

More than ONE: Ken Ohara's Photographic Journey 1972-2012

From **September 15 to October 31, 2023**, MIYAKO YOSHINAGA is pleased to present *More than ONE: Ken Ohara's Photographic Journey 1972-2012*, featuring approximately 30 works by California-based photographer **Ken Ohara**. This exhibition is organized in conjunction with this season's wide exposure of Ohara's lifework at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Brussel's Patinoire Royale | Galerie Valérie Bach, and the Paris Photo fair.

Ken Ohara (b. 1942) is known as an innovator in the genre of photographic portraiture by transforming our standard perceptions of others, ourselves, and what photography might be best suited to accomplish. In 1970, while working as an assistant to Hiro and Richard Avedon, he emerged as a young artist with his seminal *ONE* series. *ONE* features close-up faces of more than 500 New Yorkers, suggesting an essentially thin boundary across all human races and genders. The same year he produced a yearlong photographic diary in an intimate miniature album. These remarkable early accomplishments marked the beginnings of Ohara's photographic journey for the next 50 years or so, a journey upon which this exhibition strives to shed new light.

In January 1972, Marvin Israel, influential art director at Harper's Bazaar whom Ohara knew through the Avedon studio, encouraged Ohara to continue his early photo diary, and this exhibition showcases a selection from this restarted diary with new prints recently developed from original 35mm negatives (*DIARY 1972*). Each vertical pair registers what he called an "outward" view of the day (top) and a self-portrait denoting his "inward" view (bottom). This new enlarged format opens up a time capsule of the artist's personal narratives, an intimate sphere of action in the early 1970s, a time he shared with his then girlfriend whom he soon wed, and with whom he continues to share his life and his quotidian photographic practice to the present.

In the risky two-year socio-visual experiment entitled *CONTACTS* (1974-1976), Ohara circulated a camera among strangers whom he invited to take photographs of themselves, their family, and friends, thus creating an expanded community documenting and sharing the ordinary details of our lives. He achieved his goal of 100 participants living across over thirty American states. Trusting a camera's objective eye and minimizing his role behind it led to his 1990s project, *with*. His total of 123 collaborators on this project agreed not only to be photographed but also to be "with" him for exactly 60 minutes. During that time, the camera shutter with dense filters was open to allow long, slow exposure to record the time shared by the photographer and his subject. Three pieces from *with* are included in this exhibition. Lastly, images in *BAUHAUS SEITE* (2012) in this exhibition, consists of the pages of the Bauhaus Dessau Foundation's collection catalog and those of the local papers and magazines Ohara

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subscribes to, pursuing the artist's ongoing theme of the time/space which the photographic image both inhabits and records for posterity.

The series of such experiments of photographic communication with himself and others without imposing his social and political views demonstrates the distinctive place Ohara occupies in the history of photography.

Born in 1942 in Tokyo, **Ken Ohara** moved to New York in 1962 after a brief period of study at the Nihon University, and from 1963 to 1965 attended the Art Students League. From 1966 to 1970, he worked as an assistant to Richard Avedon and Hiro. In 1970, he self-published a book entitled *ONE*, which, along with a gelatin silver print from the series, was included in "*New Japanese Photography*" at the Museum of Modern Art, New York in 1974 curated by John Szarkowski. The majority of the photographers in this groundbreaking exhibition such as Shomei Tomatsu, Kikuji Kawada, Eiko Hosoe, and Daido Moriyama were older than Ohara. Ohara has been the recipient of a Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship (1974-1975), and in the 1970s he held several solo exhibitions at the Asahi Pentax Gallery among other Tokyo venues.

Since the 1990s, Ohara's work has been extensively exhibited in the US and Europe at such institutions as the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and Hamburger Kunsthalle. From 2006 to 2007, a major survey of Ohara's work traveled among the Museum Folkwang, the Städtische Galerie Wolfsburg, and the Münchner Stadtmuseum in Germany. In 2006, Ohara held solo exhibitions at the Stephen Cohen Gallery in Los Angeles and at the MIYAKO YOSHINAGA gallery in 2017. In 2018, the Smithsonian American Art Museum acquired the entire set of gelatin silver prints (1970/1998) from his *ONE* series, a selection of which will be on view for one year beginning this September as part of the museum's reinstallation project.

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