

**Defining Identity through Photographs:  
Works of Japanese and Korean Photographers, 1945–1980s**

**March 25, 2024**

**Kelly McCormick (Assistant Professor, University of British Columbia)**

**“A woman's hopes are woven of sunbeams; a shadow annihilates them”: Picturing the Ambitions of Postwar Japanese Women**

In April 1956 *Fujin Kōron* printed a group portrait of seven photographers, titled “Ashita o tsukuru hitobito: kameraman” (The people building tomorrow: cameramen). In contrast to the masculine nominal in the title, the portrait depicted women photographers, each with their camera of choice in hand as they leaned against the shiny hoods of a line of cars and casually chatted while taking photographs. A year prior, the magazine kicked off what became known as the “the Housewife Debate” which raged for decades across magazines and newspapers over the changing roles of women working within and without the home. That this photograph was published in the midst of the debate situates it as a representation of women as they broke through historical barriers to public facing work and they picked cameras to make a living as “cameramen.”

In this presentation I demonstrate how in the early postwar period women photographers’ self-representation, representations of them in the mass press, and the images they made of other women are inseparable. By situating these three kinds of photographs in relation to one another I show how the “femaleness” captured by these photographers, rather than always conform to the normative desire of the mass media, presented examples of gender performance that pressured the postwar ideas of acceptability around women’s public behaviors. Drawing on sources from women’s magazines, photography magazines, weekly newspapers, and camera company publications I explore the importance of paying attention to photography as women’s labor in this period. How did women respond to national discussions about a changing Japanese society by making photographs to represent those who were often left out of these debates? How are women as laborers in the photography world both as photographers and producers of cameras represented? With these questions in mind, I address how the focus in the 1950s on the realism movement, while touched on by some contemporary critics in relation to class, for the most part has ignored the role of gender in shaping the photography world. Through a focus on the women photographers who saw themselves as photojournalists, I explore what labor's presence within the Japanese documentary tradition was during the process of radically shifting to meet the challenges of a postwar generation that called into question the realism of their mentors.

**Ji Hye Han (Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Fellow, Sainsbury Institute)**

***Zesshō, Yokosuka Story: Ishiuchi Miyako’s Distinctive Critique on the Postwar Condition of Japan***

In 1976, in a town called Miyako in the Tōhoku region, Ishiuchi Miyako (1947–) came to a somewhat ironic realization –she had no choice but to photograph her hateful childhood hometown,

Yokosuka. Over a period of six months between October 1976 and March 1977, Ishiuchi repeatedly returned to Yokosuka, taking photographs of various parts of it. Among these photographs, Ishiuchi published 107 of them as her first photobook, *Zesshō, Yokosuka Story* (1979). This paper, which highlights the narrative possibility of the medium of the photobook, examines *Zesshō, Yokosuka Story*'s distinctive visual narrative on Yokosuka, a major port city that had been hosting the Imperial Japanese Navy since the Meiji period through 1945, and a site of Japan Self-Defense Forces (created in 1954) and a huge US naval base since 1945. What visual narrative does Ishiuchi present in her photobook? What visual terms did she use to create this visual narrative? Are those terms any different from those seen in the popular photographs of Yokosuka produced by some of her well-known predecessors including Tōmatsu Shōmei (1930–2012), Daidō Moriyama (1938–), and Tokiwa Toyoko (1928–2019) that Ishiuchi was highly conscious of from the onset of this project? Through exploring these questions, the paper seeks to provide an insight into some of the most popular photographic visions of Yokosuka during the 1960s–70s while highlighting the visual narrative that Ishiuchi presents in *Yokosuka Story* as her distinctive comment on the postwar condition of Japan and critique on nationally projected idea/image centering around the notion of peace and wealth.

**Sohee Kim (Senior Curator, Museum Hanmi)**

**"‘Modern Photo Society’ and 1960’s Modern Photography in Korea."**

This presentation will examine early 1960s photography group ‘Modern Photo Society[Hyundai Sajin Yeonguho]’ in Korea. The group began as a study group at ‘Salon Ars’, which was formed to challenge some stereotypical realism. The presentation will highlight the significance of ‘Modern Photo Society’ which signaled the emergence of a new generation highly educated in Korea. ‘Modern Photo Society’ served as the bedrock for some of the representative contemporary Korean photographers such as Joo Myung-duk, Park Young-sook, and Hwang Kyu-tae and through its publications stood at the center of Korean photographic discourse. Tracing the activities of ‘Modern Photo Society,’ the presentation will provide an in-depth look at the development of realism and modernism in Korean photography after the Korean War, and how photographers have been looking at historical and cultural changes in Korea through photographic vision.

**Sunjung Han (Director, Han Youngsoo Foundation)**

**"What other did not see but only Han Youngsoo saw"**

In his photographs, Han Youngsoo (1933-1999), who is one of the most acclaimed Korean documentary photographers, captured with a modern and sophisticated touch the streets and people of Seoul, a city that was quickly recovering from the devastation of the Korean War. The paper attempts to closely examine the changing contour of Seoul in some of Han’s most representative photographs produced between 1956-1963. Unlike his contemporaries, who mainly focused on the dreary aspect of a war-torn city, Han presents the other side of the city, which is surprisingly modern, thus contributing to shaping a more comprehensive picture of Seoul and its people during the 1950s–60s. Throughout the discussion, the paper will also highlight Han’s masterful treatment of the composition, angle, timing, and selection of subject matter, which all bespeak of Han’s

distinguished talent as a photographer. Overall, this paper seeks to discuss the works of Han Youngsoo as some of the most significant photographs in the history of Korean photography that capture the changing landscape of Seoul and its people after the Korean War and briefly introduce the activities of the Han Youngsoo Foundation.

**March 26, 2024**

**Daniel Abbe (Lecturer, Shiga University)**

### **Photographic Orientations and Colonial Space**

In her book *Queer Phenomenology*, Sara Ahmed has suggested that space itself is bodily, which is to say that it has an orientation. An orientation, then, is not just a direction that one points; it already embodies a relation with the space one is in. Ahmed's reflections emerge directly from the philosophical tradition of phenomenology, which studies the direction of consciousness. But she twists this tradition—noting that the word “queer” emerges from the word “twist,” and is thus oriented in space—in the direction of a phenomenology that is attentive to the way that space is marked by difference in general, and by sexuality in particular. In photographs, space is organized by a point of view that is tied to the bodily position of a photographer. This paper puts Ahmed's capacious notion of orientation in dialogue with photographic work produced in and around Japan, in order to explore the question of identity. I introduce a brief history of representation of Okinawa by mainland Japanese artists and intellectuals, to untangle the way that Okinawa has historically served as not simply a space into which capital could flow, but also as a screen onto which a national fantasy of Japanese identity could be projected. Then, I explore these dynamics of identification and assimilation at work in photography, through the idea of orientation. How does an orientation appear in photographs, and how, if at all, have photographers addressed the possessive, even colonial aspect of orientation? In order to answer this question, I will consider a range of photographic practices from in and around Japan.

**Shih Cheng Huang (PhD Candidate, SOAS University of London)**

### **Okinawa Reimagined: Tōmatsu Shōmei's Lens on a Transforming Landscape**

In February 1969, Japanese photographer Tōmatsu Shōmei (1930-2012) embarked on his initial journey to Okinawa as a correspondent for the Asahi Shimbun. His connection to the region deepened through multiple visits in 1971, evolving into a long-term stay after April 1972. During this period, Tōmatsu produced seminal works such as *OKINAWA OKINAWA OKINAWA* (1969) and *The Pencil of the Sun* (1975), which together constitute his Okinawa series.

This presentation delves into Tōmatsu's Okinawa portfolio, scrutinising the intricate dynamics and shifting tensions between Japan and the United States amidst the historical context of the Okinawa Reversion in 1972. It highlights the transformation in Tōmatsu's visual themes and colour schemes, reflecting the socio-political changes of the era. Building on Tōmatsu's *Occupied* series from the early 1960s, *OKINAWA OKINAWA OKINAWA* portrays the persistent influence of military bases, indicating thematic continuity. Yet, inspired by Yanagita Kunio's *Kaijō no michi* (The Maritime Path), his later endeavours embraced colour imagery and broadened his lens to include Southeast

Asian vistas. *The Pencil of the Sun* project, concluding in Miyako-jima, represents a return to monochrome and investigates ethnographic methodologies in the Yaeyama Islands.

By tracing Tōmatsu's publications across various magazines in chronological order, this study illuminates his integral role in documenting and engaging with Okinawa's development. It explores his nuanced observations of artistic expression and social realities during the turbulent Okinawa Reversion phase. This research suggests that Tōmatsu's work offers a profound commentary on the nexus of culture, politics, and identity in postwar Japan, with a special focus on the distinctive perspective of Okinawa.

**Sunyoung Kim (Senior Curator, Museum Hanmi)**

**Exploring paths and identities through magazine pages: Photo Essays by JOO Myung Duck and KANG Woongu**

With the establishment of reliable photo printing systems by the mid-1960s in South Korea, monthly magazines began to flourish, featuring curated photo spreads and essay on various social issues. Raised in the tradition of 1950s photorealism and leading the charge in 1960s documentary photography, photographers found an ideal platform in these news and cultural monthly magazines to showcase their work and make social statements.

Photographers JOO Myung Duck (1940~) and KANG Woongu (1941~) played pivotal roles as photojournalists for monthly magazines, shaping the era's photographic style, narrative format, and editorial processes from the late 1960s through the 1970s. They focused on capturing the darker aspects of society under authoritarian rule due during this period and portraying the uncertainties faced by ordinary people amidst rapid industrialization. Their work aimed to shed light on societal issues and provoke contemplation among viewers. As such, their collection of photo essays published within magazines provided an accurate portrayal of the time, prompting readers to reflect on the path and directions they should have pursued, both individually and as a nation.

Beginning in 1969, JOO Myung Duck initiated the groundbreaking project 'The Other Side of Korea' as a photojournalist for *Monthly Joongang*, which delved deep into societal issues and used photography as a tool for social commentary. Another notable series, 'Korean Families,' published in the same magazine, provided a glimpse into the lives of Koreans during the industrialization era. Meanwhile, KANG Woongu's 'The Images of Three Villages' (1972~1979), originally part of 'Residential Living Scenery' for pages of *Women's Dong-A*, was a meticulous, archeological record of the struggles for survival of agricultural and fishery communities during the Saemaul Movement, a political initiative that rapidly yet coercively industrialized the country.

**Young Min Moon (Professor, University of Massachusetts Amherst)**

**The Souvenir Photographs from the Military Camptown in South Korea, circa 1980**

During the prolonged armistice of the Korean War, townships began forming around US military bases in locations distant from mainstream Korean society. By exploring the souvenir photographs from Dongducheon near the Demilitarized Zone, whose economy has depended mainly on military bases, this paper examines the intersectionality of race, gender, and international relations in the context of the Cold War.

The souvenir photographs collected by Kim Yong Tae from commercial photo salons feature American soldiers stationed in South Korea and their temporary partners. Another set of souvenir photos by Kang Yong Suk, shot in the clubs where Korean nationals had been prohibited, features US servicemen at leisure, accompanied by female Korean club workers. Both sets of photographs simultaneously present iconographic images of the geopolitics of the divided nation and the personal aspirations through the unlikely unions of racially and socioeconomically marginalized groups from both countries.

The photographs portray the precarious lives of the Korean women forgotten in the shadow of the Cold War that still grips the nation. Their identities were dependent on and shaped by the unequal US-Korea military arrangement and the caprices of the individual servicemen. The photographs reveal the complex entanglement of inter-state security interests, economic needs, and emotional and sexual gratification through the state-sanctioned rest-and-relaxation industry. Behind the façade of the flexing of muscles, heavy make-up, and affectionate embraces, the club workers grappled with their abject poverty, state regulation, racial hierarchy, discrimination, and violence, all in their pursuit of survival and dignity as human beings.