



Taka Ishii Gallery

Photography / Film

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Ikko Narahara Memorial Exhibition “Where Time Has Vanished”

Dates: Feb 29 – Apr 4, 2020

Location: Taka Ishii Gallery Photography / Film

In memory of Ikko Narahara (1931-2020), Taka Ishii Gallery Photography / Film will present “Where Time Has Vanished,” an exhibition of works by the artist. Ikko Narahara debuted in 1956 with his spectacular exhibition “Human Land” and continued to pioneer a new era in the history of Japanese photography with his “personal document” method that was rich in poetic sentiment. Narahara once explained, “For me, photography has always arrived suddenly from the future”, and in his last years, his works seemed to engage in a cosmic conversation. This exhibition will feature approximately 10 works from the series “Where Time Has Vanished,” which he shot in the U.S. in the 1970s. The series marked a turning point in his career and helped Narahara establish a unique perspective that transcends spatial and temporal constraints.

Light itself, which photographs use to etch the passage of time, has its source in the depths of space. We are like tennis players playing on the courts of photographs, returning volleys of energy streaming toward us from the universe.

Born in the gap between dream and reality, photography seems to carry within itself a nostalgia for these kinds of cosmic memories. The reason why we feel surrounded by the pathos of being alive and immersed in depths of inexpressible nostalgia when we look back on photographs is probably that we then encounter a “vanished time” which transcends our own existence.

One winter day toward the end of 1972 I set out from New York City, where it was snowing, for Florida. I wanted to watch the launching of the Apollo 17, the last rocket to the moon. It was thirty-three minutes past midnight on the 7th of December. A sun suddenly rose into this Southern night sky so brilliantly it momentarily took away our vision. The tremendous roar and bright light, combined with overlapping shock waves, overwhelmed me as I stood there transfixed at the sight of this spaceship riding the shock waves and soaring up into outer space. A thrill almost like a scream shot through me: “Incredible! People are actually riding inside that.”

Soon, from the tip of its trajectory, the first stage booster rocket dropped off amid billowing black smoke, and the second stage burned in the distance like a star. At that moment people all around started cheering wildly. In the upsurge of this excitement, as my kneecaps shook uncontrollably against each other, I was amazed by the following thought. I began to have the definite sensation that we who were supposed to have come to see the astronauts off were in fact being left behind on earth by them. The black smoke belching out into the sky seemed to be their parting salute to us.

At that time I felt as if I were once more looking back with fresh eyes over all the perspectives that I have spent my life exploring. There I found the contours of a journey which progressed by means of personal perspectives but that found its way back to cosmic perspectives. Life on earth, I realized, began not only with the grass under our feet but also with this undulating light covering the ground. This world, which I had casually taken for granted, suddenly seemed unbearably dear to me.

Even as it demonstrated that the earth is a sphere moving through space, Apollo 17 followed an orbital trajectory that made it look, from our two-dimensional perspective down below, as if it were slowly descending.

Ikko Narahara

Ikko Narahara: Mirror of Space and Time, Shinchosha, 2004, pp. 201-202

Ikko Narahara was born in Fukuoka Prefecture in 1931, and passed away in 2020. His father, a prosecutor, frequently relocated for work; this meant that Narahara spent his adolescence living in various places throughout Japan. At the time that Narahara began photographing, in 1946, he was also interested in art and literature. He graduated from Chuo University with a degree in Law in 1954, and he later entered the master’s program in Art (specializing in Art History) at Waseda University. In 1955, he joined the innovative artist group Jitsuzaisha (Real

Existence). This group was headed by Masuo Ikeda and Ay-O, and it also gave Narahara the opportunity to deepen his connection to Shuzo Takiguchi, as well as other artists like Tatsuo Ikeda and On Kawara. At the same time, he also came to know Shomei Tomatsu and Eikoh Hosoe. In 1959, together with other photographers, these three formed the independent photo agency VIVO, which dissolved in 1961. Narahara went on to photograph various places around the world while basing himself in Paris (1962-65) and New York (1970-74). Aside from his numerous exhibitions, Narahara has also published many photography books, finding a favorable reception abroad. Major exhibitions include "Human Land," Matsushima Gallery, Tokyo (1956), "Ikko Narahara," Maison Européenne de La Photographie, Paris (2002-2003) and "Mirror of Space and Time: Synchronicity," Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography (2004). Major awards include the Japan Photo Critics Association Newcomer's Award (1958), The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture's Art Encouragement Prize (1968), the Mainichi Arts Award (1968), the Photographic Society of Japan Annual Award (1986) and The Medal with Purple Ribbon (1996).

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



Ikko Narahara

"Where Time Has Vanished, New Mexico"

1972/1973

Gelatin silver print

27.6 x 41.6 cm

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Ikko Narahara

"Where Time Has Vanished, Utah"

1971/1973

Gelatin silver print

26.6 x 34.3 cm

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