



Taka Ishii Gallery

Photography / Film

Hiroshi Hamaya “A Chronicle of Grief and Anger”

Dates: Jul 8— Aug 12, 2017

Location: Taka Ishii Gallery Photography / Film

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Taka Ishii Gallery Photography / Film is pleased to present “A Chronicle of Grief and Anger,” a solo exhibition of works by Hiroshi Hamaya from July 8 to August 12. Since the 1930s, Hamaya has captured, with penetrating perspective, the relations between people, their culture and environment. He sternly confronted the documentary aspect of photography and produced numerous valuable photographic records of his era. This exhibition will feature approximately 22 works from his book *A Chronicle of Grief and Anger* (Kawade Shobo Shinsha, 1960), which comprises photographs documenting the anti-Japan-US Security Treaty struggles shot over a one-month period.

Born in Tokyo, Hamaya captured the customs of urban and old town neighborhoods in the 1930s, when there was an air of the modernism, but also a mix of the old and new. In 1933, he began working at Oriental Photo Industry, publisher of the camera magazine *Photo Times*, which had been introducing progressive Western European art trends to Japanese readers. Meeting photographers and editors such as Senichi Kimura and Masao Horino, who represented the new era during a period when “the photographer” was also being modernized through the exploration of modernist photographic expressions, establishment of photojournalism, and the spread of New Photography, allowed Hamaya to consider what it meant to be a professional photographer. While still an up-and-coming photographer, Hamaya was already at the forefront of modern photography in Japan and helped found the “Avant-Garde Photography Association.” While shooting the winter training of the army ski troops in Takada City, Niigata Prefecture for the magazine *Graphic*, Hamaya met folklorist Shinji Ichikawa and Keizo Shibusawa, director of a folklore museum. Influenced by these encounters as well as Tetsuro Watsuji’s *Climate and Culture: A Philosophical Study*, Hamaya shifted his focus from the spectacle of the city to cultural climates that fundamentally effect the formation of persons. Increasingly, he became conscious of the import of documenting local cultural climates during a period of rapid transformation.

To record is an invaluable human act that is inextricable from the existence of humanity. And photography is the most modern medium for carrying it out.

Hiroshi Hamaya, ‘The Photograph as a Record of Nature and the Documentary Photograph’,
Camera Art, Camera Art, Dec 1940 (the final issue)

In 1940, while photographing the Little New Year in Kuwadoridani, Niigata Prefecture, Hamaya encountered the traditional lives of the local folk in the snowy Echigo region, witnessing how they were in awe of nature and understood the necessity of staying harmonious with it. After this experience, he spent ten years visiting and documenting the mountain village to publish *Snow Country*. He then explored Japan’s cultural climates and the foundational histories and current states of regional societies more broadly. In *Japan’s Back Coast*, he documented the lives of people who live in the harsh natural environs of the Japan Sea coast. In the book’s opening, Hamaya writes a phrase that would become his life-long motivation: “For humans to understand humans and for the Japanese to understand the Japanese”.

As Japan prepared for war, Hamaya was employed by Tohosha and briefly shot for its propaganda magazine *FRONT* until he clashed with the company’s executives and quit. As many photographer’s jobs were being subsumed under wartime infrastructure, Hamaya remained sternly against war. He moved to Takada City, Niigata in 1944 and saw the war end there. During the postwar period of high economic growth, in 1960, Hamaya objectively photographed the anti-Japan-US Security Treaty struggles from the citizens’ perspective, shooting 2,600 photographs in one month and publishing *A Chronicle of Grief and Anger*.

Until then, I was not very involved in documenting political events. This time is different. The steamrolling of May 19 constituted a violent act that threatened the destruction of democracy within the Diet Building. As a Japanese citizen that lived in prewar, wartime, and postwar Japan, I thought about this crisis and decided to confront it with my camera.

Hiroshi Hamaya, *Latent images, afterimages: A Photographer’s Experiential Memoir*,
Kawade Shobo Shinsha, 1971, p.198

In 1960, Hamaya became the first Asian member of Magnum Photo. His photographs drew significant interest in Europe and North America and the series "A Chronicle of Grief and Anger" was published in the June 25 edition of the *Paris Match*, and through Magnum, later in the *British Sunday Times*. Hamaya had an exhibition of the series that started in Matsuya Ginza, and traveled nationally to various exhibition spaces and university campuses. Seeing the rapid withering of what appeared to be increased political consciousness and the flooding of a mimicked peace and prosperity that followed, Hamaya felt tremendously dismayed by the Japanese and its political system. In response, he examined the causal relations between Japanese nature and its people. Stating that, "There can be a time when a person comes to terms with nature," he began photographing natural landscapes with a scientific perspective and continued to shoot nature in foreign sites such as the South Pole and the Sahara Desert. His practice was consistently rooted in a desire to examine the relation between humans and nature with his own eyes and his vision continues to pose questions regarding the relations photography and society can have.

This exhibition is held in collaboration with Marc Feustel of Studio Equis.

Hiroshi Hamaya was born in 1915 in Tokyo (he passed in 1999). In 1933, he began his career as an aeronautical photographer for Practical Aeronautical Research Institute. That same year, he was hired by Oriental Photo Industry (currently Cyber Graphics Corp.). He quit in 1937 and established "Ginkobo" with his brother Masao Tanaka. In 1938, Hamaya helped Shuzo Takiguchi establish the "Avant-Garde Photography Association." In 1939, he visited Takada City, Niigata Prefecture for a story for the magazine *Graphic* and met the folklorist Shinji Ichikawa and Keizo Shibusawa. In 1941, Hamaya joined Ihei Kimura and Hiroshi Hara at Tohosha, but quit in 1943. The same year, he shot Japanese cultural figures as a part-time employee of Pacific News Photo Service. In 1960, he became a contributing photographer at Magnum. His solo exhibitions include "The Photographer Hiroshi Hamaya," Kawasaki City Museum (Kanagawa, 1989); "Century of Photography: Hiroshi Hamaya, 1931-1990," Tokyo Photographic Art Museum (1997). His photo books include *Snow Country* (Mainichi Shinbunsha 1956); *Japan's Back Coast* (Shinchosha, 1957); *A Chronicle of Grief and Anger* (Kawade Shobo Shinsya, 1960). He is the recipient of the 2nd Mainichi Photography Award (for "Japan's Back Coast", 1956); Japan Artist's Award (for *Aspects of Nature, Aspects of Life: A Collection of Photographs by Hiroshi Hamaya*, 1981); the Hasselblad Foundation International Award in Photography (1987).

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



Hiroshi Hamaya

"June 22, 1960" from the series "A Chronicle of Grief and Anger", 1960

Gelatin silver print

Image size: 15.9 x 24 cm

Paper size: 16.9 x 24.9 cm

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Hiroshi Hamaya

"June 19, 1960" from the series "A Chronicle of Grief and Anger", 1960

Gelatin silver print

Image size: 15.9 x 24 cm

Paper size: 16.8 x 25 cm

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