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Tatsuo Kawaguchi “Land and Sea 1970”

September 4 – October 31, 2015
Reception: Friday, September 11, 6-8pm

Taka Ishii Gallery New York is pleased to present “Land and Sea 1970”, the first solo exhibition of Tatsuo Kawaguchi to be held in the United States. On view are twenty-four vintage photographs of “Land and Sea” (1970), printed by the artist in 1970. A variant of this series will be concurrently on view in October as part of the traveling museum exhibition, “For a New World to Come: Experiments in Japanese Art and Photography, 1968-1979” at Japan Society Gallery, New York. A larger version of these images, printed on twenty-six panels for the seminal 10th Tokyo Biennale, subtitled *Between Man and Matter*, was exhibited at the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, and then traveled to three other venues (Kyoto Municipal Art Museum, Aichi Prefectural Art Gallery, Nagoya and Fukuoka Prefectural Culture House) in 1970.

“Land and Sea” is a photographic record of the site specific installation Kawaguchi made using four wooden planks, cut from a single log, and floated along the shore over three days at Suma Beach, Kobe, in April 1970, a locale close to his home. The artist methodically charted the interaction of the wood and the sea with particular attention to the effects of the low and high tide. Each photograph has exact notations of the date and time (hour, minutes and seconds) when it was taken. These essential elements are key to his working process whereby the artwork takes on an action, performance and collaboration with nature. Photography provided the artist with a means to objectively express his vision - a form of depiction exquisitely tied to reality. Kawaguchi is considered one of the pioneers in the field of photographic expression in postwar Japan. “Land and Sea” is representative of the artist’s initial interest in relationship, the theme of great prominence in his oeuvre.

The 10th Tokyo Biennale, with its renowned commissioner Yusuke Nakahara, an influential art critic of the time, became a beacon moment when forty international artists including Carl Andre, Sol LeWitt, Richard Serra were exhibited alongside their Japanese contemporaries including Kawaguchi, On Kawara and Jiro Takamatsu. Of great historical impact, the Tokyo Biennale introduced then under recognized new movements such as Arte Povera, Conceptual art and Mono-ha (School of Things) and became a bridge highlighting common international interests. The subtitle, “*Between Man and Matter*,” as the Biennale’s theme particularly resonates with the works Kawaguchi showed. “Land and Sea” visualizes a world between “what can be seen” and “what cannot be seen”.

“To reveal the distance between ‘existence’ and ‘the cognition of existence’ by bringing ‘existence’ into our cognition, or to annihilate ‘the cognition of existence’ so that this distance is filled and to make ‘an existence’ out of ‘existence itself’”

Tatsuo Kawaguchi, *Dai-10-kai Nihon Kokusai Bijutsuten: Ningen To Busshitsu/Tokyo Biennale 1970: Between Man and Matter*, exhibition catalogue (Tokyo: The Mainichi Newspapers, 1970)

Also on view are two sculptures, “Iron of Iron and/or Tools: File” (1975) and “Iron of Iron and/or Tools: Graver” (1975), which represent the artist’s interests in blur and vagueness which language includes. Kawaguchi placed his iron tools into smelted iron from a blast furnace, thus combining them into a single form. In “Iron of Iron and/or Tools: File” the artist’s file is buried in the bulk and loses its function, becoming barely seen, yet still recognizable. Kawaguchi is distinguished from other artists for this sort of investigation, exploring the themes of relationship between language and recognition through his artwork in various mediums. Additionally presented is the color photograph, “Sea” (1973, printed in 2008). Evoking the same query on significance and signifier, the image captures a moment when water is poured from a bucket into the sea. The water, originating from the sea, is recognized as “water”, rather than the “sea”. The photograph visualizes the ambiguity of language, image and meaning; a critical concept that consistently runs throughout his artistic career.

Tatsuo Kawaguchi was born in 1940 in Kobe, and currently lives and works in a remote local in Chiba City. He has remained at the forefront of contemporary art since the 1960s in Japan and is one of the core members of Group "I", an avant-garde artist collective group founded by nine artists in Kobe City in 1965. His work is notable for its continued investigation of language, object and material and its use of diverse mediums; iron, metal, paper, fabric and wood. Kawaguchi's solo exhibitions include, "Let There Be Light! Tatsuo Kawaguchi: World after 3/11", Iwaki City Art Museum, Fukushima (2012); "The Spiral Time", KAKE Museum of Art, Okayama (2010); "Language, Time, Life", The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo (2009); "DARK BOX 2008", Nagoya City Art Museum (2008); "The Invisible and The Visible", Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Art and Nagoya City Art Museum (2007) and "Japan Contemporary Art - Kawaguchi Tatsuo," Busan Museum of Art, Korea (2003). His artworks have been showed in numerous exhibitions in Japan and abroad, including the Setouchi Triennale 2010 "100-Day Art and Sea Adventure" (2010); The Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennial (2009); "Magiciens de la terre" exhibition at Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (1989); the Paris Youth Biennale (1973) and the 10th Tokyo Biennale (1970). After the 1990s, his work has been included in institutional collections, such as the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo; Museum of Modern Art, Kamakura; National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto; National Museum of Modern Art, Osaka; Iwaki City Art Museum; Chiba City Museum of Art; Nagoya City Art Museum; Hokkaido Museum of Modern Art and Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk.

[Publication details]

Tatsuo Kawaguchi, Land and Sea 1970

Expected publication date: October, 2015, retail price: TBC, published by Taka Ishii Gallery New York, Edition of 500, hardcover, total 28 pages, 27 illustrations, H9.0 x W7.0 inches, essay by Tatsuo Kawaguchi (English and Japanese)

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Tatsuo Kawaguchi
"Land and Sea", 1970

Gelatin silver print

Image sizes: 7 ¼ x 11 27/32 – 11 31/32 inches

Paper sizes: 9 61/64 – 10 x 11 27/32 – 11 31/32 inches

Set of 24 pieces

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Tatsuo Kawaguchi

"Iron of Iron and/or Tools: File", 1975

Iron

16 59/64 x 8 15/32 x 43/32 inches

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