

Introduction

“Those children who wear a vacant expression of despair and solitude are mirroring the emotions of the people who look at them. Those vacant children are, so to speak, ‘cups of my emotions’ — something I could pour my emotion into.”

Hikari Shimoda



Sparkling and sweet, enchanting and disarming, Hikari Shimoda’s work portrays a world where cuteness and horror co-exist. Based in Nagano, Japan, Shimoda studied illustration at the prestigious Kyoto Saga University of Art and Aoyama Juku School before beginning her career as a professional contemporary artist in 2008. Soon after, she was selected for her first solo exhibition at Motto Gallery in Tokyo and has since held exhibitions in galleries worldwide, including Japan, the United States, Canada, and Europe.

Inspired by Japanese manga and anime, Shimoda’s images depict modern-day issues through colorful and illustrative techniques. Her characters are often starry-eyed children dressed in costumes to resemble superheroes and magical girls. Through a juxtaposition of brushstroke, text, and collage, these characters reveal the problems and struggles of

contemporary society, comment on the anointment of Jesus Christ as a savior of humanity, and mirror our fantasy heroes. They also represent our adult desire to nurture the world’s children and defend the world we have constructed.

With each new piece, Shimoda advances her search for salvation and her deeper understanding of this chaotic world.

Following the Great East Japan Earthquake and the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant accident in 2011, Shimoda became increasingly interested in world connections. Her portrait series *Whereabouts of God* features other-worldly children adorned with a Chernobyl necklace. In *Children of This Planet*, children act as a blank canvas for what Shimoda describes as countless possibilities; where fantasy meets with reality, past meets future, and life meets death and a world that is yet to be reborn.

Throughout her work, eyes communicate each character’s personality but also reflect Shimoda’s feelings and ideas.

“They are ‘anyone’ who just exists. So, they could also exist beyond the realm of being children and identify with anyone who might appreciate them. Those children who wear a vacant expression of despair and solitude are mirroring the emotions of the people who look at them. Those vacant children are, so to speak, ‘cups of my emotions’ — something I could pour my emotion into. Their sparkling eyes are staring into space, while reflecting both light and darkness, and those horns are a metaphor of wordless emotions like fury and despair that people feel towards unreasonable things in this world.”

— Hikari Shimoda

Left - *Whereabouts of God #32*, Oil on canvas, 28.6” x 28.6”, 2019

Right - *Whereabouts of God #33*, Oil on canvas, 28.6” x 28.6”, 2019



WHEREABOUTS

OF GOD



1.



2.



3.



4.

1. Whereabouts of God #37, Oil on canvas, 28.6" x 28.6", 2020
2. Whereabouts of God #38, Oil on canvas, 28.6" x 28.6", 2020
3. Whereabouts of God #39, Oil on canvas, 28.6" x 28.6", 2020
4. Whereabouts of God #40, Oil on canvas, 28.6" x 28.6", 2020





Whereabouts of God #34, Oil on canvas, 28.6" x 28.6", 2019



1.



2.

1. Whereabouts of God #35, Oil on canvas, 28.6" x 28.6", 2019
2. Whereabouts of God #36, Oil on canvas, 28.6" x 28.6", 2019