



Taka Ishii Gallery

Photography / Film

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Yu OGATA & ICHIRO OGATA ONO “Okinawan Modernism”

Dates: Oct 3 – Nov 7, 2015

Location: Taka Ishii Gallery Photography / Film

Opening reception: Saturday, Oct 3, 18:00 – 20:00

Taka Ishii Gallery Photography / Film is pleased to present “Okinawan Modernism,” a solo exhibition of works by Yu OGATA & ICHIRO OGATA ONO from October 3 to November 7. This will be the artists’ first solo exhibition with the gallery. The exhibition will feature approximately 37 works extending the artists’ ongoing “Constructivism” series, which focuses on the architectural structures of Okinawan modernism, to include photographs of the Okinawan cityscape cluttered with residential structures and minimalist sculptures carved from concrete blocks, the smallest compositional unit constituting the Okinawan city.

Yu OGATA & ICHIRO OGATA ONO understand architecture as visual manifestations of the aggregate of layers of culture and human emotion. They have considered and represented the relation between our lives and the global cultural structure, fraught with contradictions and oppositions, in various media. Photography, which allows the artist to instantly cut out a cultural layer and simultaneously translate it into a two-dimensional image, has been a particularly important method of expression for them.

Modernism, which came into being in the early 20th Century as a progressive artistic style, was characterized by ornament-less abstraction that transcended regional specificities, and consequently spread globally. Modernism’s economy and functionality drew formidable global attention and it was accepted generally by the 1950s, when it was popularized, localized, and translated into new forms of modernism that incorporated local traditions and cultures. Okinawa was no exception in this regard. Damage caused by typhoons and white ants and the shortage of building materials in the immediate postwar period lead to the disappearance of conventional, traditional wooden architectural structures, which were replaced by the spread of concrete blocks brought in by the U.S. military as military supplies. This gave birth to a unique style of Okinawan modernism – a hybrid of residences built for Americans stationed in Okinawa, later became known as *gaijin juutaku* (foreigners’housing), and reinforced concrete structures designed using traditional Japanese *kiwari* proportioning system. Characteristically, Okinawan modernist structures are unadorned concrete structures with visible beams and columns that nevertheless function as a traditional *minka* (folk dwelling).

In their shared incorporation of organic content connecting the human and material into abstract modernism, Yu OGATA & ICHIRO OGATA ONO identified a parallel between Okinawan modernism, which reflects the militarized environment and local cultures, and has produced a cityscape of sculpture-like *minka*, and Russian Constructivism, which was defined by its simultaneously revolutionary and primitive character. They thus named this localized modernist architecture “Okinawan Constructivism,” which they see as a unique cultural structure that developed not as an antithesis to traditional forms, but rather as a progressive form directed toward the future.

Certainly Okinawa’s abstraction is layered over with animism and is slightly different from Western concepts of abstraction. Yet might it be fair to view Okinawa Constructivism and Nosé’s sculptures and the idea that abstract concepts are traditional and natural as a cultural construct rare in today’s world, one directly linked to Modernism? There was a time in Okinawa when a military environment intruded upon nature, traditions, and everyday life, and abstract representations of this phenomenon became commonplace.

Yu OGATA & ICHIRO OGATA ONO, *Okinawa Chokoku Toshi [Okinawan Sculpture City]*, Hatori Press, Inc., 2015, p.153

Yu OGATA & ICHIRO OGATA ONO are interested in the fractal transmission and selection of architectural forms and materials. In the current exhibition, they present two perspectives – the cityscape and sculpture.

The “Modernism Street” series, shot on low contrast film using a 4x5 camera, attempts to capture the ambiance created by the natural environment and history. The photographed residential structures exhibit the raw workings of nature and history. On the other hand, the “Concrete Block Sculptures” series comprises images of works by Naha sculptor Kojiro Nosé (b. 1950), who uses concrete

blocks, a symbol of the artist's native landscape, and a representation of the memory of Okinawan stone architecture, to communicate the culture and history of American occupation in Okinawa. The accidental clash between the organic curvilinear forms, imitating nature and carved by Nosé, and the artificial forms of holes pre-existing in the concrete block, symbolically express Okinawan history.

These photographs are printed using a fresco-based technique, in which pigments are sprayed onto sheets coated with plaster made with water and lime, an ingredient of concrete, to secure a material connection between the photographs and their subjects.

Ichiro Ogata Ono was born in Kyoto and completed Master course at the Graduate school of Architecture, Waseda University. Yu Ogata was born in Tokyo and received her undergraduate degree from the Department of Architecture, Waseda University. Together, they continually research, photograph, study, and produce works. Their works include photography, architecture, installation, and books. Their major publications include *Okinawa Chokoku Toshi [Okinawan Sculpture City]* (2015), *Watashitachi no "Tokyo no Ie" [Our Eclectic Tokyo Home]* (2014), *HOUSE* (2009), and *Ultra Baroque* (1995). Their major architectural works include "Tokyo Eclectic House" and "Photo House." Their recent exhibitions include "Eclectic Chinese Homes" at Zen Foto Gallery in 2014.

For further information please contact:

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



"Modernism Street -1", 2015

Pigment ink on plaster coated paper

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"Concrete Block Sculptures -13", 2015

Pigment ink on plaster coated paper

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