

SHISEIDO Ultimune  
"With One Another. Without Limits. Our Future Is Beautiful.", Poster, 2020  
Photo: Sebastian Kim, Model: Beverly Maeda



With One Another.  
Without Limits.  
Our Future Is Beautiful.

Empowered by Ultimune Power Infusing Concentrate.

Confidence, colour: red

## Confidence, colour: red

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K: This is quite an open description. Only two words. This gives us a lot of freedom of interpretation.

A: The descriptions we were given for the *Remodeling project* around 2016 were often more generic, weren't they? 'Beautiful woman, attractive, sexy' or 'Girl, sensual, black and white, natural hair, pretty, young, naked', and things like that. I found them quite clichéd.

K: It shows that models are generally seen like that. The meaning of the words 'beautiful woman, attractive, sexy' is very personal though. Could 'beautiful lady, attractive, sexy' also mean confident?

A: Hm. Yes, I think so. For me, confidence stands for being strong and independent. In museums, you see many paintings of semi-naked women posing. Some feel very posed, while others are expressive and strong. I think you could describe most of those nudes with the words 'beautiful woman, attractive, sexy.'

K: Yes, there's a fine line between 'naked' and 'nudity'. The line where 'being naked' becomes 'being a nude' in art. I read in an article that the nude is always in danger of being 'soft porn for the elite'.

A: I believe in respecting freedom of expression, but at the same time, there are many images in art museums that are close to pornographic. I guess that's partly because most of the time, the artists or photographers were men painting or photographing women?

K: As models, women have been always been the subject of the gaze. Both before and after the advent of photography.

A: That's true. The act of observing and looking represents a certain power. The observer is superior to the subject of the gaze. When I take a portrait, I try not to

be too dominant over the model. Because of the situation, the person behind the camera can easily ask the model to "pose in a certain way", but I try not to overdo it. For me, taking a picture is a collaboration. I enjoy going through that process together. I need the model in order to create a portrait, so the model is as important as I am.

K: That is an important balance.

A: Speaking of looking and being looked at, do you think people wear make-up because they are being observed?

K: Yes, I think so. It shows how you want to present yourself to others. It's related to your identity – as an individual, and also in your relationships with others, your place in society. I remember when we were kids, my sister and me played around putting on my mother's red lipstick. I felt as if I became an adult when I put it on. I guess I'd learned that adults used make-up and I wanted to try it as well.

A: Red lipstick. Red is also in the description. Red is a bold colour. You wouldn't wear red clothing or red lipstick if you didn't want to stand out, right?

K: Yes, we can use red for both clothing and lipstick. Which says confidence more? Wearing red lipstick to attract people's attention? Or not wearing red lipstick because you are confident enough without it?

A: I think both suggest confidence? Let's choose one after the photoshoot.





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Red, Passion, Pride, Positive, Progress, Healthy, Strength



# Red, Passion, Pride, Positive, Progress, Healthy, Strength

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K: What do you think of this description? Do you have any particular associations with any of these words?

A: Well, in the context of Amsterdam, pride makes me think of Gay Pride. What do you think?

K: You're right, the English word 'pride' has become associated with 'Gay Pride' here. Also 'Transsexual pride', and 'Women with pride'. It's used for people who feel their rights aren't treated equally. In Japanese, the English word pride often has a negative meaning, such as "having a lot of pride" or "wounding pride", but originally the word is about honouring and having respect for oneself. The Gay Pride flag is a rainbow. I think that's also a symbol of respect for individuality and diversity. What about the other words? passion, progress, and so on...

A: Well, for me, passion lies in the energy of the model. You feel it through a person's body language and the expression of their eyes. So, we can think about body language. How do you show passion with body language?

K: The model looks straight into the camera.

A: But if you capture someone standing in a strong posture looking away from the camera, that might also look passionate.

K: That's true. Then how about the pose? What is a 'passionate pose'?

A: I think people sitting on a chair with their legs spread expresses a certain strength. Also open arms signify passion. Feet on the ground also says strength? And then in terms of the opposite, covering the face with hair, or putting hands in front of your face reduces a sense of both passion and strength.

K: How about progress?

A: The photo could be a frozen moment from a particular movement. A moment cut out from a process. We've got the word healthy, so we could think about a sporting situation.

K: Yeah. Who could be a model?

A: I can imagine Mariko or Salome working well?

K: Good idea. Both have a strong look, and at the same time give a calm and confident impression. Both have black hair. Salome has dark skin and curly hair. Mariko has western features, and her hair is straight.

A: Huh? That is funny. For me as a German, with her almond eyes and black straight hair, Mariko looks Asian. Also her cheekbones I guess make her Asian-looking for me. For you as a Japanese person, she has western features. Interesting.

K: I guess we hold things up to our social and cultural background. For better or for worse, that influences the way we look at people.



# The Right Half

Coming across her photograph was a total coincidence. Paying a visit to my parents' house for the first time in ages, I was clearing the desk in my old room, which now functioned more or less as a storage cupboard. As I opened up a drawer of the desk, I noticed something flutter down, and then there was her face staring up at me from the floor – the last face I'd expected to see there. A face I had last seen 30 years ago, which I scarcely brought to mind any more.

Her name was Cynthia, or Cindy for short. It was her voice that had first drawn me to her. It had to it a richness that echoed in the belly, a mysterious quality like travelling down to the bottom of the ocean. And then, after we got to know one another, there was the magnetism of her skin. Yes, her skin had a forceful energy to it, as if there were invisible suction pads all over her body. Embracing her, I experienced the exultation of transforming into a different kind of creature entirely.

Back then, it was the very height of Japan's bubble era, and the media was kept on its toes by news of Japanese firms buying up the Rockefeller Center in New York, or Van Gogh's *Sunflowers* painting at auction. Cindy taught English at a language school in the day, and worked at a karaoke bar at night, where non-Japanese people from the area would congregate. At that time, Tokyo was a place where people from English-speaking nations could make a killing in a short time.

When the expiry date on Cindy's visa was drawing near and the time for her to return home approaching, I thought about going with her to London. It was my final year of university, but I felt that getting a job straight after graduating was boring, and so I said to myself that the important thing was first to glimpse life outside of Japan. I realize now that my ability to entertain naïve impulses with such ease was testament to Japan's state of prosperity.

I was sure that Cindy would welcome the idea of me accompanying her—so convinced was I, in fact, that it never once occurred to me to think otherwise. Yet when I confidently informed her of my plans, her behaviour immediately altered. Her attitude grew cooler, she began to tell me more frequently that she was busy, and one day, she vanished from me entirely.

At the time, I had no idea what was going on. Like a plastic suction pad that had suddenly come unstuck, I felt totally at a loss. I wondered if I'd done something to offend her, but I couldn't think of one single thing it might have been. I was in such shock that it took me a good while to admit to myself that it had just been a fleeting relationship, of the kind that were ten-a-penny around me.

The photograph was a promotional shot from her modelling agency. I could keep it, she'd said as she gave it to me, because she'd had a bunch of them printed. In it, her right eyebrow was raised. This was an expression that she often made. She would jut out her right shoulder at a slant and look at me over it, her chin slightly cocked. 'You should go further, you mustn't hold yourself back like that'—I remember her saying those words

to me on several occasions. I had no awareness of holding myself back, as such—I just didn't know how to let myself out. Yet when she would say such things to me with that bold directness of hers, which suggested she could at any moment yank up her anchor and set sail on the seas of life, I felt something deep within me rising up, as if in response. If I didn't have any of the kinds of abilities that could be awakened by a provocation like that, unfaltering as the straightest arrow, her words did at least generate in me a kind of thrill.

Now, staring at the photograph, I felt something niggling at me. I tried turning it so it was straight, tilting it at an angle, and then, eventually, put my palm over her face, concealing the right side. After repeatedly lifting up my palm up, then replacing it, I realized what the issue was. The left and the right-hand sides of her face gave a quite different impression. There, concealed in the left half, was a different person to the one who appeared in the right.

It came to me that back when we were together, there had been a moment when I'd had a similar feeling. I'd gone to meet her after work, and after having a quick dinner together, we'd popped into a bar, where for some reason I sat to the left of her. At that time, whether we were on the train, alongside one another at a bar counter, sitting on the sofa watching videos, or lying together in bed, I was always positioned to her right. I was hard of hearing in my right ear, and so whomever I was with, I was accustomed to positioning myself so that my better ear was closer to the person I was speaking to. In the bar, sitting on the other side of her to usual, I noticed that her profile looked different. Was this really how she looked? Had she not swapped places with another woman I didn't know? The burst of anxiety that surfaced in at that moment took me by surprise. Cindy wore a tired expression that day, and didn't speak much, just took two or three sips of her scotch and then fell into silence. With our conversation at a standstill, we'd left the bar after one drink, but now, gazing down at the left side of her face in the photograph, the strange sensation I'd felt on that occasion returned to me.

It struck me that, concealed in the left side of her face was the essence of a Cindy whose existence I'd been totally unaware of back then. There was no doubting that she was a friendly, sociable, cheerful person, but that didn't mean she was a pushover. Her way of seeing things was as mature as her rich voice, and when she'd made up her mind about something, she showed no mercy. The left half of her face took on an expression best described as a kind of rational cool-headedness. Back then, I had my head in the clouds, and the extent of my naivety was somewhat tedious. In fact, I was much like Japan itself in those days: sweet, but with no real bite, like the flimsy-thin wafers you'd find perched on top of the ice-cream served after dinner. It was really no wonder that she got bored of me. Now, the photograph from thirty years past whispered in my ear: I had been looking only at the right side of her face, and worshipping only that half. The photograph itself remained as it had always been—it was me who had changed.