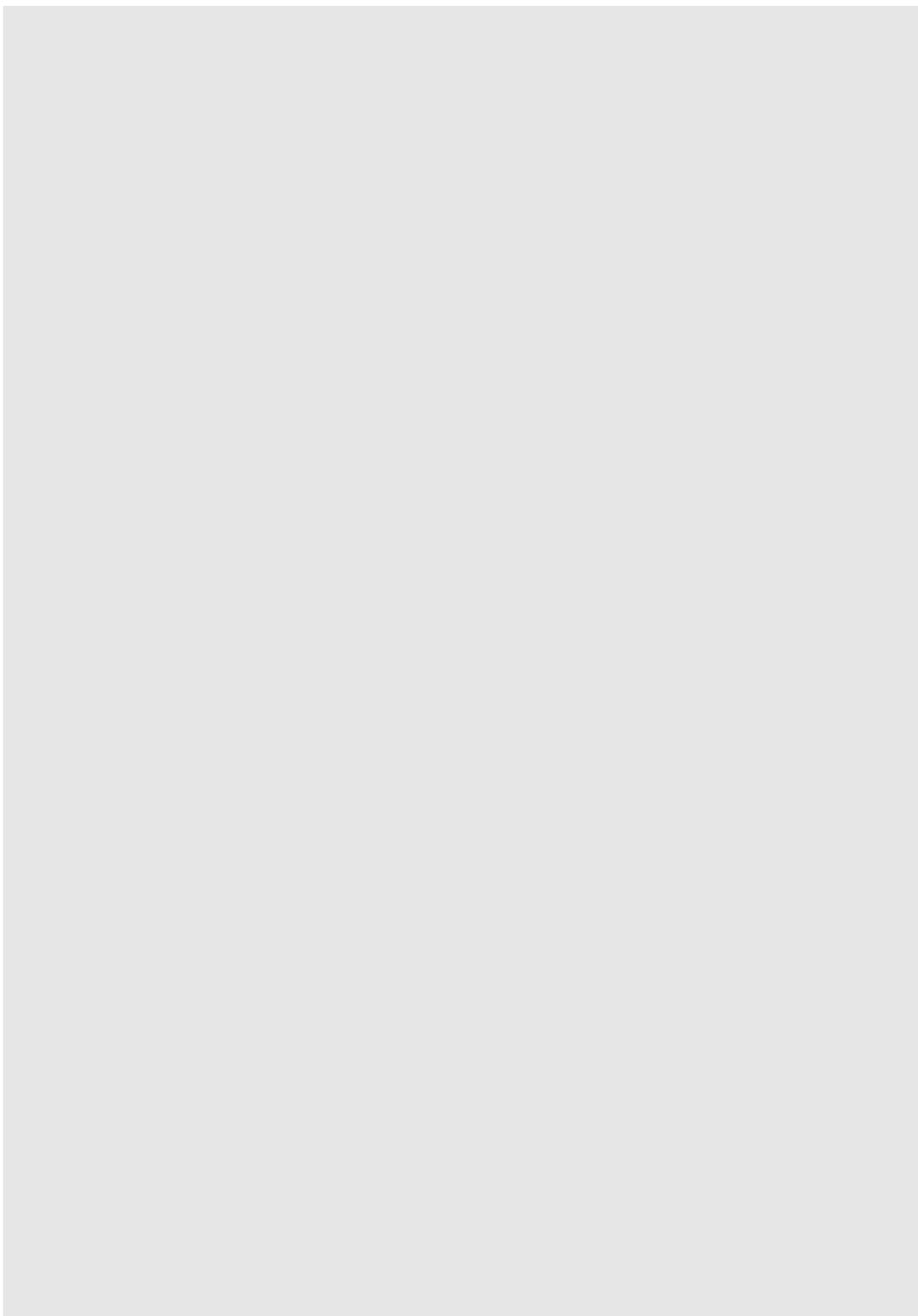
Early 1990s public displays of purikura (via @inchorin on Twitter 2018)



Early 2000s public displays of purikura (via Estèbe 2020b)



Older puricho (above) and high school students using a 1990s purikura machine in a video game arcade (below) featuring public display of purikura photographs on the exterior
(via Suzuki 2020)



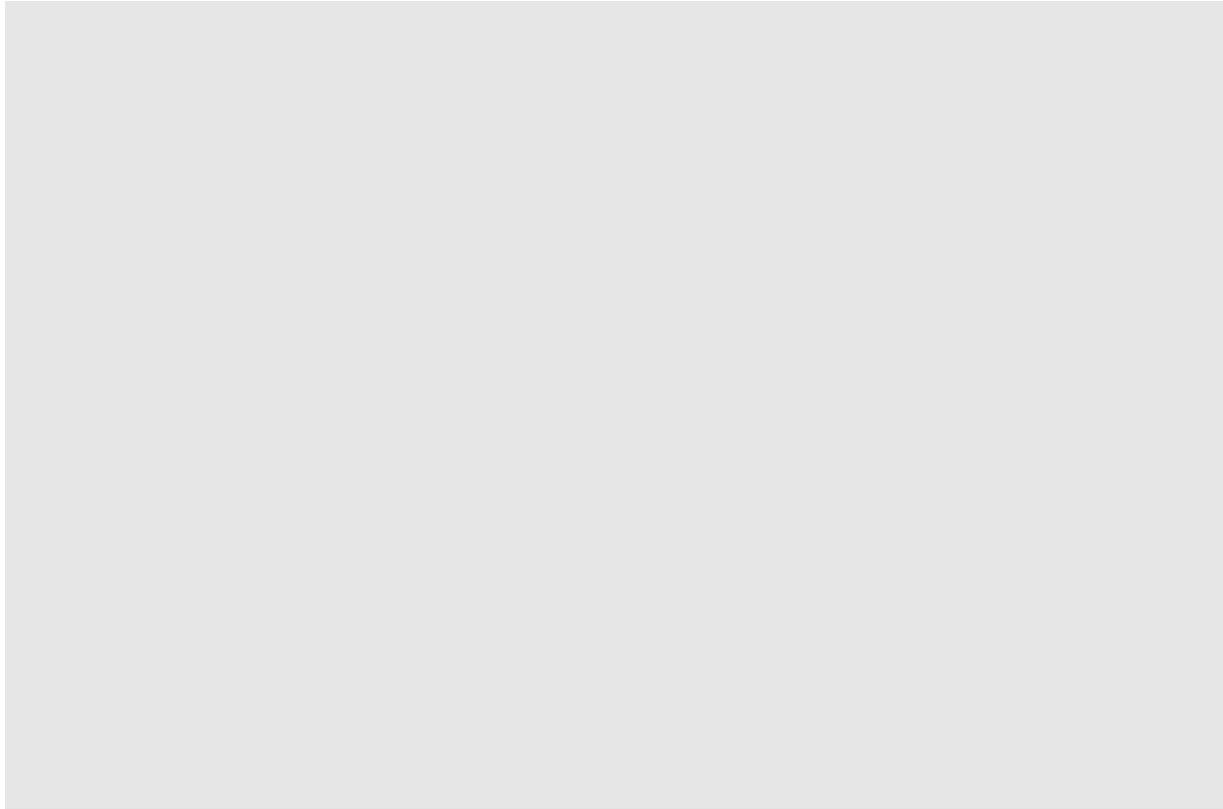




Public displays of purikura photographs during fieldwork (author's own, 2016)

READING FACES

The initial development of the purikura machine was led by Sasaki Miho, an employee at Atlus Co. Ltd - with machines located in bowling alleys and karaoke parlors, their initial target demographic was “older couples and families ... during dates and family trips” (Chalfen 2004:56). Though intended as an inexpensive commemoration to add to family photo albums, the photographs did not catch on with older generations, instead seeing a surge in popularity among adolescents. Between 1996 and 1998, the number of machines in operation swelled from 3,500 to 25,000 (ibid), a success story predicated on their adoption and reinvention by young women, further driving manufacturers to develop new technologies to meet this consumer demand. The unexpected popularity is worth noting, as it is indicative of an underlying shift among users from familial to peer group identification. Richard Chalfen has theorized that this can be interpreted as the difference between a “horizontal” or top-down hierarchical relationship to parents and authority figures and a “vertical” peer group dynamic, “representing a tension in the younger generation to reject the norm so prevalent in so much of Japanese life” (ibid:65) that privileges authority figures. This was true among women that I worked with, though not as an act of petulance - as one woman put it, “purikura is just something you do with friends, you know?”



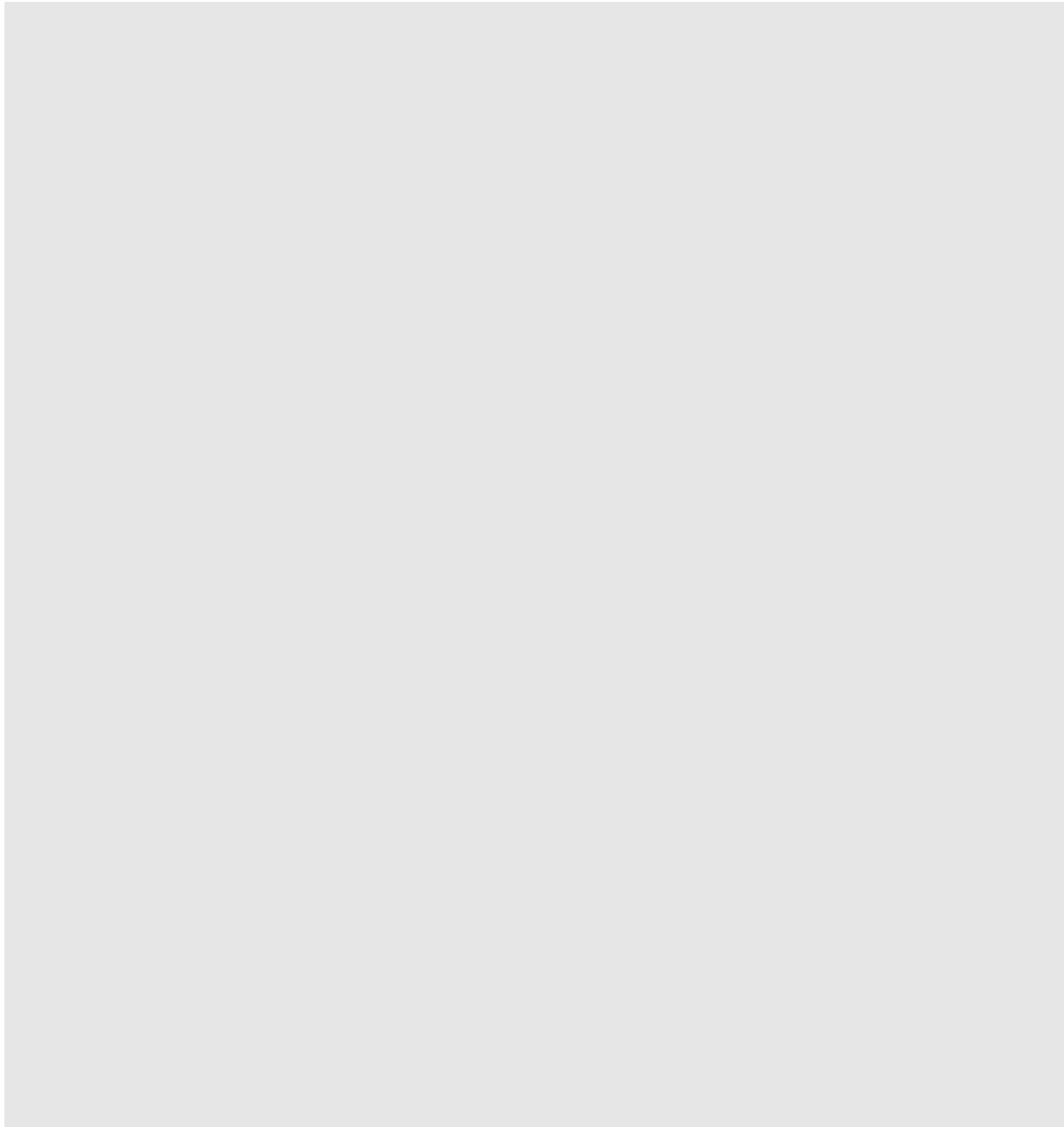
In 2014, the M&Ms Japan branch of the candy corporation Mars created a pair of purikura booths, one in Osaka and one in Tokyo, titled the Friends Maker - the first purikura booth to allow strangers in different locations to take photographs together.

Crowds gathered around both booths, located in the trendy shopping districts of Shinsaibashi and Harajuku respectively, to be paired off with their new 'friends' 250 miles away. As discussed by Okabe et al (2006), purikura is a social practice, where the photographs serve as social capital for making and maintaining friendships. Since their inception, purikura photographs have served as a component of friend group dynamics, where they were created and circulated among peers and serve as a literal display of friendship networks, which the corporation sought to utilize in their campaign. The taking, collecting and sharing among users was, and remains, the central appeal among the young women that I worked with.

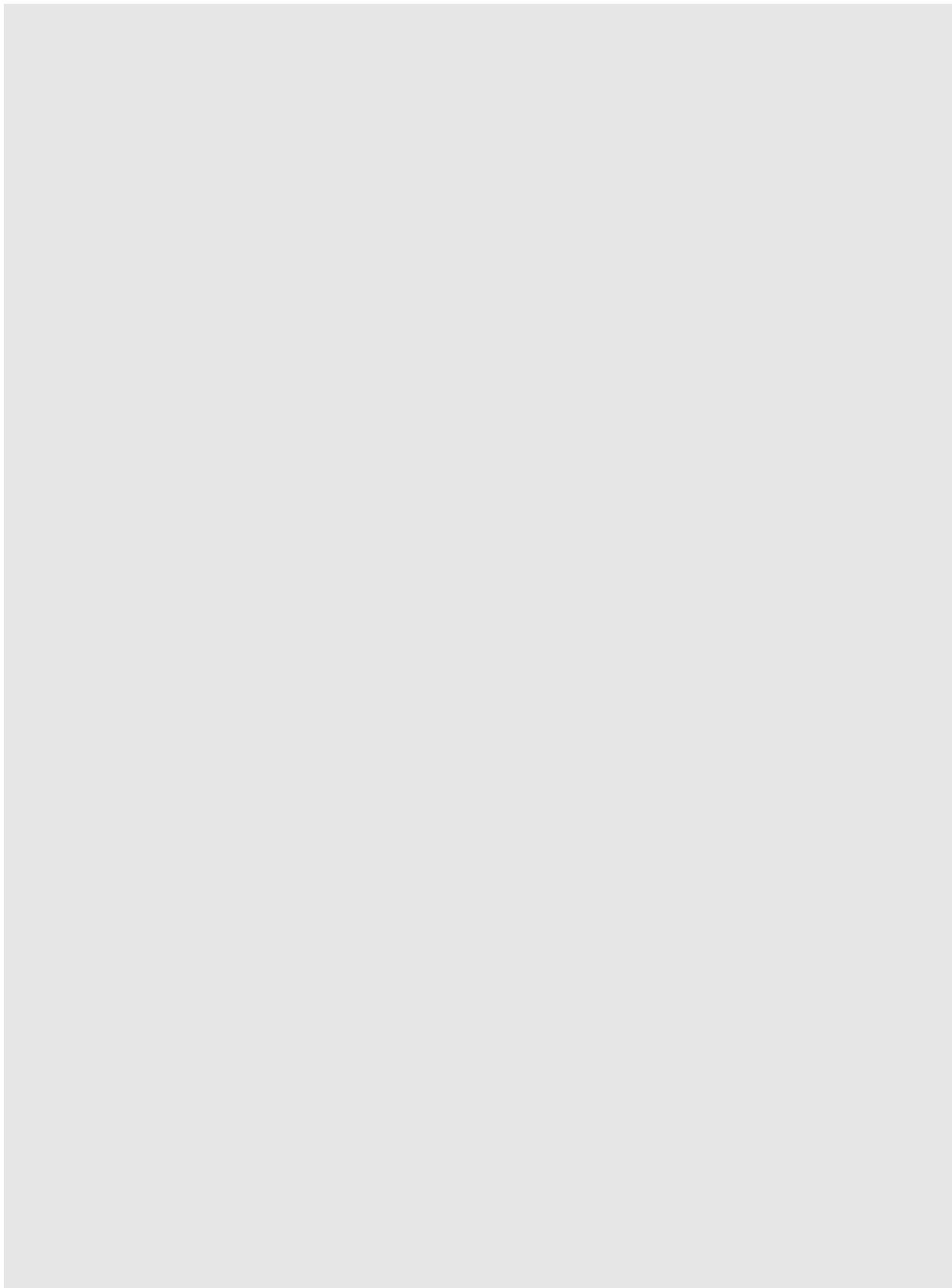
As discussed in Chalfen (2004), the importance of a "vertical" peer group structure is also found in the work of Steeves (2015) - through social networking, peer visibility takes precedence as a form of "lateral surveillance" (Andrejevic 2004). Other forms of technology have similarly been co-opted by youth cultures - chat rooms (Mendoza 2007), instant messaging (Steeves 2005), home pages and blogs (Stern 2004), cell phones (M. Ito 2005), and social networking sites (boyd 2007; S. Livingstone 2009; Shade 2008) have all been appropriated and "reconstituted as socio-technical spaces ... to connect with peers and engage in a reflexive project of constructing the self, away from the watchful eyes of adults." (boyd 2007; S. Livingstone 2009; Shade 2008)

Through early use of peer group distribution, purikura was understood as an "expansive outward movement, whereby relationships to others help to delineate the self" (Steeves 2015), which is further facilitated by networked spaces on the internet. Where early purikura users of the 1990s were once understood to "make the maximum use of [technology] to expand their social networks" (ibid:62) the myriad ways that users represent themselves through purikura on the internet has only expanded the potential scope of cyborg selfhood with the possibilities afforded by the internet technologies of today. Since the late 1990s, the inherently social aspect of purikura can be seen through the ways that it has continually developed in tandem with social media, with both purikura manufacturers and independent groups creating websites and mobile services exclusively for the display and proliferation of purikura images, rating and ranking of machines by users, as well as allowing friendship networks on the nascent web of the early 2000s to flourish. This has continued to align with newer forms of social

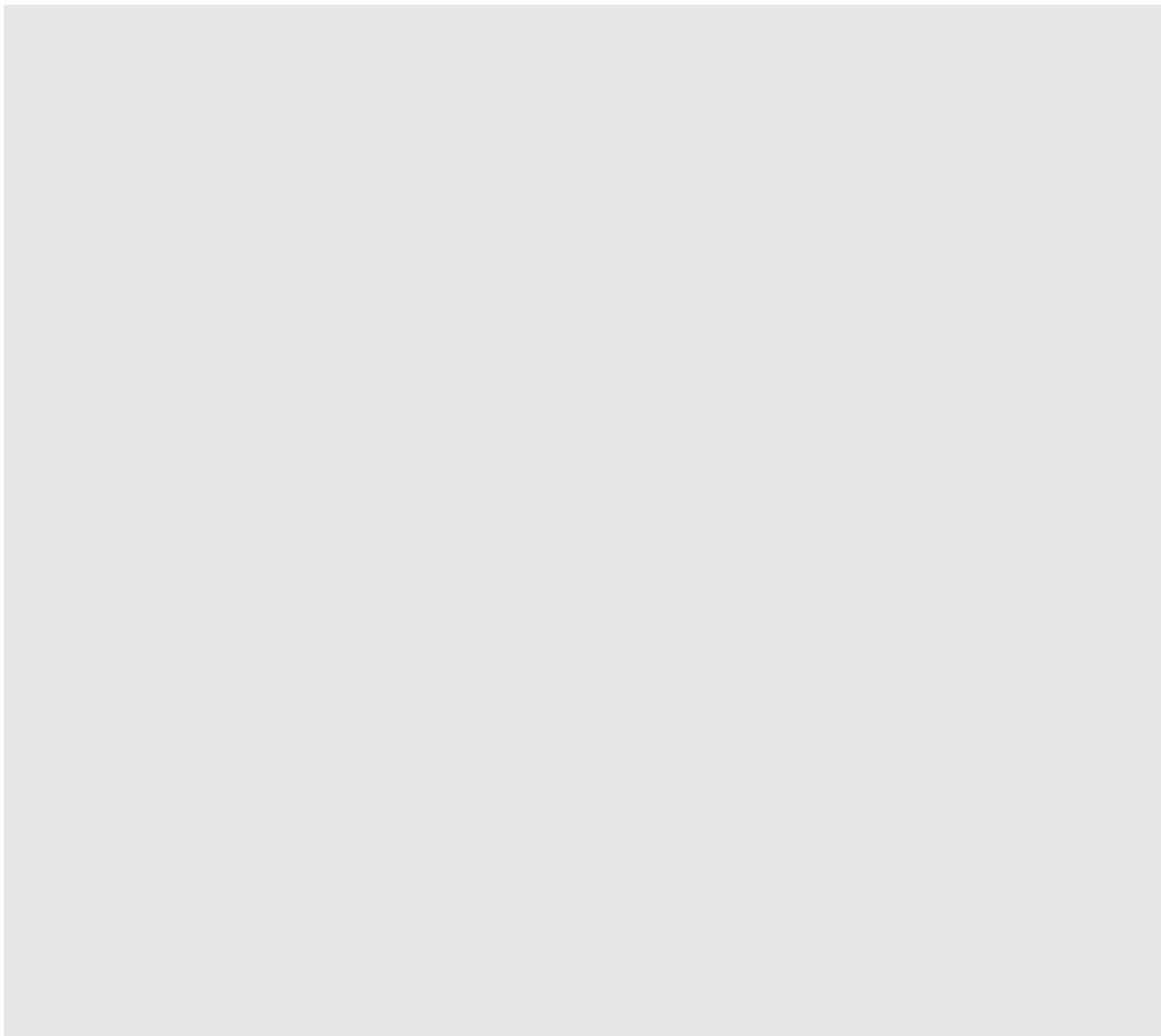
networking, as purikura machines have adapted to facilitate the uploading of photographs to sites like Twitter and Instagram – women that I worked with would often put their photographs onto such services, tagging friends and key words to further open the public display of their friendship to the millions of active users who might browse a given hashtag.



Daishi (backing paper for mounting photographs, paintings etc) included with the Purikura Super Mastery Book (1996) that challenges readers to gather 100 purikura photographs of friends, featuring remarks encouraging the establishment of new friendships in the process



Purikura address book included with the January 1996 issue of Seventeen magazine as *furoku* (freebie), associating purikura photographs with other important identifying details such as name, address and pager number



Early purikura social networking website *Mite! Mite!* (Look! Look!) from 2001 which allowed users to create “group homepages” for their photographs. Also featuring a friend search, events page, and ‘purikura chat’, the site actively encouraged users to create new internet friendships as *meru tomo* (internet penpals; texting buddies)

Fumicomu! (Fumi Community) established in 2000 – seen here during fieldwork in 2015. A pioneering social networking site for girls, with the further creation of their Purikura Square board in the early 2000s, featuring articles and user aggregated rankings of purikura booths, means of sharing photos, pose *kata*, and puricho album decoration guides. They further offered a bulletin board for finding ‘purikura exchange partners’ (*purikura koukan no aite*) for trading email addresses and photographs directly with another user. The service later expanded into the ‘purikura research club’ (*purikura kenkyuu-bu*), a presumably less-than-altruistic product development division that provided businesses with direct access to their userbase through web surveys and round table discussions, claiming that they “help high school girls and teenagers create products that they want to buy and services that they want to use.” (Fumi23 Research Division 2017)

Browsing through the hashtag for purikura on Instagram yields 4.5 million results, a number that continues to increase at any given moment. Further taking into account the multitude of variations of hashtags, as well as geotagging for specific purikura machine locations, allowed women I worked with to commemorate both exceptional and mundane life events through purikura photographs, along with the ability to discuss preferences for photo settings, poses, techniques and establishments with a broader range and number of individuals with similar interests than ever before.

What is troubling to those that criticize purikura as both a photographic medium and a beauty practice is the erasure of qualities that can be used to categorize those pictured - photography's authority, in this case, is predicated on the accurate capture and portrayal of markers for class, age and gender. This relates back to the uses of photography for external identification – a form of disruption to “the colonizing gaze of documentary practice” (L. Smith 1992, 256) which requires those features for its intelligibility. In this case, in the event that photographs are manipulated, this may serve as a form of fraud, whereby users misrepresent their class, age or ethnicity categories. In working with women who made use of purikura and beauty practices, it was clear that they were part of a social dynamic among users, where it was utilized as part of in-group classification. My field research is similarly substantiated by Yuka Kobo's work with purikura, who states that young women in Japan are “creating forms of individuality that are indecipherable to people outside their communities but highly recognizable to people within their communities.” (Kobo 2016) The digital manipulation found in purikura is an important aspect of its social utility – photographs are created for in-group consumption, and as such are primarily intended as a form of communication and categorization that is intentionally illegible to non-participants.

Despite Sheehan's claim that digital cosmetic manipulations only provide “fleeting illusions of agency to those who produce and consume them” (ibid:199), Sarah Kember has stated that photography has served as an unambiguous tool for societies and individuals to “represent and understand themselves and others”. (Kember 1996:150) This is similarly confirmed in studies of purikura, where it has been theorized as a method for young women “to control the impressions [they] impart to others and to express the owners' identity” (Okabe et al. 2009:82), which can be understood as photographic manipulation as a “tool of power” (Sontag 1977, 8).

Use of purikura and makeup signals to other users that they are members of the larger group of young women who similarly use them, in many respects serving as in-group *sekentei*. As discussed in chapter 2 regarding *kata*, the ability to effectively utilize makeup and cosmetic adornment as a technology of gender (de Lauretis 1987), is part of the ritual of group membership itself; similarly, as with the emphatic femininity discussed in chapter 3, this is part of a vocabulary of aesthetic practices within the

subculture that are intentionally obscured to outsiders. In chapter 4, I have also presented a variety of ways in which beauty practices have been used to question the boundaries of normative Japanese femininity – for some practices that play with notions of ethnicity, this may counterintuitively succeed in upholding many normative Japanese beauty standards, while perpetuating localized forms of colorism and racism that preclude the diversity that already exists. Purikura users challenge normative classification, choosing instead to align themselves within their own subculture in ways that are unreadable to those who do not participate – these images “spring from a representational strategy that is concerned not with categorization and the closure of identity but with the manipulation of a repertoire of signs signifying possible states of being.” (Pinney 1997, 91) Rather than seeing purikura or beauty practices as reducing photographic authority, through arguments presented across previous chapters it is possible to imagine them as being utilized to disrupt the categories of race, class and gender that come from external classification.

Epilogue



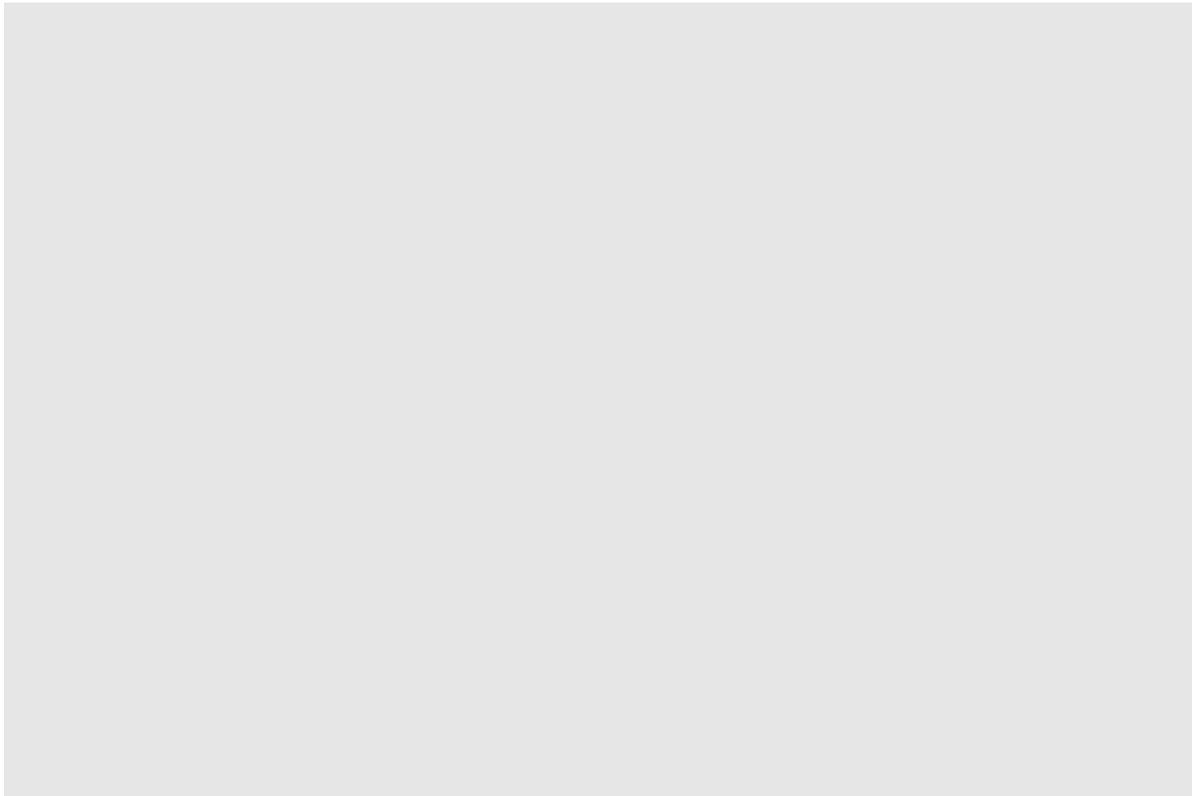
(author's own 2016)

I found myself, late one Saturday afternoon, on a Yamanote Line train. Speeding through the city, I self-consciously adjusted my hat, staring down at my gingham socks - I was dressed, somewhat ostentatiously, entirely in lavender, prompted by a cryptic text from a friend: "let's meet in Harajuku - make sure to dress up", followed by a puckish, grinning devil emoji. Several stations before my destination, the car began to fill out with an increasing number of fashionably astute passengers, their deftly-coordinated outfits cropping up among commuters. Rather than assuaging my feeling of out-of-place-ness, this only served to make me more nervous, contributing to a sense that I was, by comparison, an unsophisticated rube who was only pretending to know what they were doing.

Upon arriving at Harajuku station, I followed in an exodus of passengers, climbing stairs and crossing bridges towards the exit like a shoal of fish, pacing myself to match those around me so that I wouldn't trip and fall. After tapping out with my travel card and making my way through the turnstiles, I barely had time to look behind me at the station exterior before being shuffled along by the crowd. Retreating towards the street, I sit down on a nearby railing to wait for my friend, glancing up from my phone to peer at the oddly rustic station. Somewhat resembling a Swiss chalet with exposed woodwork and brick, Harajuku station was constructed in 1924 in a Western "half-timbering" style, primarily to serve visitors to Meiji Jingu, the large Shinto shrine nearby. With its iconic clock and weathervane, the station serves as a picturesque meeting point for many visitors, a plethora of whom happily snapped selfies around me, centering the building in their shots.

I jolted with a start as someone tapped me on the shoulder, and I turned to see my friend Satsuki - also known by the affectionate moniker Satchan, as she had gregariously insisted I call her early on in our friendship. Grinning in a voluminous pink dress, her head further bedecked in a string of pearls linked by bows, she turned back, waving over her more plainly-dressed companion, who she introduced as Mari. After exchanging greetings, Satchan gestured towards my dress with pleasure - to my relief, she seemed pleased with my choice of outfit. "We almost look like we're twinning!", she said excitedly, holding up her pastel skirt against my own - "that will definitely help us stand out." She turned towards Mari and jokingly rolled her eyes - "sorry about her,

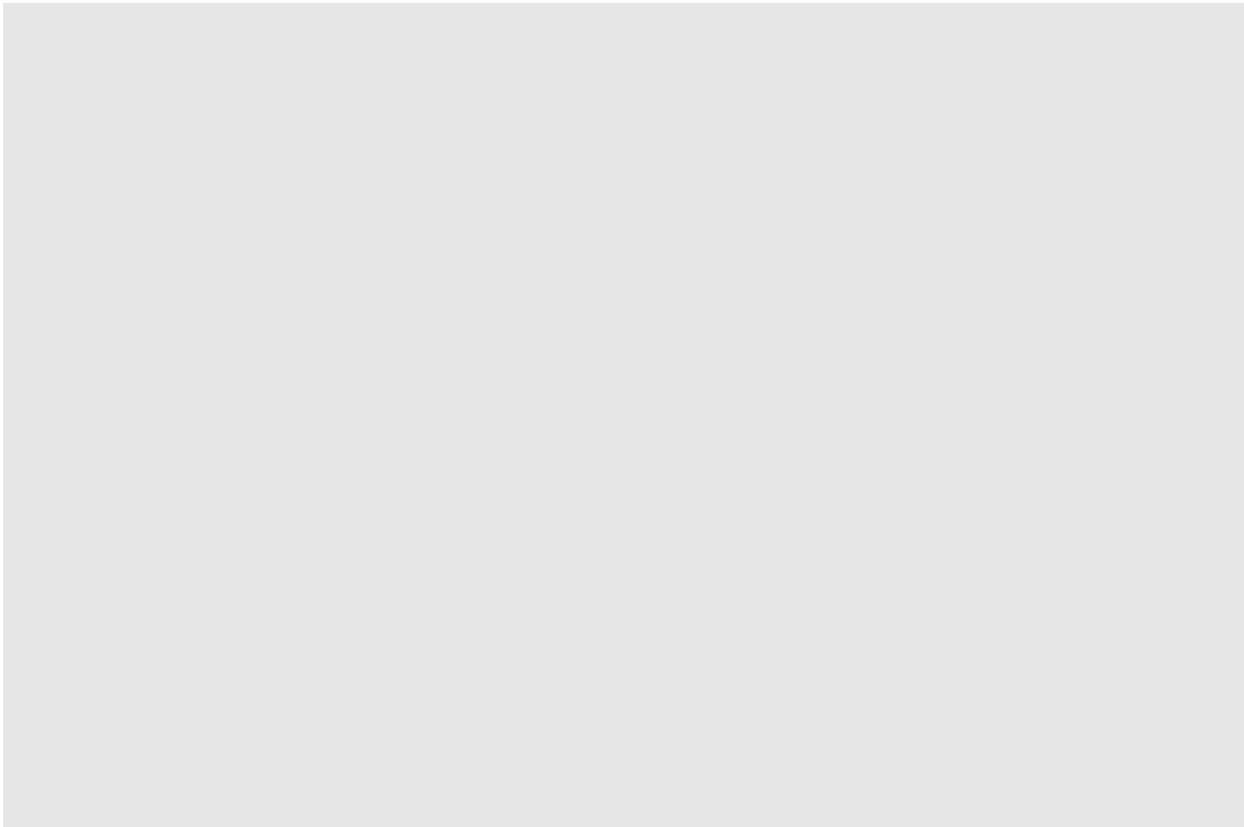
though - she won't play along", to which Mari shrugged. Clad in a plain tank top and jeans, she tucked her thumbs under the straps of her backpack, responding pragmatically - "I don't see the point, since I don't read that magazine anyways." I had been wondering as to the disparity in their attire, and turned to Satchan quizzically at the mention of a magazine - I still had no idea why we were there. With a humorously exasperated sigh, Satchan reached into her own bag to pull out the latest issue of KERA magazine. "You're no fun at all!" she sulked, brandishing the magazine to fan her face. She leaned in conspiratorially, as if she didn't want any of the bustling crowd around us to hear - "I figured out where the photographer who takes the street snaps hangs out, and I'm going to try and get us into the magazine."



(Knüsel 2017)

A neighborhood formerly populated by American Army officers during the Occupation, Harajuku was not always the bustling hub of fashion culture that it is now known for. Following increased police scrutiny and enforcement against countercultural activities in nearby neighborhoods in the early 1970s, many sought respite in different areas - "with

Shinjuku sanitized, the remnants of the youth underground went looking for a new place to congregate. The strongest candidate was a quiet residential area a few train stops away by the name of Harajuku.” (Marx 2015, 134) A further rise in vintage and vintage reproduction retail shops targeted at the youth demographic lead to a gradual rise in popularity for the area throughout the 80s, where the area went from “a serene residential neighborhood to the national center of youth fashion ... at the end of the decade, teens from 100 km away would wake up early on Sunday to take the train into Tokyo, and spend their days strolling up and down Omotesando Avenue and Takeshita Street.” (Ibid 139)



Puricho on Jingubashi bridge (Estèbe 2021)

A significant aspect of the appeal of Harajuku to those that began to frequent the area was the creation of *hokosha-tengoku* (pedestrian paradise), or *hokoten* by the local council - “Between 1977 and 1988, a section of the main road in Harajuku was closed to traffic on Sundays. This place became a public sphere - a new idea in Japan - and many young people dressed in their (often handmade) creative fashion gathered there.”

(Kawamura 2012, 29) As local councils closed off these areas on Sundays to form hokoten, they unexpectedly created spaces for fashion-conscious youths to meet - "this small patch of asphalt right outside Harajuku station would become their new promised land ... In the otherwise straight-laced Japanese society, Harajuku promised a weekly 'festival,' letting teenagers dress up ... without the overbearing supervision of parents or teachers." (Marx 2015, 141) While the pedestrian paradise of hokoten were terminated in the area by 1998 due to opposition from local residents, "the district remains a place where teenagers congregate to meet and chat with their friends who want to dress in certain styles" (Kawamura 2012, 29). For many of the women that I worked with Harajuku was an important destination, and taking purikura a key element of the experience.

From the artistic *documents* of the Paris streets supplied by Charles Nègre (1820-1880) and Eugène Atget (1857-1927) (Hannavy 2007) to the voyeuristic exploits of Italian-British photographer Felice Beato (1832-1909) of a Japan highly restricted to outsiders during the Tokugawa Shogunate, photography of pedestrians has existed since the earliest days of commercial photography itself. The use of such photographs in print media, for the purposes of fashion appreciation and consumption, increased through the late twentieth century as exemplified by the popularity of the late Bill Cunningham's long-running New York Times column *On The Street*, which especially valued the personal style and self-expression of non-celebrities. For Cunningham, the authenticity of street style was paramount: "When you're out, you stay out and the street speaks to you. That's how you find out what people are wearing, what's new, what's happening. If you're not on the street, you don't know anything. It's simple: Go on the street and do it." (cited in Lieber 2014)

"Street snaps", as they are primarily known in Japan, are a mainstay of fashion publications, particularly noted as the focus of monthly magazine *FRUiTS*, which has documented street fashion in the area since 1997. The magazine's creator, photographer Shoichi Aoki, has relied on the area for the reporting of "cutting-edge street and youth fashion" (Kawamura 2012, 29), whereby "the focus of *FRUiTS* is not on the designers but on the consumers who have become the producers of street fashion." (ibid) As discussed previously in chapters 2, 3 and 4, fashion commemoration is an

important aspect of the purikura process, further entwined with magazine consumption and street snap photography. This linkage is particularly highlighted by the technological advancements present in the successful 1998 purikura machine *Street Snap*, which facilitated the process of fashion commemoration through the emulation of the photographs present in the popular street snaps found in magazines, an innovation that has become a mainstay of the genre. The perceived authenticity of street snaps appealed greatly to the women that I worked with, touching on themes raised in chapter 2 regarding *kata* - as one woman stated,

“You can see how real people actually wear their clothes, unlike a photoshoot with a model. They really put on those clothes in the morning and left the house - they didn’t have a stylist fixing their clothes or a photographer making sure the lighting or the angles were perfect. These clothes look perfect on models, obviously, but how do they look on real people, out in the world?”

For many, the further appeal of street snaps was in the clout that came along with having been spotted in a crowd by a photographer or team of editors - the visibility of appearing in their magazine of choice further aligned them with the models they admire, and served both as a way of showing off to friends, but could lead to the future possibility of actually fulfilling the role of model professionally, as discussed previously in chapter 2. As another young woman explained to me,

“I see the same girls appearing in street snaps again and again, and they become popular - people send in letters saying they love their outfits, and often the magazines will choose them as real models. But they got there because people loved THEIR style! The magazines rely on them, really.”

Within the pages of KERA, the magazine Satchan wished to appear in, reader comments also speak to the appeal of being chosen:

*“Hi, everyone; I have been influenced so much by KERA that I am now going through a make over ... I will definitely be on the magazine someday!
(January 2010:118)*

Some day, I will be cute enough to appear in KERA (April 2010:110)

I didn't buy KERA for two months because I wanted to be an ordinary girl. But I saw the January issue and felt an intense urge to buy it. I am now convinced that it is a source of my life. I don't care if people around me don't understand me ... what's best for me is not normal for others or how people look at me strange as long as I am happy, I can bear it ... I am back to KERA-kko. [KERA style] (March 2010: 108)

KERA is my textbook. (July 2010:104)

Just started high school! Gonna walk around Harajuku and dress up so that I'd get my picture taken! (July 2010: 105)

*I want to be KERA's model. (November 2010: 61)
(cited in Kawamura 2012)*



(author's own 2016)



(author's own 2016)



(author's own 2016)



(author's own 2016)

To Satchan, the importance of getting street snapped was obviously apparent, though the speed with which she navigated the crowds down the claustrophobic street across from the station might indicate otherwise - we walked at a languid clip, the surrounding crowd seeming to propel us backwards with every forward effort. Crossing under a towering archway topped by an elaborate balloon animal display, Satchan and Mari seemed unfazed as they chatted ahead of me, peering into shops as we gradually crawled our way down Takeshita street, teeming with hundreds of other shoppers. At our molasses-like pace, I glanced furtively at the jostling crowd that surrounded us - while most of those I saw were dressed to impress, many wore school uniforms, or entirely unremarkable attire, and a significant enough portion appeared to be tourists from a variety of nationalities, backpacks and cameras in tow. I wondered if I, too, looked like an interloper - did I seem like a tourist, gawping at the people and stores around me like they were attractions in a zoo, or was my willingness to spend money enough to endear me to, at the very least, the shopkeepers raucously shouting for our attention?

Making our meandering way through the crowd, I saw the familiar sights of more than a few dedicated purikura establishments that I had visited many times, though I usually would have bee-lined straight for them to avoid the teeming crush of people. To those around me, it seemed, the sheer volume of people was part of the appeal - they weren't just there to shop. As Yuniya Kawamura remarks on her fieldwork in Harajuku, "the physical environment of an area helps street fashion to grow and spread, and it provides a space or a stage on which the teenagers can be fashionable. It gives them the opportunity to socialize and communicate with each other" (Kawamura 2012, 28). My efforts to view purikura as a standalone activity, separate from the discomfort of being crushed by swarms of onlookers, was an exercise in futility - seeing Satchan and Mari ahead of me, warmly greeting acquaintances and familiar shopkeepers as they passed by, I felt that the spectacle of purikura existed not just in the photograph itself, but in the act of going, to see and be seen. Mari held off briefly as Satchan stopped to pose for a polite, DSLR-toting tourist to snap a few photos of her coord (coordinated outfit), then we made our way forward again, pressing on down the shop-lined street. More than a few in the crowd snapped away without asking permission, turning around

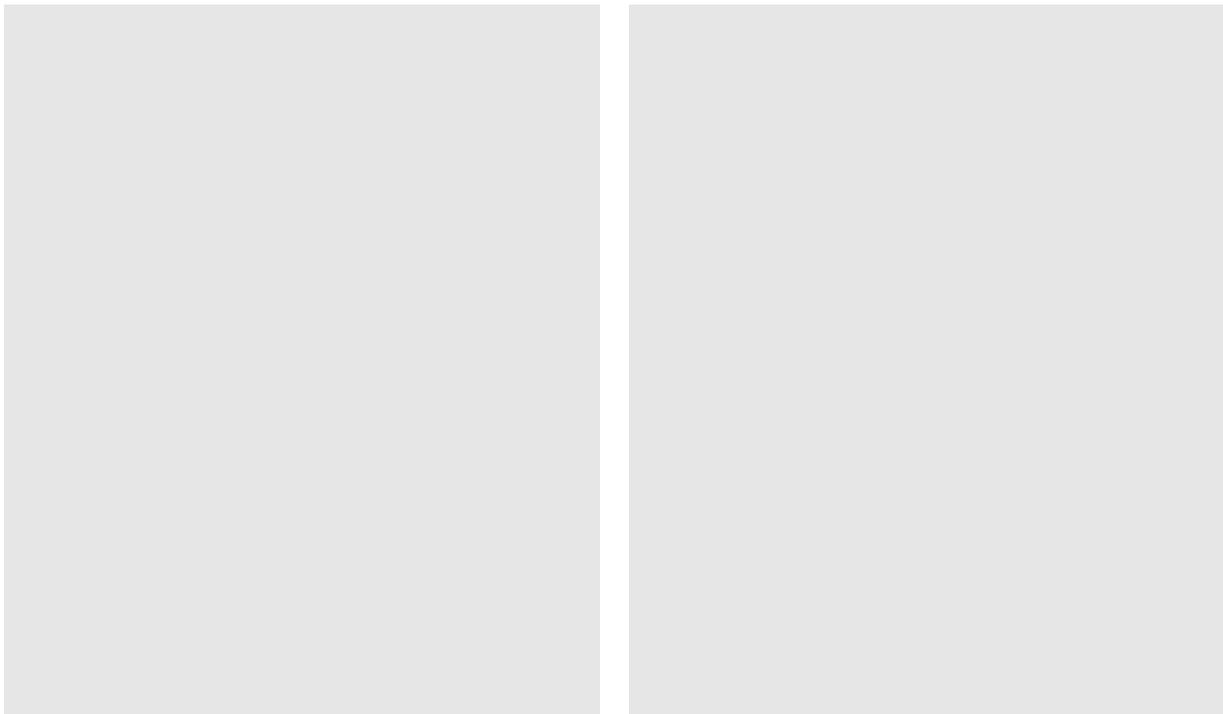
with their massive lenses held aloft to scan the entire area for their shot. Satchan fell back to lean in, grumbling - "I hate when they do that."

As we made our way further along the street, Satchan eventually beckoned us to follow her, turning down a less-crowded area of the district dubbed Urahara (from Ura Harajuku, or 'backstreet Harajuku'). Smaller independent brands, vintage stores and restaurants lined the road - with significantly thinned crowds and an almost negligible amount of tourists, our leisurely pace felt far more pleasant. With the lessened danger of being jostled along, I took the opportunity to ask Satchan - how did she know where the street snap photographer would be?

She paused along a stretch of construction scaffolding and shuttered shopfronts to rummage in her bag, brandishing her copy of KERA again. Flicking through the pages rapidly, she presented me with a full page spread of fashionably dressed individuals, seemingly spotted, at random, out in public. Pointing to the backgrounds of several photographs, she explained, "This is the street snap section, and you can see the same shops in the background of a lot of the pictures. I'm pretty sure the photographer just sits there, waiting for someone with 'KERA style'. Or at least, someone who stands out."

The intentionality with which Satchan dressed up and sought out the street snap photographer speaks to a self-awareness that underlies the perceived 'authenticity' of the form. More than just an arbitrary selection by tastemakers, street snaps are also not merely a documentary process. In dressing up, the young women that I worked with wanted to be seen, and the negotiation of visibility I found in how they went about gaming the street snap system worked out in a playful curation of authenticity. However, the ways that the falsification of authenticity in street snaps continues to be utilized to the advantage of individuals goes beyond baiting photographers with particularly stunning outfits or well-timed appearances. In China, street photography has been an ongoing trend for many years, primarily congregating in fashionable areas of Hangzhou and Beijing, among others. For those that go viral with a street snap photo or video, "self-made models are gaining more fans on their Weibo, Douyin, Xiaohongshu, or WeChat accounts, and are turning their social media apps into their very own stage."

(Koetse 2019) As a consequence, a new trend has appeared on Chinese social media wherein users post short videos on their accounts “that create the impression that they are being spotted by street fashion photographers”, (ibid) when they are in fact staged. “Although it may appear to be all spontaneous, these people – mostly women – are actually not randomly being caught on camera by one of China’s many street fashion photographers in trendy neighborhoods. They have organized this ‘fashion shoot’ themselves” (ibid) as a way of taking matters into their own hands.



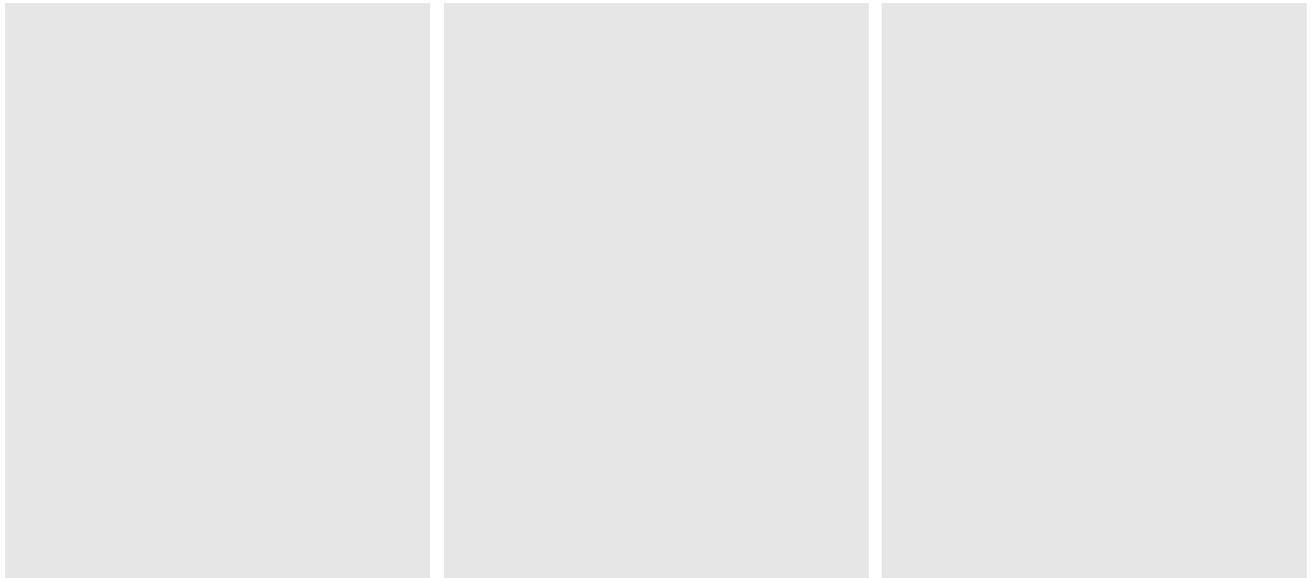
Beyond individuals seeking visibility with these ‘street snap’ shoots, companies and brands will also seek out the potential exposure that can come along with a viral hit. The “Wanghong economy” (from Wǎnghóng [网红], the Chinese term for influencers, internet celebrities and KOLs [Key Opinion Leaders]) is a lucrative business - estimated in 2018 to be worth some \$17.16 billion - where “the more views, clicks, and fans one has, the more profit they can make through e-commerce and online advertising.” (ibid) Within these staged street snaps, young women will pretend to have been spotted coincidentally - “Some look at the camera in a shy way, others turn away, then there are

those who smile and cheekily stick out their tongue at the camera” (ibid), while also providing a link for viewers to buy the exact same outfit.

The canny eagerness with which Satchan attempted to place herself in the line of sight of magazine street snap photographers is not unusual, as several women explained to me - the neighborhood thrives on the coexistence of those who want to see and be seen. In deciding not to merely leave their chances up to the whims and tastes of some photographer they don't know, Satchan and others question the power dynamic of the relationship that magazines have with their readers. Going one step further to falsify the street snap in its entirety raises some intriguing questions about this power dynamic, and the ways in which the street snap is mimicked outlines some of the qualities of their authenticity and where their value lies. More than just photographs taken outdoors in trendy neighborhoods, the frequency with which an element of 'surprise' is affected by a given model relates to notions of spontaneity, the chance encounter with a photographer for whom the stylishness of their subject affirms their trendsetting prowess.

For many, the counterfeit surprise within these staged street snaps comes off as cloying, over-the-top and laughable - as one Weibo user stated, “I find [this trend] so embarrassing that I want to toss my phone away,” to which another concurred - “This is all so awkward, it just makes my skin crawl.” (ibid) In retaliation, an anti-trend has sprung up on Chinese social media wherein street snaps are staged in ways that overtly reference their performative nature, incorporating intentionally 'uncool' clothing or locations with skits to outright mock the forms they reference. In many instances, these anti-trend street snaps “show ‘models’ walking in a rural area, pretending to be photographed by a ‘street fashion photographer’”. (ibid) Often taken in agricultural contexts, featuring farming clothes and equipment, these 'street snaps' knowingly question the economic disparity between who is and is not represented in the world of fashion. Whether paid for directly by the influencer featured in the shoot or by the businesses whose products are featured, staged street snaps explicitly show those who can afford to pay for them, and although the 'anti-trend' videos are intended as a form of contemptuous mimicry, “Although this ‘anti-trend’ is meant in a mocking way, it is

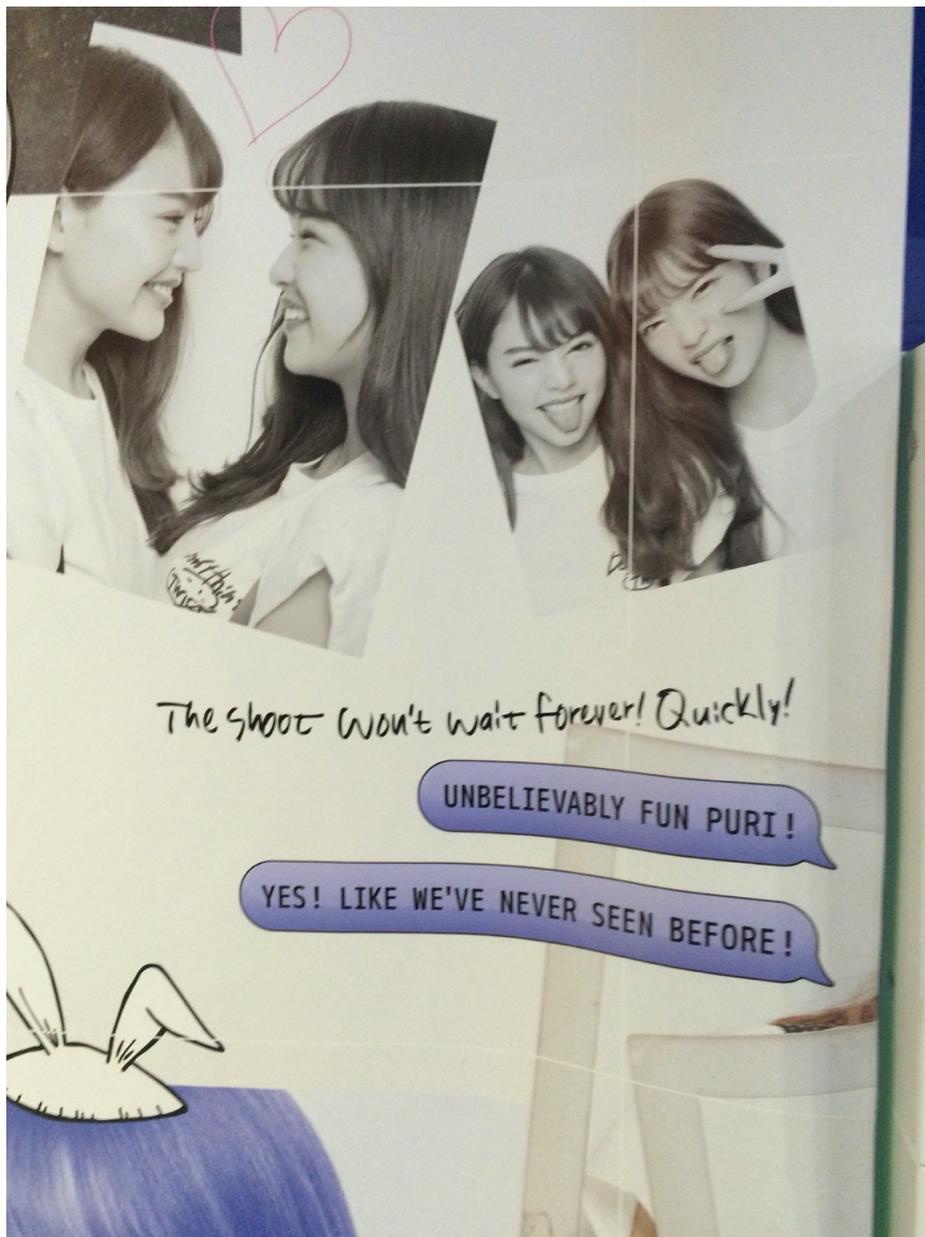
sometimes also a form of self-expression for young people for whom the Sanlitun-wannabe-models life is an extravagant and sometimes unattainable one.” (ibid)



The incongruity of street snaps staged in such contexts, intended to mock the wealthy elite, underlines the ways in which these photos relay information about the affordances of those who took them. In a material culture context, considering these elements can tell us much about how and why an object is made, owned and used - "the affordances of an object – such as a chair to support a sitter – result from the relational complement between the object and its pair – as exhibited in a sitter’s affordance to sit” (Gibson 1979; Carroll & Parkhurst 2021, 34). As regards street snap photographs, who exactly can afford to dress accordingly, or has the leisure time to spend in the areas these photographers congregate in? And in the further context of staging the photographs, who has the time and money to mythologize their own allure, and who does doing so benefit?

In Satchan’s case, these perceived affordances - to dress how she pleased and to spend her time when and where she wanted - were part of the appeal of both appearing in her magazine of choice, and of many of her own photographs posted to social media, including purikura. This was true with the majority of the women that I worked with, where their Instagram grids were dominated by photographs of delicious meals and enviable days out with friends. While not everyone posted with the explicit

intention of necessarily giving a false impression of the ways they could spend their time or money, as one woman explained, “*these are the moments I want to remember and share, because they were when I could have a good time. Why would I want to share a photograph of my empty fridge, or my boss yelling at me? I worked overtime so I could have fun - it’s the fun I want to remember.*” The notion of affordances works well here, as what was important to both remember for oneself, and to convey to others, was not just what you *had* done but that you *could* do.

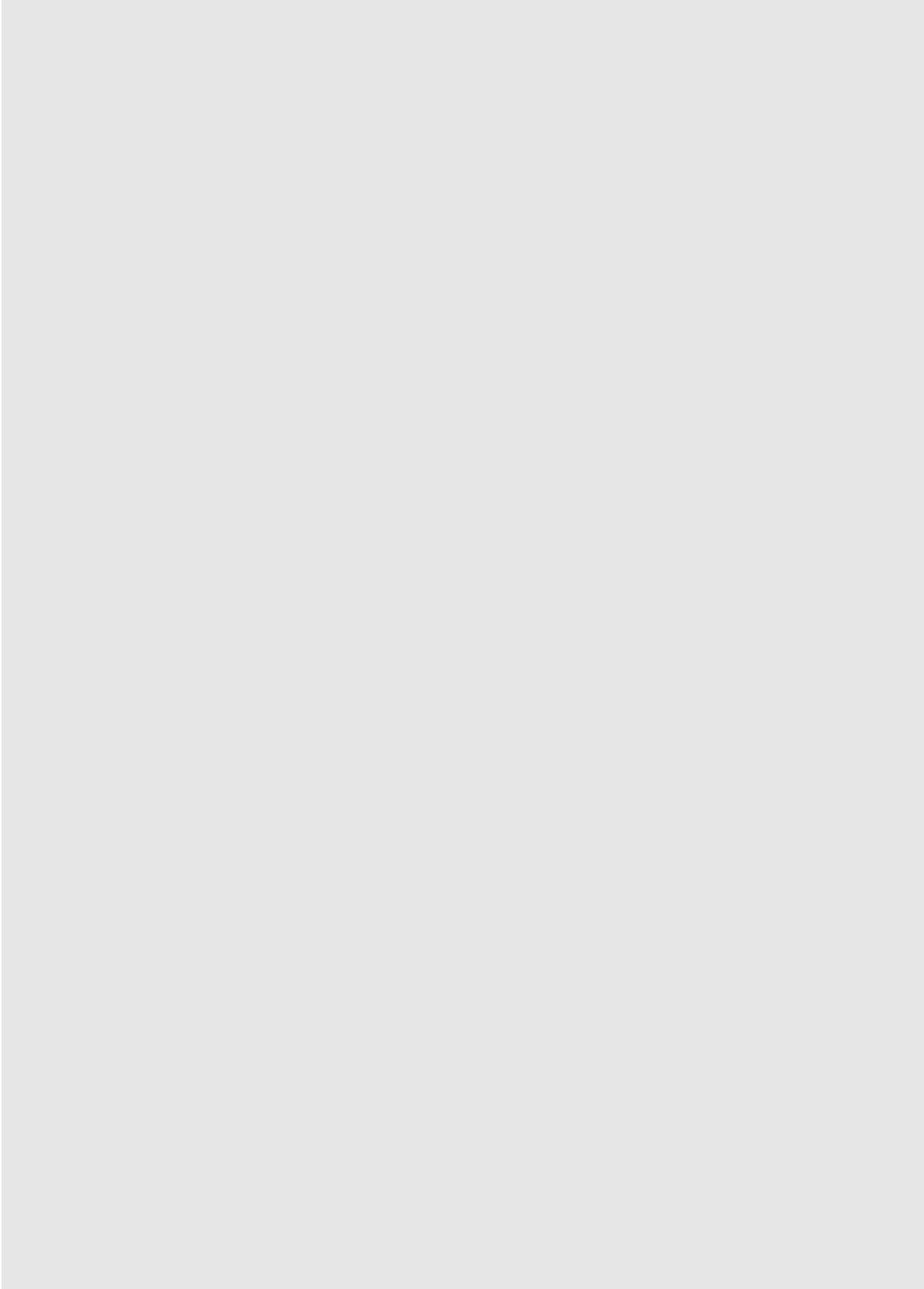


(author's own 2016)

In chapter 3, I discussed notions of emphatic femininity as, at times, functioning as an element of a performative display of wealth - overtly styled clothes and makeup as a form of conspicuous consumption. Wandering Harajuku, a neighborhood primarily known as a shopping destination, I took in the crowds - were the effusive outfits among them merely meant to signal affluence? The reality was always going to be more complicated than that. As mentioned in chapter 2, among the women I worked with, rather than actresses or pop stars, often the most admired style icons were actually shop staff working in fashion boutiques across the country, many of which were headquartered in Harajuku. In doing this research, I often found myself starstruck when I ran into staff I was familiar with from all the time spent looking through magazines and social media. Seeing the frenetic energy with which they did their own work, I was under no misapprehension that their jobs were easy, nor did most of the young women that I worked with glamorize the difficulty of the position. As one woman explained,

“I also work retail, so part of why I admire them is because I understand what the job is like. I can relate to that. But they get to express themselves with what they wear, because their employers respect them for their personal style.”

The aspirational quality of this career path lies in the perceived ability to integrate sartorial self-expression through style - normally reserved as a leisure activity - into their daily lives, even at work. In this context, we can see beauty practices and “dressing up” as being more than just an element of “leisure”, where being able to dress and act in ways that feel true to themselves is the primary goal.



Shop staff coord profiles in the February 2012 issue of Zipper magazine, featuring future purimo Risa Nakamura (top left) when she worked at Katie boutique



(author's own 2016)



Promotional materials for the purikura machine USAGI featuring Risa Nakamura as purimo (author's own 2016)



(author's own 2016)

Thinking beyond the notion of affordances in terms of money or time to spare, fashion culture in Japan has much to tell us about purikura production and consumption. During my harried meander through the back streets of Harajuku, I struggled to walk without being jostled - to enter a shop was not much better, and most could only be reached by climbing narrow, single-file staircases up to cramped ateliers towering above, or down to dimly lit basements tucked below. I wondered what shoppers who could not do so were meant to do, as visiting Harajuku with any kind of difference in mobility appeared to be next to impossible. When inquiring among friends, one replied that if she couldn't go herself, she would probably just buy the things she wanted online, as "the clothes are *free size* anyways". This, of course, raises a different issue - 'free size' or 'one size fits all' was, in my experience, the most common way of sizing clothing for street fashion brands. While larger establishments such as GU or Uniqlo might provide a range from S to LL (extra large), this differed greatly from the businesses centered around the street fashion districts favored by the women that I worked with, and as featured in most magazines, across the entire range of sub-styles.

It is worth noting that 'one size fits *all*' would be more aptly dubbed 'one size fits *some*' - I myself found that more often than not I was just too tall for most of the things I tried on, a theme repeated in my experience using purikura machines - crouching or listing sideways to even be in the frame of the shot. But of course, these clothes - and purikura machines - are not made for me. And even for the young women that I worked with, the limited range of clothing sizes was a concern that, for some, necessitated a preoccupation with body management through dieting and exercise that at times left them stressed and anxious, though this was not understood as problematic. During my fieldwork, dieting was not considered unusual for anyone of any body type, and the achievement or maintenance of a slim body was a source of pride, which concurs with Laura Miller's assertion that "Dieting is a cultural behavior in which discipline and effort are rewarded, and it may therefore be linked to specifically Japanese cultural ideas about struggle and perseverance."(L. Miller 2006, 160)

A larger cultural pressure for thinness was consistently present throughout my fieldwork in Japan, and the widespread normative expectation for women to be, or at least aspire to be, a certain weight was unavoidable. As mentioned previously in chapter 5, purikura

machines themselves have offered a variety of correctives for this, from placing the camera far above its subjects heads to digitally warping faces and bodies to appear thinner - in this sense, purikura not only fits within the narrow window of normative beauty standards, but further perpetuates them. Viewing fashion magazines and social media during my fieldwork in Japan, I began to get a sense for the limited range of body types that were viewed as acceptable. The affordances understood in street snap photography uplift a particular aesthetic of able-bodied, thin affluence that ignores the potential diversity of those that enact street fashion.



(author's own 2016)



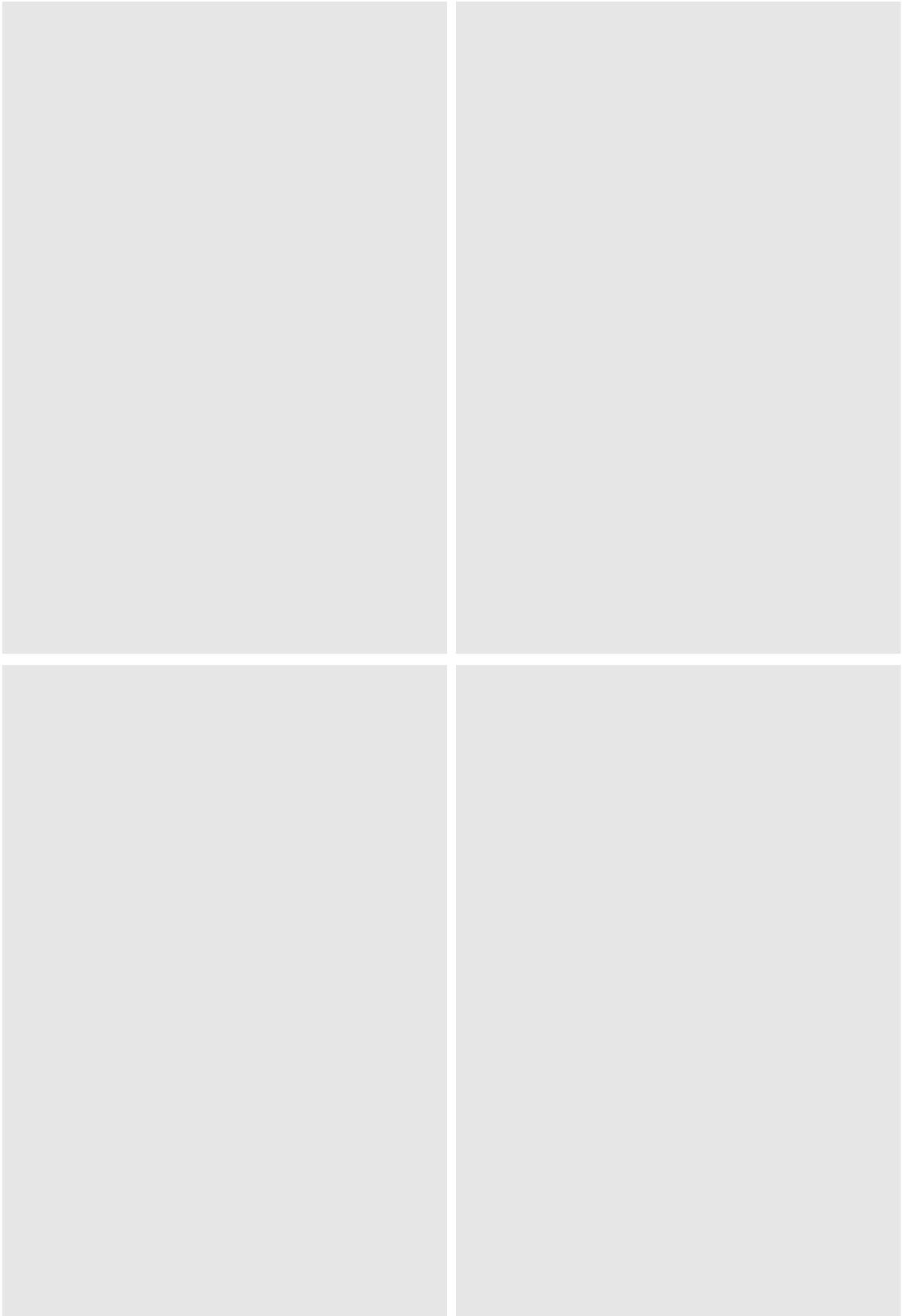
(author's own 2016)



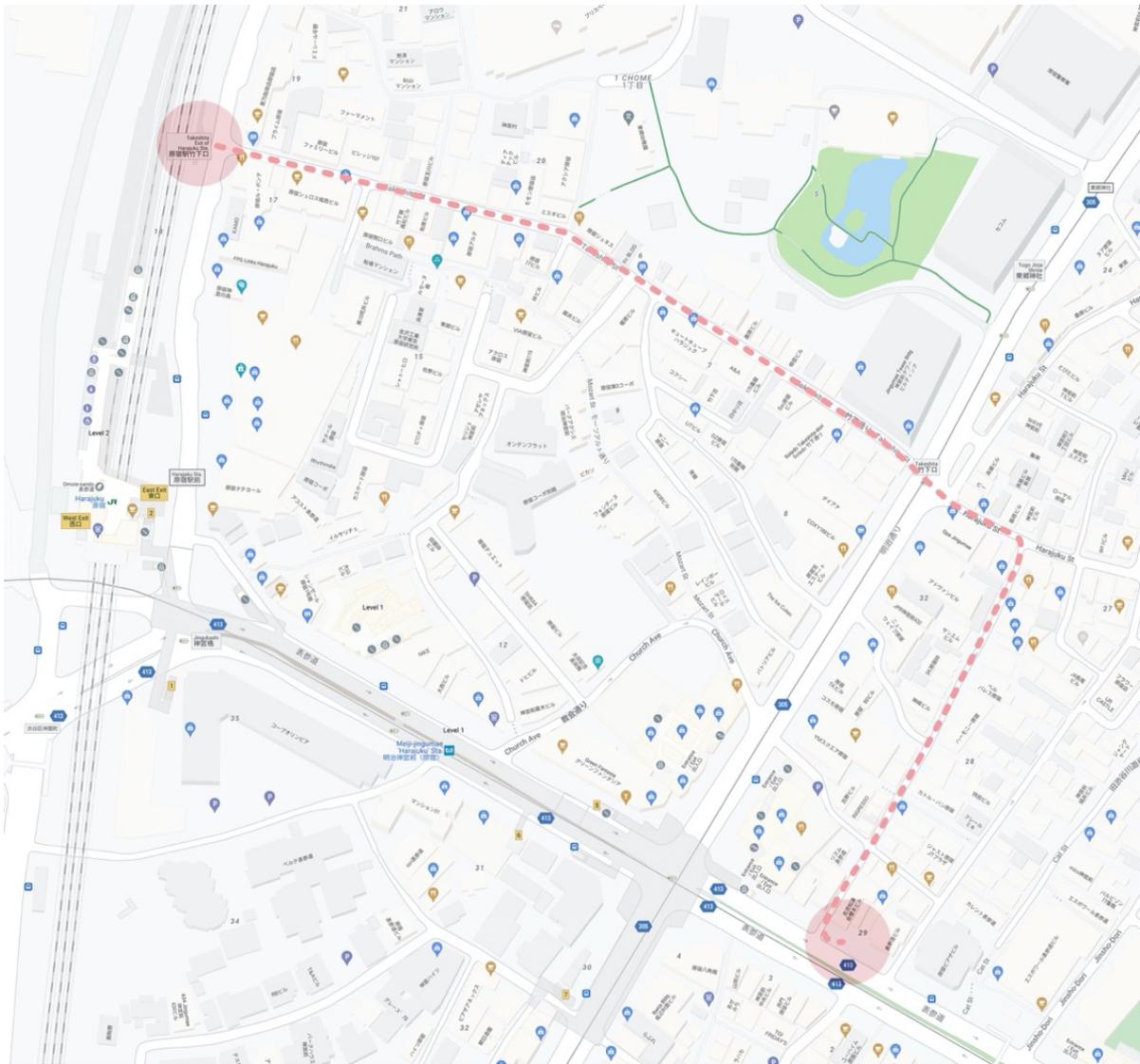
(author's own 2016)

Satchan continued on her way, gesturing us forward, and I turned to Mari as we walked on. I asked her why didn't she want to get street snapped - to which she responded that she "wasn't really into Harajuku". Confused, I clarified - "The fashion? Or the place?" She seemed to ponder this question, responding that she wouldn't mind getting street snapped, just not for the magazines that would be shooting here. "I prefer magazines that have a different kind of style - the brands they feature wouldn't be in this neighborhood. Though, what I'm really into at the moment is using vintage items - there's some vintage stores here, but there's better neighborhoods for them. I think Shimokita is better for that." Satchan turned around, nodding - "I prefer the shops here, but Shimokita has better restaurants. The vibe is definitely different." Mari leaned in, smirking - "you know the real cool kids are hanging out somewhere else." Satchan comedically exploded - "How rude!" - to which Mari laughingly assured her she was just kidding, before elaborating. "Shimokita is more chill, for sure. This place is too full of tourists for my taste."

Shimokita, or Shimokitazawa, is a small area in the Setagaya ward of Tokyo, popular for its eclectic mix of stores selling vintage clothing, records and knick-knacks - having been there myself many times, the lessened presence of chain stores felt refreshingly un-gentrified, though the area appeared to be seeing a surge in popularity that was not unlike that seen in Harajuku in the 80s and 90s. Inevitably, it appeared, as one neighborhood ascended in marketability beyond its usual clientele, many would flock to different areas, less sanitized by big business and local government. As mentioned previously, Harajuku itself had earlier followed this same pattern, whereby its initial popularity arose from its influx of visitors, displaced by overbearing custodial efforts in Shinjuku to prevent what was seen as dangerous youth culture.



Street snaps from the March 2016 issue of KERA magazine



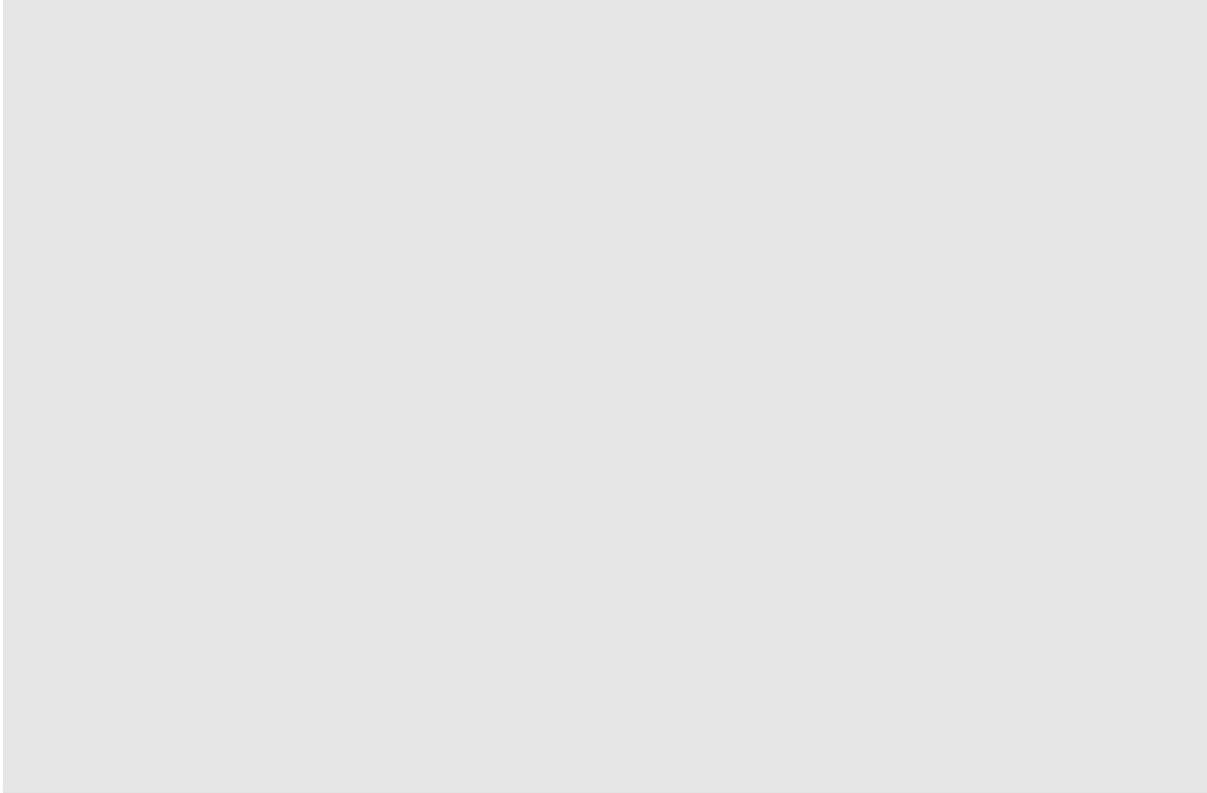
Harajuku Station to Omotesando via Urahara backstreets (Google Maps)

Turning us towards a smaller offshoot to the backroad we had been strolling along, we quickly found ourselves popping out from a cramped space between two gargantuan shops, exiting onto the much more affluent high street of Omotesando. Waving us over to the right, Satchan again showed us her copy of KERA, pointing out The Body Shop, the Calzedonia, and the now-recognizable awnings and driveway that appeared in the background of the street snaps, clearly identifying a particular haunt for the photographer in question. She nodded her head conspiratorially towards the railings that flanked the busy road, serving as seating for an array of visitors. She indicated an

area across from Folli Follie under a sprawling row of zelkova - "I think that's where they hang out. Let's sit down and wait to see if they show up."

We approached a blank space on a railing further along, dropping our bags and perching while we waited. We chatted merrily, discussing various happenings during the week, where else in the area we wanted to look around, taking out our phones to show each other photographs or posts on SNS. After a while, a young Caucasian woman approached us with a large camera, gesturing as if to ask permission - in stilted, emphasized English she asked if she could take our photograph. Nodding emphatically and making an 'OK' sign with her thumb and forefinger, Satchan leaned in towards me while I, taken by surprise, nervously lifted a limp peace sign and tried not to grimace.

The young woman happily snapped a few photos before thanking us and quickly trotting off. Satchan seemed annoyed by this, and I asked if this had been the photographer we were waiting for. "Obviously not - that was just a tourist!" she responded. "I'm glad she asked permission, but she didn't even ask us for our SNS handles so she could tag us." Satchan explained that when foreign tourists tagged her in their posts, she would often see a boost in visibility through a flurry of new followers. "It's cool when people from other places follow you, even when it's difficult to communicate. I do wish they took better pictures of me sometimes, though."



(Masuda 2014)

With the closure of the “pedestrian paradise” on Jingubashi bridge in the late 1990s, for many of the young women that I spoke to, Harajuku lacked for much to do other than shop or eat, and the area was increasingly being taken over by tourists eager to partake in what they saw as the epitome of Japanese ‘*kawaii* [cute] culture’. The local government is not unaware of this, and has actively courted this demographic, as typified by the introduction of the MOSHI MOSHI BOX Harajuku Tourist Information Center - introduced in late 2014, the pastel and neon building featured a vibrant, toy-encrusted clock covering an entire wall, created by artist Sebastian Masuda. The building, which was created as part of the MOSHI MOSHI NIPPON (MMN) Project with management and support from the Shibuya City Tourism Association, “has always striven to provide tourist information and aid to sightseers in Harajuku, especially foreign visitors to Japan” (MMN 2019). In addition to providing multilingual support and maps for the area, the foreign currency exchange feels less than altruistic when paired with their baggage storage service. As stated in their press release, “The number of tourists visiting Harajuku has vastly increased in recent years ... At the MOSHI MOSHI BOX,

we want people to be able to enjoy their Harajuku trip to the fullest and not be weighed down by all the things they have to carry” (MMN 2017), a burden no doubt increased by all the shopping bags they presumed visitors would leave with.

Despite stating that the building had become “a monument that symbolises Harajuku culture”, (MMN 2019) the young women that I worked with, at least, seemed disinterested at best. For some, the clock installation was a cute fixture of the neighborhood, but many did not know what the purpose of the project was, nor what the building housed. For some, they considered the MMN Project with some amount of disdain - as one young woman stated, “*Why would I go there? What would I do there? It’s for tourists, not me.*” Unlike the clothes I found ill-fitting, the MOSHI MOSHI BOX was, ostensibly, made for me - tailored to meet the needs of outsiders looking to wander the area for perusing, shopping or even gawking. Rather than symbolizing ‘authentic’ Harajuku culture, whatever that may be, the MMB stood as a monument to the commodification of ‘kawaii culture’, a government-sponsored attempt to define and capitalize on what has been deemed Japan’s “Gross National Cool” (McGray 2009).

This form of soft power has been readily embraced by the Japanese government, who have attempted to utilize it to their advantage, as seen in the Cool Japan initiative set out by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry in 2010 with the establishment of their new Creative Industries Promotion Office. (METI 2010) Their stated aim is to work with the private sector to promote Japanese culture through an emphasis on branding products, focusing on pop culture as a key element of their strategy. (METI 2014) Boasting a budget of ¥19 billion for 2011 alone, the Cool Japan strategy has been criticized for at best underperforming - as of 2017, journalist Joji Harano “paints a pretty bleak picture of Cool Japan’s situation stating that among all of its 52.9 billion yen in public and private money invested in 25 projects, Cool Japan is operating at a loss of 4.4 billion yen.” (*Japan Today* 2018), a situation that some might suggest “is either grossly incompetent or corrupt”. (ibid) It is in this sense odd to imagine the MOSHI MOSHI BOX as symbolizing Harajuku culture for those that actually participate in it, rather than an exploitative misrepresentation of youth subculture - an attempt to categorize and define it “in order to exploit it for nationalistic and profiteering reasons”. (Miller 2011, 101) What both the MOSHI MOSHI NIPPON and Cool Japan initiatives are

built around is a form of youth culture that is well-organized and demarcated, a 'brand' whose outline is clear, palatable and easy to sell, particularly to outsiders seeking something exotic.

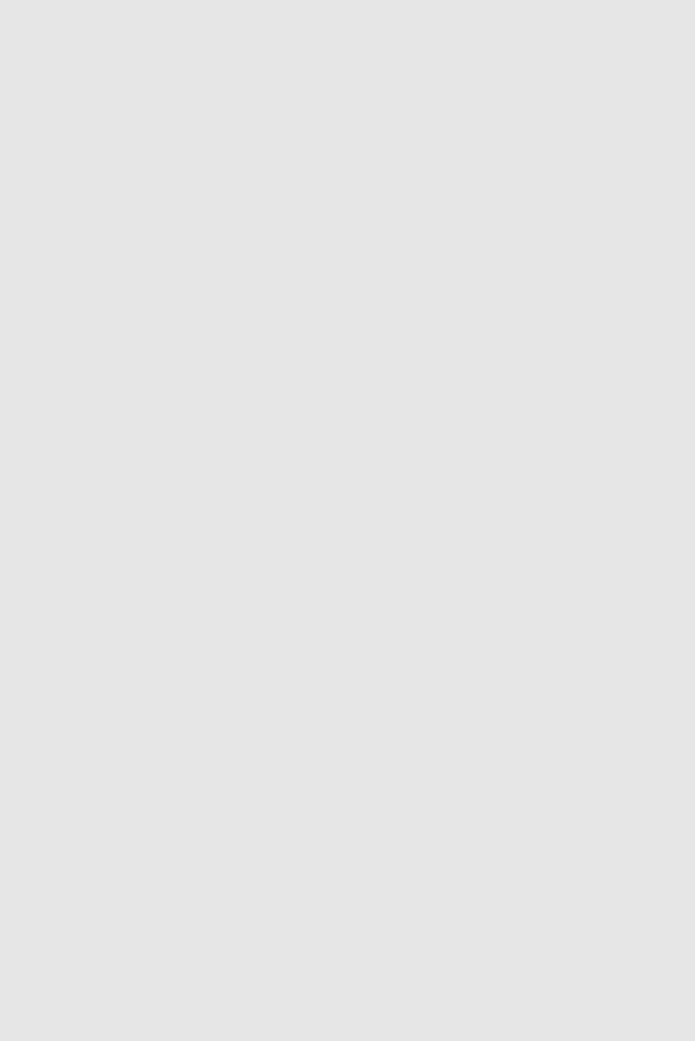
This vision of 'cool', especially as regards Harajuku fashion, revolves around a preoccupation with a particular kind of vibrancy and color, primarily neons and pastels, as exemplified by the installation piece on the outside of the MOSHI MOSHI BOX. Created by artist Sebastian Masuda for the project, *Colorful Rebellion - WORLD TIME CLOCK* encapsulates much of the aesthetic of his oeuvre, particularly the dense layering of commercial objects to create a cacophony of visuals. Born in Chiba in 1970, Masuda began his first foray into fashion and the visual arts in the 1990s with his Harajuku-based shop 6%DOKIDOKI - these colors are a mainstay of his work, and function as part of the branding for his own personal vision and definition of kawaii. The palette he employs is intentional, embracing colors that he believes are often regarded as "venomous and too chemical" (cited in Folks 2016), a curative to what he has deemed a toxically drab, greyscale society. While he states that "the kawaii culture we [the 6%DOKIDOKI brand] advocate is that of Harajuku alone and does not necessarily represent the entire kawaii culture of Japan", (2010) it was unclear that the particular style he advocated was representative of anything beyond his own portfolio.

In conversation with the young women I worked with, many felt that they somewhat associated the aesthetic with his work and the 6%DOKIDOKI brand, but most often with the *decora* substyle of fashion, which - much like Masuda's iconic installation pieces - is a cacophonous display of neons and pastels, incorporating a dense layering of toys, stickers and accessories. While it is not clear to what degree Sebastian Masuda and his work influenced this substyle or vice versa, what was evident conversationally was that *decora* - or as Sebastian Masuda dubs it, 'sensational lovely' (2010) - was not the be-all-end-all as regards Harajuku style. Many cited Harajuku fashion as "different, always changing", "ahead of normal fashion" and "unexpected" - as one young woman explained, "*decora* is *part* of Harajuku fashion, but it's not the *only* thing."

As Sebastian Masuda explains, "Girls in Harajuku turn an ordinary fashion into an original expression ... They don't conform to rules or categories and mix things

together, creating styles of their own. They have a sense that is free and flexible, one that cannot be found anywhere else in the world” (ibid), a sentiment somewhat at odds with his own store policies. As explained by a former member of his shop staff, “a typical day at work would start not on the day of my shift, but actually the day before. I would message my manager and we would discuss what I would wear” (Choom 2018), indicating a managerial curatorship precluding what could be understood as non-conformist ‘original expression’ on the part of the young women who work for him. For Masuda, “Without the outfits, the girls would feel destined to become one of those gray-colored grownups. Otherwise, they cannot protect themselves” (2010, 41), a ‘defense’ that is conveniently available for sale in his Harajuku boutique. In many respects, the 6%DOKIDOKI branding relies on a self-exoticism, promoting itself to outsiders as lurid and candy-colored, inevitably made bland in its encapsulation and stasis.

This ‘encapsulation’ is made most apparent in his participatory art installation project the *Time After Time Capsule* series, created in collaboration with the television broadcaster NHK. Beginning in 2015, Masuda “created time capsules in the shape of ten different characters, one for each city” (culture 24), including New York, London, Paris, Berlin and Beijing, where he invited local communities to contribute their memories in the form of small colorful objects. The capsules, translucent versions of the Sanrio character Hello Kitty as well as the NHK mascot Domo-kun among others, were around 3 to 9 feet in height, and were collected over a five year period to be displayed in Tokyo for the 2020 Olympics, with the aim of showing “how kawaii can unite nationalities” (cited in B. Miller 2016). For Masuda, who describes society as “a chokingly monochrome world with rampant acts of terrorism and war” (2010), the potential benefits of the proliferation of 6%DOKIDOKI-tinged kawaii culture are paramount, stating:



“Today, war and terrorism still casts a shadow over us ... I think we should protest and fight the power by wearing colorful fashion. ... This is the message I want to convey through my activities. If I can succeed in this, Japanese culture will take root in the lifestyles of youth throughout the world – via KAWAII culture. ... our politeness and ingenuity are all condensed into Japan’s KAWAII culture, and if it takes root internationally it will make the world a more livable, peaceful place. I think colorful fashion symbolizes this.” (2012)

Sebastian Masuda with shop staff Yuka, with the New York City ‘Time After Time Capsule’ (2015)

Whether serving as an Agency for Cultural Affairs’ Japan Cultural Envoy or touring with his own work, Sebastian Masuda has carefully crafted a “sharp

and colorful” (2012) image of a deceptively unrestrained female-centric “rebellion”, ensconcing himself as figurehead. For Masuda, who describes himself on his personal website as “a leading figure in driving kawaii culture in Japan,” (Masuda) who similarly claims to have been “the first to join Harajuku and kawaii together” (2012), his insistence on the reliance upon this particular range of colors to express and enact a rebellion against a claustrophobic society succeeds in placing himself and his own work at the forefront, creating a hegemonic aesthetic that defines, and limits, the boundaries of creativity, predominantly that of young women. Furthermore, seeing the Colorful Rebellion clock on the MOSHI MOSHI BOX as “a monument that symbolises Harajuku

culture” (MMN 2019) is ostensibly a reduction to the visual stylings of one singular artist, simplifying an entire shifting culture down to his own personal definition of ‘kawaii’. Sebastian Masuda’s work with Harajuku street fashion and kawaii is part of a larger narrative of individuals and institutions who seek to utilize Japanese youth culture for their own benefit – however, “once elders and profiteering enterprises get involved in selling youth cultural products, those goods quickly lose their cool status. In the wake of cool’s departure, we find only a sanitized version of the real thing, a product obviously crafted by adult strategists.” (L. Miller 2011, 101)

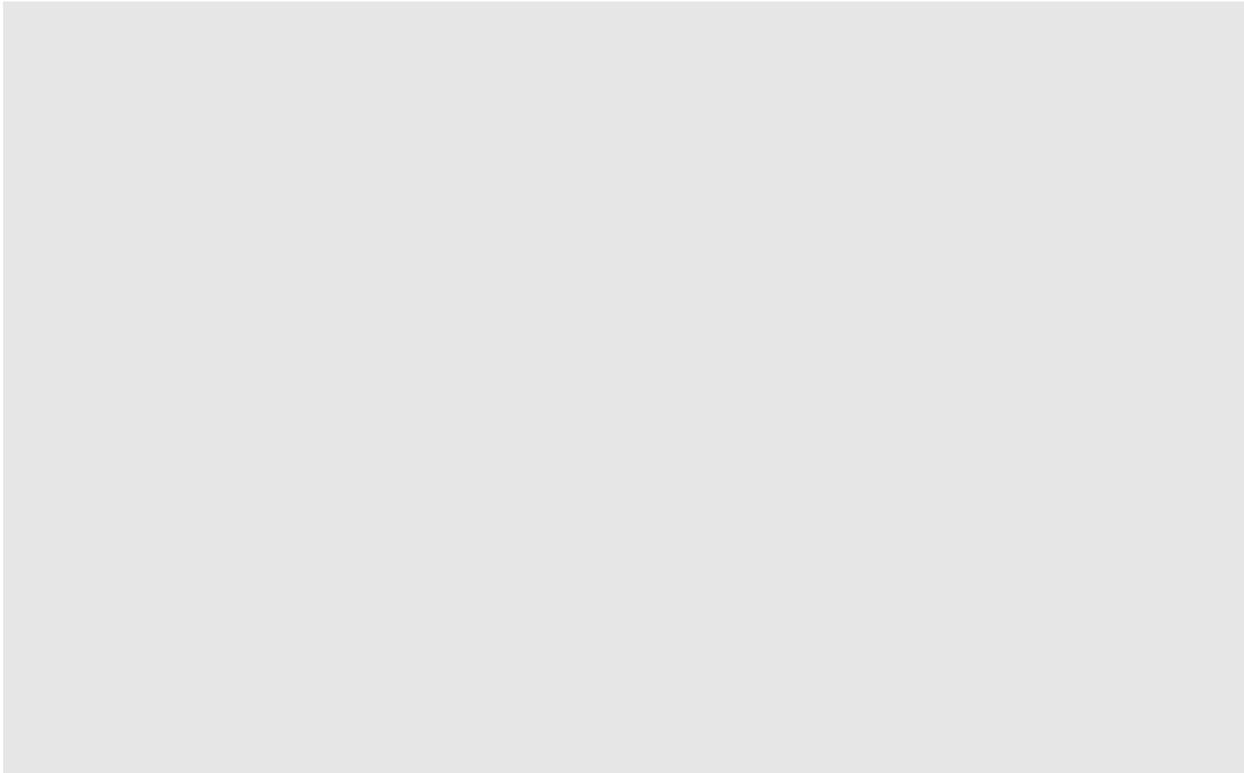
In January of 2019, the MOSHI MOSHI BOX announced that they had officially closed their doors. Sebastian Masuda’s *Colorful Rebellion* clock, which was originally intended as a permanent exhibition (Masuda), was also highlighted as being part of the closure, stating that “it will be disassembled at some point.” (MMN 2019) As the MOSHI MOSHI NIPPON press release regarding the closure stated:

“With only a year left until the Tokyo 2020 Olympics there is much construction work going on at the event’s main site which is located in a neighbouring area. Harajuku and its station, which will be the doorstep to Harajuku, is also undergoing reconstruction. The MOSHI MOSHI BOX too biding its time and is waiting for the opportunity to move and undergo renovations in the brand new Harajuku.”

This would not be the first time that the Harajuku area would be subject to a ‘revitalization’ of this kind, as it had previously been a site for the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, following which the popularity of the area largely fizzled out - as described by writer Hiroshi Morinaga, “Harajuku was as insignificant as a tiny island in the South Pacific, quiet both day and night.” (Marx 2015, 134) As mentioned previously, the area was only reinvigorated by the influx of rebellious youths in the late 1970s following sanitization efforts from local police, resulting in their expulsion from nearby Shinjuku. The cyclical nature of these government-sponsored cleanses for the sake of tourism and national pride is noteworthy, and only time will tell if the neighborhood will suffer the same sterile fate as followed the 1964 clean-up. Efforts may have been forestalled by the onset of

the COVID-19 pandemic, which significantly impacted most everything during this time, including the indefinite postponement of the unveiling of Sebastian Masuda's *Time After Time Capsule* project.

Among the young women that I worked with, a more emblematic monument to Harajuku was its train station. During my fieldwork, it was the entry, exit and meeting point for most of my outings there - as one woman explained, "it just *is* Harajuku." However, as mentioned above, "Harajuku and its station, which will be the doorstep to Harajuku, is also undergoing reconstruction" (MMN 2019), a 'reconstruction' that necessitated the demolition of its historic building in August of 2020. Instead of entirely dismantling the original structure, "a replica of its exterior [was] constructed near the new Harajuku Station building" (Arab News Japan 2020), a facsimile that speaks to the gradual gentrification of the neighborhood. As Toichi Shinohara, a 79-year-old resident who was born and raised in the area stated in an interview, "It feels like an era is ending." (ibid)



(JR-East Design Corporation 2020)

This sentiment is one shared by FRUiTS magazine founder, editor and chief photographer Shoichi Aoki who, in February of 2017, announced that the magazine would be ceasing publication. Rather than blaming the decline of print media, the street snap auteur instead stated that "there are no more cool kids left to photograph." (FASHIONSNAP 2017) With all the symbolic finality surrounding the area currently, it is somewhat surprising to find that it has been discussed in similar doomsday terms for almost as long as it has been popular - Sebastian Masuda, who has worked with Aoki in the past, has stated that:

"The scenes of colorful fashion overflowing in the streets were short-lived, only for 2-3 years before the street mall was closed in 98 – and the place for people to express their reality disappeared. I thought it was the end of this culture. But the editor of FRUiTS Aoki san and I thought that we could reestablish Hokoten [pedestrian paradise] through the magazine, and we tried, but the times moved on ... The desolate cultural desert arrived in the beginning of 2000." (asianbeat 2012)

This sense of ephemerality associated with the area and its youth culture places a significant emphasis on 'cool' as perpetually about-to-end, either teetering on its peak or already past its sell-by date - these declarations are what 'tastemakers' rely on. Whether bemoaning the closure of the *Jingubashi hokoten* in the late 1990s or the closure of FRUiTS magazine in the late 2010s, neither ever truly indicated the 'end' of youth culture or fashion, as young people have continued to dress with stylish abandon throughout Japan. During my fieldwork, it was clear that fashion culture centered around Harajuku wasn't always enacted there - the increased prevalence of social media has largely allowed the power to shift away from the arbitration of fashion magazine editors and into the hands of self-curated vernacular photographers who can promote themselves. We "need only look online to see that inspirational Japanese dressers still exist in droves, and for better or worse, their internet platforms mean that they likely reach a wider audience than any magazine" (A. Clarke 2017) - a technologically-mediated cyborg selfhood with a global audience.

The origins of purikura align with the mid-90s surge in popularity to the Harajuku area, and it has continued to persist among the increasingly varied forms of vernacular photography that exist to this day. While it is currently still a part of this visual repertoire, it would be naive to assume it always will be, just as it would be inaccurate to overstate its importance over time. In the work of historian Chris Wickham, he discusses a tendency in the field towards seeing the past as leading towards periods of enlightenment, where the later outcome of 'modernity' is what gives meaning to a former period. In the case of my own fieldwork, I feel it would be prudent not to think of the beginnings of purikura, along with the proliferation of vernacular photography and street style in the 1990s, as being important only because they have led to this moment in time. I do not feel that the current uses of social media and the internet are necessarily any more 'enlightened' than any other period of time, and there is value in seeing the recent past as "an artificial span of time, in which changes can be tracked in different ways in different places, without them having to lead teleologically to some major event at the end, whether Reformation, revolution, industrialisation, or any other sign of 'modernity'." (Wickham 2016, 5) I am also hesitant to discuss purikura, vernacular photography or even social media in any kind of forward-looking way, whereby the moment of my fieldwork will be a stepping stone towards some *future* period of enlightenment - "when something is framed in the language of 'potentiality,' it is inscribed with intention and futurity" (Taussig et al. 2013 cited in Carroll & Parkhurst 2021, 44), an exercise in futility as technology and its uses will inevitably "develop in unexpected and unanticipated directions" (ibid). What we consistently see from the past, and throughout the duration of my fieldwork, is young women using vernacular photography to try and tell their own stories, centered on their own lives and aspirations - an inclination I hope will persist in future.

Where the voices and agency of girls are frequently ignored (Monden 2014, 114), young women in Japan are using self-directed photography to describe meaningful life events, peer relationships, and emotions. The consumers of purikura, so often derided and discounted, are actively attempting to reclaim their visibility - "they are the sign of rupture and movement to a new era rather than the cause of collapse" (Prough 2011, 121). Photographs are a record made by individuals, bearing witness to the situation in

which they are created – the photograph itself, at its simplest, implicitly communicates that the photographer sought to document the event in some way, and that it was worth recording. (Berger 1972, 179) For purikura photographs, this message extends beyond merely recording an event or an outfit, but further indicates that what is worth seeing is the users themselves.

Sitting on a railing under the shade of the trees lining Omotesando avenue, I asked Satchan what we were going to do if the street snap photographer we were waiting for didn't show up. Waving her hand, Satchan responded - "I'll be disappointed, but it wouldn't be that big of a deal. I can still post pictures to my own SNS - and, I'll get to look how I want to look. So that's a plus. There's also no guarantee it would end up in the magazine, anyways."

And so we waited, chatting and people watching - acquaintances of Satchan and Mari stopping by, exchanging greetings and taking selfies together. Eventually, as the street lamps turned on, Mari grumbled about being hungry and Satchan gave in, rising with a sigh and grabbing her bag. "Well, we didn't catch them this time, but there's always next time. For now - let's take puri."

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