



Taka Ishii Gallery

Photography / Film

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Eikoh Hosoe “Kamaitachi”

Dates: Jun 7 – Jul 5, 2014

Location: Taka Ishii Gallery Photography / Film (AXIS Bldg., Roppongi)

Talk event: Jul 5, 17:00-18:00 *Details will be announced shortly.

Taka Ishii Gallery Photography / Film is pleased to present “Kamaitachi,” a solo exhibition of works by Eikoh Hosoe, from June 7th to July 5th. The exhibition will include 28 images from Hosoe’s highly acclaimed “Kamaitachi” series, some of which are previously unseen.

“Kamaitachi” has traditionally been depicted as a weasel specter with sharp *kama* (sickle) in place of each arm. It also refers to the phenomenon of skin being cut, touched by the vortex-carrying small whirlwind, as if struck by the sickle blade of the specter. Hosoe began shooting his “Kamaitachi” series in 1965, which takes the *Butoh* dancer Tatsumi Hijikata as its subject. Hosoe shot the series initially in Hijikata’s hometown Akita, then later in Shibamata and Sugamo in Tokyo, as if to trace the photographer’s own postwar trajectory. The series was published as a book in 1969. It overlaid the image of the Kamaitachi on Hijikata, who was searching for his origins within his hometown. It was also a way for Hosoe to come to terms with his own experiences of wartime evacuation in Yamagata, which he had nearly forgotten at the time. In an interview, he commented, “Where will the wartime experience of evacuation, postwar ruins and experience of living in Tokyo, and the current economic prosperity and peace all go?”¹ Hosoe explained that through the medium of Hijikata’s body, who shares the blood and culture in the Northeast, “I ‘documented’ my ‘memories.’”² The resulting works, spun out of the relation between photographer and subject, have a highly narrative quality.

In the village, he played with children, was laughed at by farmers along the roadside, shot in the middle of a field, attacked a bride, kidnapped a baby, and ran through the rural landscape. Almost all the shooting was done guerrilla style in a flash. This was something that could only be achieved through photography. No other medium — film, television, painting, or novel — could have been used in its place. At that moment, I was certain of the superiority of photography.

Eikoh Hosoe, “Foreword” in *Kamaitachi*²

Eikoh Hosoe was born in 1933 in Yamagata Prefecture. In 1951, he won the top prize for students at the Fujifilm-sponsored “Fuji Photo Contest.” In 1952, after entering the Tokyo Junior College of Photography (currently Tokyo Polytechnic University), he formed a connection with the renowned artist Ei-Q, who organized *Demokrato*, an avant-garde artist’s group. Through this relationship, Hosoe cemented his individualistic way of thinking, which challenged common conceptions of art. In 1957, he participated in the exhibit “The Eyes of Ten,” organized by photography critic Tatsuo Fukushima. This exhibit led Hosoe to meet photographers Kikuji Kawada, Akira Sato, Akira Tanno, Shomei Tomatsu and Ikko Narahara, and together they formed the independent photo agency *VIVO*. This agency positioned itself against the then-popular “Realism Photography Movement,” and

instead developed more “personal” or “subjective” modes of photographic expression. Hosoe has an esteemed reputation both at home and abroad: among his awards include The Medal with Purple Ribbon (1998), The Royal Photographic Society (England) Special 150th Anniversary Medal Award (2003), The Order of the Rising Sun (2007), the Mainichi Art Award (2008) and a designation as a Person of Cultural Merit by the Ministry of Education in 2010.

Notes

1 “Hosoe Eikoh ni kiku” (interview to Eikoh Hosoe), *The Photo Image*, vol.1, 1969

2 Eikoh Hosoe, “Kamaitachi,” *Shashin Hosoe Eikoh no sekai* (Eikoh Hosoe Photographs 1951 - 1988), Shashin Hosoe Eikoh no sekaiten jikko iinkai, 1988



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Gallery hours: Tue-Sat 11:00-19:00 Closed on Sun, Mon and National holidays



Eikoh Hosoe

“Kamaitachi” #8, 1965 / late 1960s – early 1970s

Vintage gelatin silver print

Image size : 59.4 x 39.8 cm

Paper size : 60.8 x 43.4 cm

© Eikoh Hosoe



Eikoh Hosoe

“Kamaitachi” #8, 1968 / late 1960s – early 1970s

Vintage gelatin silver print

Image size : 38.7 x 56 cm

Paper size : 39 x 56 cm

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