



Taka Ishii Kyoto

Gallery

123 Yada-cho Shimogyo-ku Kyoto #600-8442, Japan
tel: 075 366 5101 fax: 075 366 5327
email: tigkyoto@takaishiigallery.com
www.takaishiigallery.com

Yasuhiro Ishimoto “Katsura”

Dates: May 30 - June 29, 2024

Location: Taka Ishii Gallery Kyoto

Taka Ishii Gallery Kyoto is pleased to present “Katsura”, a solo exhibition of a photographer, Yasuhiro Ishimoto who worked between Japan and the US, from May 30 to June 29. Ishimoto was awarded the Medal with Purple Ribbon in 1983, the Order of the Rising Sun in 1993 and the Order of Cultural Merit in 1996. In 1948 after the war, Ishimoto entered the Institute of Design (ID) carrying on the tradition of Bauhaus and was taught by Aaron Siskind and Harry Callahan. His work had a major impact on the post-war Japanese art industry, including architecture, design and fine art, and had been highly acclaimed both in Japan and overseas. His insatiable curiosity for photography is also earned him the nickname “the gaze of an old samurai with a camera”.

The exhibition features seven black-and-white and four colour photographs from Ishimoto's signature series of photographs of traditional Japanese architecture, Katsura Imperial Villa, captured through a modernist perspective.

In 1953, when Ishimoto was age 32, he worked with Arthur Drexler, curator of architecture at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and architect Junzo Yoshimura in preparation for the exhibition Architecture of Japan at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, which focused on representative Japanese architecture and spaces. They had a tour in Kyoto, Nara and Osaka as part of a survey of traditional Japanese architecture, where Ishimoto encountered Katsura Imperial Villa for the first time. Ishimoto was commissioned to photograph Katsura Imperial Villa as illustrations for the catalogue of the exhibition.

Built in three phases between 1620 and 1658, Katsura Imperial Villa is a gem of traditional Japanese architecture and remains a source of inspiration for many international designers today. An architect, Walter Gropius, who visited Katsura Imperial Villa in the 1950s, described it as a building that “appeals to our emotions”. On the other hand, Ishimoto described as “made of clear language” when he stand in the Katsura Garden. Ishimoto found a unique rhythm and a modernist beauty in the building's composition, which is divided by blackened pillars, lintels and corridor railings, and by stepping-stones that small paths over the green lawn and velvety moss. The following year, 1954, he devoted a month to black-and-white photography, using a shift lens. With a respect for the harmony that characterizes all aspects of the villa and a desire to reflect this in his photographs, he pursued the purity of form and line, the pictorial quality of light and its various values.

The photographs were subsequently published in a book of photographs, “KATSURA: Tradition and Creation in Japanese Architecture”, by Zoukeisha and Yale University in 1960. Edited by Herbert Bayer and with texts by Kenzo Tange and Walter Gropius, the book caused a great sensation and had a profound influence on the subsequent history of architecture.

The revised edition, published by Chuo Koronsha and Yale University in 1971 and 1972, Kenzo Tange and Yasuhiro Ishimoto were authors of this, following the death of Gropius. The original 1954 photographs were replaced by a layout by Yusaku Kamekura, which emphasized Ishimoto's distinctive element.

Katsura Imperial Villa then underwent its first major demolition and repairs for six years from 1976. After the pillars and the Fusumae (a picture painted on a sliding paper door) had been repaired, Ishimoto visited Katsura Imperial Villa for the first time in almost 30 years and photographed it on colour film in 1981-82. In many of these photographs, Ishimoto used large strobes to capture the space, form and colour as they were, and concentrated on capturing the Katsura Imperial Villa as it was, which resonated with Ishimoto. These works were published in 1983 by Iwanami Shoten in "Katsura Imperial Villa: Space and Form", the third time of Ishimoto's work for Katsura Imperial Villa, which was also published in the USA, Germany, Italy and Switzerland.

Yasuhiro Ishimoto was born in San Francisco in 1921, moved to his parents' home in Kochi Prefecture in Japan at the age of three, and again to the US in 1939 at the age of 18. During World War II, he was interned at the Amachi Camp, a Japanese American internment camp in Colorado, where he spent two years learning photographic techniques from other prisoners; in 1944, he was allowed to leave the camp before the end of the war on condition that he was not allowed to live in the coastal states, and moved to Chicago. He initially entered at Northwestern University to study architecture, but his interest in photography, which he began while in camp, developed and he joined a local camera club on the recommendation of Harry K. Shigeta (Kinji Shigeta), a Japanese-American photographer who ran a studio in Chicago, and in 1948, he entered the Institute of Design (ID) carrying the tradition of Bauhaus, to further study photography, and graduated in 1952. While he is a student, he won Life magazine's Young Photographers' Contest in 1950 and received the Moholy-Nagy Award for outstanding student in 1951 and 1952, showing his talent early on.

In 1953, he came to Japan and photographed the Katsura Imperial Villa series, which has become one of his best-known works. In 1958, he published his first book of photographs of people and landscapes in Chicago and Tokyo "Someday Somewhere", which brought a breath of fresh air to the post-war art world in Japan. He continued to work from his base in Tokyo, and left behind a body of work that showed a unique perspective based on the rigorous formative awareness he had developed in ID, including traditional Japanese beauty such as the Den Shingon-in Ryokai Mandara and the Ise Jingu Shrine, urban landscapes, portraiture, sky and water. Ishimoto's deep involvement in post-war international trends, not only in photographic expression but also in design and architecture, has been widely praised, including his election as a Person of Cultural Merit. Ishimoto became a Japanese citizen in 1969. Thereafter, he continued to base himself in Japan until his later years.

Major solo exhibitions include "Ishimoto Yasuhiro Centennial", The Museum of Art, Kochi (2021); "Ishimoto Yasuhiro Centennial: Tradition and Modernity", Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery; "Ishimoto Yasuhiro Centennial: The City Brought to Life", Tokyo Photographic Art Museum (both 2020); "Someday, Chicago", DePaul Art Museum, Chicago (2018); "Bilingual Photography and Architecture of Greene & Greene", The Huntington Library, Art Museum and Botanical Gardens, San Marino, California (2016); "Katsura Imperial Villa", The Museum of Modern Art, Kamakura, Japan; "Katsura Imperial Villa", The Bauhaus Archive / Museum of Design, Berlin, Germany (both 2012); "KATSURA: Picturing Modernism in Japanese Architecture, Photographs by Ishimoto Yasuhiro", Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (2010), "Ways of Seeing: Photography of Ishimoto Yasuhiro", Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (2009); "Yasuhiro Ishimoto Photographs: Traces of Memory", Cleveland Museum of Art (2000); "YASUHIRO ISHIMOTO The Mandala of the Two Worlds at the Kyoo Gokoku-ji", The National Museum of Art, Osaka (1999); "Yasuhiro Ishimoto: A Tale of Two Cities", The Art Institute of Chicago (1999); "Ise by Yasuhiro Ishimoto", The Art Institute of

Chicago (1998); “Yasuhiro Ishimoto: Chicago and Tokyo”, Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography (1998); “Photographs by Yosuhiko Ishimoto”, The Art Institute of Chicago (1960). He has participated in group exhibitions, “Metabolism, the City of the Future: Dreams and Visions of Reconstruction in Postwar and Present-Day Japan”, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (2011); “The History of Japanese Photography”, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (2003); “The World and the Ephemeral”, Rencontres d’Arles (1999); “Photography and the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo 1953-1995”, National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo (1995); “New Japanese Photography”, Museum of Modern Art, New York (1974); and “The Family of Man”, Museum of Modern Art, New York (1955), among other.

This exhibition is held in collaboration with Photo Gallery International (PGI)

For further information, please contact:

Exhibition: Kazushi Tsuchikawa / Press: Shunji Noda (press@takaishiigallery.com)

Seiya Nakamura 2.24 Inc. Yurie Tanabe (yurie@seyianakamura224.com)

123 Yada-cho Shimogyo-ku Kyoto 600-8442 tel: +81 (0)75 366 5101 fax: +81 (0)75 366 5327

e-mail: tigkyoto@takaishiigallery.com website: www.takaishiigallery.com

Thu – Sat 10:00 – 17:30 Closed Sun – Wed and National Holidays