

# Art in America

## Hitoshi Nomura at McCaffrey Fine Art

Long overdue, this remarkable exhibition is the first American solo of the rigorously conceived photographs of Japanese artist Hitoshi Nomura. As a young man Nomura came to consider science a relevant source of art. Unknown to such contemporaries as Gordon Matta-Clark and Robert Smithson, he adapted photography to sculptural uses. In December 1975, he produced the first of a years-long series of projects based on the systematic documentation of the waxing and waning of the moon in photographs exposed at 15-minute intervals.

These investigations were informed by the chance observation of the moon's passage behind telephone wires. The prints had the look of musical notations, and Nomura thought of them as scores. Thus inspired, he etched black-and-white film with lines in the manner of a musical staff and, using a telephoto lens, exposed the film to the position and phases of the moon. At roughly 32 by 40 inches, the stark "Moon" Score, December 19th, 1975 records the

moon's trajectory over the inscribed staff. During an early exhibition, gallery visitors began to sing, reading from the "score." A "Moon" Score image dated January 1, 1980 was here accompanied by a CD of the ethereal work performed by a string quartet. Another track was choral.

Other photography-oriented projects consist of repeated actions performed in a fixed place, such as the color prints 35½ inches on a side titled *The Earth Rotation, February 4th, 1979, 16:32-17:32* and *The Earth Rotation, November 19th 1979, 14:16-14:46*. In the former, parked cars, only slightly abstracted, are discernible below an aqua sky. In the latter, clouds extend above weathered mountains and an expanse of water. Arranged in the order of their exposure, the sweep of a contiguous series of celestial images describes the path of *The 1986 Pilgrim: The Return of Halley's Comet, 1986-87*, a curving, elongated line of light described against the firmament.

In 1980 Nomura turned his attention to the sun, making exposures at regular intervals to produce images of the sun at forenoon, noon and afternoon over the course of a year. Included here were three such images, *The Analemma '91: Forenoon* followed by noon and afternoon; the sun diagrams an infinity symbol above a repoussoir landscape. Further expressing his solar interests, in 1993 he began to build and race cars that have the look of a Formula One racer or the cockpit of a jet, trailing a flatbed matrix of solar panels. In anticipation of a forthcoming exhibition that will introduce other aspects of his career, the gallery made available film footage of Nomura's pioneering solar-powered transcontinental run across the U.S. in 1999.

—Edward Leffingwell

Hitoshi Nomura: "Moon" Score, January 1st, 1980, black-and-white photograph, 31¼ by 39¼ inches; at McCaffrey.

