



Taka Ishii Gallery

Photography / Film

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Takuma Nakahira "Overflow"

Date: Aug 3 - Sep 14, 2024

Location: Taka Ishii Gallery Photography / Film

From August 3 to September 14, Taka Ishii Gallery Photography / Film is pleased to present "Overflow," a solo exhibition of a photographer and a critic, Takuma Nakahira, who played an important role at a turning point in the Japanese photography history and continues to bring a major influence on contemporary photographic expression not only in Japan but also around the world. Marking Nakahira's first exhibition at Taka Ishii Gallery, this show will focus on the early 1970s from Nakahira's nearly 50-year career from the mid-1960s to the early 2010s. It is the time when he was more consciously presenting photographs of cities and urban architecture in color.

As if the city itself were a living organism, the city in broad daylight continues to grow day by day. This can be evidence that the city we live in is, at least on the surface, in good health and continuing its vigorous activities.

However, in a corner of the city, there is a gaping hole. It is like a landing passage to the other side of the city. The wind blows up as I stand on the somewhat dark staircase to the 'negative'. Where on earth would it lead to if I went down from here? A shudder at the trap and the expectation of an anti-world - a momentary illusion for those of us who are weary of the 'healthy city'?

Takuma Nakahira, 'Urban Shades', *Asahi Journal*, 17 Nov 1972 (Vol. 14, No. 47)

From the beginning of his career as a photographer, Nakahira critically questioned the proliferation of the photographic medium itself in the consuming society. From the end of the 1960s until the publication of his first photo book "For a Language to Come" (1970), he published a number of black-and-white works with his radical expressions that negated the previous photographic aesthetics, mainly in the magazine media. Characterized by ambiguous outlines caused by shaking and blurring, coarse grain, and tilted compositions, these works attracted attention as a new photographic expression and represented a major turning point in post-war Japanese photography. However, in the context of the stagnant anti-establishment and social reform movements that followed the 1970 revision of the Japan-US Security Treaty and the Osaka Expo, Nakahira wrote "Why an Illustrated Botanical Dictionary?" (1973) as he pondered how to create cracks in the seemingly slow and subdued society. In the essay, Nakahira dared to deny his own early work and began a further search for a new turn. "Overflow" in the exhibition and other works from the same period that capture the city can be seen as Nakahira's answer to this question.

"Overflow" is an installation of 48 color photographs mounted directly on resin board, measuring 6 meters in width and 1.6 meters in height. It was presented in the exhibition "Fifteen Photographers Today" at the

National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo in 1974. The photographs, which include work published in magazines between 1969 and 1974, all take as their subject fragments of the city that lack wholeness, and are composed on the wall like a de-centered assemblage. Ivy crawling on the wall, manholes on the street, sharks in a water tank seen through glass, the inside of subway stations... the photographs tactfully direct the viewer's eye towards the darkness, cracks, defects and foreign objects that lurk in the urban space inundated with information and things. In addition to "Overflow," the exhibition will also include color photographs taken for "Urban Shades," published in the January 1975 issue of *Asahi Camera* as an urbanist work, and black-and-white photographs of an underground yard that were published in *Asahi Journal* in 1973.

Takuma Nakahira was born in Tokyo in 1938 and passed away in 2015. In 1963, after graduating from the Spanish Department of the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, he joined Gendai Hyoronsha in the same year and met the photographer Shomei Tomatsu through the general magazine "Contemporary Eye". In the final issue of the serial project 'I am a king', composed and written by Tomatsu, Nakahira published his first photographs under the name "Akira Yuzuki". In 1965 he left the company and began working as a photographer and critic. In 1968, he was involved in the compilation of the exhibition "A Century of Photography: A Historical Exhibition of Photographic Expression by the Japanese", organized by the Japan Professional Photographers Society, and his photographs have been published in "Contemporary Eye", "Asahi Journal", "Asahi Graph" and other publications. He established a joint office with Daido Moriyama in 1966. In 1968, Nakahira launched "Provoke," a coterie magazine of photographs, essays and poetry, with critic Koji Taki, poet Takahiko Okada and photographer Yutaka Takanashi (Daido Moriyama joined from Vol. 2, and the magazine ended with Vol. 3). Subtitled 'Provocative Materials for Thoughts', its manifesto was to present photographs that evoke new words and thoughts from fragments of reality. His work in the "Provoke" period was called "are, bure, boke (grainy, blurred, out of focus)" and was considered one of the most trendy photographic techniques, and was even adopted and consumed in advertising photography. Nakahira himself later recalled that the blurred and out-of-focus images were not a style, but he stated "just happened by chance," and for him they were "much closer to the naked eye than an accurate image," and were the result of his search for reality where "a photograph is just a trace of a life lived only once with its date". In 1970, he received the 13th Japan Photo Critics Association Newcomer's Award, and published a collection of his early black-and-white work, "For a Language to Come". In 1971, he participated in the 7th Paris Biennale and presented "Circulation: Date, Place, Events," an experimental installation in which he went to Paris, indiscriminately photographed every event he saw on the streets of Paris, and pasted them around the venue on the same day. In 1973, he sharply criticized his early work in the essay at the beginning of his critical collection "Why an Illustrated Botanical Dictionary?" Around this time, he burnt his negatives and prints, including major works he had published in the past, on the Zushi seaside. In 1974, he exhibited "Overflow" at the "Fifteen Photographers Today" exhibition. He then turned his attention to the cultural and regional boundaries of the South Island by publishing works photographed in Amami and Tokara, and began the series "Duel on Photography" in "Asahi Camera" magazine, featuring photographs by Kishin Shinoyama and text by Nakahira. He produced the conceptual work "D calage" in Marseille, and also participated as a photographer in Kenji Nakagami's series in the Japanese edition of "Playboy", accompanying him on his travels in Europe and Asia. In 1977, when "Duel on Photography" was published as a book, he fell ill and lost much of his memory and cognitive functions. The following year, he and his wife and child traveled to Okinawa to recuperate, and it was during that trip that he realized that photography was his starting point. Since then, daily photography has become a routine and his photographic activities have continued

unobtrusively. For a decade or so, from the end of the 1970s to the end of the 1980s, most of his photography was in black and white and he produced his prints at home with the help of friends. In 1983 he published “New Gaze”, his first photo book since his return to work. In 1989, he published “Adieu à X”, and the following year the book won the 2nd Society of Photography Award. After the 1990s, he moved to color photography and gradually established a distinctive style with vertical compositions. In 1997 he held his first solo exhibition of color works, “Everyday Life: The Present of Takuma Nakahira,” in which two works were shown as a pair; in 2002 he published “Hysteric Six NAKAHIRA Takuma”. In 2003, the first major retrospective exhibition, “Nakahira Takuma: Degree Zero – Yokohama” (Yokohama Museum of Art), was held, drawing renewed attention to his activities. In 2011, “Documentary” was published as solo exhibitions and photo book; in the same year, “Kirikae”, a solo exhibition with over 280 works, was held in Osaka; a book titled “Okinawa”, featuring photographs taken during his several visits to Okinawa between 2009 and 2011, was published posthumously in 2018; in 2024, his second retrospective at museum “Nakahira Takuma Burn – Overflow” was held at the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo.

For further information please contact:

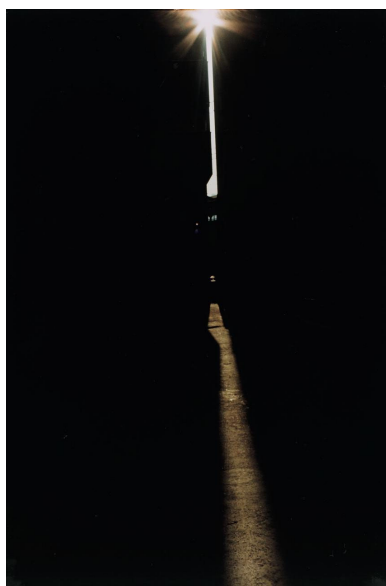
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Gallery hours: 12:00 – 19:00 Closed on Sun, Mon and National holidays



Takuma Nakahira
The Work from “Overflow” 1974/2018
Chromogenic print
42 x 29 cm
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