

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Shozo Kitadai

Forms of Experiment & Imagination

March 13 – June 27, 2015

Opening reception Friday, March 13, 5 – 9 pm



**Taka Ishii Gallery – New York** is pleased to present *Forms of Experiment and Imagination*, the first solo exhibition to be held in the United States of Shozo Kitadai (1921–2001). On view are thirteen rare vintage photographs from the *Form Series*, 1956–1960's, and two wire sculptures dating from the 1980s.

A core member of the avant-garde collaborative Jikken Kōbō (Experimental Workshop) founded in Tokyo immediately after World War II, Kitadai was a noted Japanese photographer, painter and sculptor. Composed of fourteen visual artists—performers, choreographers, light designers, sound engineers and composers—Jikken Kōbō is well known for its inter-media and cross-disciplinary works and notable role in fostering the rebirth of the Japanese cultural avant-garde.

These rarely exhibited works exemplify Kitadai's acute sense of aesthetics and experimental thought and illuminate his singular philosophy on art, form and avant - garde activities. The elegantly executed photographs and sculptures reveal his unique vantage point and rather unorthodox approach.

Evocative of a bold experimentation with form, the photographs enlist the landscape of a changing post-war Tokyo and its architecture in the seminal period of the late 1950s and early 1960s, a time when Japan began its transformation from a war devastated country to a modern society, replete with social convulsions, intense economic shifts and changing view points. Kitadai used the camera to examine and question abstract form through details he chose to frame and extract from the world around him. His acute interest in technology, engineering and structures became the subject and motifs of his experimentation using photography.

Also on view are two kinetic sculptures dating from 1980s, representative of the abstract sculptural form that he is well known for. As art critic Yusuke Nakahara wrote in her 2003 catalogue for his solo exhibition at the Taro Okamoto Museum of Art, in Kawasaki, Japan, the mobile sculptures were the expression of his ongoing interest in the theory of movement and form, defying the normative and traditional categories of art and expanding the limitations between form and movement.



This exhibition is accompanied with a limited edition gallery publication, *Shozo Kitadai, Forms of Experiment and Imagination*, published by Taka Ishii Gallery – New York, 2015. Essays by Reiko Sato, chief curator of the Taro Okamoto Museum of Art, Kawasaki, and Takayuki Fujii.

### About the artist:

Shozo Kitadai, born in Tokyo in 1921, was introduced to photography by his father. After World War II, he began painting and making mobile sculptures in the spirit of Alexander Calder. In his early career, Kitadai participated in the Yomiuri Independent exhibitions from 1949 and showed constructive paintings, which received recognition by the influential art critic Shuzo Takiguchi (1903–1979).

In 1951, Kitadai became a core member of Jikken Kōbō (Experimental Workshop) and was in charge of the scenery for the group's ballet performances, such as the seminal piece, *The Joy of Life*, in November 1951. He created filmic and experimental works, using both traditional film as well as the auto-slide (a film projector combining a taped recording and a projection of a color slide film projection, invented by Tokyo Tsushin Kogyo in 1920, a precursor to Sony.) Much influenced by the aesthetics and philosophical approach of the Bauhaus, Kitadai was interested in creating a new wave of art, along with his fellow members of the Experimental workshop.

Beginning in 1956 Kitadai focused his energies on photography, famously collaborating with fellow photographer, Kiyoji Otsuji (1923–2001), on behalf of Asahi Picture News (APN) and published in Asahi Graph magazine in 1953. He was a major member of Graphic Shūdan (Graphic Group) and extended his creative activities across mediums during Japan's boom in commercial photography in the 1960s. After the landmark Osaka Expo'70, Kitadai moved gradually away from his commercial work and began to create airplane models in a highly experimental fashion.

Recently, Kitadai's work has been featured in a solo exhibition, *Form and Simulation: Experiment & Photography of Kitadai Shozo*, at the Taro Okamoto Museum of Art, Kawasaki in 2013 and featured in notable group exhibitions such as *Jikken Kobo (Experimental Workshop)* at the Museum of Modern Art, Kamakura, Japan, 2013 and *Tokyo 1955–1970: A New Avant-Garde* at MoMA, New York (2012–2013)

His work is included in institutional collections including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Tate Modern, London; Metropolitan Museum of Photography, Tokyo; Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo; The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo; Taro Okamoto Museum of Art; Setagaya Art Museum and Itabashi Art Museum in Japan.

image: Shozo Kitadai, *Form-2*, 1957 © Makoto Kitadai  
Courtesy: Tokyo Publishing House

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