



Taka Ishii Gallery

Photography / Film

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Yusuke Yamatani "ONSEN"

Dates: Nov 15 – Dec 14, 2024

Location: Taka Ishii Gallery Photography / Film

Opening reception: Friday, Nov 15, 18:00 – 20:00

Taka Ishii Gallery Photography / Film is pleased to present Yusuke Yamatani's solo exhibition "ONSEN." This marks Yamatani's first solo exhibition at Taka Ishii Gallery, showcasing a new configuration of works from his "ONSEN" series, which he has been developing longer than any other series in his career.

Every time I put out a call for companions on social media to join me in seeking hidden hot springs, several people respond. ... An almost forced communication begins among strangers, including self-introductions and subtle ways of presenting oneself. Amid casual conversations, questions arise as a way of getting to know each other, alongside a sense of anticipation and excitement for the adventure to come, and a shared sense of camaraderie toward a common goal. The rhythm born at this moment evokes scenes from a world "that-has-been," transcending time and place.

Yusuke Yamatani, 2024

"ONSEN" is a series Yamatani began nearly 15 years ago as a personal interest, inspired by the search for natural hot springs—wild springs that emerge naturally in rugged, unmanicured landscapes. Due to volcanic gasses and mineral-rich waters, vegetation does not grow there, exposing bare rock in an austere, desolate scene. Yamatani describes being captivated by these “stark landscapes where it feels as if this world and the next intersect.” Hot springs, a natural blessing in volcanic Japan, have long been a source of recreation, and the vulnerable human form within these raw landscapes prompts reflection on our relationship with nature. Hot springs also have a long cultural history in Japan, referenced in early literature like the *Nihon Shoki* and *Manyoshu* as spaces where men and women gathered to drink, sing, and get to know each other. Yamatani's interest, initially focused on photographing nature's overwhelming aesthetic beauty, grew to explore primitive human relationships. His journeys with friends and family to these wild springs, where strangers come together by chance via social media, recall the timeless essence of human interaction. This incorporation of happening elements and others in his work is characteristic of Yamatani's recent works, such as *Doors*, a fusion of photography and drum performance.

This exhibition also introduces a new experiment within the series: lumen prints. During his journeys to hidden springs, Yamatani recorded "casual conversations" exchanged among his companions and transferred these words onto photographic paper from Japan, the United States, China, France, India, Russia, and other places, each from different periods. Long-expired, the paper has developed unique textures and variations due to storage conditions, mold, exposure, and chemical compositions, revealing different faces. Through the passage of time visible on these papers, Yamatani illuminates words that transcend both era and place, capturing the universal resonance of human connection.

Yamatani's new book "ONSEN MMXXIV" will be published in conjunction with the exhibition.

【Publication details】

Yusuke Yamatani “ONSEN MMXXIV”

Published by flotsam books, in November 2024

3,850 JPY (tax included)

Total 320 pages, 148 x 220mm

216 works

102 pages of conversation text with hot spring companions (in Japanese)

Yusuke Yamatani was born in 1985 in Niigata, Japan. After graduating from Rissho University's Faculty of Letters, Department of Philosophy, he worked at Gaien Studio. Later, he moved to Nagasaki, where he learned photography through interactions with both Shomei Tomatsu and various unknown photographers, eventually beginning his career as an artist. Yamatani is currently based in Tokyo.

His major exhibitions include "KYOTOGRAPHIE" (2015), "Tokyo International Photography Festival" (2015), solo exhibition "KAIKOO" (Yuka Tsuruno Gallery, 2021), "VOCA Exhibition 2021" (Ueno Royal Museum, 2021), the "14th Yebisu International Festival for Art & Alternative Visions" (Tokyo Photographic Art Museum, 2022), solo exhibition "ONSEN" (Studio 35 Minutes, 2024), and solo exhibition "Onsen - Assemblage, Environments & Happenings" (Kurenboh, 2024), as well as a show at the Condé Nast building in New York, among others in Japan and abroad.

His main publications include *Tsugi no yoru e* (self-published, 2013), *ground* (lemon books, 2014), *RAMA LAMA DING DONG* (self-published, 2015), *Into the Light* (T&M Projects, 2017), *Doors* (Gallery Yamatani, 2020), and *ONSENI* (flotsam books, 2023).

For further information please contact:

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Gallery hours: 12:00 – 19:00 Closed on Sun, Mon and National holidays



Yusuke Yamatani
“From Japan, 1955”, 2024
Gelatin Silver Print
17.5 x 15 cm
© Yusuke Yamatani



Yusuke Yamatani
“ONSEN #008”, 2014
C-Print
96 x 64 cm
© Yusuke Yamatani



Yusuke Yamatani
“ONSEN #042”, 2022
C-Print
64 x 96 cm
© Yusuke Yamatani