

GALERIE PEPE

*ECHOES OF MISHIMA*

*WITH WORKS BY:*

*GO MISHIMA*

*SADAO HASEGAWA*

*TAMOTSU YATŌ*

Language fails. Deleuze says, summarizing Spinoza, “the only question that we don’t even know [savons] what a body is capable of, we prattle on about the soul and the mind and we don’t know what a body can do.” After an early life devoted to the word, Yukio Mishima turned to the body, to discover what a body was capable of, as an actor, as a body builder. An actor instrumentalizes the body, in service to language sometimes, but really gestures toward something more. A body builder counts - reps, sets, weights - to break the body in order to strengthen it, to gesture towards something more. The fetish, per Freud, emerges when a desiring subject fails to reconcile reproductive impulses, replacing the object of desire with a symbol. The fetish becomes not merely a substitute for the phallus, but something more. The “healthy” drive towards procreation, towards life, becomes an erotic impulse towards death. The image, the symbol, the gesture, the body, confront the limitations of language. The body, of course, also fails. The gesture remains. Violence, like eroticism, does not speak. When Mishima spoke to the soldiers at the military base before his ritual suicide, they couldn’t hear him.

“I cherished a romantic impulse toward death. . . . It remained for me some day to achieve something, to destroy something. That was where the steel came in. . . . The goal of my life was to acquire all the various attributes of the warrior. . . . Body and spirit had never blended. . . . Somewhere, there must be a higher principle that manages to bring the two together and reconcile them. That principle, it occurred to me, was death.” Yukio Mishima, *Sun and Steel*

Dasha Nekrasova

**Galerie Pepe is pleased to present Echoes of Mishima a three-person exhibition of Japanese artists Go Mishima, Sadao Hasegawa and Tamotsu Yato.** September 21st - November 4th, 2023

Tsuyoshi Yoshida (1924 – January 5, 1988), known by the pen name **Go Mishima** (三島剛, Mishima Go), was a Japanese homoerotic fetish artist and founder of the magazine Sabu. He is noted for his illustrations of men, often with yakuza-inspired *irezumi* tattoos. Mishima is regarded as a central figure in the first wave of contemporary gay artists in Japan.

During the late 1950s Mishima met the writer Yukio Mishima at a gym, and formed a friendship on their shared interest in athletics, bodybuilding, and hypermasculine sexuality. The two men drew artistic nudes together as a pastime; Go Mishima began to pursue a career in art in earnest with Yukio Mishima's encouragement, and adopted Mishima's last name to use as his pen name in tribute. After Yukio Mishima's death by ritual suicide, Go Mishima began to depict more violent material and themes in his art, including bondage, masochism, and torture.

In 1964, Mishima was published in Fuzokukitan and Bara, two of the first magazines in Japan to publish gay and gay pornographic content. He was an early contributor to Barazoku, which in 1971 became the first commercially circulated gay magazine in Japan. Dissatisfied with the *bishōnen* art style of Barazoku, Mishima founded Sabu in 1974, which focused on images of masculine men, and was more explicitly pornographic. On January 5, 1988, Mishima died of complications from cirrhosis. A commemorative issue of Barazoku was published in tribute to Mishima in 1989, in which Sadao Hasegawa referred to him as "a master illustrator of the male physique."

**Sadao Hasegawa** (長谷川 サダオ, Hasegawa Sadao, 1945 – November 20, 1999) was a Japanese graphic artist known for creating homoerotic fetish art. His works are noted for their extensive detail, elaborate fantasy settings, and for their juxtaposition of elements from Japanese, Balinese, Thai, Tibetan Buddhist, African, and Indian art. While Hasegawa focused primarily on depictions of muscular male physique, he often incorporated extreme sexual themes in his works, including bondage and sadomasochism. His art is noted for strong mystical and

spiritual overtones. In 1978, Hasegawa's art was published for the first time in *Barazoku*, a monthly magazine for gay men; he would later go on to be published in *Sabu*, *Samson*, and *Adon*.

Hasegawa cited Go Mishima and Tom of Finland among his influences, calling the former "a master illustrator of the male physique" in an obituary written in 1989 for *Barazoku*. His early works reflected European art styles. Beginning in the late 1980s, Hasegawa began making regular trips to Bali and Thailand, resulting in a greater focus on Asian iconography and mythology in his art. On November 20, 1999, Hasegawa committed suicide by hanging at a hotel room in Bangkok, Thailand.

**Tamotsu Yato** (矢頭 保, Yato Tamotsu, 1928(?) – May 1973) was a Japanese photographer and occasional actor responsible for pioneering Japanese homoerotic photography and creating iconic black-and-white images of the Japanese male.

Yato was born in Nishinomiya in 1928 as Tamotsu Takeda. He was self-taught photographer and during his life never took part in any of the many photographic organizations which was customary in Japan that time. During his life he had been a day laborer, as well as working at the *Nichigeki* theater. Tamotsu Yato was a friend and collaborator of the writer Yukio Mishima and the film critic Donald Richie, as well as a long-term romantic partner of Meredith Weatherby, an expatriate American publisher and translator of Mishima's works into English. Meredith, who was president of the Weatherhill publishing house, bought Yato his first camera, and his friends showed him how to use it. Yato completed three volumes of photography. Even though Yato's work received only a limited public distribution, it has attained a cult following and has been acknowledged as a major influence by a number of artists working with male erotica. Thus, Sadao Hasegawa remarks in his *Paradise Visions*: "Tamotsu Yato achieved fame by creating *Otoko*, a picture book. He photographed Yukio Mishima, nude. His subjects: traditional, muscular, unsophisticated countryside men, are mostly extinct today. *Otoko* was valuable because you could see these long-bodied, stout-legged, cropped hair, square-jawed men... Good-bye, men of Nippon!"

Kimitake Hiraoka (平岡 公威, Hiraoka Kimitake, 14 January 1925 – 25 November 1970), also known as **Yukio Mishima** (三島 由紀夫, Mishima Yukio), was a Japanese author, poet, playwright, actor, model, Shintoist, nationalist, and founder of the *Tatenokai* (楯の会, "Shield Society"). Mishima is considered one of the most important writers of the 20th century. His works include the novels *Confessions of a Mask* (仮面の告白, *Kamen no kokuhaku*) and *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion* (金閣寺, *Kinkaku-ji*), and the autobiographical essay *Sun and Steel* (太陽と鉄, *Taiyō to tetsu*). Mishima's work is characterized by "its luxurious vocabulary and decadent metaphors, its fusion of traditional Japanese and modern Western literary styles, and its obsessive assertions of the unity of beauty, eroticism and death", according to author Andrew Rankin.

Mishima's political activities made him a controversial figure, which he remains in modern Japan. From his mid-30s, Mishima's right-wing ideology and reactionary beliefs were increasingly evident. He was proud of the traditional culture and spirit of Japan, and opposed what he saw as western-style materialism, along with Japan's postwar democracy, globalism, and communism, worrying that by embracing these ideas the Japanese people would lose their "national essence" (*kokutai*) and their distinctive cultural heritage (Shinto and *Yamato-damashii*) to become a "rootless" people. Mishima formed the *Tatenokai* for the avowed purpose of restoring sacredness and dignity to the Emperor of Japan. On 25 November 1970, Mishima and four members of his militia entered a military base in central Tokyo, took its commandant hostage, and unsuccessfully tried to inspire the Japan Self-Defense Forces to rise up and overthrow Japan's 1947 Constitution (which he called "a constitution of defeat"). After his speech and screaming of "Long live the Emperor!", he committed seppuku.

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*GO MISHIMA*





Go Mishima, *Untitled*, n.d.  
Ink on paper  
550 x 380 mm; Frame 750 x 580 x 35 mm



Go Mishima, *Untitled*, n.d.  
Ink on paper  
550 x 380 mm; Frame 750 x 580 x 35 mm

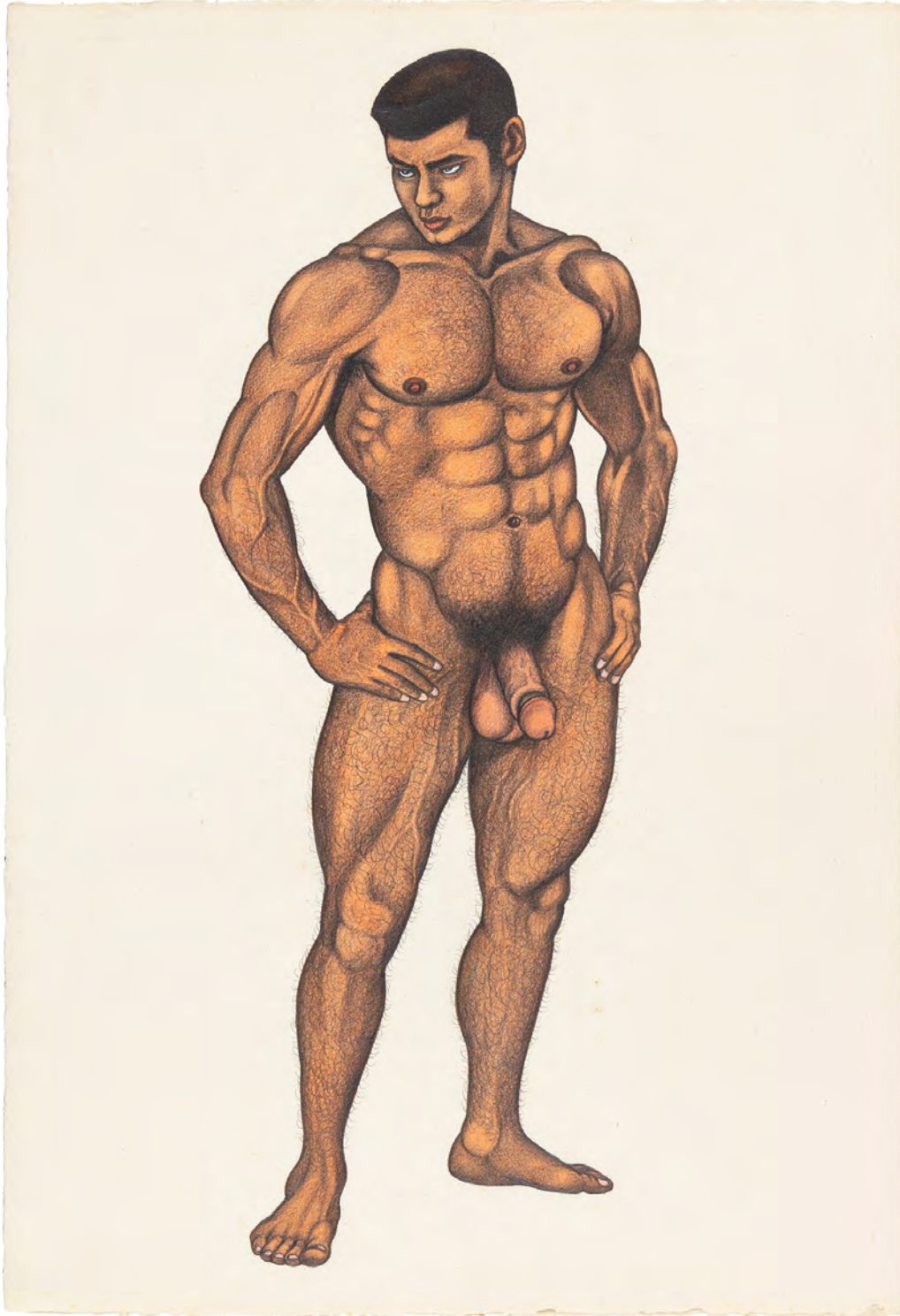


Go Mishima, *Untitled*, n.d.  
Ink on paper  
550 x 380 mm; Frame 750 x 580 x 35 mm





Go Mishima, *Untitled*, n.d.  
Ink on paper  
380 x 550 mm; Frame 580 x 750 x 35 mm



Go Mishima, *Untitled*, n.d.  
Ink on paper  
550 x 380 mm; Frame 750 x 580 x 35 mm





Go Mishima, *Untitled* , n.d.  
Ink on paper  
550 x 380 mm; Frame 750 x 580 x 35 mm



Go Mishima, *Untitled*, n.d.  
Ink on paper  
380 x 550 mm; Frame 580 x 750 x 35 mm

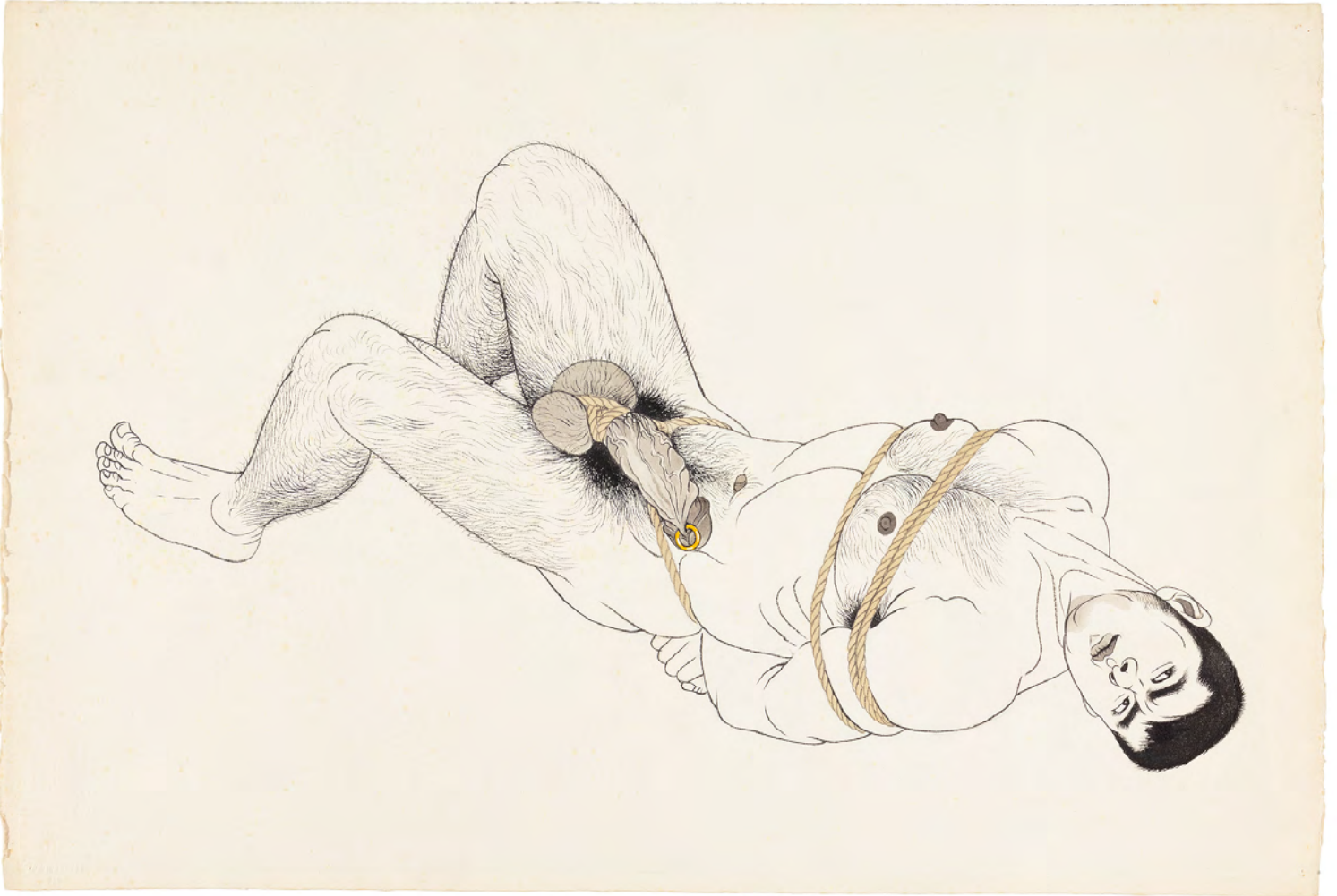


Go Mishima, *Untitled*, n.d.  
Ink on paper  
550 x 380 mm; Frame 750 x 580 x 35 mm





Go Mishima, *Untitled*, n.d.  
Ink on paper  
380 x 550 mm; Frame 580 x 750 x 35 mm



Go Mishima, *Untitled*, n.d.  
Ink on paper  
380 x 550 mm; Frame 580 x 750 x 35 mm



Go Mishima, *Untitled* , n.d.  
Ink on paper  
332 x 235 mm; Frame 465 x 370 x 35 mm





Go Mishima, *Untitled* , n.d.  
Ink on paper  
347 x 250 mm; Frame 465 x 370 x 35 mm

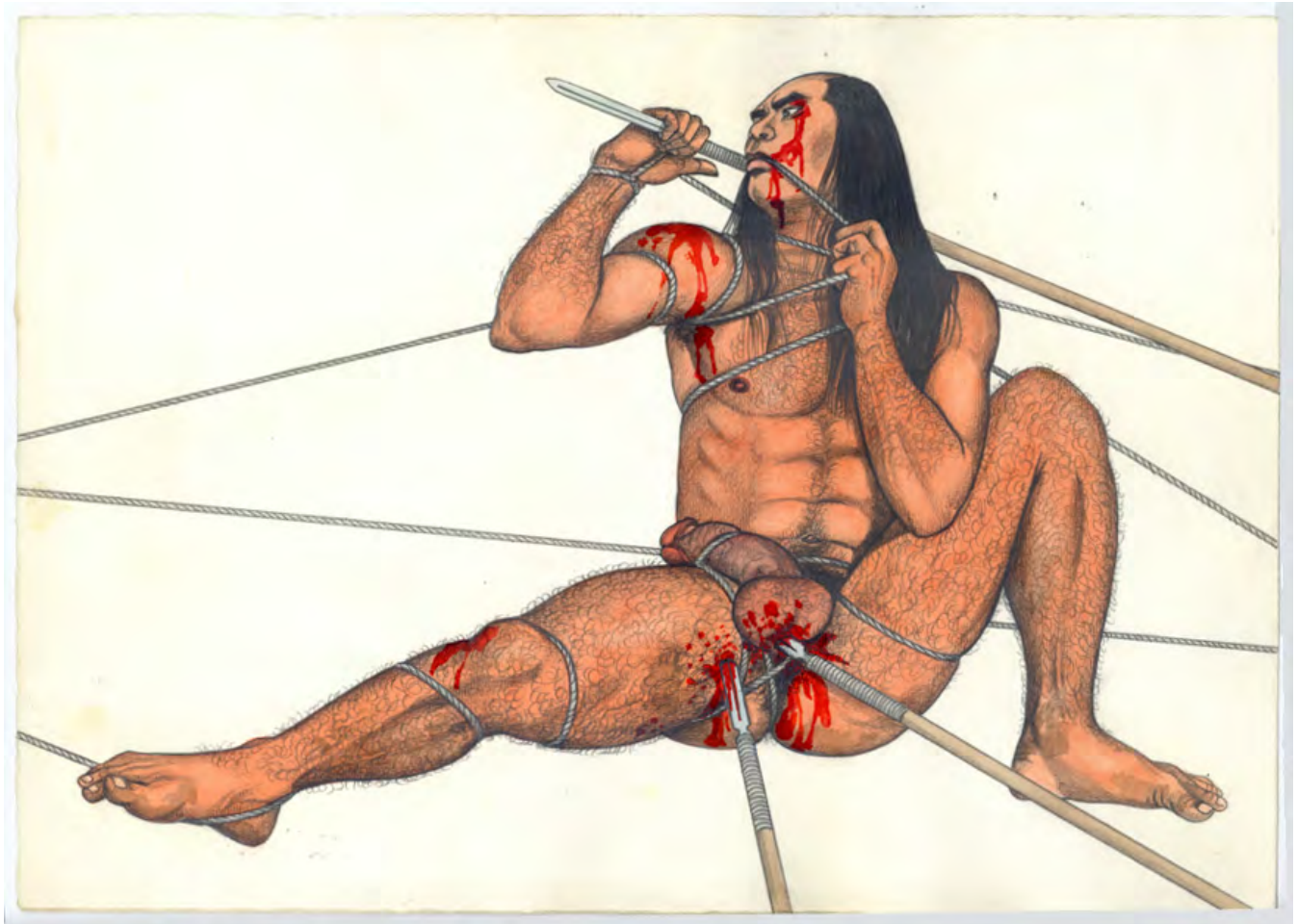


Go Mishima, *Untitled* , n.d.  
Ink on paper  
324 x 224 mm; Frame 465 x 370 x 35 mm



Go Mishima, *Untitled*, n.d.  
Ink on paper  
341 x 240 mm; Frame 465 x 370 x 35 mm



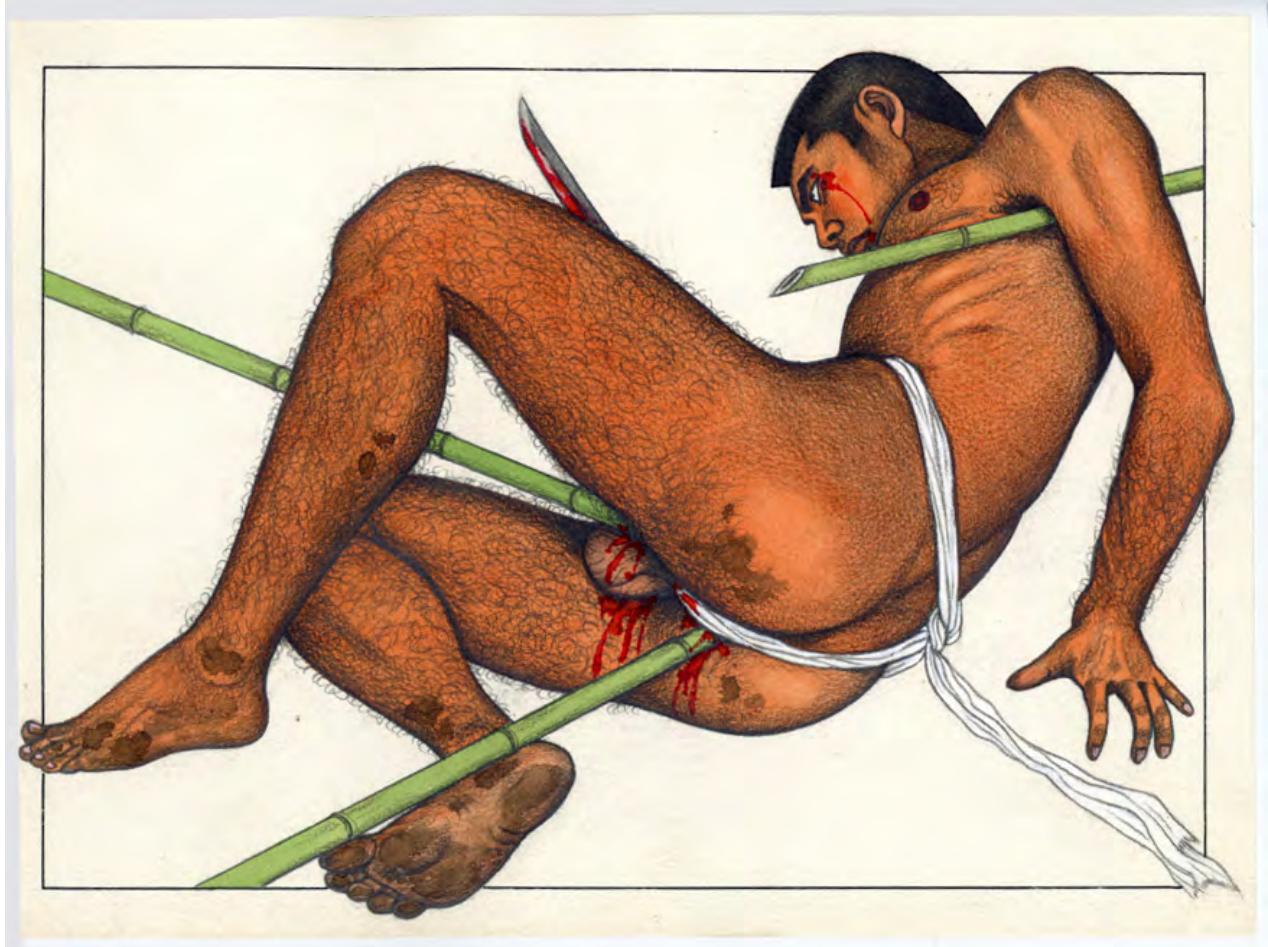


Go Mishima, *Untitled*, n.d.  
Ink on paper  
250 x 350 mm; Frame 370 x 465 x 35 mm

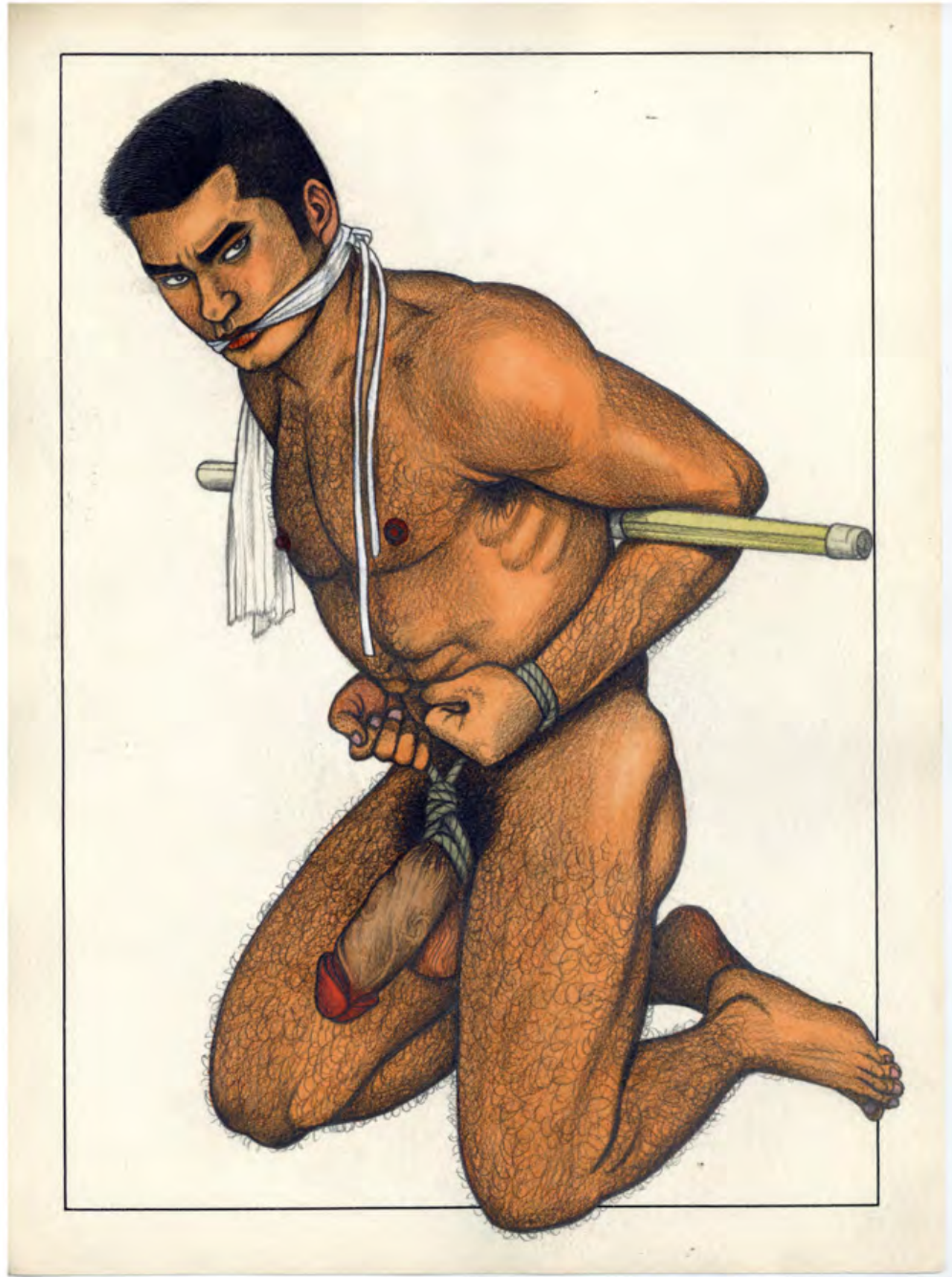


Go Mishima, *Untitled*, n.d.  
Ink on paper  
246 x 350 mm; Frame 370 x 465 x 35 mm





Go Mishima, *Untitled*, n.d.  
Ink on paper  
262 x 357 mm; Frame 370 x 465 x 35 mm



Go Mishima, *Untitled*, n.d.  
Ink on paper  
370 x 270 mm; Frame 465 x 370 x 35 mm



Go Mishima, *Untitled*, n.d.  
Ink on paper  
350 x 250 mm; Frame 465 x 370 x 35 mm





Go Mishima, *Untitled*, n.d.  
Ink on paper  
350 x 250 mm; Frame 465 x 370 x 35 mm

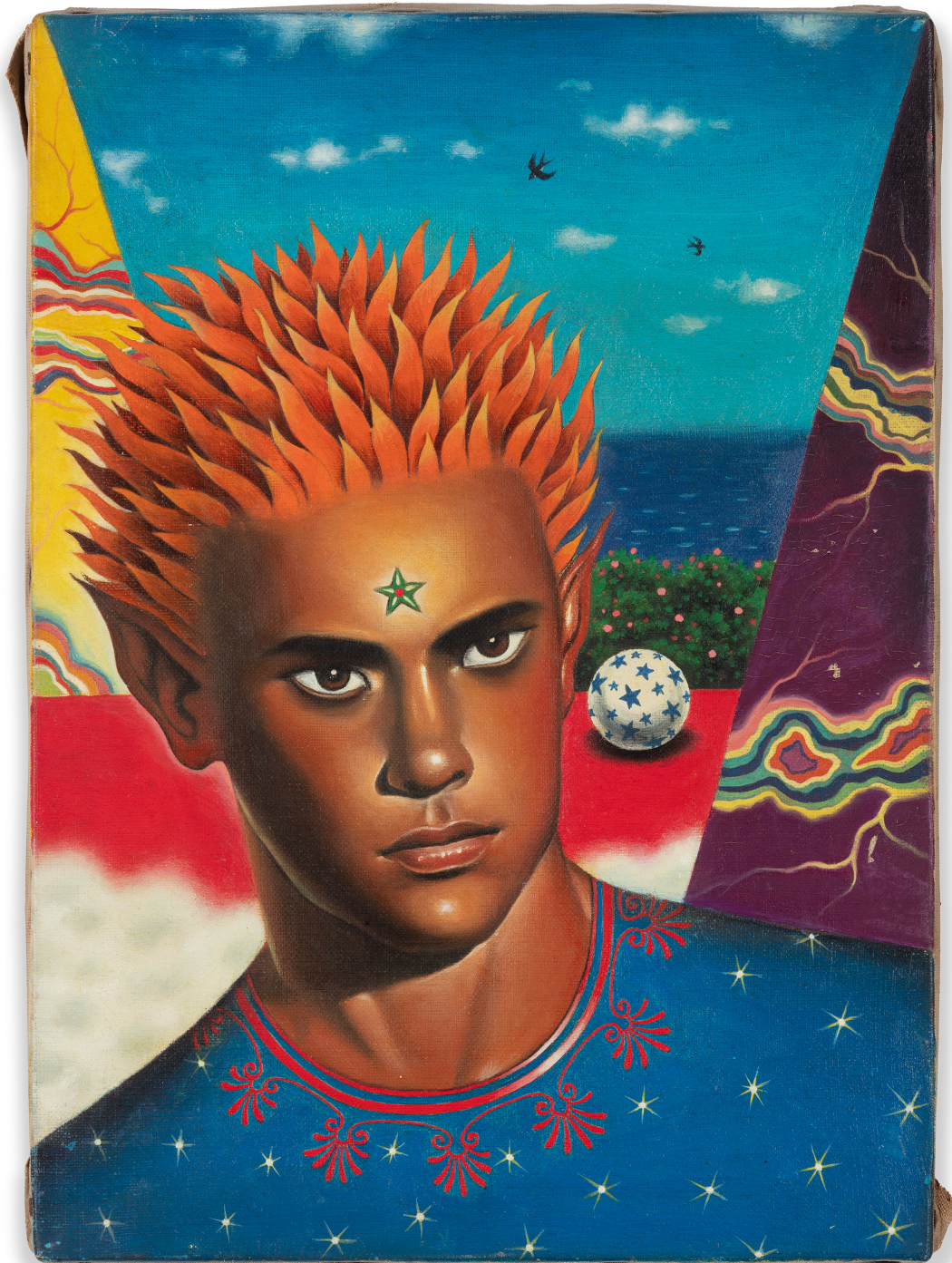


Go Mishima, *Untitled*, n.d.  
Ink on paper  
350 x 250 mm; Frame 370 x 465 x 35 mm

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*SADAO HASEGAWA*





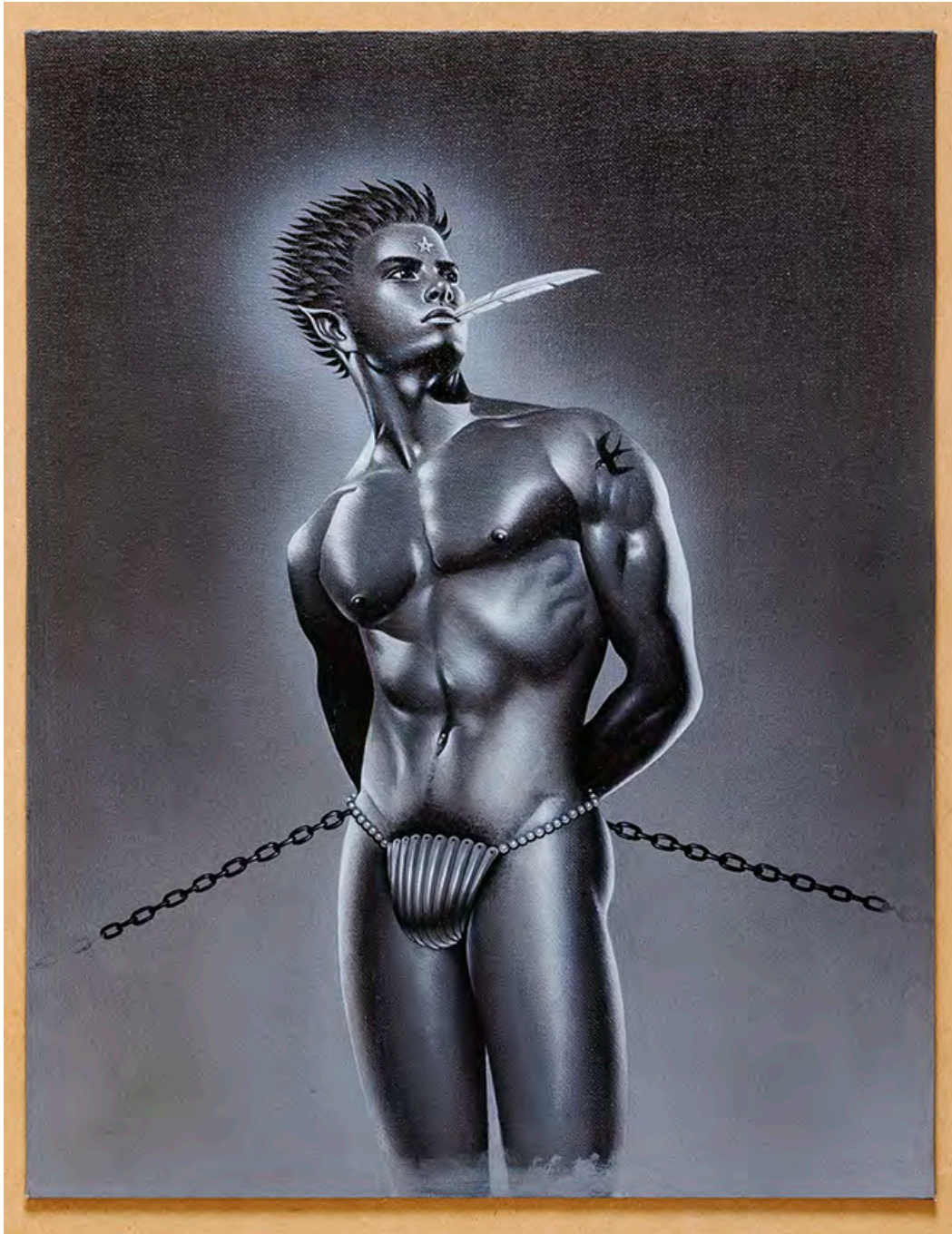
Sadao Hasegawa, *Untitled*, n.d.  
Acrylic on canvas  
335 x 240 mm



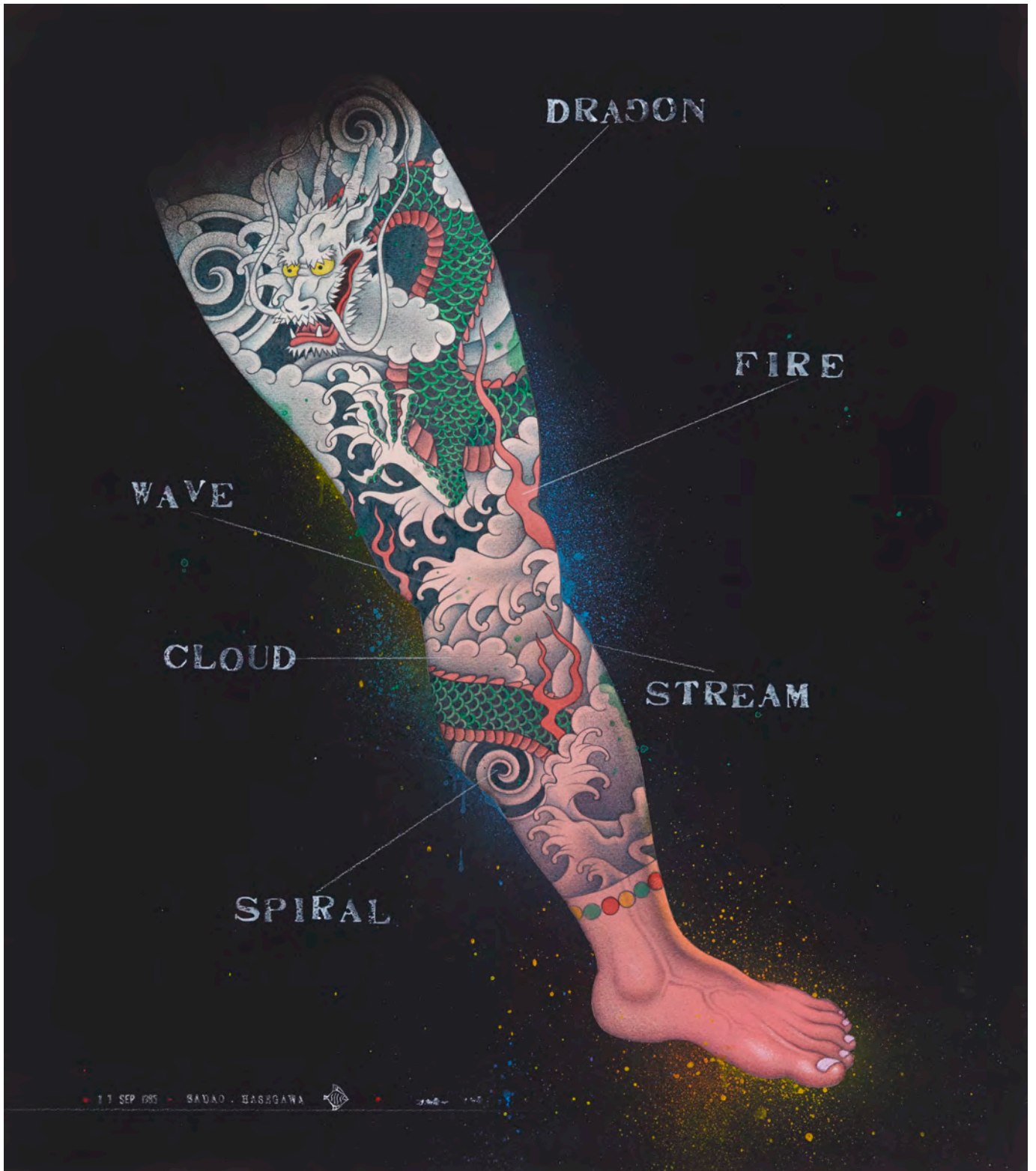


Sadao Hasegawa, *Untitled*, 1996  
Pencil and ink on paper  
236 x 325 mm



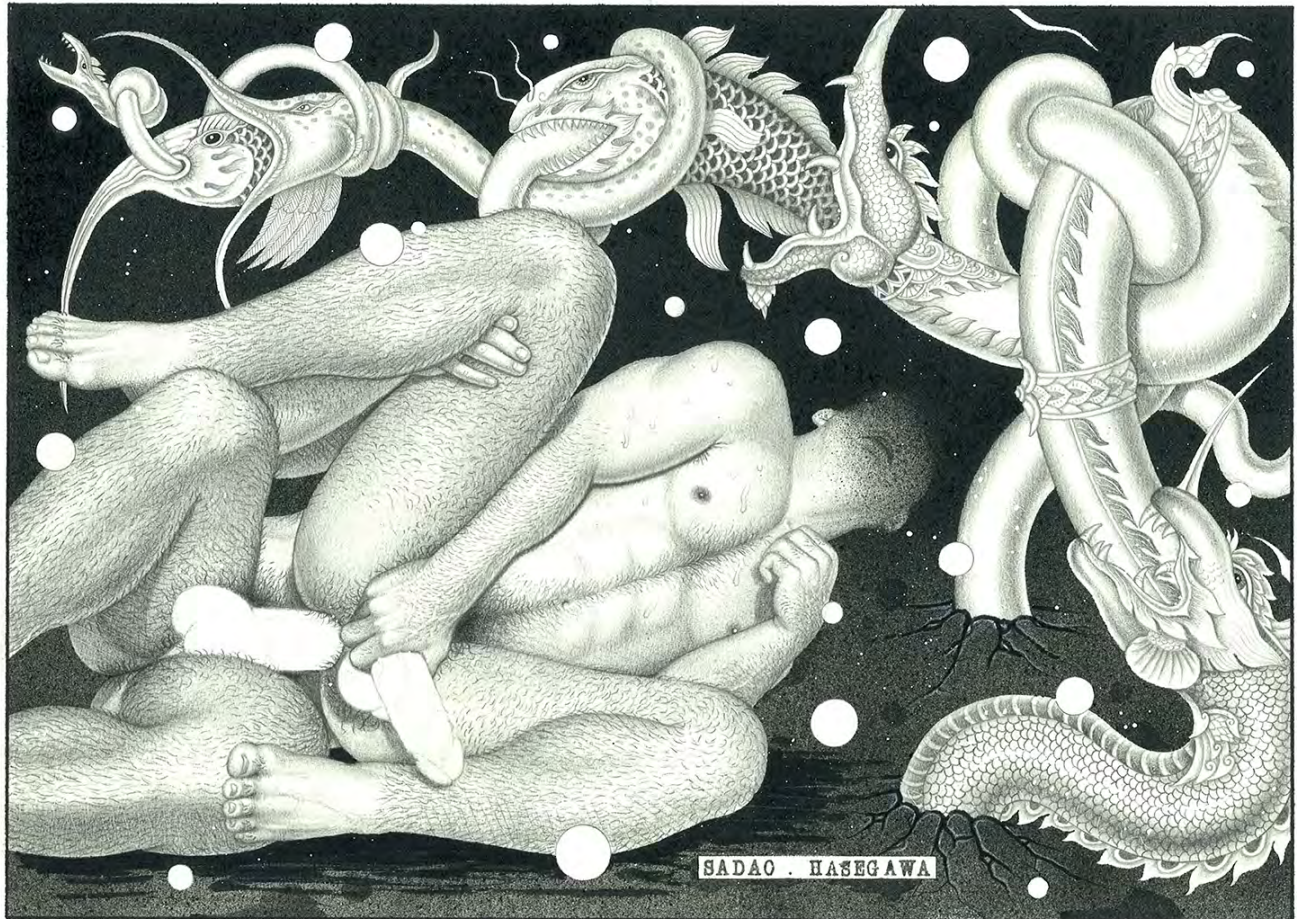


Sadao Hasegawa, *Untitled*, n.d.  
Acrylic on canvas mounted on board  
410 x 320 mm



Sadao Hasegawa, *Untitled*, 1985  
Pencil and ink on paper  
540 x 475 mm; Frame 595 x 530 x 10 mm

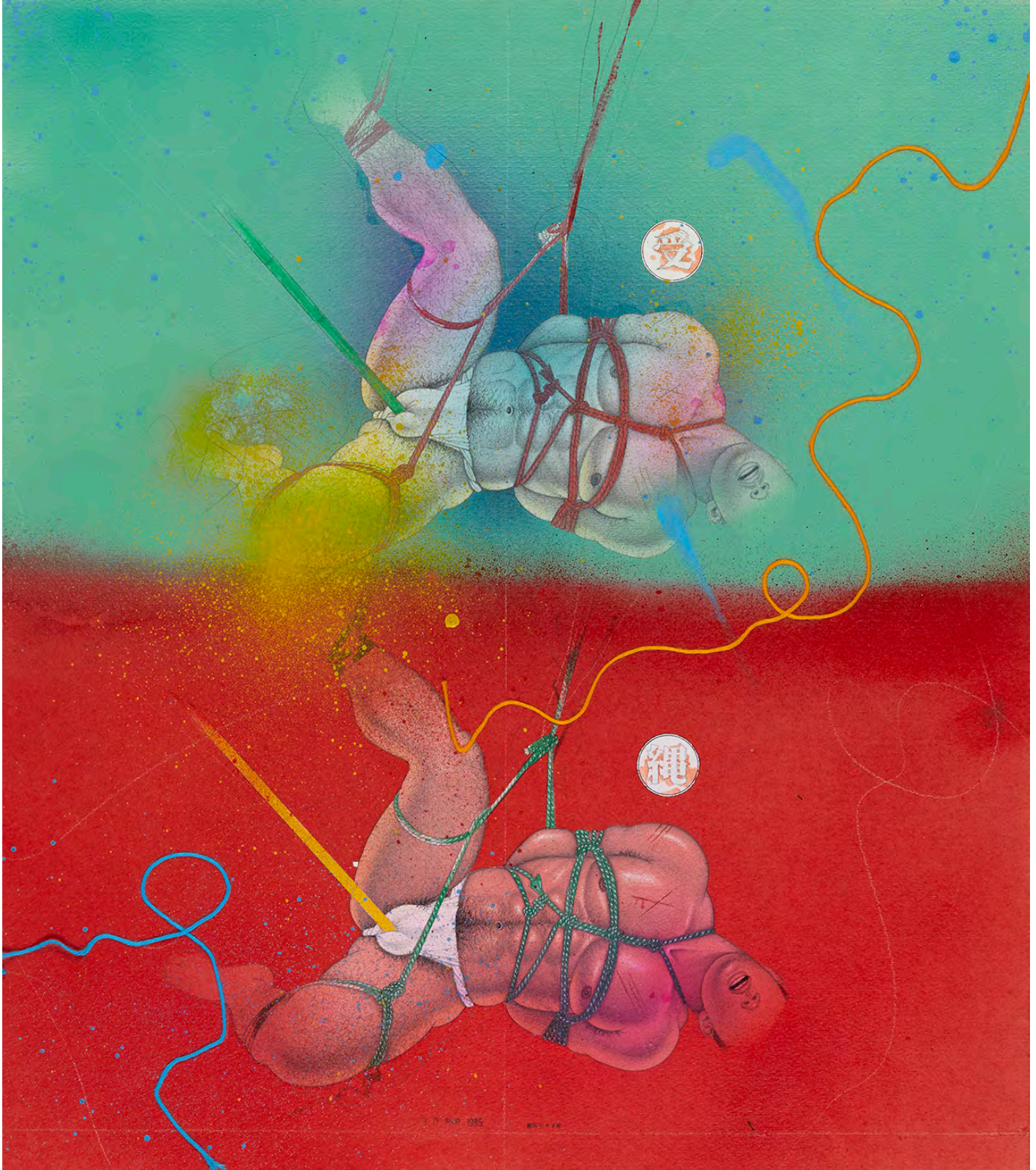




1997 15/4

Sadao Hasegawa, *Untitled*, 1997  
Pencil and ink on paper  
235 x 321 mm





Sadao Hasegawa, *Untitled*, 1985  
Pencil and ink on paper  
540 x 475 mm; Frame 595 x 530 x 10 mm





Sadao Hasegawa, *Untitled*, 1998  
Pencil and ink on paper  
235 x 225 mm





Sadao Hasegawa, *Untitled*, n.d.  
Acrylic on canvas  
455 x 335 mm





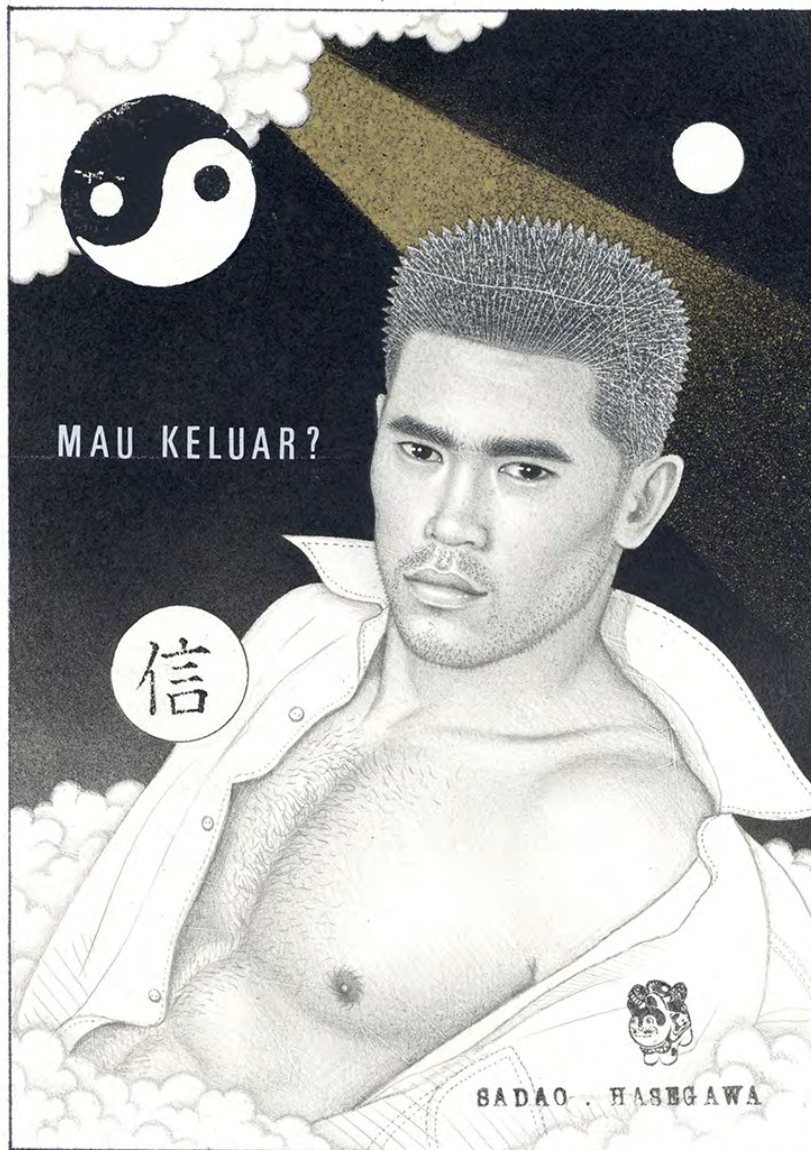
Sadao Hasegawa, *Untitled*, 1998  
Pencil and ink on paper  
237 x 322 mm





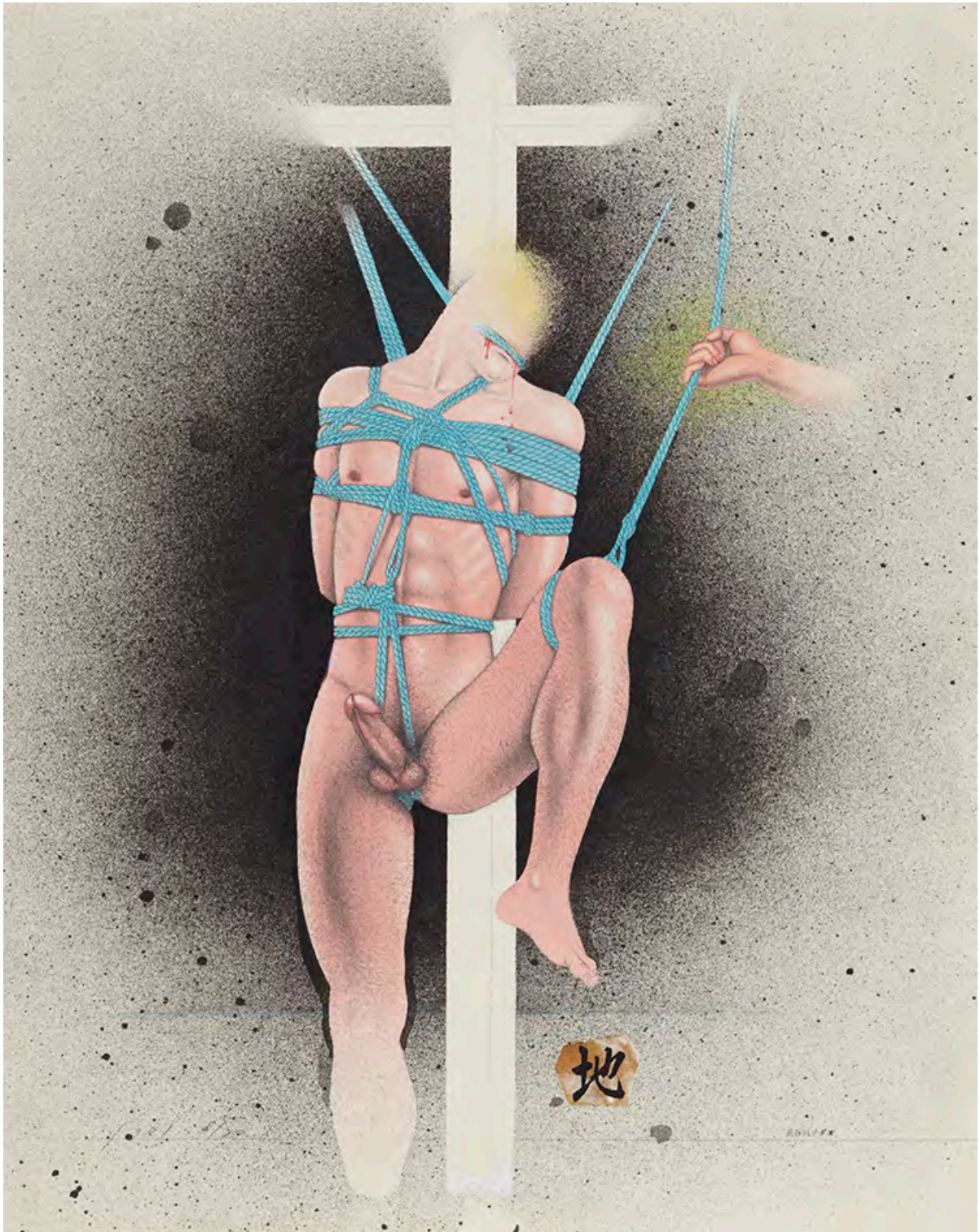
Sadao Hasegawa, *Untitled*, 1985  
Pencil and ink on paper  
540 x 475 mm; Frame 595 x 530 x 10 mm





Sadao Hasegawa, *Untitled*, n.d.  
Pencil and ink on paper  
235 x 172 mm





Sadao Hasegawa, *Untitled*, 1981  
Pencil and ink on paper  
Tryptich  
410 x 330 mm each; Frame 465 x 385 x 10 mm each



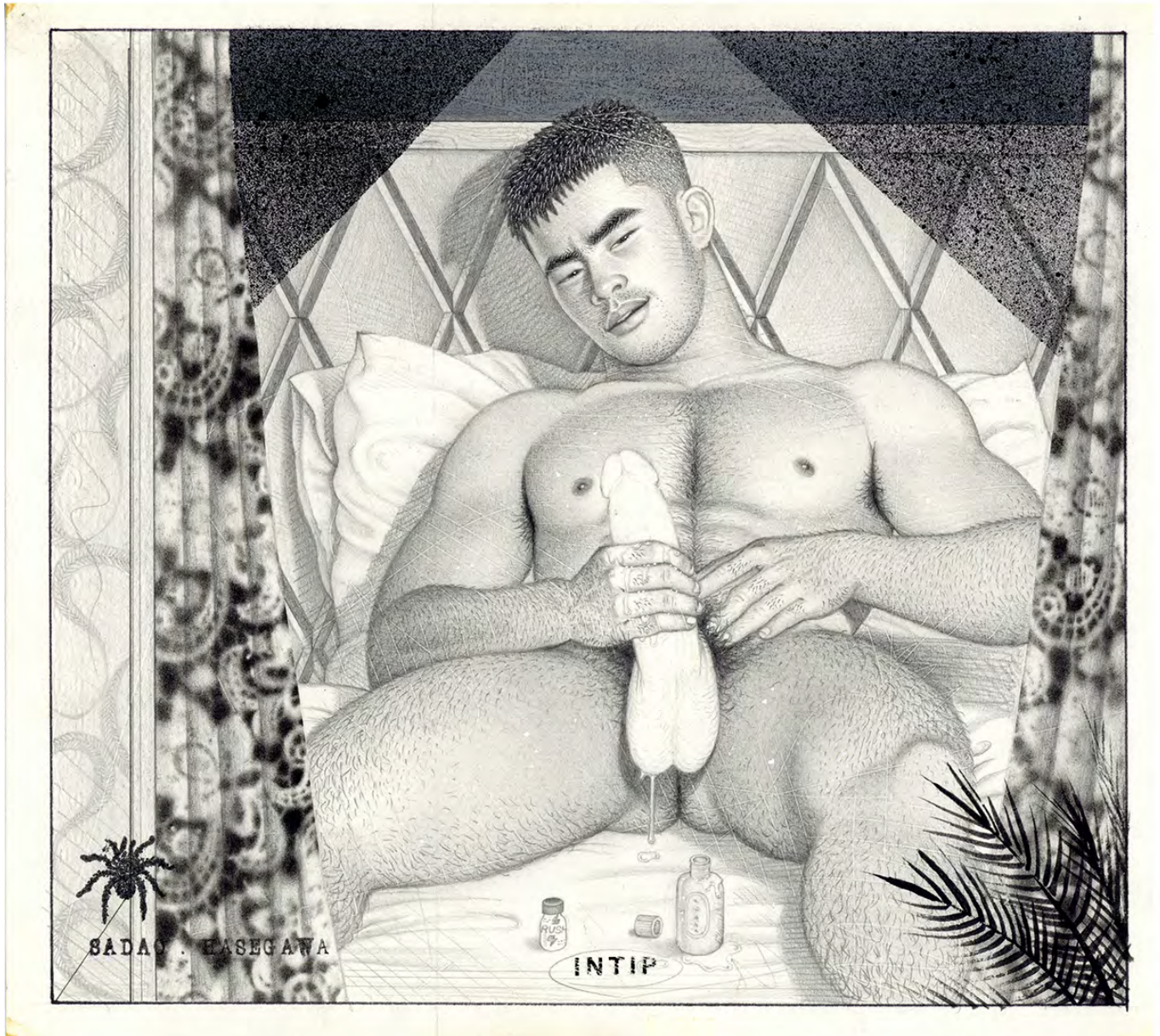






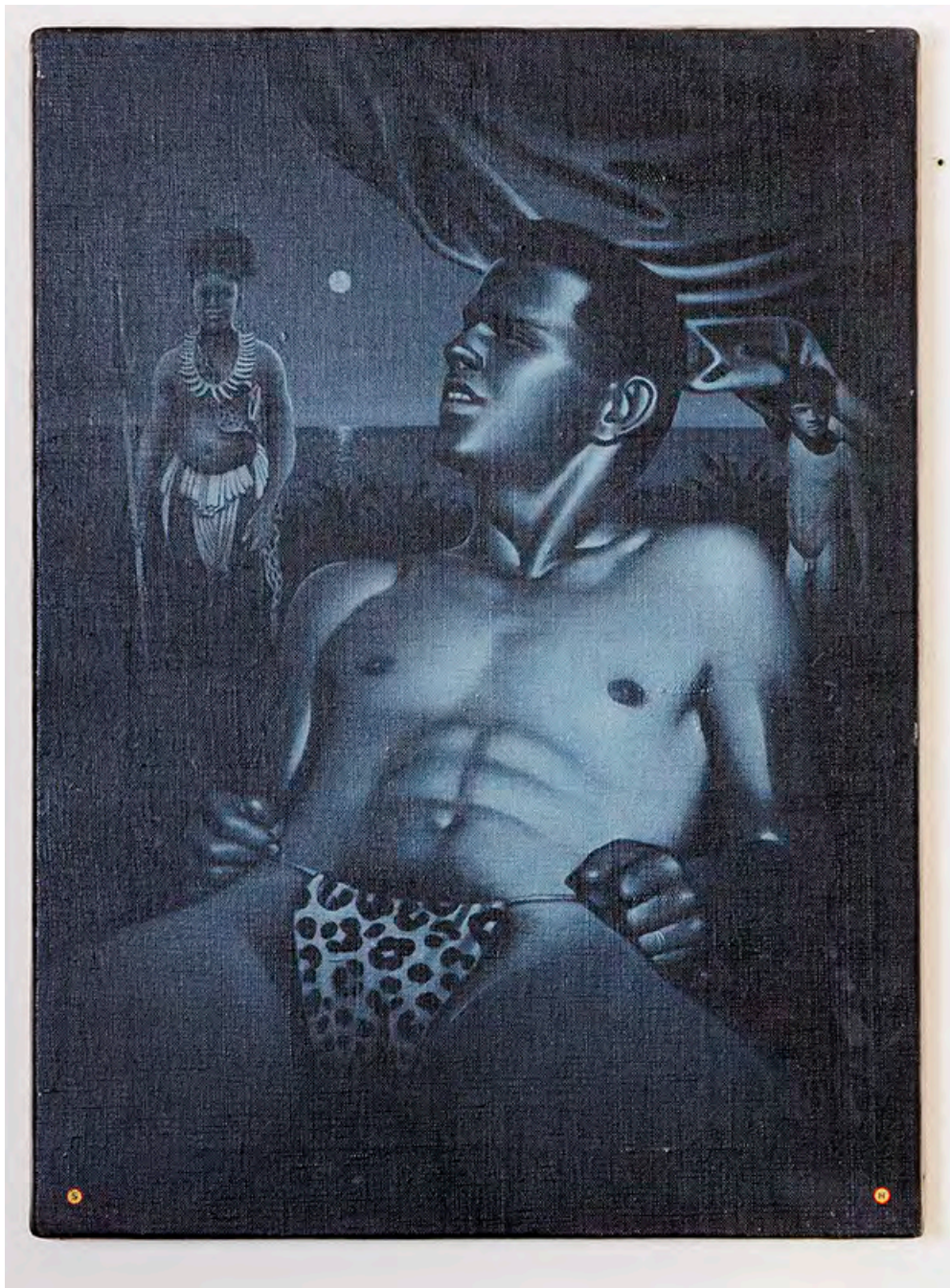






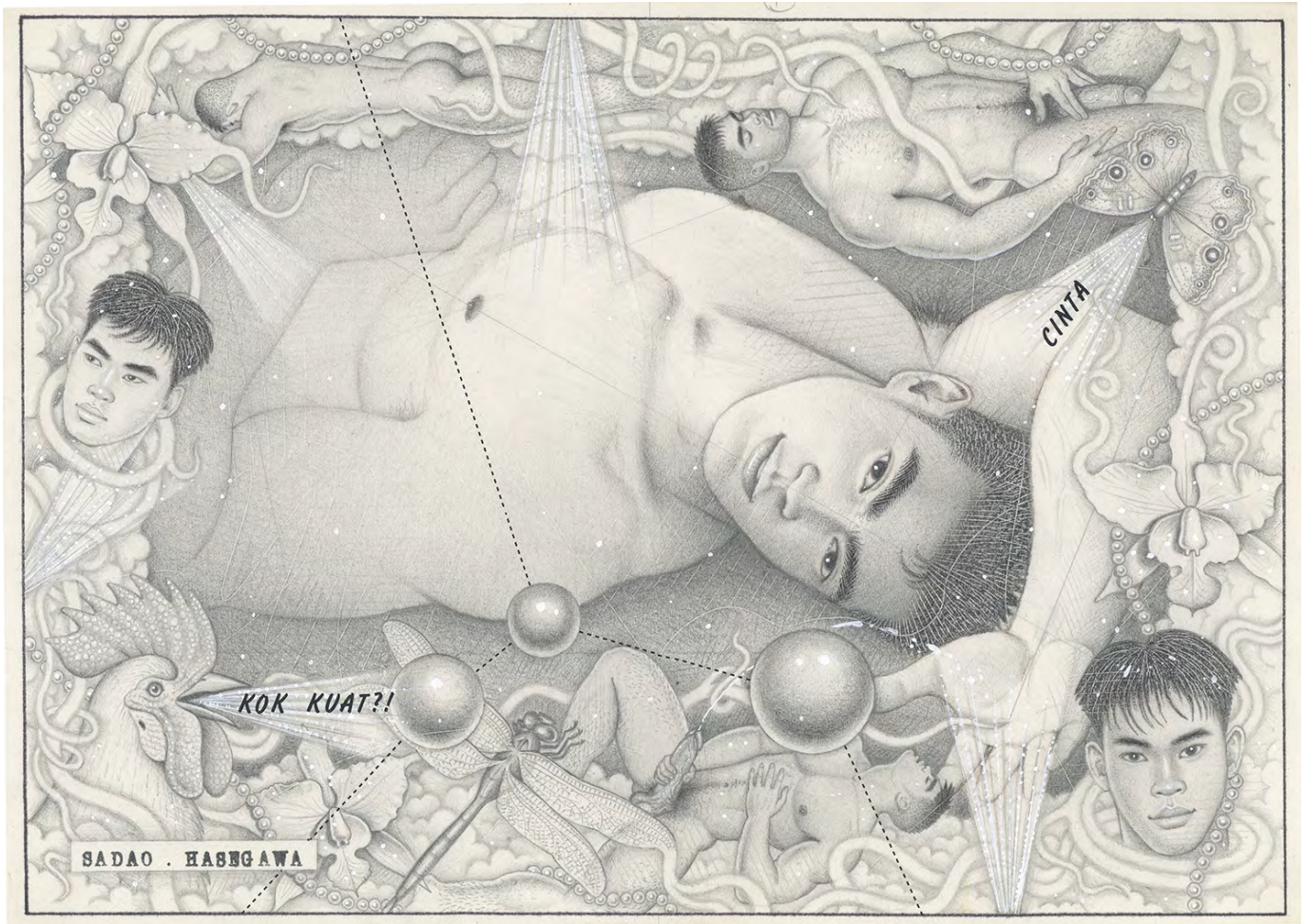
Sadao Hasegawa, *Untitled*, n.d.  
Pencil and ink on paper  
236 x 260 mm





Sadao Hasegawa, *Untitled*, n.d.  
Acrylic on canvas  
455 x 355 mm





Sadao Hasegawa, *Untitled*, n.d.  
Pencil and ink on paper  
235 x 325 mm; Frame





Sadao Hasegawa, *Untitled*, n.d.  
Acrylic on canvas  
455 x 335 mm

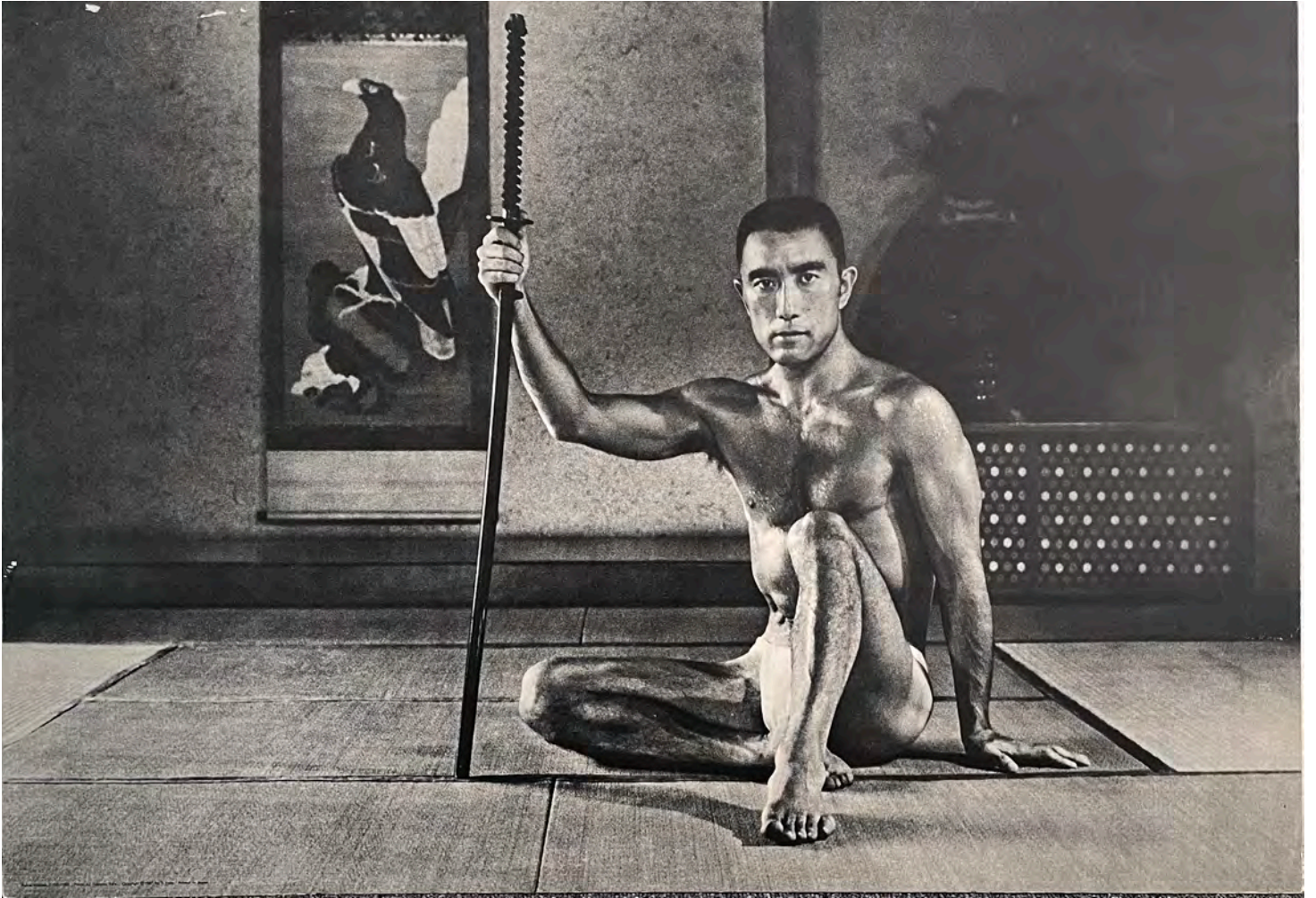
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*TAMOTSU YATŌ*



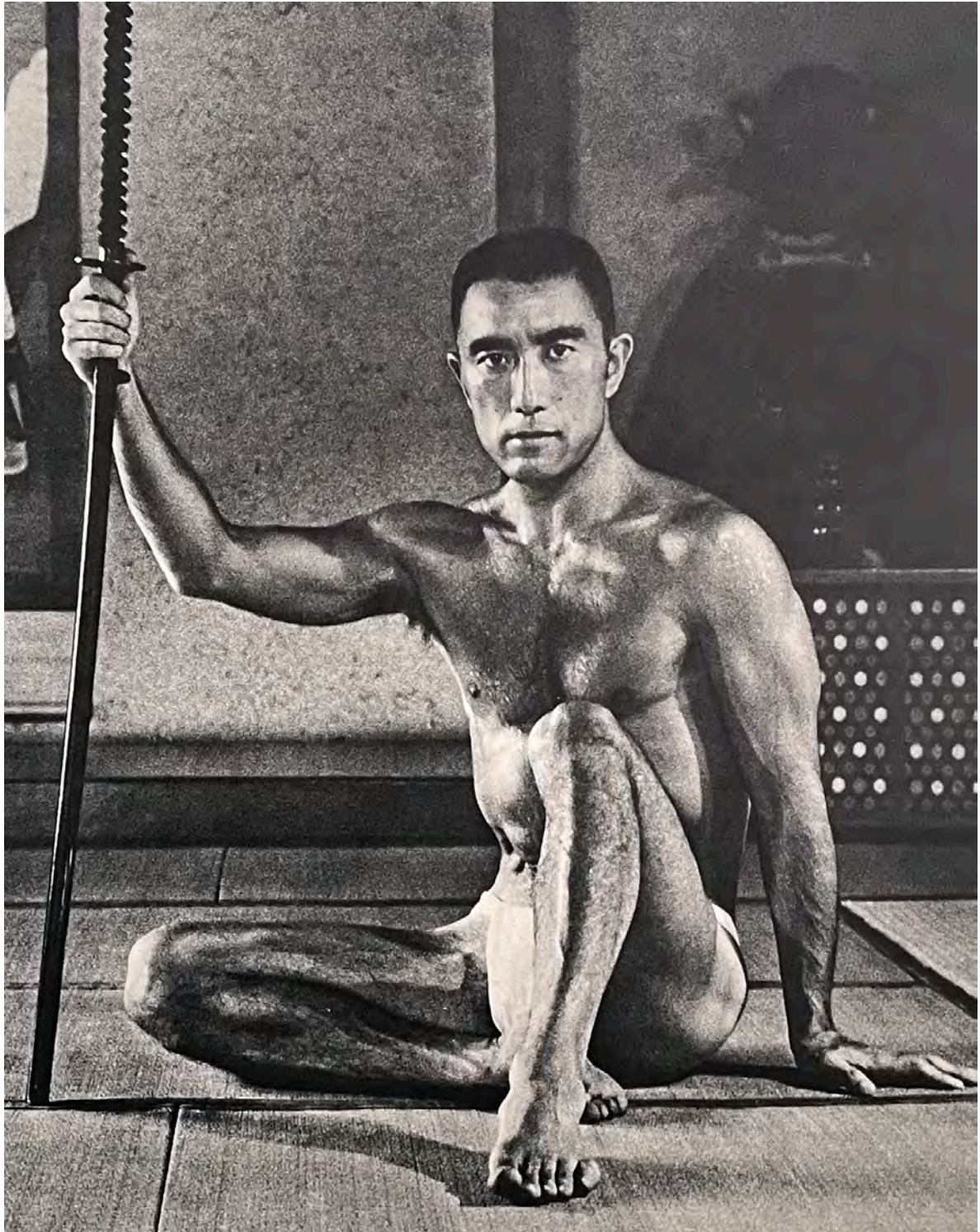


Tamotsu Yato, *Untitled*, n.d.  
7 Gelatin prints  
Frame 372 x 803 x 30 mm



Tamotsu Yato, *Yukio Mishima*, 1967  
Poster print on board  
1028 x 716 mm





Tamotsu Yato *Yukio Mishima* , 1967

Poster print on wood

515 x 650 x 230 mm

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