

PRESS RELEASE

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Enokura, Nomura, Takamatsu: Photographs 1968–1979

McCaffrey Fine Art, New York
August 11–September 26, 2009

McCaffrey Fine Art is very proud to present *Enokura, Nomura, Takamatsu: Photographs 1968–1979*, an exhibition of ground-breaking conceptual photoworks, most of which have never been seen in the United States. The exhibition will be on view from August 11th through September 26th.

Koji Enokura (1942–1995), Hitoshi Nomura (b. 1945), and Jiro Takamatsu (1936–1998) were and are non-traditional practitioners of photography working in genres including performance, sculpture, painting, music, and video. They are part of a generation of artists that emerged during the later 1960s who used the precision of photography's registration of time, motion, and space to reveal physical truths and structures of meaning that are otherwise unapparent.

Hitoshi Nomura began his career by using photography as a tool to examine chance composition and transformation in his sculptural works such as *Tardiology*, 1968–69. Nomura built the 27-foot-tall cardboard sculpture outdoors in order to document the effects over several days of weathering on the creation of form. The result was an eight part photowork that is remarkable in its prescience.

Performance has also gone hand-in-hand with photography in Nomura's work. Realizing that the difference between still and film cameras is merely the number of frames per second run through a camera, Nomura embarked upon a ten-year-long project. Using a film camera set to a slow shutter speed, he documented his daily existence. The resulting work is called *Ten Year Photobook or the Brownian Motion of Eyesight*, (1972–1982) a sequence of several hundred photobooks and countless still photography films. Exhibited here as an endless sequence of still photographs documenting the years 1972–1973 shown at four frames per second, this work blurs the distinction between photography and film in a deeply meditative reflection on the chaos of vision, the passage of life-time, and our search for meaning.

Nomura's evolving exploration of time and space led to a deepening engagement with science evinced in his series *The Earth Rotation*, 1979. A still camera was attached to a gyroscopic device that compensated for the earth's rotation, physically freezing the movement of the camera in space. Nomura made a series of thirty-minute exposures of seascapes and landscapes in which the motion of the earth is captured in a single image of a blurred landscape against a motionless sky. These confoundingly beautiful images completely contradict our perception of the Ptolemaic axiality of the earth as the center of the universe and our privileged place therein.

A woman is photographed holding a photograph in her hand that is partially obscured by the reflection of the terrace and world outside. A print of a ski vacation is partially immersed in a photographic tray full of liquid; the glossy undulating paper and reflective fluid throw off highlights that reveal certain details while

bleaching out others. A photograph of a building is pinned to a fabric-covered wall and is lit by the harsh light of a naked bulb that casts a shadow of a pull cord and reveals the worn and buckled photographic paper. These works are characteristic of Jiro Takamatsu's *Photograph of Photograph*, (1972–1973) series, beguiling in their beauty and emotive in their invocation of unspoken narratives.

To make *Photograph of Photograph* Takamatsu commissioned a professional photographer to rephotograph a series of prints from his family album in compositions that he had arranged. Each photograph was taken from an acute angle to articulate deep shadows and bleached-out highlights, making plain the worn and dog-eared corners and the presence of folds and dents in the photographic emulsion. Conceived before the authority and truth of the photographic record was undermined by digital manipulation, and with no interest in direct appropriation, Takamatsu's *Photograph of Photograph* attests to the ritualistic reenactment of memories, blurring of recollections, and our struggle against the loss of the past in our collected photographs. In doing so he reveals how vintage prints acquire their own unique histories and narratives that are separate from their mimetic functions—something otherwise unnoticed or unappreciated before this.

Koji Enokura's photographic practice ranged from that of a performer to a minimally invasive observer. Trained as a painter but best known for his sculpture, his use of photography is deeply influenced by his exploration of matter and space 'in the round.' Enokura's photographs are designated as performances and sculptures called *Symptoms* and more interrogatory photoworks identified by the subtitle *P.W.*

The *Symptoms* series have a quiet physicality and lightness as Enokura explored the point of contact between man and matter and the permeability of these borders. An existential nihilism is invoked in *Symptom—Sea, Body*, 1972 as Enokura arched his body to conform to the shape of a lapping wave, suggesting a loss of self. Sculptural works like *Symptom—Lump of Lead to the Sky*, 1972 and *Symptom—Floor, Water*, 1972 explore the effect of gravity on the motion of one material through contact with another. Throughout the series the subject is intentionally vague but the atmosphere is powerful. The *P.W.* series adopts the same position as humble objects were photographed in the absence of an explicit narrative, and a pervasive quiet suggests a zone of perception where differentiation ceases and naming does not exist. A chipped plaster corner, *P.W.—No. 35*, 1972, the tire of a construction vehicle, *P.W.—No. 21*, 1972, and a rope tied to a tree, *P.W.—No. 35*, 1972, all lose their former identities and are invested with a simple formal beauty that is overwhelming in its resonance of emptiness.

Hitoshi Nomura's work has been the subject of numerous exhibitions and publications. Major retrospective exhibitions have taken place at the National Museum of Modern Art, Osaka (1987); Art Tower Mito, Ibaraki Prefecture (2000); the Toyota Municipal Museum of Art, Toyota City (2001); and most recently at The National Art Center, Tokyo (2009). Jiro Takamatsu was a co-founder of the art collective Hi Red Center and later a member of the Mono-Ha movement. He has had one-man exhibitions at the Niigata City Art Museum (1996); the National Museum of Art, Osaka (1999); and Kitakyushu Municipal Museum of Art (2004). Koji Enokura (like Nomura) first received international recognition at the 1971 Paris Biennial and subsequently exhibited at the Venice Biennale in 1978 and 1980. Most recently his work was the subject of a major retrospective exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo (2005).

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