ARAMASA Taku

HORIZON

26 March - 26 April 2014

Annely Juda Fine Art
23 Dering Street (off New Bond Street)
London W1S 1AW
ajfa@annelyjudafineart.co.uk
www.annelyjudafineart.co.uk
Tel 020 7629 7578  Fax 020 7491 2139
Monday - Friday 10 - 6  Saturday 11 - 5

Cover: HORIZON - The Border 2005 (printed 2011)  Inkjet print on paper mounted on aluminium
4 parts, 50.5 x 41.5cm each  photo location: Hokkaido Rebun Island
At the point where land meets sea, the eye is drawn beyond the edges of the ocean.

The images in Aramasa’s HORIZON series have a grandeur of overwhelming intensity. Printed in recent years using a special technique (OROgraphy) he has pioneered, they are the outcome of the many journeys Aramasa has made to outlying islands and similarly remote parts of Japan since the late 1990s.

In this first solo exhibition of his work in Europe, photographs from the HORIZON series are shown alongside images from his ARAMASA SAKURA series. Both bodies of work represent an empathetic reengagement with, and reappraisal of, the deeply rooted view of nature – closely associated with ideas about life, death and the afterworld – that has underlain the spiritual lives of the Japanese since earliest times. His work can also be viewed as a persistent questioning of the stances to be adopted and the values to be upheld in the face of the ever shifting present in which we live.

Taku Aramasa was born in Tokyo in 1936. As a child he lived with his family in north-eastern China. After Japan’s defeat in the Second World War and the collapse of Manchukuo, he remained in China as a refugee for a further two years. Once back in Japan, he set his heart on studying graphic design. During and after his time as a student at Musashino Art School (present Musashino Art University) he won a series of prizes at important competitions for advertising design, launching himself onto the path of becoming a leading figure in the world of advertising during the boom years of the 1960s.

In the late 1960s Aramasa abandoned his work in advertising and turned his attention to freelance photography. He was persuaded to make this change of career by Shoji Yamagishi, the editor of the influential Camera Mainichi from 1963 to 1979 and a widely admired critic and advocate of creative photography. Fame as a photographer came to Aramasa with the succession of series of documentary photographs he published between 1985 and 2000.

In his ‘Distant Motherland’ series of 1985 he portrayed the proud and dignified faces resulting from many years of living in unfamiliar surroundings of the first generation of Japanese settlers in Brazil, Peru and other parts of South America (awarded the Domon Ken Prize).

His ‘Who Am I?’ series, published as a substantial volume in 1989, consisted of portraits of Japanese who had been forced as children to remain in China after the Second World War and from 1981 onwards, following the
reinstatement of Sino-Japanese relations, travelled to Japan in groups in search of their blood parents. Known as Chugoku Zanryu Nihonjin Koji (Japanese orphans left in China), they were the children of former Japanese settlers who fled north-eastern China in the aftermath of the Second World War.

Aramasa’s next undertaking, published in 1995 as the ‘Land of Silence: Siberia’, followed the collapse of the Soviet Union, which enabled him to visit the remains of the camps where Japanese prisoners of war captured during and after the Second World War had been housed and the sites of the construction projects on which they had been forced to work. The images took the form of expansive panoramic landscapes (awarded the Photographic Society of Japan Prize).

In his ‘Land of Promises: America’ of 2000 Aramasa turned his attention to the subject of Japanese-Americans who, following the outbreak of war between Japan and the USA, were uprooted from the West Coast and isolated from the rest of American society by being interned in camps set up in 11 inland desert locations. He visited the sites of these now dismantled camps and captured on film their desolate remains, the severity of his gaze drawing attention to the fate of the many individuals caught up in this episode in 20th century history.

Through this sequence of archival projects and the use of a large format camera that allowed him to capture his subjects at high resolution, Aramasa focused on the vanishing circumstances of Japanese who have or had lived for long periods of time as minorities in parts of the world far away from Japan. With their richly graduated monochromes, Aramasa’s photographs challenge us to engage with the silent histories of the people subjected to his gaze, forcing us to look outside the cocooned existences we lead in our increasingly materialistic world.

In 2000, having completed what was effectively a grand tour of foreign lands, Aramasa turned his attention to Japan. He recounts how he searched for sites unsullied not only by humans but even by birds. In the lead up to the start of his HORIZON series in the late 1990s, he sought out remote locations, mainly high cliff tops near the sea, from which he could focus his camera on the expanses that lay beyond Japan’s borders. In these images one can see a constant attempt to stand back from the noisy superficiality of modern life and, through a return to the primordial roots of human experience, to reenergize our means of engagement with the world.

Over the years the HORIZON project has evolved into three separate strands, ‘The Border’, ‘Vegetation’ and ‘Visible Transfiguration’. The current exhibition features works from the first and last of these. Works in ‘The Border’ series consist of multiple images taken with the position and optical axis of the camera being shifted sideways between each shot. This is different from the way in which panoramic views are taken from a single position and produces a more enveloping effect with enhanced spacial and temporal depth. Works in the ‘Visible Transfiguration’ series are more performative in conception. As if making a ritual offering or creating a flower arrangement, Aramasa manipulates close-up images of plant forms by blurring light with dark, and shadow with reflection.

Aramasa goes far beyond normal documentary photography in his engagement with the cosmological world of Japan’s earliest inhabitants and their yearning for a land of eternity beyond the sea, a land in which the spirits of the dead live on among the deities who bring abundance and good fortune. His ARAMASA SAKURA series can also be regarded as an attempt, through its reflections on the cherry blossom, an archetypal symbol of ephemerality associated with notions about life and death, to engage with the essence of Japan’s spiritual culture.

The inspiration for OROgraphy came from the early 20th century American photographer Edward Curtis, examples of whose work Aramasa encountered when travelling around the West Coast of the USA. Curtis’s technique involved the application of gold pigment to the reverse of a glass plate on to which a positive image had been printed. What Aramasa does is to scan a negative to create a digital image which he prints onto clear film with an inkjet printer. Having done this he applies gold leaf of the sort used by traditional Japanese craftsmen to the back of the film, The gold backing adds depth to the image, intensifies the effects of shading, and causes the foreground and background to merge into one another.

Kin’ichi Obinata, February 2014
HORIZON - Visible Transfiguration 2002 (printed 2012)
Giclee print (digital positve) Pictorico TPW 100 Film mounted on aluminium
99.7 x 128.8 cm
photo location: Kagoshima Amami-Oshima
ARAMASA SAKURA - in black box  2009 (printed 2012)
Gelatine silver (digital-positives) Pictorico TPW100 Film mounted on aluminium
99.7 x 129 cm
photo location: Tokyo Inokashira Park
ARAMASA SAKURA - in black box 2001 (printed 2012)
Orography (digital-positives) Pictorico TP-W100 Film mounted on aluminium
99.7 x 127.7 cm
photo location: Aomori Hirosaki
HORIZON - The Border 2003 (printed 2011)
Inkjet print on paper mounted on aluminium, 2 parts
106.8 x 83.6 cm overall
photo location: Shimane Nishinoshima
HORIZON - The Border 2005 (printed 2011)
Inkjet print on paper mounted on aluminium
4 parts, 50.5 x 41.5 cm each
photo location: Hokkaido Rebun Island
7 **HORIZON - The Border** 2003 (printed 2011)
Inkjet print on paper mounted on aluminium, 2 parts
108 x 83.8 cm overall
photo location: Hakkaido Tomakoma
8 HORIZON - The Border: 2009 (printed 2011)
Inkjet print on paper mounted on aluminium
3 parts, 53.4 x 41.5 cm each
photo location: Hokkaido Cirron-Line
HORIZON - Visible Transfiguration 2008 (printed 2012)

Orography (digital-positive) / Pictorico TP-W100 Film mounted on aluminium
99.5 x 125.5 cm

Photo location: Tokyo Shikine Island
11 HORIZON - Visible Transfiguration 2003 (printed 2012)
Orography (digital-positives) Pictorico TPV-100 Film mounted on aluminium
99.6 x 123.8 cm
photo location: Shikine Nishinoshima

10 HORIZON - Visible Transfiguration 2002 (printed 2012)
Orography (digital-positives) Pictorico TPV-100 Film mounted on aluminium
99.6 x 123.8 cm
photo location: Nagasaki Ikituki
12 HORIZON - Visible Transfiguration 2007 (printed 2012)
Orography (digital-positives) Pictorico TPW100 Film mounted on aluminium
99.7 x 126.5 cm
photo location: Tokyo Shinko Island
HORIZON - Visible Transfiguration 2003 (printed 2012)
Giclee print (digital-positives) Pictorico TP-W 100 Film mounted on aluminium
99.7 x 125.4 cm
photo location: Shimane Nishinoshima
OROgraphy (digital-positivel) Pictorico TPW100 Film mounted on aluminium
99.6 x 123.3 cm
photo location: Shimane Nishinoshima
Biography

1936 Born in Tokyo, Japan
1960 Studied at Musashino Art University, Tokyo, Japan
1993 Taught at Musashino Art University
Lives and works in Tokyo, Japan

Selected Exhibitions

2014 ARAMASA Taku - HORIZON, Annely Juda Fine Art, London
2012 ARAMASA Taku Photographs: HORIZON, Tokyo Publishing House/Shigeru Yokota Gallery, Tokyo
2011 ARAMASA Taku Photographs: ARAMASA SAKURA – in black box & black room, Gallery OUT of PLACE, Nara, Japan
2009 ARAMASA Taku Solo Show: frame & vision – blessing in forest, Tokyo Gallery and Beijing Tokyo Art Projects, Tokyo
2008 ARAMASA Taku Photographs: America/Promised Land, Gallery OUT OF PLACE, Nara, Japan
ARAMASA SAKURA, Nikon Salon, Tokyo and Osaka
2006 ARAMASA Taku Photographs: Apocalypse, Museum of Musashino Art University, Tokyo
2005 ARAMASA Taku - Sakuru, Stephen Wirtz Gallery, San Francisco
2001 ARAMASA Taku Photographs: Portraits of Japanese Immigrants, Polaroid Gallery, Tokyo
2000 ARAMASA Taku Photographs: America/Promised Land, Misumura Art Plaza, Tokyo
11+1 Photographs, Musashino Art University, Department of Imaging Arts 10th Anniversary, Misumura Art Plaza, Tokyo
1997 Silent Land – Prison Camps in Siberia, Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography, Tokyo
1996 Manchuria / Siberia, Kawasaki City Museum, Kawasaki, Japan
1995 Silent Land-Prison Camps in Siberia, Shinjuku Park Tower-Gallery 1, Tokyo
1994 ARAMASA Taku Photographs: Portraits of Native America, Yurakucho Marion, Tokyo
1990 Family, Commemorative Exhibition of ‘Who Am I’, Nikon Salon, Tokyo and Osaka
1988 ARAMASA Taku Photographs – The 80th Anniversary of Japanese Immigration to Brazil, Sao Paulo Museum, Sao Paulo, Brazil
1987 A Portrait of Japanese Immigrants to South America, Hiroshima and Osaka, Japan
1986 A Portrait of Japanese Immigrants to South America, Yurakuchio Mariyon, Tokyo

Selected Publications

2010 ARAMASA SAKURA, in black room & in black box, ARAMASA Taku Limited
2007 e-book ARAMASA Taku Photographs – Apocalypse, Museum Musashino Art University
2006 ARAMASA Taku Photographs – Apocalypse, Museum Musashino Art University
2000 America / Promised Land, Misuzi Shobo
1995 The Silent Land: Prison Camps in Siberia, Chikuma Shobo
1993 Portrait of Native America, Kodansha
1985 A Portrait of Japanese Immigrants to South America, Asahi Shinbunsha
1980 To My Angels, Zenkoku Shuppan

Awards

1996 Artist of the Year Award, 46th Japan Photography Association
1994 10th Higashikawa Award
1986 5th Domon Ken Award
1985 Grand Prize at the 1st International Triennale Toyama (Public Poster Division)
1978 New Artist of the Year Award, 28th Japan Photography Association

Public Collections

Center for Creative Photography, Arizona State University, Arizona
Domon - Ken Memorial Hall, Sakata, Japan
Higashikawa Museum, Higashikawa-cho, Hokkaido, Japan
Sao Paulo Museum, Sao Paulo, Brazil
History Museum of Japanese Immigrants, Sao Paulo, Brazil
International Center of Photography, New York
Osaka Human Rights History Museum, Osaka, Japan
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, California
History Museum of Japanese Immigrants, San Jose, California
Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography, Tokyo, Japan
Stephen Wirtz Gallery, San Francisco, California
Gallery OUT OF PLACE, Nara, Japan
Museum of Musashino Art University, Tokyo, Japan
In collaboration with Tokyo Publishing House

All works are an edition of 3

ISBN 1-904621-57-0

Catalogue © Annely Juda Fine Art / ARAMASA Taku 2014

Essay © Kin’ichi Obinata
Translation: Kyoko Ando and Rupert Faulkner

Printed by Advent, England