



Taka Ishii Gallery

Photography / Film

Minoru Hirata “Sentimental Tokyo 1949-1970”

Dates: Mar 9 – Apr 27, 2019

Location: Taka Ishii Gallery Photography / Film

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Taka Ishii Gallery Photography / Film is pleased to announce “Sentimental Tokyo 1949-1970,” an exhibition of works by Minoru Hirata, from March 9 to April 27, 2019. Hirata’s second solo exhibition with the gallery will present approximately 26 photographs of Tokyo’s urban landscape and inhabitants on the street. These images, selected from the titular series, capture the changing social realities of the city between the immediate postwar period and the era of rapid economic growth.

When the photographer assembled this series *Sentimental Tokyo 1949-1970* in 2014, he recalled,

I took my very first photograph with a folding camera I borrowed from a friend of mine. It was in 1949. The image I shot was a ruin of the German Embassy in Nagatachō (where the National Diet Library stands today), burned down by an air raid on Tokyo during WWII. Subsequently, I acquired a Ricohflex, known as the first camera domestically produced in postwar Japan. I took it with me, hanging it from my shoulder, as I roamed the city of Tokyo from the 1950s to the 1970s.

Back then, Tokyo was dirty and dark, scarred by the war’s damages. Yet the people I found there were going about their business on the peaceful streets, with their faces illuminated by their hopeful aspiration for the future.

The primary area I walked around was Ginza 4-chōme, the epicenter of the capital. I also explored the areas along the Sumida River, from Tsukishima to Tsukudashima, including the famed Tsukuda ferryboat. From there, I trekked to Shinjuku, covering the districts around Shinjuku Station’s West, South, and East Entrances. Residential zones I explored extend from Shibuya along Tōyoko Line that connects the streets of Jiyūgaoka, Gakugeidai, and Okusawa, among other neighborhoods. I trained my lens on the people in Tokyo and the ways they lived their lives, which have since faded into a sentimental land of loving memories.

(Translated by Reiko Tomii)

Minoru Hirata began working as a freelance photojournalist in the 1950s, when realism emerged in Japanese photography. Since then, he consistently shot Tokyo, its manners and scenes, and its people. In the immediate postwar period, people were shining the shoes of soldiers of the occupation forces and selling goods on the street. While confronting this social reality, Hirata also captured Tokyoites’ remarkable resilience and strength and saw that they constituted a city filled with hope for the future. He trained his compassionate gaze at wide-eyed children at *kamishibai* street theater performances and local festivals; *chindonya* marching bands; and portable shrines carried by women. His works capture nostalgic scenes and customs that would soon be transformed or disappear altogether and vividly convey the emotions of the era.

In the 1960s, Hirata made photographs that documented the intensity of avant-garde performance works. In these works, he aimed for cohabitation with his subjects to go beyond being a mere recorder of events. Later, in the 1970s, he would return to Tokyo’s urban landscape. In Shinjuku, where skyscrapers were being constructed for urban development, he photographed the city and its inhabitants as they went through rapid changes. These images were combined with his photographs from the 1950s to create the *Sentimental Tokyo 1949-1970* series.

A catalogue will be published in conjunction with the exhibition.

【Publication details】

Minoru Hirata, *Sentimental Tokyo 1949-1970*, published by Taka Ishii Gallery Photography / Film (2019)

Retail price: ¥ 3,700- (tax excl.)

Soft cover, total 72 pages, 38 illustrations, H 21 x W 14.8 cm

Text by Minoru Hirata and essay by Shuhei Hosoya (English and Japanese)

This exhibition is made possible with support from HM Archive and Reiko Tomii.

Minoru Hirata was born 1930 in Tokyo and passed in 2018. After working as a stenographer in the Diet, he independently began studying photography. In 1953, debuted as a photographer with the publication of his works in Asahi Camera Extra Edition International Photography Salon and began working as a freelance photojournalist. Between the 1950s and 1970s, he documented Tokyo and its inhabitants, landscapes, and social realities as they moved from the postwar period to the era of rapid economic growth. In the 1960s, his photographs, which captured avant-garde artists such as Yoko Ono, Genpei Akasegawa, Ushio Shinohara, Hi Red Center, and Zero Jigen, were widely published in weekly magazines. Hirata's consistent approach and subjective shooting of subjects and events also resulted other works such as the Okinawa series, shot between the late 1960s and early 1970s, and his journalistic photographs of sky sports. His recent group exhibitions include "Postwar: Art Between the Pacific and the Atlantic, 1945–1965," Haus der Kunst (Munich, 2016); "Japanorama. New vision on art since 1970," Centre Pompidou-Metz (Metz, 2017); "1968: Art in the Turbulent Age, " Chiba City Museum of Art, Chiba; traveled to: Kitakyushu Municipal Museum of Art, Riverwalk Gallery, Fukuoka; Sizuoka Prefectural Museum of Art, Shizuoka (2018-2019); "Awakenings: Art in Society in Asia 1960s-1990s," The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo (Tokyo, 2018). His works are included in the public collections of Tate Modern; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden; The National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea; Tokyo Station Gallery.

For further information please contact:

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Gallery hours: 11:00-19:00 Closed on Sun, Mon and National holidays



Minoru Hirata
City: Shinjuku, early 1970s/2019
 Gelatin silver print
 Image size: 33.6 x 22.2 cm
 Paper size: 35.5 x 27.7 cm
 © HM Archive



Minoru Hirata
Omoide Yokochō (Memory Alley), near Shinjuku Station's West Entrance, early 1970s/2019
 Gelatin silver print
 Image size: 33.5 x 22.1 cm
 Paper size: 35.5 x 27.7 cm
 © HM Archive



Minoru Hirata
The Family of Den-chan, a Chindonya Street Performer, 1950s/2019
 Gelatin silver print
 Image size: 25.2 x 25.3 cm
 Paper size: 35.5 x 27.7 cm
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