



Taka Ishii Gallery

Photography / Film

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Ryuji Miyamoto “Lo Manthang 1996”

Dates: Aug 26 – Sep 30, 2017

Location: Taka Ishii Gallery Photography / Film

Opening reception: Saturday, Aug 26, 18:00 – 20:00

Talk event: Saturday, Aug 26, 16:30 – 18:00

Taka Ishii Gallery Photography / Film is pleased to present “Lo Manthang 1996”, a solo exhibition of works by Ryuji Miyamoto from August 26 to September 30. Interested in architecture’s material features beyond their *raison d’être* or purpose, Miyamoto has been photographing, from a unique perspective, the city as it is transformed, ruined, and revived. This solo exhibition, his first with the gallery, will feature approximately 22 never-before-shown photographs of the Nepalese walled city Lo Manthang.

Since the 1980s, Miyamoto has taken buildings amidst demolition and incidentally emerged anonymous architectural structures as his subjects to confront architecture as an object freed from meaning and purpose. He has also captured such buildings in their relation to their surrounding space as well as latent facets of urban space, or the “unconscious of cities.” The images captured through his scrupulous gaze, which treats all details equally, and the physical relation between space and the photographer, who pushes himself into the folds of the city, adeptly reflect contemporary social issues, while also illuminating the spatial transformations that appear in them. Miyamoto’s photographs, however, refuse containment inside the nostalgia for things that are and have been lost or the tropes of emotional documents of urban life exposed to shifts in social structure.

In May 1996, at the poet Mikiro Sasaki’s invitation, Miyamoto spent seven days traveling to Lo Manthang, a walled city in Mustang, Nepal. At a severe altitude of 3,780 m, the city was closed to foreigners until 1991 and lacks any modern urban facilities such as electricity, gas, or sewage. In 1996, the only available modes of transportation were walking and horses. Lo Manthang was thus secluded and untrodden territory. The interior of the city was complexly structured with Tibetan Buddhist temples and monasteries circling the central royal palace with residences between them. The self-sufficient residents grew barley and buckwheat and grazed sheep outside the city walls. Citing ‘The Violent Tenor of Life,’ the first chapter of Johan Huizinga’s *The Waning of the Middle Ages: A Study of the Forms of Life, Thought, and Art in France and the Netherlands in the XIVth and XVth Centuries* (1919), Miyamoto wrote the following impression of Lo Manthang:

There are many cities and ruins around the world with an old city housing a citadel, but here, the royal palace, from which a lord reigns, the temples, in which numerous monks practice and perform religious services, and the homes in which the residents and their livestock cohabit are circumscribed by the city walls. Daily life and the sacred are surrounded by the wall and clearly unified.

*At the beginning part of his book *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, the historian Huizinga writes, “To the world when it was half a thousand years younger, the outlines of all things seemed more clearly marked than to us. (...) Calamities and indigence were more afflicting than at present; it was more difficult to guard against them, and to find solace. Illness and health presented a more striking contrast; the cold and darkness of winter more real evils. (...) A medieval town did not lose itself in extensive suburbs of factories and villas; girded by its walls, it stood forth as a compact whole, bristling with innumerable turrets.” Lo Manthang fit Huizinga’s description perfectly. It is a walled city in which the Middle Ages somehow continues in the present.*

Ryuji Miyamoto, June 2017

Citation: Johan Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages: A Study of the Forms of Life, Thought, and Art in France and the Netherlands in the XIVth and XVth Centuries*, trans. F. Hopman (London: Edward Arnold, 1924), pp.1-2.

During his nine-day stay, Miyamoto shot photographs with his 4 x 5 large format camera, but he was also perennially plagued by altitude sickness. His memories of his time in Lo Manthang are thus uncertain. Though he swore to revisit

the city, 21 years have passed without any chances to do so. Printing the negatives which had been left untouched, Miyamoto explained, “the walled city was captured with surprising clarity.” This body of work, which has never been shown before, vividly captures the solid stone wall through the light and shadows cast on life inside the city, which articulates ideas regarding the inside and outside and cultivated culture and life in the city.

In conjunction with the exhibition, a talk will be given by Miyamoto and the poet Mikiro Sasaki, who traveled together to Lo Manthang in 1996.

Talk event “Mikiro Sasaki x Ryuji Miyamoto” * In Japanese-language only

Date: Saturday, Aug 26, 16:30– 18:00 (Doors open: 16:00)

Guest: Mr. Mikiro Sasaki (Poet)

Venue: IMA CONCEPT STORE (5-17-1 3F, Roppongi, Minato-ku, 106-0032 Tokyo)

Admission: ¥1,000- (with one drink)

Capacity: 50 (booking required)

Booking deadline: Thursday, Aug 24, 2017

Bookings: Please book by e-mail.

To: tigpf@takaishiigallery.com

Title: Ryuji Miyamoto Talk event

Letter body: Name and E-mail address

Ryuji Miyamoto was born in Tokyo in 1947. After graduating from the Graphic Design Department of Tama Art University, and working as an editor at architectural magazines, he began working independently as a photographer. Miyamoto has photographed, from a unique perspective, the city and its buildings as they are transformed, ruined, and revived. His works, such as “Architectural Apocalypse” (1986), in which he shot building demolition sites, and “Kowloon Walled City” (1988), in which he photographed the titular high rise slum in Hong Kong, have received critical acclaim both domestically and internationally. His solo exhibitions include “Ryuji Miyamoto Retrospective,” Setagaya Art Museum, Tokyo (2004); “Urban Apocalypse,” Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin (1999); “KOBE 1995 After the Earthquake+,” Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt, Frankfurt (1999); “Architectural Apocalypse,” Hillside Gallery, Tokyo (1986). He is the recipient of the 55th Award of the Ministry of Education in the Art Encouragement Prizes (for his solo exhibition at Setagaya Art Museum, 2005); Golden Lion Prize of the 6th International Architecture Exhibition Venice Biennale (for the exhibition “KOBE 1995 After the Earthquake,” 1996); the 14th Kimura Ihei Memorial Photography Award (his photo-books *Architectural Apocalypse* and *Kowloon Walled City*, as well as his exhibition “Kowloon Walled City,” 1989). His works are included in the collections of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (San Francisco); Deutschen Centrum für Photographie (Berlin); the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo (Tokyo).

For further information please contact:

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



Ryuji Miyamoto
“Lo Manthang 1996”,
1996/2017
Gelatin silver print
Image size: 40.5 x 50.8 cm
Paper size: 50.6 x 60.9 cm
© Ryuji Miyamoto



Ryuji Miyamoto
“Lo Manthang 1996”,
1996/2017
Gelatin silver print
Image size: 40.4 x 50.9 cm
Paper size: 50.6 x 60.9 cm
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