

MISA SHIN GALLERY

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Press Release
May 2023

Tomatsu Shomei *Tomatsu Shomei Tokyo ca.1969*

Friday, May 26 - Saturday, July 8, 2023

Tuesday-Saturday 12:00-19:00 (Closed on Mon, Sun, Public holidays)



Tomatsu Shomei, *Oh! Shinjuku*, 1969 (Printed in 69), gelatin silver print, image size 13.5 x 19.9cm

MISA SHIN GALLERY is pleased to present a solo exhibition *Tomatsu Shomei Tokyo ca.1969* from Friday, May 26 - Saturday, July 8, 2023.

The student- and youth-led movement for social change that began with the May 68 uprising in France rapidly spread across the world, igniting the Prague Spring in Czechoslovakia and the Vietnam War protests in the United States. The spark that flew to Japan quickly flared up, and as the center of the hippie and anti-war movements, Shinjuku came to symbolize that chaotic era. Tomatsu had spent most of his post-university years living in Tokyo in the Shinjuku district, and he, too, would rush to the West Exit of Shinjuku Station whenever he received an anonymous tip by telephone about some impending action, to click away furiously, day after day.

The Shinjuku of the late 1960s was a perfect subject for photography, and this became the stage upon which Tomatsu took photos imbued with extemporaneity and physicality that convey speed and dynamism. At the same time, in his approach to urban landscapes and architecture, he criticized mass production and mass consumption during Japan's period of rapid economic growth, and he leaned toward a static design sensibility that was keenly structural.

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Along with being an era of questioning and rebelling against old values and systems, the latter half of the 1960s was also a time when avant-garde art movements flourished, and when people from different fields such as art, architecture, theater, and music went beyond the boundaries of their own genres to interact and push each other. Tomatsu voraciously immersed himself in activities that transcended boundaries, such as making movies, participating in exhibitions, and collaborating with dancers and actors.

The exhibit displays approximately twenty of Tomatsu Shomei's vintage photographs from the 1960s to 1970s, a time when Japan was boiling with passion and energy and Tomatsu was running full-tilt as a photographer. Beginning with *Oh! Shinjuku*, which captures the mayhem of Shinjuku around 1968, the exhibition also shows photographs from the *Asphalt* series, a microscopic view of the city in which things worn down and buried by the tires running on Tokyo road surfaces are revealed, a photo of the rear side of a computer with the ruined appearance of a remnant of modern society, and *Alibi*, work that sprouted from street performance.



Tomatsu Shomei, *An Alibi 2, Tokyo*, 1971 (Printed in 80)
Gelatin silver print, image size 29.8 x 20.0cm

Tomatsu Shomei

1930-2012. One of Japan's leading and most influential figures in photography. Major solo exhibitions include "Sakura and Plastics" at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York 1992) "Shomei Tomatsu: Skin of the Nation" at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (San Francisco 2004), "Tokyo Mandala" at the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography (Tokyo, 2007), "The Chiseling of Time" at the Nagasaki Prefectural Art Museum (Nagasaki 2010), "Tomatsu Shomei: Photographer" at the Nagoya City Art Museum (Nagoya 2011), "Shomei Tomatsu: Island Life" at the Art Institute of Chicago (Chicago 2013), "Shomei Tomatsu" at the Fundaci3n MAPFRE Casa Garriga Nogu3s Exhibition Hall (Barcelona 2018), and major group exhibitions include "Conflict, Time, Photography" at Tate Modern (London 2014), "For a New World to Come: Experiments in Japanese Art and Photography, 1968-1979" at the Museum of Fine Arts (Houston 2015), "Provoke Between Protest and Performance- Photography in Japan" in Albertina (Vienna 2016), "Tokyo Revisited" at MAXXI, the National Museum of 21st Century Art (Rome 2022).

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Route by subway:

12 minutes' walk via Nanbu-zaka from Hiroo Station on the Tokyo Metro Hibiya Line.

15 minutes' walk via Rakuen-zaka from Shirakane-Takanawa Station on the Tokyo Metro Nanbu / Mita Line

Route by bus:

3 minutes' walk after getting off at Sendai-Sakaue on the Toei-Bus [橋 86].

3 minutes' walk after getting off at Sendai-Sakaue on Chii-Bus, Azabu-West route.

(Hiroo Station ~ Azabu-Juban Station ~ Roppongi-Keyakizaka ~ Hiroo Station)

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