

Fergus McCaffrey is pleased to present a solo exhibition of works by Japanese photographer

Ishiuchi Miyako

September 5 – October 19, 2019

Opening Reception: Thursday, September 5, 6–8PM

Fergus McCaffrey is pleased to announce Ishiuchi Miyako’s representation by the gallery with an exhibition that encompasses over 70 photographs from five series made over four decades, including many early and never-before-seen works. The exhibition will occupy both floors of our 26th Street location and the gallery’s architecture and color scheme have been carefully modified and updated by Ishiuchi. This presentation is the artist’s largest gallery exhibition to date and the first since her celebrated retrospective at The J Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, in 2015.



Ishiuchi’s strength is her self-taught affinity for exposing a universal vulnerability that speaks to our mortality, giving voice to unspoken history and oppressed emotion, and granting nobility and status to her subjects. She was born in 1947 in Kiryū, a town approximately sixty miles northwest of Tokyo. In 1953, Ishiuchi’s family moved to Yokosuka, a seaport that had been occupied by a United States naval base since August 1945. It was in Yokosuka that she encountered the US servicemen’s oblivion of Japanese culture and assumed ownership of the land and people. She left home to attend Tama Art University in Tokyo in 1966 where she studied weaving and became involved in the student protests of the late 1960s.

Ishiuchi started taking photographs in the mid-1970s while living in Tokyo, shooting with a 35mm Nikon camera and a 28mm lens, which have remained a constant to this day. *Yokosuka Story* was produced between October 1976 and March 1977; in this series, Ishiuchi revisited her childhood home. Her anxiety and swift pace of maneuvering through the landscape are palpable in urban landscapes and poorly-lit stairwells that suggest escape routes or trapping places, in which she photographs.



Yokosuka Story earned Ishiuchi the coveted Kimura Ihei Award in 1979. The artist continued to photograph Yokosuka until 1990, always in black-and-white, completing two additional series there that were exhibited regularly in Tokyo throughout the 1980s: *From Yokosuka: Third Position* and *Tokyo Bay City*. The former maintained the grim tone of *Yokosuka Story* with additional images from Dobuita Dori (“Gutter Alley”) which, as a child, Ishiuchi had been forbidden to visit. *From Yokosuka: Third Position* documents the decaying skin of old buildings, particularly the doorways and crumbling paper signage outside vacant bathhouses and brothels. In 1983, the artist was assigned by *Camera Mainichi* magazine to work on *Tokyo Bay City*, a commission that

documented industrial landmarks alongside Tokyo Bay. Ishiuchi's own inescapable unease is embedded in each image, reflecting from the artist's perspective some several decades of continuous occupation.

Since the beginning of her career, Ishiuchi has made all of her own black and white prints, resulting in a distinct grainy and high contrast aesthetic that has become her signature. She developed her negative films to enhance the physical presence of photographic texture and establish a highly diverse tonal range. While printing at her studio, she worked with extremely large rolls of photographic paper and taught herself to dodge-and-burn images to further enhance the physical presence of the grain and rich contrast in the images; her process and the chemical make-up of the paper often cause the images to refract light like mid Nineteenth century daguerreotypes. The idiosyncrasies of her process and hand work in printing make each of her black-and-white photographs unique.



The *Scars* series (1991–) contain tightly-cropped imprints of the human body, each annotated with the cause and year of the wound, yet presented with tender intimacy and sensitivity. *Scars #19 (illness 1964)* (1995/1998) illustrates a swath of skin, an empathetic acknowledgment that it is only a small fragment of its sitter, and their life overall. Embracing imperfection through these scars of life, Ishiuchi approaches her subjects non-invasively, rather with a sense of tenderness and sensitivity. The artist

maintained an interest in markers of trauma for her *Innocence* series (1994–), which focuses on female bodies and scars left-over from childhood accidents. In *Innocence #9* (2007), the sitter's back is turned to the camera, and her naked body is visible from the shoulders down, standing. Conversely, this series utilizes minimal contrast as the marks blend into the surface of the skin. Ishiuchi has described the scars in this series as signs of vitality—blemishes that have likely dictated the course of each sitter's life in some way.

Photographing her mother in 2000, shortly before she passed away, Ishiuchi examined the belongings accrued over a lifetime. Embracing the beauty of the worn, eroded, and decayed, the artist documented her mother's most personal possessions: a floral -patterned undergarments, antiquated lingerie, and a bottle of her daily perfume, each illuminated by the natural light in her mother's living room. The series (2000–05) began in black-and-white and eventually shifted to color, all the while evoking a posthumous intimacy in the objects. The *Mother's* series debuted at the 51st Venice Biennale in 2005 in the Japanese Pavilion, and was shown at the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography in 2006 and the Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney in 2007.





The artist's compassionate and empathetic working methods made her singularly apt to be invited to record and articulate the personal effects, mementos and contributions of Hiroshima bomb victim families. In 2007, she was commissioned to document articles of her choice donated to the Hiroshima Peace Museum, among which she selected some hand-stitched garments that had been worn by residents of Hiroshima when the atomic bomb detonated on August 6, 1945, giving the victims a unique voice, and finding beauty and humanity through their worn relics. *ひろしま / hiroshima* (2007–present) summons memories and emotions and distinguishes them from the political event, allowing personal effects to take precedence over difficult debates on victimhood and violation. *ひろしま / hiroshima #75 Donor: Harada A.*

(2007/08) depicts a white glove printed at approximately human scale, with darkened fingers and a slightly scorched lace trim. The varied sizes of her prints allow these garments, and the circumstances thrust upon them, to converse with and confront our own human scale. This annual, ongoing project makes up a significant portion of the exhibition.

Her intimate attention to quotidian objects of the past led Ishiuchi to photograph artist Frida Kahlo's possessions at the Blue House in Mexico City in 2012. Ishiuchi produced two series from this commission: the first, titled *Frida*, evokes the artist's day-to-day effervescence; the second, *Love and Pain*, points to accoutrements that were likely hidden. A demure Tehuana dress and line-up of five silver and gold rings reveals Frida's close ties to her Oaxacan roots and her spiritual connection to the matriarchal Tehuanatepec and Zapotec cultures. In *Frida Love and Pain #10* (2012), two green shoes with blue bows embody Frida's adolescent trauma, often hidden under her long skirts; the right shoe is slightly taller than the left in order to balance her uneven gait. These images remain a celebration of imagination and illustrate Ishiuchi's empathy towards her sitter's lived life. The artist's subjects are often the human beings hiding beneath or within the objects she photographs. In this exhibition, Ishiuchi invites us to acknowledge humanity outside the constraints of time, and to share space with those we've lost.



About the artist

Ishiuchi Miyako (b. 1947) has been taking photographs since the 1970s. She represented Japan in the 2005 Venice Biennale, Italy. In 2014, she became the third Japanese artist to receive the Hasselblad Award in Photography. Ishiuchi has had over twenty solo museum exhibitions, most recently at the J Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles (2015–16) and the Yokohama Museum of Art, Japan (2017–18). She has been the subject of documentaries by filmmaker Linda Hoaglund including *ANPO: Art x War* (2010) and *Things Left Behind* (2013). Currently, her work is in the public collections of The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; SFMoMA, San Francisco; Museum of Fine Arts Houston, Texas; the International Center for Photography, New York; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; the Tokyo Photographic Art Museum, Japan;

and the Tate Modern, London. Since 1979, Ishiuchi has been the subject of several noteworthy prestigious and self-published publications (several out of print) of her photographs. Ishiuchi lives and works in Kiryū.

About Fergus McCaffrey

Founded in 2006, Fergus McCaffrey represents an increasingly global group of post-war and contemporary artists from the United States, Europe, and Japan. For over a decade, the gallery has developed a multifaceted program, representing over 24 artists and estates worldwide. Internationally recognized for its promotion of postwar Japanese and seminal western artists, Fergus McCaffrey has locations in New York, Tokyo, and St. Barth.

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Images:

1. Ishiuchi Miyako, *From Yokosuka*, 1981. Gelatin silver print, 41 1/8 x 60 7/8 inches (104.5 x 154.7 cm) © Ishiuchi Miyako
2. Ishiuchi Miyako, *From Yokosuka Third Position*, c. 1981. Gelatin silver print, 42 1/4 x 31 3/8 inches (107.6 x 79.7 cm) © Ishiuchi Miyako
3. Ishiuchi Miyako, *Scars #19 (illness 1964)*, 1995/1998. Gelatin silver print, 29 1/8 x 42 1/2 inches (74 x 108 cm) © Ishiuchi Miyako
4. Ishiuchi Miyako, *Mother's #37*, 2001/2006. Chromogenic print, 7 1/2 x 11 1/4 inches (19 x 28.5 cm) © Ishiuchi Miyako
5. Ishiuchi Miyako, *ひろしま/hiroshima #75 Donor: Harada A.*, 2007/2008. Chromogenic print, 13 1/8 x 9 inches (33.5 x 23 cm) © Ishiuchi Miyako
6. Ishiuchi Miyako, *Frida Love and Pain #10*, 2012. Chromogenic print, 44 1/4 x 30 inches (112.5 x 76.2 cm) © Ishiuchi Miyako