



Taka Ishii Gallery

Photography / Film

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## Leo Rubinfien

*Vintage prints from "A MAP OF THE EAST" 1980 – 87*

Dates: Oct 25 – Dec 6, 2014

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

Opening reception: Saturday, Oct 25, 18:00 – 20:00

Taka Ishii Gallery Photography / Film is pleased to present "Vintage Prints from *A Map of the East* 1980 – 87," a solo exhibition of works by Leo Rubinfien from October 25 to December 6. This solo exhibition, his second with the gallery, will feature 17 color photographs selected from his series *A Map of the East*, which he made in Japan and other parts of Asia between 1980 and 1987.

Born in 1953 in Chicago, Rubinfien accompanied his parents to Japan during its period of rapid economic growth, and spent many years there. In 1979, he returned and was drawn, out of his early experiences, to the East as a photographic subject. From 1980, he began traveling repeatedly not only to Japan, but also to China, Thailand, Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Vietnam. In the series *A Map of the East*, he explored what it means to see the world through one's memories and aimed to capture, from the perspective of a Western intruder, the "innocence" that he felt was a uniquely Asian characteristic and that was also being quickly transformed.

*The question of how much is corrupt and how much not yet corrupted is what drove me through making the pictures in this book. They cannot answer the question of course, and when I look at them now I am struck by their ambivalence, by the mixture of tenderness and irony in their voice. Which is, I hope, exactly right: losing continually, we are also continually enriched by naming that which we have lost, and recognizing that which remains.*

- Leo Rubinfien, excerpted from an essay published in *A Map of the East*  
(David R. Godine, Inc., 1992)

*A Map of the East* was published in 1992, in conjunction with a solo exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Reviewing it in *the New York Review of Books*, Ian Buruma wrote:

*... the modern visitor to Japan, or anywhere in Asia, can hardly overlook the lively cultural mess. What makes Leo Rubinfien's photographs ... so superb is his refusal to overlook it. Instead, he finds poetry in the hybrid vulgarity of contemporary Asia. The temptation for a Western artist in Japan is to look for juxtapositions: East-West, foreign-native, Buddhas and Coca-Cola. Rubinfien, although he, too, according to his own introduction, is given to lamenting what has been lost, avoids this easy choice. His photographs of Japanese picking their way through the urban landscape show everything at once: kimonos, business suits, paper lanterns, jazz coffee shops, skyscrapers, Shinto shrines. It is all here, the architecture, the clothes, the clutter of life, presented without cheap irony. Some of it might have originated in China, or Paris, or New York, yet all of it is unmistakably Japanese. Categories like East and West, let alone pure and impure, cease to exist, or at least to matter.*

Rubinfien first gained recognition as a young photographer of the "New Color" movement in the early 1980s. Since then, his works have been exhibited in the U.S., Europe, and Japan at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Museum of Modern Art in New York, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and the National Museum of

Modern Art, Tokyo. They are also represented in major museum collections around the world. His major publications include *A Map of the East* (David R. Godine, Thames and Hudson, and Toshi Shuppan, 1992) and *Wounded Cities* (Steidl, 2008). Also an acclaimed writer on photography and other subjects, he was author of *Shomei Tomatsu: Skin of the Nation* (Yale University Press, 2004) and *Garry Winogrand* (Yale University Press, 2013).

In conjunction with the current exhibition, Taka Ishii Gallery Photography / Film will publish a new collection of Rubinien's unreleased images from the *A Map of the East* series, *New Turns in Old Roads*.

Publication details:

Leo Rubinien, *New Turns in Old Roads*

(Newly-published photographs from *A Map of the East* 1979 - 87)

Retail price: JPY 55,000 (tax excl.), published by Taka Ishii Gallery Photography / Film, 2014

Essay by Leo Rubinien (English and Japanese)

Edition of 200, hardcover, 130 pages, 60 illustrations, H24.7 x W30 cm

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



Leo Rubinien

"On the Breakwater at Kenceran Beach during  
Idul Fitri, Surabaya"

1982/ca. 1992

C-print

Image size: 49 x 60 cm

Paper size: 49.3 x 60.5 cm

© Leo Rubinien



Leo Rubinien

"In an Alley, Jakarta"

1987/ca.1988

C-print

Image size: 39.8 x 48.7 cm

Paper size: 40 x 49.1 cm

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