



Taka Ishii Gallery

Photography / Film

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Group Exhibition “Performance/Documents”

Dates: Dec 3 – 22, 2016

Location: Taka Ishii Gallery Photography / Film

Taka Ishii Gallery Photography / Film is pleased to present a group exhibition entitled “Performance/Documents” from December 3 to 22. Since its earliest days, photography has been intimately connected to performance and the theatrical art. Many artists have also made their works with a keen awareness of the performativity inherent in the acts of photographing and being photographed. The relation between performance and photography has been complicated further in recent years by the spread of cameras and innovations in digital and information technologies. This year, in fact, the Tate Modern in London held an exhibition entitled “Performing for the Camera” which included some of the same artists featured in our upcoming exhibition. “Performance/Documents” will comprise approximately 16 works by artists Kiyoji Otsuji, Minoru Hirata, Eikoh Hosoe, and photojournalist Takashi Hamaguchi.

Photography played a crucial role in the documentation of performance art, which was established as an art genre in the postwar period. Action-based works, which often incorporated chance and accepted its own ephemerality, were sometimes produced without documentation in mind. In response, photographers took great pains considering how they might capture these fleeting events and an artistic exchange resulted between the photographers and their subjects. Kiyoji Otsuji, who was working on commission for *Geijutsu Shincho* magazine, shot the “Second Gutai Art Exhibition” held at the Ohara Kaikan in Tokyo in 1956. His photographs helped provide support for the Gutai artists, who were pushing their art beyond conventional pictorial expression, and played a decisive role in establishing international acclaim for Gutai’s pioneering actions. Minoru Hirata similarly worked as a freelance journalist in the 1960s, when he extensively documented avant-garde artists’ actions and sold them, sometimes accompanied with his own text, to various magazines. These photographs were sometimes the only records of the actions. They go beyond mere documentation, however, and should be looked at as artworks on their own right.

(...) he (Hirata) served as an agent instrumental in affording “art in action” its immediate and enduring afterlife.

Reiko Tomii, ‘Hirata Minoru’s Action, the 1960s: A Theoretical Consideration as “Photo Art”’, Minoru Hirata, *ACTION, the 1960s*, Taka Ishii Gallery Photography / Film, 2014, p. 63

The collaboration between photographers and their subjects was a new development in the relation between photography and performance. Conventionally, the photographer simply witnessed and recorded a performance. In collaborative works, the performances are staged specifically and exclusively for the photographer. In 1971, Eikoh Hosoe produced “Simon: A Private Landscape,” a series which was shot at various outdoor locations around Tokyo and featured the actor and doll artist Simon Yotsuya. The images, which featured an actor, but were shot outside the context of the theater, are composed and organized to read like a film.

On the other hand, photojournalists produce photographs to disseminate information about events that occur regardless of their presence. As such, their works have long been distinguished from those of artists and collaborators described above. Takashi Hamaguchi documented numerous social and political struggles, turning points, and historical events since the 1950s. Going beyond mere reportage, he used his camera to confront and capture the essence of various social problems that arose in the turbulent decades. These photographs are not meant to be simply consumed; they implore their viewers to consider how they might live more humanely. Shot over an extensive period to capture incidents and movements in their entirety, Hamaguchi’s photographs have great historical value exceeding the expression of personal positions or principles.

Kiyoji Otsuji: Born in 1923 in Tokyo, and died in 2001. He engaged in the foundation of the photography and design studio *Graphic Group* and participated in the interdisciplinary avant-garde art collective *Jikken Kobo* (Experimental Workshop). Otsuji's work is distinctive due to its sculptural and avant-garde qualities, which are tied to a spirit of experimentation. His exhibitions include "Kiyoji Otsuji Retrospective – Experimental Workshop of Photography," The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo (1999). He received The Photographic Society of Japan Distinguished Contributions Award.

Minoru Hirata: Born in Tokyo in 1930. He has documented the avant-garde activities of such important artists in 1960's as Yoko Ono, Genpei Akasegawa, Ushio Shinohara, Hi Red Center, and Zero Dimension. His work has been shown in the exhibitions of postwar Japanese art, and included in the collection of the Tate Modern, London.

Eikoh Hosoe: Born in 1933 in Yamagata. He took part in the formation of the independent photo agency *VIVO*. This agency positioned itself against the then-popular "Realism Photography Movement," and instead developed more "personal" or "subjective" modes of photographic expression. Producing important works depicting people and human body, Hosoe has an esteemed reputation both at home and abroad: among his awards include The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture's Arts Encouragement Prize, The Medal with Purple Ribbon, The Order of the Rising Sun, and the Mainichi Art Award.

Takashi Hamaguchi: Born in 1931 in Shizuoka. He went on to shoot socio-political issues regarding the US military bases, Niigata earthquake, student struggles, and protests against the construction of Narita Airport. His awards include the All-Japan Mainichi Photography Exhibition Prime Minister's Award (for "Niigata Earthquake," 1964). His photobooks and texts include *Record and Instant* (1969) and *University Struggle Towards ANPO 70* (1969).

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



Kiyoji Otsuji

"Transfixion of Murakami Saburo, the second Gutai exhibition", 1956/printed later
Gelatin silver print

Image size: 19.8 x 30 cm

Paper size: 27.8 x 35.1 cm

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Eikoh Hosoe

"Simon: A Private Landscape", 1971

Gelatin silver print

Image size: 23.2 x 30 cm

Paper size: 25.4 x 30.9 cm

© Eikoh Hosoe



Takashi Hamaguchi

"November 19, 1971, Hibiya Incendiary Incident, Tokyo", 1971/1972

Gelatin silver print

Image & paper size: 23 x 29.9 cm

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