

The Museum of Modern Art

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NEW JAPANESE PHOTOGRAPHY AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

NEW JAPANESE PHOTOGRAPHY, the first attempt to present an extensive survey of contemporary Japanese photography outside Japan, will be on view at The Museum of Modern Art from March 27 through May 19. Co-directed by John Szarkowski, Director of the Museum's Department of Photography, and Shoji Yamagishi, Japanese critic and editor of Camera Mainichi, the exhibition consists of 187 photographs, dating from 1940 to 1973, presented as a series of one-man shows which identify the central concerns of 15 photographers. The exhibition, made possible by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and SCM Corporation, will travel after the New York showing.

In the accompanying book* Mr. Szarkowski attributes the rise of a distinctively Japanese photography, radically different since the 1950s, to the bankruptcy of the prewar tradition of photographic pictorialism in that country, the national fascination with photographic technique, and the stunning speed with which the character of Japanese life has been transformed since the end of World War II.

"The quality most central to recent Japanese photography is its concern for the description of immediate experience; most of these pictures impress us not as a comment on experience, or as a reconstruction of it into something more stable and lasting, but as an apparent surrogate for experience itself, put down with a surely intentional lack of reflection."

The pivotal figure of the show is SHOMEI TOMATSU, whose work has defined the iconography, style and method against which younger Japanese photographers

*NEW JAPANESE PHOTOGRAPHY edited by John Szarkowski and Shoji Yamagishi. 112 pp. 116 black-and-white illustrations. \$8.95 clothbound, distributed to the trade by New York Graphic Society Ltd.; \$5.95 paperback available only at The Museum of Modern Art. Both books published by The Museum of Modern Art.

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have measured their own identities. Tomatsu was born in 1930. His books include 11:02 Nagasaki(1966), Nippon(1967), Après-Guerre(1971), and I Am a King(1972). The 37 photographs in the exhibition, dealing in large part with the westernization of Japan, transform the materials of photojournalism into an intensely personal and intuitive statement. "It was not the rejection of traditional journalism but the acceptance of a larger and more difficult problem that defines Tomatsu's identity as a photographer," Mr. Szarkowski says.

A reappraisal of Japan's traditional values is seen in the work of KEN DOMON and YASUHIRO ISHIMOTO. Ken Domon, born in 1909, is represented by a selection from his classic interpretation of the 8th-century temple Muro-ji. The photographs were made between 1940-54. The photographs included show details of the Buddha Shakamuni in the Hall of Miroku, and aspects of the landscape in which the temple is set.

Co-director Yamagishi credits Ishimoto, who was born in California in 1921, with bringing many of the essentials of modern photography to Japan where he has lived most of his life. In the United States Ishimoto studied with Callahan and Siskind and his work was exhibited in Museum of Modern Art exhibitions in 1953 and 1961. He is represented in the current show by 10 photographs titled "Stepping-Stones of the Katsura Palace, Kyoto," made in 1953-54 and published in Katsura in 1960.

Ten photographs by KIKUJI KAWADA, born in 1933, are from his book titled The Map published in 1965. It is a requiem to those who dedicated their youth to World War II, as evoked in photographs of mementoes in a war memorial, and of the detritus of an abandoned factory.

IKKO, born in 1931 in Japan, now lives in New York and has traveled throughout Europe and the U. S. His photographic observations on Western

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culture include pictures of a roller skating rink in Colorado, a fossilized figure at Pompeii, and a costume party in New York. Most date from the 1970s.

The photographs of EIKOH HOSOE, born in 1933, are concerned with confrontation of new attitudes towards sex in Japan, Mr. Yamagishi says. Hosoe has taught and exhibited in the United States as well as in Japan, where he has had many one-man shows. Work in the exhibition includes selections from his books Man and Woman (1960) and Killed by Roses (1963).

The next generation of photographers in the exhibition "search for an artistic expression of the unlimited richness of everyday life in contemporary Japan. Facing the collapse of the traditional family system and the devastation of a humane environment, they also focus on the more demonic aspects of the world, working on such atavistic subjects as traditional religion and the unsophistication and the eroticism of the Japanese," Mr. Yamagishi says. MASAHIKA FUKASE, born in 1934, draws on his own life; all his photographs on view are from a series called Yohko. MASATOSHI NAITOH, born in 1938, is interested in folklore of Japan. His photographs in the exhibition are titled Hags and were made in 1968-70. They deal with the surviving vestiges of archaic religious practice. TETSUYA ICHIMURA, born in 1930, pursues themes which are based not on a clear coherence of subject matter, but on the discovery of symbolic consonances among widely varied subjects. His work combines visual elegance with a subtly foreboding sense of the erotic.

HIROMI TSUCHIDA, born in 1939, is represented by eight untitled prints, in part from his series titled Japanese Bondage, which deals with the continuing reality of traditional patterns of thought. Mr. Yamagishi refers to their old-fashioned aura, which is due not only to their formal character but to a strong sense of the ceremonial and the irrational.

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DAIDOH MORIYAMA, born in 1938, has been perhaps the most influential of younger Japanese photographers during recent years. His work presents in the clearest terms the tendency of Japanese work of the period to favor an intensely autobiographic, intuitive, and fragmented expressionism. The majority of his photographs in the exhibition are from A Hunter (1972) or from Nippon Theater (1968).

Mr. Szarkowski says that Moriyama's work reflects an occult taste for the dark and the frightening, and suggests that perhaps the very force of his work has persuaded still younger photographers to seek out alternative approaches. In the work of RYOJI AKIYAMA and KEN OHARA, both born in 1942, and SHIGERU TAMURA and BISHIN JUMONJI, both born in 1947, the "functions of wit, objectivity and reflection seem to have again entered the photographer's definition of his role."

Akiyama's photographs of pedestrian, everyday aspects of contemporary Japanese life reject the dramatic intensity of Moriyama's work in favor of a reflective and sympathetic good humor. Jumonji's series of headless figures are impersonal rather than frightening.

The work of Ohara and Tamura relates to the problems of conceptual art as explored in the West during the same period. Ohara, who has worked in this country since 1966, is represented by his book One, published in 1970, which reproduces photographs of 504 unidentified faces. Tamura's twelve photographs record the same site over a period of a year, from one summer storm to another, during which time two new houses are constructed within the camera's cone of vision.

NEW JAPANESE PHOTOGRAPHY will be shown at the St. Louis Art Museum, St. Louis, Mo., from January 9 to February 16, 1975, at the Minneapolis Institute

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of Arts, Minneapolis, Minn., from March 10 to April 27, 1975, and at the Krannert Art Museum, University of Illinois, Champaign, Ill., from September 1 to October 12, 1975.

The exhibition is presented under the auspices of The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art. Preliminary research was supported by the JDR 3rd Fund. Research in Japan was assisted by the cooperation of Camera Mainichi, Mainichi Newspapers, who made their library and staff available in a spirit of generous cooperation.

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Catalogs, photographs and additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw,
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