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The Photographer Under Pressure:
Nakahira Takuma as a Body in the World, 1968-1977

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Art History

by

Daniel Pease Abbe

2023

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2023

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Photographer Under Pressure:
Nakahira Takuma as a Body in the World, 1968-1977

by

Daniel Abbe

Doctor of Philosophy in Art History
University of California, Los Angeles, 2023
Professor George Baker, Chair

Many art historical discussions take a philosophical approach to photography, in which the medium becomes an ontological object. This dissertation proceeds instead from the subject of the photographer, understood in phenomenological terms. In particular, I take the photographs and critical essays of the Japanese photographer Nakahira Takuma (1938-2015) as a case study to ask how photographers are bodies in the world. Nakahira stands out for his significant contributions to the politicization of photographic theory and practice, largely during the 1970s. Yet he differs from other artist-critic figures working around the world at this time because he consistently staked his work on corporeal experience. Drawing on the events of 1968, mass media distribution of images, conceptual practices of photography,

Mono-ha art theory and the political situation of Okinawa, Nakahira continuously worked over the question of how bodies relate to the world.

Each chapter of this dissertation examines one group of Nakahira's photographs, or one of his essays, to trace the development of his corporeal theory and practice. Chapter 1 introduces photographs that Nakahira published in the second issue of the magazine *Provoke*, to show why he came to understand bodies in political terms around 1968. Chapter 2 considers the body of the photographer in relation to mass media, capital and state power, through a close reading of "The Illusion Called Document," a 1972 essay that Nakahira wrote in dialogue with contemporary media theory. Chapter 3 positions Nakahira's 1971 Paris installation *Circulation* within the context of conceptual art and photography. In contrast to such cool indexicality, this work developed the idea of the photographer as a body flowing through the world. Chapter 4 turns to Nakahira's most well-known piece of writing, "Why an Illustrated Botanical Reference Book?" Drawing on phenomenology through the Mono-ha artist Lee Ufan, Nakahira situates the photographer in relation to the world through the embodied notion of "encounter." Chapter 5 examines photographs that Nakahira took on the islands of Amami. The disorientations of photographic space in this series represent a critique at a sensorial level of the colonial relationship between "mainland" Japan and Okinawa.

The dissertation of Daniel Pease Abbe is approved.

Katsuya Hirano

Saloni Mathur

Dell Upton

George Baker, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2023

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Although my name appears as the sole author of this dissertation, studying Nakahira Takuma has taught me that things only emerge through relation—and that appearances, in any case, cannot be taken at face value. This project germinated in Tokyo, where I moved in 2009 to teach myself about photography. I still have a clear memory of sitting in a park in Suginami-ku, struggling through a three-page essay in a volume of Nakahira's writing. That was now well over ten years ago. At the time, I did not know I was taking the first steps on a journey that would last until today. I do not remember who first pointed me to Nakahira, a fact that shows how difficult it would be to completely express the deep gratitude I feel upon arriving at this point. This research only exists because of the care and support of countless people, some of whom I will try to name here.

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I have only reached this point because of my family. My grandmother Kathryn, a photographer, sparked my interest in photography. Mom, Dad, Becca: I love you all so much. Thank you, Lucinda, for being there. A photograph of my grandmother Leah sits on the desk

at which I have worked on each page of this dissertation, including this one. In the picture, she appears full of determination and poise, composed but not rigid, completely absorbed in her practice. This image spurred my work on, as Leah so often did while she was alive—but she also urged me to leave my research behind, and go out into the world. Thank you, Leah; this dissertation is dedicated to you.

Vita

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M.A. 2016 University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), Art History
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Selected Publications

“Critics' Picks: Sanya Kantarovsky, Taka Ishii Gallery Kyoto.” *Artforum*, May 2023, online.

“Restricted View.” In *Une ligne formée de points*, by Hayahisa Tomiyasu, 169-172. Edited by Lilian Froger. Lannion: L'Imagerie - Centre d'art, 2022.

“Re-Staging Postwar Japanese Photography: Ōtsuji Kiyoji, APN and Straight Photography.” *Japan Forum* 34, no. 3 (2021): 355–82.

“Nikutai wo motta katachi: Shinden toshite no Ishioka Eiko ten.” (“Flesh Given Form: Ishioka Eiko’s Exhibit as a Temple”) *Bijutsu Techō*, May 2021, online. [Japanese]

“‘Iwanakute ii koto’ no busshitsusei.” (“The Materiality of ‘What Need Not Be Said’”) *Bijutsu Techō*, August 2020, online. [Japanese]

“Toyo Miyatake’s Positions / Miyatake Tōyō No Fukusū No Pojishon.” *Photographers’ Gallery Press*, no. 14 (December 2019): 305–26. [English with Japanese translation]

“Photography at the End of Industry.” *X-TRA* vol. 21 no. 4 (Summer 2019): 60-69.

Selected Presentations

“Busshitsu toshite no nikutai: Nakahira Takuma to shashinkaron.” (“Flesh as Material: Nakahira Takuma and the Theory of the Photographer”) Japan Society of Image Arts & Sciences, Photography Research Group 9th Research Presentation Meeting, November 2022, online. [Japanese]

“Movimientos sociales de la década 70 en Japón: escalas y potencialidades.” (“Social Movements in the 1970s in Japan: Scale and Potentiality”) Asociación Cultural Satori, Lima, Sep 2022, online. [Spanish]

“Corporeal Freedom: Nakahira Takuma’s Theory of Jazz.” Asian Studies Conference Japan, Tokyo, July 2022, online.

“Flesh as Material: Nakahira Takuma’s Provoke and Body Politics.” 45th Annual AHVA Graduate Symposium, University of British Columbia, Feb 2022, online.

Roundtable: “Writing the History of Japanese Photography: Challenges and Provocations.” Association of Asian Studies, March 2021, online.

“‘Or, We Could Quit Being Photographers’: Nakahira Takuma and the Crisis of the Image Circa 1972.” Getty Graduate Symposium, Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Jan 2019.

“Amateur Interventions: Re-Thinking ‘Protest Photography’ Through Masuyama Tazuko and Akagi Shuji.” Japan Studies Association Conference, Honolulu, Jan 2017.

Selected Translations (all Japanese to English)

Katsuya Hirano. “Settler-Colonial Translation: ‘Civilizing’ Operations and the Ainu Voice” (forthcoming in *The Legacies of Postcolonial Studies*, under consideration at University of California Press)

Otsuji Kiyoji. *Kiyoji Otsuji Photography Archive, Film Collection 7: The Time the Sun Did Not Know*. Tokyo: Musashino Art University Museum & Library, 2022.

Catalog essays in Nagashima Yurie. *Nagashima Yurie: And a Pinch of Irony with a Hint of Love* Tokyo: Tokyo Museum of Photographic Arts, 2017.

Otsuji Kiyoji. *Kiyoji Otsuji: Photographs in the Collection of Musashino Art University Museum & Library*. Tokyo: Musashino Art University Museum & Library, 2016.

Photography Books Published (as MCV MCV)

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Professional Experience

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2013 – 2014	Translator, Taka Ishii Gallery, Tokyo
2012 – 2013	Contributing Editor, IMA Magazine, Tokyo
2011 – 2013	Web Editor, Bonnier Corp / American Photo [online]
2009 – 2011	Assistant Language Teacher, ACUP Japan, Tokyo
2006 – 2009	Editorial Specialist, Google Book Search, Mountain View, CA

Note

Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Japanese are my own.

All works by Nakahira Takuma in this dissertation are © Nakahira Gen, courtesy of Osiris.

Introduction

> One way or another, the photographer is in the world.[1]
>
> Abigail Solomon-Godeau

Two photographs by Tōmatsu Shomei show the emergence of a photographer. In the first, from 1964, a man takes a swing at a punching bag hanging from the ceiling of a desolate room. A Coca-Cola sign sits on the back wall, to the side of a shoot-em-up game with rifle-wielding cowboys in Stetson hats. Set amidst these markers of American industry and violence, the man cuts a futile figure, as the force with which he propels his somewhat diminutive stature towards the bag seems out of proportion, if not simply uncoordinated. Tōmatsu has used a slow enough shutter speed to blur this man's right arm and face, adding motion to the scene, but he also takes the sting out of the punch by framing it together with the thoroughly cartoonish cowboys. The photograph is called "Editor Nakahira Takuma, Tokyo, Shinjuku." The second was taken in 1967. Here, a figure is captured in almost the same bodily position: right arm extended, left arm thrown back. The scene is again rather bleak, dominated by a dull sky. And yet even as a building rises above the human figure, this body itself towers over an imposing-looking structure in the deep background. The body pushes off of its left leg, making what looks to be a small hop. This photograph is called "Photographer Nakahira Takuma, Tokyo, New City Center."[2]

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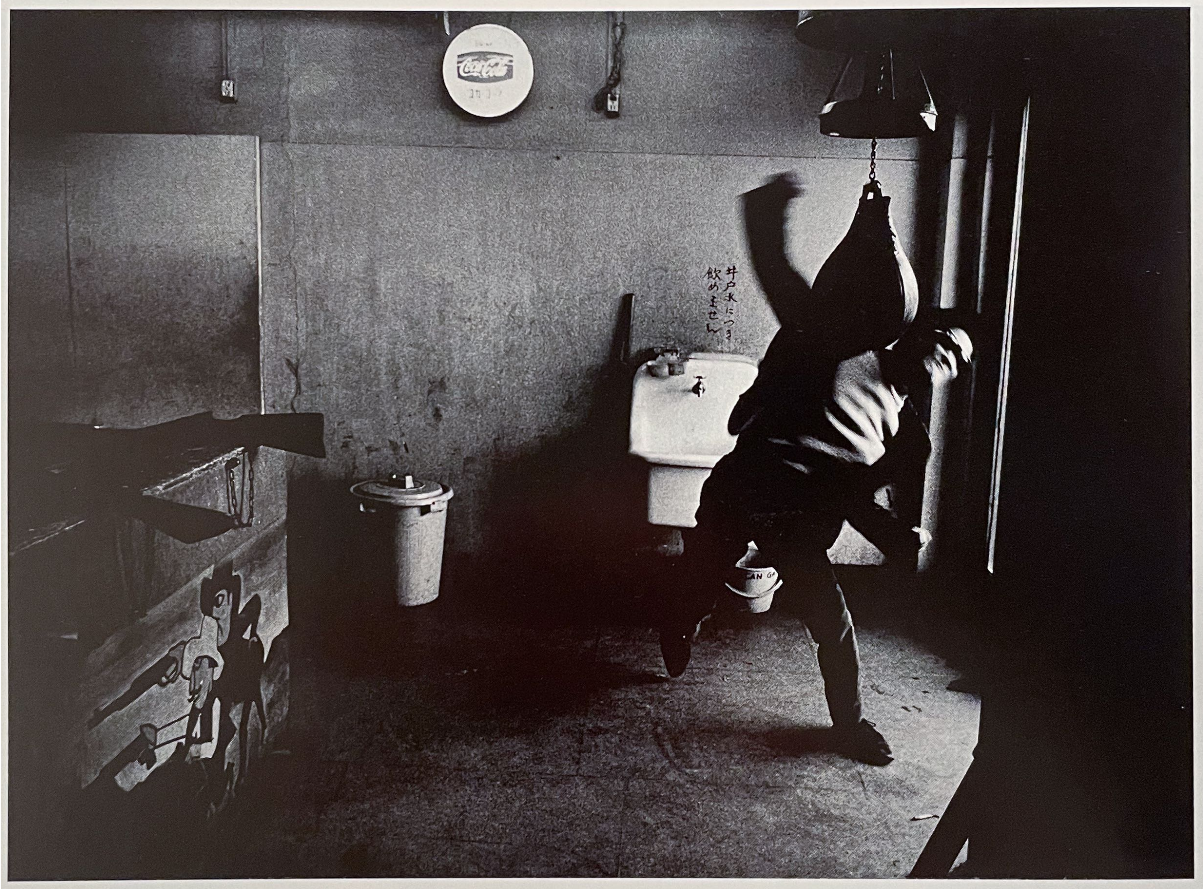
[1] Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Inventing Vivian Maier: Categories, Careers, and Commerce," in *Photography after Photography: Gender, Genre, History*, ed. Sarah Parsons (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2017), 153–54.

[2] These titles appear in a 2011 catalog of Tōmatsu's work, in which it is noted that Tōmatsu re-named some of the photographs at the time of its publication. See note in Tōmatsu Shōmei, *Shashinka Tōmatsu Shōmei zen shigoto* (Nagoya: "Shashinka Tōmatsu Shōmei zen shigoto" ten jikkō īnkai, 2011), 142. The earlier photograph was published in Tōmatsu's 1969 book *Oh! Shinjuku*.

Figures 1 and 2



Tōmatsu Shōmei, “Editor Nakahira Takuma, Tokyo, Shinjuku,” 1964.

Tōmatsu Shōmei, “Photographer Nakahira Takuma, Tokyo, New City Center,” 1967.

+++

Extending Abigail Solomon-Godeau’s contention that “the photographer is in the world,” this dissertation proceeds from the claim that the photographer is a *body* in the world. Across the pair of Tōmatsu’s photographs, the figure identified as Nakahira Takuma goes from a punch to a jump, from interior to exterior, from editor to photographer. In each case, he appears in the midst of an almost exaggerated corporeal gesture. Practically unknown in 1967, Nakahira went on to become a widely recognized photographer and essayist. I take up Nakahira’s work as a case study to ask: how are photographers bodies in the world? What are the stakes of this corporeality, and what art historical methodologies can draw them out? Nakahira’s work suggests the importance of the photographer’s own corporeal sensation. However, sensation exceeds the boundaries of the individual: even though Nakahira’s bodily

posture hardly changes across the two photographs, when he emerges as a photographer he is no longer hitting out at the world but leaping into it—perhaps, even, starting to intertwine with it.[3]

Today, Nakahira is best known as a member of *Provoke*, a Tokyo-based magazine of photographs, essays and poetry published between 1968 and 1969. Nakahira's 1970 photobook *For a Language to Come*, which collects many of the photographs he published in *Provoke*, is considered a representative publication of postwar Japanese photography.[4] Within the Japanese-language discourse of photography history and theory, he is also well-known as an essayist; a 2007 anthology of his writings runs some 500 pages.[5] In his later years, he held a retrospective exhibition at a major public museum, published various photography books, and was the subject of two separate documentary films.[6] And yet beyond any of these career accomplishments, Nakahira stands out for his significant contributions to the politicization of photographic theory and practice, largely during the 1970s. Nakahira differs from other artist-critic figures working around the world at this time because he consistently staked his politics on the body of the photographer itself.

---

[3] Strictly speaking, the shift from "Editor Nakahira Takuma" to "Photographer Nakahira Takuma" does not mean leaving the interior space of the office for the outside world: Tokyo-based editors like Nakahira were constantly meeting with writers, while photographers spent significant time inside the darkroom.

[4] *For a Language to Come* appeared in the first volume of a market-setting series of books on famous photobooks; it is now a collector's item. See Martin Parr and Gerry Badger, *The Photobook: A History*, vol. 1 (London: Phaidon, 2004), 292.

[5] The 2007 Japanese anthology is Nakahira Takuma, *Mitsuzukeru hate ni hi ga...: hihyō shūsei 1965-1977* (Tokyo: Osiris, 2007). At present, few of these essays have been translated into English, with the notable exceptions of translations by Franz Prichard, which are included in Nakahira Takuma, *Kitarubeki kotoba no tame ni* (Tokyo: Osiris, 2010); Takuma Nakahira, *Circulation: Date, Place, Events* (Tokyo: Osiris, 2012).

[6] In 2003, the Yokohama Museum of Art held the solo exhibition "Nakahira Takuma: Degree Zero — Yokohama." Up until his death in 2015, Nakahira was publishing books fairly regularly. In 2003, Kohara Masashi released his film *The Man Who Became A Camera: Photographer Takuma Nakahira*, which documented Nakahira across three years. In 2004, Homma Takashi released the film *Extremely Good Landscapes*, which also took Nakahira as its subject.

At this point, I offer working definitions of these key terms, "photographer" and "body." By "photographer," I refer to a human subject that makes photographs.[7] The images of Nakahira by Tōmatsu show that no photographer simply emerges as a fully formed subject, as it were *ex nihilo*. There is no transhistorical subjectivity called "photographer"; subjects must articulate the term in practice, in the world. This idea of emplacement in the world connects to my working definition of "body." Thinking with phenomenology, I take the body as a human and material presence that is always opened up to, in touch with, the world. To consider the photographer as a body in the world is to understand the human subject that makes photographs as a corporeal presence that can only exist in relation to something outside of itself.

This study bodies forth the figure of the photographer for two reasons. The first is to suggest a methodological direction for photographic and art historical research that attends to the body. To take the photographer as a body calls for a mode of analysis that is, itself, sensitive to the sensorial. In this regard, the rather vast amount of scholarship on photography that privileges an ontological inquiry into the nature of the medium—as if "photography" or "the photographic" could be grasped through philosophical means—is less useful than an approach grounded in phenomenology. As a result, I focus less on the ontological and abstract object that is "photography," and more on the phenomenological and concrete

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[7] Joanna Zylinksa's recent book *Nonhuman Photography* offers an important challenge to the category of the human within photography scholarship. She notes that "the traditional scholarly and curatorial way of discussing this medium still maintains a relatively narrow set of humanist and human-centric frameworks and discourses on the topic." Joanna Zylinska, *Nonhuman Photography* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2017), 3. Against this model, Zylinksa proposes a posthuman model of photography, in order to theorize a "nonhuman vision," which she claims is a "*better* way of looking, not just in an optical but also in an ethico-political sense." Zylinska, 17. In Zylinska's study, the "nonhuman" is assumed to be a moral good, if not even to carry a revolutionary value. To the extent that I am interested in the category of the human, it is in line with the far more subtle line of thinking advanced by Zakiyyah Iman Jackson: "Many critics of anthropocentricism have mistakenly perceived that the problem of our time is anthropocentricism rather than a failed praxis of being." Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, *Becoming Human: Matter and Meaning in an Antiblack World*, Sexual Cultures (New York: New York University Press, 2020), 15.

subject of the photographer. Beyond photography history and theory, to examine the artist in phenomenological terms opens up a new direction for art historical inquiry. Phenomenology is well-known to art history, primarily as a means of thinking through the encounter between works and spectators. This project inquires into the corporeal sensation of the artist, attempting at each turn to bring forth the social stakes of bodily experience. Nakahira offers a compelling case study against which to test this method.

My second reason for turning to the photographer, then, is to trace a consistent line through Nakahira's heterogeneous production, which includes a vast range of essays, and an experimental body of photographic work that did not adhere to any single style. Across the years that I examine, roughly 1968 to 1977, Nakahira spent a great deal of critical energy thinking through the political stakes of being a photographer. To draw this energy out, I focus on three bodies of Nakahira's photographs and two major essays that he published during this period. I do not attempt to account for all that Nakahira produced over these years. However, throughout the study, I situate his photographs and essays within the broader social, political and artistic conditions of their time. After all, Nakahira did not consider the figure of the photographer in abstract terms. Instead, his thinking was always grounded in his own experience, which he described in both world-historical and sensorial dimensions. The figure of the photographer was Nakahira's mode through which to grapple with the pressing questions of the day—and his answers consistently pointed towards the body as the site where they might be resolved.

Nakahira Takuma and his Context

Born in Tokyo in 1938, Nakahira moved around the greater Tokyo area various times during his childhood, in part to take refuge from the bombing of Tokyo; his family home was destroyed in the Great Tokyo Air Raid of 1945. Nakahira's father was a calligraphy artist of

some note; his mother passed away when he was a teenager.[8] After working as a magazine editor during the early 1960s, Nakahira became a well-recognized photographer by about 1970. Around this time, he also published critical essays in a range of journals.[9] In 1977, he fell down a flight of stairs after a night of heavy drinking, and fell into a coma. In time, he regained consciousness. Nakahira did not write any further essays after this event, although he did continue making color photographs late into his life; much of this late work has been collected in photobooks.[10] He passed away from pneumonia-related complications in 2015.

Wartime experience at home and on the front formed the political sensibilities of an entire generation in Japan. Still, Nakahira was far too young to have been drafted into military service during the Second World War. His political formation came at Tokyo University of Foreign Languages, which he entered in 1958. He majored in Spanish, and formed a study group dedicated to Latin America.[11] The question of Third World solidarity

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[8] Nakahira's father, Nankei, was somewhat well known within calligraphy circles. In 1974, he published a rather luxurious edition of his work. The colophon of the book marks it as "not for sale." Nakahira Nankei, *Nakahira Nankei kinsakushū* (Yokohama: Self-published, 1974).

[9] Nakahira published articles across a variety of print media in Japan, including specialist magazines in the fields of photography (*Asahi Camera*), art (*Bijutsu Techō*), film (*Kikan Film*), design (*Dezain*), poetry (*Gendai Shi Techō*) as well as general newspapers (*Nihon Dokusho Shimbun*) and weekly news magazines (*Asahi Journal*). Many of these articles were collected in two volumes that he published during the 1970s: *Why An Illustrated Botanical Reference Book?* (1973) and *Duel on Photography* (1977), a collaboration with the photographer Shinoyama Kishin, whose photographs appeared alongside Nakahira's writing.

[10] See, for example, Takuma Nakahira, *Documentary* (Tokyo: Akio Nagasawa Publishing, 2011); Takuma Nakahira, *Okinawa* (Tokyo: Rat Hole, 2017).

[11] In 1962, Nakahira wrote directly to Fidel Castro, asking to become a volunteer soldier for the Cuban revolution. According to Nakahira, the reply from Castro's secretary read: "We are more than capable of defending our own country; you should fight in yours." Nakahira Takuma, "Mattaku no yukiatari battari — watashi no dokusho," *Geijutsu Kurabu*, November 1973, 172. Recounting the episode about 10 years later, though, Nakahira renders the name of Castro's secretary and longtime confidant Celia Sánchez as "María"; while the details of the story should be taken with a grain of salt, I take his feeling to be genuine. It is hard not to wonder whether he really would have gone to Cuba if summoned. A small anecdote from late in Nakahira's life sheds some light on his idealism. Speaking in 1993, Nakahira explained why he smokes the short version of Hope brand cigarettes: "there is also 'Long Hope,' but now is not the age of aiming for world revolution. 'Short Hope'—the hope is brief." Nakahira Takuma, "Intabyū Nakahira Takuma: 'Purovōku' no saisentan wa Takanashi Yutaka datta," *déjà-vu*, October 1993, 57.

preoccupied Nakahira for the rest of his life, and he became a particularly avid reader of Frantz Fanon.[12] The political landscape of Japan from the late 1950s through the 1960s—in which Nakahira developed as a student, editor, and then photographer—was dominated by large-scale left-wing struggles against the Japanese state. Along with labor conditions and environmental pollution, the relationship between Japan and the United States was a site of sharp conflict. As a university student, Nakahira participated in demonstrations held in Tokyo in 1960 against the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, which guaranteed a United States military presence in Japan.[13] The treaty was eventually signed, placing Japan firmly on the side of the United States in the Cold War, and opening the door to significant military cooperation between Japan and the United States.

The Vietnam War made this military alliance clear and visible, galvanizing another wave of protests that culminated in Tokyo in 1968. Like other places around the world, Japanese students organized themselves in spontaneous mobilizations directed against the state and their own universities, which they saw as complicit in the war. For those like Nakahira who were aligned with the Japanese New Left, party politics were almost entirely out of the question—younger leftists had split with the Japanese Communist Party from as far back as 1958.[14] All the same, Nakahira was already 30 by 1968, placing him at a generational remove from the center of these student revolutions. Instead, he was part of the cultural scene

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[12] The Okinawan poet Takara Ben, one of Nakahira's closest interlocutors from the 1970s onwards, has recounted that at an early point in their friendship, Nakahira recommended him to read all of Fanon's work. Takara Ben, "Nakahira Takuma ron," in *Tamafuri: ryūkyū bunka geijutsuron* (Tokyo: Miraisha, 2011), 187.

[13] Takuma Nakahira, *Nakahira Takuma: Degree Zero—Yokohama* (Tokyo: Osiris, 2003), 156. Hundreds of thousands of people were in the streets of Tokyo to protest the signing of the treaty, which is known widely in Japanese and English-language scholarship by its abbreviated name, Anpo.

[14] See William Andrews, *Dissenting Japan: A History of Japanese Radicalism and Counterculture, from 1945 to Fukushima* (London: Hurst & Company, 2016), 27.

that developed around the Tokyo district of Shinjuku, a gathering place for hippies, beat poets, and countercultural figures of all sorts.[15]

This is the milieu in which Nakahira began his career, in 1963, as an editor at the cultural magazine *Gendai no Me* (Contemporary Eye). His work put him in touch with a range of artists: Nakahira worked closely with the avant-garde poet and director Terayama Shūji, and he also met Tōmatsu when he commissioned the more senior photographer to write a series of film reviews for the magazine. The cultural scene in Japan during the mid to late 1960s was fluid: artists, designers, filmmakers, architects, theater directors, musicians, editors and critics shared social spaces and published in the same journals. In that sense, it is not surprising that Nakahira would make the leap from editor to photographer. And yet it was Tōmatsu himself who sent Nakahira on his path to becoming a photographer, when he gave Nakahira a camera as a wedding present in 1964.[16] Nakahira published his first photograph (under a pseudonym) in *Gendai no Me* in December 1964, and by 1968 he published his first series in *Asahi Camera*, one of the major photography magazines of the day.

Even this early series, titled "Last Train," shows Nakahira's interest bodily experience. Nakahira photographed scenes on the last train of the evening to leave Tokyo for his home in Zushi, the end of the line some 50 kilometers away. Figures appear distorted throughout. In one photograph, a man in a suit is visible at the right, but he is only recognizable as human because of the gradation between the gray of his jacket, the white of his shirt and the black of his tie—the blur that convulses the entire photograph distends his face beyond recognition. On the following page, two hands press up to the glass of a window.

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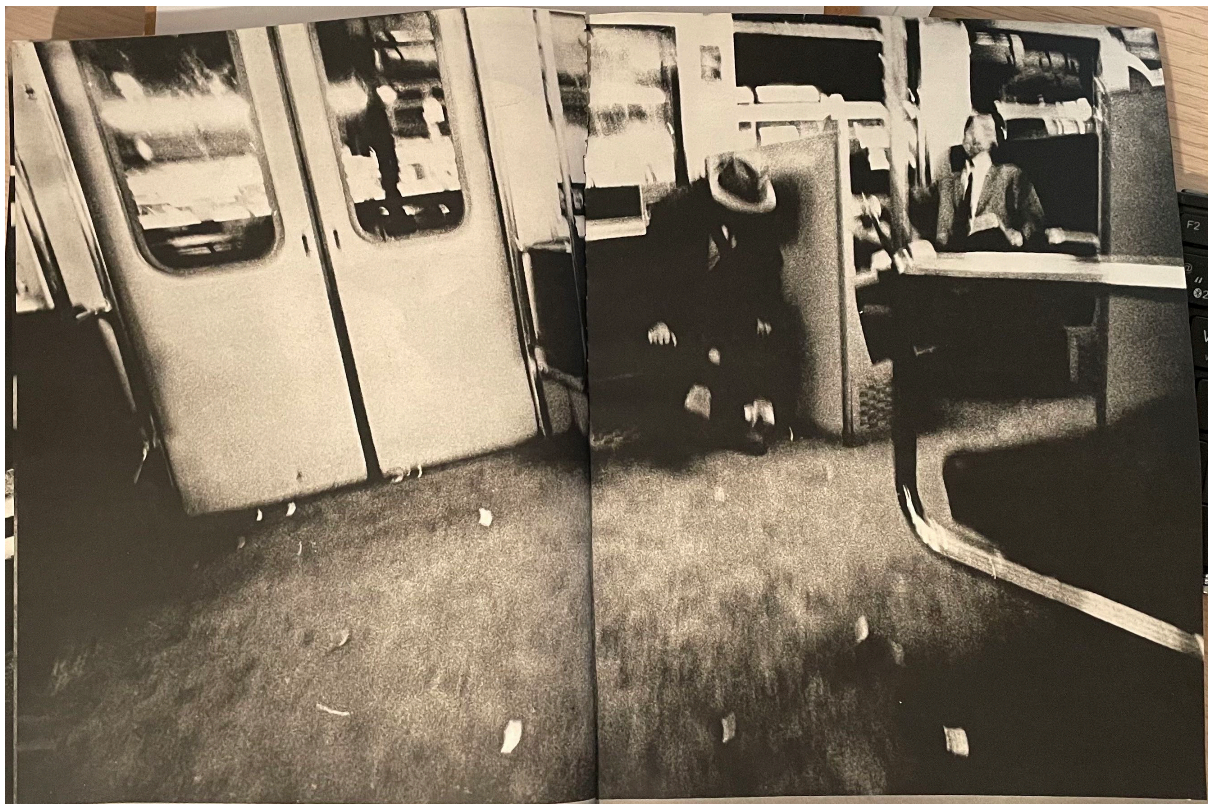
[15] For a deeper exploration of Shinjuku in the 1960s, with a particular focus on artistic production, see Taro Nettleton, "Throw Out the Books, Get Out in the Streets: Subjectivity and Space in Japanese Underground Art of the 1960s" (Ph.D. diss, University of Rochester, 2010).

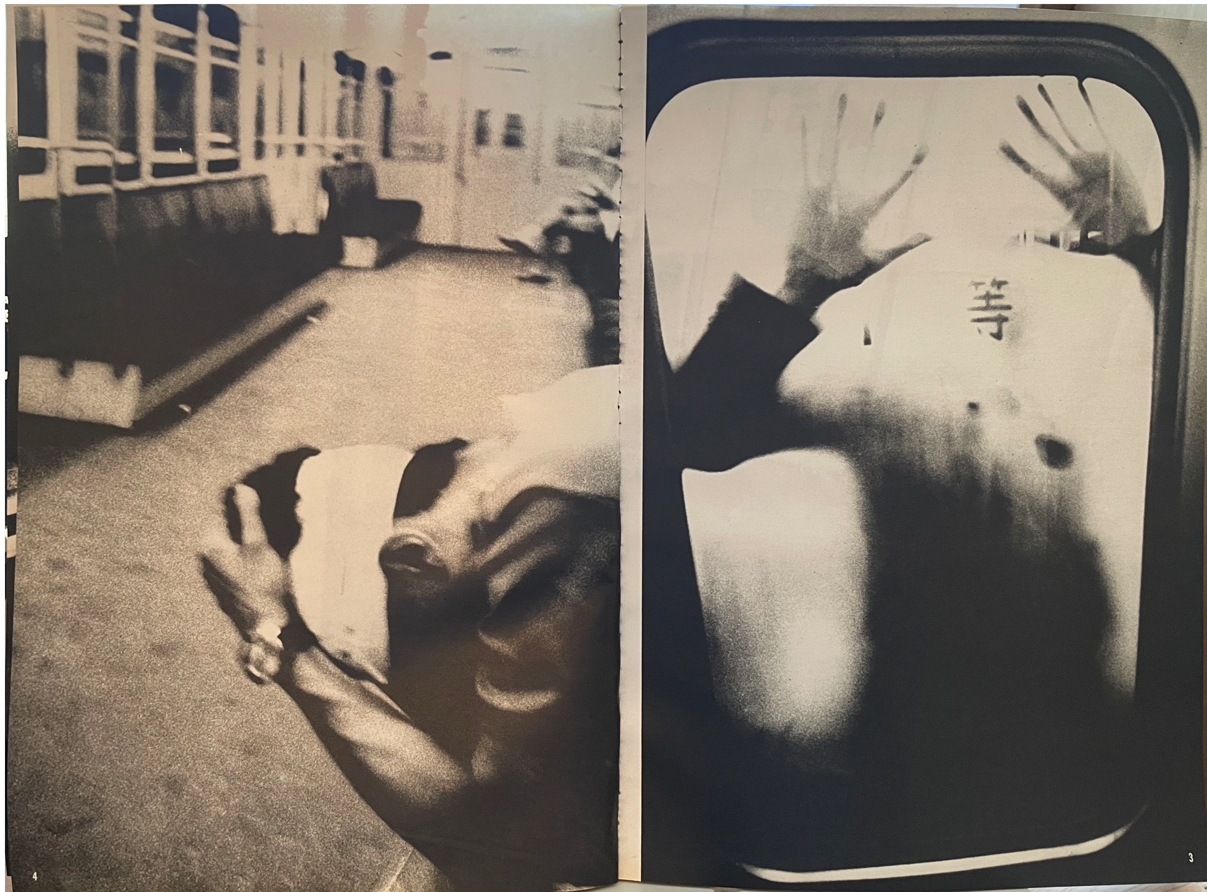
[16] See Nakahira, *Nakahira Takuma: Degree Zero—Yokohama*, 156. Tōmatsu is, arguably, the major photographer of postwar Japan. Throughout their careers, Nakahira and Tōmatsu were rivals who never openly warred with each other. I discuss Tōmatsu's work in relation to Nakahira's in Chapter 5.

A body is rendered in a fuzzy outline of black, a torso without a head. A single Chinese character shows up in the white space where their face ought to appear.[17] In the facing photograph, a man wearing the headwrap of a laborer sits hunched over, head in hands. Where the profile of his face might appear, the photograph goes completely dark. In these images, bodies are distorted, trapped, unrecognizable.

Figures 3 and 4



[17] This character, 等, would have been part of a compound to indicate "train carriage."



Nakahira Takuma, from “Last Train,” published in *Asahi Camera*, October 1968.

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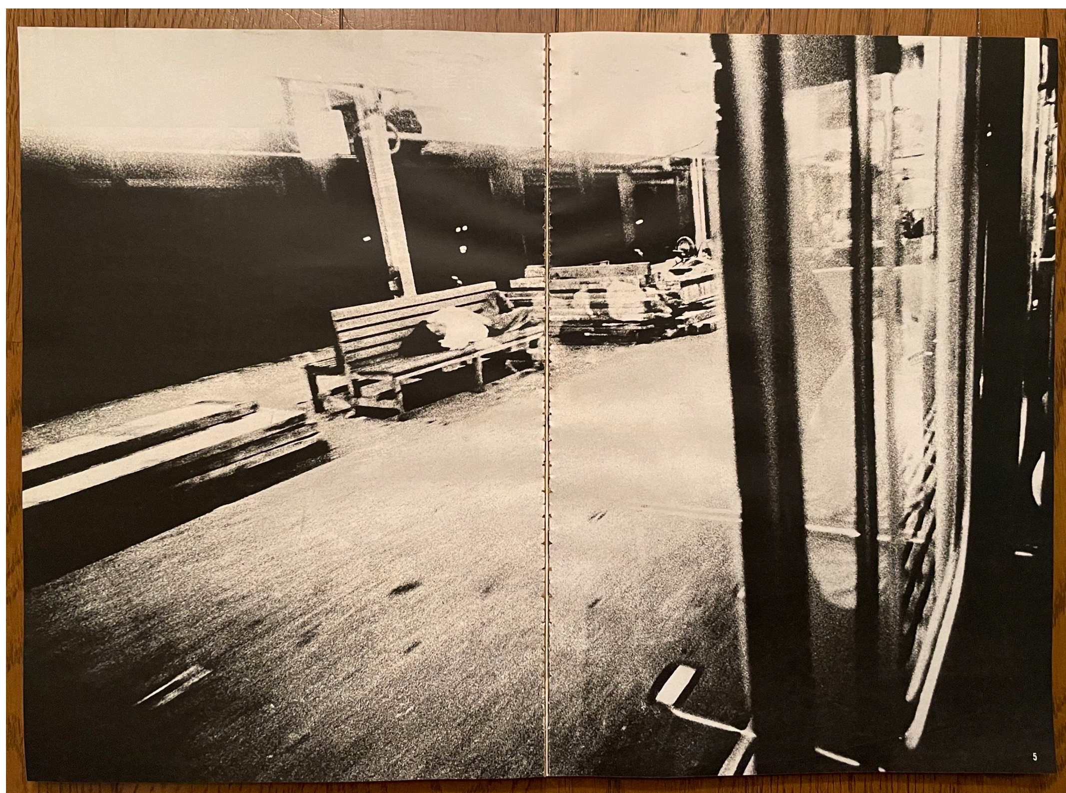
And yet the corporeal qualities of Nakahira’s photographs cannot be reduced to figurations of the body alone. The final photograph of “Last Train” suggests the presence of Nakahira’s own body. Here, the photographer looks onto a station platform from inside a train car. A subtle blurring of the foreground at the bottom left shows that the train is moving, leaving behind another faceless figure sleeping on a bench. But in the other half of the photograph, the train carriage itself comes into view, its thick black line running the full height of the frame. This line splits the scene into interior and exterior, here and there, the photographer inside and the world outside. Or so it seems. Within the interior, a window allows a narrow view of the platform to come through, mingling with a reflection of the

carriage's lit interior. What is "inside" or "outside" here? The dividing line itself is hardly solid: at various points along its longitudinal journey, it is pierced by white light seeping in from the outside, when not simply pockmarked by the film's rough grain. Nakahira approaches this line from the side, so that his own body does not confront the boundary head-on, but on an oblique, as if the line that runs through the plane of the carriage window would slice off, say, a good bit of the photographer's left arm. In the end, this body—more than the bodies of Nakahira's subjects—is at stake in Nakahira's work. The photographic techniques that Nakahira employed—blurring, or the arrangement of space—function as the very modes by which he positioned himself as a body in the world.

Figure 5



Nakahira Takuma, from "Last Train," published in *Asahi Camera*, October 1968.

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Of course, with their aggressive blur and harsh contrast, these photographs inevitably recall *Provoke*, the magazine Nakahira helped organize. *Provoke*'s first issue was published just one month after "Last Train." *Provoke* has come to be associated with a photographic aesthetic known in both Japanese and English as *are bure boke* (rough grain, blurriness, out-of-focus). Surprising as it may sound, this independent magazine which lasted for three issues across 1968 and 1969 is arguably *the* canonical object of postwar Japanese photography.[18] This is due in part to the recognition of *are bure boke* as a style, and because one of its members, the photographer Moriyama Daidō, has become a worldwide star.[19] I focus largely on Nakahira's photography and essays after this point. While Nakahira is best known today for his black-and-white photography, by 1975 he was publishing color photographs, in crisp focus. What motivated such a turn? Answering this question means looking beyond *Provoke*, and the specific conditions out of which it emerged. For example, even by 1972 the stakes of mass media image distribution had shifted dramatically. In that sense, then, this dissertation is not just "after" *Provoke* in a temporal sense: it also makes a conscious effort to shift Nakahira away from the magazine as the overarching category through which to understand his variegated practice.

To situate Nakahira after *Provoke* also means making sense of the political situation in Japan after 1968. While Nakahira participated in a citizens' movement in Okinawa, which I discuss in Chapter 5, for the most part his political commitments came as a writer, not as an organizer, much less as a heroically militant figure. In one sense, Nakahira was a paradigmatic left-wing intellectual of his generation: in his essays, he consistently argued for a revolutionary and anti-imperialist internationalism. Like many other writers of this time, he

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[18] For a longer discussion of *are bure boke*, and a more thorough review of scholarship around *Provoke*, see Chapter 1.

[19] In fact, Moriyama's photographic practice continues to carry the torch of *are bure boke* to this day.

understood the Vietnam War as a form of American imperial aggression in which Japan was complicit. And yet, he hardly fits the bill of a stoic leftist, much less that of a party intellectual—he was not affiliated with any particular political organization. Years later, one of Nakahira's *Provoke* collaborators described him as an "agitator"; a "sensitive guerrilla, and something of a sleeping-pill literati"; "an easily excitable person"; like a "romantic, heroic" Meiji-era youth; and "extremely timid, with a part of him that wanted to rise up against the extreme of that timidity."[20] This current of feeling comes through Nakahira's political commitments, if it did not fuel them altogether. A sometimes frenetic sense of urgency runs through his written work.

In fact, what truly sets Nakahira apart from his peers is his consistent dedication to pursuing the political dimension of sensation itself. His writing is laden with the weight of his political moment, and it articulates this weight in sensorial terms. During the 1970s, subjectivity emerged as a political category full of potential for groups like the coalition of activists involved in women's liberation.[21] At the same time, subjectivity was also an important site of capitalist development. For example, during this period, the visual grammar of advertising shifted away from physical goods, towards a more abstract mode of so-called "feeling advertising" in which the product being sold was not a physical commodity but a

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[20] See Okada Takahiko, "Intabyū Okada Takahiko: mu seifu jōtai de umareta ishu kōhai," *Déjà-vu*, October 1993.

[21] Setsu Shigematsu's scholarship on this movement pays close attention to the precise articulations of politics that emerged within it. She notes: "Revolution was to be understood as a living and lived practice in which the subject struggled to transform society and the self and the self's relationship with the other—not a future utopia." Setsu Shigematsu, *Scream from the Shadows: The Women's Liberation Movement in Japan* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), xxi. In discussing one of the important essays by Tanaka Mitsu, a key critic of the movement, Shigematsu claims that Tanaka's "theorization involved a radical pursuit of the other within the self, which became a way to forge a radical relationship to the other beyond the self." Shigematsu, 162. Tanaka, on Shigematsu's account, takes "contingency as the foundational condition of being in the world." Shigematsu, 168.

different version of the self.[22] Across his essays, Nakahira tried to hold fast to corporeal sensation, even though this experience itself was a contested site. For example, in a 1975 essay on Surrealism, he wrote:

> The distortions and the high degree of systematization produced by managed national monopoly capitalism go all the way to the level of the essential structure of each person living in this system. They shape the most physiological parts of the human; in other words, desire itself is shaped in accordance with them, to produce a desire that allows for the easy reception of commodities. There is no longer anything like the desire of the people in and of itself, much less a revolutionary desire. When we clearly see that, on the contrary, desire now helps to reproduce the system, we must accept the Surrealist thesis of carrying out the revolutions of human sensation and society together as something real.[23]

This passage shows Nakahira's hope and despair. Capitalism has pressed upon human desire, but there is still a possibility of going beyond it. Nakahira was constantly working out the relationship between his body and the world in response to the political contours of his time. This ground was, so to speak, always shifting beneath the photographer's feet.

Historiography

Nakahira's work points to three interrelated sites on which the figure of the photographer has been theorized and contested in recent photography history. First, from the mid-1960s, Museum of Modern Art curator John Szarkowski argued for the status of the photographer as a modern artist. In "The Photographer's Eye," his exhibition and corresponding catalog from 1966, Szarkowski developed a theory of the photographer as a visionary artist who drives forward photography's Greenbergian medium specificity.[24]

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[22] The notion of "feeling advertising" was developed by the advertising executive Fujioka Wakao. See Nariai Hajime, "Ryūtsū suru 'byūtifaru' — Disukabā jyapan kyanpēn wo megutte," *AMC Journal* 1 (2015): 102–15.

[23] Nakahira Takuma, "Rekishi e no ishi — Shururearisumu no senzai tekina chikara," in *Mitsuzukeru hate ni hi ga...: hihyō shūsei 1965-1977* (Tokyo: Osiris, 2007), 375.

[24] Szarkowski writes that "it should be possible to consider the history of the medium in terms of photographers' progressive awareness of characteristics and problems that have seemed inherent in the medium." John Szarkowski, *The Photographer's Eye* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1966).

Reacting against this move, a major strand of 1980s American photography theory and criticism argued against the stability of the photographer as an author. In a 1986 essay on Eugène Atget, for example, Abigail Solomon-Godeau made the case that "whether commentators are committed to the excavation of a surrealist Atget, a primitive Atget, a documentary Atget, a modernist Atget, or a Marxist Atget, what is most crucially at stake is the demand that 'Atget' be a coherent and unified subject."[25] For Solomon-Godeau, such an insistence on Atget's authorial coherency disregarded the work of Michel Foucault and Roland Barthes, already by that time almost 20 years old.[26] Ten years before Solomon-Godeau's essay, Nakahira had shifted his attention to the human subject and the author figure, based on his own reading of Barthes.[27] Solomon-Godeau pointed out that the ideological work of producing a unified subject seasoned the photographer for consumption by the art market, to say nothing of art history itself.[28] While institutional concerns were of less concern to Nakahira, his writing in the mid-1970s prefigures a shift to politicize the theory and practice of photography that would come to the fore in English-language discourse later on.

A second important site for thinking the photographer has been documentary photography, the ground on which artist-critics like Martha Rosler and Allan Sekula

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In 1974, Szarkowski organized the exhibition "New Japanese Photography," together with Yamagishi Shoji, the editor of the Tokyo-based monthly photography magazine *Camera Mainichi*, in which Moriyama was included. For an analysis of this exhibition, see Yoshiaki Kai, "Distinctiveness versus Universality: Reconsidering New Japanese Photography," *The Trans-Asia Photography Review* 3, no. 2 (Spring 2013).

[25] Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Cannon Fodder: Authoring Eugène Atget," in *Photography at the Dock: Essays on Photographic History, Institutions, and Practices*, Media & Society 4 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 30. This essay was originally published in 1986.

[26] Against this coherency, Solomon-Godeau claimed that "photography anarchically disrupts the attempt to circumscribe it in formalist or *auteurist* boundaries." Solomon-Godeau, 48.

[27] For more on this shift, see Chapter 4.

[28] To wit: "the operations of cultural legitimation possess economic as well as ideological interests (an Atget photograph is, in every sense, *worth* more than an anonymous one)." Solomon-Godeau, "Cannon Fodder: Authoring Eugène Atget," 31.

politicized the medium. Each criticized notions of liberal subjecthood that elevated select photographers to the status of artists, while also hollowing out the once-radical genre of documentary photography. For Rosler, by 1981 this genre had lost any pretension to actual social reform, becoming no more than "the social conscience of liberal sensibility presented in visual imagery."[29] Presenting documentary as predatory in relation to its subjects, Rosler spoke of "victims of the camera—that is, of the photographer."[30] In particular, she highlighted the case of Florence Thompson, the woman who appeared in Dorothea Lange's famed "Migrant Mother" photograph without compensation, even as this photograph became one of the most widely reproduced of all time. Like Solomon-Godeau, Rosler argued that the art market had depoliticized documentary photography, a state of affairs that Szarkowski—without question, the favored punching bag of each critic—had only exacerbated with his 1967 exhibition "New Documents." For his part, Sekula took up many of the same themes as Rosler, at least insofar as he criticized the liberal subjecthood that had come to underwrite the practice of documentary photography; "the photographer, regardless of working context" is understood as an artist, who is then "represented as possessing a privileged subjectivity."[31] Unlike Rosler, though, Sekula was interested in his capacity as critic and artist to discover what he would later call the "submerged possibilities" of "documentary social realism."[32]

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[29] Martha Rosler, "In, Around and Afterthoughts (On Documentary Photography)," in *Decoys and Disruptions: Selected Writings, 1975-2001* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press in association with International Center of Photography, New York, 2004), 176.

[30] Rosler, 178.

[31] Allan Sekula, "Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary (Notes on the Politics of Representation)," in *Photography Against the Grain: Essays and Photo Works, 1973-1983* (Halifax, Nova Scotia: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1984), 54.

[32] Sekula, in a 2003 conversation with Benjamin Buchloh: "The key choice I made in the seventies was for documentary social realism, founded in the intuition that this supposedly exhausted genre contained submerged possibilities." Allan Sekula, "Conversation between Allan Sekula and Benjamin H.D. Buchloh," in *Allan Sekula: Performance under Working Conditions*, ed. Sabine Breitwieser (Vienna: Generali Foundation, 2003), 38.

For Sekula and Rosler, to access politically viable documentary photography meant a return to the 1930s—to the work of Lewis Hine, for example, or to the more radical elements of the New York Photo League. The situation was much different for Nakahira: he had access to a tradition of realism just outside his door, but that was no happy state of affairs—after all, 1930s photography that could be called "documentary social realism" was put to use as part of Japan's wartime effort, and when realism came back in the postwar it was championed by the same photographers that had produced wartime propaganda.[33] In 1981, Rosler pointed out that documentary photography was aestheticizing poverty through the archetypal figure of the Bowery bum—but debates around so-called "beggar photography" had already roiled the photography world of Japan during the 1950s, when the notion of photography as a form of socialist realism was very much in play.[34] However, for photographers of a comparatively younger generation, led by Tōmatsu, there was certainly little nostalgia—let alone hope of political reclamation—for a strict documentary mode. For his part, in 1969 Nakahira called himself "a photographer of documents," an appellation that would have self-consciously aligned him more with a photographer like Atget than Hine.[35]

Finally, Ariella Aïsha Azoulay has offered the most powerful challenge to the photographer in recent years, as part of her long-term project to theorize "a new ontological-political understanding of photography."[36] Across three books, Azoulay has offered understandings of politics and history that emerge out of her effort to re-think photography

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[33] I expand on this discussion in Chapter 1. Needless to say, though, propaganda was not the only form of photography practiced during this time. For an illuminating account of Surrealist photography under wartime conditions, see Jelena Stojković, *Surrealism and Photography in 1930s Japan: The Impossible Avant-Garde* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020).

[34] The key figure of this discourse is Domon Ken, whose work I address in Chapter 1.

[35] Nakahira Takuma et al., "Konpora ka riarizumu ka: atarashii shashin hyōgen no kanōsei wo saguru," *Asahi Camera*, April 1969, 228. The distinction here is subtle, but Nakahira uses the Japanese term *kiroku*, a word whose resonances I discuss at length in Chapter 2.

[36] Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*, trans. Rela Mazali and Ruvik Danieli (New York: Zone Books, 2008), 21.

through the relationship between the photographer, the camera, photographed subjects, and viewing subjects. Throughout her work, Azoulay consistently opens up the figure of the photographer to question and critique, while also returning to some of the major themes of Rosler's own inquiry.[37] For example, in *The Civil Contract of Photography*, she writes: "The photographic situation, in which the photographer is whoever actually holds the means of production in his or her hands and controls its operation, effectively created the conditions for the photographer's designation as the 'natural' owner of the photograph."[38] Azoulay's emphasis on a relational "photographic situation" signals the terms of her ontological intervention: photographs shall no longer accrue to the photographer-capitalist. She works against the presumed centrality of the photographer, thereby opening up the possibility for claims to be made on the photograph by other parties—namely, the subjects of photographs.[39]

The figure of the photographer remains a major part of her reflections. In Azoulay's more recent work, she has put forward the notion of photographers "unlearning the position of the photographer as expert," which involves voluntarily giving up power, and working in more explicit collaboration with their subjects.[40] Pointing to the work of Susan Meiselas in particular, Azoulay writes that "one of the striking signs of this process of unlearning in Meiselas's photographic work occurs in the decision not to take more photographs

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[37] For example, Azoulay also discusses Florence Thompson; see Azoulay, 97. Although Azoulay clearly shares lines of inquiry with Rosler, Rosler goes almost entirely uncited in Azoulay's work.

[38] Azoulay, 95.

[39] In her most recent book, *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism*, Azoulay develops this principle in no less a direction than a method for writing history itself, suggesting a speculative return to imperial histories and epistemologies that would "attend to their origins and render imperial plunder impossible once again." Ariella Azoulay, *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism* (London: Verso, 2019), 13.

[40] Ariella Azoulay, "Unlearning the Position of the Photographer as Expert," in *Susan Meiselas: Meditations*, by Susan Meiselas (Bologna, Paris, Barcelona: Damiani, Jeu de Paume, Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 2018), 97–119.

immediately, and even actively to refrain from taking photographs."[41] In calling for a photographic refusal, Azoulay echoes a position that Rosler took 40 years prior—but she also recalls Nakahira's essay "The Illusion Called Document," the subject of Chapter 2, in which he claimed that photographers might "quit being photographers."[42] Just a year later, Nakahira made a bonfire of his negatives and photographs from his *Provoke* period on a beach near his house. In a somewhat fictionalized account of this bonfire, he recounted a dialog with a passerby: "I'm burning photographs, I said. Why are you burning photographs, came the reply. Because I'm a photographer, I said."[43] Nakahira's gestures of refusal and disavowal, raised to the degree of self-definition as a photographer, resonate with Azoulay's idea of "unlearning." In these various ways, Nakahira's positions anticipate contemporary discourse on the photographer.

How might a consideration of the photographer avoid the traps that critics from Solomon-Godeau to Azoulay have pointed out? Why, in other words, return to the photographer, when this runs the risk of re-centering the conventional author function that has supported art historical inquiries of old? And in what way could a turn to the photographer have any purchase on politics? Nakahira complicates an understanding of photographic politics during this period because of his sustained interest in subjectivity. While "subjectivity" was practically a taboo for American critics like Sekula and Solomon-Godeau, this concept had a different valence in the context of postwar Japan. While Sekula associated it with a "cult of private experience," the question of subjectivity was an important

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[41] Azoulay, 104. In *Potential History*, Azoulay extends this principle more generally, asking her readers to "imagine photographers going on strike and using differently the privileges that were historically given to them when they were recognized as the sole signatories of photographs." Azoulay, *Potential History*, 284.

[42] Rosler: "*The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems* is a work of refusal." Rosler, "In, Around and Afterthoughts (On Documentary Photography)," 191.

[43] Nakahira Takuma and Shinoyama Kishin, "Kettō shashinron — tsuma," *Asahi Camera*, February 1976, 88.

political question in the years immediately following the end of World War II.[44] During this time, debates around subjectivity in relationship to revolution played out across the fields of literature and philosophy in Japan.[45] This intellectual trend was not limited to the late 1940s alone; some of the most radical political and artistic movements—such as the women's liberation movement—were concerned with the idea of subjectivity (and intersubjectivity in particular). Within this context, subjectivity cannot be grasped automatically as a form of liberal humanism, because critics on the ground were actively trying to articulate it towards radical political experience. Said another way round, Nakahira's self-criticality does not make him a modernist—it makes him politically engaged in this historical moment.[46] In accounting for Japan's wartime history, and in his critical work on Okinawa, he attempted to work through his position as a photographer of an imperial power.[47] Sekula has argued that the "meaning of an artwork ought to be regarded, then, as *contingent*"—and in Japan, similar claims were being advanced for subjectivity itself.[48] The photographer, too, ought to be understood as a contingent figure.

Within scholarship on cultural movements in Japan, though, the years following 1968 have often been denigrated as a time of a retreat to subjectivity. According to this narrative,

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[44] Sekula, "Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary (Notes on the Politics of Representation)," 53.

[45] J. Victor Koschmann's research offers an in-depth analysis of these debates. According to Koschmann, in the immediate postwar era, "the immediate question had to do with how to recognize and/or construct the subject" of the revolution of democracy. J. Victor Koschmann, *Revolution and Subjectivity in Postwar Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 233.

[46] For an in-depth discussion of self-criticism as a form of politics, see my discussion of 1968 politics in Chapter 1.

[47] See, for example, his essay on the My Lai massacre, which I discuss in Chapter 2.

[48] Sekula, "Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary (Notes on the Politics of Representation)," 53.

sometime around 1972, if not earlier, once-radical Japanese artists and artist collectives devolved into apolitical, hermetic forms of cultural production.[49] The idea that politically committed art in Japan was defeated after 1968 has precluded any sustained inquiry of its afterlife in the 1970s. For example, although film scholar Yuriko Furuhata acknowledges that the narrative of the "double erosion of artistic and political activism in the mid-1970s" is "something of a cliché," her analysis does not entirely avoid this rhetoric.[50] She writes that once-radical film directors "retreated," insofar as their work "was funneled back into a new space of confinement in the 1970s, as filmmakers and artists began to disengage from street politics."[51] Furuhata is hardly the only scholar to associate 1970s cultural production in Japan with a move towards subjectivity, and thus away from politics.[52] Yet this approach projects a 1960s model of collective politics onto the 1970s. Writing in 1971, Fredric Jameson points to a certain ahistorical quality of Furuhata's insistence on "street politics," claiming that the pressing issue of the time is no longer "whether the street fighter or urban guerrilla can win against the weapons and technology of the modern state, but rather precisely where the street is in the superstate, and, indeed, whether the old-fashioned street as such still exists in the first place in that seamless web of marketing and automated production which makes up the

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[49] See, for example, Karatani Kōjin, who writes of the 1970s in Japan terms of a "retreat to interiority and literature after political setback." Kōjin Karatani, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, Post-Contemporary Interventions (Durham, N.C: Duke University Press, 1993), 44. Yoshikuni Igarashi has offered a different approach to this period with his book *Japan, 1972*. See Yoshikuni Igarashi, *Japan, 1972: Visions of Masculinity in an Age of Mass Consumerism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021).

[50] Yuriko Furuhata, *Cinema of Actuality: Japanese Avant-Garde Filmmaking in the Season of Image Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 183.

[51] Furuhata, 200. Furuhata identifies the departure of director Adachi Masao (see Chapter 3) for Palestine in 1974 as a turning point in this regard.

[52] Abé Mark Nornes also contends that "the early to mid-1970s seem to constitute a break," in which filmmakers "quickly lost their artistic and political edge" as production shifted towards a more individual model. Abé Mark Nornes, *Forest of Pressure: Ogawa Shinsuke and Postwar Japanese Documentary*, Visible Evidence, v. 18 (Minneapolis, Minn: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 130–32.

new state."[53] Nakahira was also sensitive to this relationship between marketing—an important domain of images—and state power.

There is already a significant body of scholarly work on Nakahira. In particular, Franz Prichard's book *Residual Futures: The Urban Ecologies of Literary and Visual Media of 1960s and 1970s Japan* offers what is by far the most sustained engagement with Nakahira's theory and practice in English.[54] Prichard's research traces the comprehensive arc of Nakahira's production as a photographer and writer in much greater detail than I attempt here. Prichard's analysis is sensitive to the wide resonances of Nakahira's work, articulating it towards a critique of, and movement beyond, the nation form. For example, he argues that Nakahira's work shows how a process that "started with the flux of demolition and rebuilding of Japan's urban centers had permeated into the inner linings of the embodied senses."[55] I fully agree with Prichard that Nakahira shows how the sensorial blurs into the social. Still, I arrive at this understanding from a very different trajectory, by considering Nakahira within the history of art writ large, understanding his contribution to photography theory through the category of the photographer, and grounding my analysis in carefully looking at just a few of Nakahira's photographic works.

More so than in English, however, Nakahira is widely known in Japanese-language scholarship. His name appears within most overviews of photography history in Japan, and his work is routinely taught in Japanese art universities.[56] Among the various scholars and

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[53] Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971), xviii.

[54] Philip Charrier has published an extremely insightful essay about Nakahira's work. See Philip Charrier, "Nakahira Takuma's 'Why an Illustrated Botanical Dictionary?' (1973) and the Quest for 'True' Photographic Realism in Post-War Japan," *Japan Forum* 32, no. 1 (2020): 1–27.

[55] Franz Prichard, *Residual Futures: The Urban Ecologies of Literary and Visual Media of 1960s and 1970s Japan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 194.

[56] For an example of Nakahira's inclusion in an overview of photography history in Japan, see Torihara Manabu, *Nihon shashinshi* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2013), 199.

critics who have written about Nakahira, Shimizu Minoru stands out for consistently pointing out that Nakahira took the photographer as an important site of theoretical reflection: "Here, the retrograde, binary relationship of subject/object, seeing/seen is contaminated. Concepts like 'body' and 'environment' are invoked as places of confusion; in other words, the photographer's corporeality and sociality are emphasized."[57] Kuraishi Shino has also paid close attention to the interrelationship between Nakahira's photographic work and the geopolitical situation of his day, while taking care to not mythologize him.[58]

Other scholars writing in Japanese have not been as scrupulous in their treatment of Nakahira, often taking for granted that his practice reflects his theory. For example, while Ezawa Kenichirō's recent book *On Nakahira Takuma* offers an excellent introduction to Nakahira's key essays and photographs, it lacks Shimizu and Kuraishi's critical distance.[59] At one point Ezawa correctly notes that Nakahira wrote of a "gaze of things," thrown back to a viewing subject by objects in the world. When he examines some of Nakahira's contemporaneous photographs, Ezawa offers little analysis of how they signify; he only notes that their color is "breathtaking." Without any further justification, he claims that "what appears there is 'the gaze of things.'"[60] It is all too easy to project Nakahira's ideas onto his images, and then quite literally read that language back off of the photograph, as Ezawa does here. But the challenge of studying Nakahira is to keep text and image apart, and to engage

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[57] Minoru Shimizu, "Hibi kore shashin — Nakahira Takuma no shashin," in *Hibi kore shashin* (Tokyo: Gendai Shichō Shinsha, 2009), 12.

[58] See, for example,

Kuraishi Shino, "Henshū nōto," in *Okinawa - Amami - Tokara, 1974-1978*, by Nakahira Takuma (Tokyo: Miraisha, 2012); Kuraishi Shino, "Kokkyō: Nakahira Takuma no Amami, Tokara no shashin," *Literature and Environment*, no. 18 (October 2015): 5–15. Kuraishi curated Nakahira's 2003 solo exhibition at the Yokohama Museum of Art.

[59] Ezawa Kenichiro, *Nakahira Takuma ron: kitarubeki shashin no kyokugen o motomete* (Tokyo: Suiseisha, 2021). This volume is the first monograph on Nakahira, in either English or Japanese.

[60] Ezawa, 118.

with his photographs on their own terms. Nakahira's photographs are an experimental space in which he worked on—and rarely, if ever, realized—his theoretical claims.

Theory and Methodology

To shift the emphasis of photographic research from photography to the photographer means leaving behind the ontological mode of inquiry that characterizes much research on photography. Ontology may well serve to ask questions pertaining to the definition of photography. It may even be able to answer such questions. However, a different methodological approach is required to grasp the photographer as a body in the world. Phenomenology—the analysis of sensation, in which the sensing subject is a human body that is never split off from the world—offers a fitting method for that inquiry. For Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "the world is always 'already there' prior to reflection"; in philosophical terms, this means that perception precedes any essence.[61] In this way, phenomenology is opposed to ontology. Or, to be more precise, the kind of ontology that phenomenology proposes is not an idealized form of being, somehow cocooned within its own senses: "The phenomenological world is not pure being, but rather the sense that shines forth at the intersection of my experiences and at the intersection of my experiences with those of others."[62] For Merleau-Ponty, the self is, *a priori*, intertwined with the other.[63] In this way,

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[61] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A. Landes (Abingdon, Oxon; Routledge, 2012), lxx.

[62] Merleau-Ponty, lxxxiv.

[63] The question of the other, in fact, is one of Merleau-Ponty's preoccupations: "In order for the word 'other' not to be meaningless, my existence must never reduce itself to the consciousness that I have of existing; it must in fact encompass the consciousness that *one* might have of it, and so also encompass my embodiment in a nature and at least the possibility of an historical situation." Merleau-Ponty, lxxvi.

phenomenology muddles the strict separation of subject and object, and also necessarily contains a political dimension.[64]

Recent scholarship in the field of critical phenomenology has brought forward such politics of sensation. Eden Kinkaid has offered a summary of this emerging field: "In different ways, critical phenomenologists invest a unique kind of political potential in acts of perception and modes of embodiment, recognizing the constitutive links between normative embodiment, modes of perception, systems of representation, and larger material, symbolic, and spatial orders."[65] Kinkaid also points to the specific potential of vision, writing that "critical phenomenological accounts exercise and invest in other potentials for vision: visuality as a form of relationality, an ethical mode of relating to others, and a performance of space and social relations otherwise."[66] Nakahira's practice shows that the photographer was a site of both sensation and politics. In her book *Queer Phenomenology*, Sara Ahmed returns to Merleau-Ponty and Edmund Husserl to complicate their investigations by bringing forward queer moments latent in their work. Ahmed understands the notion of "orientation" to include the notion of bodily position, sexual orientation, as well as an Orientalism that stabilizes ostensibly neutral positions, arguing that such "orientations are organized rather than casual."[67] In analyzing Nakahira's color photographs made in Amami, I engage with

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[64] For analyses of Merleau-Ponty's work along these lines, see Judith Butler, "Sexual Difference as a Question of Ethics: Alterities of the Flesh in Irigaray and Merleau-Ponty," in *Feminist Interpretations of Maurice Merleau-Ponty*, ed. Dorothea Olkowski and Gail Weiss, Re-Reading the Canon (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 107–26; Diana H. Coole, *Merleau-Ponty and Modern Politics after Anti-Humanism*, Modernity and Political Thought (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007).

[65] Eden Kinkaid, "Re-Encountering Lefebvre: Toward a Critical Phenomenology of Social Space," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 38, no. 1 (February 1, 2020): 182.

[66] Kinkaid, 178.

[67] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 158.

Ahmed's work to draw out the spatial orientations within the series, and then locate these orientations within the colonial relationship between Japan and Okinawa.

Within art history, phenomenology has primarily been used to assess how spectators draw meaning from the sensorial experience of viewing works of art.[68] In photography history, some recent inquiries have moved beyond the spectator, to look at the bodily sensation of figures that are represented in photographs—including, at times, the photographer themselves.[69] In turning to Nakahira's photographs, I articulate the phenomenological qualities of photographs through the sensations of the photographer—even if Nakahira rarely, if ever, appears in his own photographs. While the "Last Train" photographs distend bodies in front of the camera, I am more interested in Nakahira's own corporeal experience. This may well seem impossible: even if photography really is an indexical medium, how would the indexical traces of the photographer's own bodily sensation appear on film? And even if such traces were left in Nakahira's photographs, to what extent would it be possible to claim that they were left there intentionally?

In my analysis of Nakahira's photographs and essays, I foreground moments in which the corporeal qualities of sensation are brought to the fore—as when the train carriage window seems about to run straight through the spot where he is standing. I approach Nakahira's photographs from the position that viewing subject and viewed object are always intertwined. Nakahira's idea of the "gaze of things"—an echo of the photographer's own embodied gaze, estranged and then thrown back from the world—points to such a mutually

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[68] See, for example, Rosalind Krauss on Rodin: "We are left with gestures that are unsupported by appeals to their own anatomical backgrounds, that cannot address themselves logically to a recognizable, prior experience within ourselves. But what if meaning does not depend on this kind of prior experience? What if meaning, instead of preceding experience, occurs *within* experience?" Rosalind Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1981), 27.

[69] See George Baker, "Wolfgang Tillmans: View from Above," in *Wolfgang Tillmans: Sound Is Liquid*, ed. Matthias Michalka (Cologne; Vienna: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther und Franz König; Mumok - Museum moderner Kunst, 2021); Sabine Kriebel, "Florence Henri's Oblique," *October*, no. 172 (May 1, 2020): 8–34.

enmeshed quality. The phenomenological stakes of Nakahira's work appear in such moments of corporeality. In a one-page text that Nakahira published with "Last Train," he wrote: "It is accepted wisdom that photographs should not be out of focus or blurry, but I find that hard to believe. In the first place, even when the human eye apprehends images of things, each individual thing and each individual image is blurry and out of focus. Isn't it the case that the imagination orders them, and fixes them into a solid image?"[70] Nakahira describes sight in biological terms, points to the mind's processing capabilities, and resolves these terms in the image: the subject of this discourse is not photography, but sensation. In narrating his embodied experience of the world, even at this early moment he was already writing like a phenomenologist.

To draw out the phenomenological stakes of Nakahira's photographs, my analysis hews closely to them as material.[71] Paying careful attention to a photograph requires more than naming what appears there. Angle of view, the distance between the camera and the object in front of it, how clearly this object appears, blockages that appear, the degree to which the photograph is in focus, its orientation, whether it is in color or monochrome, how it was printed, where it appears in a sequence—all of these aspects of a photograph emerge through choices made in the variegated processes of photographing, printing, and editing. It is exhilarating (or maddening) to study photographs because these details are the only sources of evidence at hand, and yet it would be foolish to assign a deep authorial necessity to most of them, as if the photographer had unquestionably meant it to be so. Turning to the body of

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[70] Takuma Nakahira, "Saishūden," *Asahi Camera*, October 1968.

[71] In suggesting that photographs can be investigated as material, I recall Matthew Witkovsky's claim that the study of photographs might ground itself in "an attention to form in the historically conditioned materialist way" that Yve-Alain Bois put forth in his book *Painting as Model*. See Matthew Witkovsky, "Photography as Model?," *October* 158 (2016): 18.

the photographer is not an attempt to unlock a secret code that underwrites all photographs. Instead, this corporeality shows how the photographer is contingent, open to the world.[72]

This dissertation emerges out of a sustained period of research in Japan, with an emphasis on primary sources from the period. Each of my five chapters examines a body of work, or an essay, that Nakahira published between 1968 and 1976. In order, I focus on Nakahira's photography in *Provoke*; the 1972 essay "The Illusion Called Document"; *Circulation*, a 1971 installation of photographs that Nakahira produced in Paris; the 1973 essay "Why an Illustrated Botanical Reference Book?"; and a series of photographs taken on the islands of Amami, published in 1976. In order to situate these photographs and essays, I turn to other sources from these specific moments. For example, Nakahira's essay "The Illusion Called Document" was part of an extensive dialogue on media theory in Japan at this time. Nakahira also responded to particular historical and political moments; the color photographs that he took in Amami cannot be fully grasped without accounting for the colonial relationship between Japan and Okinawa, and the wider context of visual and intellectual work from or about Okinawa at this time.

Many of the photographs that I discuss were first made public in photography magazines. Although Nakahira's magazine work has been collected and reproduced in a 2011 volume, the tone and color of these reproductions often differ greatly from the original magazines.[73] As a rule, I have always consulted original issues of the magazines where Nakahira's work appeared. Without ascribing finality to these mechanically reproduced

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[72] Here, Kaja Silverman's project of bringing phenomenology to bear on art history and photo history resonates with my own work. Silverman: "we do not stand in front of the world, as if before a picture; rather, we are inside it." Kaja Silverman, *World Spectators*, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2000), 146.

[73] See Nakahira Takuma, *Toshi fūkei zukan* (Tokyo: Getsuyōsha, 2011).

images, it is important to see them just as Nakahira's own audience would have.[74] During the course of my research, I was able to consult Nakahira's personal papers several times, at a privately held archive in Tokyo. I also consulted archival material at libraries across Tokyo and Kyoto. Beyond Nakahira's own writing, I also read a wide range of Japanese-language sources from this period, to grasp the broader historical and intellectual conditions of his historical conjuncture. Although the ongoing global pandemic made it difficult to conduct interviews, I was able to speak with some people who worked with Nakahira in various capacities during the 1970s.

Chapter Outlines

My first chapter examines *Provoke*, to show why Nakahira came to understand bodies in political terms. It is well known that for the first issue of this magazine, Nakahira and Taki Kōji wrote a manifesto-like statement which claimed that language had lost its "material base." What, though, was to replace language as a stable ground of existence? This chapter argues that corporeal experience itself was invested with this possibility. Taki and other *Provoke* writers cited Merleau-Ponty in their essays for the magazine, while the photographer emerged as a theoretical focus of Nakahira's own writing. Confronting Japan's imperial aggression in Asia, Nakahira pointed to the failing of a previous generation of photographers, whose institutional power had continued on unabated into the postwar period. These photographers remained beholden to an idea of realist truth-value which ultimately reduced

[74] Based on a conversation with Kitai Kazuo, another photographer who published with Nakahira in *Asahi Camera*, it is clear that photographers did not have much control over the way that their photographs would have appeared in print. A photographer could go to the printing press when making a photobook, but they would have relatively little control over what appeared in magazines. Kitai noted that it was quite common for him to send prints off to a magazine and be disappointed with the printed result. So while the photographs that appeared in original issues of magazines may not exactly correspond to the intentions of the photographer, they constitute the form in which the photographs contributed to the visual discourse of their time. Kazuo Kitai, Interview, September 30, 2022.

photographs to linguistic illustrations. At its core, thinking and practicing from the body of the photographer was a move beyond this linguistic impasse. A more fleshly conception of the photographer, freed from the binds of language, could body forth a new kind of politics. *Provoke*'s second issue was themed "Eros," and the reference to Herbert Marcuse was intentional: across the broader historical moment of Japan in 1968, flesh was connected to politics. In the photographs that he published in this issue, Nakahira experimented with placing the body of the photographer on the table, in the way he had hinted at in "Last Train." These photographs demand a reading beyond the aesthetic of *are bure boke*, because if they index anything, it is the blurriness of the boundary between the world and the body that senses it.

But it was not long before the photographer was put under extreme pressure. In the immediate aftermath of *Provoke*, Nakahira considered the body of the photographer in relation to mass media, capital and state power—and he now suggested that photographers might simply "quit being photographers." Chapter 2 investigates this pessimistic thought through "The Illusion Called Document," an important theoretical essay that Nakahira published in 1972. In this essay, he discussed the case of Matsunaga Yū, a man who was falsely accused of murder on the basis of two photographs taken at a demonstration that had been published in a national newspaper. Through the Matsunaga case, Nakahira developed the idea of the "systematization of vision," by which he referred to the residual effects of constant exposure to television and photojournalism on visual perception. Nakahira claimed that these media reinforced an erroneous belief in photography as a reliably documentary medium. The systematization of vision, though, also extended to the body of the photographer itself. Nakahira's treatment of the case showed that it was all too easy for photographers to unwittingly work on behalf of the state; regardless of any photographer's personal intentions, their physical presence at any given time and place could be used as the

legal ground for a wrongful arrest and conviction. It looked impossible to claim a bodily position outside of mass media, and this situation forged Nakahira's most critical thinking about the position of the photographer. At this time, Nakahira was part of a lively discourse on media theory in Japan; thinking sensation and politics together distinguished his work from contemporary approaches to media. The suggestion to "quit being photographers," meanwhile, places Nakahira in dialogue with gestures towards refusal in recent photography theory.

Chapter 3 examines Nakahira's installation *Circulation*, which he produced at the 1971 Paris Biennial. *Circulation* was an exhibition in constant flux: Nakahira kept adding new photographs to it as he took more photographs in Paris, such that they spilled off of the wall, and oozed along the floor. Water itself was a major motif of these photographs, and liquid did not just appear in the photographs: because of their haphazard developing conditions, they were sometimes tacked up while still dripping wet. This chapter looks at *Circulation* in order to develop the idea of the photographer as a body moving through the world—flowing through it, to be more precise. And yet, while *Circulation* embodied liquid in so many ways, it was exhibited in an exhibition of contemporary art at a time when many conceptual artists were invested in photography as the ground for a cool—and, I contend, dry—form of indexicality. Nakahira was involved in an important 1970 exhibition of contemporary art in Tokyo, where Hans Haacke had exhibited a work, also called *Circulation*, that dealt with water. This chapter positions *Circulation* within this moment of conceptual art, drawing out the tensions it embodies between liquidity and dryness. By taking the photographer as a flowing body, Nakahira made himself at home in these antinomies.

Nakahira's relationship to contemporary art plays a key role in Chapter 4, which again takes up Nakahira as a writer. This chapter analyzes Nakahira's most well-known essay, "Why an Illustrated Botanical Reference Book?" Seeming to resolve the crisis of being

a photographer that he had confronted in "The Illusion Called Document," this essay finds Nakahira proposing, in sometimes strident language, a new photographic methodology. Thoroughly criticizing his *Provoke* work, Nakahira now called for a photography that was to ruthlessly pursue clarity, use color film in bright daylight, and show "the world as it is," without the slightest vagueness. On the face of it, then, the essay argued for a photographic realism. But stranger ideas lurk within the essay, where Nakahira suggested that "the process of unlimited 'encounter' must replace our conventional artistic practice." The word "botanical" itself, in the essay's title, is also somewhat odd. By calling out to "encounter" and "the world as it is," Nakahira was directly referencing the phenomenological language of Lee Ufan, the Korean-born artist who is known as a primary theorist of Mono-ha. In the end, Nakahira's essay did not hew to a strict program of photographic realism, but instead put forth the idea that bodies mediate encounter with the world. As such, this chapter suggests that the essay represents Nakahira's most important contribution to a phenomenological theory of the photographer. The category of the "botanical" is instructive here: plants figured prominently in this essay not because Nakahira thought that photographers needed to photograph them, but because, as "organic bodies" that take up an "intermediary position," they analogized encounter itself. Lee and Nakahira had a significant personal connection, and this chapter argues that Nakahira's deeply phenomenological idea of the "botanical" emerged out of their shared thinking.

Nakahira worked out his last answer to the question of how the photographer is a body in the world through photographing in and around the islands of Okinawa. My final chapter examines a series of color photographs that Nakahira took on the Amami island chain, which lies between Japan and Okinawa. Nakahira was working against an anthropological tradition in Japan—taken up by artists and intellectuals alike—that positions "Okinawa" as an object against which to define the putative subject of "Japan." That tradition

offered a cultural justification for Japan's control over Okinawa, which had been formally re-established in 1972, and then re-asserted through symbolic events such as the Okinawa International Ocean Exposition of 1975. I look at Nakahira's photographs alongside the work of Tōmatsu Shōmei, in order to read the colonial relationship between Japan and Okinawa through photographic representations of space. Drawing on Sara Ahmed's phenomenological theorization of space as embodied, this chapter points to the disorienting qualities of Nakahira's photographs. Clearly, Nakahira did not quit being a photographer, as he had once suggested. Yet his photographs from Amami demonstrate an embodied position of refusal, and a turn towards intermediary space. This bodily orientation was Nakahira's last answer to the methodological and political questions that he posed to himself, because in 1977, he fell into a coma and lost much of his memory and consciousness.

Although this dissertation focuses on Nakahira, each chapter opens up historical and conceptual questions. To that end, I do not attempt to account for everything that Nakahira produced. For example, readers familiar with Nakahira's work may note the minimal reference to his 1970 photobook *For a Language to Come*. More than completeness, I have attempted to bring forth the historical and political atmosphere of the times in which Nakahira lived and worked. Nakahira is like a highly sensitive barometer, who registers the atmospheric pressure. A barometer registers pressure indexically, but this does not mean that there are literal indexical traces of "political pressure" left on Nakahira's negatives. The atmosphere of this time appears in Nakahira's photographs and essays through certain physical positions that he took up, certain decisions about what to photograph and what not to photograph, certain emotions that surged up in his sometimes meandering, stream-of-

consciousness texts. To write about a single artist in this way is to track minute changes in these conditions over time.

To open up Nakahira to such larger questions allows him to emerge as a photographer and writer available to the history of photography writ large. Even without any concrete exchange, his work was certainly in dialogue with the questions that photographers in South Africa, the United Kingdom, and Mexico were posing at the same time—or, in many cases, a bit later. To date, few of Nakahira's writings have been translated into English, and the basic fact of this language barrier means that he has been inaccessible to an audience that would, otherwise, surely be receptive to his ideas.[75] But why was Nakahira so motivated to pursue photography to the end? Why did he approach his "critical inquiry into seeing as both problem and possibility" as if it was a matter of life or death?[76] In his writing, the tone of Nakahira's essays is gripped by feeling; the stakes are always laid out so high. He writes with an almost Benjaminian urgency, as if the world depended on it. I hope to show that, in some way, it did.

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[75] For example, Nakahira's work would have fit in *Not Yet*, an edited volume on the politicization of photography around the globe during the 1970s and 1980s which reproduces an extensive range of primary documents from South Africa, Mexico, Germany and the United Kingdom. The omission not just of Nakahira, but in fact of any photographers from Asia, is surely not a case of scholarly neglect, but a lack of linguistic ability. See Jorge Ribalta, ed., *Not Yet: On the Reinvention of Documentary and the Critique of Modernism: Essays and Documents, 1972-1991* (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2015).

[76] Prichard, *Residual Futures: The Urban Ecologies of Literary and Visual Media of 1960s and 1970s Japan*, 121.

Chapter 1

Bodies Against Language: *Provoke*

Introduction: Photography After Language

> Alpha 60: Do you know what illuminates the night?
> Lemmy Caution: Poetry.
>
> *Alphaville*, 1965

In 1970, Nakahira Takuma published his first photobook, *For a Language to Come*, which collected photographs and essays that he had published in various venues over the previous few years. In the photographs, language represented in various notational systems appear throughout. Even the book's first image, which shows the doorway to a salacious-looking pub, presents roman script, Chinese characters, and *katakana*.[1] The photograph is angled up, situating the photographer outside and below the door and its ersatz odalisques. At the bottom left, *katakana* characters on a sign spell out the words "American system," a term that refers to the way the pub charges its customers; the sign explains various fees. Published at the height of the Vietnam War, the words "American system" signal an unmistakable interest in the contemporary exercise of power. Another photograph in the book shows a nighttime scene, with a poster for Jean-Luc Godard's 1965 science fiction film *Alphaville* in the center of the frame. Nakahira included an essay on Godard in *For a Language to Come*, and he referred to Godard in many other writings. The deep blacks of Nakahira's photographs from this time recall the murky cinematography of *Alphaville*.

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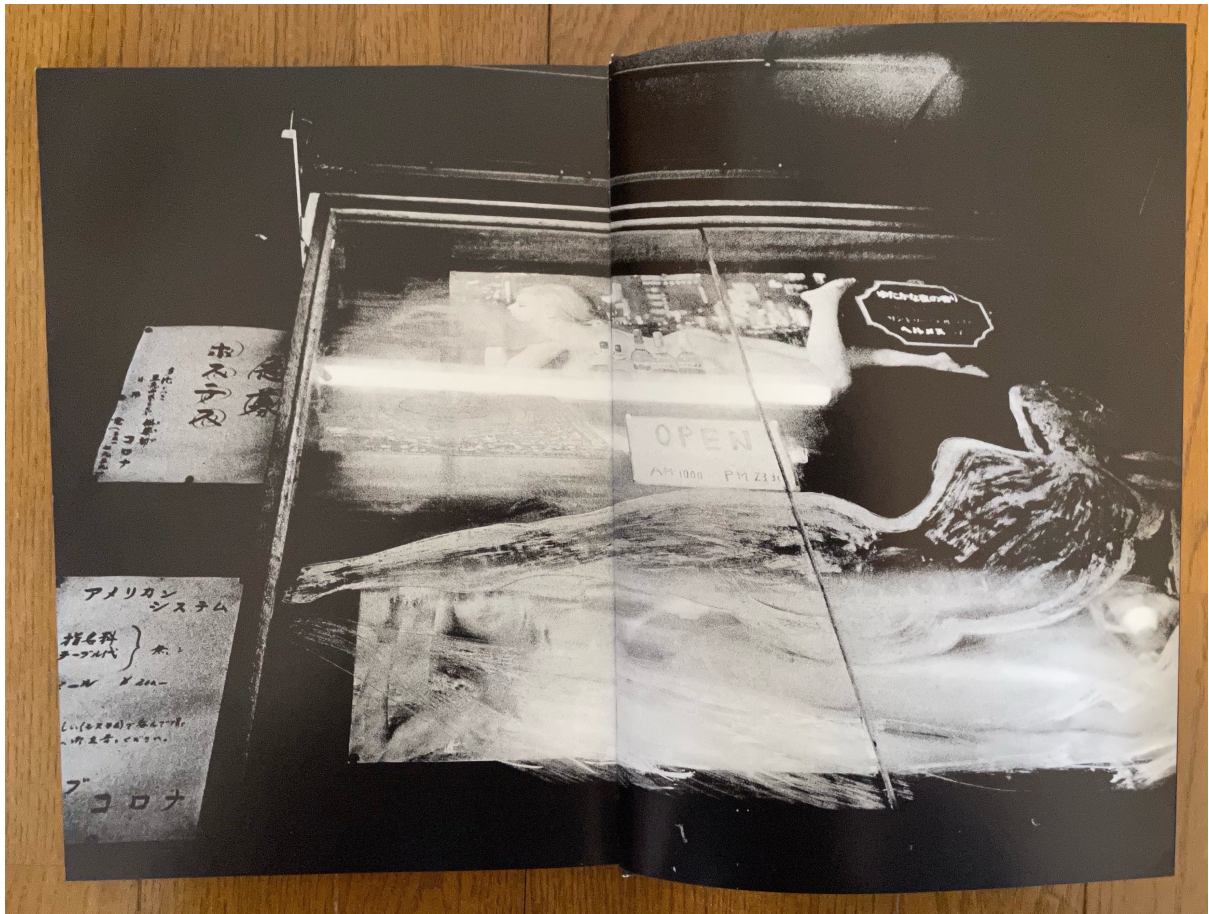
[1] *Katakana* is a Japanese syllabary, used primarily for loan words. In the example below, "American" and "system" are rendered as *amerikan* and *shisutemu*.

Figures 6, 7 and 8



Nakahira Takuma, from *For a Language to Come*, 1970.

Nakahira Takuma, from *For a Language to Come*, 1970.

Alphaville, 1965, dir. Jean-Luc Godard.

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Beyond this visual connection, *Alphaville* also clarifies the significance of language—a concept that underpinned not only Nakahira's book, but also *Provoke*, the Tokyo-based magazine of essays and photographs which he helped publish between 1968 and 1969. In many ways, the plot of the film models an adversarial relationship to language. *Alphaville* revolves around the attempt of its beleaguered hero, secret agent Lemmy Caution, to overthrow Alpha 60, a centralized linguistic computing system that controls a technocratic and genocidal state from within an institution called, no less, the Institute of General Semantics. Lemmy comes from the so-called "Outlands," an area at war with Alphaville. He finds that anyone who thinks outside of Alpha 60's strictly rational limits is summarily executed. These limits are defined in terms of language. In Alphaville, what is called a "Bible" is actually a dictionary, in which entries are deleted as soon as the words are deemed a threat to the stability of the system.[2] The film makes language into a ground of politics; the struggle for the vocabulary that one can grasp is also the struggle for liberation. Language is a totalizing, brutally administered system—against which Lemmy launches an irrational assault. Under interrogation by Alpha 60, he claims that poetry, not electricity, is what illuminates the night. Throughout the film, Lemmy takes up romantic ideas, and romance itself, as weapons against Alpha 60's rational system of language.

The idea that the system of language must be attacked drove forward the theoretical program of *Provoke*, the magazine that Nakahira published with four other members between 1968 and 1969. In the first issue of the magazine, he and fellow member Taki Kōji wrote a manifesto-like statement that laid out a program explicitly focused on the relationship between language and images. The pair claimed that although images are "not exchangeable

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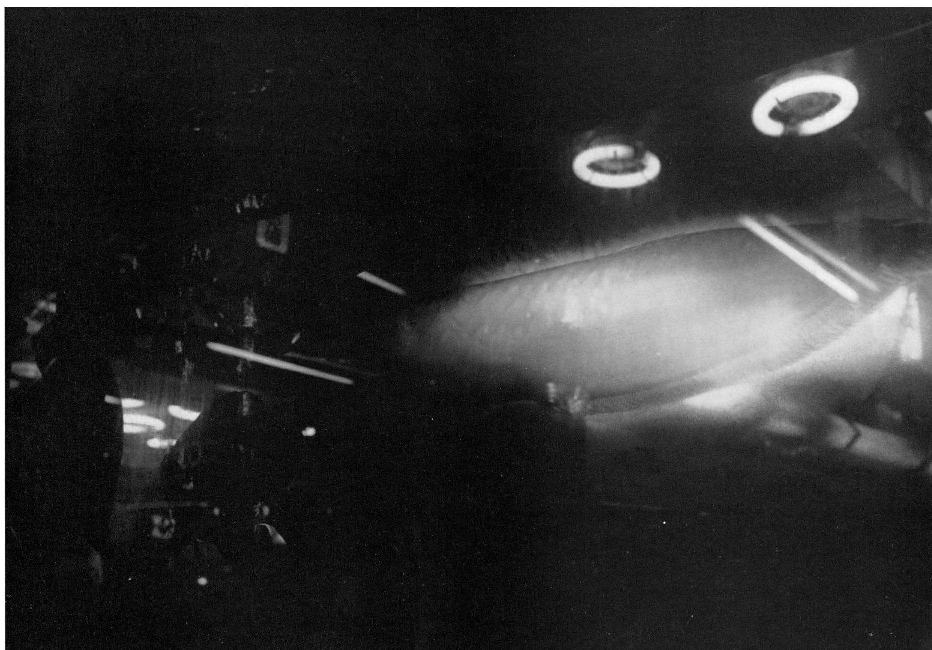
[2] The French word *conscience*, for example, has disappeared.

symbols like language," they can sometimes go beyond already existing, pre-formed language, and "explode" the world of language and ideas.[3] When that happens, they transform otherwise fixed language into new language, and therefore new thought. Then, they put forward an important claim for photography: "Today, when language has lost its material base—that is, its reality—and flutters in mid-air, what we as photographers can do is to capture fragments of reality with our own eyes, which existing language cannot do."[4] Crucially, this statement places theoretical weight on the photographer, who is tasked with breaking through the system of language.

Figure 9



Nakahira Takuma, from *Provoke* 2, March 1969.

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[3] Nakahira Takuma and Taki Kōji, "Untitled Preface," *Provoke*, no. 1 (1968): 2.

[4] Nakahira and Taki.

Nakahira's series of photographs published in the second issue of *Provoke* begins here, with his name printed in small letters to the left. Where to begin describing a photograph that seems to *show* almost nothing, that seems to be *about* almost nothing? Two fluorescent bulbs describe nearly complete circles towards the top right of the frame, while the rest of the image is strewn with some indistinct registrations of white on the otherwise deep black background. The digital file that I reproduce here offers vision too much of a foothold: looking at the magazine itself, the eye begins to slide off of its glossy paper, which catches light that mingles with the scattered reflections on the page.[5] And how to find words for the bulbous, hazy, fleshy *thing* that surges up in the right half of the image? With its permeable boundaries, it "flutters in mid-air," unfixed. Apart from the bulbs, really, not much else can be named with certainty. Words, names, language—everything breaks down.

If language was no longer solid, what would take its place? Lemmy Caution could call on the tradition of written poetry, and Paul Éluard's book *Capital of Pain* figures prominently in the film. But poetry was no solution for photographers. This chapter argues that the body itself was invested with the possibility of going beyond language. While today *Provoke* is largely associated with the harsh aesthetic of its photography, at its core the magazine was driven by a deeply felt necessity to push photography into the realm of the

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[5] The original issues of *Provoke* have become expensive commodities. In 2008, a complete set of the three magazines sold at auction for $43,000, far outpacing its estimated price of $18,000. "PROVOKE," Christie's, accessed December 2, 2021, https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-5054242. Nakahira's photographs from *Provoke* that appear in this chapter are digital files that were prepared for a facsimile version of the magazine published by Tokyo-based Nitesha in 2018. Throughout the course of my research, I have consulted the original issues of *Provoke* held in the library of the Tokyo Museum of Photographic Arts; I thank the library staff for their consistently generous assistance. Looking at the original issues of the magazine, the Nitesha reprint, other facsimile versions and my own digital files, I have determined that the digital images from *Provoke* 2 are even closer to the original than the Nitseha publication itself, which is printed somewhat too dark, and with slightly too much contrast. However, among all existing facsimile versions of *Provoke*, the Nitesha version is the best, in terms of paper stock and image quality; the printing of issues 1 and 3 is extremely close to the original.

corporeal. How could photography be *of* the body, not just figure it? Why did the body take on such significance at this particular time and place?

To answer such questions, this chapter contends that *Provoke*'s major intervention was to shift theoretical weight from photography—a philosophical, linguistic and ontological category—to the photographer. This shift was already signaled in Nakahira and Taki's statement, which inquired into "what we as photographers can do." Moving from photography in the abstract to the photographer in the flesh, *Provoke* also understood the photographer in phenomenological terms: in various essays*,* its writers drew explicitly on the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty.[6] This turn towards the photographer as a body in the world was not simply a theoretical exercise, but one that registered in photographs, particularly Nakahira's series published in *Provoke* 2. Merleau-Ponty's essay "The Intertwining—The Chiasm" practically models the indeterminate mode of photographic practice that Nakahira pursued in the second issue.

This essay begins with a powerful rejoinder to philosophy itself: "If it is true that as soon as philosophy declares itself to be reflection or coincidence it prejudges what it will find, then once again it must recommence everything, reject the instruments reflection and intuition had provided themselves, and install itself in a place where they have not yet been distinguished, in experiences that have not yet been 'worked over,' that offer us all at once, pell-mell, both 'subject' and 'object,' both existence and essence, and hence give philosophy

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[6] Merleau-Ponty's ideas were well known in the Japanese intellectual sphere. An early essay on film appeared in *Eiga Hihyō* in 1957, while a translation of *Humanisme et terreur*, his first complete book to appear in Japanese, was published in 1959. His work was translated consistently from that point on. Okada Takahiko cited Merleau-Ponty directly in the first issue of *Provoke*, in an essay I discuss later in this chapter. Taki's essay for the 1970 *Provoke* book *First, Abandon the World of Pseudo-Certainty*, also drew heavily on the same volume of Merleau-Ponty's writings. The first line of Taki's essay stated: "At the same time that any photograph is 'the thing seen,' it also brings forth the flesh of the photographer, which hides beneath consciousness." Taki Kōji, "Me to me narazaru mono," in *Mazu tashikarashisa no sekai wo sutero: shashin to gengo no shiso*, ed. Taki Kōji and Nakahira Takuma (Tokyo: Tabata Shoten, 1970), 176.

resources to redefine them."[7] Because philosophy has understood itself to be a "reflection," and thus "prejudges what it will find," it must shift its very location; it must "install itself in" the indeterminate zone of those experiences "that offer us all at once, pell-mell, both 'subject' and 'object.'" Such experiences productively distort the operation of language: Merleau-Ponty writes that "in all languages," the name given to them does not denote a clear meaning, but instead "conveys meanings in tufts, thickets of proper sense and figurative senses."[8] The experiences themselves resist incorporation into language—sensation ingrains itself into the name, almost pushing itself through the name, but not entirely. Language remains intact, but it no longer carries meaning transparently; it is instead warped, distorted, or perhaps blurred. Merleau-Ponty writes that these names are "the repeated index" of "a light which, illuminating the rest, remains at its source in obscurity."[9]

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[7] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Intertwining—The Chiasm," in *The Visible and the Invisible*, ed. Claude Lefort, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 130.

[8] Merleau-Ponty, 130.

[9] Merleau-Ponty, 130.

Figure 10

Nakahira Takuma, from *Provoke* 2, March 1969.

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The center of another photograph from Nakahira's series in *Provoke* 2 is consumed by a white burst that emanates from an overpass—maybe from a train, maybe from a car. Either way, light floods into the wide-open aperture of the camera, imprinting the octagonal traces of the aperture blades onto the film itself. Dwarfed by this explosion, a tiny sliver of a human figure appears at the left. They are nearly wiped out by the light; their face is, of course, illegible. Concrete blocks of the overpass dominate the lower third of the composition, while the upper section is a hash of night sky, refracted light and grain. The photograph offers no information, no fact, no explanation: light blots out the scene, and the imprint of the aperture blades on the film scatter this central explosion across the darkness of night. Is this "a light

which, illuminating the rest, remains at its source in obscurity"? For now, that seems too literal a reading of the photograph. Certainly, though, Nakahira was trying to move beyond linguistic "reflection," in his photographs and his essays alike. Against language, he installed photography, as it were, in the location of such "pell-mell" experience, letting it signify in the "tufts" and "thickets" that appear here, as if to bend the system of language towards some unexpected end.[10]

Where was this location? In other words, after giving up on the indexical certainty of "reflection or coincidence," where exactly was philosophy (for Merleau-Ponty) or photography (for Nakahira) to install itself? The answer, for both, was the body. Yet for Merleau-Ponty, the body could not be thought apart from the world, and this intertwined relationship constitutes the true horizon of his thinking. Merleau-Ponty used the concept of "flesh" to point to this indeterminate yet inextricable relation: it is "not matter," but instead "the coiling over of the visible upon the seeing body."[11] As Nakahira's photographs track his own bodily encounter with the world, in all of its "pell-mell" confusion between subject and object, they also track the theoretical shift that *Provoke* made towards the photographer—understood as a sensing, feeling body. If Nakahira's photographs in the second issue are indexical in any sense, they index the blurriness of the boundary between the world and the body that senses it.

While *Provoke*'s theoretical approach was grounded in an approach to the body, it was just as committed to the politics of its day, dominated by the "American system." Why

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[10] In a 1967 essay, Taki suggested that he was interested in the discovery of unknown worlds through new visual languages. See Taki Kōji, "Eizō no gyakusetsu—Narahara Ikkō ron," *Design Hihyō*, no. 4 (1967): 142–50.

[11] Merleau-Ponty, "The Intertwining—The Chiasm," 146. He also calls flesh "the formative medium of the object and the subject." Merleau-Ponty, 147. Merleau-Ponty's writing abounds in pairs—body and world, subject and object, sense and language—but he is at pains to stress that they are reversible sides of the same phenomenal coin. The last words of Merleau-Ponty's essay read: "we do not have to gather them up into a synthesis: they are two aspects of the reversibility which is the ultimate truth." Merleau-Ponty, 155.

might a focus on the body of the photographer mean more than a simple retreat into subjective experience? Understanding *Provoke* within the specific context of 1968 in Japan shows that the body was understood politically; the cultural critic Hyūga Akiko, for example, wrote of the importance of "corporeal thinking" to the cultural landscape.[12] Looking at a range of material published in Japanese at this time—little of which has been addressed in Japanese-language scholarship on the magazine, let alone in English—shows that in advocating for a bodily and sensuous turn, *Provoke* was hardly unique among artists and intellectuals in Japan.[13] The very title of *Provoke*'s second issue—"Eros," a clear reference to Herbert Marcuse—pointed to body politics.

Provoke plays an important role within this dissertation because it crystallized Nakahira's initial thinking around the body of the photographer, here pitched against the system of language. Without understanding the theory of *Provoke* and the significance of Nakahira's photographs for the second issue, it would be difficult to grasp the later turns in his development as a photographer and writer. As a result, I understand *Provoke* through Nakahira's own interests, highlighting both the magazine's theoretical inquiry into the photographer as a body in the world, and Nakahira's own practice, which came the closest to visually articulating this theoretical core.[14] More so than any other series that was published in the magazine, Nakahira's photographs for the second issue plumbed the relationship

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[12] Hyūga Akiko, "Fīringu toiu koto," in *Poppu bunkaron* (Tokyo: Diamond-sha, 1973), 321.

[13] It may not be an exaggeration to say that the body is the central term of postwar Japanese art. For further analysis, see Namiko Kunimoto, *The Stakes of Exposure: Anxious Bodies in Postwar Japanese Art* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017); Kuroda RaiJee, *Nikutai no anākizumu — 1960 nendai nippon bijutsu ni okeru pafōmansu no chika suimyaku* (Tokyo: grambooks, 2010); Bert Winther-Tamaki, *Maximum Embodiment: Yōga, the Western Painting of Japan, 1912-1955* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012).

[14] I focus on Nakahira, but in an excellent article on the intellectual genealogy of *Provoke*, Philip Charrier takes Taki Kōji as the theoretical fulcrum of the magazine. See Philip Charrier, "Taki Kōji, Provoke, and the Structuralist Turn in Japanese Image Theory, 1967–70," *History of Photography* 41, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 25–43.

between the photographer and the world. These photographs stand apart even from Nakahira's own work published in the first and third issues of the magazine. However briefly, he let the world in, as the light from the overpass came streaming in through the lens. Existing scholarship on *Provoke* largely focuses on the magazine's photographic aesthetic, leaving aside its evident interest in the body.[15] Nakahira's exploration of "Eros" did not last, but his experience of *Provoke* was extremely formative for his later practice as a photographer and writer. With *Provoke,* his lasting interest in the body—which would become the central term of his practice—began in earnest.

A Snapshot of Provoke

> I repeat: the issue is what is happening inside of us.[16]
>
> Taki Kōji, *Provoke* 1, 1968

A brief overview of *Provoke* is thus in order. *Provoke* was a magazine of photographs, essays and poetry published in Tokyo by a group of five people: Nakahira, Taki Kōji (both photographers, editors and writers), Takanashi Yutaka, Moriyama Daidō (both photographers; Moriyama joined from the second issue) and Okada Takahiko (art critic and poet). If anything were to link the five members, it would be their shared connections to the established art and photography world. For example, by 1968 Takanashi (b. 1935) had already won a significant photography award and was working as a photographer in the

[15] Fujii Yuko's 2012 dissertation, "Photography as Process: A Study of the Japanese Photography Journal *Provoke*," points out its connection to phenomenology. In particular, Fujii discusses Taki Kōji's interest in Merleau-Ponty. See Yuko Fujii, "Photography as Process: A Study of the Japanese Photography Journal 'Provoke'" (Ph.D. diss, New York, City University of New York, 2012), 92.

[16] Taki Kōji, "Oboesho 1 — chi no taihai," *Provoke*, no. 1 (1968): 66.

office of the Japan Design Center, a major advertising agency.[17] Moriyama (b. 1938) moved from Osaka to Tokyo in the mid-1960s, made contact with Tōmatsu Shomei, and then worked as a darkroom printer for Hosoe Eikoh; both of these were well-established stars in the firmament of the photography world. By the time Moriyama joined *Provoke*, he too had a major award under his belt.[18] Taki (1928-2011) was already a seasoned editor and photographer who had trained for years working on a famed series of pocket photography books published by Iwanami Shoten, one of Japan's major presses.[19] Taki's work at Iwanami also led him to meet Tōmatsu, who worked as a photographer for the series.[20] For his part, Okada (1939-1997) was not directly connected to the photography world, but he was a lauded poet with connections to contemporary art in Japan; he later worked as a curator and invited Nakahira to participate in the 1971 Paris Biennale.[21] Yet in Tōmatsu's own words, Nakahira

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[17] Takanashi won the Japan Photo Critics Association Newcomer's Award in 1964 for his series "Otsukaresama." He had met Nakahira when the latter was working as an editor for *Gendai no me*. Takanashi Yutaka, "Intabyū Takanashi Yutaka: 'Shashin - dōgō hanpuku' e no iradachi," *Déjà-vu*, October 1993, 62. For more on Takanashi at this moment, see a special feature on his work that was published in the November 1968 issue of *Design*.

[18] Like Takanashi, Moriyama won the Japan Photo Critics Association Newcomer's Award, in 1967 for his work "Nippon Gekijō." This series traced the lives of itinerant performers throughout various regions of the country. However, Moriyama was unhappy with the fact that this work was understood in terms of a documentary interest in Japan's local cultures, when he was more interested in developing a personal mode of expression. See Nishii Kazuo, *Naze imadani "Purobōku" ka: Moriyama Daidō, Nakahira Takuma, Araki Nobuyoshi no tanjō* (Tokyo: Seikyūsha, 1996), 26.

[19] Taki, for his part, was the organizational and financial center of the group: *Provoke* was published out of his office, and he covered the printing costs that members did not make up. Yanagimoto Naomi, "Intabyū Yanagimoto Naomi: 90 pāsento ga seiji no hanashidatta henshū kaigi," *Déjà-vu*, October 1993, 71. At Iwanami, Taki worked under the photographer and editor Natori Yōnosuke, who I address briefly in the following section.

[20] In the mid-1960s, when Taki worked as an editor at the magazine *Glass*, published by the Asahi Glass Company, he brought Tōmatsu on as part of an innovative photography series called "Contemporary Eye." I thank the late Kaneko Ryūichi for pointing me to *Glass*, with the knowing suggestion that it might be a hidden precursor to *Provoke*.

[21] I discuss the work Nakahira made in Paris in Chapter 2.

was “the ringleader of *Provoke*”; all of the members had met through him, and he was the most energetic in terms of pursuing both photography and writing with equal passion.[22]

Provoke ran for three issues, published November 2, 1968, March 10, 1969, and August 10, 1969. It sold for 500 yen, a sizable amount at the time, and was self-published out of an office in the Aoyama area of Tokyo.[23] About 1000 copies of each issue were printed, and the copies were not distributed through usual commercial channels but instead sold by hand.[24] Although the individual members were very well-connected, the publication itself was an entirely independent production. The magazine ended in 1969, and all of the members participated in the print volume *First, Abandon the World of Pseudo-Certainty*, published in 1970 by Tabata Shoten.[25] This volume collects photographs alongside essays, some of which had been previously published in other magazines. For the purposes of this study, I largely focus on the three issues of the magazine itself, as they offer the clearest picture of the group’s photography; there, they could exercise more control over the final publication. While *First, Abandon the World of Pseudo-Certainty* was published in a standard size with a single paper stock not well suited to photographic reproduction, the issues of *Provoke* all have slightly different dimensions, and used different paper stocks for photographs and text, sometimes using different stocks for photographic series within the same issue. Each number

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[22] Tōmatsu Shōmei, “Intabyū Tōmatsu Shōmei: ‘Jidai no ko’ toshite no shashinka,” *Déjà-vu*, October 1993, 75.

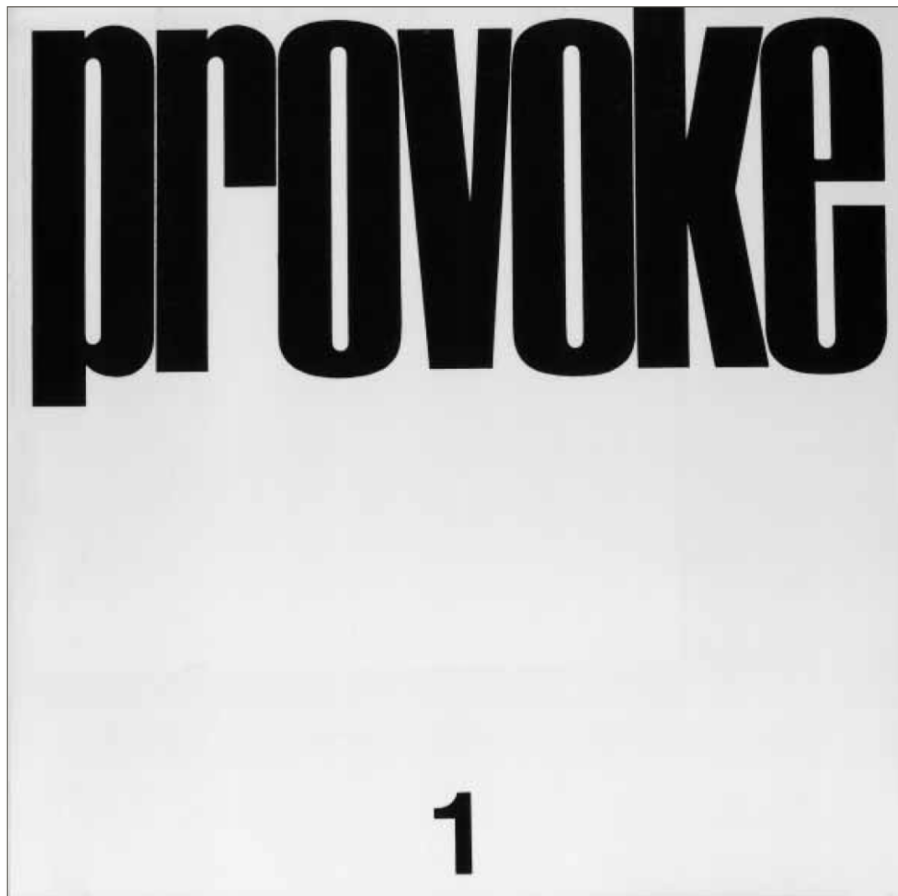
[23] Yuko Fujii notes that major magazines sold for less than 300 yen at the time. Fujii, “Photography as Process: A Study of the Japanese Photography Journal ‘Provoke,’” 11.

[24] According to Fujii’s research, Yanagimoto Naomi, an assistant of Taki Kōji, visited various bookstores around the country to sell the magazine by hand. Fujii, 11.

[25] Tabata Shoten published a number of important critical works around this time, such that a cultural history of Japan in the 1960s and 1970s could surely be written through its books alone. In particular, see Lee Ufan, *Deai o motomete: atarashī geijutsu no hajimari ni* (Tokyo: Tabata Shoten, 1971); Masao Matsuda, *Fūkei no shimetsu* (Tokyo: Tabata Shoten, 1971); Matsuda Masao, *Fukanōsei no media* (Tokyo: Tabata Shoten, 1973); Muraki Yoshihiko and Fukai Mamoru, *Hansen + terebijon: watashi no kaosu watashi no kyoten* (Tokyo: Tabata Shoten, 1970).

was substantial in length: the first issue had 68 pages, while the remaining two had 110.[26] The magazine's cover—in all likelihood, designed by Nakahira—spelled out *Provoke* using a modified version of Helvetica Extra Compressed, in all lowercase, with practically no kerning between the letters.[27] The letter 'k' of the title was printed full bleed, to the top of the page.

Figure 11



Cover of *Provoke* 1, 1968.

[26] The magazine was never printed physically large: the widest issue is 21 centimeters across, the tallest 24 centimeters high.

[27] Many thanks to Becca Abbe for identifying this typeface. The poster of the 1970 Tokyo Biennale, which featured Nakahira's photograph, also used a standard version of Helvetica Extra Compressed; see Chapter 3.

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Each issue, the photographers all had the same number of pages (15-20, depending on the issue) to publish their work. These photographs were laid out in a rather uniform way: either one photograph per page, or one photograph per two-page spread. The photographers were always published in separate sections, and even within individual sections their photographs never overlapped each other. In *Provoke* 1, a brief caption introduced each series with a title, while in *Provoke* 2 and *Provoke* 3 the untitled series were introduced by the name of the photographer alone. In this regard, the presentation of photographs in *Provoke* was not so distinct from that of mass-market camera magazines of the day, which also featured individual photographers that laid out one photograph per page (or one per spread), used different paper stocks for different sections, and published various essays. The sheer amount of ink on the pages of *Provoke* was greater, the photographs were sometimes printed full bleed, and the slightly panoramic format of the first issue was especially unusual.[28]

The magazine's sharp subtitle appeared on the inside cover of each issue. Using just a few words—"Provocative Materials for Thought"—it hinted at *Provoke*'s theoretical ambition. The word "materials" strongly connotes the written word, and a significant portion of each issue was devoted to text.[29] In fact, readers who opened up any issue of the magazine would have seen an essay or a poem before they saw a photograph.[30] While this poetry had

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[28] Takanashi noted the strangeness of this format in a 1968 interview with Nakahira; see Nakahira Takuma and Takanashi Yutaka, "Ima shashinka de aru koto," *Bijutsu Techō*, December 1968, 200.

[29] The Japanese word used in the subtitle, *shiryō*, does not connote "materials" in the sense of matter, but rather of "research materials"—that is, text. This term is completely different from the word that Nakahira and Taki use when they described a "material base," *busshitsu*. In the abstract, *shiryō* could also be rendered comfortably as "document." However, Nakahira (and Taki) used a different word, *kiroku,* to convey the idea of a photographic document. See Chapter 2 of this dissertation, where I analyze Nakahira's essay "The Illusion Called Document."

[30] Among the five members, Nakahira, Okada and Taki wrote prose, while Okada—the only non-photographing member—published his poetry in *Provoke* 2 and *Provoke* 3. The poet Yoshimasu

some nominal connection to the images in the magazine, the essays bore no relation at all to the photographs. In fact, none of these essays even took photography as their main subject, but dealt instead with theoretical questions. For example, Taki titled his essay in the first issue of the magazine “Memo 1—The Decay of Knowledge.” In this essay, he evaluated the state of contemporary knowledge production, criticizing the dominant “big science” that acts only in collusion with military, industrial or national interests—a criticism that Taki explicitly drew from Japan’s student movement at this time. Against this cynical idea, Taki defined knowledge as “a striving towards the theory that would grasp the totality between the human and the world.”[31] To write in terms of human and world is already to anticipate the claims of phenomenology. Still, throughout the course of the essay Taki returned to the theme that contemporary knowledge neglected this important relationship; he argued against a paradigm of the social sciences that abstracts individual experience. This is why he claimed that “the issue is what is happening inside of us.”[32]

In another essay from the first issue of *Provoke*, Okada Takahiko wrote an essay that takes the affective relationship between the subject and the object as its starting point. Okada’s prose in this essay is abstruse—perhaps one reason that “Can’t See, Heartrending Feeling, Wanting to Fly” has never been discussed in either English or Japanese. In the text, Okada offers a wildly poetic theorization of politicized artistic practice. He defines freedom as “human potentiality,” and goes on to suggest that regardless of whether it is called art or not, the act of expression has the possibility to produce freedom, even from the state.[33] Okada

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Gōzō was also invited to publish a poem in the third issue. Yoshimasu is the only person outside of the core group of five to publish in the magazine.

[31] Taki, “Oboesho 1 — chi no taihai,” 64.

[32] Taki, 66. While Taki does not quite use corporeal language, he is interested in the concreteness of existence, which he describes using the Heideggerian notion of *Entwurf*, or “thrownness” (in Japanese, *tōki*).

[33] Okada Takahiko, “Mienai, setsunai, tobitai,” *Provoke*, no. 1 (1968): 3.

argues for artistic expression because it advances the twinned projects of social and personal liberation. As a result, his thinking passes through Marxist and psychoanalytic discourse.[34] Okada consistently returns to the experience of feeling a "heartrending" emotion, which he suggests rises up most intensely when the subject wants to see something but cannot. When faced with the intense power of this emotion, the subject can choose either to "crystallize" it, or run away from it. If the subject chooses the latter option, it is led down a disastrous path which distorts their own consciousness. Discussing the distance between subject and object, Okada turns to Merleau-Ponty, suggesting that seeing itself is predicated on a certain distance from the object that one wishes to behold.[35]

Not yet approaching the intermingling of photographer and world of the second issue, Nakahira's photographs from *Provoke* 1 offer a view of other bodies breaking down. In one of these photographs, two women are photographed from above sitting on a beach towel; one wears a bathing suit.[36] Their eyes are downcast—a consistent feature of Nakahira's photography, in which the eyes of human figures are either burned out or turned away from the viewer's gaze. At the bottom left corner, the somewhat haggard face of an anthropomorphic sun lazily shines through the towel. Just above that cotton sun, bright daylight—or overexposure—dissolves the boundary between the woman's arm and the towel behind it: the inside edge of her arm is defined, but there is no outside line at all. Her arm

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[34] This brief analysis of this essay does not focus on its specifically political dimension, which is well developed. In addition to Japanese intellectuals like Yoshimoto Takaaki, Okada also cites Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* to bring out Marx's call for the full awakening of human sense as part of liberation. Okada, 7–8. Because of Okada's interest in Marxism and psychoanalysis, he also passes through Surrealism: André Breton figures among the many thinkers who are quoted in this essay. In the mid-1970s, both Nakahira and Okada returned to Surrealism in their writing. See Nakahira, "Rekishi e no ishi — Shururearisumu no senzai tekina chikara"; Okada Takahiko, *Nihon no seiki matsu* (Tokyo: Ozawa Shoten, 1976).

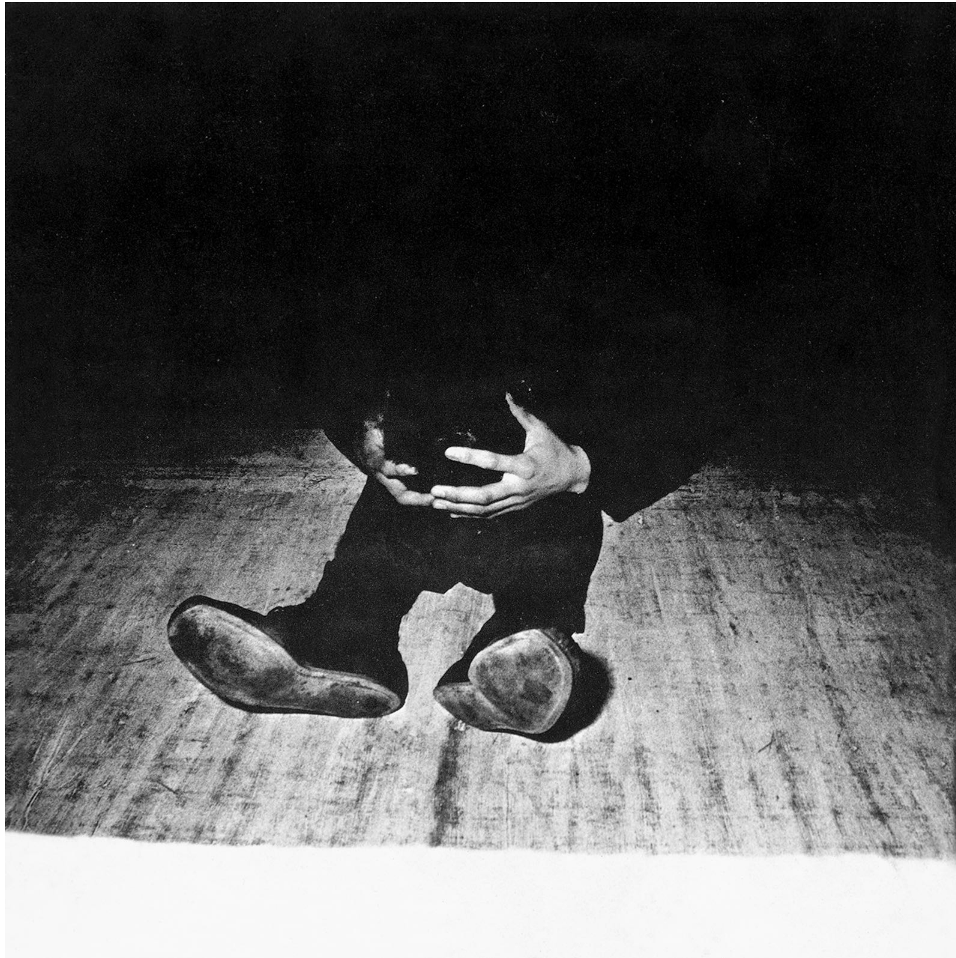
[35] Here, Okada cites Merleau-Ponty's volume *Me to seishin,* a translation of *L'oeil et l'esprit* that was first published in Japanese in 1966. Okada, "Mienai, setsunai, tobitai," 26.

[36] They are Nakahira's wife and sister. Fujii, "Photography as Process: A Study of the Japanese Photography Journal 'Provoke,'" 130.

simply melts into the white material. Nakahira's last photograph of the series performs the same operation in the inverse. A figure wears black pants, black shoes, black socks and a black shirt. They sit in front of a black backdrop—or an area that Nakahira has simply burned in. The photograph cuts off unevenly at the bottom edge, the result of an error, as if part of the film had simply not been exposed. The figure holds something up, but it is impossible to make out what—a ball, or perhaps their own head, as if rhyming with the gesture of a photograph that Nakahira had published in his "Last Train" series just a month earlier.[37] But the entire top half of their body is engulfed by the blackness of the background. These photographs roughen up the distinctions between the "inside" of the human and the "outside" of the world.

Figures 12 and 13

[37] See Introduction.



Both Nakahira Takuma, from *Provoke* 1, 1968.

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It is difficult to speak about the magazine in general, as if it was an internally consistent group, when the various photographic styles and theoretical approaches of its members were not in harmonious agreement with each other. In terms of theory, different members had different motivations for participating; while Nakahira and Taki were more interested in politics, Takanashi and Moriyama took a back seat in the political discussions that the other two drove forward.[38] Even though Nakahira and Taki make up the theoretical

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[38] At this time, the photographer Yanagimoto Naomi was working as Taki's assistant. In a later interview, he recalled that in the *Provoke* editorial meetings, Nakahira and Taki argued about politics

center of *Provoke*, Taki mainly looked to French structuralist intellectuals, while Nakahira felt a deep internationalism in keeping with the spirit of the times. In his essays, he consistently referred to Vietnam, Algeria, and Cuba, a geopolitical sense that was developed through Nakahira's interest in the concept of "Third Cinema." Nakahira was closely connected to independent filmmakers and film critics working in Japan at this time, especially those around the left-wing film magazine *Eiga Hihyō* (Film Review). Writings by Frantz Fanon and Eldridge Cleaver circulated in this group, for whom Godard was also an obvious reference point.[39] Okada, meanwhile, brought a deep interest in psychoanalysis to the magazine which the other two writers did not share. All three emphasized the importance of internal experience in relation to the world—but it bears repeating that *Provoke* is a discontinuous object, more discontinuous than my own analysis can disclose.

By the same token, there is no coherent program of "*Provoke* photography," even though the Japanese term *are bure boke* (rough grain, blurriness, out-of-focus) has been used to describe it in both Japanese and English.[40] The techniques of roughness, blur and focus have practically been taken for granted as *Provoke*'s special domain, and they have sealed its standing within photography history.[41] For all coherence that the term *are, bure, boke* confers upon *Provoke*'s images, however, it was always an appellation from the outside. *Provoke*

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while Takanashi listened attentively, and Moriyama seemed confused about what was happening. See Yanagimoto, "Intabyū Yanagimoto Naomi: 90 pāsento ga seiji no hanashidatta henshū kaigi."

[39] Along with the *Eiga Hihyō* editor and critic Matsuda Masao, Nakahira developed the concept of "landscape theory," which theorized the presence of state power in everyday scenes. For more on landscape theory, see Chapter 4.

[40] *Are* refers to the roughness of film grain. *Bure* refers to the blurriness of a photograph (whether caused by the motion of the subject or of the photographer). *Boke* refers to a photograph going out of focus, in part or whole. During the 1960s and 1970s, it was more common in Japanese-language photography discourse to describe photographs in terms of "*bure boke*"; *are* entered the picture somewhat later.

[41] This is not specific to European and North American commentators, but was in fact already sealed in Japanese-language discourse early on. In March 1976, when the magazine *Asahi Camera* published a special feature called "What Happened to *Bure Boke*," the term was clearly associated with *Provoke*.

members did not develop this term, and they discussed it only fleetingly in print until well after the magazine had already folded. Truth be told, the magazine has no special purchase on these photographic techniques, which were all in use across a range of commercial and artistic practices for decades prior. In fact, it would be possible to locate the origin of blurry and grainy photography as far back as Niépce's window photograph, or even the smeared prints of the pictorialists.

For the immediate purposes of delineating a narrative of *Provoke*, though, one could start in New York, in 1945, with the publication of Aleksey Brodovitch's photobook *Ballet*. In this work, Brodovitch experimented with blur and high contrast to depict the motion of dancers through space. For the most part, Brodovitch's own hand remained somewhat steady, allowing the motion of limbs, or the twirl of a dress, to leave an extended trace on the surface of the film. There was hardly a more established figure within the world of editorial photography than Brodovitch, who had worked as the art director of *Harper's Bazaar* since 1934. William Klein, one of Brodovitch's own staff photographers, took this technique to the streets of New York City to produce his 1956 photobook *Life Is Good & Good For You In New York: Trance Witness Revels*. This book caused a stir around the world, including in Japan. In 1967, Nakahira published an essay on Klein, who he named (along with Tōmatsu, Robert Frank and Eugène Atget) as a major reason that he started to take photographs. In the essay, Nakahira was already guarding against a literal reading of grain and blur, critiquing a tendency to "directly connect the instability of Klein's composition to the instability of contemporary people, and the roughness of the grain to the roughness of people's emotions,

as if it cracking and translating a code."[42] Instead, he claimed that Klein's photographs went beyond such linguistic modes of analysis, and even beyond meaning altogether.[43]

However, these techniques were already part of the discourse in the broader Japanese photography world before *Provoke* was published.[44] Even in 1960, the novelist Iizawa Tadasu keenly pointed out the confluence of the commercial and the artistic in techniques of blur and grain. In article on Klein, Iizawa highlighted his intense grain, which he said reminded him of bromoil prints. At the same time, he also wrote that Klein's work "has an extreme quality that recalls the extremity of recent newspaper advertising photographs, with the film pushed to show only highlights and shadows." In fact, when Klein started to make the New York photographs in 1954, the costs of film, developing, and printing were underwritten by *Vogue*.[45] *Are*, *bure* and *boke* are hardly specific to *Provoke*, or Klein: they were—and still are—part and parcel of the wide uses of photography.

For example, in January 1967, the photography magazine *Camera Mainichi*, one of the major photography publications of the day, devoted a special feature to "*Bure* and *Boke* in Photography," a title that was splashed across the front cover. For Nishii Kazuo, this issue suggests that *bure* and *boke* "started in editorial photography, within the terrain of the commercial."[46] One article explained *bure boke* in terms of a technical mistake to be avoided,

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[42] Nakahira Takuma, "Fudō no shiten no hōkai — Uiriamu Kurain 'Nyu Yōku' kara no hassō," in *Mitsuzukeru hate ni hi ga...: hihyō shūsei 1965-1977* (Tokyo: Osiris, 2007), 14.

[43] Whether they found a critique of the modern capitalist city or an exploration of urban loneliness, Nakahira was unhappy with critics in Japan who described Klein's work symbolically. Nakahira granted that it is possible to use "emotional adjectives" to describe Klein's photographs individually to arrive at "something like a meaning," but that "when these fragments are assembled, they completely reject such adjectives." Nakahira, 14–15.

[44] Iizawa Tadasu, "Buenryona shashinka – Kurain no 'Rōma' o mite," *Geijutsu Shinchō* 11, no. 3 (March 1960): 87.

[45] See Jane Livingston, *The New York School: Photographs, 1936-1963* (New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 1992), 313.

[46] Nishii, *Naze imadani "Purobōku" ka*, 27–28.

and offered tips on how to minimize the shake of the camera.[47] Another took a more philosophical tack, explaining how they could be used to transmit something close to the reality of a situation.[48] In August of the same year, the editor-in-chief of *Camera Mainichi*, Yamagishi Shoji, wrote that "in the case of *bure*, the moving image itself adds a certain thrill to the form."[49] He praised this use of blur in some of the photographs that one of the leading commercial photographers of the time, Tatsuki Yoshihiro, had taken for the magazine. One of these images shows a radial blur encircling a model, who lies in a field in the center. This blur directs the viewer's gaze towards the model's face, highlighting the subject of the photograph. While *Provoke* photographers used *bure* and *boke* to largely different ends, as techniques they were already well accepted within fashion and commercial photography.

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[47] Chiba Univeristy professor Tamura Minoru found the origin of blur in the "shaking of the body," and he showed a graph that plotted shutter speed (on the x-axis) against amount of blur in millimeters. See Tamura Minoru, "Pinboke to kamera bure," *Camera Mainichi*, January 1967, 167. As the shutter speed gets faster, the blur gets smaller. But the graph purports to demonstrate that an "average of 19 adult males" were able to produce the least blur in their photographs. The people who were unable to control their body were a "nursery school student," followed by a "girl in the first year of elementary school," followed by a "housewife," whose line cuts off. This wildly unscientific graph suggests that women are somehow less able to control the shaking of their bodies, causing them to leave larger blurs on the surface of the image.

[48] In an article called "*Bure Boke* as Image Effects," photography critic Yoshimura Nobuya argued for *bure* and *boke* as an expressive technique, citing the work of Klein, Robert Capa and Ernst Haas. In this erudite text that cites both Henri Bergson and the Japanese image theorist Nakai Masakazu, Yoshimura suggested that while *bure* and *boke* are "(sometimes intentional) technical failures that go against precise photographic realism," they can also transmit a "surprising truthfulness." Yoshimura Nobuya, "Eizō kōka toshite no bure to boke," *Camera Mainichi*, January 1967, 175.

[49] Yamagishi Shōji, "Sakuhin kaisetsu," *Camera Mainichi*, August 1967.

Figure 14

Photographs by Tatsuki Yoshihiro published in *Camera Mainichi*, August 1967.

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Takanashi Yutaka's own photographs in *Provoke* link the magazine to this commercial context. Takanashi intentionally published his fashion photographs—some of which had already appeared in fashion magazines proper—in each issue of *Provoke.*[50] In one of his photographs from *Provoke* 1, a model walks down a runway, an elaborate headdress rippling around her. Although her right elbow is eerily sharp and in focus, the contours of her

[50] In an interview with Yuko Fujii, Takanashi said that he was consciously trying to prove the value of fashion photography to Taki, who saw it as "too soft." For a fuller examination of Takanashi's fashion photography in Provoke, see Fujii, "Photography as Process: A Study of the Japanese Photography Journal 'Provoke,'" 209–13.

face and torso are slightly blurred, creating a distinct sense of motion. An audience sits behind the model, facing the photographer. Their faces, though, are entirely blurred out. Even the model's face is unclear: her eyes are two black sockets bored into the surface of her face. At a purely formal level, the photograph could be seen as a prime example of *are bure boke*. However, the commercial aspect of Takanashi's work in the magazine belies the notion that *Provoke* offered such a uniform approach to photography.

Figure 15

Takanashi Yutaka, from *Provoke* 1, 1968.

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Although *Provoke* was a small and independent publication, in recent years it has come to dominate the understanding of postwar photographic practice in Japan. For example, a 2009 exhibition at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art was simply called "The Provoke Era: Postwar Japanese Photography." A 2016-2017 exhibition, "Provoke: Between Protest and Performance," firmly established *Provoke*'s position within the Euro-American

museological structure. Further museum exhibitions and catalogs across Asia, Europe and North America have cemented the magazine's canonical status within photography history.[51] Moriyama Daidō, the lone member of the group to persist with *are bure boke* photography, emerged as a globally famous photographer around the late 1990s.[52] The recent attention paid to *Provoke* outside of Japan is by no means a case of curators and historians discovering a group that is neglected in its home country.[53] In a welcome sign, "Provoke: Between Protest and Performance" situated the magazine in the specific political and artistic contexts of its time, and the inclusion of independently published magazines by student protestors, taken with extreme effects of blur and grain, showed that *are bure boke* was not the exclusive domain of *Provoke* photographers. In general, though, discussion of this aesthetic has subsumed inquiry into other aspects of the magazine, especially because of its perceived link to the politics of 1968, when demonstrations initiated by university students took place across Tokyo. It would be possible to read a politics of resistance off of *Provoke* photographs because they resist so much: clarity of depiction, correctness of film developing, any semblance of formal stability. And yet *are bure boke* cannot account for the connections between *Provoke* and the political situation of Tokyo at this time. These connections ran through the body.

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[51] For example, in 2021 the Kuandu Museum of Fine Arts in Taipei held the exhibition "Provoke: Opposing Centrism," which positioned *Provoke* within broader artistic and cultural contexts.

[52] In 1999, Moriyama held a solo exhibition, "Daidō Moriyama: Stray Dog" at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Among countless exhibitions and publications, he held a two-person show with William Klein at the Tate Modern in 2012.

[53] Some of the significant essays and publications in Japanese on *Provoke* include the October 1993 issue of *déjà-vû*, and Nishii, *Naze imadani "Purobōku" ka*; Shimizu Minoru, "'Are bure boke' saikō — Moriyama Daidō no 'Shashin yo sayōnara' fukkan," *Inter Communication*, no. 58 (Autumn 2006): 98–107. *Provoke* also played a major role in "1968—Japanese Photography," a 2013 exhibition held at the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography.

Body Politics in Tokyo, 1968

> Continuing to publish the magazine will change myself, and, I hope, the world as well.[54]
>
> Nakahira Takuma, "What is Contemporaneity?", 1969

Figure 16

Nakahira Takuma, from *Provoke* 1, 1968.

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In one of Nakahira Takuma's photographs from the first issue of *Provoke*, streetlights pierce white holes through an otherwise muddy image. The roughness of the film grain pushes swarms of black and white dots to the surface; they hover around the streetlights and add texture to the pavement. Men in suits linger towards the right of the frame, but their faces are blurred out, unreadable. A placard above some cars towards the left spells out a single English word: "Empire." The idea of empire drove *Provoke*'s approach to politics, both in

[54] Nakahira Takuma, "Dōjidaiteki de aru koto wa nanika?," in *Mitsuzukeru hate ni hi ga...: hihyō shūsei 1965-1977* (Tokyo: Osiris, 2007), 58.

terms of the history of Japanese imperialism, and the expansion of the latter-day American empire, a major target of protests around 1968 in Tokyo. In addition to the "American system," *Provoke* also took the system of language itself as a regime to attack. In turning its attention to world-historical and subjective categories alike, *Provoke* was of a piece with its cultural moment. The challenge of grasping *Provoke* within the particularities of Tokyo in 1968 is to recognize the relation between a single body and the broader systems within which it existed. Recall Taki's injunction to consider the relation between "the human and the world," framed up explicitly in terms of the Vietnam War.

This vector of thought pushed Nakahira towards the photographer and the body. The turn to the photographer emerged out of a consideration of Japan's wartime history, and the actions of photographers during that time. However, for Nakahira the photographer was not just a theoretical construct or a rational historical actor, but a body engaged with the world. While keeping in mind the historical consequences of photography, Nakahira also considered the photographer in corporeal terms. This section specifies these theoretical commitments, first by drawing out Nakahira's thinking around Japanese photography history, which he developed through his work for a 1968 photography exhibition. Then, it turns to the context of Tokyo in 1968, paying attention to the importance of the body within that moment. Situating *Provoke* in this moment shows why the photographer and the body emerged as the focus of its theory and practice: bodily experience was integral to the politics of this time and place.

Japan's wartime history motivated Nakahira's theoretical commitment to the photographer. Nakahira and Taki Kōji were both thinking about photographers who worked to support Japan's imperialist aggression across Asia during the 1930s; they came to know this history intimately well because they were part of the small committee that developed and researched the landmark 1968 exhibition "100 Years of Japanese Photography," held under

the aegis of the Japan Professional Photographers' Society (JPS).[55] Researching this exhibition—for which the committee members looked at some 50,000 photographs across the country—brought home the close relationship between photographers and Japan's imperial project. While much recent scholarship on photography explores its connection to empire, at this time that could not have been taken for granted, in part because the JPS exhibition was the first sustained effort to survey the history of photography in Japan. In truth, Nakahira was extremely fortunate to take part in the writing of this history, at a time when such scholarship hardly existed. Keeping in mind that Nakahira's background and training was not as a photographer but as a left-wing magazine editor, it makes sense that he paid close attention to the way that Japanese photography worked in tandem with Japanese empire.

After working on the "100 Years of Japanese Photography" exhibition, Nakahira made two significant arguments that showed his commitment to thinking about the photographer. The first came in a public review of the exhibition itself. Nakahira wrote that because the camera is a product of modernity, the period of "100 Years of Japanese Photography" (1868-1968) demonstrated how Japan modernized.[56] Considering the various wars that Japan engaged in over this time, Nakahira suggested that "modernity in Japan is built on an untold number of dead bodies."[57] Nakahira pointed out that Japanese citizens did

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[55] Nakahira and Taki first met through their work on this exhibition. The committee was organized by Tōmatsu Shomei, who invited both of them to join. Other people on the committee included the photographers Imai Hisae and Naitō Masatoshi. The exhibition, which displayed over 1,500 photographs, was held at the Seibu department store in Tokyo from June 1-12, 1968.

[56] This review, titled "The Collapse of Aesthetics," was originally published in the July 1968 issue of *Design Hihyō*, a design magazine in which both Nakahira and Taki published various texts about photography between 1968-9.

[57] Nakahira Takuma, "Shisen no tsukiru hate," in *Mitsuzukeru hate ni hi ga...: hihyō shūsei 1965-1977* (Tokyo: Osiris, 2007), 128. It is worth noting that no one else in the photography world wrote with Nakahira's combination of strident rhetoric and historical accuracy. Such analysis could not have appeared in the text of the JPS exhibition or catalog; in a 1971 conversation, Nakahira said that JPS would not allow the word "imperialism" to appear. See Moriyama Daidō and Nakahira Takuma, "Hachigatsu futsuka yama no ue hoteru — Taidan: Nakahira Takuma + Moriyama Daidō," in *Shashin yo sayonara* (Getsuyōsha, 2019), n.p. Even today, major art institutions in Japan are willing to toe the

not mobilize against their own government, and he said the same of photographers in particular: they were "simply washed away by history, and *were not able to do a single thing* against Japanese history."[58] Here Nakahira critiqued his own exhibition, blaming the top brass of the Japan Photographers Society for showing only a few dozen photographs from the 1930s, all of which had little relation to the war—when these images had been culled from 10,000 other photographs that *did* show full-throated support of the war.[59] He wrote that the exhibition put the "historical responsibility of photographers" on the table for discussion, even if this came about incidentally, against the intentions of the Japan Photographers Society itself.[60] Looking at this history made Nakahira extremely skeptical of the dominant idea of photography in Japan at this time, a photographic realism championed by the photographer Domon Ken.[61]

In 1935, at the age of 26, Domon began working for Natori Yōnosuke's agency Japan Workshop—one of the most significant agencies producing nationalist propaganda in the name of photojournalism. Natori had worked as a photojournalist in Germany until 1933, when he returned to Japan and established Japan Workshop, a company launched to present a

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line of historical amnesia. For example, a 2021 exhibition of the designer Ishioka Eiko's work held at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, was willing to go along with Ishioka's view of Leni Riefenstahl as a misunderstood artist. See my own review of this exhibition published on the website of *Bijutsu Techō*. Daniel Abbe, "Nikutai o Motta Katachi: Shinden Toshite No Ishioka Eiko Ten," Bijutsu Techō, May 17, 2021.

[58] Nakahira, "Shisen no tsukiru hate," 129. Emphasis in original. Responding to this specific contention, Mitsuda Yuri has offered a compelling counterpoint, especially with respect to prewar still life photographers like Nakayama Iwao. See Mitsuda Yuri, *Shashin, "geijutsu" to no kaimen ni: shashinshi 1910 nendai - 70 nendai* (Tokyo: Seikyūsha, 2006), 23.

[59] For a keen analysis of the generational dynamics involved in the planning of the exhibition and its catalog that sheds light on a major split between the Tōmatsu-led research group and older JPS members, see Kugo Kasumi, "'Anonimasu na kiroku' toshite no shashin," *Eizogaku*, no. 108 (2022): 122–43.

[60] Nakahira, "Shisen no tsukiru hate," 129.

[61] Nishii Kazuo has claimed that "postwar Japanese photography began with Domon Ken's 'realism photography' movement." Nishii, *Naze imadani "Purobōku" ka*, 8.

sanitized view of Japan to readers in Europe.[62] From late 1934, the company published the quarterly magazine *Nippon*, which appeared in English, French, German and Spanish. Japan Workshop was not alone in producing this kind of propaganda, especially from late 1937 with the establishment of the Information Department of the Cabinet; from that time on, a number of other photographic magazines put a kind face on Japanese imperialism in Asia.[63] Domon became a staff photographer of the agency, and worked on a wide range of its projects.[64] In one of the photographs that Domon published in *Nippon*, he photographed a group of soldiers who were leaving for the front.[65] The ranks of assembled soldiers, and women seeing them off, stretch out to the edge of the frame. It is up to the viewer to guess how far into the distance the crowd extends.

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[62] See Gennifer Weisenfeld, "Touring 'Japan-As-Museum': NIPPON and Other Japanese Imperialist Travelogues," *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 8, no. 3 (2000): 747–93.

[63] For more on these other magazines, see Mari Shirayama and Masashi Kohara, *Sensō to heiwa: "Hōdo shashin" ga tsutaenakatta nihon* (Tokyo: Corona Books, 2015).

[64] Domon's photographs appeared in two of Japan Workshop's most ambitious works: a 72-page accordion-style foldout book (also titled *Nippon*, from 1938) that approximated the scale and grandeur of a photomural, and a photomural itself that appeared at the 1940 World's Fair held in New York. For an excellent analysis of this photomural, see Yamamoto Sae, "1940 nen nyū yōku banpaku ni shuppin sareta syashin hekiga 'Nippon sangyō' ni miru 'Hōdo shasin' no eikyō," *Bulletin of Japanese Society for Science of Design* 56, no. 2 (July 2009): 63–72.

[65] This photograph was published in *Nippon* 14. It also ran in the Nov. 29, 1937 issue of LIFE magazine, credited to Natori. See Shirayama Mari and Hori Yoshio, eds., *Natori Yōnosuke to Nippon Kōbo: 1931-45* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2006), 52.

Figure 17

Domon Ken, photograph published in *Nippon* no. 14, February 1938, alongside an article called "For the Mutual Prosperity of the Far East."

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Domon re-emerged in the early postwar period as one of the leading photographers of the day, wielding great influence among amateur photographers through his position as a judge of the monthly amateur photography contest in the mass-market magazine *Camera*. Under the banner of realism, Domon used his columns to issue dogmatic proclamations about how photographers should practice. Domon's realism was grounded not so much in a technical as an ethical approach to photography; he thought that photographers had a responsibility to contribute to society through their work.[66] He placed great importance on the subject or content that photographers took, and he discussed this in specifically linguistic terms: "The photographer sets out to capture the quintessence that lurks within the photographic subject. To say it more precisely, this quintessence is the human 'meaning' that makes the subject the subject."[67] Domon relied on language to carry the weight of photography—and this linguistic quality made him a target for Nakahira, even if his politics shifted after the war.

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[66] "Only realist photography, which takes as its basic method the absolutely unstaged absolute snapshot is capable of facing up to societal reality itself. […] I believe that the only true way for a photographer to add anything to this society as an artist lies in this method of production." Ken Domon, "Rearizumu shashin to saron pikuchua," *Kamera*, October 1953, 185–86.

[67] Domon Ken, "Shashinka wa suri de aru," in *Shashin zuihitsu* (Davide-sha, 1979), 188. This essay was originally published in 1957.

Figure 18

Kawada Kikuji, *May Day*, 1950. Published in *Camera*, March 1950.

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After 1945, Domon championed a leftist realism that was roughly aligned with the Japanese Communist Party (JCP).[68] As a result, he praised a photograph submitted by a young Kawada Kikuji to *Camera* in 1950 that showed a May Day demonstration.[69] The faces of all of the figures in this photograph are clear. So is the text of the banner held by the

[68] Some of Domon's well-known works from the early postwar period include photographs of miners, and a series of people harmed by the Hiroshima atomic bomb.

[69] Kawada went on to become a significant photographer, best known today for his 1965 photobook *The Map*. See Maggie Mustard, "Atlas Novus: Kawada Kikuji's Chizu (The Map) and Postwar Japanese Photography" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2018). He continues to produce work to this day, and at the time of writing frequently shares new and strange photographs on Instagram.

women in the foreground: "Quit War Now!" A man playing an accordion at right gives the sense of a carnival atmosphere, which is heightened by the women's smiles. The photograph is taken from a slightly elevated position—the camera looks ever so slightly down on the man in front, allowing the crowd to open out behind him—and Kawada has positioned himself slightly off to the side, avoiding a confrontational composition. In his short review of this photograph, Domon noted that the previous year's May Day was marred by violence against the marches, and that in depicting the joy of workers advocating for peace, Kawada "properly photographically renders the historical character of this year's May Day."[70] This comment epitomizes Domon's idea of photography, in two senses. In the first place, the implication that there is a "proper" way to represent something photographically demonstrates his ethical approach to photography. At the same time, his focus on the "historical character" of this event points to his interest in using photography to transparently "render" clear meanings from the world. In the most literal sense, the anti-war slogan is legible, and such clarity guarantees the meaning of Kawada's photograph. This idea of language as a system of stable exchange between image and text set the tone for postwar photography in Japan. Domon's realism relies on language—but for *Provoke*, of course, this was no stable ground at all. The manifesto authored by Nakahira and Taki in *Provoke* 1 already claimed that images are "not exchangeable symbols like language."

In a significant 1969 essay, titled "What is Contemporaneity?", Nakahira further critiqued the linguistic idea of photography.[71] In doing so he advanced his second argument that showed his commitment to thinking about the photographer. In contrast to film, which can be thought of in terms of prepositions and linking words that connect images to each

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[70] Ken Domon, "Untitled review," *Kamera*, March 1950. Domon's expression "photographically rendered" [*shashinka shiteru*] is not a common phrase. It could also be translated somewhat awkwardly as "photographized."

[71] This essay was published in installments, across four issues of the magazine *Design*.

other, Nakahira wrote that photography fundamentally lacks these grammatical elements.[72] However, he claimed that "so-called 'socialist' photography"—a clear reference to Domon—forced them in to the image.[73] As a result, such realist photographers can only produce linguistically pre-formed photographs, even of hot-button issues like war, famine, the student movement, or Okinawa: "*They do not see Okinawa; they have only seen the meaning of Okinawa.*"[74] Nakahira claimed that by using photography as "illustration," these photographers create "a feeling of safety that they themselves will not get caught up in the turmoil" of what they are photographing.[75] That is, they rely on the system of language to insulate themselves from the world. Nakahira was unwilling to trust language, even if its content happened to align with his own politics. After all, as Taki had pointed out in a 1967 essay, during the 1930s language itself was distorted to support the war.[76] Domon's career trajectory was proof enough that the ideological content of language could be flipped from one side to another without much trouble. A prewar crowd of soldiers becomes a postwar crowd of workers, leaving the underlying regime of language untouched. Language *still* lacked its material base.

Moving beyond the linguistic idea of photography, Nakahira put forth a corporeal idea of being a photographer. In the essay, Nakahira offered one of his few written statements about *Provoke* while it was in production. He claimed repeatedly that on its own, a single

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[72] Nakahira, "Dōjidaiteki de aru koto wa nanika?," 77. Nakahira is discussing the film theory of Nakai Masakazu. Nakai's theory deals with particles, a common feature of Japanese grammar that links words within a sentece, in the manner of prepositions. For further analysis of Nakai, see Philip Kaffen, "Nakai Masakazu and the Cinematic Imperative," *Positions: Asia Critique* 26, no. 3 (August 1, 2018): 483–515.

[73] Nakahira, "Dōjidaiteki de aru koto wa nanika?," 77. Nakahira names this mode of photography as "realism" on the following page, and he had already referred to Domon by name earlier in the essay.

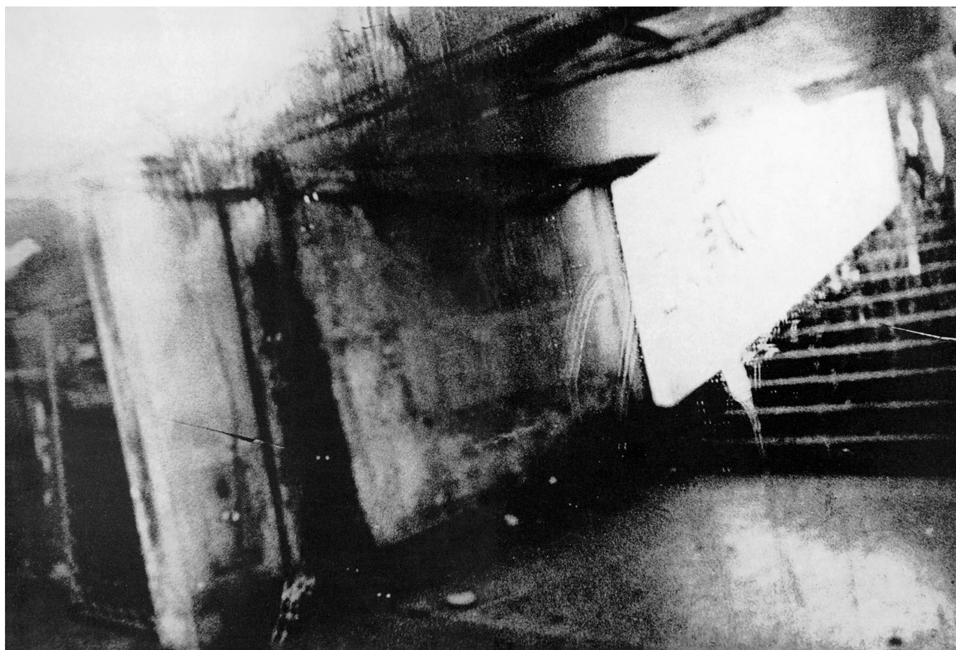
[74] Nakahira, 78. Emphasis Nakahira's.

[75] Nakahira, 78.

[76] See Taki Kōji, "Untitled Essay," in *Nippon*, by Tomatsu Shomei (Tokyo: Shaken, 1967). Taki discusses the idea of a "false structure," which he says he was able to live under quite easily as a teenager during the war.

photograph could not make any significant historical or political intervention. Still, he held out some small hope for *Provoke*: "Continuing to publish the magazine will change myself, and, I hope, the world as well."[77] Emphasizing the relationship between the self and the world—not between the photograph and the world, or between the photograph and the viewer—represented a significant theoretical shift. Yet Nakahira went further, and specified the nature of this relationship between self and world that would drive his photography: he called it a "response of eros to and with the world."[78] What did this look like? What, in other words, would it look like if photography moved beyond language and pushed the photographer to "get caught up in the turmoil" of the world?[79]

Figure 19



Nakahira Takuma, from *Provoke* 2, March 1969.

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[77] Nakahira, "Dōjidaiteki de aru koto wa nanika?," 58.

[78] Nakahira, 88. Nakahira writes that he is borrowing Taki's words, but there is no direct citation of Taki in the essay.

[79] Early on in the essay, Nakahira asked himself: "What can I do as a single photographer?" Nakahira, 57.

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One of Nakahira's photographs published in *Provoke* 2—again, the entire issue was given the theme "Eros"—shows an interior scene, perhaps a subway station given the lighting and the stairs leading up to the right. There are three streaks or cuts in the image, at left, right and center. Are they scratches on the film (traces of the photographer)? Or are they scratches on a mirror (traces of the world)? A combination of the two? There is some camera shake here, producing a generalized blur. But these effects do not come from the photographer alone. They come from the mingling of photographer and world.

Because Nakahira describes his photographic methodology in terms of eros, it might be tempting to understand the relationship between self and world in strictly sexual terms. But in an interview that he gave just between the publication of *Provoke* 1 and *Provoke* 2, Nakahira stated: "To say it grandly, it's about the place where the world and I correspond, how to bring that out—once it's brought out, it's actually not me, it is something else, outside. That outside thing—that's what interests me."[80] The idea of correspondence moves beyond a purely physical connection. In "What Is Contemporaneity?", Nakahira wrote that the "response of eros" compelled him "to participate concretely in political actions, not to take photographs."[81] Eros was connected to politics, in other words. In one sense, taking the body instead of language as a base, photographers could re-discover some materiality of experience, and avoid being "simply washed away by history," as happened during the war. At the same time, by connecting the sensuous transformation of the self to the concrete transformation of the world, Nakahira articulated one of the fundamental ideas that motivated culture and politics in Japan at this moment.

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[80] Nakahira and Takanashi, "Ima shashinka de aru koto," 194.

[81] Nakahira, "Dōjidaiteki de aru koto wa nanika?," 88.

In 1968, Tokyo saw a wide range of actions directed against Japanese institutions: students occupied their universities for months, demonstrated en masse against Japan's complicity in the Vietnam War, and mobilized to stop the transportation of Vietnam-bound jet fuel through Shinjuku Station.[82] Chelsea Schieder offers a clear summary of this movement: "The leftist student movement in postwar Japan criticized how the Japanese state and economy benefited from a capitalist geopolitical order maintained through U.S.-led military might and also implicated them and their education in that system."[83] This last aspect—a consciousness of how students themselves were implicated in the very things they were fighting—led to the idea of "self-negation" (*jiko hitei*) as a way to continually question one's own position and actions. While the working conditions of graduate students also galvanized the movement, it is also not a coincidence that science students emerged as leaders, because they could clearly see how their research was directly funneled towards Japan's military endeavors with the United States.[84] Recall Taki's essay from the first issue of *Provoke*: in practically the same breath, he criticized the collusion of "big science" with the military, and argued in impassioned terms for a conceptual understanding of knowledge itself as a "theory that would grasp the totality between the human and the world."[85] Taki's former point obviously echoes the students' critique—but his latter one would have also resonated, precisely because students took subjectivity as an important ground of their politics.

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[82] The action against the jet fuel transport happened on October 21, 1968; it was recorded in the photobook *10.21 to wa nani ka*. See Duncan Forbes, "Photography, Protest, and Constituent Power in Japan, 1960-1975," in *Provoke Between Protest and Performance Photography in Japan 1960/1975*, ed. Diane Dufour and Matthew Witkovsky (Göttingen: Steidl, 2016).

[83] Chelsea Szendi Schieder, *Coed Revolution: The Female Student in the Japanese New Left* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 2.

[84] See Saishu Satoru, "Yamamoto Yoshitaka — jiko hitei o kasanete," in *Banpaku to okinawa henkan — 1970 nen zengo*, ed. Yoshimi Shunya (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2015).

[85] Taki, "Oboesho 1 — chi no taihai," 64. In fact, Saishu Satoru claims that the late 1960s in Japan was the age of thinking of "totality." Saishu, "Yamamoto Yoshitaka — jiko hitei o kasanete," 53.

None of the *Provoke* members were connected to 1968 protests in any materially significant way; their connection to student protestors was theoretical, insofar as both groups were interested in accessing subjective experience.[86] Although the students were somewhat famous for refusing to offer programmatic declarations, in a 1969 essay Yamamoto Yoshitaka, a leader of the student movement, offered a rare summation: "Piling up self-negation on top of self-negation, at the end is just the human—after becoming a self-conscious human, I actually just want to live as a physics student."[87] At another point in the essay, Yamamoto wrote: "What is most important for our struggle is not political ideas, but instead the origin point of a thought that will pierce through the struggle."[88] In this major essay, Yamamoto articulates his idea of politics in subjective, almost transcendental terms, rather than through a more familiar appeal to mass politics. In fact, the Japan Communist Party itself was a major target of critique for the student movement and New Left groups in Japan, because of its unwillingness to confront the state directly.[89] "The origin point"; "just the human"—Yamamoto's language points to the desire to strip away the layers of modernity and return to an unmediated form of subjective experience. For student protestors, the project of protesting the confluence of education with military was also connected to the project of

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[86] Kazuo Nishii's 1996 book, *Why Still Provoke Today?*, goes some way towards identifying the crucial concerns of the magazine and situating it more accurately within its moment. Nishii himself lived through the late 1960s and early 1970s as an editor interested in left-wing politics. He connects *Provoke* to the idea of "self-negation," and argues in this vein that the site of politics in the late 1960s and early 1970s shifted from the group to the individual: "the substance of 'revolution' could absolutely refer only to the revolution of one's own way of living." Nishii, *Naze imadani "Purobōku" ka*, 12. He suggests that Nakahira and Moriyama were "photographers connected with this revolution of the self," and he also makes the important observation that this led them to think about the photographer. Nishii, 13.

[87] Yamamoto Yoshitaka, "Kōgeki teki chisei no fukken," *Asahi Journal*, March 2, 1969, 23. Yamamoto was a doctoral student in the physics department at Tokyo University. For more detailed information on Yamamoto, see Saishu, "Yamamoto Yoshitaka — jiko hitei o kasanete."

[88] Yamamoto, "Kōgeki teki chisei no fukken," 23.

[89] In an article on 1968 in Japan, William Marotti has offered a detailed account of why student groups split with the Japan Communist Party. See William Marotti, "Japan 1968: The Performance of Violence and the Theater of Protest," *The American Historical Review* 114, no. 1 (2009): 107.

returning to the self. Such ideas were hardly unique to the student movement or *Provoke* itself; they were part of the cultural and intellectual landscape in Japan at this time.

Around 1968, Tokyo's Shinjuku district became an important meeting place for beat poets, queer people, experimental theater troupes, hippies, folk singers, glue-sniffing dropouts, underground filmmakers, and photographers like Nakahira and Moriyama.[90] Pulling together these various strands of counterculture, critic Hyūga Akiko discussed the cultural landscape of the late 1960s and early 1970s in political, aesthetic, sonic and especially sexual terms. In one 1969 article, titled "The Sexual Thought of Mass Media," Hyūga took up the student movement idea of "self-negation," and noted that it was a strategy to escape overarching concepts and traditions of thought that no longer had any meaning. Claiming that the once-familiar pillars of thought that supported culture were now entirely absent—an echo of the *Provoke* claim that "language has lost its material base"—she went on to suggest that "eroticism, art and poetry all occupy the same ground now."[91] In a series of columns called "Eros Anthropology," she examined the position of sexuality in culture; these were collected into a book, *Declaration of a New Eroticism*.[92] Hyūga consistently discussed the idea of eros in terms of political liberation.[93] Across the board, the body drove what

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[90] In 1969, Moriyama photographed "crime hippies" in Shinjuku—not for *Provoke*, but on assignment for the magazine *Asahi Journal*. For an excellent exploration of the cultural space of Shinjuku at this time, see Nettleton, "Throw Out the Books, Get Out in the Streets: Subjectivity and Space in Japanese Underground Art of the 1960s." Matsumoto Toshio's 1969 film *Funeral Parade of Roses* offers a compelling representation of this specific time and place.

[91] Hyūga Akiko, "Masukomi no sei shisō," *Design Hihyō*, no. 10 (October 1969): 75.

[92] See Hyūga Akiko, *Nyū erotishizumu sengen* (Tokyo: Arechi Shuppansha, 1970). Hyūga's monthly columns ran across the 1969 issues of the magazine *Geijutsu Seikatsu*. These columns were published without the lavish illustrations of the magazine book form. I thank Emiko Inoue for first pointing me to Hyūga's work.

[93] According to Setsu Shigematsu, the idea of eros also played an important role within the theory and practice of the women's liberation movement of the early 1970s; she calls eros one of its "key concepts." Setsu Shigematsu, "'68 and the Japanese Women's Liberation Movement," in *The Red Years: Theory, Politics, Aesthetics in the Japanese '68*, ed. Gavin Walker, 2020, 85. One journal from the movement was called *Onna Erosu* [Woman Eros], and a 1970 speech by Tanaka Mitsu, an important women's liberation figure, was called "Declaration of the Liberation of Eros." Shigematsu

Hyūga called Japan's "feeling generation," which she considered in terms of "corporeal thinking"—in other words, the idea that "instead of thinking first and then acting, thinking happens in the middle of action."[94] Throughout her writing from this period, Hyūga pointed to this shift from rational and intellectual faculties towards sensorial and corporeal ones. Citing scientific research, she wrote that when the ostensibly "advanced" rational faculties are given too much priority, this produces "incapacitation, if not sexual frigidity. When feeling disappears, and only the prefrontal cortex—which deals with reason alone—is put to work, the conditioned reflexes are always in a state of oppression. Today, many intellectuals use their brains in this way."[95] Always keen to draw out a gendered critique of Japanese society, Hyūga specified that it was mostly intellectual *men* who suffered from this condition.

Herbert Marcuse's book *Eros and Civilization* appeared in Japanese by 1958—Nakahira owned a copy of this translation, which he annotated heavily.[96] In this work, Marcuse argued for a more sensuous relationship between subject and object. While Merleau-Ponty described the fullness of this relationship in sensorial detail, Marcuse took a Marxist tack to show how it might connect to large-scale social transformation. Marcuse does not describe eros in specifically sexual terms, and in fact argued for a "conceptual transformation of sexuality into Eros" because "Eros, as life instinct, denotes a larger biological instinct rather than a larger scope of sexuality."[97] At every turn, he connects the inhibition of the body to the structures of capitalism that spell premature death for humans around the world;

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cites a song from the women's liberation movement that echoes Nakahira: "Let's make revolution / You can revolutionize yourself / If you change the world changes / If the world changes you change." Shigematsu, 93.

[94] Hyūga, "Fīringu toiu koto," 321.

[95] Hyūga, 335.

[96] Nakahira's copy of *Eros and Civilization* sits in his personal papers.

[97] Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), 205.

this is why he says that "Today the fight for life, the fight for Eros, is the *political* fight."[98] Eros is an almost transcendental force that, in its potential for liberating the senses, also offers the basis for social revolution.

In one of the only essays written in English that advances a new critical understanding of *Provoke*, photography historian Duncan Forbes puts the magazine in a productive dialog with photobooks that emerged from Japan's student movement during the mid to late 1960s.[99] Forbes observes that the protest photobooks and *Provoke* use similar formal strategies, both pushing black-and-white film photography to its aesthetic limit. He suggests that the earlier publications are the "work of collective self-representation," while *Provoke* privileges the subject position of the individual.[100] This observation accurately situates *Provoke* in political terms, given that the magazine did not pursue a model of mass politics. Forbes even goes so far as to suggest that *Provoke* privileges "the body of the lone photographer" in terms of how it constructs urban space.[101] Such insights not only transcend a surface-level reading of blur and grain as a form of political resistance; they also understand the magazine with uncommon accuracy.

However, the conclusion that Forbes draws from these insights ignores the context of Tokyo in 1968, and projects an incongruent idea of photography onto the magazine. In the end, he forecloses the magazine's politics on the grounds of content: *Provoke* can only speak of a "withdrawal from the commons" because, aside from Taki Kōji's photographs of miners and left-wing editors in Issue 1, the photographs do not depict protesting masses. After noting that the magazine emerged as mass protest in Japan was coming to an end, Forbes concludes

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[98] Marcuse, xxv. This is a quote from the "Political Preface 1966."

[99] This essay, "Photography, Protest, and Constituent Power in Japan, 1960-1975," was written for the catalog of the 2016 exhibition "Provoke: Between Protest and Performance."

[100] Forbes, "Photography, Protest, and Constituent Power in Japan, 1960-1975," 239.

[101] Forbes, 243.

that it swore off "any attempt to represent" the commons, and thus "it came to express a very different content. *Provoke*, in other words, was also an index of defeat."[102] Forbes also criticizes *Provoke*'s photography as "an occlusion of visual information," but this content-driven analysis harks back to Domon's own model of photography—which Nakahira had so thoroughly criticized in the first place, in terms that could not have been any more grounded in the concrete reality of Japanese history.[103] The political movements of this time did not theorize their struggle in terms of "the commons." In both photographic and political terms, Forbes projects ideas onto the magazine and its context that do not account for the specificity of this conjuncture. A closer look at the discourse across this period shows that questions of the body, and of sensation, were at the heart of politics. If that sounds solipsistic, this focus on the self had deep resonances with the outside world, as thinkers from Merleau-Ponty to Hyūga to Marcuse all show.[104] This was especially true of *Provoke*.

The Unrealized Potential of Eros

> Where are we to put the limit between the body
> and the world, since the world is flesh?[105]
>
> Maurice Merleau-Ponty

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[102] Forbes, 243–44. For a brief review of scholarship on post-1970 Japan that understands this period in terms of a political retreat, see Introduction.

[103] Forbes, 243.

[104] Luce Irigaray has critiqued Merleau-Ponty on the grounds that his thought is overly solipsistic. According to Irigaray, phenomenology runs the risk of projecting the worldview of the perceiving subject (conceived as neutral, not aware of difference, thus replicating male structure) onto the world itself. This projection simply confirms the subject's prior way of perceiving, which remains undisturbed. Judith Butler has complicated this reading by suggesting that Irigaray actually needs Merleau-Ponty's own terminology of "flesh" (the mode of bodies relating to the world) to conceive of an actually ethical relationship in which difference can be preserved. See Butler, "Sexual Difference as a Question of Ethics: Alterities of the Flesh in Irigaray and Merleau-Ponty."

[105] Merleau-Ponty, "The Intertwining—The Chiasm," 138.

Figure 20

Nakahira Takuma, from *Provoke* 2, March 1969

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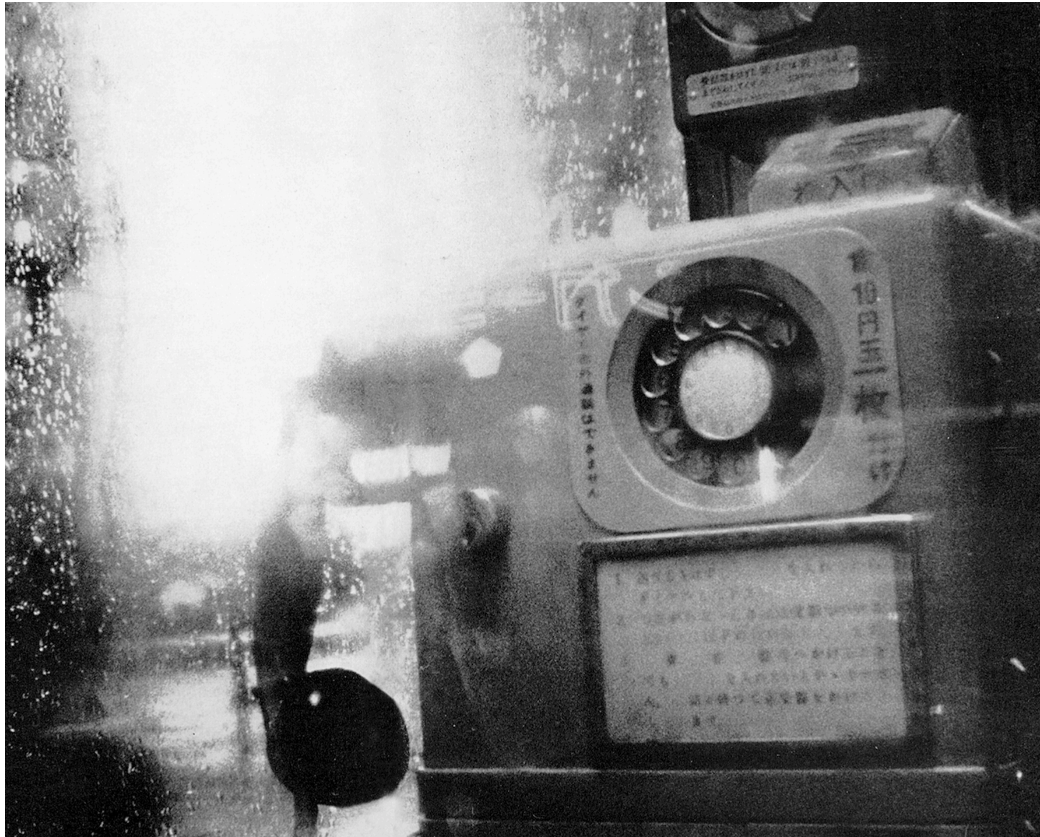
Raindrops on the windows of the phone booth catch the shimmering light that floods in from outside, again rendering nothing clearly visible or identifiable. There are no vistas here, just surfaces that impede or disturb the photographer's vision. The windows of the phone booth allow light in, but they really function as walls, blocking off the outside world. In Nakahira's "Eros," the effects of distortion, indistinctness, abstractness, distancing, blockage, separation, inaccessibility—I am trying to find the right word, or combination of words, even though I know that is not possible—do not come entirely from the photographer. They come from the world as well, or from the place where the photographer and the world meet. The light trapped in the central pane of the phone booth window blocks vision, even as it offers a way out. In its very indistinctness, Nakahira's series grapples with the world. Nakahira is not even inside the phone booth, but shooting through another window; the

reflection of a neon sign outside superimposes itself on the phone, a technology of connection made into an image of disconnection. But it is not complete disconnection, just an indeterminate state that corresponds to the way that Merleau-Ponty describes flesh.

Figure 21



Nakahira Takuma, from *Provoke* 2, March 1969, detail.

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Why was the second issue titled "Eros"? This concept brings together the non-rational and the sensorial; it deals with the relation between body and world in a way that was understood politically. The essay that Okada wrote for the first issue of *Provoke* called out to eros: there, he laid out the most ecstatic horizon of the magazine's photography. After discussing the frustrated desire to see a thing that does not appear, Okada introduces the

writings of the Swiss psychoanalyst Medard Boss, who studied love as a psychological phenomenon. Boss describes love as the utmost form of nostalgia for union with the object. Boss suggests that love brings about the dissolution of the self, and makes the world itself transparent. In his extremely lyrical depiction of love, he finds a "spiritual and eternal image of the hermaphroditic 'anthropos.'"[106] This vision of union between self and world points to a photography of love, in which the boundaries between body and world would be eroded, in a zone beyond the capture of systematized language, and perhaps also beyond the imperial, "American system." Those boundaries would not be eliminated or made transparent as if by magic but—what else?—blurred, roughened up, made to go out of focus. Precisely that blurring, that indistinctness, would be the form of communion between body and world. Seen in this way, *Provoke* was after unmediated encounter itself, through the body of the photographer figured in deeply romantic and almost transcendental terms as the lover's body. The subtitle of the second issue stated: "The world is truly the wilderness of eros—what we want is a logic of spirit and flesh, which has been cornered by the oppression of civilization."[107] The word "civilization" here clearly referenced Marcuse: the potential of eros was to redeem the self and the world at the same time, an at once political and romantic project.

And yet, most of the photographs in the "Eros" issue do not nearly live up to the wild potential that Okada had sketched out in his essay. In fact, some of them do not even clear the bar of going beyond linguistic illustration. With his contribution to the issue, Moriyama

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[106] Medard Boss, *Meaning and Content of Sexual Perversions: A Daseinsanalytic Approach to the Psychopathology of the Phenomenon of Love*, trans. Liese Lewis Abell (New York: Grune & Stratton, 1949), 33. I have slightly modified the 1949 English translation here, in accordance with the Japanese translation of Boss' book, which Okada cites in his essay. What the English translation renders as the word "bisexual," the Japanese text renders as *ryōsei*, that is, "hermaphroditic." This quote appears within a passage in which Boss is discussing what he calls the "indivisible male-female entity," so it seems clear that "bisexual" is not an accurate English translation.

[107] These words were printed across the *obi* (book jacket) of *Provoke* 2.

submitted a hackneyed series of photographs that he took of himself literally having sex. For a magazine theoretically opposed to photography as illustration, it is almost scandalous for Moriyama to have published photographs that were so conceptually uninventive. At the same time, they did not evoke eros in a mode in touch with the world; the entire series plays out in a single hotel room. The photographs themselves are clichés, from the post-coital cigarette to the photograph of the woman from behind, on all fours, a flat mimicry of standard erotic photography. Another photograph shows Moriyama's partner watching television—a nod to pop culture, perhaps, but hardly enough to bring the photographs to the level of pop art. The layout of this series itself is the least inventive of the magazine's entire run: the images are printed in the middle of the page with a generous white border around them, a favored technique of the pictorialists of yore.

Figures 22 and 23

Both Moriyama Daidō, from *Provoke* 2, March 1969.

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By contrast, Nakahira's "Eros" is much stranger. Of the four photographers, Nakahira is the only one to not show any human figures at all. Against Moriyama's illustrations of eros, none of the photographs in Nakahira's series could fit into the category of a typically "erotic" representation. The series presents distance, or space, and deals with tension and release, frustration and lack of access, the condition of being walled off. What kind of erotics is this? In 1976, Nakahira recalled photographing flowers that "looked far more flower-like than flowers; they were plastic."[108] A nighttime close-up in the rain. A flower hangs upside-down, seen through the rain-studded folds of a plastic covering. At the right, in the distance,

[108] "I stepped out into the evening city under a light rain, and a wreath of flowers to celebrate the opening of a pachinko parlor caught my eye. Drops of rain on the clear bag covering the wreath. They looked far more flower-like than flowers; they were plastic. Like it was yesterday, I recalled clicking the shutter over and over, adjusting my position slightly each time." Nakahira and Shinoyama, "Kettō shashinron — tsuma," 89. This text is written in the past tense because Nakahira is narrating his own experience of recalling this scene a few years before writing the article.

out of focus, two or maybe three figures huddle under an umbrella; light reflects off the wet pavement in iridescent globs. Something towards the right of the frame catches a glow, in the near distance, an abstract agglomeration of translucent material, maybe a tattered umbrella, which arcs towards the center. The gutter of the magazine neatly splits off this bright form, so that, holding the magazine, it is hard to gauge whether the two pages show two different photographs—there is no obvious or necessary continuity between them. Yet there they are, the flatness of the flower at left somehow outrageously continuous with the depth of the nighttime scene at right.

Figure 24

Nakahira Takuma, from *Provoke* 2, March 1969.

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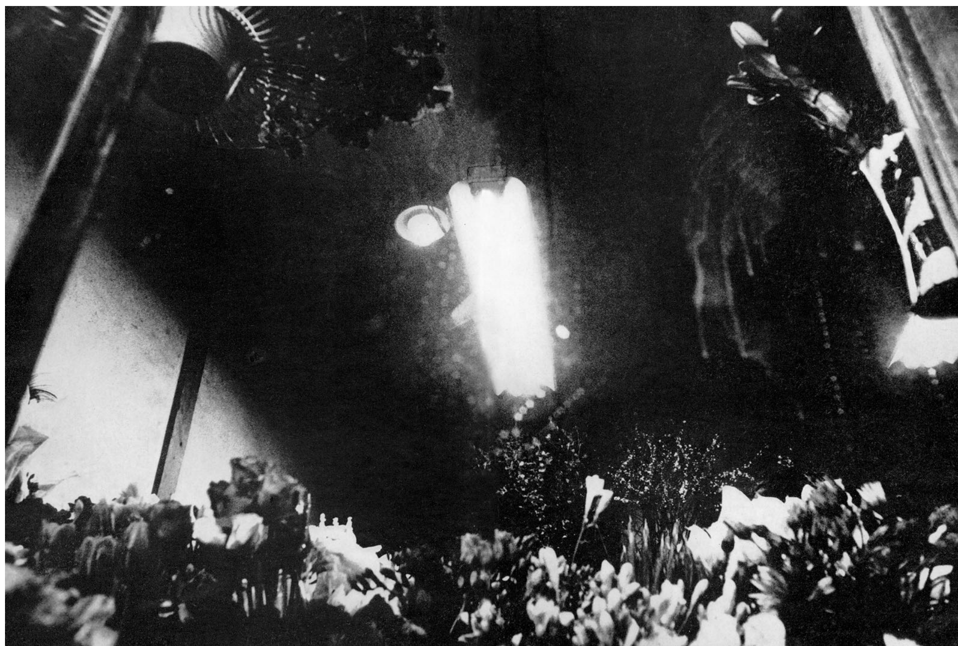
This is one of a number of photographs that Nakahira published in "Eros" of rainy evening scenes. Rain makes transparent boundaries visible, by making them translucent. Even the lens is one of these boundaries; it, too, is in the turmoil of the world, and a smudge

is left where a raindrop has grazed it. It would not make sense to try to reverse engineer these photographs, as if this procedure would reveal some consistent and logical technique that runs through them all. The way that the photograph signifies has less to do with Nakahira's operation of the camera and more to do with the relation between the body and the world outside it. These photographs break with the model of linguistic photography passed down to Nakahira from Domon; no language can hold the left and the right hand sides of this photograph together, and stabilize the whole. This photograph, and many others in the series, seems to push cognition aside in favor of sensation. The flower, the umbrella, and the smudge are not there to be taken in as discrete things, but rather as a "pell-mell" experience. The imbalance of this image, its distortions, its translucencies, the smeared drop of rain on the lens—if this photograph can point to anything, as an index, it is to these moments of indeterminate contact that model the relation between world and body, between which there could not possibly be a clear boundary. The boundaries, instead, must go blurry.

Figure 25



Nakahira Takuma, from *Provoke* 2, March 1969.

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Flowers represent love, but perhaps these, too, are plastic; they remain close to the photographer, and all they really do is block off the vanishing point. Raindrops gather around the fluorescent light, which is, again, viewed through a streaked window. This distance, this lack of communion and immersion, produces the *desire* for its realization. That, at least, is what Okada tried to narrate in his essay, anticipating Roland Barthes years before *Camera Lucida*.[109] Nakahira is trying to connect with the world but is not able to—in Okada's terms, the thing that produces the heartrending feeling in its most acute form, along with the desire for its realization. There is only constant blockage, distanciation, disorientation. But what if this actually *is* the way of experiencing the world? What if the vista, the glorious view, clear access—what if that never arrives? These photographs speak to a yearning for connection, but perhaps this is what connection looks like.[110]

Nakahira's photographs did not stay in this space of charged indeterminacy for long. By the third and final issue of *Provoke*, the effects of blurring and roughness seemed to come from a different source. Bodies litter the frame in one of these photographs. At least three human figures appear here, scattered at the edges of the frame in such a way that a featureless

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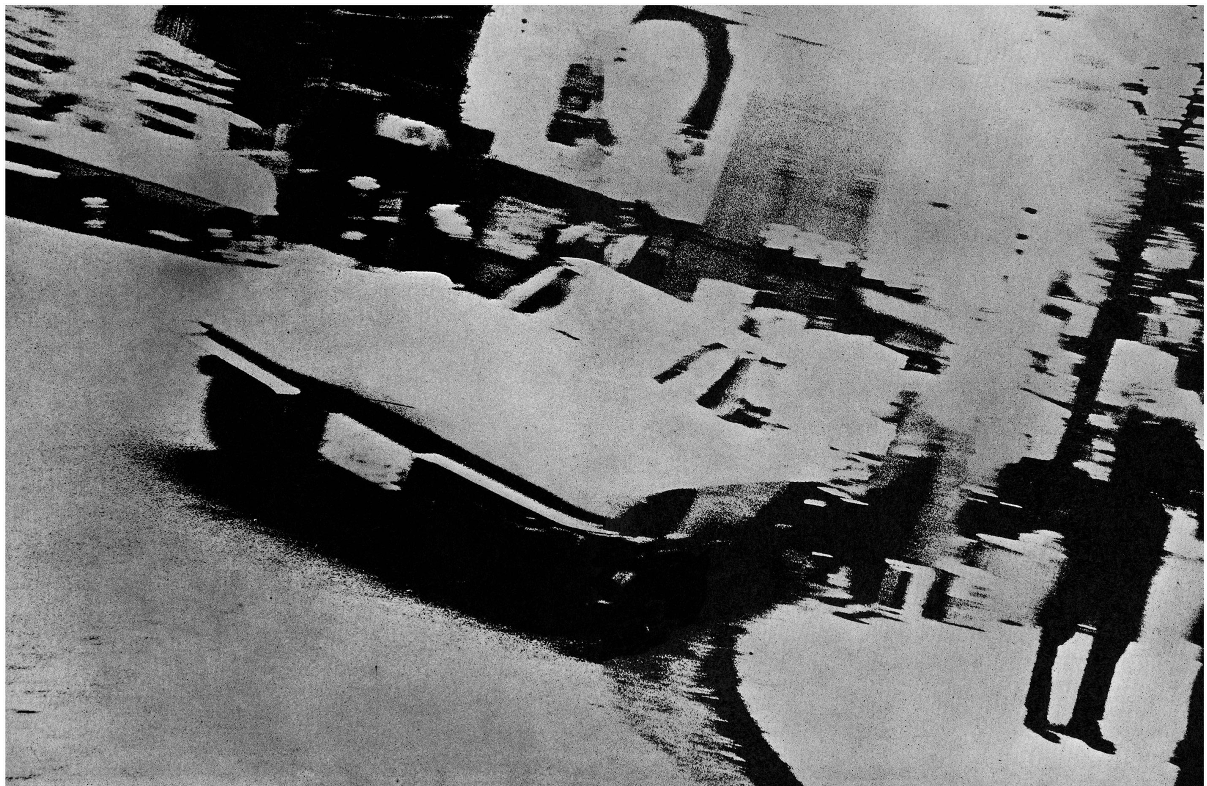
[109] "Classical phenomenology, the kind I had known in my adolescence (and there has not been any other since), had never, so far as I could remember, spoken of desire or of mourning." Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010), 21.

[110] For Merleau-Ponty, at least, there is no such catharsis. Merleau-Ponty narrates the experience of hands touching each other in terms of a reversibility between the touching and the touched. He later clarifies that this "is a reversibility always imminent and never realized in fact. My left hand is always on the verge of touching my right hand touching the things, but I never reach coincidence." Merleau-Ponty, "The Intertwining—The Chiasm," 147. However, he writes: "this incessant escaping, this impotence to superpose exactly upon one another the touching of the things by my right hand and the touching of this same right hand by my left hand […] this is not a failure. For if these experiences never exactly overlap, if they slip away at the very moment they are about to rejoin, if there is always a 'shift,' a 'divergence,' between them, this is precisely because my two hands are part of the same body, because it moves itself in the world, because I hear myself both from within and from without." Merleau-Ponty, 148.

expanse of sidewalk dominates the middle of the image. The figures all have their backs turned away from the photographer, further pushing the viewer's own gaze towards that empty center. The edges of the sidewalk are riven by rough film grain, and the entire image is convulsed by blur. Now, with their vacant blacks and smudged-out grays, his photographs practically resembled Warholian screenprints, pushing photography towards an ever more dizzying incomprehensibility. In one sense, this work was as far away as possible from the realist model of photography as systematized language. The license plate of the car (let alone the signage on the buildings behind it) is completely blotted out, while an ostensibly human figure to the right becomes nothing more than a hollow cut-out, indistinct from the urban detritus behind it. In the last photograph of the series, everywhere that language ought to appear—the illuminated sign in the foreground, the department store marquees in the background, the placard held by a disembodied hand—is either completely erased by light, or else rendered illegible. In *Provoke* 1, Nakahira's photographs showed fairly little of his own intervention, continuing on from his "Last Train" series. In *Provoke* 2, he seemed to be working in an intermediate zone, where his own body was mixed up with the world, in the encounter of eros. Here, though, his work functions more in the mode of projection. In other words, when these later photographs go blurry, this is because Nakahira has jerked his own body, less so because of any blurriness in the world. The photographic techniques here read as more of an exaggeration.

Figures 26, 27 and 28



All Nakahira Takuma, from *Provoke* 3, 1969.

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Provoke ended soon after, in late 1969. Then, in 1970, an advertising campaign for Japan's national railway system was launched with photography that, to Nakahira at least, resembled nothing so much as *Provoke*'s own photographs. After the 1970 Osaka Expo, the national railway company tasked the country's largest advertising agency with stimulating domestic rail travel. The result was "Discover Japan," a campaign that urged city dwellers—and primarily young women—to visit rural areas as a mode of self-discovery.[111] One photograph from the campaign shows a woman who seems to meet the glance of a man wearing religious robes. The copy reads: "Set out on a journey, and the homeland of the heart quivers." The photograph is marked by a significant motion blur, produced by shaking the

[111] For a detailed analysis of this campaign, see Marilyn Ivy, *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

camera as the shutter is tripped. Even so, the face of the woman is clearly visible. The caption supplies the linguistic meaning of the motion: what jumps is not the photographer, but your own heart. Language and image come together in a safe and transparent relationship, charged with a faint glimmer of eros. Nakahira took the "Discover Japan" campaign as a personal affront, claiming soon after that it meant *Provoke* had been "skillfully transformed into a single design."[112] In other words, for Nakahira the campaign signified nothing other than the violent re-incorporation of *Provoke* photography into the systematized, codified realm of language. Well beyond Tatsuki Yoshihiro's work from *Camera Mainichi*, the photographs that Takanashi published in *Provoke* itself show that blur was already a well-established technique of commercial photography. And yet, if the campaign copied anything of Nakahira's photography from this time, it was his work in the later mode of projection, by which point the photographs functioned more at the level of technique only.

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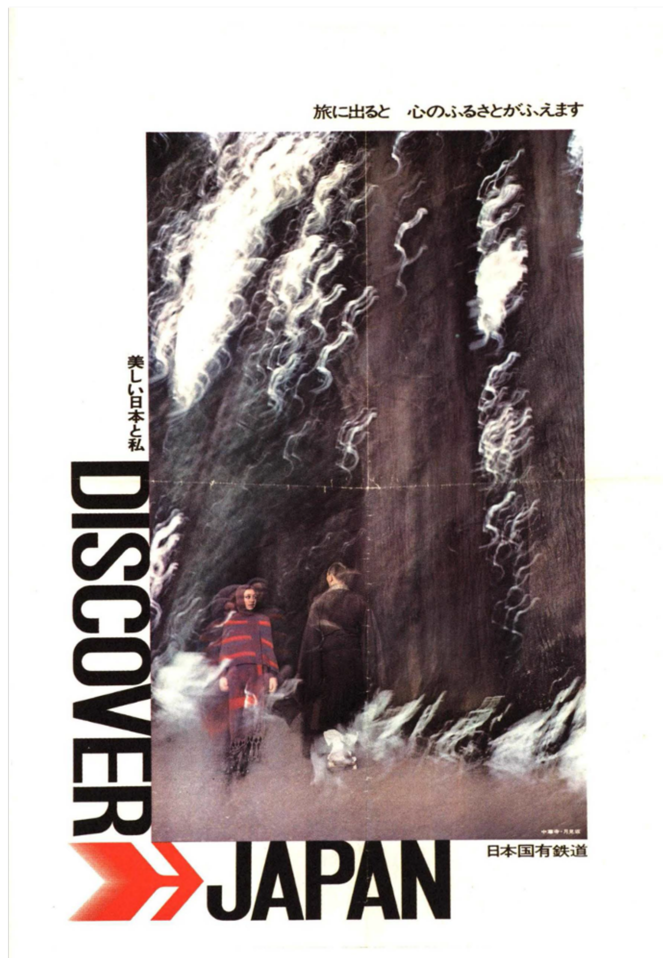
[112] Nakahira Takuma, "Kiroku to iu gen'ei: dokyumento kara monyumento e," *Bijutsu Techō*, July 1972. Nakahira also wrote about the "Discover Japan" campaign in the 1972 essay, "Discover Japan—On the Meaning of a Captive Journey." See Nakahira Takuma, "Disukabā jyapan: toraware no tabi no imi ni tsuite," in *Naze, shokubutsu zukan ka: Nakahira Takuma eizō ronshū* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 2007).

Figure 29



Promotional poster for Japanese National Railways, 1971. Photographer: Iizuka Takenori.

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Leaving aside the relative merits of Nakahira's criticism, the idea that his photographs had been neatly assimilated to the latter-day Alpha 60 brought on a deep malaise. In a 1971 conversation between Nakahira and Moriyama that accompanied Moriyama's photobook *Farewell Photography*, Nakahira mentioned "Discover Japan" as part of a wide-ranging discussion in which he also spoke openly about his habit of taking sleeping pills to cope with

depression.[113] For Nakahira, this emotional weight corresponded to his relationship with the world: "It's not a slump, it's more like the loss of reality. I feel this very strongly."[114] *Provoke* had claimed that "language has lost its material base—that is, its reality," and put the body forward as a different site of possibility. But now, it seemed, that reality was slipping away, along with the potential of eros to connect to it. And here, Nakahira's own rhetoric took a misogynistic turn that undermined the complexity of his work. Soon after the remark about the "loss of reality," he lamented: "When you take a photograph, and face off with some reality, there's a big feeling of things coming to the surface, no? I don't feel that now, even though I'm clicking the shutter as if my life depended on it. It's like the partner is a sexually frigid woman."[115] Nakahira genders the world and complains when it doesn't put out—the discourse of a jilted lover. Here, he unwittingly echoed Hyūga's term, "sexually frigid," which she used to describe the mental state of intellectuals who rely too much on their rational, rather than sensorial, faculties. By this point, Nakahira had abandoned the wilder ideas of *Provoke*'s eros—which were not gendered, or articulated in specifically sexual terms. As much as Nakahira saw himself fighting against the tradition of photography represented by Domon, with all of its imperial associations, he was hardly free of this tradition's machismo.[116]

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[113] Moriyama and Nakahira, "Hachigatsu futsuka yama no ue hoteru — Taidan: Nakahira Takuma + Moriyama Daidō." This interview is unpaginated, but much of the material that I quote here appears within the first few pages. In a much later interview, Okada Takahiko suggested that it would be impossible to understand the "continuity and discontinuity" of Nakahira's work from this time without understanding his reliance on alcohol and sleeping pills. He also said that this influence shows up most pointedly in Nakahira's work for *Provoke* 2. Okada, "Intabyū Okada Takahiko: mu seifu jōtai de umareta ishu kōhai."

[114] Moriyama and Nakahira, "Hachigatsu futsuka yama no ue hoteru — Taidan: Nakahira Takuma + Moriyama Daidō."

[115] Moriyama and Nakahira.

[116] For an analysis of Domon Ken in terms of "straight photography" and the sexual connotations therein, see Daniel Abbe, "Re-Staging Postwar Japanese Photography: Ōtsuji Kiyoji, APN and Straight Photography," *Japan Forum* 34, no. 3 (2021): 355–82. Philip Charrier argues that Nakahira ought to be understood within the tradition of realism. See Charrier, "Nakahira Takuma's 'Why an

There was a great deal of potential in the rich brew of ideas that Nakahira, Taki and Okada put forward, reaching its most ecstatic pitch around the idea of eros. Nakahira's own photographs for the second issue seemed to pull off the impossible, and not so much "translate" these ideas—this is too linguistic a concept—into images, as much as to make images signify in the "thickets of proper sense" that are proper to phenomenological experience. At this level, techniques of blur and grain mattered less than a corporeal experience of the world. To remain here, suspended in the space of unrealized potential, perhaps would have been impossible. But for a moment, Nakahira incorporated, or ingrained, this unrealized potential itself into his photographs. This is why Nakahira's photographs published under the title of "Eros" thematized nothing if not disconnection and separation, as if the unrealized desire to bridge this unbridgeable gap, not its realization, drove the work.

Figure 30

Nakahira Takuma, from *Provoke* 2, March 1969.

Illustrated Botanical Dictionary?' (1973) and the Quest for 'True' Photographic Realism in Post-War Japan."

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After all, in the final photograph of Nakahira's series for the second issue, after so many blockages and disconnections, the photographer encounters the world without any barriers. At last everything opens up. Yet if this is the realization of desire for the world, it hardly feels like Boss' "spiritual and eternal" union. It is an equivocal vista: finally the eye is allowed to run free, allowed to see something natural, but it can only do so at the very edge of the city, within the geometry of industry. Distance is marked off at regular intervals by power lines that march inexorably towards the horizon—which is now clearly visible for the first time in the series, but which hardly connotes hope. This landscape falls somewhere between the barely habitable and the thoroughly dystopian: no one is in sight, and dark clouds gather towards the top. The scene looks nothing so much like an unused location for *Alphaville*. The wall that physically separates water from land runs down the center, one of many straight lines that reinforce the single-point perspective, a classical mode of composition incongruous with the rest of Nakahira's photographs. Traditionally, an architectural landmark or a deity ought to appear at this vanishing point, but there is no such resolution here. After all, to provide a clear answer would fall back on language. Instead, the eye is simply led to a cruelly insignificant mess of water, cement and electricity. At the very bottom of the frame, the concrete is just wide enough to suggest that the photographer is standing on it, feet planted out of sight. As this line recedes back into the flattened landscape, it makes an entirely muddled connection with the vanishing point. There can be no simple communion between the photographer and the world. While all of the other photographs are at least partially blocked off by objects or surfaces, this photograph produces a great distance between the photographer and everything else. Here, the photographer is simply exposed to the world.

Conclusion: Photography Before Language

This photograph of the desolate seaside also appeared in *For a Language to Come*, Nakahira's 1970 book which reproduced almost every photograph that he published in *Provoke* 2.[117] It appears again towards the very end, as part of a dramatic concluding series of photographs taken around a seaside industrial area, perhaps even the same location on the same day. The full text of "What is Contemporaneity?" was also reprinted in *For a Language to Come*. Moriyama's post-*Provoke* photobook was titled *Farewell Photography*: while Moriyama looks back at the medium, Nakahira looks forward to language. But why, if *Provoke* had tried to "explode" language, would Nakahira now position himself before it, waiting for a language to come?

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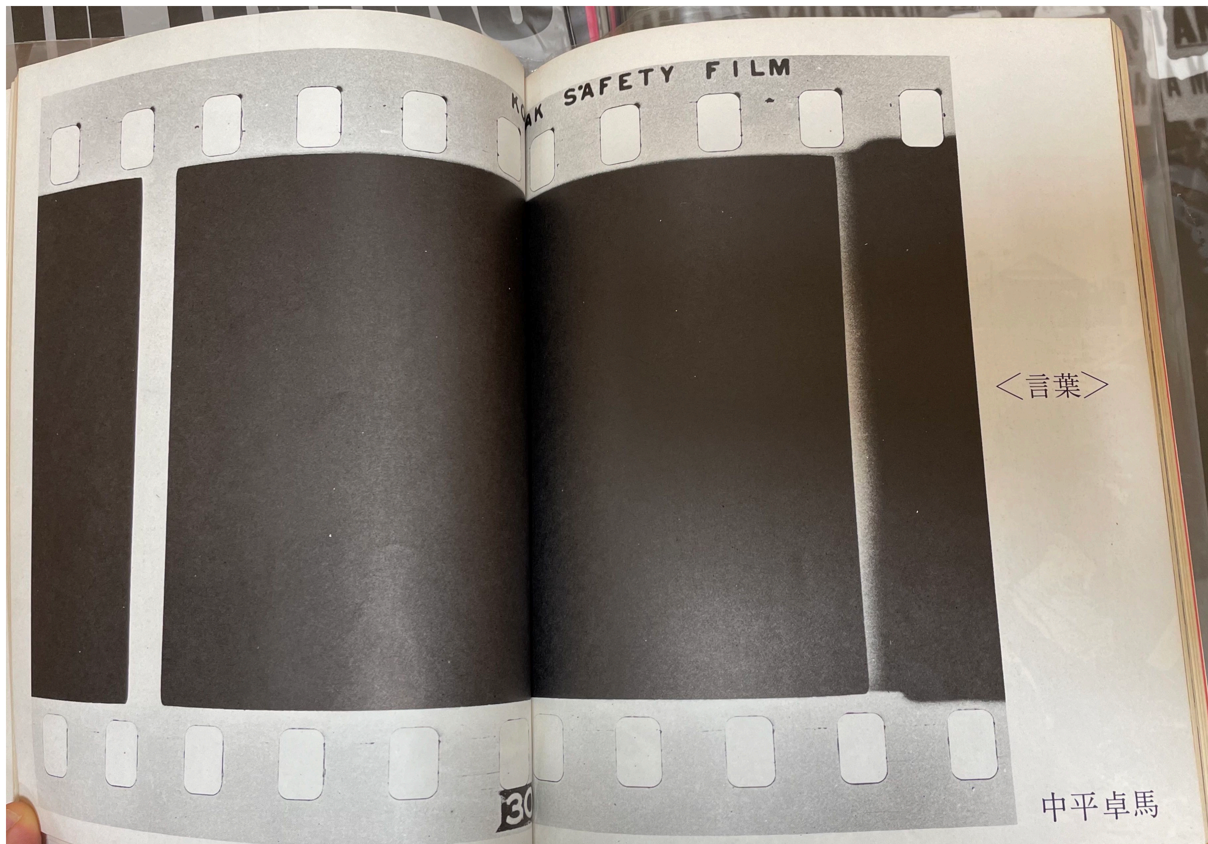
[117] *For a Language to Come* was published in November 1970. In December 1970, Hyūga published an article about psychedelic culture as eros called "The Community to Come" in a small journal called *Sub*; the theme of the issue was "Hippie Radical Elegance." Hyūga's article ran immediately after an interview between Nakahira and the artist Akasegawa Genpei.

Figure 31



Nakahira Takuma, *Language*. Published in *KEN* 3, 1971.

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In January 1971, Nakahira published a single photograph in *KEN*, a magazine that Tōmatsu Shomei had launched to protest the 1970 Osaka World Expo.[118] Towards the back of the magazine, a few photographers published their work under the heading "Manifesto." Nakahira contributed a work simply titled *Language*. The two-page spread shows part of a

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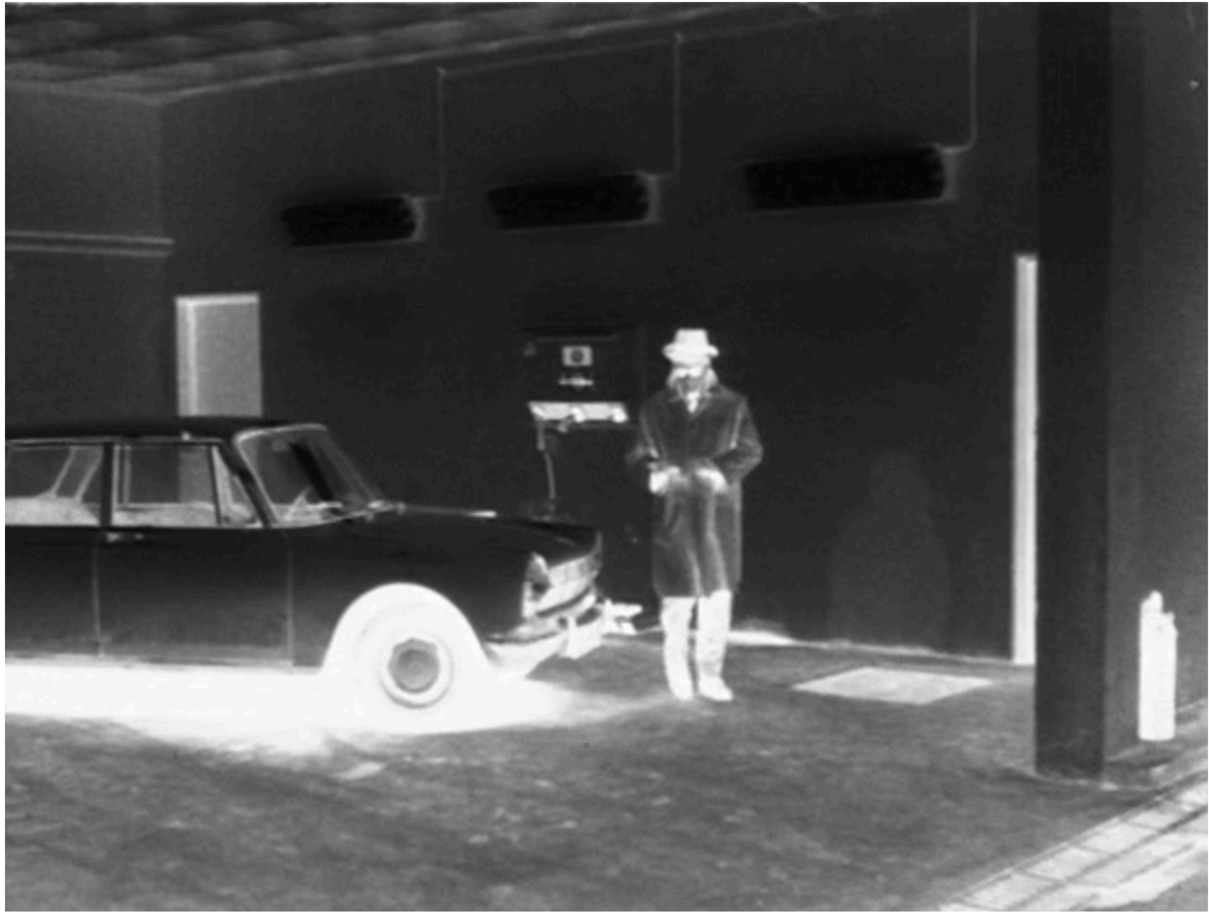
[118] This photograph appeared in the third and final issue of *KEN*. In his essay for *Provoke* 1, Taki Kōji also criticized the 1970 Expo and the artists that participated in it, singling out the architect Isozaki Arata, designers Sugiura Kōhei and Awazu Kiyoshi, and the filmmaker Matsumoto Toshio: "their insides are broken, and in this sense recuperation is impossible." Taki, "Oboesho 1 — chi no taihai," 68. Nakahira was skeptical of such a binary position; see a conversation published in the June 1969 issue of *Design Hihyō*. For more on Expo '70, see the *Review of Japanese Culture and Society*, Vol. 23, a special issue on "Expo '70 and Japanese Art: Dissonant Voices."

negative strip; one central frame is flanked by cut-off frames to the left and right. The film sprockets are visible and translucent, while the three frames are all pitch black—no light will pass through them, they are blocked up. But if Nakahira's photographs for "Eros" dealt in the blockage between the body and the world, this blockage is no longer about corporeal sensation. No *thing* is represented here, even in an indeterminate way. Nakahira has simply allowed an excess of light to hit the film. *Language* is a conceptual photograph, perhaps Nakahira's first, and certainly not his last. The work speaks to the inversions that are necessary to produce even a plain image of white light, from white to black and back to white again. The image reproduced in the magazine finds this process arrested halfway through, an incomplete articulation. Godard, too, had played with the reversibility of black-and-white film in *Alphaville*; towards the end, after Lemmy has disabled Alpha 60 by presenting it with a riddle on time, some of the shots flip between positive and negative.

Figure 32



Alphaville, 1965, dir. Jean-Luc Godard.

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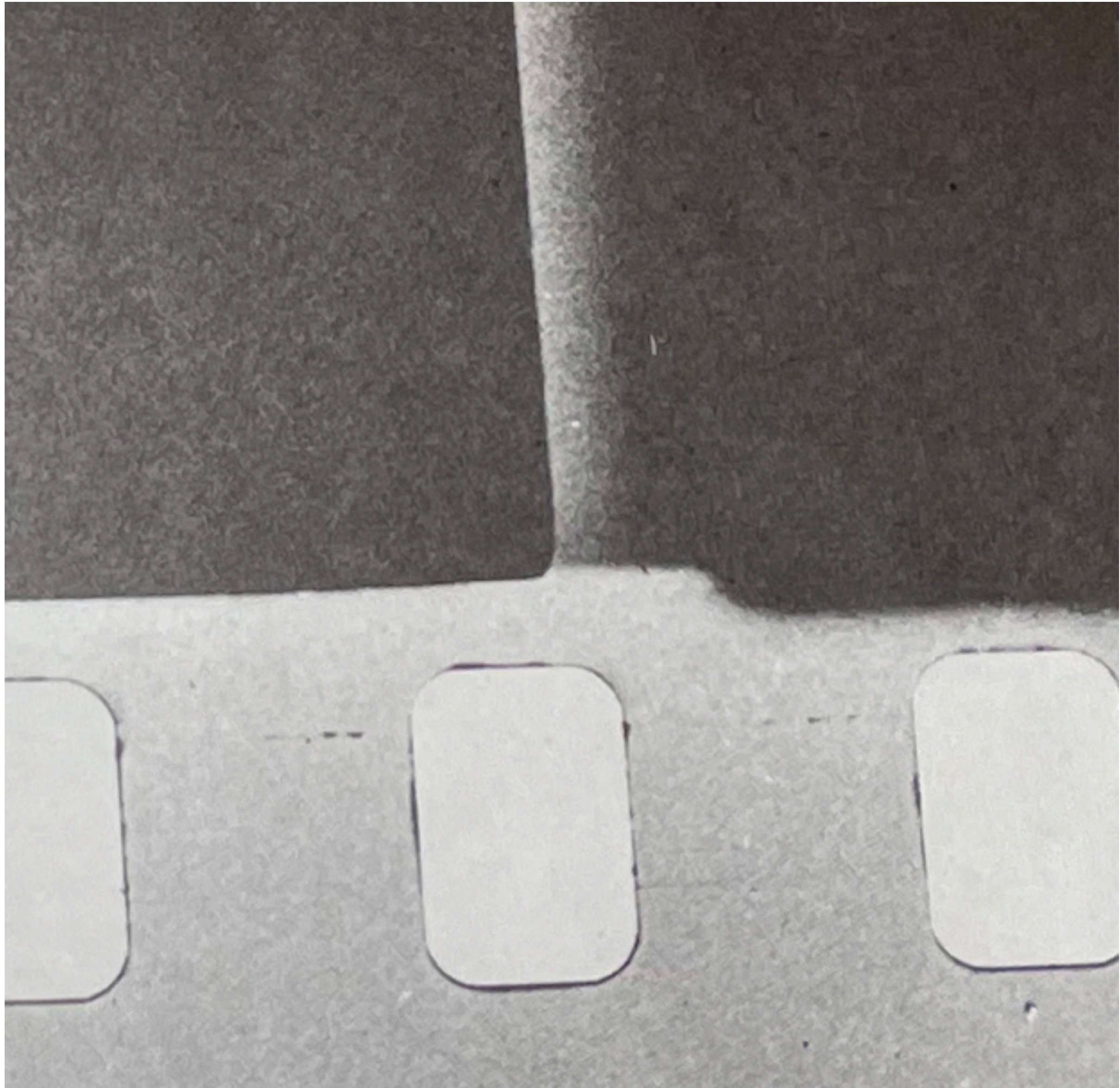
Perhaps, though, there is another way to read the title, to see *Language* in terms of the total picture that Nakahira offers here. Language, after all, might be grasped as the overall system that connects the three frames. And while there is a clear gap between the leftmost frame and the center frame, the border between center and right is not at all clear. The edge of the frame at right warps dramatically, such that it exceeds its own boundaries and surges towards the central one, even touching it at the bottom. Seen in this way, the work suggests that the system of language is internally riven by difference, and that its boundaries might be

breached by touch. In that sense, the work shares *Provoke*'s concern: the desire to break through language, and to find a space of indeterminate communion beyond that static system. At its most ambitious, the magazine conceived of this communion in terms of love.

Figure 33



Nakahira, *Language*, detail.

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In this regard, too, *Provoke* was perfectly in concert with *Alphaville*'s linguistic politics. After all, throughout the film Lemmy speaks of the transformative power of love to Natasha Vonbraun, the daughter of the scientist behind Alpha 60, whose vocabulary has been subjugated to her father's centralized system. Godard offers a straightforwardly happy ending: Lemmy disables Alpha 60, and as he and Natasha travel back to the Outlands, she finds for herself the words that she was not meant to learn: "I love you." The pair travel down the road, and in the last shot of the film, the intense streetlights that have featured throughout go blurry. The end. Even if a swelling soundtrack of Hollywood schmaltz lightly ironizes the moment, it cannot mask the film's earnest idea that love and poetry offer a concrete form of liberation from the tyranny of language. In their utter lack of irony or erotic cliché, Nakahira's photographs for *Provoke* 2 articulate a similar idea.

Figure 34

Alphaville, 1965, dir. Jean-Luc Godard.

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And yet, there is no place for the photographer in *Alphaville*. Lemmy consistently takes photographs as he moves around, and each time he trips the shutter, he sets off a tremendous flash, which sometimes blinds even the viewer of the film. When he photographs inside the Institute of General Semantics, its mastermind Dr. Vonbraun shoots him a quick look but takes no further action to stop him. No one inside the system seems overly worried about him, a small warning about the limits of being a photographer. For all the ways in which *Alphaville* figures Nakahira's theory and practice during his participation in *Provoke*, this warning seems to have gone unheeded. When Nakahira thought he saw the incorporation of *Provoke* photography in the language of advertising, he took up a revanchist position that did away with the more lyrical possibilities of eros.

Figure 35

Alphaville, 1965, dir. Jean-Luc Godard.

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Nakahira grounded his theory and practice against language in the photographer as a body engaged in the world. His "Eros" photographs show him grasping for an intermediate zone, in the realm of the senses, literally putting his body in the world. In *Language*, though, the frames at right and left are sliced off by the hand of the photographer; they attest to the fact that the system will continue on, beyond the frame, out of sight. Nothing can be free of mediation, and the entirely arbitrary interruption of the continuity of these frames points to the very force of their continuous movement through time. In pointing to this inexorable movement, and in highlighting the materiality of the film itself, *Language* evokes cinema, that space in which, unlike photography, Nakahira claimed that grammatical elements are able to connect images to each other. If the *Provoke* idea was to explode language through the body of the photographer in the indeterminate encounter with the world, then by this point Nakahira seems to have already moved on to a different strategy. Now, rather than breaking the system of language apart from the inside, as if one single corporeal act could smash the boundary between subject and object and do away with the "heartrending" feeling that Okada had described, this work finds Nakahira before language, not in a temporal sense of being prior to it, but in the sense of standing before it—beholding it, almost, or trying to get outside of it, and to grab hold of it in one image.

During his participation in *Provoke*, at least, Nakahira did invest the body with the potential to go beyond language. But by the time he spoke with Moriyama, such desire was long frustrated, as if his own actions as a photographer were as futile as Lemmy Caution's. Nakahira did find one bright spot in the conversation, though. Okada had invited him to show work in the upcoming Seventh Paris Biennial, and Nakahira said: "The best thing about this conversation has been the feeling that I won't show any work in the biennial; I will quit the

biennial, as a manly man. (Laughs) Instead, I will just go abroad. I used the word 'floating' before, so actually, I will just float along. It's not about going to the biennial. That's nothing more than the cue to go."[119] Nakahira did make the trip to Paris in late 1971, and he did make an installation for the biennial. The idea of "floating" played an important role in this work; as a photographer, he threw himself into the more cinematic flow of time that he had begun to consider with "Language," and allowed himself to be carried along with it. This Paris work found Nakahira immersed in systems, not only of language but of media as well. Such a floating position brought new possibilities for encountering the world. But the body as "material base," as a weapon against language—that had already begun to flow away.

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[119] Moriyama and Nakahira, "Hachigatsu futsuka yama no ue hoteru — Taidan: Nakahira Takuma + Moriyama Daidō."

Chapter 2

A Case for Quitting: “The Illusion Called Document”

Introduction

Not long after *Provoke* ended, one of Japan’s major newspapers ran a pair of photographs that dramatically altered the stakes of being a photographer in the world. The two photographs appeared next to the headline: “Radicals Beat a Burning Policeman to Death—First Time in Okinawa.” In the top photograph, brightly lit by a flash, a crowd forms around a figure in the center. Three or four people are caught in the middle of uncertain actions: someone in a white or gray jacket has a leg raised, someone is holding a long baton, another person holds up the central figure. The bottom photograph is somewhat blurrier: a white expanse of flames dominates the composition. The person in the light jacket now appears at right, and the figure in the center of the top photograph is indistinguishable. They hardly offer a clear view of the situation. Yet their publication, and the legal arguments that sprung up around them, deeply reshaped the corporeal stakes of being a photographer at this time.

Figure 36

讀賣新聞

THE YOMIURI SHIMBUN

(日刊) 第34191号 ©読売新聞社1971年

11月11日 木曜日

昭和46年(1971年)

発行所 読売新聞社
東京都中央区銀座3の2の1
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協定反対 沖縄・本土…デモ呼応

過激派がめった打ち

警官火ダルマ死ぬ

沖縄で初めて

【那覇支局十日発】六万人が参加（主催者側発表）した与儀公園の決起大会のあと、デモ隊は午後四時近くに会場を出発、ひめゆり道路、軍用道路一号線などを経て、約六㌔離れた米民政府に向かった。出発直後からデモ隊は荒れ模様で、会場周辺を固めた警官隊や、コース沿道の交番一か所、米軍変電所や外人住宅地区のゲート付近などで、労組員の中にまじった過激派学生らが火炎ビン数十本を投げつけて一部を炎上させ、各所で警官隊ともみ合いを繰り返した。

同六時ごろ、解散地点に近い浦添市内の普天間署勢理客（じっちゃく）交番前まできたところ、中核派学生とみられる一団五十人が、またも火炎ビンを投げつけ、ほかのデモ隊を巻きこんで、警官隊と衝突、激しい"市街戦"となった。その乱闘のさなか、各署で編成した警官隊の一人、与那原署交通主任、山川松三巡査部長

過激派に取り囲まれた山川巡査部長（円内）は、めった打ちにされ（写真上）、火炎ビンで火だるまになった（写真下）＝酒匂特約カメラマン撮影

Front page of the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, November 11, 1971.

+++

These photographs were used as the only evidence that police would use to wrongfully arrest the man in the light jacket, named Matsunaga Yū, for the murder of the

traffic officer in the center. This incident brought Nakahira to his most radical reflections on being a photographer: in an essay called "The Illusion Called Document" that he published in the wake of the Matsunaga Yū incident, he suggested that photographers "could quit being photographers."[1] The photographer was not so much up for reinvention, as on the chopping block. This chapter situates Nakahira's claim within the social and intellectual context of its day. In the first sentence of the essay, Nakahira wrote: "Photographs are documents." The essay sets out to prove how an uncritical belief in the documentary or indexical properties of photography has become distorted at a social level. Writing in dialogue with contemporary media theory, Nakahira's thinking about the body of the photographer thus passed through its most pessimistic phase. In the wake of *Provoke*, Nakahira criticized not only the indexical notion of the photographic document, but the magazine itself. In the end, Nakahira used his sensorially grounded analysis of mass media to pressure the very idea of being a photographer.

Nakahira wrote "The Illusion Called Document" as a media theorist, in dialogue with a wide range of thinkers both in Japan and abroad. During this time, Nakahira was part of a lively discourse on media theory in Japan. Various Japanese cultural critics discussed the effects of mass media on personal experience, and Nakahira was particularly interested in the media theory of the German critic and poet Hans Magnus Enzensberger. By theorizing contemporary media conditions through the Matsunaga Yū case, "The Illusion Called Document" pushed this discourse in a political direction. Nakahira's lasting interest in the Matsunaga case marks a broader turn in his critical writing towards "the shifting geopolitical and aesthetic stakes of photography as a form of media," as Franz Prichard puts it.[2] While

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[1] A full translation of this essay appears in the Appendix of this dissertation.

[2] Prichard, *Residual Futures: The Urban Ecologies of Literary and Visual Media of 1960s and 1970s Japan*, 120–21.

many critics in Japan at this time had criticized media for hollowing out the texture of individual experience, Nakahira sounded the alarm about the concrete consequences of taking and publishing photographs.

Nakahira paid careful attention to the political dimension of the relationship between bodily sensation and mass media. Thinking together sensation and politics in this way distinguishes his work from other critical approaches to media at this time. In this respect, he claimed: "it is within this boundless everyday that the mass media of today's information society acts out its truly political role. Unconsciously, mass media systematizes the everyday, and through this systematizes and controls our senses."[3] Nakahira developed the idea of the "systematization of vision," paying close attention to the sensorial effects of television and photojournalism. He claimed that these media reinforced the erroneous belief in photography as a reliably documentary medium. At the same time, he also used the Matsunaga case to extend the concept of the systematization of vision to the body of the photographer, which could now all too easily work unwittingly on behalf of the state. Regardless of any photographer's personal intentions, their physical presence at any given time and place could be used as the legal ground for a wrongful arrest and conviction. It looked impossible to claim a bodily position outside of mass media, and this phenomenological gap between bodily presence and legal documentary status forged Nakahira's most critical thinking about the position of the photographer.

Even though Nakahira was a tremendously prolific writer, the stakes of "The Illusion Called Document" were higher than usual, because this was his first major byline in the widely-read *Bijutsu Techō*, Japan's art magazine of record to the present day.[4] Not only that,

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[3] Nakahira, "Kiroku to iu gen'ei: dokyumento kara monyumento e," 84.

[4] Nakahira had previously appeared in *Bijutsu Techō* as a participant in roundtable discussions. See, for example, Nakahira Takuma et al., "Toriaezu geijutsuka toshite," *Bijutsu Techō*, June 1971; Nakahira and Takanashi, "Ima shashinka de aru koto."

the essay was given top billing in that month's special feature, titled "Photographs and Documents—The Manipulation and Structure of Images."[5] "The Illusion Called Document" appeared in July 1972, at a time that *Bijutsu Techō* was taking a keen interest in photography.[6] As a working writer, Nakahira developed his ideas across essays written for various publications, often taking up the same themes in different venues. "The Illusion Called Document" was not the first time for Nakahira to reflect on mass media and the photographer's role within it. However, it is his most clearly articulated statement on the subject, even as it remains true to Nakahira's generally convoluted writing style. His essays often follow his stream of consciousness, starting at a seemingly arbitrary point and burrowing through a series of thoughts, arriving at bombastic conclusions along the way.

Within the scope of this dissertation, this chapter clearly articulates Nakahira's most pessimistic vision of the photographer: he floats the idea of giving up entirely. Quitting was in the air at this time, as other *Provoke* photographers took serious stock of their positions. Taki Kōji swore off taking photographs to concentrate on criticism, while Moriyama Daidō published a photobook in 1972 called *Farewell Photography*. In a conversation with Moriyama that appears in *Farewall Photography*, Nakahira spoke of his "militant pessimism," and connected futility to struggle: "Because I am a pessimist, I must become militant."[7] For Nakahira, the events of late 1971 and early 1972 marked a turning point in the stakes of what it meant to be a photographer in the world. In order to draw these stakes out,

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[5] In addition to regular columns, reviews, and one-off articles, each month's issue had a special feature which collected three or four pieces of writing (a mix of essays, roundtable discussions, or interviews) around a single theme.

[6] Just a month before, the special feature was "Photography and Art—Myth of the 'Truthful Thing," including a long essay by Okada Takahiko, a short text by Moriyama Daidō, and an essay about *Provoke* by Kuronuma Kōichi called "The Agitation Towards Photographers."

[7] Moriyama and Nakahira, "Hachigatsu futsuka yama no ue hoteru — Taidan: Nakahira Takuma + Moriyama Daidō." Nakahira also discusses the strategic value of pessimism in Nakahira Takuma, "Nikusei no kakutoku wa kanō ka," *The Nippon Dokusho Shimbun*, March 19, 1973.

this chapter closely analyzes the arguments of “The Illusion Called Document” across three sections. The first section introduces the conditions of media theory in Japan, positions Nakahira within them, and explores his concept of the “systematization of vision.” The second section turns to the Matsunaga Yū case, paying special attention to an indexical theory of photography that state prosecutors developed. Finally, it addresses Nakahira’s provocative claim that photographers “might quit being photographers,” and considers this refusal in light of recent photography theory.

One major narrative of photography’s politicization in the 1970s holds that this came about through a return to documentary practices.[8] But “The Illusion Called Document” critiques the very notion of photography’s status as a document—an idea that does not correspond strictly to the concept of “documentary photography,” but rather to a range of images that circulate outside of specifically artistic contexts.[9] In its push to move beyond documentary photography—and, perhaps, beyond the photographer altogether—Nakahira’s essay represents a significant theoretical contribution.

Sensing Media: Nakahira as Media Theorist

“The Illusion Called Document” begins with a simple statement: “Photographs are documents.”[10] Everything in the essay responds directly to this sentence. At first, Nakahira affirms that photographs can be documents because they must be produced in relation to the “outside world,” and that a photograph can be a document on the basis of mutual

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[8] For a global approach to this narrative, see Ribalta, *Not Yet*.

[9] In English-language discourse, Molly Nesbit has offered an extended reflection on the idea of the photographic document in her work on Eugène Atget. For Nesbit, documents are “pictures that went to work.” Beyond this definition in terms of use value, she suggests that in Atget’s time there was no established criterion for what constituted a photographic document. Molly Nesbit, *Atget’s Seven Albums* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 16.

[10] Nakahira, “Kiroku to iu gen’ei: dokyumento kara monyumento e,” 73.

understanding between the person who takes it and the person who looks at it.[11] With these qualifications, Nakahira says that the document makes photography worthwhile as a medium: "Through the directness of reflecting reality, photography has succeeded at considerably reducing the distance between reality and ourselves. Photography could have no great potentiality in contrast to other media without this."[12] In order to explain such "directness of reflecting reality," Nakahira presents a standard notion of photography's indexicality, grounded in the photomechanical interaction of light and camera. This is the same basis on which certain art of the 1970s modeled itself, such that Rosalind Krauss could speak of photography's "documentary status, its undeniable veracity" on the basis of its indexical relationship to the "natural world."[13] Nakahira begins here—but almost at once, he pulls the rug out from under this proposition. At its core, "The Illusion Called Document" sets out to demonstrate the ideological danger of uncritically believing its first sentence.[14]

The very fact that Nakahira called his essay "The Illusion Called Document" showed that it was in dialog with the contemporary discourse of media theory in Japan, within which the idea of "illusion" played a major role. The Japanese-language discourse on media of the 1960s and early 1970s included a large body of text in translation: Marshall Macluhan's work, and Daniel Boorstin's book *The Image* were both read widely. Although Boorstin is not discussed frequently in English-language scholarship today, *The Image* (published 1962,

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[11] Nakahira does not offer a concrete example here, but he seems to be thinking of a situation in which a photograph is produced and exchanged within a very limited context. While this could easily describe a family portrait, the language he uses here anticipates his description of *Provoke* later on in the essay as a "relation between individuals."

[12] Nakahira, "Kiroku to iu gen'ei: dokyumento kara monyumento e," 74.

[13] Rosalind Krauss, "Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America. Part 2," *October* 4 (1977): 59.

[14] The subtitle of the essay is "From Document to Monument." This is a reference to Michel Foucault, who writes in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*: "history, in its traditional form, undertook to 'memorize' the monuments of the past […] in our time, history is that which transforms documents into monuments." Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972). Nakahira's deep skepticism about the document is somewhat at odds with Foucault.

translated into Japanese 1964) practically set the terms of media theory in Japan during this moment.[15] When this book was translated into Japanese, it was given the snappier title *The Age of Illusion*.[16] This difference in the translation of the title points to the specific conditions of media theory in Japan at this time, which differed considerably from the English-language context. By including "illusion" in the title of his essay, Nakahira referenced Boorstin's work directly. The central insight of Boorstin's book is that "we are haunted, not by reality, but by those images we have put in place of reality."[17] As it happens, Boorstin's analysis of the fallout from this condition tends toward a more or less nationalistic thought; writing from a Cold War perspective, he mourned a perceived loss of America.[18] However, his idea that the fakery of mediated images had come to stand in for experience drove left-wing media theory in Japan, where it was used in a different political register.[19]

Instead, early 1970s media theorists in Japan examined the social and material effects of media. They often arrived at the conclusion that mechanically reproduced images had hollowed out experience. *Thought in the Age of Reproduction*, a pair of essay collections published in 1971 and 1973 by Fuji Xerox, demonstrated the close connection of

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[15] *The Image* remains influential in Japan today; cultural studies scholar Tada Osamu (to the best of my knowledge, no relation to Tada Michitarō, who I discuss below) used Boorstin as the central theoretical frame for his 2004 book *The Birth of the Image of Okinawa*. Tada Osamu, *Okinawa imēji no tanjō: aoi umi no karuchuraru sutadīzu* (Tokyo: Toyo Keizai Inc., 2004).

[16] In Japanese, *Gen'ei no jidai*.

[17] Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image: Or, What Happened to the American Dream*, 1st ed. (New York: Atheneum, 1962), 6.

[18] "What ails us most is not what we have done with America, but what we have substituted for America." Boorstin, 6. *The Image* was originally published with the subtitle *Or, What Happened to the American Dream*, which was later changed to *A Guide To Pseudo Events In America*.

[19] In fact, the most widely read work in Japan around "illusion" during this period, Yoshimoto Takaaki's 1968 book *Theory of the Shared Illusion*, takes up a position quite opposed to Boorstin: through a psychologically inflected reading of family relations in premodern texts, Yoshimoto offered a critical re-telling of the establishment of the nation form in Japan, arguing that the nation itself—and in turn the power that accrues to the state—is constructed on the basis of illusory relationships. See Yoshimoto Takaaki, *Kyōdō gensōron* (Tokyo: Kawade Shobo Shinsha, 1968).

contemporary Japanese media theory to social life.[20] As the title of the two volumes indicates, the writers collected in these volumes wrote in the wake of Walter Benjamin, whose writings on media were translated in 1965, before they appeared in English.[21] In fact, by the time that Nakahira wrote "The Illusion Called Document" in 1972, he could call Benjamin's theory of exhibition value and cult value "an already extremely famous discourse."[22] In the first volume of *Thought in the Age of Reproduction*, an essay by Yasunaga Toshinobu put forth a Marxist understanding of the role of new visual media, analyzing the social and personal effects of the "age of vision."[23] Yasunaga suggested that the age of vision had changed the conditions of labor, in which vision (rather than manual labor) was now the main skill. He presented a generally bleak picture of life in the 1970s, in which television controls the minds of people.

Tada Michitarō's essay from the 1971 volume, called "What is Reproductive Art?", began to articulate a theory of media in slightly more corporeal terms than Yasunaga. He keenly showed how Boorstin privileged a quasi-religious approach grounded in outmoded concepts of "originality." In this way, the essay shows that Japanese intellectuals critiqued and built on media theory from Europe and North America. Like Boorstin, Tada considered the conditions of reproduction as they affected daily life. Although Tada spoke of loss, he was not concerned with the loss of nationhood but rather the loss of "the embodied voice of people, the concrete image of the person in conversation, the actual landscape."[24] Tada

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[20] Tsumura Takashi, ed., *Zoku: Fukusei jidai no shisō* (Tokyo: Fuji Xerox, 1973); Yoshida Mitsuro, ed., *Fukusei jidai no shisō* (Tokyo: Fuji Xerox, 1971).

[21] Walter Benjamin, *Fukusei gijutsu jidai no geijutsu*, trans. Jirō Kawamura (Tokyo: Kinokuniya Shoten, 1965).

[22] Nakahira, "Kiroku to iu gen'ei: dokyumento kara monyumento e," 78.

[23] Yasunaga Toshinobu, "Ningen to fukusei," in *Fukusei jidai no shisō*, ed. Yoshida Mitsuro (Tokyo: Fuji Xerox, 1971), 53–82.

[24] Tada Michitarō, "Fukusei geijutsu to wa nani ka," in *Fukusei jidai no shisō*, ed. Yoshida Mitsuro (Tokyo: Fuji Xerox, 1971), 128.

suggested that some of these things could be recovered in media, whether through cameras or sound recordings. But such recoveries were bound to remain artificial—and that situation, in turn, altered experience: “We live in the middle of a copy of nature that is a secondary or tertiary nature. Accordingly, our perception is also shifting towards a secondary or tertiary nature.”[25] Taking up Benjamin’s terms, Tada suggested that his own era had moved on from the paradigm of cult value, and even beyond exhibition value, to enter a paradigm of transmission. However, the transmission of the mass media that forms sensory experience is always and already mediated by external systems and major corporations. As a result, Tada claimed that people in contemporary society live out a deep form of unfreedom.[26] Nakahira’s own writing on media took up Yasunaga’s focus on vision as the defining characteristic of the time, and Tada’s emphasis on embodiment and perception.

Although Nakahira shared the pessimistic outlook of both writers, the media theorist that he cited most frequently in “The Illusion Called Document” was the more hopeful German critic and poet Hans Magnus Enzensberger. By the time Enzensberger’s essay “Constituents of a Theory of Media” appeared in Japanese in August 1971, he was already known for his theoretical work on the “consciousness industry,” a concept that showed how the mind itself provided new terrain for capital to develop.[27] In one sense, “Constituents of a Theory of Media” fit the negative tone of early 1970s Japan, because Enzensberger pointed to a distinct *lack* of theorization of new media from within the ostensibly “New” Left. Nakahira

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[25] Tada, 131.

[26] Like other essays across *Thought in the Age of Reproduction*, Tada’s analysis is not couched in a specifically Japanese context, a fact that demonstrates the international horizon of media theory in Japan at this time.

[27] Enzensberger Hans Magnus, “Mediaron no tame no tsumikibako,” trans. Nakano Koji, *Bungei*, August 1971. “Constituents of a Theory of Media” appeared in English in late 1970. Hans Magnus Enzensberger, “Constituents of a Theory of the Media,” *New Left Review* I, no. 64 (December 1970): 13–36.. Enzensberger’s book *The Consciousness Industry* was translated into Japanese in 1970; it did not appear in English until 1974. See Enzensberger Hans Magnus, *Ishiki sangyō*, trans. Ishiguro Hideo (Tokyo: Shobunsha, 1970).

cited Enzensberger's sardonic critique of Paris 1968 activists for adhering to outmoded forms of bourgeois media—Enzensberger lambasted them for choosing to take over the Odeon, Paris' old theater, rather than radio stations.[28] Still, the essay is no elegy for the loss of experience that these new media brought about. On the contrary, Enzensberger understood media as tools of mobilization, and he suggested how they might carry out this function.

Enzensberger urged leftist movements to come to grips with the potentialities of electronic media, and he offered a distinctly optimistic view of technology, grounded in the idea of the technological reversibility of electronic circuits. This reversibility suggested the possibility of moving away from a one-sided model of transmission, thus breaking down the boundary between author and receiver:

> Electronic techniques recognize no contradiction in principle between transmitter and receiver. Every transistor radio is, by the nature of its construction, at the same time a potential transmitter; it can interact with other receivers by circuit reversal. The development from a mere distribution medium to a communications medium is technically not a problem. It is consciously prevented for understandable political reasons. The technical distinction between receivers and transmitters reflects the social division of labour into producers and consumers, which in the consciousness industry becomes of particular political importance.[29]

Technology itself emerges here as the site on which political transformation can be imagined, from a (dystopian) mono-directional transmission, to a (utopian) bidirectional communication. Enzensberger assumed that because transmission only goes in one direction, to flip the switch and make receivers into authors would liberate them. After all, to make an ostensibly passive audience into an active participant is one of the longest-held dreams of leftist media thinking.

When he considered the role of artists, Enzensberger again returned to Benjamin, not to the "Work of Art" essay, but to Benjamin's 1934 speech "The Author as Producer." In that

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[28] Coincidentally or not, a placard for the Odeon subway stop appeared in the work that Nakahira produced in Paris in 1971, *Circulation*. See Figure 51.

[29] Enzensberger, "Constituents of a Theory of the Media," 15.

text, Benjamin discussed the roles of both the artist and the photographer.[30] With respect to artists, Benjamin demanded that they produce work that would turn "readers or spectators into collaborators."[31] This is, of course, Enzensberger's ideal use of media, and he expressed disappointment that not enough artists had been able to make their audiences into producers. He noted wryly that the Rolling Stones had mobilized more people than any New Left media, and he suggested that art produced within the specifically aesthetic tradition (i.e. of modernism) would only survive "as a marginal special case within the framework of a much more comprehensive theory."[32] Almost anticipating Nakahira's suggestion to "quit being photographers," he claimed that artists would have to give up their function of being artists, and that the act of producing an individual work was becoming redundant: "For the old fashioned 'artist'—let us call him the author—it follows from these reflections that he must see it as his goal to make himself redundant as a specialist in much the same way as a teacher of literacy only fulfills his task when he is no longer necessary."[33] Without specifically mentioning Soviet artists, Ensenzberger's ideal form of artistic production closely hews to the goals of Soviet constructivism's "productivist" phase from late 1921.[34]

Nakahira responded to these various media theorists by combining Enzensberger's focus on channels of distribution with Tada's intuition towards sensation. Although Nakahira wrote that the document is the only source of photography's potentiality as a medium, within

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[30] "What we require of the photographer is the ability to give his picture a caption that wrenches it from modish commerce and gives it a revolutionary use value." Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer," in *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*, ed. Michael William Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 87.

[31] Benjamin, 89.

[32] Enzensberger, "Constituents of a Theory of the Media," 31.

[33] Enzensberger, 36.

[34] See Boris Arvatov, *Art and Production*, ed. John Roberts and Alexai Penzin, trans. Shushan Avagyan (London: Pluto Press, 2017); Maria Gough, *The Artist as Producer: Russian Constructivism in Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

the first few pages of the essay he argued that this very proposition had become twisted around itself. He claimed that the idea of the photograph as a document was now a reified myth that only produced the illusion of reality, and that it was more difficult to detect this myth in images, compared to print media, where "it is easier to sniff out the industrial language, and finally the political form that supports industrial society—that is to say, the language of the state."[35] While Nakahira focused on the specific case of photographs, he used the term "image" to refer to technically mediated photographic images in general.[36] The problem with images was that they had become "monumental fetishes"; their meaning was completely severed from the thing in the world that they represented, a condition made possible by "the shared illusion of tacit deceit between sender and receiver that these images are absolutely documents of things actually happening."[37] In turning from photographs to images, Nakahira put himself in the terrain of media theory.

How does the idea that "photographs are documents" lead to illusion? Nakahira's answer was that print and broadcast media distribute "a countless number of mass-produced realities," and as a result, "we believe that reality itself is not reality, but its resemblance."[38] The idea that mediated images do not correspond to reality resonates with Boorstin and Tada, and Nakahira also quoted Enzensberger at great length on the idea of "manipulation" in

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[35] Nakahira, "Kiroku to iu gen'ei: dokyumento kara monyumento e," 74.

[36] The term that Nakahira uses for "image," *eizō*, was widely used in the Japanese-language discourses of film and photography. In tracing the genealogy of this term within avant-garde film discourse, Yuriko Furuhata defines it as a "kind of image created and mediated by technological means, including cinema, television, photography, and computer imaging." Furuhata, *Cinema of Actuality*, 39.

[37] Nakahira, "Kiroku to iu gen'ei: dokyumento kara monyumento e," 77. The idea of "shared illusion" [*kyōdō gensō*] is a clear reference to Yoshimoto Takaaki's *Theory of the Shared Illusion*. See note earlier in this chapter.

[38] Nakahira, 74. Who exactly Nakahira refers to when he says "we" is an open question. It could simply mean "we who live in the early 1970s," or "we who live in early 1970s Japan." In truth, it may be closer to "we who live in early 1970s Tokyo," if not "we left-wing intellectuals who live in early 1970s Tokyo."

reference to the channels through which these images pass.[39] He concluded: "all documents of reality are also fictionalized, once they pass through the media's manipulation and the cathode-ray tube of a television."[40] If the idea that photographs are documents had become a socially accepted myth, this troubled Nakahira because the relationship "between sender and receiver" is so uneven: like Tada, he noted that the "senders" here were not individuals but corporations. Nakahira then extended this thought further, into a more corporeal register.

Nakahira suggested that consistent exposure to such images split off from reality had actually altered sensorial experience *en masse*, such that people now only believed in the reality of mass media images. Sensorial language runs throughout the essay: "However, we who believe in the primary documentary quality of images, that everything reflected there is really happening—our senses constitute another side of the situation. Our senses obscure 'their' skilled tricks, and allow us to accept the idea that actually imaged reality is true reality."[41] In fact, he said, people now think that if something is *not* an image, it is not real.[42] As the essay went on, Nakahira discussed images that were mediated by newspaper and television, and he examined how they formed the sensations of those who received them. The issue was not only that images were manipulated by corporations at the point of their distribution; sensation itself had been conditioned by and for this manipulation.

This led Nakahira to the idea of the "systematization of vision"—one of this essay's key concepts, which became a consistent refrain throughout Nakahira's writing during this

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[39] Nakahira cited Boorstin directly in other texts. While this discourse also resonates with Guy Debord, I have not found references to Debord's texts in Nakahira's essays. For a brief note on resonances between Nakahira and Debord, see Prichard, *Residual Futures: The Urban Ecologies of Literary and Visual Media of 1960s and 1970s Japan*, 237.

[40] Nakahira, "Kiroku to iu gen'ei: dokyumento kara monyumento e," 76.

[41] Nakahira, 75.

[42] This idea, too, echoes Boorstin: "The American citizen thus lives in a world where fantasy is more real than reality, where the image has more dignity than its original." Boorstin, *The Image*, 37.

period.[43] He suggested that "the mass media systematizes the everyday, and through this systematizes and controls our senses."[44] In other words, there is no longer any possibility to simply see what has been put in front of the eye; because "the mass media systematizes the everyday," sight in general is already mediated by a system. Tada had grasped this idea when he wrote that "our perception is also shifting towards a secondary or tertiary nature," suggesting that perception was ever more distanced from reality. Nakahira argued that this systematization of vision represented the "truly political role" of the mass media.[45] In this sense, he was continuing to develop the politics that had motivated *Provoke*, but now with a more concrete target in sight: not language, but mass media.

Enzensberger offered a way out of this systematization—but his fundamental optimism about the potential of media did not find a receptive audience in Japan. This became clear when he visited Tokyo in February 1972, for a two-day symposium on media held in his honor; Nakahira was among the panelists.[46] At his own symposium, Enzensberger said that he felt there were "four pessimists and one optimist" on stage.[47] Even in the six months between the publication of "Constituents" in Japanese and his visit to Tokyo, the situation of media and politics in Japan had shifted. The Matsunaga Yū case pushed Nakahira towards a decidedly pessimistic approach to media theory, which thought media together

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[43] In Nakahira's 1971 conversation with Moriyama, he had spoken of a "systematization of sensation." Moriyama and Nakahira, "Hachigatsu futsuka yama no ue hoteru — Taidan: Nakahira Takuma + Moriyama Daidō." He would continue to use the language of the systematization of vision across a range of texts and discussions from this time. He alternated between two slightly different homophones to express the idea of "vision," one that meant "sense of sight" and another that meant "angle of vision." Nakahira renders the word *shikaku* as 視覚 (sense of sight) and 視角(angle of vision) intercheangeably.

[44] Nakahira, "Kiroku to iu gen'ei: dokyumento kara monyumento e," 84.

[45] Nakahira, 84.

[46] Nakahira wrote a reflection of the symposium in 1973 newspaper article. See Nakahira, "Nikusei no kakutoku wa kanō ka." A condensed summary of the symposium can be found in Hans Magnus Enzensberger et al., "Entsensuberugā shi o mukaete no shinpojumū hōkoku to tōron bassui," *Geijutsu kurabu*, July 1973.

[47] Cited by Nakahira in his summary of the symposium. Nakahira, "Nikusei no kakutoku wa kanō ka."

with sensation and politics. In light of the Matsunaga case, Enzensberger's optimism looked much less viable, because this case pushed the idea of the systematization of vision beyond the individual subject. It was not just a matter of a system mediating individual vision; now, the state itself was developing the ability to see.

State Vision: The Impact of the Matsunaga Yū Case

The case of Matsunaga Yū, the man falsely accused of murder on the basis of photographs that were published in the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, was key to the major claims of Nakahira's essay—the idea of a systematization of vision, and the suggestion that photographers might quit being photographers. This case made clear the stakes of believing in the photograph as an indexical document. The Matsunaga case showed that questions of the mass media went deeper than personal experience; the idea of the photograph as an indexical document could be twisted around itself to serve the interests of the state. Even further, any ideological motivation of the photographer was shown to be completely irrelevant; a photographer's individual vision could be assimilated by force to the state—a system that now had "eyes" of its own. This event pushed Nakahira's analysis of the mass media in Japan beyond the existing discourse of media theory. In the end, it demonstrated that the concept of the systematization of vision pointed well beyond the individual subject.

The Matsunaga case emerged out of a general strike and protest against the reversion of the Ryūkyū Islands, known as Okinawa, to Japanese control.[48] From the end of World War II until its eventual reversion in May 1972, Okinawa was administered as American territory:

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[48] Modern-day Okinawa Prefecture is a group of islands situated between mainland Japan and Taiwan. Okinawa was formally colonized by Japan in 1879. When the Ryūkyū kingdom was invaded by the Satsuma domain in 1609, it was already under Chinese rule; from that point on until it was ruled by both China and the Shogunate. In 1879, when the Meiji government organized "Japan" as a modern nation, it incorporated Okinawa. See Katsukata-Inafuku Keiko and Maetakenishi Kazuma, eds., *Okinawagaku nyūmon: kūfuku no sahō* (Kyoto: Shōwadō, 2010), 3.

the United States dollar was the only currency, and its legal system was different from the Japanese one.[49] The American military occupation, which continues today, was no more popular than the Japanese: Okinawans were hardly granted any rights compared to Americans, who raped and murdered Okinawan people without legal consequences. After various parliamentary debates, an agreement to hand over Okinawa to Japan was approved by the central Tokyo government in late November 1971.[50] The general strike and protest took place on November 10, 1971, in the run-up to this decision, in order to protest the continued presence of American military bases and weapons.

About 150,000 people participated in the strike, and 60,000 people joined a demonstration at a park in Naha, the largest city in Okinawa, which became a march towards the American administrative headquarters.[51] One part of the march faced off with riot police blocking the road; about 80 people armed with Molotov cocktails attacked the police, and broke their lines. The police mostly retreated, but two or three charged the protestors. One of the police was surrounded by people who pushed him to the ground, and set him on fire. The crowd set about putting this fire out, but the officer, Yamakawa Matsuzō, died. When the police heard this, they drove everyone out of the area. A task force of 90 detectives was immediately set up to find the person responsible, and they publicly claimed that this was the work of an extremist acting on the orders of an organization from the mainland.[52]

One week after the demonstration, on November 16, 24-year-old Matsunaga Yū of Saitama Prefecture was arrested inside the Okinawan Prefectural Museum. In a public

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[49] For the particularities of Okinawan law under American occupation, see Isa Chihiro, *Gyakuten: Amerika shihaika, Okinawa no baishin saiban* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 1987).

[50] The Socialist and Communist parties pushed for, and won, a protection against storing nuclear weapons in Okinawa as part of this agreement. In the days before the general strike, these deliberations consistently ran across the front pages of Japan's major newspapers.

[51] Chikada Yoichi, "'Hondo no ningen' no muzai o negau: 'Matsunaga Yū jiken' ni miru Okinawa no kokoro," *Asahi Journal*, October 11, 1974, 22.

[52] Chikada, 22.

statement, the police declared that Matsunaga was a member of the Chūkaku-ha, a major left-wing organization, and that "the deciding factor in the arrest was the 'vivid' photographs taken at the crime scene"—that is, the very photographs in Figure 36 that had been published in the *Yomiuri Shimbun*.[53] Matsunaga denied all charges, and stated that he had traveled to Okinawa not on any orders to participate in the demonstration, but to study the traditional Okinawan art of *bingata* dyeing.[54] Matsunaga consistently maintained that he was trying to help the officer, an account corroborated by eyewitnesses. On December 8, Matsunaga was indicted on murder charges and held in jail for 288 days, after which he was granted a temporary release, but could not return home to Saitama while his trial was ongoing. During this time, a citizens' movement to support Matsunaga emerged in Naha.

Nakahira became deeply invested in this case because of the role that photographers played in it. In addition to "The Illusion Called Document," Nakahira wrote three further articles that dealt heavily with the case.[55] In 1973, he visited Naha to participate in the citizen's movement supporting Matsunaga, and to observe the trial.[56] After that visit, Nakahira published an article on the trial in *Bijutsu Techō*, in which he wrote that while the two photographs in the *Yomiuri Shimbun* were used to identify Matsunaga, the photographer and the newspaper refused to present them as evidence in court.[57] As a result, the police

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[53] Statement cited in Chikada, 22.

[54] A catalog of Matsunaga's *bingata* work has recently been published in conjunction with his exhibition at the Sakima Museum in Okinawa; see Matsunaga Yū, *Matsunaga Yū senshoku sakuhinshū* (Ginowan: Gajumaru Shorin, 2022). For an interview with information about Matsunaga's work as a dyeing artist, see Natsuko Chiyoda, "Matsunaga Yū," accessed January 23, 2020, https://www.ne.jp/asahi/b-men/b-side/document/tatsujin/tatsujin.htm.

[55] See Nakahira Takuma, "'Hōdō no jiyū' no jisshitsu o tou," *Bijutsu Techō*, November 1972; Nakahira Takuma, "Matsunaga Yū saiban dai hachi kai kōhan bōchōki," *Bijutsu Techō*, September 1973; Nakahira Takuma, "Kyakkansei toiu ashiki gensō: Matsunaga Yū jiken o kangaeru," *Asahi Journal*, January 25, 1974. In Nakahira's 1974 article, published in the weekly news magazine *Asahi Journal*, he reported on the part of the trial that he had seen in July 1973.

[56] I discuss Nakahira's visit to Okinawa in Chapter 5.

[57] Nakahira, "Matsunaga Yū saiban dai hachi kai kōhan bōchōki," 15.

turned to other photographers to find similar evidence. They forced their way into the home of freelance photographer Yoshioka Kō, who took pictures of the demonstration, and confiscated his film against his will.[58] Yoshioka would later successfully sue the government for wrongful treatment.[59] The main body of photographs eventually used at the trial was taken by an amateur photographer named Hirano Tomihisa, who said he was photographing the demonstration "for fun."[60] Between Yoshioka and Hirano, the actions of the prosecution showed that a photographer's position was materially irrelevant once the state was involved. Yoshioka photographed the demonstration from a committed position in support of the protestors, while Hirano could not have cared less. The state assimilated—or systematized—the work of both photographers all the same.

The issue at stake was not only that a photograph was estranged from the reality of the photographer's corporeal experience, or that its distribution through mass media hollowed out the sensorial experience of its viewers. The Matsunaga case showed that all channels of the mass media led to the state, and the consequences of this situation were not just at the level of sensory experience but the very concrete fact of wrongful imprisonment. Newspapers were, of course, hardly new media in Japan—but the idea that the state would take a photograph published in a newspaper as legal evidence, an idea that the prosecution articulated very directly, *was* new.[61] For this reason, Matsunaga's case has become well-

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[58] Nakahira wrote about this incident for *Bijutsu Techō*. See Nakahira, "'Hōdō no jiyū' no jisshitsu o tou." The photographer Yanagimoto Naomi wrote about Yoshioka's case in Yanagimoto Naomi, "Fūjirareta giji genjitsu," *Bijutsu Techō*, no. 357 (July 1972): 88–97.

[59] For extremely detailed records relating to Yoshioka's arrest and trial, see Hōdō no jiyū Yoshioka kameraman wo mamoru kai, ed., *Shashin to kenryoku: Okinawa firumu ōshū jiken tōsō kiroku* (Tokyo: Adin Shobo, 1975).

[60] Chikada, "'Hondo no ningen' no muzai o negau: 'Matsunaga Yū jiken' ni miru Okinawa no kokoro," 23.

[61] For studies of images in legal contexts in the United States, see Joan Kee, *Models of Integrity: Art and Law in Post-Sixties America* (Oakland, Calif: University of California Press, 2019); Louis Georges Schwartz, *Mechanical Witness: A History of Motion Picture Evidence in U.S. Courts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

known in Japanese legal history; it regularly appears in legal textbooks and reference books, and is known as the "Image Trial."[62]

During the trial, Matsunaga proved that he was not a member of any political group, so his innocence or guilt came down to a single photograph taken by Hirano. Among a group of 32 of Hirano's photographs, the prosecution argued that one in particular showed Matsunaga in the act of stepping on the officer's head.[63] The defense argued that Matsunaga was placing his foot just next to the officer so that he could help him. Hirano testified against Matsunaga, while six witnesses from the defense claimed that Matsunaga was in fact helping the officer.[64] Hirano's photograph shows even less of the scene than the photographs that ran in the *Yomiuri Shimbun*; it is dominated by a cloud of smoke. Practically the only element that is at all visible is Matsunaga's bent leg; Hirano is too far away from the scene to capture other faces or gestures, which aligns with his own claim to have taken the photographs as a bystander, for fun only.

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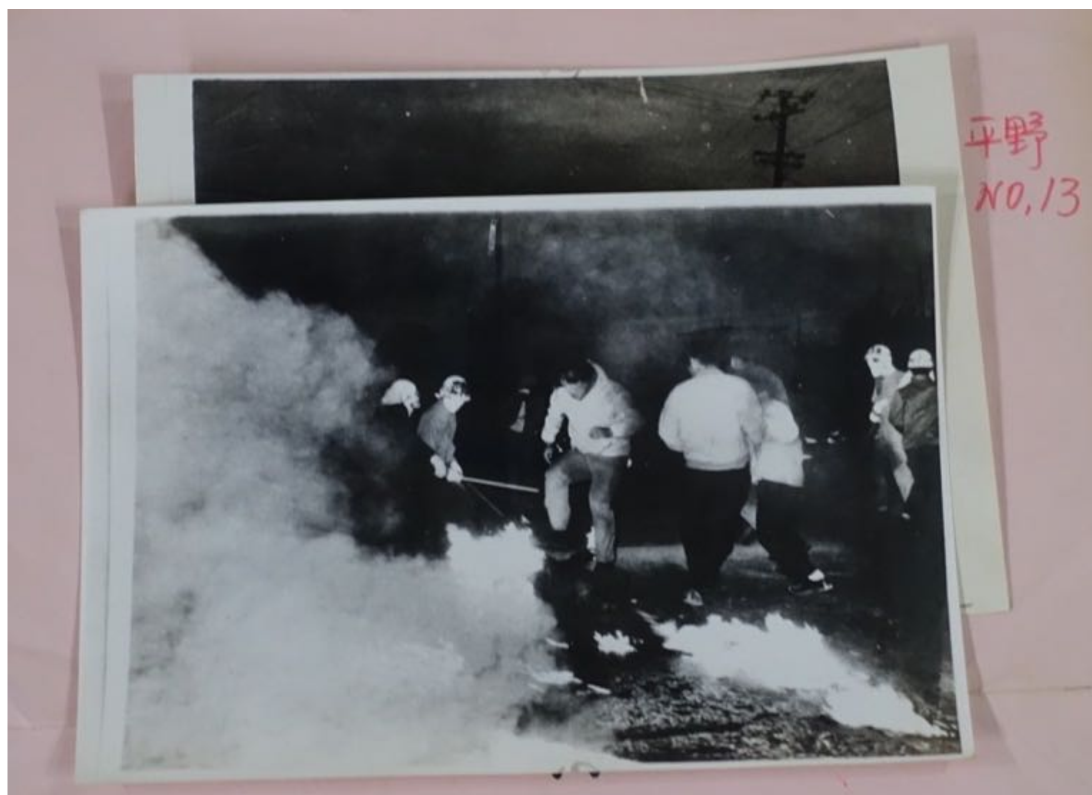
[62] See, for example, the following appearance of the case in a legal encyclopedia. Murano Kaoru and Jiken Hanzai Kenkyūkai, eds., "Okinawa zenesuto keikan satsugai jiken," in *Jiken hanzai dai jiten: Meiji Taishō Shōwa Heisei* (Tokyo: Tokyo Hōkei Gakuin Shuppan, 2002).

[63] This photograph, along with other images marked "Hirano," are part of Nakahira's privately held papers.

[64] In a September 1973 article, Nakahira describes Hirano's testimony at a publicly-held hearing in July of the same year. He was an hour late to the hearing, forgot the month of the 1971 protest, and contradicted much of his testimony from the previous hearing. See Nakahira, "Matsunaga Yū saiban dai hachi kai kōhan bōchōki."

Figure 37



A photograph taken by Hirano Tomihisa.

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To claim that the photograph conclusively showed Matsunaga stepping on the officer, the prosecution developed its own form of photographic theory grounded in an extremely mechanical form of indexicality. Nakahira encountered this document later, and cited it in his 1974 article on the case. The state argued that the "characteristic" of photographs "is to mechanically and scientifically completely grasp the entirety of a subject in the outside world, without relation to the arbitrariness of the taker [*satsueisha*], so that they last almost

eternally."[65] The prosecution argued that a photograph can *only* render the world faithfully, with scientific precision, and that the photographer is of no consequence. Here, indexicality was pushed to its most cynical, and sinister, extreme—which the prosecution took as the basis of an ontological theory of photography. In his study of 19th century European police photography, Allan Sekula developed the term "juridical photographic realism," which resonates with the theory of the prosecution.[66] Sekula examines bureaucratic and typological modes of photographic data collection, which were used, respectively, to identify particular criminals and to predict criminality more generally. The police photographers who operated within these older systems had to use convoluted techniques in order to produce scientific-seeming photographs of the people who were brought before them. With the Matsunaga case, this hard-wrought illusion of scientific truth was no longer necessary: a person could simply be arrested on the basis of a photograph in the newspaper, and convicted on the basis of a haphazardly taken snapshot.

In fact, the state's argument did hold up in court: on October 7, 1974, Matsunaga was found guilty, and sentenced to one year in prison and two additional years of a suspended sentence. Matsunaga won his innocence on appeal in 1976, and later successfully sued the government for wrongful damages.[67] The state argued forcefully that Hirano's photograph revealed the truth of the situation, as the grounds for it to be introduced as evidence in legal proceedings. However, the police could only identify and arrest Matsunaga in the first place because of the photograph that circulated in the *Yomiuri Shimbun*. The fact that even this

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[65] Cited in Nakahira, "Kyakkansei toiu ashiki gensō: Matsunaga Yū jiken o kangaeru," 38. Ishida Shōzaburō, a lawyer who was involved in later stages of the Matsunaga case, did not have this document in his personal archive. Shōzaburō Ishida, Interview, January 24, 2020.

[66] Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," *October* 39 (1986): 5.

[67] For information and documents relating to Matsunaga's case against the government, see Matsunaga kokubai wo tatakau kai, *Enzai to kokka baishō: Okinawa zenesuto Matsunaga kokubai saiban* (Tokyo: Ryokufu Shuppan, 1994).

ostensibly independent—at the very least, not state-run—newspaper was already plugged into the levers of incarceration showed that photographers could hardly consider themselves independent of this mechanism.

This aspect of the case pushed Nakahira to consider the relationship of the photographer to much broader systems of control. The Matsunaga case demonstrated that any photograph, even if it was not taken from a police perspective, might at any time be forcibly seized and be re-interpreted as if it had been. The political stance or intentions of a photographer were entirely immaterial; state systems themselves could simply assimilate them as part of their own vision. Although Hirano later volunteered to testify at the trial, he became an unwitting participant in the legal process from the moment that he started photographing the demonstration. But now, any photographer ran the risk of photographing not as if they were the state, but simply as the state itself. This was bad enough in the case of Hirano's photographs taken "for fun," but the forcible seizure of Yoshioka's film showed that even unpublished photographs by politically conscious photographers were not safe. Even further, once these photographs were forcibly acquired, they were assimilated to a legal theory of photographic ontology which took the photographs purely as uncritical reflections of reality—or, more accurately, of the reality that the prosecution wished to have happened. The subject of Sekula's inquiry was "a truth-apparatus that cannot be adequately reduced to the optical model provided by the camera."[68] In the Matsunaga case, though, the state really did argue for the inherent truthfulness of the camera, and won. But the case showed that the police no longer needed to employ their own photographers: when they found a photograph and looked at it, it might as well have been their own.

Nakahira introduced one other example to demonstrate the symbiotic relationship between the state and the mass media: a nationally televised standoff at Asama Sansō, a

[68] Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," 16.

corporate villa on the outskirts of the mountain resort town of Karuizawa. In February 1972, police chased a militant left-wing organization across the mountains of Gunma and Nagano, roughly a few hours' drive from Tokyo. Some members of the group were arrested, while five members fled to Asama Sansō, where they took a hostage and holed themselves up against a protracted police siege. The façade of the building, shot from a distance with telephoto lenses, was shown on all major television networks for days on end.[69] Eventually the police stormed the building and captured everyone inside alive; during the fighting, two police officers died. The entirety of the final siege, which lasted over 10 hours, was broadcast continuously on television; a staggering 87% of television owners in Japan were tuned in.[70] Even though Richard Nixon's visit to China was happening at the same time, this major international news was "drowned out" in news coverage.[71]

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[69] Widely broadcast images of police officers standing in the cold eating Cup Noodles, a new product at the time, helped make them the iconic brand they are today.

[70] See Jayson Makoto Chun, *"A Nation of a Hundred Million Idiots"? A Social History of Japanese Television, 1953-1973* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 236. This no empty statistic: in my conversations with people who were living in Japan during this time, I have not met anyone who does not vividly recall watching this event on television.

[71] "Despite the slow movement of the real-life broadcasts, so powerful was this hostage drama that it drowned out other major news stories of the day, such as Nixon's visit to China, which helped to cement detente between China and the United States." Chun, 239.

Figure 38

The view of Asama Sansō as broadcast on Japanese television.

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Nakahira argued that this event showed how the mass media and the state operated in lockstep, even if there was no open agreement between them. He was deeply interested in the fixed-position shot of the building's façade, which was broadcast for days with new "updates" that the people inside had been there for twenty-four hours, a day, two days, and so on. Built on the side of a steep hill, the building extended down the slope. As time went on, Nakahira suggested that the image worked on the consciousness of the people watching it, to reaffirm the criminality of the people inside. Then,

> Just as the moral balance of right-minded citizens had crossed the horizon that 'it is natural to shoot criminals dead,' the final siege was carried out. The police forces certainly calculated the timing of this action extremely carefully. And in the end, by broadcasting images of it the television stations contributed to it. Whether this contribution was conscious or unconscious is almost entirely irrelevant to the present discussion. The point is that the police developed their 'Do-or-Die Hostage Rescue Strategy' on the assumed basis of the workings of mass media—television first and

> foremost, but newspapers, magazines and other outlets as well—while at the same time, mass media clearly extracted profit from the event (newspapers and magazines could expand readership, television could secure its high viewership).[72]

The image of the façade that was broadcasted into television screens across the nation could not tell its viewers anything about what was actually happening inside of the villa. But because it was a photographic image, it could become an empty symbol carrying the meaning of criminality—to the benefit of the media and the state alike.[73]

In retrospect, scholars and activists alike have come to view the Asama Sansō incident as a clearly demarcated end of a cycle of New Left politics in Japan—not because the militants were captured, but because of difficult facts that emerged in the weeks following the event. This organization, the United Red Army, was a newly-formed merger of two left-wing groups that were already on the run. The internal dynamics of this failed merger produced disastrous consequences: 14 of the 29 members were killed as part of internal purges.[74] In her analysis of how this event is remembered, Patricia Steinhoff shows that for active participants in Japan's New Left movements, Asama Sansō colored their perception of the movement that came before. At the same time, she argues that for generations to come who would know the event through its mass media representation, it retroactively conferred a negative value on all forms of political activism.[75] As a self-proclaimed "pessimist" who felt

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[72] Nakahira, "Kiroku to iu gen'ei: dokyumento kara monyumento e," 77.

[73] Nakahira, 77. "Much less than a document, they were bathed in the colors of meaning. Here, the individual images took on an extremely symbolic character." Four years later, Allan Sekula would write: "television is an openly *symbolist* enterprise, revolving entirely around the metaphoric poetry of the commodity." Sekula, "Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary (Notes on the Politics of Representation)," 59.

[74] For a detailed analysis of these group dynamics, see Patricia G. Steinhoff, "Hijackers, Bombers, and Bank Robbers: Managerial Style in the Japanese Red Army," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 48, no. 4 (1989): 724–40.

[75] "The criminality of the hostage taking at Asama Sansō and the appalling violence of the purge reflect backward to intensify the impact of the Tokyo University conflict as the senseless destruction of both social order and the personal aspirations of a generation of young people." Patricia G. Steinhoff, "Memories of New Left Protest," *Contemporary Japan* 25, no. 2 (August 1, 2013): 162.

a "loss of reality," Nakahira hardly escaped the ennui of the time. But even so, as a "militant pessimist," he was still looking for a reason to press on.

The Matsunaga case and the Asama Sansō siege demonstrated that mass media were not passive or depersonalized conduits, but rather active participants in the actual structure of everyday sensorial existence. As much as electronically distributed photographs might have played a role in the degradation or hollowing out of subjective experience—or, to follow Enzensberger, as much as they might connect and liberate people—they could now produce the all too concrete effect of incarcerating a person for a crime that they did not commit. Nakahira traced this all back to an uncritical belief the first sentence of the essay: "Photographs are documents."

"Or, We Could Quit": The End of the Photographer?

In July 1972, more than six months after the demonstration in Okinawa, the front page that led to Matsunaga's arrest ran across a two-page spread in *Bijutsu Techō*. The original newspaper, with its headlines focused on the death of the officer, ran on one side. On the other, the graphic designer Kimura Takehisa published a modified version of the same front page, using the same incriminating photographs, but with headlines that now blared: "Okinawa Reclaimed: Full-Throated Protest against the Pact," "Historic Liberation of Okinawa," "The Real Situation of the Plot Divulged."[76] The smallest text read: "Police Officer Dies." Kimura manipulated—or, perhaps more accurately, re-manipulated—the Matsunaga photographs in the mode of satire, a classic avant-garde strategy of working on

[76] Taki Kōji also worked on this feature, called "The Hidden Persuader." Nakahira and Kimura were close interlocutors; see, in particular, Nakahira Takuma and Kimura Tsunehisa, "Dare no tame no geijutsu ka," *Bijutsu Techō*, April 1974.

politics that shared by another key figure of of the day, the designer known as Mad Amano.[77] In the context of Nazi Germany, for example, John Heartfield is well known for his satirical photomontages, and Kimura's 50-page feature also satirized Nazi propaganda. And yet, Heartfield's work appeared in the workers' periodical *AIZ*, while Kimura's appeared in a specialized art magazine.[78] In Enzsensberger's terms, was Kimura not simply a "marginal special case"? Or was he using the magazine to work against the systematization of vision?

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[77] Mad Amano was eventually sued by the photographer Shirakawa Yoshikazu for copyright infringement. Nakahira wrote various articles about Mad Amano, and the case caused a major stir in the art world of Japan; *Bijutsu Techō*'s February 1973 special feature was devoted to the lawsuit. See, in particular, the roundtable discussion: Nakahira Takuma et al., "Eizō no teikoku," *Bijutsu Techō*, February 1973. A recent exhibition catalog on parody in the 1970s also addresses the Mad Amano case. See Kurokawa Noriyuki and Nariai Hajime, eds., *Parody and Intertextuality: Visual Culture in Japan Around the 1970s* (Tokyo: Tokyo Station Gallery, 2017).

[78] Sabine Kriebel has carefully discussed Heartfield's work for *AIZ*, claiming that "Heartfield's works 'critically intervene in a photographically reproduced reality' precisely because they mimic the conventions of the mainstream press." Sabine Kriebel, *Revolutionary Beauty: The Radical Photomontages of John Heartfield* (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2014), 12.

Figure 39

実験2

讀賣新聞

THE YOMIURI SHIMBUN

11月11日 木曜日

昭和46年(1971年)

沖縄奪還 満身の怒りで協定反対

あばかれる謀略の実態

沖縄の歴史的解放

警官死亡

讀賣新聞

THE YOMIURI SHIMBUN

11月11日 木曜日

昭和46年(1971年)

協定反対 沖縄・本土…デモ呼応

過激派がめった打ち

警官火ダルマ死ぬ

沖縄で初めて

A spread from Kimura Tsunehisa and Taki Kōji, “The Hidden Persuader,” published in the July 1972 issue of *Bijutsu Techō*.

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Just a few pages later in the same issue, Nakahira confronted such questions in “The Illusion Called Document,” pressuring the figure of the photographer in particular.[79] After describing the Asama Sansō broadcast, Nakahira shifted the weight of his analysis from the mass audience who received this image, to the more specific subject of photographers. He described the close connection between mass media and state power in terms of a crisis:

[79] Nakahira’s essay was not illustrated with any images.

"Naturally, what I have just narrated is an unavoidable condition for us photographers, who work only within mass media. To run away from it can only lead to pridefulness in one's innocence after putting up a useless banner of 'moral defeat.' If that is the case, what should we do? This is the actual question that has been thrust before us."[80] What should a photographer do, or what should the role of the photographer be?

Even before turning to examine conditions of media distribution, Nakahira had already started to pose such questions in his essays. For example, in a 1970 article called "The Thing That Decides the Value of Photographs," Nakahira answered the title's implicit question by saying this is a matter of "how much the photographer lived."[81] This highly existential answer emerged out of a discussion of the My Lai Massacre, in which American soldiers killed hundreds of unarmed Vietnamese civilians.[82] Nakahira discussed photographs of this event taken by Ronald Haeberle, an official army photographer; one of these photographs later ran on the front cover of *Asahi Journal*, a major news weekly to which Nakahira often contributed.[83] Nakahira wrote: "As a photographer myself, I have just one question to ask: shouldn't he have taken the liberty to refuse to take photographs, or even further to directly protest the massacre?"[84] Nakahira criticized Haeberle for thinking that his photographs alone would transmit something of the reality of the event, without first taking stock of his position as a photographer actually standing before an atrocity. The notion of

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[80] Nakahira, "Kiroku to iu gen'ei: dokyumento kara monyumento e," 78.

[81] Takuma Nakahira, "Shashin no kachi wo kimeru mono," in *Naze, shokubutsu zukan ka: Nakahira Takuma eizō ronshū* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 2007), 149.

[82] Sartre and Camus were widely read among all Japanese intellectuals at this time; Nakahira had their books in his personal collection. For more on Nakahira's connection to existentialism, see Charrier, "Taki Kōji, Provoke, and the Structuralist Turn in Japanese Image Theory, 1967–70."

[83] See the August 10, 1971 issue of *Asahi Journal*. Nakahira does not address the fact that the Art Workers' Coalition used one of Haeberle's photographs for their 1970 poster *Q. And babies? A. And babies.* See Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2011).

[84] Nakahira, "Shashin no kachi wo kimeru mono," 146.

refusal begins to appear here, but Nakahira ended up staking the question of how to be a photographer on the idea of "how much the photographer lived."

By the time of "The Illusion Called Document," Nakahira rejected that idea for not taking account of mass media—and now, he put himself on the chopping block, offering a scathing assessment of his activity as a photographer during his *Provoke* days. Nakahira examined *Provoke* in order to work through his own relationship to being a photographer. Although Nakahira had briefly reflected on *Provoke* in a 1970 newspaper article, he now made a sharper self-critique.[85] Once again suggesting that *Provoke*'s photography was co-opted by advertising and graphic design, Nakahira wrote that *Provoke* wound up as a "reverse proof" that "the impregnable and multi-layered structure of this age" could "take anything and water it down."[86] While Nakahira still believed in the magazine's fundamental criticism of photography in Japan, his remorseful tone extended to his reflections on the notion of photography as a document.[87] Nakahira thought he had sufficiently questioned this idea, but looking back on *Provoke*, he claimed that he still put too much faith in it. More precisely, he thought that his photographs actually represented a trace of "the life I lived," a term that crops up throughout the essay, an echo of his earlier language in the article on Haeberle.[88] The foundation on which he had written about the photographer was broken.

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[85] This newspaper article originally appeared in *Nihon Dokusho Shimbun*, March 30, 1970. It was republished in Nakahira Takuma, "Shashin wa kotoba wo chohatsu shieta ka," in *Mitsuzukeru hate ni hi ga...: hihyō shūsei 1965-1977* (Tokyo: Osiris, 2007), 105–9. Nakahira explicitly frames this section in terms of "self-criticism," which resonates with the idea of "self-negation," a prevalent mode of left discourse during Japan's 1968 protests. For more on "self-negation" in 1968 in Japan, see Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

[86] Nakahira, "Kiroku to iu gen'ei: dokyumento kara monyumento e," 80.

[87] Nakahira says that the loosely shared idea motivating *Provoke* was "to reject the photography that was dominant then, and is still dominant today: a photography which clings to meaning, which begins and ends with meaning, which understands photographs as illustrations of established language, reducible to meaning." Nakahira, 78. I discuss this critique of photography as linguistic illustration in Chapter 1.

[88] In Japanese, "the life I lived" is *ikita sei*.

Mass media clearly emerged as the factor that forced Nakahira to re-think being a photographer. He had shown his work in various photography magazines, and because he was working with the model of "the life I lived," he claimed that he naively "believed that some kind of communication, however uncertain, would emerge" between his photographs and the audiences that encountered them.[89] But Nakahira wrote that this uncritical belief blinded him to what happened to his photographs once they left his hand: "I lacked the real consciousness that any kind of personal expression through photography is impossible outside of the social base on which photographs rely, in other words mass media."[90] Nakahira intuited that once a photograph enters the mass media, it is divorced from the experience of the photographer. While a single photograph may be an indexical document in a vacuum, the actual conditions of media distribution mystify the relationship between image and reality. This turn again shows the influence of contemporary media theory on Nakahira's thinking. Nakahira directed this theoretical energy back towards himself, in order to question what it means to be a photographer. For Nakahira, this was precisely the "unavoidable condition for us photographers, who work only within the mass media": there was no question of how it might be possible to produce photographs that would not immediately become assimilated to this system.

The confluence of these factors, with the Matsunaga case hanging in the air, led Nakahira to suggest towards the end of the essay that it might be better to simply give up on being a photographer altogether. To produce images within this system, he concluded, was a futile act:

> The photographs that we photographers take and display are also not free from the mass media's manipulation. Even more, the many images that we produce day after day become the raw material for that manipulation, and

[89] Nakahira, "Kiroku to iu gen'ei: dokyumento kara monyumento e," 80.

[90] Nakahira, 80.

> thus become commodities. This is already obvious. Is it possible to escape from it? To continue to take and display photographs without asking oneself this question obviously means assisting the other side. Asking this question must become the minimum requirement for anyone who chooses to be a conscious photographer, or who undertakes to be an artist working with images. Day after day, through the manipulation of the mass media the photographs that we take are incorporated as illusions, re-manufactured products daubed with reality. *Or, we could quit being photographers, quit being image producers.* This too is a difficult way of living, or really a way of dying. For example, as the deeply political case of the reporting around the Okinawa protest shows, if it is not even possible to use effort and thought to protect one's own film, the act of photographing is already a form of assisting power. Such a situation is starting to emerge clearly. To power, the uncommitted amateur photographers and college photo club members who flock to protests form a private Evidence Photo Corps.[91] (Emphasis mine)

The Matsunaga case is everywhere in this paragraph: in the general invocation of mass media, in the specific mention of the Yoshioka incident, and especially in reference to the "private Evidence Photo Corps"—the idea that state surveillance was unconsciously farmed out to photographers points directly to Hirano. Enzensberger's language of manipulation also appears throughout here. Nakahira saw mass media deeply entwined with everyday life, all the way through to sensory experience. He asked himself whether it was "possible to escape" from the systematization of vision, but its weight fell on the photographer, who could only supply it with "raw material." Now, he had arrived at the position that it might be time to give up on being a photographer entirely.

Nakahira's proposal that photographers might "quit being photographers" resonates deeply with Ariella Azoulay's recent theoretical inquiry into the photographer, which is perhaps the most sustained body of contemporary critical thinking on the topic. In particular, she has suggested the idea of photographers "unlearning the position of the photographer as expert," which involves voluntarily giving up power, and working in more explicit collaboration with their subjects.[92] Pointing to the work of Susan Meiselas in particular, Azoulay writes that "one of the striking signs of this process of unlearning in Meiselas's

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[91] Nakahira, 85–86.

[92] Azoulay, "Unlearning the Position of the Photographer as Expert."

photographic work occurs in the decision not to take more photographs immediately, and even actively to refrain from taking photographs."[93] Here, Nakahira and Azoulay are quite closely aligned: in the essay on Haeberle's photographs of the My Lai Massacre, Nakahira questioned why he did not "refuse to take photographs"—if not to "directly protest" the massacre altogether. For both critics, the question of refusal emerges from a reflection on the situation of photojournalism.

Even so, Nakahira and Azoulay arrive at the idea of refusal from somewhat distinct theoretical positions. The photographer is one important factor in what Azoulay has compellingly theorized as the "photographic situation," a term through which she signals the inherent relationality of photography.[94] That the photographer might quit photographing offers up the possibility of historical repair.[95] Still, Azoulay's theoretical project is driven by the search for "a new ontological-political understanding of photography," and for Nakahira, this focus on ontology held little appeal.[96] After all, his central point was that any definition of photography, no matter how correct, was powerless before the systematization of vision. Even if photographs really are documents—and Nakahira can never bring himself to fully reject this thesis—the relative truth of this statement is wholly irrelevant in the face of the material conditions of their circulation, which will immediately and conclusively mystify them.[97] When Nakahira claimed that "the act of photographing is already a form of assisting

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[93] Azoulay, 104.

[94] Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*, 95.

[95] In Azoulay's most recent book, *Potential History*, she extends the principle of refusal, asking her readers to "imagine photographers going on strike and using differently the privileges that were historically given to them when they were recognized as the sole signatories of photographs." Azoulay, *Potential History*, 284.

[96] Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*, 21. For a thoughtful and incisive response to Azoulay's ontological thinking, see Patricia Hayes, "The Uneven Citizenry of Photography: Reading the 'Political Ontology' of Photography from Southern Africa," *Cultural Critique* 89 (2015): 173–93.

[97] On this point, Nakahira anticipated a claim made by Afrapix, the anti-Apartheid group of South African photographers, who wrote in one of their statements: "The camera doesn't lie. This is a myth

power," he was not speaking in abstract terms, but responding to the media conditions in front of him.

Nakahira parted ways even further with Azoulay when he started to suggest that some way out of the problem might lie in a corporeal register. At root, Nakahira diagnosed the question of media in terms of its effect on bodies.[98] In examining his *Provoke* work, the language of phenomenology started to enter into his vocabulary: "Actually, within the claim that each individual photograph is a trace of the life I lived lies the assumption that seeing is all there is to experience, or at least the main element of experience. But it is obvious that our lived experience is something much more total, or rather bodily. It would be far more correct to say that for the photographer, one of their photographs is self-estrangement given form."[99] Nakahira appears to suggest that bodily sensation exceeds the "assumption that seeing is all there is to experience." But what kind of photographer would give up seeing? How would it be possible for a photographer to incorporate bodily experience into their work? Is this simply a contradiction, or was Nakahira starting to arrive at some new mode of being a photographer? To call the relation between photographer and photograph "self-estrangement given form" points to the terms on which Nakahira would consider being a photographer in the world in the wake of this essay. The relation between body and world would come to the

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about photography in South Africa in the Eighties that we will not swallow. In our country the camera lies all the time—on our TV screens, in our newspapers and on our billboards that proliferate our townships." Quoted in Leslie Meredith Wilson, "Past Black and White: The Color of Photography in South Africa, 1994-2004" (Ph.D. diss, The University of Chicago, 2017), 24.

[98] At the end of the essay Nakahira discusses *A Dying Colonialism*, in which Frantz Fanon recounts the way that radio shifted from a media of the colonizer's voice to an independent media (the Voice of Fighting Algeria) produced through struggle. There are significant differences in the English and Japanese translation of the text; the Japanese translation emphasizes bodily experience. For example, in Fanon's discussion of radio—and which also Enzensberger cited in his "Constituents" essay—what is rendered in English as "a means in the hands of the occupier by which to maintain his strangle hold on the nation" appears in Japanese as "a means by which the occupier could permeate all the way through the flesh of the people." For English translation see Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, trans. Haakon Chevalier (New York: Grove Press, Inc, 1967), 92. Nakahira cites Fanon's discussion of radio in Nakahira, "Kiroku to iu gen'ei: dokyumento kara monyumento e," 86.

[99] Nakahira, "Kiroku to iu gen'ei: dokyumento kara monyumento e," 78–79.

fore—now, without any assumption that the photographer occupied a stable or special place there.

Conclusion: Another Index

After "The Illusion Called Document," Nakahira did stop showing photographs for a time. One of his first photographs to appear after this hiatus was published in the June 1974 issue of *Bijutsu Techō*, as part of a feature on a group exhibition called "Photography about Photography," held at Shimizu Gallery in Tokyo.[100] Nakahira's photograph, *Blue Sky*, shows a cloudless, blank expanse. The photograph is not in black-and-white, but color: it shows a nearly even tone of blue from edge to edge. The film leaders are exposed, showing that the image has not been cropped, and also recalling *Language* [Figure 31], the image of a film strip that he had published in 1971.[101] The negative is cut somewhat haphazardly at its left edge, allowing the smallest slice of the previous photograph to come through. The caption reads: "Bora Coast, Miyako Island 1974.3.27 10:43 A.M." The work offers little more than a blank photograph, and a caption asserting that the photographer was present at a specific date and place.

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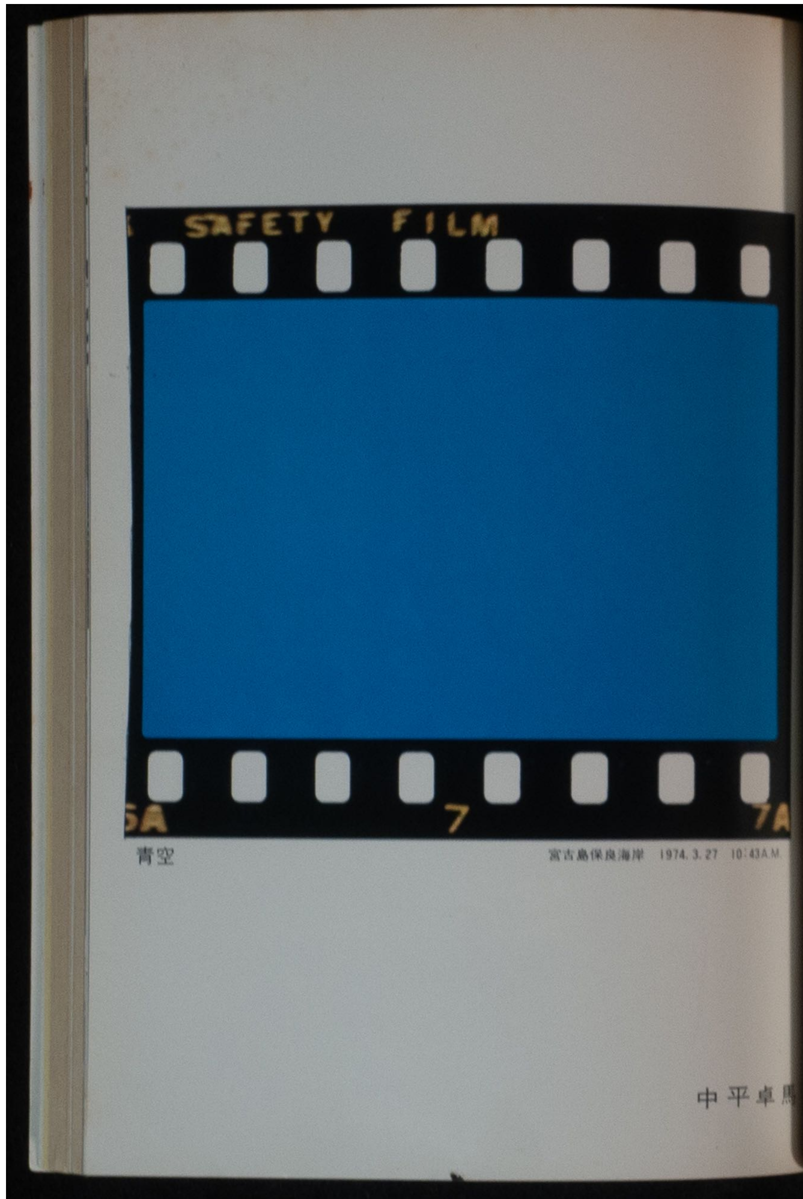
[100] Other photographers to participate in this exhibition included Araki Nobuyoshi, Kishin Shinoyama, Fukase Masahisa and Kimura Ihei.

[101] The exposed leaders of this color photograph echo the way that Ronald Haeberle's photographs of the My Lai Massacre were printed on the cover of *Asahi Journal*, which I discuss in the previous section.

Figure 40



Nakahira Takuma, *Blue Sky*, published in the June 1974 issue of *Bijutsu Techō*.

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In its stark form, *Blue Sky* might appear to turn toward the sort of conceptual art practices that Rosalind Krauss has claimed offer up "a message that translates into the

statement 'I am here.'"[102] Krauss' description matches up almost exactly with the work of On Kawara, who stamped postcards with a date, time, and the message "I got up." Just around the time that Nakahira wrote "The Illusion Called Document," he was also active in the contemporary art world, and came into close contact with conceptual artists—including Kawara—working in an indexical mode. In the next chapter, I explore this relationship in close detail, focusing on the first time Nakahira showed his work in an exhibition, in Paris in late 1971. However, *Blue Sky* does not exactly offer the viewer the same level of factual registration as conceptual art: the photograph itself is literally blank.

If a Kawara postcard tells its recipient "I got up," what does this photograph say? If anything, the literal emptiness of the photograph parodies its caption. In other words, how could this photograph actually verify or guarantee that language? Nakahira's old *Provoke* companion Taki Kōji had invited Nakahira to participate in the exhibition, and he contributed a text to the issue of *Bijutsu Techō.* There, Taki cast some doubt on whether this photograph was even taken on Miyako: he claimed that the photograph actually showed the sky over Tokyo, and that this showed that Nakahira had been working on the question of how photographs lie.[103] This would certainly align with the central argument of "The Illusion Called Document." If Nakahira had staked *Blue Sky* on the truthfulness of his presence—in other words, on the value of the photograph as a document—then it might be worth following up on Taki's doubt, and establishing whether he was actually on Miyako Island at 10:43 A.M. on March 27, 1974.

But there were bigger questions at stake here, even within the caption itself: Miyako is an Okinawan island. By 1974, photographers from so-called "mainland Japan" were

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[102] Krauss, "Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America. Part 2," 59.

[103] Taki Kōji, "Kansei no myakuraku — shashin no kōzō to sono imi ni tsuite," *Bijutsu Techō*, June 1974, 127.

traveling frequently to Okinawa to take pastoral color photographs, extolling the virtues of sun and sea in what Shimizu Minoru has called the "aesthetic version of colonialism."[104] If *Blue Sky* was taken in Okinawa, it refuses to depict the colonized landscape in any recognizable fashion. Nakahira did travel to Okinawa in 1974—but not for the purpose of taking photographs. Instead, he was there to agitate at the trial of Matsunaga Yū.[105]

With "The Illusion Called Document," Nakahira developed a pessimistic thought in in contrast to Enzensberger's more utopian ideas about electronic media. But this negativity should not be taken as a sign of defeat that lines up neatly with the existing scholarly narratives of 1970s malaise.[106] The suggestion to quit being a photographer did not mean abandoning this subject position altogether. Instead, it meant reimagining the photographer in a different way. Nakahira went to Okinawa to agitate for Matsunaga as a photographer, bringing his professional and theoretical knowledge to bear on this situation. In an article he wrote for the weekly magazine *Asahi Journal* in 1974, Nakahira used the term "fetishism of the image,"[107] a neat condensation of "The Illusion Called Document." This exact term then appeared in a legal brief that Matsunaga's defense team used to successfully overturn his conviction, in 1976.[108] Perhaps this was another way to be a photographer in the world, even without taking photographs. Given the historically specific context in which *Blue Sky* was taken, the uncoded message here does not track the cool indexicality of Kawara's "I got up,"

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[104] Minoru Shimizu, "'Okinawa' to 'Shōzō'—Ishikawa Ryūichi No 'Okinawan Portraits 2010-2012,'" ART iT, accessed April 10, 2017, http://www.art-it.asia/u/admin_ed_contri7_j/Ncd02pWs8baxO346PZhF/. See also Tada, *Okinawa imēji no tanjō*.

[105] For a discussion of Nakahira's relationship to Okinawa, and his activity around the Matsunaga trial, see Chapter 5.

[106] See Introduction.

[107] Nakahira, "Kyakkansei toiu ashiki gensō: Matsunaga Yū jiken o kangaeru."

[108] Ishida Shōzaburo, one of Matsunaga's lawyers, gave me a copy of this document in private conversation, Jan 24 2020.

or Krauss' "I am here." For the militant pessimist, the message would have to be a deeply negative yet charged phrase: something more like "I have not quit yet."

Chapter 3

The Photographer in Flux: *Circulation*

> Water plays an essential part in the making of photographs, but it has to be controlled exactly and cannot be permitted to spill over the spaces and moments mapped out for it in the process, or the picture is ruined. You certainly don't want any water in your camera, for example!
>
> Jeff Wall, "Photography and Liquid Intelligence"[1]

Introduction: Photography and Liquid

Four photographs that Nakahira took shortly after *Provoke* folded show the flow of water along a sidewalk. Some pedestrians, their torsos cut off by the top of the frame, loiter in the middle distance. Nothing much appears to happen across the sequence: the pedestrians walk off, leaving behind a sidewalk that is empty save for the streams of water. Nakahira took these photographs as part of *Circulation: Date, Place, Event*, a work that he exhibited at the Seventh Paris Biennial in 1971. In his first public exhibition, Nakahira showed some of his work as sequences, even though they offered little narrative. Photographs showing liquid appeared throughout Nakahira's exhibition. In this sequence, the composition of all four photographs is dominated by a complex flow of water across the sidewalk. Large swathes of liquid gather towards the right, and as they run to the left, directly across the frame, they divide into smaller streams. At one point the water splits into three elegant rivulets of water, a drip painting on the concrete; some thicker bands of water resemble the strokes of a

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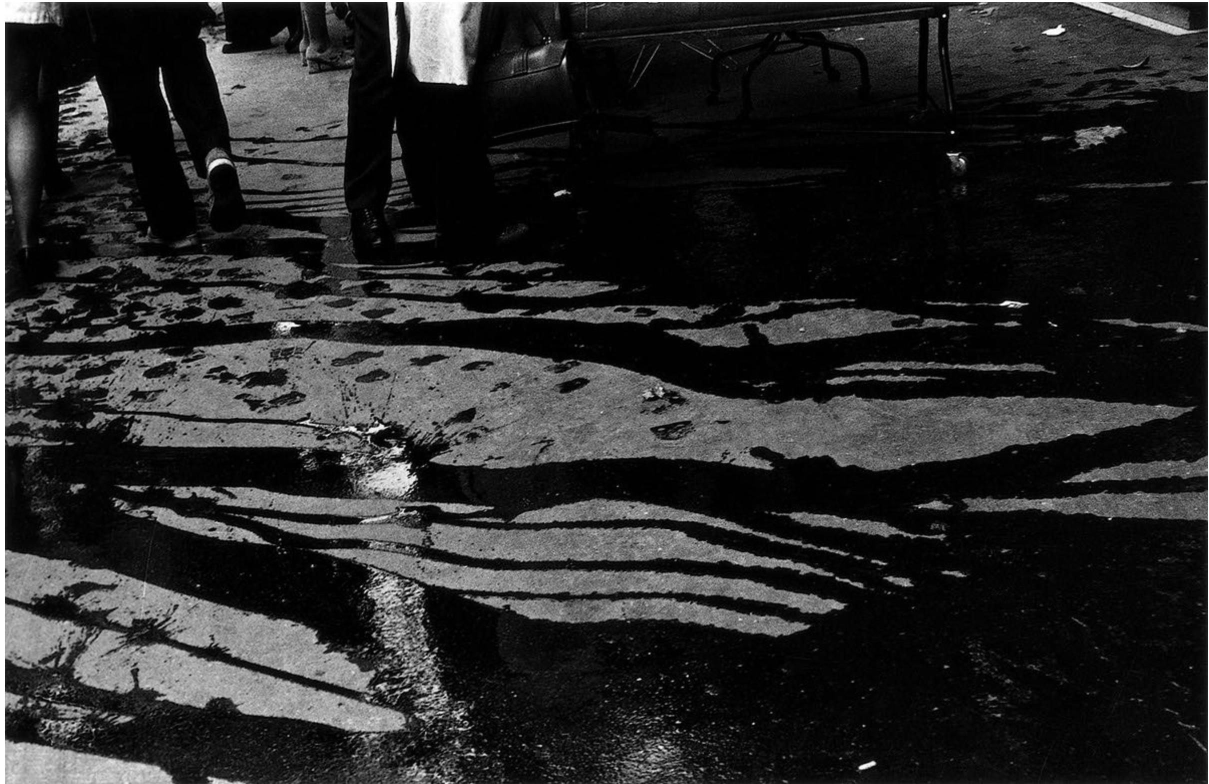
[1] Jeff Wall, "Photography and Liquid Intelligence," in *Jeff Wall: The Complete Edition* (London: Phaidon, 2009), 218.

calligraphy brush.[2] In the first and last photographs, especially, the water reflects light from above, its sheen highlighting the sometimes smooth, sometimes pockmarked texture of the pavement beneath. In this way, the water also reveals something about the underlying structure of the ground beneath it, whose contours influence the direction it flows. The very title of this installation, *Circulation*, suggests a fluid motion.

Figures 41, 42, 43 and 44

[2] Nakahira's father was a calligraphy artist of some note. See Introduction.



All Nakahira Takuma, from *Circulation*, 1971. 2012 modern print by Kanemura Osamu.

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In so many different ways, *Circulation* dealt with flow, a term that designates a motion like that of a liquid moving over, or through, space.[3] Nakahira's photographs sometimes showed flowing water, and the installation itself was analogous to a flow: its boundaries shifted, as Nakahira took, printed, and added more photographs to it throughout the exhibition period. Photographs spilled off of the wall, and oozed along the floor. Liquid appeared not just in, but *on* the prints that Nakahira exhibited. Nakahira developed his film

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[3] Without making it the center of their analysis, both Franz Prichard and Matthew Witkovsky use the term "flow" with respect to *Circulation*. See Franz Prichard, "On For a Language to Come, Circulation, and Overflow: Takuma Nakahira and the Horizons of Radical Media Criticism in the Early 1970s," in *For a New World to Come: Experiments in Japanese Art and Photography, 1968-1979*, ed. Yasufumi Nakamori (Houston: The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 2015), 84–87; Prichard, *Residual Futures: The Urban Ecologies of Literary and Visual Media of 1960s and 1970s Japan*, 127; Matthew Witkovsky, "Nakahira's Circulation," *Aperture*, Summer 2015.

and made prints in a makeshift darkroom in Paris; sometimes, not having enough time to dry his photographs after a long night of printing and developing, he pinned them up while they were still dripping wet.[4] In this sense, the exhibition was thoroughly invested in fluidity.

Figure 45

Nakahira Takuma, from *Circulation*, 1971. 2012 modern print by Kanemura Osamu.

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Still, *Circulation* also dealt with fixity. Another of Nakahira's photographs from *Circulation* registers a group of postcards covered in marks. Postage stamps have been affixed to each card, and these in turn have been cancelled by a rubber stamp. The words

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[4] Nakahira describes the wet condition of his prints in an essay that he wrote shortly after the exhibition concluded. See Nakahira Takuma, "Shashin, ichi nichi kagiri no akuchuariti," *Asahi Camera*, February 1972.

“AIR MAIL,” too, are stamped out. Every other mark—the address, the sender, the date, the message—has been mechanically registered. A fluorescent light reflecting off of glass pierces the photograph at the left. The view is not particularly clear; the photograph is taken at an angle oblique to the plane of the glass, and it is somewhat blurry, such that the street address of the sender is hardly legible. At the very least, the sender’s name (“ON KAWARA”) and the message (“I GOT UP AT 3.45 P.M.”) are clear.

Figure 46

Nakahira Takuma, from *Circulation*, 1971. 2012 modern print by Kanemura Osamu.

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Between the flow of water on the sidewalk and Kawara’s cool work, Nakahira’s photographs for *Circulation* embody the tension between what might be called the “wet” and “dry” sides of photography, to slightly twist Jeff Wall’s terms. Wall characterizes the “dry”

aspect of photography as separate from the less easily controlled "'liquid intelligence' of nature."[5] He even says that the precise motion of the camera shutter is "the concrete opposite kind of movement from, for example, the flow of a liquid."[6] Against this flow, Wall describes the "dry" aspect of photography in terms of the "optics and mechanics" of the medium, and associates it with a "technological intelligence."[7] The dry side of photography, then, might be allied to the idea of indexicality—precisely the mode in which Kawara was producing his work.

The philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce distinguishes the index—a sign caused directly by a physical phenomenon—from the icon, a sign that is not dependent on any actually existing thing.[8] An indexical representation can be a shadow caused by the object that casts it, the direction of a weathervane blown by the wind, or a footprint, perhaps left by a pedestrian who has stepped in a flow of water and tracked it across pavement. Around 1970, conceptual artists were drawn to the index as a way to remove the hand of the artist from the scene of artistic production. In an influential essay, Rosalind Krauss suggested that the index was the crucial operation of art of the 1970s. For Krauss, this indexical model offers up "a message that translates into the statement 'I am here.'"[9] Bodily presence was reduced to factual statement.

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[5] Wall, "Photography and Liquid Intelligence."

[6] Wall.

[7] Wall.

[8] Peirce writes: "An Index is a sign which refers to the Object that it denotes by virtue of being really affected by that Object." See Charles Sanders Peirce, "A Syllabus of Certain Topics of Logic," in *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings. Vol. 2*, ed. The Peirce Edition Project (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1998), 291–92.

[9] Krauss, "Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America. Part 2," 59.

The relationship of facts to photographs during this time is now well known to art history.[10] Wall himself has written on this moment in which conceptual artists used photography, in order to argue forcefully against the validity of this work.[11] In his own practice as a photographer, Wall has opposed the index with a latter-day form of pictorialism—which, because of his meticulous control, remains firmly on the "dry" side of photography. Nakahira is aligned with Wall insofar as he is also skeptical of photography's claim to indexicality. After all, "The Illusion Called Document" was nothing if not an extended meditation on the ill effects of an uncritical belief in the index. But Nakahira was not interested in Wall's project of recuperating an artistic subjectivity, and his work opens up a different path through the relationship of conceptual art and photography. The motion of flow goes against the fixity of the index, and in this way *Circulation* complicates the ideal of a cool—or dry—idea of indexicality.

This chapter focuses on *Circulation* to develop the idea of the photographer as a body moving through the world—flowing through it, to be more precise.[12] Nakahira's photographs of Kawara's *I Got Up* and water on pavement track two different modes of representing the relationship between body and world: the facticity of an indexical trace, and the fluidity of a moving body. Kawara's work is "dry," insofar as it proposes a clean and practically scientific relationship between the artist and the world, mediated through a "technological

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[10] On this point, see Liz Kotz, *Words to Be Looked at: Language in 1960s Art* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2007); Joshua Shannon, *The Recording Machine: Art and Fact during the Cold War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017).

[11] See Jeff Wall, "'Marks of Indifference': Aspects of Photography in, or as, Conceptual Art," in *The Last Picture Show: Artists Using Photography, 1960-1982*, by Douglas Fogle (Minneapolis, Minn.: Walker Art Center, 2003), 32–44. I discuss this essay later in this chapter.

[12] Writing about *Circulation*, Mitsuda Yuri suggests that Nakahira and other Japanese artists working at this time "used photography as a medium to confront their bodies in 'living time.'" Yuri Mitsuda, "Intersections of Art and Photography in 1970s Japan: 'Thinking from Dates and Places,'" in *For a New World to Come: Experiments in Japanese Art and Photography, 1968-1979*, ed. Yasufumi Nakamori, 2015, 30.

intelligence." Against this idea, Nakahira described his own activity in liquid terms. In an essay published a few months before the exhibition, Nakahira had linked the idea of flow to the body, offering a hopeful redefinition of a journalist as "an endlessly floating person who verifies, a permanent revolutionary transformed into a moving body itself."[13] The act of "verification" recalls photography's indexicality, but there is no longer any intention from the photographer towards the world, carried along as they are. The rather long title of this essay, "The Floating of an Endlessly Moving Body: Geography Towards a Theory of Emergence—Thinking From Date and Place," anticipated the title of his Paris exhibition, *Circulation: Date, Place, Event*.[14] In a conversation with Moriyama Daidō a few months before he left for Paris, he said of his participation in the Biennale: "I used the word 'floating' before, so actually, I will just float along."[15] What would it mean to set a photographing body adrift?

This chapter attempts to answer this question by introducing *Circulation*, paying special attention to the various ways that flow appeared in this work. Nakahira's photographic investigation into the urban environment of Paris led him towards a range of flows, not just liquids on pavement but also the movement of bodies through space, and information through the channels of electronic media. Then, I discuss "Between Man and Matter," an important exhibit of conceptual art in Tokyo that included figures like Kawara, Sol LeWitt and Hans Haacke. Nakahira did not show his work in this exhibition, but his photographs appeared on the cover of the exhibition's catalog and official poster, both of

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[13] Nakahira Takuma, "Bigaku no hōkai," in *Naze, shokubutsu zukan ka: Nakahira Takuma eizō ronshū* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 2007), 184. In Japanese, "floating" is *rurō*. The two Chinese characters that make up this word, 流浪, each strongly suggest water and fluidity; one literally means "flow."

[14] This essay was later re-titled "Thinking From Date and Place: Journalism, Zenkyōtō, Expression." For original publication information, see Nakahira, *Nakahira Takuma: Degree Zero—Yokohama*, 162.

[15] This long conversation, from August 1971, appeared in Moriyama's 1972 book *Farewell Photography*. See Moriyama and Nakahira, "Hachigatsu futsuka yama no ue hoteru — Taidan: Nakahira Takuma + Moriyama Daidō."

which he designed. Although some of the work in this exhibition was of a drily indexical sort, Hans Haacke displayed a work, also called *Circulation*, that presented a literal flow of water. The final section accounts for Nakahira's *Circulation* within the seemingly contradictory poles of dry conceptual art and the flows that he sought out in Paris, suggesting that he took the photographer as moving, flowing body.

Circulation and Flow

In one of Nakahira Takuma's photographs of his exhibition, *Circulation: Date, Place, Event*, photographs spill out, over and through the space of the 1971 Paris Biennial. They have been affixed to Nakahira's assigned wall panel, laid out on the floor, and also cover two sides of a reception desk that juts out into the foreground of the image. To the left, in the background, the work of another artist in the Biennial sits neatly on the wall. Nakahira's space is much wilder; there is just a mass, or a mess, of prints. In another shot, taken from a position off to the side, the gaze of the camera rakes across the main panels of his exhibition. This image hardly shows any photographs on the panel clearly. Its vertical orientation encloses four long rows of prints laid out on the floor of the exhibition space. There are easily 150 photographs here, in more or less neat rows. On the wall, though, they curl with an unruliness that extends to the formal language of this photograph itself—the film was developed in such a haphazard way that another piece of film partially obscures its surface.

Figures 47 and 48

Both Nakahira Takuma, from *Circulation*, 1971. 2012 modern print by Kanemura Osamu.

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Nakahira was invited to participate in the Biennale by his former *Provoke* colleague Okada Takahiko, the commissioner for Japan's contingent of artists. Although the Biennale ran from September 24 to November 1, *Circulation* started late (October 10) and came down early (October 30). Nakahira's installation was delayed because it took him some time to find a local darkroom. This was a requirement for the work because *Circulation* was not a static group of images that Nakahira brought from Japan, but rather a dynamic agglomeration of photographs produced on site that grew and shifted over time. Each day, Nakahira took photographs, developed and printed them in the evening, and hung them up the next morning at his assigned space. All artists were assigned a series of panels hung from the ceiling by a wire.[16] At first, Nakahira installed his work on these panels. But as his own photographs show, his installation gradually took over more and more space around him, eventually including the nearby reception desk in the foreground of Figure 47. With its dynamic and expanding form, the installation itself took on the characteristic of a flowing liquid, perhaps an extremely viscous one, adapting its shape to the form of its container. If a reception desk happened to be nearby, then it, too, would be slowly taken over by photographs. Nakahira's own photographs of *Circulation* are one of the only sources of its own documentation, showing how its contours shifted over time.[17] His installation expanded until the general commissioner of the Biennale removed some of his work, when it was deemed to encroach

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[16] Many exhibiting artists were unhappy with the display conditions, and in fact with the venue in general. Due to construction at the Biennale's previous location, the Paris Museum of Modern Art, the 1971 edition was held at the Parc Floral de Paris, inside the far less central Bois de Vincennes. The overly spacious hall was not well equipped to display works of art; Okada detailed these and other organizational issues in a withering article for *Bijutsu Techō*. See Okada Takahiko, "Atarashī busshitsukan no taidō o kanjita," *Bijutsu Techō*, December 1971.

[17] A 2017 reproduction of *Circulation* produced at the Art Institute of Chicago used Nakahira's own photographs to recreate the installation in extremely accurate detail, exactly as it appeared on October 18, 1971. This meticulously archaeological approach did not account for the fact that *Circulation*'s form shifted over time.

on other space.[18] Thoroughly aggrieved, Nakahira pinned a strident letter to the commissioner on his panel and took the rest of his work down in protest.

Circulation marked Nakahira's first time to exhibit his photographs in a public space; before his trip to Paris, he had only circulated his work through printed media, whether in *Provoke* or major photography magazines. This form presented a significantly different challenge. Instead of working with a sequence of pages and the layout within them, the installation form brought questions of time and space to the fore. In shifting from the printed page to three-dimensional space, Nakahira did not exactly change his medium, insofar as he was making photographs with a camera. However, the work appeared in the form of photographic prints, rather than magazine pages. Nakahira's prints were hastily produced, so they did not exactly conform to the conventional aesthetic standards of art photography. Instead, it was as if he put his own body through a physical test, moving through the city, photographing, developing, printing and installing in one fluid motion.

Although its constantly shifting form makes it difficult to grasp the exhibition as a coherent whole, the photographs generally break down into a few distinct categories. In the first place, there are snapshot photographs, taken on the streets of Paris, which continue to mine the urban subject matter that Nakahira had explored during *Provoke*. The work also includes various photographs that Nakahira took inside and around the exhibition venue itself. These photographs include views of Nakahira's own installation (as in Figures 45 and 48), and photographs of other artists' work.[19] The other major group is of the numerous

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[18] Nakahira recounts these facts in his essay "The Exhaustion of Contemporary Art," first published in 1971. See Nakahira Takuma, "Gendai bijutsu no hihei: dai nanakai Pari biennāre ni sankashite," in *Naze, shokubutsu zukan ka: Nakahira Takuma eizō ronshū* (Tokyo: Shobunsha, 1973), 80–95. Franz Prichard has translated into English; see Takuma Nakahira, "The Exhaustion of Contemporary Art: My Participation in the Seventh Paris Biennale," in *Circulation: Date, Place, Events*, trans. Franz K. Prichard (Tokyo: Osiris, 2012), 295–305.

[19] On Kawara's work was not shown in the Seventh Paris Biennale; Nakahira would have seen this exhibit elsewhere.

photographs that Nakahira took of mass-reproduced images and text. Nakahira photographed billboards, television screens and Telex news reports. Signage and television had appeared in his photographs before; see his earlier photograph of the poster for *Alphaville*, or of a sign reading “Empire.” [Figures 7 and 16] However, these earlier photographs isolated those words within a larger frame, treating them as a visual element. In *Circulation*, Nakahira moved closer to the words and images that moved through mass media, as if to quote them, without much thought given to how they would appear photographically.

In terms of its photographic technique, *Circulation* marks a significant departure from Nakahira’s *Provoke*-era photography. The photographs that Nakahira took for this installation evince a direct clarity that was largely absent in his prior work. So many of these photographs clearly communicate their subject; for example, a photograph of a dog next to a subway grate is so centrally framed as to almost parody the vagueness of *Provoke* photography. This clarity goes beyond the composition of the photograph. Leaving behind *Provoke*’s famed blur, both the foreground and background here are in focus. That Nakahira took this photograph using natural light is itself an almost entirely novel element. With the exception of photographs of the subway, nearly all of *Circulation* was shot outside, under daylight. Before this, much of Nakahira’s work had almost exclusively used streetlights, car headlights or other kinds of nocturnal urban illumination—the kind of photography that appeared throughout *Alphaville*. The photographs may also have been printed with less contrast, although this is difficult to verify.[20]

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[20] The figures I reproduce here are digital images of modern prints made by the photographer Kanemura Osamu for publication in the 2012 book version of *Circulation*. See Nakahira, *Takuma Nakahira - Circulation*. Nakahira reproduced some of his Paris photographs for an article in the magazine *Design*, and these images did have a fairly high contrast. But these are printed photographs, not the original prints that Nakahira made in Paris. See Nakahira Takuma, “Sākyurēshon — Nakahira Takuma,” *Design*, January 1972.

Figure 49

Nakahira Takuma, from *Circulation*, 1971. 2012 modern print by Kanemura Osamu.

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Nakahira was also turning towards a new sense of the photographer as a body in the world. Rather than a romantic model of eros, in a quite literal sense he flowed through Paris, approximating the "floating" that he had described in his conversation with Moriyama. One photograph of a subway map represents the city as a massive network, and it is as if Nakahira sent himself moving through this body-like system of veins and tubes. Nakahira took a great number of photographs inside of the Parisian subway system, a space through which people flow. His photographs in that space often document the names of stations: placards for Reamur Sébastopol, Cité, Saint-Michel, Strasbourg Saint Denis, and Odeon all appear. When he displayed some of these images in the installation, he marked the specific times that his journey began and ended. The photographs trace Nakahira's movement as a body flowing through a specific time and space.

Figures 50, 51 and 52

All Nakahira Takuma, from *Circulation*, 1971. 2012 modern print by Kanemura Osamu.

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Other photographs in *Circulation* pointed to various kinds of flows in Paris. A photograph of a Honda motorcycle, for example, connotes traffic, transport, and the flow of commodities across the ocean. Another image shows water pouring out of a gutter into a larger stream, its form slightly blurred as it flows out. In another of Nakahira's photographs, a diagonal black bar rends the top half of the image, and burn marks pierce its upper left corner, leaving blank holes. Just below them, a series of scratches appear on the surface of the negative, a material trace of some incident that took place during the various acts of exposing, developing and printing. A figure rises through this thicket of visual interruptions. He is framed neatly by the diagonal bar, only for a mass of thick grain to obscure his features.

A few words narrowly escape the burn marks, and the crop of this image at its left edge: "…rection de la CHAPELLE."

If any photograph from *Circulation* approximates the form of Nakahira's *Provoke* work—black-and-white photographs with exaggerated effects of blur and grain—it is this one. The image of the man in the subway appears within a larger black border, rounded at its edges. This is a photograph of a television set, and the black bar sweeping across the screen demarcates one frame of the transmission from the next. A trademark of *Provoke* photography, the grain here is no longer the result of Nakahira's own photographic intervention, but a readymade artifact of the media that broadcast this image. "Circulation" dealt with a range of flows, some of which the photograph of the television arrests: the image traveling to meet the photographer, the man moving through the subway station, one television frame wiping to the next. Well aside from the image of the man on the television screen, print and visual media appear throughout the photographs of *Circulation*.

Figures 53, 54 and 55

All Nakahira Takuma, from *Circulation*, 1971. 2012 modern print by Kanemura Osamu.

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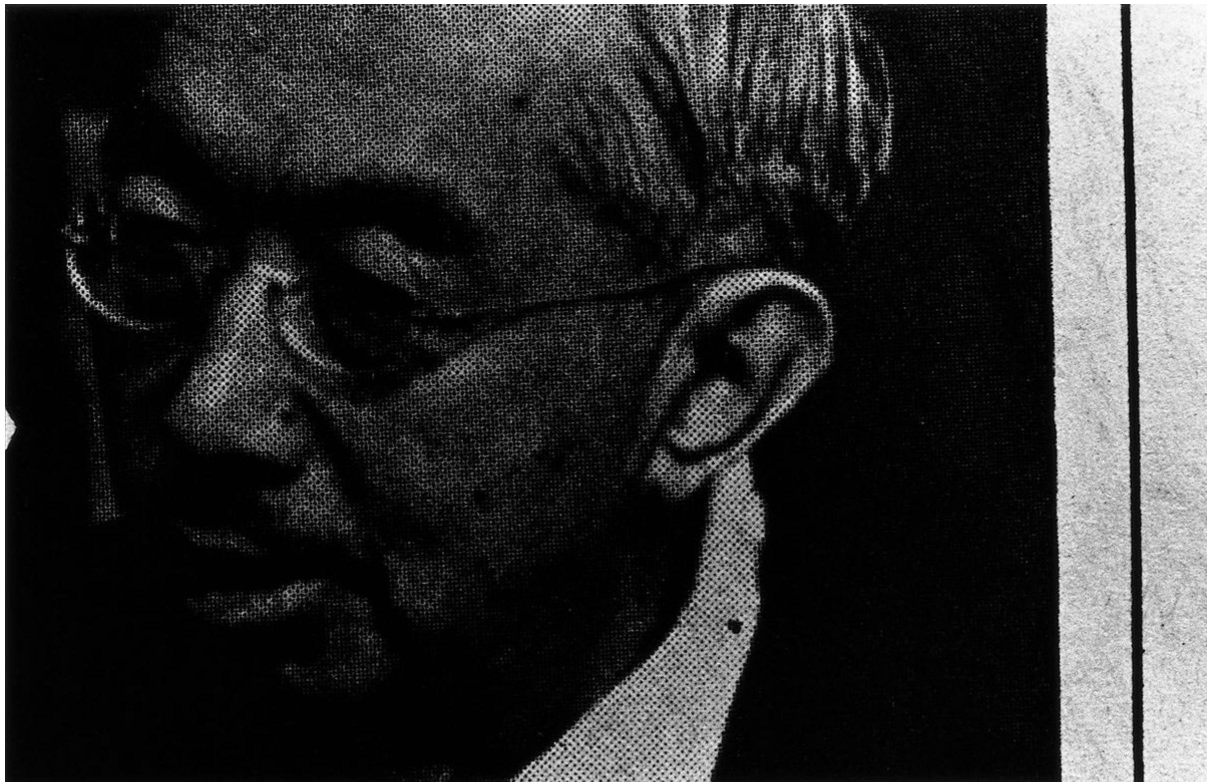
In Chapter 2, I showed how Nakahira was engaged in the contemporary discourse of media theory. Hans Magnus Enzensberger's article "Constituents of a Theory of the Media" was published in Japanese just a few weeks before Nakahira left for Paris; regardless of whether he read this essay or not, images and text that flowed through the mass media consistently appear in his photographs from *Circulation*.[21] Other photographic images, whether broadcast through television, printed on newspapers, or pasted up as billboards, appear throughout the work. In the case of a newspaper photograph showing Japan's emperor, Hirohito, the Moiré pattern is visible, pointing to the mediated quality of this image.

[21] Among the ephemera that appear in Nakahira's personal papers, there is a note with Enzensberger's home address in Berlin. The note itself is undated, but it is grouped together with other papers from the 1971 Paris Biennale.

At the time, Hirohito was on a tour across various European countries, and he visited Paris on October 10, the day that Nakahira's installation began. Because Hirohito never acknowledged responsibility for Japan's imperial aggression, he was the target of intense demonstrations throughout Europe.[22]

Figures 56 and 57



[22] For further details about the demonstrations that Hirohito's visit provoked, see Toshiaki Kawahara, *Hirohito and His Times: A Japanese Perspective* (Tokyo; New York: Kodansha International, 1990), 194.

Both Nakahira Takuma, from *Circulation*, 1971. 2012 modern print by Kanemura Osamu.

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Nakahira also photographed advertisements, billboards, newspaper headlines and Telex news reports. The act of photographing textual news reports positions Nakahira as a somewhat passive receiver of information. Although the later events of the Matsunaga case and the Asama Sansō incident formed the core of Nakahira's 1972 essay "The Illusion Called Document," Nakahira had already been writing about journalism and photojournalism for some time.[23] Nakahira's selection of these news reports was hardly random: one discusses an upcoming European economic meeting, and the stated intention of Japanese financial ministers to make a strong impression there, while another reports on the arrest of antiwar

[23] See, for example, Nakahira, "Shashin no kachi wo kimeru mono."

activists who were planning to kidnap Henry Kissinger.[24] This media condenses the worldwide capitalist system, its legal apparatus, and a few people trying to fight against it into easily digestible, formally undifferentiated units. Certainly, by the time that any visitor encountered these photographs in the exhibition, the information the photograph carried was old news. Nakahira photographed this media almost head-on, not so meticulously that the text lines up perfectly with the plane of the image, but also not so wildly as to distort the text beyond recognition. He took multiple photographs of each article, one close up, the other from a wider angle. He then interspersed these photographs as part of a sequence, so that viewers encountered the same article a second time, from a slightly different perspective. And yet, to present a temporally delayed photograph of a news article to the Biennial audience emphasizes the futility of the photographer's efforts. Photographs could not match the speed of television or Telex news reports, even if the exhibition was made into a dynamic space.

[24] These are AP wire reports; one photograph shows the "Associated Press" tabs on the side.

Figures 58, 59, 60 and 61

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KIDNAP
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA, OCT 14 (AP)--
BERRIGAN AND SEVEN OTHER ANTIWAR ACTIVISTS
HERE JANUARY 10 ON FEDERAL CHARGES WHICH I
KIDNAP PRESIDENTIAL ADVISER DR. HENRY A. K
THE CHARGES ALSO INCLUDE PLOTTING TO BL
IN FEDERAL BUILDINGS IN WASHINGTON AND TO
COAST DRAFT OFFICES.
U.S. DISTRICT COURT JUDGE J. DIXON HER
THAT THE TRIAL DATE WAS TENTATIVE AND DEPE
OF VARIOUS PRETRIAL MANEUVERS. HE SET OCTO
DATES FOR PRETRIAL ARGUMENTS.
DEFENSE LAWYERS, WHOSE SPOKESMAN WEDNES
ATTORNEY GENERAL RAMSEY CLARK, MET WITH HE
THEY HAVE MADE FOUR MOTIONS TO DISMISS THE
GROUNDS, INCLUDING A CONTENTION THAT THE G
STITUTIONAL WIRETAPS AGAINT THE DEFENDANTS

All Nakahira Takuma, from *Circulation*, 1971. 2012 modern print by Kanemura Osamu.

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The effect is much different from another contemporary work that used Telex news reports, Hans Haacke's *News* (1969).[25] Haacke set up a Telex printer that spooled out news reports into the gallery space, mechanically producing an overflow that rhymes with the material excess of *Circulation.* But the accumulation of these projects operates in different registers. Haacke selected nothing in *News*, whereas *Circulation* is always mediated by the body of the photographer, who has to select the article, photograph it, develop the film, make the print, and paste it up on the wall. To dumbly document documents would be a conceptual art strategy, but *Circulation* seems to work against mute copying, repetition or seriality. To display multiple photographs of the same newspaper article is not a clear mode of transmitting information. The subway signs, magazine photographs and wire reports alike all point to the experience of motion and flow, mediated at every turn by the body of the photographer.

[25] This work was first shown at the Städtliche Kunsthalle, Düsseldorf, in 1969. It was later included in the exhibition "Software," held in 1970 at the Jewish Museum, New York.

Figure 62

Hans Haacke, *News*, 1969. Teletype machine, wire service. On view at "Software," Jewish Museum, New York, 1970.

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Water flows into the river, motorcycles flow from Japan across the ocean to France, information flows through media. Nakahira photographs things in flux, as if he had found things in the world that corresponded to the idea of the photographer as a moving body. In an essay that Nakahira wrote after the exhibition, he said his own activity was like "a mouse

running on a wheel."[26] The physical exertion required to produce the exhibition is certainly why multiple scholars have called *Circulation* a performance, but this term does not sit comfortably with the work.[27] Of course, Nakahira was physically present in the biennial space, but the conceptual weight of this installation did not fall on the literal display of his own body. Instead, Nakahira took his own body as a kind of liquid, that he proposed to set flowing through the various systems that he encountered in Paris, whether of commerce, mass media, or transport. Nakahira tried to give up some control over the direction of his own work, to "just float along" and to let Paris imprint itself on his photographs. In this gesture of moving away from his own subjective intentionality, he was in fact in dialog with the contemporary art of his day, with its importance placed on negating the subjective presence of the artist. For the most part, this model of being an artist was much more dry—but it left its mark on *Circulation.*

Dry Ice

The image of On Kawara's *I Got Up* (1968-1979) that appears in *Circulation* [Figure 46] demonstrates how artists were modeling their work on an idea of photography's indexical operations. Kawara's postcards fix the trace of his physical presence at a particular point in time and space, using the mechanized action of stamping to guarantee the facticity of this registration. For Liz Kotz, *I Got Up* is a paradigmatic example of how "language became modeled on photography" in conceptual art practices around 1970.[28] The work relied on the indexical procedures that Rosalind Krauss would later identify as a key mode of 1970s

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[26] Nakahira, "Gendai bijutsu no hihei: dai nanakai Pari biennāre ni sankashite." This article was originally published in *Asahi Journal* in December 1971.

[27] See Mitsuda, "Intersections of Art and Photography in 1970s Japan: 'Thinking from Dates and Places'"; Witkovsky, "Nakahira's Circulation."

[28] Kotz, *Words to Be Looked At*, 222.

artistic production. Krauss described this art in terms of "the conversion of the pictorial and sculptural codes into that of the photographic message without a code."[29] In a sense, then, conceptual art took photography as its "dry" ground, on which it could secure an indexical relationship to the world. In this indexical mode, the relation of the subject to the world is treated as a semiotic problem that can be solved by fact: the index is a way to record traces of a presence that can be translated to factual statements, like "I got up."

The notion of a "photographic message without a code" comes from Roland Barthes, and as Philip Charrier's careful research has shown, *Provoke* had tried to turn this very idea towards the politically minded goal of exploding language, nearly ten years before Krauss' own essay.[30] The idea of modeling language on photography goes against the *Provoke* idea of breaking through language as a system altogether. In the harsh reflection of the fluorescent light at the left, and the mottled shadows that creep across the image from the right, Nakahira's photograph layers indexical traces of the most disruptive sort on top of Kawara's, troubling the idea that language could ground itself in something as slippery as photography. In all the ways that it opened itself to fluidity, *Circulation* seems to oppose the stringency of the index as stable semiotic ground.

And yet, in the immediate aftermath of *Provoke*, Nakahira did not blindly oppose conceptual practices of art and photography. *Circulation*, after all, was shown at a biennial of contemporary art, and in a text written months before the Paris exhibition, Nakahira said that he was now concerned with "process," not "the mountains of photographs" that result from

[29] Krauss, "Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America. Part 2," 68. In a similar vein, Kotz writes that "the systematic exploitation of both text and photography as documentation aspired to the conditions of a neutral recording apparatus that would operate with complete indifference to aesthetic qualities." Kotz, *Words to Be Looked At*, 222.

[30] See Charrier, "Taki Kōji, Provoke, and the Structuralist Turn in Japanese Image Theory, 1967–70."

photographing.[31] If this seems to mark a turn towards a more conceptual practice, the photographer that appeared in *Circulation* was a far cry from Sol LeWitt's famous notion of a "clerk cataloguing the results of his premise."[32] LeWitt's model of artistic practice suggests a coolness—and, perhaps, a dryness—that was not evident in *Circulation.* All the same, Nakahira was closely involved in the 10th Tokyo Biennial, titled "Between Man and Matter." This was the most significant exhibition of conceptual art in Japan during this time, and LeWitt, among many other artists, participated. In showing how conceptual art was tied to a model of indexicality that was grounded in photography, the exhibition provides an important point of reference for Nakahira's exhibition in Paris the following year.

On the cover of the square-shaped catalog of "Between Man and Matter," a black-and-white photograph by Nakahira shows a pair of thick tire tracks running up from the bottom left hand corner. They have marked out relatively deep trenches in the soil, on top of which some highly distinguishable footprints appear. Holding the catalog upright in one's hands, with the spine to the left, the photograph appears rotated 90 degrees to the right, with the horizon running vertically. The front cover has a small foldout, on which a bit more of the sky appears. This photograph recalls Nakahira's work for *Provoke*, and he would select it for publication in his November 1970 photobook *For a Language to Come*. The version of this photograph on the catalog's cover is heavily cropped, to accentuate the tire tracks carved into the surface of the ground. Especially at this rotated angle, the ground itself is a major element of the composition, taking up almost the entirety of the frame. The viewer is confronted by a formless, directionless expanse of dirt, and the various striations that have been left on it—

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[31] Nakahira, "Bigaku no hōkai," 187.

[32] Sol LeWitt, "Serial Project #1, 1966," ed. Brian O'Doherty, *Aspen Magazine*, no. 5–6 (1967): n.p. Benjamin Buchloh has criticized this bureaucratic model of conceptual art for its "critical devotion to the factual conditions of artistic production and reception without aspiring to overcome the mere facticity of these conditions." Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," *October* 55 (1990): 141.

not just the large tire tracks, but other, smaller ones too.[33] Nakahira was credited for the cover design of this catalog. On first glance, the actual title of the exhibition is invisible, printed as it is in small black letters which are almost indistinguishable from the mess of soil and pebbles at the bottom.

Figure 63

Cover of exhibition catalog, *Between Man and Matter*, 1970. Cover design and photograph: Nakahira Takuma.

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[33] These large tracks visually recall Richard Long's 1968 photoconceptual work *England 1968*.

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"Between Man and Matter," held from May 10 to May 30 at the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, was organized by the Japanese critic and curator Nakahara Yūsuke. This exhibition marked an important moment for the reception of conceptual art in Japan.[34] In the run-up to the exhibition, Nakahara traveled through Europe and the United States, where he saw exhibitions like "When Attitudes Become Form" (Kunsthalle Bern) and "Anti-Illusion: Procedures/Materials" (Whitney Museum). "Between Man and Matter" brought together a group of 40 artists from Japan and overseas, in a program that surveyed the terrain of conceptual art of the time. The participating artists included Carl Andre, Daniel Buren, Christo, Enokura Kōji, Luciano Fabro, Hans Haacke, On Kawara, Jannis Kounellis, Koshimizu Susumu, Matsuzawa Yutaka, Mario Merz, Bruce Nauman, Giuseppe Penone, Richard Serra and Takamatsu Jirō. The program included a number of artists associated with Arte Povera, and a few who would go on to be associated with Mono-ha. The exhibition brought forward many works by important conceptual artists—and Nakahira's work was hovering just around the exhibition.

On Kawara, for example, showed 96 of his date paintings, titled *Today*, in which he painted the date on which he made the painting. These works do not speak to anything like Kawara's artistic skill; they offer little for the viewer to appreciate in terms of the way that he applied paint to the canvas. Instead, they simply record the date that he painted them, in white on a monochrome background. *I Got Up*, *Today*: these works are the direct result of the linguistic idea that is expressed in their titles, with as little involvement of the artist as

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[34] To the extent of my knowledge, photography magazines published in Japan at this time did review or report on the exhibition. However, art magazines were more accepting of the photography world. In the August 1970 issue of *Bijutsu Techō*, for example, no less a figure than Yamagishi Shōji, the influential editor of the photography magazine Camera Mainichi, put together 31 plates of rather straightforward photography.

possible.[35] In works like *I Got Up*, Kawara stamps or prints out his text in mechanical fashion. The same principle operates in *I Am Still Alive*, a work in which the mechanical registration of date and time is carried out by the network of the telegram; Kawara submitted this work to the catalog of “Between Man and Matter.”[36] In all cases, his hand never disturbs his indexical documentation.

Figure 64

On Kawara, *June 8, 1972*, 1972, from *Today*. Liquitex on canvas and handmade cardboard box with newspaper clipping.

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[35] In both affective and visual terms, though, Kawara’s later conceptual work could not be any further from the work he made during the 1950s. At that time, he made two series of figural works (*Bathroom*, 1953-1954; *Events in a Warehouse*, 1954) that depicted the depravity and isolation of the postwar human subject in gut-wrenching detail.

[36] Yūsuke Nakahara and Toshiaki Minemura, eds., *Between Man and Matter* (Tokyo: Mainichi Newspapers and the Japan International Art Promotion Association, 1970). Unpaginated.

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Conceptual artists were attempting to remove their own subjectivity from their work, on the basis of an indexical operation that would make their work more mechanical. This conceptual turn moves away from the body, and from liquid as well. In Wall's own language, the "dry part" of photography is its "technological intelligence" that is "separated to a great extent from the sense of immersion in the incalculable."[37] While the extended repetition of Kawara's gestures lends his works a certain poetics, their unassailably mechanical indexicality renders them ice cold, without any trace of fluidity. There is no space for "the incalculable" in these works; everything has its place.

Some conceptual artists in "Between Man and Matter" also produced photographs. Kawaguchi Tatsuo, for example, showed his series of photographs *Land and Sea*. To make this work, Kawaguchi placed four wooden beams on the edge of the ocean and photographed their interaction with the ocean over three days. For all that liquid appears in this work, Kawaguchi takes a dry approach to photography. In other words, his approach was geared towards documenting the factual conditions of the situation: he took all the photographs from the fixed position of a tripod, stamped each photograph with the precise moment it was exposed, and displayed the work in the gallery space alongside a schematic diagram of his work, a topographic map of the area where he carried it out, and a tidal chart of the local area for the dates he was there.[38] This approach guarantees that the photographer will not get any water in their camera, to follow Wall.

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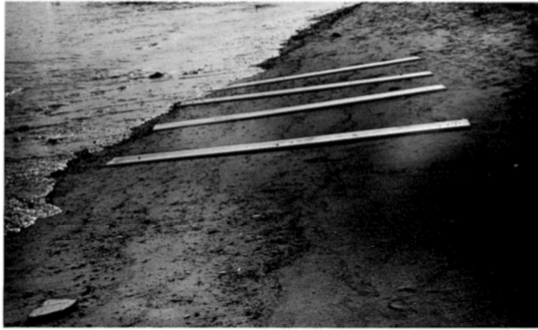
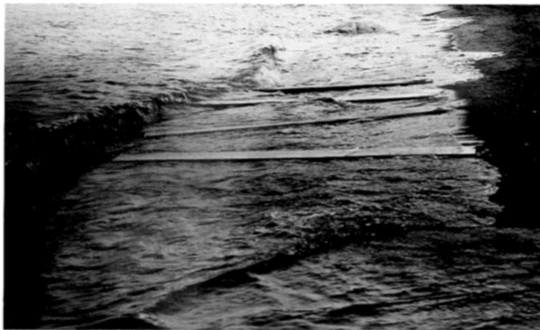
[37] Wall, "Photography and Liquid Intelligence."

[38] With good reason, one commentator has written about the work in terms of the "facts laid out" there. See Rachel Hooper, "Tatsuo Kawaguchi," in *For a New World to Come: Experiments in Japanese Art and Photography, 1968-1979*, ed. Yasufumi Nakamori (Houston: The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 2015), 136–39.

Figures 65 and 66





Kawaguchi Tatsuo, from *Land and Sea*, 1970. Silver gelatin prints.

Kawaguchi Tatsuo, from *Tokyo Biennale 70: Between Man and Matter*, exhibition catalog, 1970.

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In LeWitt's essay "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art," he suggested that conceptual art set out to remove the figure of the artist from the system of artistic production: "To work with

a plan that is pre-set is one way of avoiding subjectivity."[39] LeWitt did not attend the Tokyo Biennale, but sent instructions for 4x4cm sheets of paper, in four different colors, to be rolled up and placed in the holes that appeared at regular intervals on the walls of the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Art, "at random with no thought of arrangement or design."[40] In a literal sense, LeWitt could remove his own hand from the production of the work. For LeWitt, "avoiding subjectivity" was a goal to strive for, and on the analysis of Kotz and Krauss, photography was the model through which this could happen. In the same essay, LeWitt wrote: "The idea becomes a machine that makes the art."[41] For all the succinct beauty of this statement, it is only a figure of speech. Strictly speaking, ideas are not machines; artists still had to produce something. As a medium, photography offered a bare minimum of depiction, while promising to distance the artist as much as possible from the scene of creation itself. Never mind the body—for artists working in the icy mode of indexicality, even the figurative "hand" of the artist would have introduced too much instability into the picture. It is surely not coincidental that another conceptual artist working with photography, Nomura Hitoshi, showed a series of photographs in "Between Man and Matter" in which he photographed the evaporation of dry ice itself—weighing and noting its volume at periodic intervals. When dry ice evaporates, it produces no water, a helpful quality for the drily indexical artist.

However, not every artist who exhibited in "Between Man and Matter" was so averse to liquid. In particular, Hans Haacke's works offered more fluidity than those shown by Kawara, LeWitt or Kawaguchi. In the exhibition catalog, each artist was given a page to send in their proposed plan for the exhibit. Haacke's full statement reads as follows:

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[39] Sol LeWitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art," *Artforum*, June 1967, 80.

[40] In Nakahara and Minemura, *Between Man and Matter*. Unpaginated.

[41] LeWitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art," 80.

> Not knowing the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum's premises, the surrounding park, nor the city and its people, it is impossible for me to outline a definitive proposal for my participation in the Tokyo Biennale. Since I intend to deal with the prevailing conditions of the place rather than importing a finished product, I have to wait until I have personally inspected the situation in Tokyo. Only through analysis of the local systems would it be possible to find ways to expose just these systems, or to interfere with them or to introduce new systems sensibly tailored to the existing environment.[42]

Haacke states that he wants to avoid imposing an idea of his work onto the "prevailing conditions" of Tokyo, without physically being there first. His work, in other words, ought to be a response to the concrete conditions on the ground. Further, he makes clear the importance of "systems" to his work, in a very different sense of the idea of language that Nakahira had used in his work for *Provoke*. Nakahira saw himself fighting a romantic battle against the system of language, writ large. Haacke's work was not pitched against a single system in the abstract—instead, it was to be more local, and in the plural. At the same time, he placed theoretical importance on his own physical presence in the space of the exhibition, and Tokyo itself.

In a review of "Between Man and Matter," Okada Takahiko, who invited Nakahira to participate in the Paris Biennale, introduced some key information about the work that Haacke realized. In the very first paragraph, he described encountering a clear plastic tube from which small streams of water leaked out when he was walking outside of the museum. A poet as well as an art critic, Okada described his encounter with the work in the following way: "One stares at it a while. This feeling—it's not bad."[43] This was Haacke's *Water Following Surface of Road*.[44] An installation photograph shows that the tube had openings at

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[42] In Nakahara and Minemura, *Between Man and Matter*. Unpaginated.

[43] Okada Takahiko, "Atarashī kotoba o motomete," *Asahi Journal*, June 7, 1970.

[44] In a 2012 essay, Mika Yoshitake gives the title of Haacke's work as *Tokyo Trickle*. See Mika Yoshitake, "The Language of Things: Relation, Perception and Duration," in *Tokyo, 1955-1970: A New Avant-Garde*, by Doryun Chong (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2012), 120–37. In calling the work *Water Following Surface of Road*, I follow a catalog of photographs of "Between Man and Matter" taken by the photographer Ōtsuji Kiyoji. That catalog reproduces information from the

different points along its length; water pooled up and moved in different directions, revealing the topography of the pavement below. The existence of this work is already well known, but Okada's description reveals that it was connected to the other work that Haacke showed in "Between Man and Matter," inside the museum: *Circulation*.[45]

In this work, Haacke created a complex system of tubes through which water flowed, using materials listed as "plastic tube, electric pump, water, air."[46] Haacke had shown *Circulation* the previous year, in an exhibition at Howard Wise Gallery in New York. *Water Following Surface of Road*, however, was a new work. In his article, Okada indirectly quotes some of Haacke's own words: "He is an artist who has consistently been interested in the condition of things moving slowly, but in this work, he says that he wanted to show that the circulation of water across the inside and outside of the space is analogous to the circulation of blood within the body."[47] Water following a surface, blood moving through the body: Haacke's *Circulation* also thematized flow.[48]

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official report on the Biennale, published in 1970. (This is a separate publication from the catalog where Nakahira's photograph appeared.) There, the materials of *Water Following Surface of Road* are given as "plastic tube, water, road with uneven surface." See Kinichi Obinata and Takefumi Murai, eds., *Kiyoji Otsuji Photography Archive: Film Collecton 2 - Between Man and Matter* (Tokyo: Musashino Art University Museum & Library, 2018), 89.

[45] Knowingly or not, in running a line out of the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, Haacke was echoing a 1963 work by Takamatsu Jirō, *On Anti-Existence Concerning Curtains*. There, Takamatsu ran a string out of the gallery all the way to nearby Ueno Station.

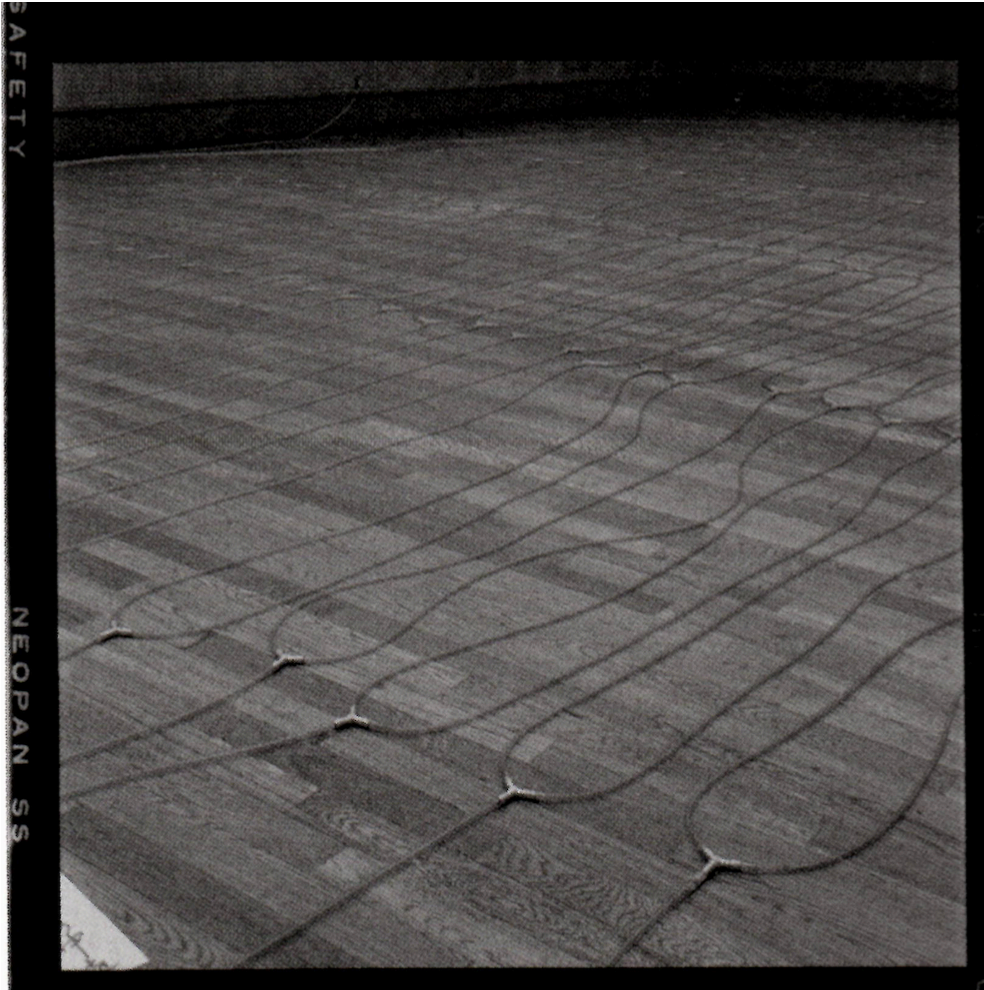
[46] See Obinata and Murai, *Kiyoji Otsuji Photography Archive: Film Collecton 2 - Between Man and Matter*, 89.

[47] Okada, "Atarashī kotoba o motomete."

[48] Liquid was a major motif of Haacke's work during the later 1960s. For example, in his 1969 installation *Cycle*, he again used perforated plastic tubes to run water to the center of a space, where it was recirculated by a pump. Around 1971, the Mono-ha artist Suga Kishio also produced various works (such as *Law of Situation*) that dealt with water.

Figures 67 and 68

Hans Haacke, *Water Following Surface of Road*, 1970. Installed at the 10th Tokyo Biennale, "Between Man and Matter," Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, 1970.



Hans Haacke, *Circulation*, 1969. Installed at the 10th Tokyo Biennale, “Between Man and Matter,” Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, 1970. Photograph: Ōtsuji Kiyoji.

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Nakahira’s contribution to the 1970 Tokyo Biennale was not limited to the cover of the catalog; he also seems to have designed the official poster of the exhibit, which again featured his own photograph.[49] Here, the horizon is off-kilter, and a recognizable object appears in the middle of the photograph, literally framed up by text that surrounds it on all four sides: a ship, in the middle of expelling a great plume of smoke into the air. The

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[49] This poster features a modified version of the typeface that was used on the cover of *Provoke*. See Chapter 1.

photograph shows two, if not three bodies of water: the ocean, the clouds above, and the smoke—could it be steam?—that emerges from the boat. The low contrast of the photograph, and the grain around the horizon, makes it difficult to distinguish cloud from smoke. This photograph stages nothing if not the mixture of different forms of water, moving between liquid and gas. The image became an emblem of the exhibition itself; one critic notes that it also appeared on tickets of the biennial, making Nakahira "an unofficial 41st artist of the exhibition."[50] If that was the case, then was Nakahira's *Circulation* really about liquidity only?

[50] Reiko Tomii, "Toward Tokyo Biennale 1970: Shapes of the International in the Age of 'International Contemporaneity,'" *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* 23 (2011): 205.

Figure 69

Official poster for "Between Man and Matter." Silkscreen. Photograph: Nakahira Takuma.

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Wet Prints

Beyond their shared title, there are deep affinities between Haacke's work and Nakahira's Paris installation. Haacke does not take up the mechanical, ice-cold model of indexicality. At the same time, he did not present himself as an all-intending artist, in full control of the final appearance of his work. This shift away from subjectivity resonates with Nakahira's attempt to allow himself to be carried along by the currents of Paris. If Haacke's work in Tokyo engaged with indexicality at all, it is in *Water Following Surface of Road*, where the shape of the small streams that emanate from the tube are not entirely random, but are determined by the surface along which they flow. In a similar way, Nakahira's *Circulation* is not purely about flow. This work also has its own relationship to indexicality, or a certain kind of "dryness."

This quality emerges most clearly when *Circulation* took the form of sequences that Nakahira displayed in the physical space of the exhibition.[51] By displaying several photographs in sequence, Nakahira pointed to the flow of time. In *Language*, his work from early 1971, Nakahira had hinted at an interest in the temporality of the individual photograph, and the relationship between photography and cinema.[52] Sequences are a basic element of photobook or magazine editing; the order of the pictures establishes temporality, allowing it to tell a story. But Nakahira used sequences in a way that had little to do with narrative development. The photograph of the dog in Figure 49, for example, was the last in a sequence of four photographs, all taken in almost exactly the same position. In the first two photographs, the dog sniffs around the subway grate, while in the last two it looks off into the distance. The only consistent change over the four photographs is Nakahira's position: with

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[51] One of these sequences, for example, is visible in Figure 48.

[52] See the conclusion of Chapter 1.

each shot, he moves a bit closer to the animal. Nothing in these images adds up to a cathartic or even coherent story, but Nakahira displayed this entire sequence.[53] Showing all of these moments together reduces the importance of any single photograph, and shifts the focus to the flow of time between these frames. The action here, such as it is, also faintly suggests an idea of the index: the dog sniffs around for the trace of a scent, something left behind—which it seems to point towards, an indexical gesture, in the last photograph.

Figures 70, 71, 72 and 49

[53] All of these sequences appeared when Nakahira published a selection of the photographs from *Circulation* in the magazine *Design*. See Nakahira, "Sākyurēshon — Nakahira Takuma."

All Nakahira Takuma, from *Circulation*, 1971. 2012 modern print by Kanemura Osamu.

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In another sequence of four photographs, Nakahira investigates a road as a surface for mark making. These images show a man crossing a street that is half covered in water. A large car at left anchors all four images, making it clear that Nakahira has not moved very much through space. Temporally, too, the span of the four images is only as long as someone crossing a street—in the last photograph, his legs and the very bottom of his jacket are visible just at the very top right corner. In the first photograph, rivulets of water play across the cement, and some of the burned-out reflections rhyme with literal burn marks on the negative, which pierce holes in the car. In the second and third photographs, a footprint is conspicuously visible at the bottom left. The last photograph shows an overcast sky reflected on the surface; seen from this angle, the sheen of this thin layer of water—not so dissimilar from the one that ran out of Haacke's tubes in Tokyo—brings out individual pockmarks on

its surface, fresh tire tracks, and a discarded cigarette. Three separate streams of water flow off, out of the frame and back towards the sidewalk. The stream at the left appeared dark in the third photograph in the sequence, but now it reflects light from above.

Figures 73, 74, 75 and 76

246 TV 15

All Nakahira Takuma, from *Circulation*, 1971. 2012 modern print by Kanemura Osamu.

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These wet prints are indexical marks, but they are not fixed: they are bound to be washed away, to be run over by a car, if not simply to evaporate. In this sequence of photographs, much like the photographs of the pedestrians on the sidewalk in Figures 41-44, the pavement is full of footprints that are made of water itself. "Dry" models of conceptual art lean on mechanical registration, but Nakahira pursued these paradoxically fluid marks. A single photograph fixes their presence on film, but the sequence of multiple photographs softens up this fixity. The minute movements of a photographer through space and time shows the contingency of their appearance. The footprints will inevitably disappear, just as in the photograph of a television screen, the frame that appears fleetingly will wipe to the next. There is no linguistic support to fall back on, no language or diagram or mechanized indexical stamp to reel the work in. Like Haacke's *Circulation*, Nakahira's work of the same

title stakes itself on a certain uncontrollability, based on his own movement in Paris. He arrived at a practice of the photographer as a body in the world that was like a fluid, responding to the surfaces across which it moved. This presence could not be fixed; instead, it would have to flow through the world.

Many of the photographs in “Circulation” could fit loosely within the genre of street photography: they are snapshots produced in an urban environment, more spontaneous sketches than cool compositions. Street photographers might take multiple photographs in the same place, to select one photograph at the stage of editing. But the fact that Nakahira displayed these sequences in total pulls them away from a search for a more aesthetically pleasing composition. His consistent photographs of television, screens and Telex news reports also positioned them within a larger flow; in this sense, too, his work was quite different from street photography of the time. For example, Lee Friedlander’s 1960s photographs of television, “The Little Screens,” bear out his interest in expression through careful framing. Each photograph from this series shows a television within a domestic or interior space. In *Washington D.C. 1962*, the television appears wedged between other domestic objects. The eyeball that appears on the screen rhymes with the underside of the lamp, and the circular fan of the air conditioning unit. In these photographs, Friedlander frames television in terms of its impact on private space: he addresses television less as media than as furniture. Nakahira uses the camera to quote television directly, without the same interest in emotionally charged compositions.[54] His use of the sequence form pushes against Friedlander’s more modernist mode of photography.

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[54] Mochizuki Masao’s series “Television 1975-1976” represents a more scientifically detached, dry pole of television photography.

Figure 77

Lee Friedlander, *Washington D.C. 1962*, from "The Little Screens."

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In a separate essay, Wall has narrated this moment of photography history in terms of depiction, with iconophobic conceptual artists on one end and iconophilic artists on the other.[55] Wall aligns Friedlander with this latter tendency, and claims that the desire to avoid depiction was an unrealizable dream upon which conceptual uses of photography were bound to fail: "dragging its heavy burden of depiction, photography could not follow pure, or linguistic, Conceptualism all the way to the frontier."[56] The gambit of Wall's essay was to produce not just a history of conceptual uses of photography, but in fact to produce a prehistory of his own work: the essay ends at the moment that Wall shows how photography was ineluctably drawn back to pictorial representation, that is to say, drawn back to Wall's own mode of working: "Photoconceptualism was then the last moment of the pre-history of photography as art."[57]

But *Circulation* proposes a different approach to what seems to be an intractable problem for this moment in photographic history, finding a way through the poles of indexicality and pictorialism. For instance, look again at the photograph of water spilling out of a drain. [Figure 53] It literally depicts flow, and the camera itself is unable to freeze the water. Where the water rushes out, the actual movement of its reflection across the surface of the film leaves behind a blur, demonstrating the inability of photographs to fully isolate and capture the thing in front of the lens. The ripples, bubbles and even tiny waves that appear etched into the surface of the water will have disappeared in the next moment, even faster than wet footprints can vanish.

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[55] For a detailed exploration of iconophobia and conceptual photography, see John Roberts, "Photography, Iconophobia and the Ruins of Conceptual Art," in *The Impossible Document: Photography and Conceptual Art in Britain, 1966-1976*, ed. John Roberts, Camerawords, v. 1 (London: Camerawork, 1997), 7–45.

[56] Wall, "'Marks of Indifference': Aspects of Photography in, or as, Conceptual Art," 44.

[57] Wall, 44.

And yet the entire photograph is riven by a single white line running horizontally across two-thirds of its width. A scratch on the negative, an indelible record of the rushed conditions of the photograph's production, a perhaps careless trace of the photographer's own hand. The scratch does not index any fact about its production, much less any fact about the real world. It is an index of something dragged across the negative, but it points away from a chilly model of indexicality, just as it undoes the aspiration to pictorial excellence. Both of these models involve a certain stable projection onto the world, whether to apprehend it scientifically or aesthetically. Beyond using the same title, Nakahira may have emulated Haacke in the sense of choosing to give up some control, and to let the conditions of Paris determine the form of his work—as the shape of pavement determines the flow of water. By taking himself as a "floating" body, Nakahira made himself at home in the antinomies of flow and fixity.

Conclusion

Photographs of other works on display in the 1971 Paris Biennale appear throughout *Circulation*. In one of these photographs, a large rock sits in the foreground of the image, while the reflection of an open window appears next to it. The rock appears to have broken the glass, or just cracked it enough that some gentle lines emanate from its center. Light leaks in from the top and bottom of the film, erasing some of the surface of the glass itself. This photograph shows *Phenomena and Perception B*, a work by Lee Ufan, the Japan-based artist who was representing South Korea at the Biennale. In one sense, the work calls out to a certain kind of indexicality, in that the force of this particular stone seems to cause the particular breaks in the glass.[58] But Lee's work is not about indexical operations; he never

[58] I discuss this work at greater length in Chapter 4.

makes any scientific references to specific dates and places. He was more concerned with the interaction of natural materials with man-made ones, and the very title of this work references the phenomenological writings of Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

Figure 78

Nakahira Takuma, from *Circulation*, 1971. 2012 modern print by Kanemura Osamu.

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Lee was one of the primary theoretical and practical drivers of the group known as Mono-ha.[59] Some artists associated with Mono-ha had shown their work in "Between Man

[59] For an overview of Mono-ha, see Mika Yoshitake, "What Is Mono-Ha?," *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* 25 (2013): 202–13.

and Matter," and more were at the 1971 Paris Biennale.[60] In Kotz's telling of the relationship between photography and conceptual art, a semiotic model tied to mass media superseded a phenomenological model of minimal sculpture.[61] Kotz's analysis may indeed hold up in the context of Europe and North America; however, within Japan, the grouping of artists around Mono-ha, and Lee in particular, were pushing strongly in a phenomenological direction. Lee offered a corporeal approach to artistic production that sat between cold indexicality and uncontrolled flow. In the following chapter, I explore a new turn in Nakahira's thinking, which emerged in close dialog with Lee. The connection between Nakahira and Lee goes much deeper than the photograph of *Phenomena and Perception B*. The pair shared a personal relationship, hinted at by the presence of a snapshot of Lee among the works of *Circulation*. Lee and Nakahira already knew each other before the Paris Biennale, and Lee has recounted that he met with Nakahira every day in Paris.[62]

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[60] Among artists from Japan to participate in the 1971 Paris Biennale, Enokura Kōji, Koshimizu Susumu and Yoshida Katsurō were all associated with Mono-ha. Both Enokura and Koshimizu showed their work in "Between Man and Matter."

[61] See Kotz, *Words to Be Looked At*, 218.

[62] See Lee Ufan, "Intabyū: Ri Ufan," *Bijutsu Techō*, April 2003.

Figure 79

Nakahira Takuma, from *Circulation*, 1971. 2012 modern print by Kanemura Osamu.

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In his essay on photography and liquids, Wall wrote that "the echo of water in photography evokes its prehistory," and continued: "I think that this 'prehistorical' image of photography—a speculative image in which the apparatus itself can be thought of as not yet having emerged from the mineral and vegetable worlds—can help us understand the 'dry' part of photography differently."[63] In *Circulation*, Nakahira pushed photography towards water, though perhaps not so much to return to a "prehistory" of the medium. Instead, flow was a way to put pressure on the notion of photography as an indexically verifiable medium—an idea that he was already preparing to criticize in "The Illusion Called

[63] Wall, "Photography and Liquid Intelligence."

Document," which he published just a few months after the 1971 Paris Biennale. Within a year, though, Nakahira was returning to an even more explicitly phenomenological theory of photography, which bears the hallmarks of Lee's own thinking. Through this dialog with Lee, Nakahira found a way to go beyond the reduction of photography to language, to the recording of facts in the world. Wall suggests that the liquid characteristics of photography might bring the medium closer to the "mineral and vegetable worlds." In the theory that Nakahira was to develop, he committed himself to this latter world—that is, to a botanical idea of photography.

Chapter 4

Encountering the World: "Why an Illustrated Botanical Reference Book?"

Introduction: A Theory For and Against "Vagueness"

At the conclusion of the Paris Biennale in October 1971, Nakahira visited Casablanca, and then came back to Paris for about a week before returning to Tokyo. During his second stay in Paris, he wrote a draft of a letter in English to an editor of the art magazine *Opus International*, inquiring about the possibility of placing an article there.[1] In the course of describing *Circulation*, he remarked: "In fact, the world can not exist without us, but, at the same time, we can not exist without the world, vice versa."[2] This chapter explores the furthest resonances of this statement in a major theoretical text called "Why an Illustrated Botanical Reference Book?" that Nakahira published about a year and a half later. Certainly, Nakahira's assertion calls to mind an image of the intertwining of human and world, which motivated the theoretical program of *Provoke*. In that moment, this relation was described in terms of eros. Here, Nakahira described this intertwining not as a romantic ideal to pine for, but as a necessary condition of being. The register of his language had shifted, and Nakahira's interest in thinking through the relationship between the human and the world was conditioned by his relationship with Lee Ufan. In particular, Nakahira's ongoing dialogue with Lee led him to carefully consider the body as the term that mediates "us" and "the

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[1] This letter, addressed to Gérald Gassiot-Talabot, sits in Nakahira's privately held archives. It was written in 1971 in Paris, between October 31 (when Nakahira said that he returned from Casablanca to Paris) and November 8 (when Nakahira said that he would depart Paris for Tokyo). Nakahira was not comfortable writing French, so it is likely that he would have given this letter to a friend to translate.

[2] I have left Nakahira's note as is.

world." Taking into consideration Nakahira's relationship with Lee, "Why an Illustrated Botanical Reference Book?" finds Nakahira writing as a phenomenologist.

This claim does not sit easily with the understanding of "Why an Illustrated Reference Book?" as a text that is concerned with realism. For example, Philip Charrier has convincingly situated the essay within the longer tradition photographic realism in Japan, while Shimizu Minoru has consistently seen Nakahira's photographs and essays as strategies for accessing "the real."[3] Without question, there is reason to see it in terms of realism. After all, leaning on the example of French *nouveau roman* writers, Nakahira claimed that photographs must be made without the slightest hint of emotion or projection on the part of the photographer, in order to grasp "the world as it is."[4] Or, perhaps, to grasp the world as it *really* is. In order to realize this theory, Nakahira put forward the idea of the "illustrated reference book": color photographs, taken with utter clarity, which depict their subject and nothing else. The essay argued for this photographic methodology in often strident language: "If it has even the slightest bit of vagueness, it does not fulfill the function of an illustrated reference book."[5] In that sense, it fits within the tradition of modern photographic realism, in which a sufficiently purified photographic technique ostensibly grants access to objectivity.[6]

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[3] Charrier, "Nakahira Takuma's 'Why an Illustrated Botanical Dictionary?' (1973) and the Quest for 'True' Photographic Realism in Post-War Japan"; Shimizu, "Hibi kore shashin — Nakahira Takuma no shashin." Shimizu hardly takes Nakahira as a straightforward realist; in one of his essays, he refers to Nakahira's position as one of a "realism of negation," given the impossibility of accessing reality. See Shimizu Minoru, "'Shashin genten' no keisei — Nakahira Takuma no magajin wāku ni yosete," in *Toshi fūkei zukan*, by Nakahira Takuma (Tokyo: Getsuyōsha, 2011), n.p.

[4] The idea of "the world as it is" ran throughout Nakahira's essay. See, for example, Nakahira Takuma, "Naze, shokubutsu zukan ka," in *Naze, shokubutsu zukan ka: Nakahira Takuma eizō ronshū* (Tokyo: Shobunsha, 1973), 12. Charrier's essay cited above also carefully demonstrates the influence of the French intellectual tradition on Nakahira, pointing to Jean-Paul Sartre and J.M.G. Le Clézio in particular.

[5] Nakahira, 31.

[6] In particular, I refer to the realism of Albert Renger-Patzsch, who I discuss later in this chapter. The photographs and ideas to emerge from the San Francisco-based Group f/64 are also relevant in this context. See Michel Oren, "On the 'Impurity' of Group f/64 Photography," *History of Photography* 15, no. 2 (June 1, 1991): 119–27.

But the essay undercuts any straightforward claim to realism through the way it elaborates the "botanical." This essay is, by some measure, Nakahira's best-known piece of writing. Various scholars in both English and Japanese have written about it, and yet the idea of the botanical, practically hiding in plain sight in the essay's title, has received no attention at all to date.[7] Nakahira's call to photograph in the manner of an "illustrated botanical reference book" was not a literal demand to photograph plants. The botanical was, rather, an important component of the methodology that the essay put forth. As "organic bodies," plants offered an analogy of human corporeality—and of relationality, as well. Wildly contradicting his demand for photographs of unemotional clarity, Nakahira wrote approvingly of plants in terms of their "vagueness," and their "intermediary position"—from which, he went so far as to claim, "they leap impulsively and sink into me."[8] Here, Nakahira's language departed from any orthodox idea of realism. Or, if there were to be any realism here, it would have to answer the question: could a theory of photographic realism ground itself in the phenomenological indeterminacy of the body?

In developing, and making corporeal, the relational idea of being that he had sketched out in the letter, Nakahira was in deep dialogue with Lee. The two already had a personal and

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[7] In addition to Charrier and Shimizu, other scholars to comment on "Why an Illustrated Botanical Reference Book?" include Asada Akira, "Nakahira Takuma toiu jiken," in *Nakahira Takuma: kitarubeki shashinka*, by Nakahira Takuma (Tokyo: Kawade Shobo Shinsha, 2009), 139–48; Hayashida Arata, "Shashin o miru koto no hate ni — Nakahira Takuma ron," *Shashin Kūkan* 4 (July 2010): 88–102; Kawatani Shoko, "Osafune Tsunetoshi no 'aru mono' to, 1970 nendai no Shizuoka, Tōkyō no amachua shashinka no kakawari nitsuite," *Bulletin of Shizuoka Prefectural Museum of Art* 31 (2015): 9–23; Koyashiki Takumi, "Tōmatsu Shōmei no 'Okinawa' to Okinawa — 'Tōmatsu shinwa' o kaitai suru," *N27*, no. 8 (August 2016): 19–37; Kuraishi Shino, "Aru epokē ni tsuite," *Newsletter of The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo*, September 2015; Miyasako Chizuru, *"Josei genri" to "shashin": kitarubeki "mizugameza no jidai" no tame ni* (Tokyo: Kokubunsha, 1984); Nakazato Isao, "Me no kaikisen – Nakahira Takuma to 'minami,'" *Mirai*, no. 509 (February 2009): 1–8; Prichard, *Residual Futures: The Urban Ecologies of Literary and Visual Media of 1960s and 1970s Japan*; Takahashi Yoshitaka, *Kotoba no hate no shashinkatachi: 1960 - 90 nendai no shashin hyōgen* (Tokyo: Seikyūsha, 2017); Yasumi Akihito, "Imēji no reido — Nakahira Takuma 'Genten Fukki—Yokohama,'" in *Nakahira Takuma: Degree Zero - Yokohama*, by Nakahira Takuma (Tokyo: Osiris, 2003).

[8] Nakahira, "Naze, shokubutsu zukan ka," 1973, 32.

professional relationship before their time together in Paris; still, the connection between Nakahira and Lee has not been explored in detail within accounts of contemporary art in Japan at this time. At one point in the essay, Nakahira claimed that “the process of unlimited ‘encounter’ must replace our conventional artistic practice.”[9] By calling out to “encounter”—and in his multiple references to the “the world as it is”—he was using Lee’s own theoretical language. Lee had wrought these terms from his study of phenomenology; encounter was a thoroughly corporeal concept, which specified a moment and place in which the human is open to the world, and the world is open to the human. He called this an experience “of the world itself as it is,” which brought back an embodied mode of perception that had been foreclosed by modernity.[10] Lee was certainly interested in an experience of “the real,” but he proposed to access it through an ambiguous bodily term that both mediates, and is mediated by, the world. In his work on Nakahira, Franz Prichard has suggested that “Why an Illustrated Botanical Reference Book?” put forth a theory of “entangled visuality.”[11] The idea of entanglement resonates with Lee’s essays—and it also disturbs the model of a purified mode of photographic realism.

Within the scope of this dissertation, then, this chapter explores one of Nakahira’s most important contributions to a phenomenological theory of the photographer as a body in the world. In the essay, Nakahira thinks through the body of the photographer in order to arrive at the categories that have grounded phenomenological thinking: subject and object, self and other, “us” and “world.” Because the idea of photographing in color was so central to the photographic methodology that the essay laid out, this chapter also introduces Nakahira’s

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[9] Nakahira, 16.

[10] Lee Ufan, “Deai o motomete,” *Bijutsu Techō*, February 1970, 17.

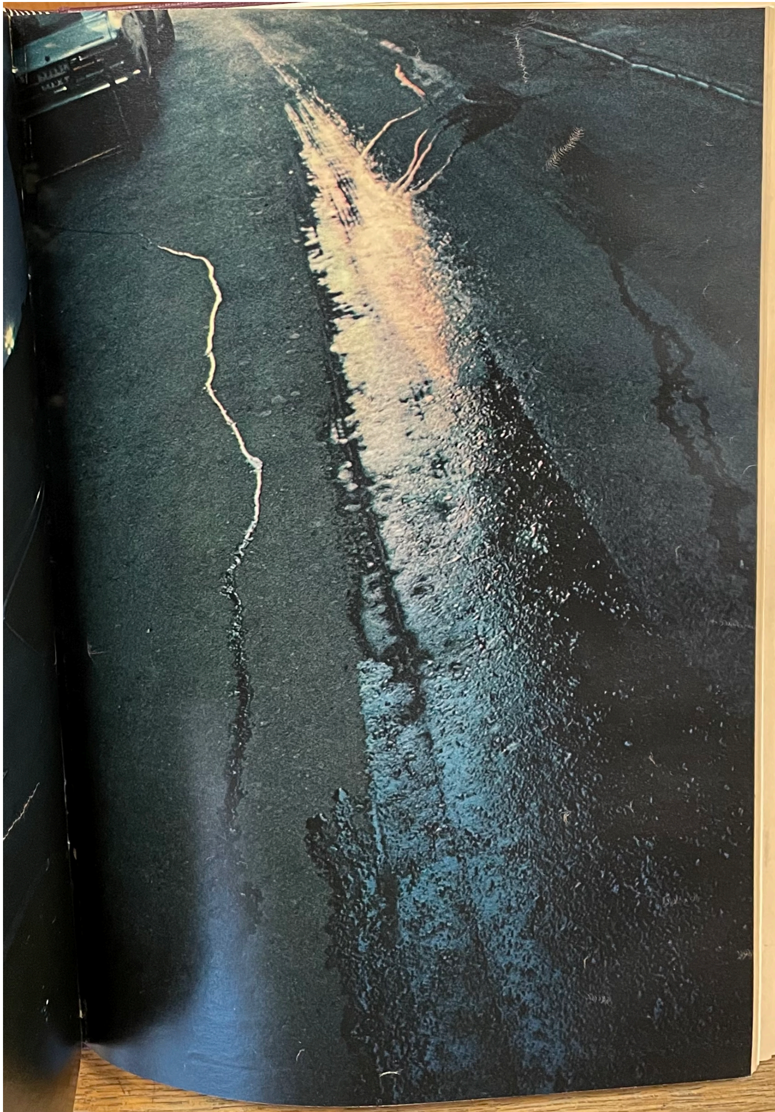
[11] Prichard, *Residual Futures: The Urban Ecologies of Literary and Visual Media of 1960s and 1970s Japan*, 122.

early color work, in order to investigate how Nakahira's practice as a photographer aligned with his theoretical program.

Nakahira's Early Color Photography

Nakahira claimed in "Why an Illustrated Botanical Reference Book?" that he would switch to color film, and leave black-and-white behind. By making this declaration, he continued the attack on *Provoke* photography that he had already initiated with "The Illusion Called Document." However, Nakahira had already been publishing color photographs in magazines as early as 1969, and with greater frequency around 1971 and 1972. As eager as Nakahira was to draw a line under his *Provoke* photography, much of this work continues the mode of looking that he developed at that time. Examining Nakahira's early color work offers important context, both for the claims that he made in "Why an Illustrated Botanical Reference Book?" and for his later development as a photographer. At the same time, Nakahira's color photographs emerged out of a specific discourse of image theory in Japan, known as landscape theory. Nakahira himself was an important interlocutor in this discourse, which theorized power relations in Japan in terms of spatial homogenization and sought ways to break through this structure. This discourse itself resonated with the claims that Nakahira would make in "Why an Illustrated Botanical Reference Book?"

Figure 80



Nakahira Takuma, from “City I,” published in *Asahi Journal*, December 17, 1971.

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Between late 1971 and early 1972, Nakahira contributed three installments under the title “City” to a series of color photographs that ran in *Asahi Journal*, a weekly news

magazine with a left-wing slant.[12] One photograph from "City I" is taken in twilight; the majority of the frame is occupied by a gray expanse of road, punctuated by long trails of water. Published a month after *Circulation*, and the year following his encounter with Hans Haacke's work for the 1970 Tokyo Biennale, this photograph speaks to the importance of fluidity to Nakahira's photography around this time. This image is framed vertically, so the wide trail of water begins at the lower right corner of the photograph and has the space to run practically the height of the frame, arcing slightly to the left. It peters out next to a couple of parked cars. The top of the frame slices off the bodies of the cars, and the road itself, blocking off any possible view of the horizon. All is gray here, except for the trails of water that catch a steely blue and white tone, along with the faintest of pinks, as they reflect the sky cast down onto the rough texture of concrete. But no sky is visible here; the image is covered head to toe in cement.

The final two-page spread of Nakahira's "City III" offers an even dimmer vision. The photograph at left shows the façade of a building, at a slightly oblique angle. Some plants cling to the outside, but they are no more than small incidents on the blank expanse of concrete that sits squarely in the middle of the frame. The photograph printed next to it could have been shot in the same location. Like the photograph of the water trail, the camera points down to the ground. This time, though, there is no hint of color from above. A manhole cover offers the only visual incident of note: it is covered with a white powder marked by a single black tire track—an indexical monochrome in miniature. Both photographs are bathed in the harsh and uniform light of a flash, which, at left, illuminates patches where the concrete wall has been worn away over time. Outside the areas illuminated by flash, darkness engulfs each

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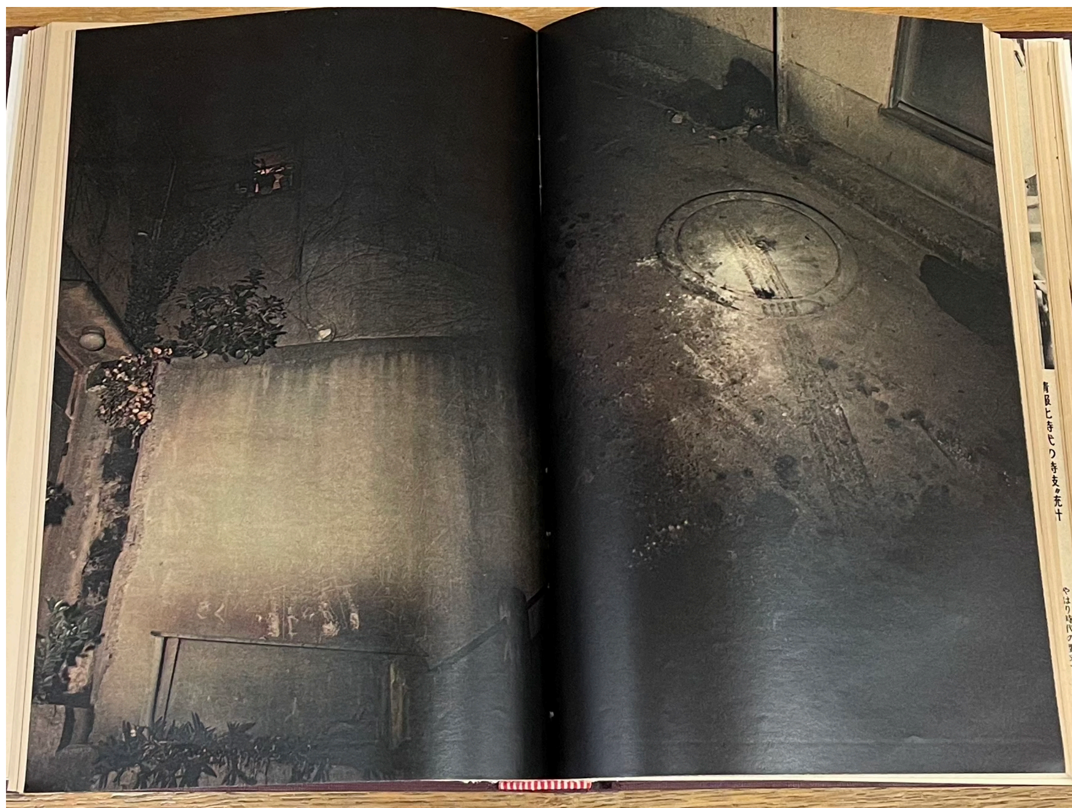
[12] This weekly series was called "Another Country." Nakahira contributed other installments aside from "City." During its run, "Another Country" featured photographers like Kitai Kazuo, Moriyama Daidō, and Watanabe Hitomi. The 1962 James Baldwin novel of the same title had been published in Japanese somewhat recently, in 1969.

photograph, creeping in either from the top or from the bottom, as if the photographer was fumbling through the dark and bumped up against these blank walls. The series ends here, flush up against these dead-ends, with no discernible way out.

Figure 81



Nakahira Takuma, from “City III,” published in *Asahi Journal*, March 17, 1972.

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Although Nakahira’s photographs were taken with color slide film, which is known for its brilliant colors, they are so desaturated that they express little more than concrete’s assorted shades of gray. The dullness of these photographs did not result from a technical limitation of *Asahi Journal*’s printing process; for example, the color photographs that Kitai

Kazuo published as part of the same series show a vivid range of hues.[13] Nakahira's desaturated palette, consistent across the three installments of "City," speaks instead to a reticence to engage with color. In Leslie Wilson's research on the relationship between black-and-white and color photography, she suggests that desaturation "might in fact reveal the effort to find a way to carry the gravitas historically associated with black-and-white into color."[14] Here, Nakahira holds color at bay, and shoves it into a dark urban muck: this is certainly not the clear photography that he was soon calling for. Although these photographs do not use *Provoke*'s signature photographic techniques of blur and grain, they persist with the point of view that Nakahira developed there, a perspective from which the gaze is blocked or thwarted at every turn. In this sense, the photographs still attempt to "carry the gravitas" of his earlier work.

Against the seriousness of monochrome photography, color was linked to commerce, advertising, and mass culture.[15] On the one hand, major photography magazines in Japan like *Asahi Camera* and *Camera Mainichi* ran at least a few color photographs in practically every issue from the mid-1960s on. However, almost without exception the major photobooks—in other words, the major artistic statements—of the time were published in black-and-white.[16] When photographers in Japan exhibited prints in galleries or museums, they also showed

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[13] See, in particular, Kitai's contribution to "Another Country" in the December 3, 1971 issue of *Asahi Journal*.

[14] Wilson, "Past Black and White: The Color of Photography in South Africa, 1994-2004," 159. Wilson continues: "It operates in the register of something like 'serious' color, as opposed to spectacular, seductive, or banal color." I thank Isabel Wade for the suggestion to look at Wilson's work.

[15] For a sweeping exploration of anxiety over color, see David Batchelor, *Chromophobia* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000). Here, Batchelor suggests that color has been historically suppressed on the grounds of its impurity, or because of its connection to corporeal—and thus vulgar—senses of pleasure.

[16] For example, in the 2009 compilation *Japanese Photobooks of the 1960s and '70s*, the only books shot largely in color are *28 Girls by Shinoyama Kishin* (1968) and *Nude* (1970), both by the commercial photographer Shinoyama Kishin.

monochrome work. All of the photographs shown in the 1974 exhibition "New Japanese Photography," held at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, were in black-and-white. By contrast, color photography "bore the taint of advertising and escapism," as Sally Stein has suggested was the case in the context of the prewar United States.[17] For example, in the 1967 feature on roughness and blur I discussed in Chapter 1, the examples of blur—brilliant color photographs of models wearing bright clothes—were shot by Tatsuki Yoshihiro, a leading commercial photographer of the day. In 1972, the commercial photographer Shinoyama Kishin was given an entire extra issue of *Asahi Camera*, to publish color nude photographs of a model named Marie in Hawaii; it seems likely that the magazine could afford to publish this special issue in full color because the highly salacious material guaranteed that it would recoup its printing costs. In fact, the predominance of black-and-white photobooks may simply relate to the sheer cost of printing in color, which would only help to cement color photography as a commercial form. Finally, the 1970 Osaka Expo, a symbol of national and commercial development, was a major impetus for the popularization of color television.[18]

A.K.A. Serial Killer, a 1969 documentary film made by some of Nakahira's close interlocutors, is a notable exception to the rule of black-and-white "gravitas" against color "escapism." The film is a somewhat abstract documentary, with no diegetic sound. Across its 90 minutes, it shows various places throughout Japan where Nagayama Norio—a 19-year-old arrested in 1969, for four murders by gunshot—grew up, lived and worked. Before his arrest, Nagayama had already crisscrossed the Japanese archipelago many times, running away from home on various occasions and then stringing together a series of itinerant jobs. Strictly

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[17] Sally Stein, "Toward a Full-Color Turn in the Optics of Modern History," *American Art* 29, no. 1 (2015): 16. Stein writes that because color techniques were associated with commerce, "it was that much harder for serious social photographers to feel comfortable using them."

[18] See Niwa Yoshiyuki, "Ushiyama Junichi — terebi ni mita 'yume,'" in *Banpaku to okinawa henkan — 1970 nen zengo*, ed. Yoshimi Shunya (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2015), 118. According to Niwa, the number of color television viewers in Japan overtook black-and-white by 1972, coincidentally the year of the televised Asama Sansō siege, which I discuss in Chapter 2.

following Nagayama's peregrinations, the filmmakers cut together a dizzying array of locations across the country. Although Adachi Masao is nominally credited as the director of *A.K.A. Serial Killer*, it was planned and filmed by a group who understood themselves working in an avant-garde mode.

As a result, the use of brilliant color in the film reads as a cynical exaggeration. In a later interview, Adachi said that the homogenized landscape he encountered throughout the making of the film had the beauty of a "picture postcard."[19] This remark points at once to the space of mass culture, and to color photography. It might have been outré to uncritically adopt color photography, especially of the highly saturated sort that appears throughout *A.K.A. Serial Killer*. When the filmmakers showed Japan's most postcard-friendly landscape, Mt. Fuji, they did not avoid an iconic composition, with the snow-covered peak of the mountain practically in the center of the frame, surrounded by blue sky. But the shot begins with the camera trained on heavy trucks rumbling down a road, before panning abruptly to the mountain—where the composition is nicked by three power lines at the upper left corner of the frame, and a smokestack intrudes into the view from the bottom. Here, the ultimate landscape that connotes "Japan," a landscape that is firmly part of the nationalist iconography, finds itself subject to incursions of industry.[20]

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[19] See Adachi Masao and Hirasawa Gō, *Eiga/kakumei* (Tokyo: Kawade Shobo Shinsha, 2003), 290.

[20] For a thorough iconographic history of Mt. Fuji in relation to the formation of the modern Japanese nation, see Kohara Masashi, *Visions of Fuji: An Incurable Malady of Modern Japan* (Shizuoka: Izu Photo Museum, 2011).

Figure 82

A.K.A. Serial Killer, 1969, dir. Adachi Masao

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The seemingly unstoppable expansion of capitalist development motivated "landscape theory," a cinematic discourse on state power and visuality that emerged in Japan at this time.[21] *A.K.A. Serial Killer* is the best-known film produced in accordance with this discourse. Matsuda Masao, a primary theorist of landscape theory, paid special attention to the flattening of urban and rural space. In "The City as Landscape," a 1971 essay that specifically addressed his participation in making *A.K.A. Serial Killer,* he wrote: "In the

[21] The Japanese term is *fūkeiron*.

center and in the provinces, in the cities and in the far-flung places, and finally in 'Tokyo' and in the 'hometown,' there is now only a homogenized landscape."[22] These pairs were clearly differentiated in terms of their political and economic power, so their collapse into a "homogenized landscape" was no equal mixing. Matsuda wrote that "monopolized economic growth exposes us to increased homogenization, which takes the Japanese archipelago as a gigantic city."[23] Landscape theory was a way to theorize relations of power inside Japan, understanding the urban—and, above all, Tokyo—as the dominant subject. For Matsuda, it "was not possible to find the 'hometown' where Nagayama Norio grew up. We could only see little 'Tokyos.'"[24] As Tokyo replicated itself throughout the nation, it erased any heterogeneity it encountered.

Nakahira was a key figure in the discourse of landscape theory from its inception, and Matsuda himself called Nakahira its true "firestarter."[25] Around 1970, Nakahira published various black-and-white photographic series that thematized urban landscape, including a collaboration with Matsuda that was simply called "Landscape."[26] When he started to publish work in color, it is perhaps not a surprise that his photographs held color itself at bay; after all, *A.K.A. Serial Killer* only employed it in an exaggerated, cynical mode. Nakahira had

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[22] Matsuda Masao, "Fūkei toshite no toshi," in *Fūkei no shimetsu* (Tokyo: Kōshisha, 2013), 26. Matsuda's essay has been recently translated into English; see Franz Prichard, "Introduction to 'City as Landscape' (1970) by Matsuda Masao (1933–2020)," *ARTMargins* 10, no. 1 (April 30, 2021): 60–66.

[23] Matsuda, "Fūkei toshite no toshi," 26.

[24] Matsuda, 26.

[25] Matsuda Masao, "Fūkeiron no kiten," in *Fūkei no shimetsu* (Tokyo: Kōshisha, 2013), 308. One of the central texts on landscape theory is a roundtable discussion held in 1970, in which Nakahira participated alongside Matsuda, Adachi and others. See Nakahira Takuma et al., "Fukei wo megutte," *Kikan Shashin Eizo*, no. 6 (October 1970): 118–34. For a discussion of Nakahira in relation to landscape theory, see Gō Hirasawa, "Landscape Theory: Post-68 Revolutionary Cinema in Japan" (Ph.D. diss, Leiden University and Université Sorbonne Nouvelle - Paris 3, 2021), 86–88.

[26] In 1971, the pair collaborated on a series across various issues of the film magazine *Eiga Hihyō*, in which Nakahira published his black-and-white urban photographs alongside Matsuda's texts on landscape. Nakahira and Matsuda also published a conversation in the magazine *KEN*. See Nakahira Takuma and Matsuda Masao, "Sōtō no hebi ni," *KEN*, no. 2 (1971): 140–57.

already hinted at his approach to color in an extremely favorable review of Agnes Varda's *Le Bonheur*, in which he spent a paragraph describing the beauty of this film's color photography. He wrote: "Everything here is, truly, beautiful—but the more beautiful it is, the more that it starts to look like the peak of sorrow."[27] Clearly, one way to maintain some critical distance was to exaggerate color, in the manner of *A.K.A. Serial Killer* and *Le Bonheur*. Against the mode of exaggeration, Nakahira simply pushed color down altogether; "City" offered a dim view of urban development.

The Method of the "Illustrated Reference Book"

"Why an Illustrated Botanical Reference Book?" departed from a critique of the modern subject, which Nakahira described in terms similar to landscape theory. Just as Tokyo projected itself onto rural areas in Japan, the subject projected an image of itself onto the world. This essay was prompted by a letter to the editor of *Bijutsu Techō* in response to "The Illusion Called Document," from a student who said that Nakahira had gone too far in criticizing his photographs from around the time of *Provoke*, and who wondered why he was more invested in writing criticism than in taking photographs.[28] "Why an Illustrated Botanical Reference Book?" appeared in a volume of the same title that collected his essays, practically all of which had already appeared in other publications.[29]

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[27] See Nakahira Takuma, "Fukahi tekina miburi toshite no eiga," in *Naze, shokubutsu zukan ka: Nakahira Takuma eizō ronshū* (Tokyo: Shobunsha, 1973), 140. This article was originally published in October 1970.

[28] See Yoshikawa Tomoo, "Nakahira Takuma ni mukete," *Bijutsu Techō*, September 1972.

[29] Nakahira Takuma, *Naze, shokubutsu zukan ka: Nakahira Takuma eizō ronshū* (Tokyo: Shobunsha, 1973). Within the Japanese-language publishing industry, it remains common for an author to collect their previously published columns or articles into a single volume, often with one newly-written essay, sometimes an introduction or afterword. "Why an Illustrated Botanical Reference Book?" was a new essay that Nakahira published in this volume.

In the essay, Nakahira described art from the Renaissance on as a regime in which "the artist, in other words the subject" projects their *a priori* image of the world onto the world.[30] The end result of this regime was a "distortion and anthropomorphization of the world," and by making the world itself into an object, Nakahira argued that the modern subject effected its "transformation into private property."[31] Nakahira found this dynamic within the camera itself, which he wrote "objectifies everything; by separating itself at a distance from me, it makes the world into an object."[32] As such, the camera produces a possessive relationship to the world; it exemplifies the dualism of subject and object, which Nakahira called the "foundational logic of modernity."[33] Against the idea that subjects can possess the world, he claimed that it was time to accept that there is an unbridgeable divide between the "here" of human experience and the "there" of the world, because the world always lies beyond the subject's image of it. Nakahira went further, claiming that "this means accepting the defeat of the human by the world," a defeat that must be the starting point from which to re-conceive artistic production.[34] Again, Nakahira put his own work under the knife, and criticized his *Provoke* photographs as a prime example of the problem he described. He criticized the "poesy" of this work, which he now saw as nothing more than the projection of his own self onto the world.

Nakahira put forward the "illustrated reference book" as a way to dissolve this old and possessive idea of human-centered vision. Nakahira pointed to French *nouveau roman*

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[30] Nakahira, "Naze, shokubutsu zukan ka," 1973, 14.

[31] Nakahira, 12. This unilateral vision, he wrote, makes the world into a tool for human use.

[32] Nakahira, 24. In Japanese, "objectifies" is *taishōka*, and "object" is *kyakutai*.

[33] Nakahira, 25.

[34] Nakahira, 16. In a similar vein, Yuriko Furuhata writes that landscape theory tried to move away from "the anthropocentric figure of the subject" as the center of filmmaking. Yuriko Furuhata, "Returning to Actuality: Fûkeiron and the Landscape Film," *Screen* 48, no. 3 (September 21, 2007): 361.

writers—J.M.G. Le Clézio and Alain Robbe-Grillet, in particular—as worthy models of contemporary artistic production. He was interested in this literary movement because it pursued unemotional, objective description, which Nakahira called "a way of thinking that accords absolutely with concrete reality."[35] Attempting to find a photographic equivalent to the decentered authorial mode of the *nouveau roman* writers, Nakahira arrived at the "illustrated reference book" because of its extreme visual clarity: "If it has even the slightest bit of vagueness, it does not fulfill the function of an illustrated reference book."[36] No emotions of any kind can be there—and not even any shadows. Following Le Clézio's dictum that things are scarier in the daylight because they appear in all of their clarity, Nakahira wrote that he would now photograph in daylight because that is where "things appear as they are."[37] According to Nakahira, an illustrated reference book simply juxtaposes things as they are, side by side.[38] And so, he went on, that method had to become his own.

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[35] Nakahira, "Naze, shokubutsu zukan ka," 1973, 18. For Nakahira, these writers showed what could result if artists eliminated human projections from their work. Rejecting the label "work" in favor of "text" or "event," Nakahira claimed that the *nouveau roman* writers allowed the structure of the world to come through the things that they did. In denying themselves the comfort of subjective expression, he wrote, these writers themselves were opened up.

[36] Nakahira, 31. Franz Prichard has described Nakahira's position in terms of "decentering." Prichard, *Residual Futures: The Urban Ecologies of Literary and Visual Media of 1960s and 1970s Japan*, 118. See also Stuart Hall's description of Althusser as, in part, a project of decentering the human. Stuart Hall, *Cultural Studies 1983: A Theoretical History* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2016), 100.

[37] Nakahira, "Naze, shokubutsu zukan ka," 1973, 23.

[38] I have chosen to translate the Japanese word *zukan* (図鑑) as "illustrated reference book." Most scholars writing on Nakahira in English have translated it as either "illustrated encyclopedia" or "illustrated dictionary." The etymological emphasis of the word *zukan* falls on the pictorial, without specific reference to encyclopedias or dictionaries, which in English, at least, call to mind large books filled with text. However, no translator would render the English words "encyclopedia" or "dictionary" in Japanese as *zukan*. In any case, most encyclopedias have some illustrations, so it is almost a tautology to speak of an "illustrated encyclopedia." In a *zukan*, pictures take precedence over text, so I use "illustrated reference book" in the hope of maintaining this emphasis on visual illustration. The volume and breadth of books published in Japanese even today under the heading *zukan* goes far beyond the domain of thick tomes; this category also encompasses quite playful guides to animals, trains, science, and so on. The term "picture book" could even be appropriate, and Nakahira does speak of *zukan* in relation to books for children.

Whether an illustrated reference book actually looks like this or not, Nakahira took it as the example of impartial, un-subjective, un-artistic perception on which to base his photographic methodology. In order to realize the "illustrated botanical reference book," Nakahira wrote that he would leave behind black-and-white film and switch to color. This was not because of any intrinsic quality of color film, but because if he used color film he could simply drop it off at a lab, and thereby cut out the pesky intervention of his own hand in the darkroom—the hand, of course, being "the thing on which art is developed."[39] At this point in the essay, Nakahira's rhetoric took a particularly strident tone, declaiming the absolutely un-subjective qualities of this method. Nakahira's writerly zeal is surely one reason that the essay remains so widely read to this day. But it seems quixotic, at best, to suggest that using color film somehow excises the photographer's subjectivity from the photographic process.

In calling for photography to model itself on an illustrated botanical reference book, Nakahira was tilting at the windmill called realism. As I described in Chapter 1, Nakahira had already criticized the dominant trend of photographic realism in postwar Japan, championed by the photographer Domon Ken. In epistemological terms, Domon's realism grounded itself in a stable relationship between language and the world. This relationship was precisely what Nakahira had attempted to explode, or go beyond, with *Provoke*. But if Domon's linguistic realism was still anathema to Nakahira, the idea of the "botanical reference book," with its more scientific connotations, moves in a different direction. Given Nakahira's call to remove subjectivity and emotion from the picture, it calls to mind the German photographers associated with New Objectivity, in particular Albert Renger-Patzsch and Karl Blossfeldt.

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[39] Nakahira, "Naze, shokubutsu zukan ka," 1973, 33. Nakahira continued on, in the mode of a phenomenologist: "The hand—that is to say, the other within the self."

Figures 83 and 84

Albert Renger-Patzsch, *A Road in the Ruhrgebiet*, 1927.

Albert Renger-Patzsch, *Sempervivum percarneum*, 1922/23.

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Renger-Patzsch praised photographers who used “photographic technique” to bring forth the “objectivity of its representations.”[40] In his work, Renger-Patzsch made extremely precise photographs that are almost always ordered by straight vertical and horizontal lines. For example, in his 1927 photograph *A Road in the Ruhrgebiet*, a wide road extends towards the horizon in the distance. Renger-Patzsch has framed the scene in order to emphasize the geometrical regularity of the horizontal and vertical axes. While the straight poles of two traffic signs orient the photograph vertically, various horizontal lines—a furrow or road that runs across the background, the place where the road cuts off as it dips over a hill, and countless striations on the surface of the road itself—keep the photograph straight. Renger-Patzsch also photographed plants, such as in *Sempervivum percarneum*, 1922/23. Here, the succulent extends out from the exact center of the photograph, in a regular pattern. Renger-Patzsch photographs this plant as a mathematical fractal, proof of a clear form in nature.[41]

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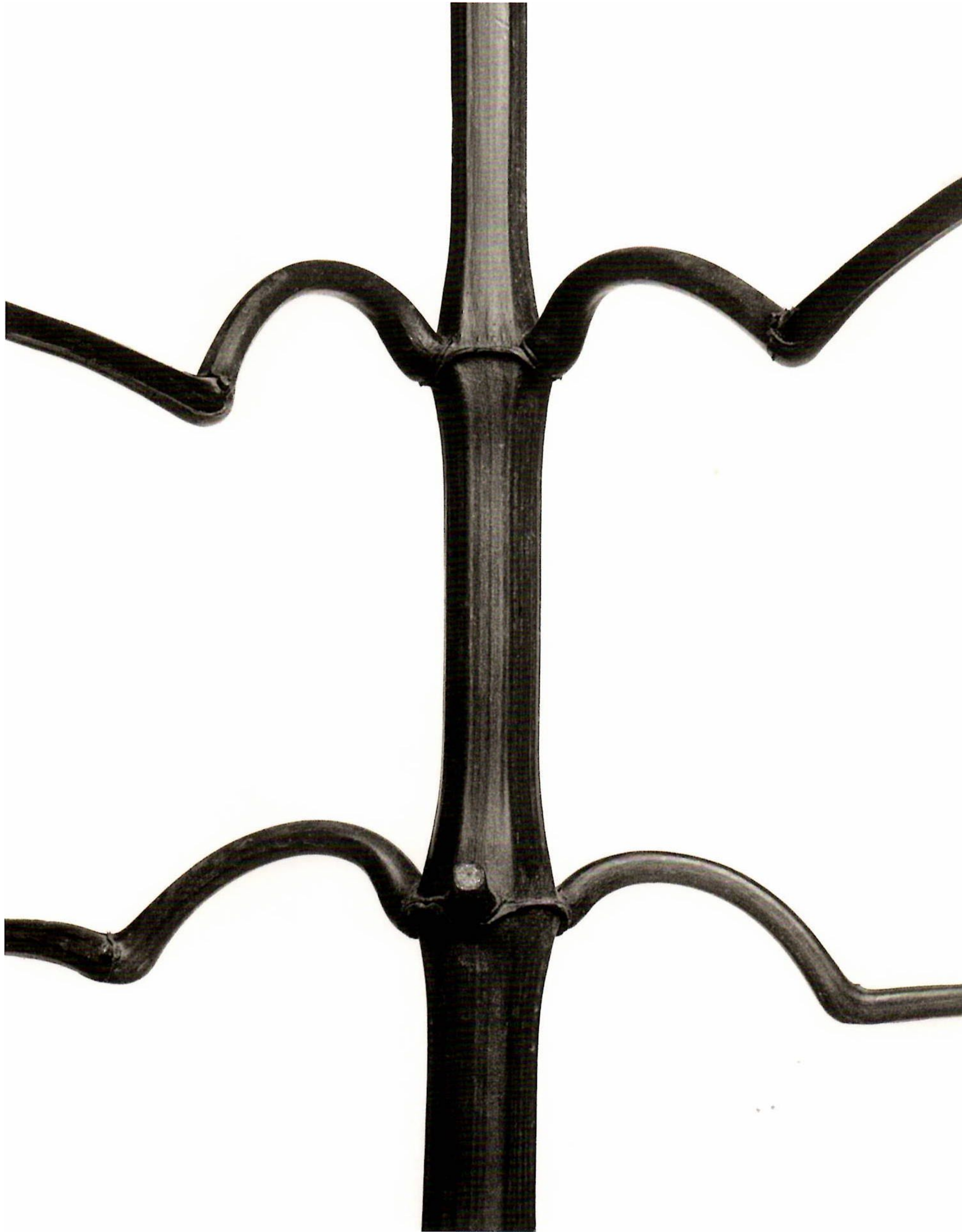
[40] Albert Renger-Patzsch, “Joy Before the Object [1928],” in *Photography in the Modern Era: European Documents and Critical Writings, 1913-1940*, ed. Christopher Phillips, trans. Joel Agee (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Aperture, 1989), 108.

[41] Renger-Patzsch wrote: “Nature, after all, is not so poor that she requires constant improvement.” Renger-Patzsch, 109.

Figure 85



Karl Blossfeldt, *Himalayan Balsam, Leaf Nodes*, circa 1930.

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Plants were the primary subject matter of Karl Blossfeldt, a German art teacher who used photography to make visible the details of botanical life as a tool for drawing and sculpture. Blossfeldt was a contemporary of Renger-Patzsch, but he did not think of photography in the same mode of objectivity. Nevertheless, his photographs show plants in what seem to be extremely simple forms, and the title of his first book, *Art Forms in Nature*, suggests a correspondence between the botanical and artistic worlds. In Blossfeldt's photograph of a Himalayan balsam, for example, the branches of this plant extend outwards from the central stem, which runs straight up and down the photograph's central axis. The curvature of each branch is echoed by its counterpart on the other side of the stem. Blossfeldt picked most of his plants in fields around his Berlin home, making small trips to the countryside areas to do so. Once he found a plant that interested him, he would make extensive return trips, in order to seek out an ideal specimen.[42] Blossfeldt manipulated his plants extensively in order to prepare them for being photographed. In the case of the Himalayan balsam, a botanist has commented that this stem "had most of its parts removed before the picture was taken."[43]

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[42] One commentator has suggested that the "reason why he kept hunting for new specimens of a particular plant would seem to be that he was searching for the archetype of the living plant." Hans Christian Adam, "Between Ornament and New Objectivity: The Plant Photography of Karl Blossfeldt," in *Karl Blossfeldt*, ed. Hans Christian Adam (Cologne: Taschen, 1999), 33.

[43] Hansjörg Küster, "Botanical Notes," in *Karl Blossfeldt: Masterworks*, by Karl Blossfeldt, ed. Ann Wilde and Jürgen Wilde, trans. James Grieg (New York: D.A.P./Distributed Art Publishers, 2017), 155.

Figure 86

Nakahira Takuma, from "Botanical Reference Book," published in *Design*, July 1973.

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In 1973, Nakahira did publish a series of photographs under the title of "Illustrated Botanical Reference Book," across eight pages of the magazine *Design*.[44] In photographic terms, the essay "Why an Illustrated Botanical Reference Book?" proposed a photography that was to ruthlessly pursue clarity, use color film in bright daylight, and represent things as they are, without any emotion or vagueness. All 11 of the photographs in *Design* were, at least, in color. Yet it would be a stretch to claim that they lived up to the stringent requirements that Nakahira had laid out in his essay. One spread from the magazine shows an extremely murky pair of photographs. On the right, the flash of the camera bounces off a

[44] The series ran in the July issue of the magazine.

pane of glass, revealing an untold number of heavy scratches and smudges. The light still travels through the glass, and falls on the somewhat distended, tired-looking white body of a shark on the other side. The left side of the frame rudely decapitates the hapless fish. This is, in no sense, a photograph that might be used as the illustration of a reference book entry for "shark." The photograph at left returns Nakahira to a favored setting, the nighttime urban landscape. Here, vines crawl across a building, mingling with the power lines that run across the building's surface. This extremely murky photograph, practically submerged in darkness, does not come close to meeting the technical side of Nakahira's essay, published a few months prior. In fact, this exact spread had already appeared in one of Nakahira's installments of "City" the year before.[45]

Clearly, the method of the "illustrated botanical reference book" did not mean that Nakahira would only take photographs of plants; the vines that appear in the left of Figure 86 are some of the only vegetation to appear in the series. Leaving aside Nakahira's photographs for a moment, the idea of the "botanical" that the essay articulated opened up on to a much stranger and wider terrain. There, Nakahira attempted to develop an idea of realism that was much more complex than the simple negation of subjectivity, or the pursuit of objectivity. In this regard, it is worth recalling that Walter Benjamin arrived at the idea of photography as an "optical unconscious" in his discussion of Karl Blossfeldt; in other words, he already saw that plants do not necessarily lead to a clearly delineated vision of the world.[46]

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[45] This spread originally appeared in the February 11, 1972 issue of *Asahi Journal*. Towards the end of the sequence in *Design*, Nakahira also reproduced the photograph of a gray wall [Figure 81] that he had shown before, in "City III." Other photographs in the sequence had already been published in other magazines. For reproductions of Nakahira's magazine work, see Nakahira, *Toshi fūkei zukan*.

[46] Walter Benjamin, "Little History of Photography," in *Selected Writings*, ed. Marcus Paul Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter, vol. 2 (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), 512.

Lee Ufan and Encounter

Seeming to contradict the stringent requirements of the illustrated reference book, the essay also developed a corporeal and more explicitly phenomenological line of thinking around the photographer. The challenge of “Why an Illustrated Botanical Reference Book?” was to find a mode of looking beyond the duality of subject and object, in which the former assimilates the latter to it as property. The *nouveau roman* writers resolved this question by dissolving the authorial subject entirely, leaving behind only things themselves.[47] In calling for a photography modeled on an “illustrated reference book,” it might seem that Nakahira was following suit. And yet, just after he claimed that the camera “objectifies everything,” Nakahira wrote: “However, looking cannot happen from a place split off from the body.”[48] Soon after, he suggested: “To look is also to expose the self to the gaze of the other.”[49] For all the appeal of photographing *á la nouveau roman*, Nakahira did not argue for a complete negation of the photographer. Rather than a straightforwardly antihuman position, he explored the body as a site of relationality between the self and the world.

Phenomenology was thus a major component of the essay, and in this regard Nakahira’s relationship to Lee Ufan is highly significant. Among many other exhibitions, Lee showed his work in the 1971 Paris Biennial, where Nakahira had displayed *Circulation*. Nakahira’s ideas in “Why an Illustrated Botanical Reference Book?” align with the core contentions of Lee’s theoretical essays from the early 1970s. This is not a matter of coincidence, given the personal relationship between Lee and Nakahira. When Nakahira critiqued art as a “distortion and anthropomorphization of the world,” this resonated with a

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[47] Albert Renger-Patzsch had originally wanted to give his book *The World is Beautiful* the title *Things*, but this was rejected by its publisher. See Adam, “Between Ornament and New Objectivity: The Plant Photography of Karl Blossfeldt,” 151.

[48] Nakahira, “Naze, shokubutsu zukan ka,” 1973, 25.

[49] Nakahira, 25.

central insight of Lee's writings. The idea of things appearing "as they are," too, recalls one of Lee's consistent refrains. Finally, Nakahira also suggested that "the process of unlimited 'encounter' must replace our conventional artistic practice."[50] Here, he echoed Lee's most fundamental concept.

Across various essays, Lee has offered many explanations of encounter. In the main, though, Lee's notion of encounter refers to an experience in which a human—sometimes called a "viewer," sometimes a "creator"—is radically opened up to the world, and in doing so enters an intersubjective moment of transcendence. Based on Lee's study of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Martin Heidegger, and the Japanese philosopher Nishida Kitarō, encounter was a thoroughly corporeal and phenomenological concept. In the essay "In Search of Encounter," which first appeared in a 1970 issue of *Bijutsu Techō*, Lee wrote: "'Encounter' is the moment and place of consciousness (nirvana) in which a person transcends 'man,' contacted and fascinated by the vividness of the world itself as it is."[51] This experience "of the world itself as it is" brought back an embodied mode of perception which he claimed had been foreclosed by modernity.[52] Lee argued that what people thought of as their authentic experience was only their experience of concepts invented by humans. He railed against the anthropomorphization and objectification of the world, comparing these processes at one point to colonization itself.[53] Calling his own time "the age of reification," Lee wrote that people no longer had direct access to their own bodily experience—even sex was mystified.[54] For Lee, encounter was a way to overcome this indirectness of the modern world and return to the body.

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[50] Nakahira, 16.

[51] Lee, "Deai o motomete," February 1970, 17.

[52] Lee, 17.

[53] Lee, 14.

[54] Lee, 15.

Lee was not optimistic about the situation of art: "The artistic world produced through the operations of representation lacks, precisely, directness and the living flesh of corporeality; it is only an indirect world, which supports emptiness and despondency."[55] He criticized contemporary artists, such as Robert Smithson and Claes Oldenburg, for projecting their own preconceived ideas about the world through their work. In valuing flesh, Lee was in dialogue with the thinkers that I introduced in Chapter 1; like the critic Hyūga Akiko, Lee also grouped together student protestors and Japanese hippies among those who felt the political challenge of the day in their bodies, and were struggling to liberate themselves on those terms.[56] At the same time, Lee's critique of contemporary visual culture as offering only "an indirect world" resonated with the media theory that I described in Chapter 2. Lee took his own interest in politics; after moving to Japan in 1956, he participated for some time in Korean unification organizations.[57]

In a 1971 essay titled "Introduction to a Phenomenology of Encounter: In Preparation for a New Theory of Art," Lee stressed the deep importance of the body to his idea of encounter. Again, Lee critiqued the modern paradigm of objectification, which only results in the reification of experience. For Lee, "objectivist epistemology" was only interested in "researching the objective facts of things, and empirically cutting out their forms."[58] This description recalls Renger-Patzsch's photography; against this rational epistemology, Lee discussed encounter as a contingent relation of a body to a particular place and moment. Drawing on Merleau-Ponty, Lee wrote that "the question is the relationship between the

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[55] Lee, 15–16.

[56] Lee, 16.

[57] See Mika Yoshitake, "Lee Ufan and the Art of Mono-Ha in Postwar Japan (1968–1972)" (Ph.D. diss, University of California, Los Angeles, 2012), 75.

[58] Lee Ufan, "Deai no genshōgaku josetsu — atarashī geijutsuron no junbi no tame ni," in *Deai o motomete: atarashī geijutsu no hajimari ni* (Tokyo: Tabata Shoten, 1971), 223–24. In this sense, he continues Merleau-Ponty's critique of Cartesian rationalism.

human and the world."[59] Lee pointed to an internal contradiction, that humans can both mediate the world and be mediated by it. Encounter specifies the moment and place of mutual mediation: there, it is not just that the human is open to the world, but that the world is open to the human. For Lee, only the body itself could function as this "ambiguous" term of mediation.[60] As the essay went on, and he turned to questions of artistic production, Lee went even further in the direction of a corporeal thought. Towards the end of the essay, he wrote that "expression is actually the expression of the body."[61] Lee's central idea of the "world itself as it is" seems closely aligned with realism. But here, access to the world does not arrive through an abstract idea like language, or objectivity. Instead, it arrives through the mediation of the body, in all of its phenomenological ambiguity.

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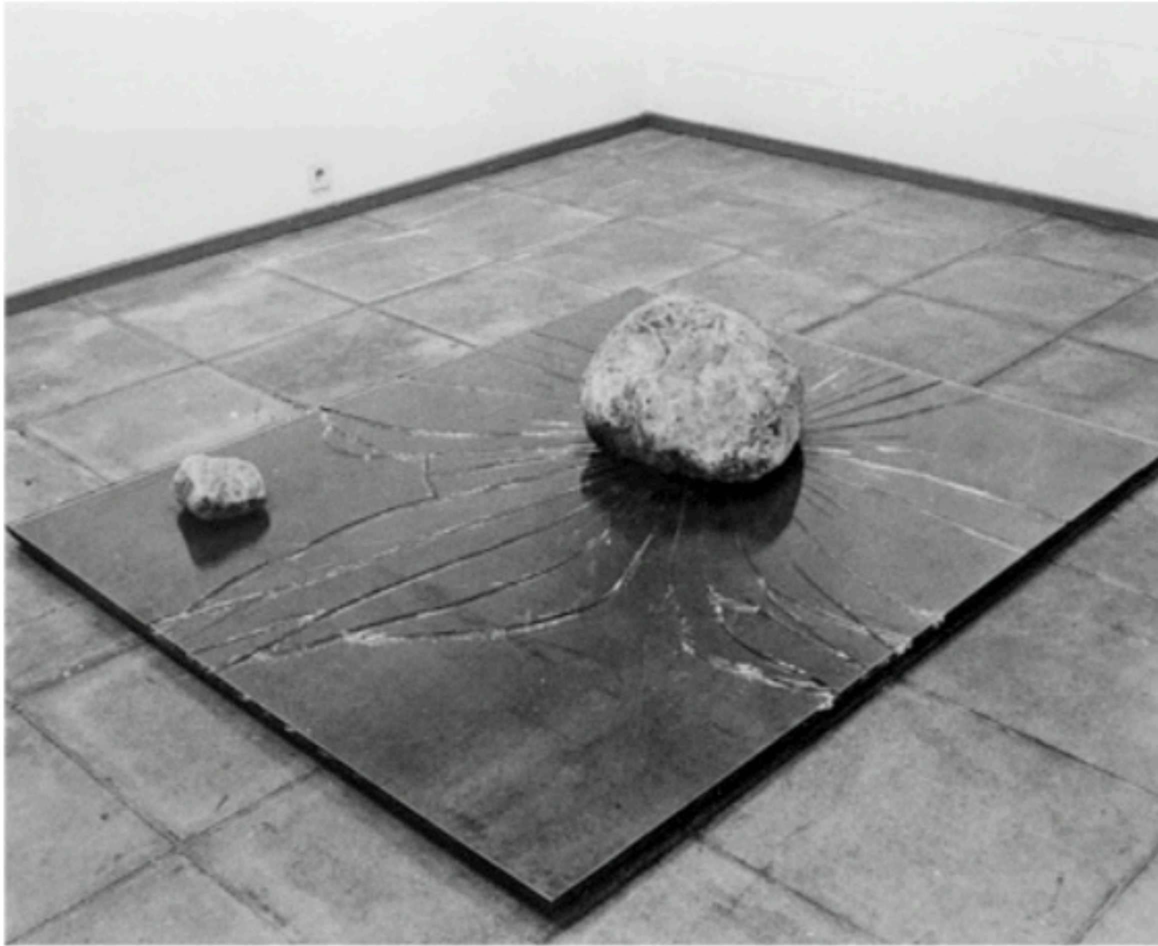
[59] Lee, 229.

[60] Lee, 230.

[61] Lee, 244.

Figure 87



Lee Ufan, *Phenomena and Perception B* (later re-titled *Relatum*), 1971. Stones, steel plate, and glass. Installation view, 1971 Paris Biennale.

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Lee's own work ran against the language-based mode of conceptual art that I discussed in Chapter 3. His most iconic work from this period, a stone placed on a sheet of cracked glass, was originally titled *Phenomena and Perception B*—an obvious reference to Merleau-Ponty.[62] Naming the work in this way firmly positioned it outside of the realm of

[62] This work, along with many of Lee's other early works, was later re-named *Relatum*.

process art, or mechanically indexical procedures. Although the cracked glass seems to track the force with which the stone was placed on it, that is hardly a predictable index. If anything, the uncontrollable breaking of the glass points back to Marcel Duchamp's *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass)*, famously shattered in transport in 1926 and happily left in this state by the artist.[63] Lee showed *Phenomena and Perception B* in Paris at the 1971 Biennale, and Nakahira photographed the work as part of *Circulation*. [Figure 78] In recent years, Lee has related an anecdote about the Paris installation. "When I brought the stone in to the site of the 1971 Paris Biennale," he said, "more than a few people asked me somewhat ironically: 'did you make this yourself?' I wanted to say that a thing which they could never become exists, but they could not understand this."[64] In this way, Lee keenly draws a line between his own work and the practice of his contemporaries. In "Introduction to a Phenomenology of Encounter," Lee did not discuss his own work, or attempt to situate it as an ideal realization of encounter. *Phenomena and Perception B* cannot legislate its reception, but it seems to present an analogy of what encounter might look like.

Many of Lee's important writings, including the two essays that I have cited here, appeared in his 1971 volume *In Search of Encounter*—a publication for which Nakahira is credited as the book designer.[65] While the text of the essays is laid out in a more or less

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[63] Looking at the *Large Glass* in 1956, Duchamp remarked: "I like the cracks, the way they fall. You remember how it happened in 1926, in Brooklyn? They put the two panes on top of one another on a truck, flat, not knowing what they were carrying, and bounced for sixty miles into Connecticut, and that's the result! But the more I look at it the more I like the cracks: they are not like shattered glass. They have a shape. There is a symmetry in the cracking, the two crackings are symmetrically arranged and there is more, almost an intention there, an extra—a curious intention that I am not responsible for, a ready-made intention, in other words, that I respect and love." Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson, eds., "Edited Version of 'A Conversation with Marcel Duchamp,' Television Interview Conducted by James Johnson Sweeney, NBC, January 1956," in *The Essential Writings of Marcel Duchamp: Salt Seller*, by Marcel Duchamp (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975), 127.

[64] Lee, "Intabyū: Ri Ufan," 135.

[65] To the best of my knowledge, *In Search of Encounter* and the cover of the catalog of "Between Man and Matter" are Nakahira's only credited design work. As I indicated in Chapter 1, it is also likely that Nakahira designed the cover of *Provoke*.

standard format, the title of the book on the cover is written is a thick typeface, almost approaching a calligraphic style. Strangely, the spacing between some characters is uneven—note the gap between 出 and 会 compared with the compressed distance between 求 and め. The last character of Lee's own name, 煥, also appears out of joint with the preceding two characters. The correspondence between Nakahira and Lee goes beyond this collaboration; the two had a more personal relationship. *In Search of Encounter* was published in January 1971, well before the Paris Biennale, and in a 2003 interview, Lee recounted that he had met Nakahira some years before they connected in Paris.[66] Lee had been invited to work on a new magazine with Nakahira, Taki Kōji and the graphic designer Kimura Tsunehisa, but the plans fell through.[67] Lee has also described his personal resonance between him and Nakahira, noting that they could always talk very smoothly. Lee said that this is because their own strangeness matched up well: although Lee spoke Japanese well, he had been born in Korea under Japanese colonial rule, and he felt a discomfort in Japan. Lee described Nakahira as physically weak, always a little scared, and somewhat difficult to get along with. In that sense, Lee said that "somewhere, there was the consciousness that we were of the same type."[68]

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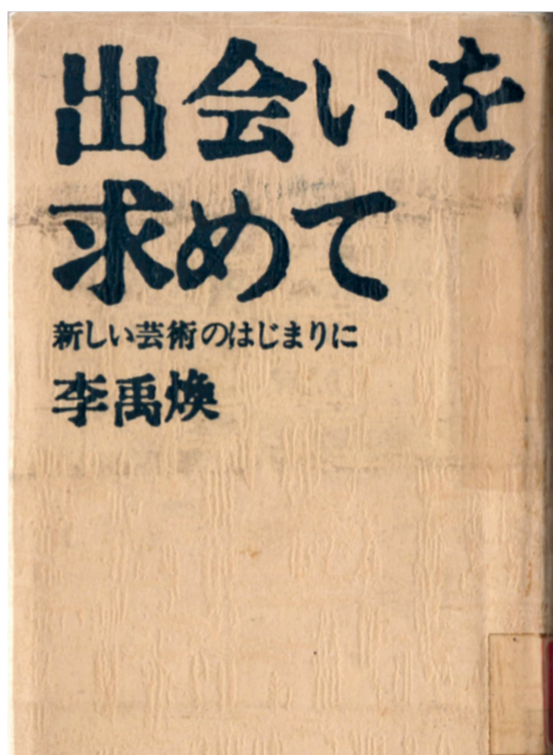
[66] This interview specifically addresses Lee's relationship to Nakahira. To the best of my knowledge, Nakahira never discussed his relationship with Lee in print.

[67] See Lee, "Intabyū: Ri Ufan," 132. I mention Kimura's work briefly in Chapter 2.

[68] Lee, 133.

Figure 88



Cover of Lee Ufan, *In Search of Encounter*. Tokyo: Tabata Shoten, 1971. Book design: Nakahira Takuma.

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Curiously, Lee also noted that Nakahira offered him some frank advice about his artistic theory. Lee recalls that when he spoke about wanting to "remove the image" and access things directly, Nakahira told him, "Lee, that's impossible!"[69] Based on a cursory reading of "Why an Illustrated Botanical Reference Book?" and "In Search of Encounter," it might seem that the putative roles of each artist are reversed here. After all, Nakahira appears to be the more dogmatic of the two, setting out strict rules for his photographic practice, while Lee is more fundamentally open to the ambiguity of the body. But Nakahira's own

[69] Lee, 134.

essay also incorporates this ambiguity, very much in the mode of Lee's own investigations. Such ambiguity may go against the idea of the illustrated reference book—but it comes from the notion of the botanical, a concept advertised in the title of the essay.

Botanical Likeness

Notions of encounter appear in "Why an Illustrated Botanical Reference Book?" precisely through the category of the botanical. Lee's phenomenology helps to answer the question: why an illustrated *botanical* reference book? In short, plants themselves come to analogize a corporeal and ambiguous relationality. In explaining his interest in plants, Nakahira once again positions the body as the key site of his practice:

> So, why plants? Why an illustrated botanical reference book and not an illustrated animal reference book or an illustrated mineral reference book? Animals stink too much of life, while from the very beginning, minerals flaunt their sternness of the beyond. Plants sit just in the middle of these two. Veins, sap, and so on: they still retain something that resembles our own flesh. In other words, they are organic bodies. From an intermediary position, they leap impulsively and sink into me—such are plants. They still retain some sort of vagueness. To grasp the vagueness of plants means just barely marking out the boundary between plants and myself. That is my secret conception of the illustrated botanical reference book.[70]

In light of what has come before, Nakahira's interest in the "vagueness" of plants sounds contradictory. After all, he has spent the bulk of the essay praising extreme clarity, which the "illustrated reference book" seems to pursue with single-minded focus: by Nakahira's own definition, it is opposed to ambiguity. And yet—plants ground this methodology, *even though* they push Nakahira to use words like "vagueness" and "intermediary." The very reason for turning to plants, then, seems to undermine the rest of the essay, which might help to explain why no existing scholarship engages with the idea of the botanical. For all its rhetoric of

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[70] Nakahira, "Naze, shokubutsu zukan ka," 1973, 32.

clarity, a deep ambivalence lurks within this text. Why does this apparently strict essay deviate so oddly at its very core?

"Why an Illustrated Botanical Reference Book?" is concerned primarily with the relationship between subject and object. In a somewhat oblique fashion, Nakahira argues that bodies mediate the relationship of subject and object, drawing these two binarily opposed terms together. Nakahira's argument is oblique because he does not say this directly, but instead argues it through turning to plants as an analogy of the human body. After all, he claims, "they still retain something that resembles our own flesh." Because they are "organic bodies," plants blur the stark divisions between subject and object, self and other, here and there. Their resemblance to human flesh, which is the source of their "vagueness," leads Nakahira to suggest that there is a "boundary between plants and myself" that can just barely be discerned. Sometimes, it seems, plants disregard this boundary altogether: "From an intermediary position, they leap impulsively and sink into me—such are plants." This phenomenologically rich description takes the body as permeable, open to be mediated by plants. This discourse stands in marked contrast to Nakahira's description of the camera, a machine that only produces clear divisions.

This explains why Nakahira does not call for a photography *of* vegetation; instead, the very corporeality, and "intermediary position" of plants becomes an analogy for the body of the photographer. While Nakahira says that he is able to establish the boundary between plants and himself, this is only "just barely" possible. Recall Nakahira's claim that "the process of unlimited 'encounter' must replace our conventional artistic practice." The experience of *encountering* plants thus becomes the basis for his photographic looking—looking being something that "cannot happen from a place split off from the body." This means always understanding the body of the photographer in relation to an other whose boundaries are unclear. Plants complicate or frustrate the tendency to determine whether

something is “the same” or “different” from the self. So for all of the apparent clarity that Nakahira’s essay appeared to gain by attacking subjectivity, he was after a more entangled relationship between subject and object, figured materially by plants as bodies. When Nakahira wrote that “to look is to expose the self to the gaze of the other,” this was a call to re-think seeing on terms that would push the subject to give up the possessive power of identification. To do so required the sort of bodily encounter that Lee had spent so much energy describing.

In this sense, the essay diverges quite dramatically from well-known theories of photographic realism. In one breath, Nakahira calls for an unsubjective, unsparingly clear mode of photography—and in the very next, says that the “vagueness” of plants its “secret conception.” What do these contradictory impulses do to the notion of subject and object in photography? Could Lee’s idea of encounter hold up as a photographic method? In other words, could a theory of photographic realism ground itself in the phenomenological intermediacy of a body, fully accounting for its intersubjectivity? Even leaving aside Lee’s contention that “expression is actually the expression of the body,” doesn’t the “illustrated botanical reference book” method position the body of the photographer—not the camera, or the eye, or the finger on the shutter—at the center of photography? Or, even more strangely, that as a system for producing infinite encounter, photography might always be corporeal?

Seen a bit more schematically, Nakahira proposes decentering the subject to make room for the object, which “sinks into” an intermediary, mediating term—a body. This body is drawn into an analogical relationship with plants, but these are not taken to be mathematical figures or stripped-down forms, as in the photographs of Renger-Patzsch and Blossfeldt. Nakahira describes plants in terms of their resemblance to human flesh, but they also resemble the material of film itself: both of these materials have layers of celluloid, and

both, of course, are sensitive to light.[71] Nakahira does not discuss photosynthesis, or mention the fact that plants are capable of moving their own bodies towards sources of light, through heliotropism. Even within Japanese history, plants have played a special role in the development of term "photography."[72] By drawing an analogy between the body and plants, Nakahira suggests a certain photographic quality of corporeal experience—in which all of these terms point towards a fundamentally relational, intersubjective mode of encounter consistent with the way Lee articulated this concept.

In suggesting that bodies are analogous to plants, Nakahira anticipated some of the recent work of Kaja Silverman, who has theorized photography on the basis of analogy. Silverman's idea of analogy is related to the nature of photographic technology itself, which produces signs indexically. But she is clear to distance herself from the coolness of this term: "When I say 'analogy,' I do not mean sameness, symbolic equivalence, logical adequation, or even a rhetorical relationship—like a metaphor or a simile—in which one term functions as the provisional placeholder for another. I am talking about the authorless and untranscendable similarities that structure Being, or what I will be calling 'the world,' and that give everything the same ontological weight."[73] Like Nakahira and Lee, then, Silverman theorizes a radically open relation between subject and object, human and world. Importantly for photography history, Silverman argues against the idea of a coherent and singular author at the center of the photographic process, instead making this figure always in relation to something outside

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[71] I thank Allie Tsubota for this observation.

[72] Maki Fukuoka's compelling research shows that the very concept of "photography" (*shashin*, in Japanese) emerged out of botanical research by doctors in the 19th century. See Maki Fukuoka, *The Premise of Fidelity: Science, Visuality, and Representing the Real in Nineteenth-Century Japan* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2012).

[73] Kaja Silverman, *The Miracle of Analogy, or, the History of Photography* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2015), 11.

of itself.[74] By drawing an analogy between the body and plants, it might seem that Nakahira was also plumbing a similar line of thought.

The differences between these two theories shed light on the question of humanism and anti-humanism in Nakahira's essay. At one point, Silverman remarks: "This oceanic planet, however, is our world, and it is through photography—rather than hallucinations—that it speaks to us."[75] Here, in the context of discussing the Andrei Tarkovsky film *Solaris*, Silverman makes a significant claim for photography as a mode of ontological disclosure. However, Silverman's language betrays something of an "anthropomorphization of the world," to return to the fundamental critique that Nakahira and Lee both made in their essays. To suggest that the world "speaks to us" already projects a linguistic, human frame onto the world. The question at stake for Nakahira was how to move beyond all forms of human-centered thinking, which he framed in terms of "accepting the defeat of the human by the world." As a photographer, though, this was an extremely paradoxical challenge. To be a photographer meant having a body in the world; looking could not "happen from a place split off from the body." Lee's notion of encounter—and the corollary that "expression is actually the expression of the body"—provided a way through the contradiction between the desire to erase the human entirely, and the knowledge that this erasure could never be completed. The body was that remainder, and Nakahira's turn to the botanical analogized this excess, or "vagueness."

In this essay as well as others from the period, Nakahira suggested that photographic expression was a "collaborative work between my thought and the thought of things."[76] In

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[74] Silverman writes: "Two is the smallest unit of Being." Silverman, 11. Silverman's 2001 essay on Jean-Luc Godard, "The Author as Receiver," is particularly relevant to her project of arguing against authorial coherency. See Kaja Silverman, "The Author as Receiver," *October* 96 (2001): 17–34.

[75] Silverman, *The Miracle of Analogy*, 85.

[76] Nakahira, "Naze, shokubutsu zukan ka," 1973, 19.

fact, Nakahira defined "the world" itself as "the magnetically charged place where my gaze is interwoven with the gaze of things."[77] The word that Nakahira used for "thing" is *mono*, the same "mono" of "Mono-ha."[78] Thinking together with Lee Ufan, Nakahira's phenomenological reflections on photography led him towards encounter. Nakahira did not pursue a strictly anti-human thought, or propose an early version of what is now called object-oriented ontology. Encounter, the botanical, a magnetically charged place: all of these terms pointed to a corporeal and relational mode of being. "Why an Illustrated Botanical Reference Book?" was an attempt to introduce this wild idea into the space of photographic thinking.

Conclusion: Another Impasse

On a desolate beach outside of Tokyo in 1973, Nakahira has made a fire on a brisk autumn night. This fire is not for warmth: he is using it to burn the monochrome prints and negatives he produced during his time as part of *Provoke*. Explosions of light have been seared into surfaces of these photographs, and now this raw material shines forth as it is consumed by the flames. An old man walks by, stops, and stokes the fire. Three years later, in 1976, Nakahira narrated the scene in an essay:

> What are you burning, the old man asked. Now I could hear his voice clearly. I'm burning photographs, I said. Why are you burning photographs, came the reply. Because I'm a photographer, I said. Why does a photographer burn photographs, he should have asked. Pro photographers burn photographs, I would have answered. But he did not ask anything more.[79]

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[77] Nakahira, 20.

[78] "Mono-ha" translates to "School of Things." Like the names of many artistic movements, this name was given to it from the outside, by critics.

[79] Nakahira and Shinoyama, "Kettō shashinron — tsuma," 88. Nakahira's untitled essay appeared alongside the photographs of Shinoyama Kishin. When this article was collected in the volume *Kettō shashinron*, it was re-named "Interlude." See Nakahira Takuma and Shinoyama Kishin, *Kettō shashinron* (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1977).

Why are you burning photographs? Why does a photographer burn photographs? Nakahira's answers to these questions clarify nothing. He offers them up as if it were entirely obvious that photographers burn their photographs, and that burning one's photographs is in fact the height of professionalization. The old man here is almost certainly a fabulation, but Nakahira did burn his work by the sea.[80] After this fire—which he made just months after publishing "Why an Illustrated Botanical Reference Book?"—where was there left to go? Nakahira had not simply turned away from the harsh black-and-white aesthetic of *Provoke*, but quite literally left it burning in his wake.

Matsuda had called Nakahira the "firestarter" of landscape theory, and now he played this role in a more negative sense. For quite some time, Nakahira did not do anything much at all; even in "Why an Illustrated Botanical Reference Book?" he acknowledged his recent inactivity as a photographer. Later in 1973, he launched an over the top attack on the photography critic Nishii Kazuo in the pages of *Bijutsu Techō*, after Nishii had written a lukewarm review of "Why an Illustrated Botanical Reference Book?"[81] Nakahira complained that he was low on money, and wrote that anyone interested in purchasing a copy of his photobook *For a Language to Come* at a cut-rate price could contact him directly—at his home address or phone number, both of which he published in the magazine. In short, things seemed bleak: after publishing series of photographs in magazines practically each month between 1970 and 1972, he was much less active between 1973 and 1975. Whether talking

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[80] Nakagawa Michio, Nakahira's assistant at the time, confirmed that he was with Nakahira on the beach when he burned his work, and that no other person was there. He later asked Nakahira's wife whether he had gone back to burn more negatives at some other time, at which point the old man might have stopped by; she said that Nakahira had not. Nakagawa Michio, Interview, January 22, 2020.

[81] See Nakahira Takuma, "Kinkyō — sore kara sore kara nami takashi," *Bijutsu Techō*, October 1973. Nakahira's language was extremely rough throughout this article; he addressed Nishii as *temē*, the rudest possible form of "you" in Japanese. For Nishii's review, see Nishii Kazuo, "Shohyō: Jō wa owatteshimatta," *Shashin Hihyō* 2 (June 1973): 27–30. The pair seem to have made up, as years later Nishii would go on to write a book that attempted to reclaim the value of *Provoke*, and Nakahira's photography, without any sign of ill will. Nishii, *Naze imadani "Purobōku" ka*.

about quitting being a photographer or burning his negatives, Nakahira was at a point of crisis.

Soon enough, though, he did find a motivation to take photographs, and now he left behind his desaturated mode of color photography and brought forth the vivid colors that appeared in *Blue Sky* [Figure 40], which he published in the middle of 1974. It would be too much to suggest that Nakahira was "contacted and fascinated by the vividness of the world itself as it is," as Lee had written of encounter. In the following chapter, I explore the color photographs that Nakahira made which brought him out of his blank period. As *Blue Sky* hinted, this involved a turn to thinking about photography through the political situation of Okinawa. In the wake of his phenomenological thinking, though, this also had a corporeal dimension.

In no small part because of its strident rhetoric, "Why an Illustrated Botanical Reference Book?" has overdetermined the reception of Nakahira's work. The idea of the "illustrated botanical reference book" has become a major trope through which to understand Nakahira's later color photography, in both Japanese and English language scholarship. Some writers have tried to take the essay on faith, as if the work that Nakahira produced after he wrote this text realizes the theory that he advanced.[82] For example, in Ezawa Kenichirō's recent book *Nakahira Takuma ron* (*On Nakahira Takuma)* he notes the "gaze of things" that Nakahira theorized in the essay. When he examines some of Nakahira's contemporaneous photographs, he offers little analysis of how they signify; he only notes that their color is "breathtaking." Without any further explanation, he claims that "what appears there is 'the gaze of things.'"[83] The notion that Nakahira's photographs could mechanically reflect his

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[82] In addition to Ezawa, see also Homma Takashi, "A Gecko on the Ceiling," in *Gecko*, by Nakahira Takuma (Los Angeles: Little Big Man, 2013), n.p.; Kohara Masashi, "'Nantō' e / 'nantō' kara," 10+1, 2012, https://db.10plus1.jp/backnumber/article/articleid/1402/.

[83] Ezawa, *Nakahira Takuma ron*, 118.

writing misunderstands his theory from the start. Nakahira himself dismissed that possibility off in 1973, in his response to Nishii. Discussing the photographic methodology of "Why an Illustrated Botanical Reference Book?" he wrote: "There's no possible way to take photographs like that."[84] In the next phase of his work, he did move towards color photography, in focus, taken in the daytime. But if anything of the essay was present in these photographs, it was the category of the botanical—not because plants were literally present there, but because he was working through the question of bodily relation.

[84] Nakahira, "Kinkyō — sore kara sore kara nami takashi," 3.

Chapter 5

Disorientations: “Amami”

Introduction

> For Evans discovered—and it has the force of an invention in photography—that the literal point of view of a photograph, where the camera stands during the making of a picture, can be so treated in an extended sequence or discourse as to become an intentional vehicle or embodiment of a cumulative point of view, a perspective of mind, of imagination, of moral judgment.[1]
>
> Alan Trachtenberg

> For about the last two years, I have been visiting Okinawa because of a certain frame-up trial. However, if not for this reason, I think I probably would not have gone there. That is because I was hounded by a premonition that to encounter Okinawa would shake the foundation of my being.[2]
>
> Nakahira Takuma, 1974

In a newspaper article written from Okinawa and published in September 1974, Nakahira described looking out towards Ie Island. He is sitting in a room in a small town called Motobu, in the northern part of the main island of what is today known as Okinawa Prefecture. He describes the clouds that appear over the horizon, and miniscule details that appear in them. Under the sun of Okinawa, Nakahira says, “everything is visible.”[3] Finally, it seems, Nakahira was ready to embark on the photography that he had called for in his 1973

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[1] Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York, N.Y.: Hill and Wang, 1989), 250.

[2] Nakahira, “Shisen no tsukiru hate,” 350.

[3] Nakahira, 349.

essay “Why an Illustrated Botanical Reference Book?”—a photography of absolute clarity, to be carried out in color, under the brightest of daylight.

One photograph of this very view of Ie Island was published on the front page of a magazine in December 1973. Taken in color, it shows a deep blue sky filled with dramatically mottled white clouds. In the foreground, the deep orange of a backhoe practically merges with the reddish earth that it works over. A line of dark trees appears in the middle distance, and in the background, the distinct form of Ie Island rises up over the horizon in the center of the frame. The blue sky is set off by the even deeper blue of the ocean that appears below it. The light in this photograph is clear and even; it hardly even casts a shadow. The spatial relationship between the backhoe in the foreground and Ie Island in the background is spelled out, with enough markers to orient the viewer of the photograph. The English caption reads: “The Sea We Would Like to See.” Who exactly was this “we”?

Figure 89

Cover of *Kaiyōhaku News*, No. 13, December 1973. Photograph: Hirata Minoru.

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This photograph was taken by Hirata Minoru, best known for his photographs of avant-garde performances in Tokyo in the 1960s. Hirata's commission could not have been any further from that world, though: his photograph ran on the cover of *Kaiyōhaku News*, the official publication of the Okinawa International Ocean Exposition of 1975. "The Sea We Would Like to See" was the Ocean Expo's official slogan; here, it was given a cruelly sardonic twist, as the visual rhetoric of the publication argued in all seriousness that the sea one "would like to see" is the one that appears behind Hitachi-branded construction equipment. The 1970 Expo, held in Osaka, was an extremely well-known event that was pitched as a cultural capstone to the growth of the Japanese economy during the 1960s.[4] The 1975 Ocean Expo carried out a similar function. After the reversion of the islands of Okinawa to Japanese control in 1972, this event was a symbol of their re-integration into the Japanese nation. At the same time, the Ocean Expo also functioned as a conduit for mainland capital to flood in.

Hirata's photograph for *Kaiyōhaku News* makes tangible the stakes of the theory that Nakahira and Lee Ufan developed. Both artists turned to the phenomenological strategy of encounter through their critique of the modern dynamic of subject and object, in which the former assimilates the latter to it. This is why Nakahira spoke of the subject making the world into private property, and why Lee drew a comparison between this objectification and colonization. These arguments may well have been correct in theoretical terms. But the 1975 Ocean Expo demonstrated their most concrete stakes, by crystallizing a dynamic of assimilation and possession between the ostensible unities of "Japan" and "Okinawa."

This chapter examines the colonial relationship between Japan and Okinawa around 1975 through representations of photographic space. Despite his vivid description of bright

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[4] The 1970 Expo was a favored target for some avant-garde artists. In an essay for the first issue of *Provoke*, Taki Kōji wrote that the artists who participated in the Expo's cultural program could never be rehabilitated. See Taki, "Oboesho 1 — chi no taihai," 68.

sunlight in Okinawa, Nakahira did not produce a major series of photographs there. Instead, he published a significant series of photographs taken on the islands of Amami, which sit between Okinawa and the Japanese mainland. In this work, Nakahira consistently denied access to foreground and background, and to the horizon. In other words, he denied orientation in general. In that sense, his work resonates with Alan Trachtenberg's assertion that "the literal point of view of a photograph" can "become an intentional vehicle or embodiment of a cumulative point of view." Departing from this claim, Nakahira's refusal to orient his photographs comes to look like a bodily position that he took against a spatial orientation that was in the process of claiming Okinawa as its property. Paradoxically, then, Nakahira's most important photographs about Okinawa were not taken there.

I begin with a careful description of the spatial orientations of Nakahira's photographs taken in Amami, with a particular focus on the way that the orienting devices of the horizon, foreground, and background are treated. Drawing on Sara Ahmed's phenomenological theorization of space, I suggest that these spaces relate to bodily positions of the photographer. Then, the chapter situates Nakahira's photographs in relation to the political situation in Okinawa, and the processes of development around the 1975 Ocean Expo. Hirata's photograph clearly delineates foreground and background, orienting its viewer spatially, and, I suggest, offering up the landscape for consumption. However, in the following section I turn to a body of work that Nakahira confronted more directly: *Pencil of the Sun*, a 1975 book by Tōmatsu Shōmei. I conclude with a return to the Amami series, and a reflection on the course of the dissertation as a whole.

Figure 90

Nakahira Takuma, "Amami." Published in *Asahi Camera*, February 1976.

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From the beginning, the series that Nakahira published under the title "Amami" worked against spatial order. This first photograph was shot during the day, with light distributed evenly across the frame; there are practically no shadows here. A central band of snake plants stretches across the frame from edge to edge, and each individual leaf catches the same amount of light. There are some variations between the leaves—some are more yellowed than others, at the edges—but they all point up, rising vertically towards the sky,

which is mottled with clouds. Confronting the viewer head-on, they form a wall that blocks off the horizon from view. In the fall of 1975, Nakahira traveled to the Amami Islands, which sit to the north of Okinawa, and to the south of the mainland prefecture of Kagoshima, which administers them.[5] The following February, he published 16 color photographs across 11 two-page spreads of the photography magazine *Asahi Camera*, together with a brief article. This section presents Nakahira's Amami photographs, focusing on the way that they represent space in general, and the horizon in particular. To be oriented in a photograph, it is necessary to have a horizon, a foreground, a background—in other words, a spatial system to establish distances.

For example, a photograph of a gravel road shows contradictory forms of orientation. This road extends up and off to the horizon, while also filling the lower half of the frame. Start from the very bottom of the photograph, where two tire tracks crisscross each other in the gravel—recalling the photograph [Figure 63] that Nakahira had published on the cover of the catalog of "Between Man and Matter." This road seems to rotate through space and up towards the camera, so that at the lower edge, it almost confronts the picture plane head-on. To produce this effect, Nakahira pointed his camera down towards the ground, a technique he used in much of his early color photographs, which also denied any access to the horizon. In a photograph of water on pavement [Figure 80] that he had published as part of "City I," the frame slices the view off at the top, while the final installment of that series [Figure 81] ended with dark photographs that resembled nothing so much as dead-ends, with no way out. The photograph of the road in Amami also finds Nakahira looking down, but the photograph includes a thin strip of sky, and a miniscule band of the ocean at the top of the frame. It holds together these two different orientations, looking both out and down. Nakahira could hold

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[5] Nakahira visited the islands of Amami Oshima, Tokunoshima and Okinoerabujima. See Nakahira Takuma, "Amami — nami to haka to hana, soshite taiyō," *Asahi Camera*, February 1976.

both of these perspectives in the frame by using a wide-angle lens, pointing his camera down to the gravel road and adjusting the composition to include as little sky as possible.[6] The result is a somewhat vertiginous effect, as if the ground itself was starting to rise up and meet the photographer.

Figures 91 and 83

Nakahira Takuma, "Amami." Published in *Asahi Camera*, February 1976.

[6] Camera magazines generally printed the technical data for each spread that they published. Here, it is noted that Nakahira used 28mm, 50mm and 100mm lenses. In the same issue, Nakahira wrote a brief article explaining his interest in wide-angle lenses. See Nakahira Takuma et al., "Shashin, ima: naze waido renzu ka," *Asahi Camera*, February 1976.

Albert Renger-Patzsch, *A Road in the Ruhrgebiet*, 1927.

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Compare this photograph to Renger-Patzsch's *A Road in the Ruhrgebiet*. The two photographs are dominated by a road, although the texture is quite different in each: the road in the Renger-Patzsch photograph is full of parallel lines, while the Amami road is marked by the intersection of the tire tracks. Renger-Patzsch has used a longer lens, which flattens the image, such that the near and far traffic signs are both perfectly vertical. The square format of the picture also produces a geometrically ordered spatial orientation. Note the angle of the road, in relation to the camera, at the bottom edge of the Renger-Patzsch photograph; it is almost perpendicular to the picture plane, distancing the photographer from the pavement. This road extends out gently into the distance, where it eventually disappears over a hill.

Although the sides of the road meet the left and right edges of the frame at different heights, it is precisely centered within the frame, such that the lines form a neat path towards the vanishing point.

Nakahira's photograph is considerably more unbalanced. A swathe of plants sits to the side of the road, which makes somewhat uneven progress towards the top of the frame. This road does not travel in line with classical rules of single-point perspective, according to which the vanishing point would appear in the center of the picture. Instead, these lines produce a vanishing point that sits somewhat oddly within the composition, almost at the top left hand corner of the photograph. The spatial strangeness of this photograph does not end here. By rotating the camera 90 degrees, to what in English is called "portrait orientation," Nakahira severely reduces the space of the photograph, cutting off the landscape. In framing up the scene in this way, Nakahira goes against what would seem to be a logical, even obvious choice. In other words, why turn away from "landscape orientation" in a photograph of a landscape?[7] Why go against the horizontality of the horizon? The horizon line itself is off-kilter, running on a slight oblique that angles down and to the right. All told, then, the photograph is held in tension along different spatial axes. There is a rotation in space *towards* the camera at the bottom, opposing the opening *out* into space at the top. Because the road tilts up to practically confront the photographer, it functions equally as blockage and path. The photograph also rotates *up* into portrait orientation, narrowing the space against the tendency of a landscape to open out. And just where the road ends, and the view promises to open out to a clear view of the ocean—there, plants block the view.

Throughout the Amami photographs, plants stand in between the photographer and the horizon. For example, in the photograph on the page facing the gravel road [Figure 91,

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[7] The tradition of Chinese inkbrush painting offers the convention of a landscape depicted in a vertical orientation.

left side], a large banyan tree looms up, cutting off access to what lies beyond. The strategy is repeated across the series, as in another photograph of a massive plant that completely fills the frame, standing parallel to the picture plane as with the snake plants that appear in the first photograph of the series. [Figure 92, right side] But the lines of the plant themselves are not regularly parallel, as with the surface of the road that Renger-Patzsch photographed. Instead, they move along uneven diagonals. In another photograph, at least three different species of plants fill the frame, and the long fronds of one obscure a building at the top left. [Figure 93, right side] A similar structure of corrugated metal peeks through the right side, where a small pole and the faintest of power lines also appear. But these are only minor incidents in what is otherwise an explosion of vegetable life, which mediates between these two human structures and prevents any access beyond.

Figures 92 and 93

Nakahira Takuma, “Amami.” Published in *Asahi Camera*, February 1976.

Nakahira Takuma, “Amami.” Published in *Asahi Camera*, February 1976.

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Of course, it is impossible to ignore the fact that vegetable life figures so prominently in this series, given that Nakahira had called for a photography modeled on an “illustrated botanical reference book.” Yet Nakahira’s 1973 essay “Why an Illustrated Botanical Reference Book?” was not a call to photograph plants. Instead, it was a proposal to take the body itself as a term that mediates and is mediated by the world. This thinking was in close dialog with Lee Ufan’s notion of “encounter,” a deeply phenomenological concept. In writing about Amami and Okinawa, Nakahira suggested that the former was a site where cultures “encounter” each other, and that “to encounter Okinawa would shake the foundation of my being.” Nakahira’s essay suggested the always embodied quality of looking, and corporeal

traces appear in the photographs he took on Amami. A horizon does not just orient the viewer of the photograph, but it also orients the photographer. Or, perhaps, it shows how the photographer is oriented. The bodily position of the photographer—how close they are to something, where they literally stand—alters the appearance of space.

Nakahira's Amami photographs consistently disorient space, by offering up contradictory perspectives or blocking off the horizon. In considering this treatment of space in the series as a whole, I mean to extend Alan Trachtenberg's claim that "the literal point of view of a photograph" can acquire a significance across a sequence.[8] Trachtenberg made this argument to suggest the idea of an authorial "point of view" in Walker Evans' 1938 book *American Photographs*. Developing this idea through Evans, Trachtenberg assigned it the more or less humanist categories of "a perspective of mind, of imagination, of moral judgment." While I would question whether Nakahira's photographs taken in Amami cohere into such traits, the consistent treatment of space in Nakahira's photographs corresponds to some "vehicle or embodiment of a cumulative point of view." In discussing the photographic "point of view," Trachtenberg also suggested the importance of "the physical position the photographer selects to view a scene and take a picture."[9] Here, Trachtenberg was not concerned with Evans alone, but the practice of photography in general. Trachtenberg did not pursue this corporeal line of thinking further, but it offers a compelling way to grasp Nakahira's Amami series, because it might be developed in a spatial rather than "moral" direction. In other words, Trachtenberg's insight makes it possible to claim that in photographs, space is organized by a point of view that is tied to the bodily position of the photographer.

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[8] Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs*, 250.

[9] Trachtenberg, 251.

The question is not just what the Amami photographs show, but *how* they show it, because this perspective is connected to Nakahira's own corporeal orientation. In these photographs, though, the point of view does not so much organize space as disorient it, through the strategies that I have discussed. What bodily position, or orientation, does this correspond to? In her phenomenological thinking around orientation, Sara Ahmed has suggested that space itself is bodily, which is to say that it has an orientation. She has also made a claim that very much resonates with Trachtenberg: "If space is orientated, then what appears depends on one's point of view."[10] For Ahmed, "orientations involve different ways of registering the proximity of objects and others," and they "shape the contours of space by affecting relations of proximity and distance between bodies."[11] In other words, an orientation is not just the direction one is pointing; it already embodies a relation with one's space. 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 sexual difference in particular. Departing from the idea that "queer" names both a sexual orientation and a line that is off-kilter, Ahmed intends to make orientation "itself the site of an encounter."[12]

And what of the literal orientation of the Amami photographs? Nakahira published five photographs in landscape orientation, and the other 11 in portrait orientation. The first spread shows the vertical photograph of the snake plants, next to Nakahira's short article. From that point on, the series alternates between a spread of one photograph in landscape

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[10] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, 12.

[11] Ahmed, 3.

[12] Ahmed, 5.

orientation (laid out across two pages) and two photographs in portrait orientation (one on each page). Looking across the six spreads of vertical photographs, each one shows botanical life in some detail. Meanwhile, four of Nakahira's five horizontally oriented photographs depict a body of water. The series oscillates between horizontal and vertical, unable to stabilize itself. Throughout, the treatment of the horizon underscores this instability.

For example, one of the photographs in landscape orientation shows a massive wave, framed up in such a way as to again blot out the horizon. But that is not the only disorienting operation that this image performs. The wave seems to be pushed and pulled in so many directions—it breaks at the left, with a strong undertow towards the bottom of the frame, and a lateral movement at the right. This wave has no relation to the water that Nakahira had photographed flowing along the sidewalks in Paris; this is an image of a chaotic and dangerous force, a sensation heightened by the lack of any clear sense of foreground and background here. From what position has this photograph been taken? On what ground is Nakahira standing? Both camera and photographer seem about to be engulfed by the wave; they stand as if on the edge of a precipice, with the vertigo that this position produces. Vertigo, after all, is felt in the body. Horizon, foreground, background: all of these are precisely what this photograph, what these photographs, deny.

Figure 94

Nakahira Takuma, "Amami." Published in *Asahi Camera*, February 1976.

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Or, if they do not deny them outright, they consistently disorient them. The horizon *is* visible in two of the photographs from the series: the photograph of the gravel road [Figure 91, right side], and another photograph that shows another rough sea. A tangle of choppy waves moves in all directions at once, and their wild motion registers as blurring. Here, too, the photograph tilts upward at the bottom, as if the photographer is about the pitch in to the sea. The horizon appears here, at the very top of the photograph. Like the photograph of the road, the sky only takes up a small sliver of the image. Even further, the horizon is tilted at

precisely the same angle as the photograph of the road, a repeated strategy to knock this device of orientation off-kilter. The photograph also distorts foreground and background—the cement that sits in the right part of the frame appears to surge up out of nothing. It is almost like a trompe l'oeil; is the dark rectangle at the bottom concave or convex? How far back into space does it travel?

Figure 95

Nakahira Takuma, "Amami." Published in *Asahi Camera*, February 1976.

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Ahmed pays attention to moments of disorientation because they suggest other lines along which bodies can travel. In her work, deviating from straight lines offers up the possibility of queer politics. But she does not take for granted that any form of disorientation automatically refers to a political "good." Noting that disorientation can lead to conservative

retrenchments, she writes: “I want us to think about how queer politics might *involve* disorientation, without legislating disorientation as a politics.”[13] The questions of space, its orientation, and its accessibility necessarily exceed the space of the photograph. I also return to Ahmed, to show that the question of how space appears—how graspable it is, who it appears for—is not just a question limited to the space of the photograph itself. As Nakahira was well aware, they extend all the way to the imagined space of the nation.

A Space for Development

> The Ocean Exposition must be taken advantage of, such that it plays a role in the regional development of Okinawa soon after its reversion to the mainland.
>
> “Basic Plan of the Ocean Exposition,” Ministry of International Trade and Industry[14]

Nakahira began the short essay that appeared next to “Amami” by noting that he had been traveling to Okinawa to agitate at the trial of Matsunaga Yū.[15] He wrote: “My experience in Okinawa taught me that culturally and politically, Okinawa is absolutely not the same as ‘Japan’ or ‘the mainland.’”[16] As a result, he said that he went to Amami to see if he “could discover the invisible line that separates Japan from Okinawa.”[17] The Amami islands sit between Okinawa and Japan, and their intermediary position has made them an

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[13] Ahmed, 158.

[14] Ministry of International Trade and Industry, Industrial Strategy Department, *Okinawa kokusai kaiyō hakurankai no kiroku* (Tokyo: Ministry of International Trade and Industry, 1976), 168. This document is dated June 29, 1972.

[15] For a discussion of this case, see Chapter 2.

[16] Nakahira, “Amami — nami to haka to hana, soshite taiyō.”

[17] Nakahira.

object of keen anthropological interest for that reason.[18] But Nakahira was quick to add that that such a boundary line does not, of course, exist—it would be more like an “invisible zone” in which cultures “encounter” and encroach on each other.[19] Clearly, Amami’s intermediary position drew Nakahira, and the idea of “encounter” referred back again to the phenomenological thinking that he had developed with Lee Ufan. But why was it important to think about the difference between “Japan” and “Okinawa,” or to find some mediation between them?

The 1975 Okinawa International Ocean Exposition materialized a long-standing colonial dynamic between Japan and Okinawa. As the document produced by the Ministry of International Trade and Industry outlining the “Basic Plan of the Ocean Exposition” demonstrates, the Ocean Expo took the entire region of Okinawa as a space of development and construction. This was not the first time that the islands were made into a tool for the development of mainland capital. In 1609, the Satsuma domain (present-day Kagoshima) invaded the Ryūkyū kingdom; from that point it was under the dual subjugation of Satsuma and the Ming emperor. This marks the first “disposition” of Okinawa. In 1879, the Meiji state annexed the Ryūkyū kingdom by force—the second “disposition”—and established Okinawa Prefecture, shifting administrative control of Okinawa from Ryūkyū nobility to Tokyo bureaucrats.[20] After the end of the second World War, Okinawa was administered by the United States, until May 15, 1972, when it was handed over to Japan. This event, officially

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[18] For an anthropological analysis of Amami’s intermediate, and contradictory, position in relation to these cultural spheres, see Shimono Toshimi, *Yamato bunka to ryūkyū bunka: minami no shimajima no seikatsu gyōji ni utsutta nihon bunka no kosō chizu* (Tokyo: PHP Institute, 1986). For a critical account of anthropological studies of Amami by mainland researchers, see Sakano Tōru, *Fīrudowāku no sengoshi: Miyamoto Tsuneichi to kyūgakkai rengō* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2012).

[19] Nakahira, “Amami — nami to haka to hana, soshite taiyō.”

[20] For a more detailed account of this history, see Wendy Matsumura, *The Limits of Okinawa: Japanese Capitalism, Living Labor, and Theorizations of Community*, Asia-Pacific: Culture, Politics, and Society (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2015), 28–35.

called “reversion,” is said to mark a third moment of Okinawa’s “disposition.”[21] The Ocean Expo functioned as an economic engine, solidifying the “reversion” of Okinawa to Japanese control.

The event was a convenient ruse by which to assimilate Okinawa in one fell stroke to a regime of development that was already advancing outwards from cities on the mainland. As Matsuda Masao had written in 1971, “monopolized economic growth exposes us to increased homogenization, which takes the Japanese archipelago as a gigantic city.”[22] Okinawa could function as another peripheral site in which Tokyo could replicate itself. Companies from the Japanese mainland turned huge profits on the Expo, because they were the ones to provide much of the resources and labor for the site. For example, one of the centerpieces of the Expo was *Aquapolis*, a floating work of architecture designed by the Metabolist architect Kikutake Kiyonori. Producing different parts of this structure required the coordination of various corporations, and in the end it was assembled in Hiroshima and towed over 600 miles to the site.[23] Even the official mascots of the Expo, dolphins named “Oki-chan,” were not trained in Okinawa; instead, they were actually trained on Amami.[24]

In the years leading up to the Expo, the very Minister of International Trade and Industry was advancing a humanism of concrete. In his 1972 book *Rebuilding the Japanese Archipelago*, Tanaka Kakuei articulated a program of expansive national development. Practically quoting Matsuda’s essay directly, Tanaka wrote that Japan needed a nationalized network of construction “not in a narrow sense of city planning, but one that takes the

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[21] The Japanese term is *henkan*.

[22] Matsuda, “Fūkei toshite no toshi,” 26. I discuss Matsuda in Chapter 4.

[23] On Vivian Blaxell’s analysis, “every part of Aquapolis reproduced the networks of Japanese capitalism in Okinawa.” Vivian Blaxell, “Preparing Okinawa for Reversion to Japan: The Okinawa International Ocean Exposition of 1975, the US Military and the Construction State,” *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 8, no. 29 (July 19, 2010): 16.

[24] See Kusuda Toyoharu, ed., *Me de miru Amami no 100 nen* (Matsumoto: Kyōdo Shuppansha, 2004), 106.

entirety of Japan as a single urban area."[25] As such, Tanaka argued *ad nauseam* that "the main site of development must shift to rural areas."[26] True to form, for every problem facing Japan he had a solution based in interlocking construction projects. Roads, bridges, tunnels, train tracks, dams, communication networks, new cities—you name it, Tanaka wants to build it. When he titled a section of his book "For the Construction of 1000 Dams," this was no figure of speech. At the same time, Tanaka struck a romantic tone, concluding his book with a call to restore the warm-hearted lifeways of old, a "return of the human" through "rebuilding, at a national scale, the disappearing 'hometowns' of the Japanese people."[27] His ideas were no flights of fancy: in July 1972, three weeks after publishing *Rebuilding the Japanese Archipelago*—and not even two weeks after his Ministry published the "Basic Plan of the Ocean Exposition"—he became Prime Minister.[28]

The Expo was located in Motobu, the town from which Nakahira looked out at Ie Island. The very choice of Motobu, some 80 kilometers to the north of the prefectural capital of Naha, illustrates how this event fit with Tanaka's policies. This relatively distant location provided the rationale for constructing not just a massive north-south toll road, but also bridges and tunnels around the Expo site itself—to say nothing of a significant reconstruction of various Okinawan airports, construction of new dams, waterways and roads of all kinds.[29] Among other candidate locations, Motobu was put forth because its distance from Naha held out "the prospect of the largest investment" into auxiliary construction and maintenance

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[25] Tanaka Kakuei, *Nihon rettō kaizōron* (Tokyo: Nikkan Kogyo Shimbun, 1972), 3.

[26] Tanaka, 78.

[27] Tanaka, 216, 218.

[28] Tanaka remains popular in Japan today: at the time of writing, newly printed copies of *Rebuilding the Japanese Archipelago* can still be found on the shelves of convenience stores across the country.

[29] For a highly detailed record of construction projects that were eventually realized in connection with the Ocean Expo, see Okinawa ken Okinawa kokusai kaiyou hakurankai kyoryokuyoku, ed., *Umi — sono nozomashī mirai: Okinawa kaisai no ayumi* (Okinawa: Okinawa ken Okinawa kokusai kaiyou hakurankai kyoryokuyoku, 1976).

projects.[30] Around the beginning of 1972, there was an internal debate at a national level about whether Motobu was a realistic site. The Ministry of Construction protested that there would not be enough time to construct and repair the necessary roads, and that a site in central Okinawa would be more preferable. But the powerful Ministry of International Trade and Industry pushed back, claiming that "in terms of the scenery, there can be no candidate other than the Motobu Peninsula."[31]

One might well ask whether scenery was truly the only pressing concern, given that the Minister of International Trade and Industry was Tanaka himself. During the official groundbreaking ceremony held in Motobu in March 1973, Tanaka gave the signal to begin construction—now, of course, as prime minister. Thoroughly in keeping with the powerful dynamic of center and periphery for which he had argued in print, Tanaka was not physically present at the site to inaugurate the proceedings. Instead, he simply pressed a button from his Tokyo office, a gesture that was duly recorded on the cover of *Kaiyōhaku News* later that month.

[30] This 1972 letter, written by the Okinawan Governor Yara Chōbyō, is reproduced in Okinawa ken Okinawa kokusai kaiyou hakurankai kyoryokuyoku, 9. The internalization of this discourse by an Okinawan politician is consistent with Wendy Matsumura's analysis of the Ryūkyūan ruling elite during the late 19th century. See Matsumura, *The Limits of Okinawa*, 184.

[31] Okinawa ken Okinawa kokusai kaiyou hakurankai kyoryokuyoku, *Umi — sono nozomashī mirai*, 8. Both the Ministry of Construction and the Ministry of International Trade and Industry no longer exist. They were merged into the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism.

Figure 96

Cover of *Kaiyōhaku News*, No. 6, March 1973.

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Nakahira's interest in Okinawa shifted over time. He first visited Okinawa because of Matsunaga Yū, the young dyeing artist who was arrested on the basis of newspaper photographs after a general strike and protest in November 1971. Nakahira went to Okinawa in July 1973 to participate in the Naha-based citizens' movement that sprung up to support Matsunaga.[32] In his own recollection of this first trip, Nakahira described hot days of passing out flyers on the street.[33] His visit had generated a great deal of interest among members of the photography club at the University of the Ryūkyūs who were involved in Matsunaga's cause. Nakahira was already a well-known photographer and writer, and he brought photography students with him from Tokyo. Still, not everyone in the movement was impressed with Nakahira. One person who participated in the movement said that there was a gap between the correctness of Nakahira's public statements about the trial and his actions in private.[34] Nakahira wrote various articles about the Matsunaga case through 1974, but his focus started to shift towards material conditions in Okinawa more generally. He returned to Okinawa in January and August of 1974, each time writing a pair of journalistic articles that reported on conditions related to the Expo. These articles appeared in the weekly news

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[32] See Nakahira, *Nakahira Takuma: Degree Zero—Yokohama*, 153; Takara, "Nakahira Takuma ron."

[33] For Nakahira's account of passing out flyers, see Nakahira, "Kinkyō — sore kara sore kara nami takashi."

[34] In 2022, I spoke with one participant in the Matsunaga movement, who prefers to remain anonymous, about Nakahira's visit to Okinawa. This person said that after a few days of enthusiastically handing out flyers, Nakahira left suddenly to attend to a personal matter in Tokyo, hastily borrowing money from them for the flight.

magazine *Asahi Journal*, as part of a series titled "Dissolution of the Archipelago"—a clear shot at Tanaka's *Rebuilding the Japanese Archipelago*.[35]

Nakahira's dispatches for "Dissolution of the Archipelago" show how the Ocean Expo connected his theoretical problems to geopolitical space. In an article called "Poverty on Display," Nakahira reported on the construction of the Expo site in Motobu, noting that the entire capacity of the largest cement company in Okinawa had been promised to the Expo, leaving local people out of luck if they wanted to build anything themselves.[36] At the same time, he wrote that the Expo had already served as a trigger for mainland capital to flood in, especially in the area of real estate, not just on the main island of Okinawa but also on the smaller Miyako and Yaeyama islands. In other words, at the same time that Nakahira was writing about the projection of the human onto the world as way of effecting its "transformation into private property," the Japanese state was carrying out a similar process, taking Okinawa as a site of "regional development."[37] Lee Ufan had compared the process of "objectification" to colonization, and the conditions in Okinawa brought this reality home.

A short anecdote that Nakahira related in his article illustrates this colonial logic of objectification. Walking around Motobu, Nakahira found some shabby houses with straw-thatched roofs. He noted his surprise at finding a nearby placard that read: "Preserved Property: Be Careful with Grounds, Entire Building, All Trees in Area." The houses, in other words, were marked off as specifically Okinawan cultural products. This placard *produced* the house as an object of display, leading Nakahira to claim: "The poverty of Okinawa—which has come about through the discrimination, oppression and exploitation of the

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[35] In Japanese, the title of this series (*Rettō kaitai*) more clearly satirizes the partial title of Tanaka's book (*Rettō kaizō*). The "Dissolution" series began in March 1974 and ended in December of the same year.

[36] See Nakahira Takuma, "Chinretsu sareru hinkon," *Asahi Journal*, May 3, 1974.

[37] Nakahira, "Naze, shokubutsu zukan ka," 1973, 12.

‘mainland’—has become a ‘show’ for Expo tourism.”[38] Although Nakahira illustrated these articles with his photographs, the emphasis of the “Dissolution” series as a whole fell on writing. Each entry in the series combined one page of dense text with just three pages of black-and-white images, sometimes schematic maps rather than photographs. By comparison, the magazine’s earlier “Another Country” series featured seven pages of color photographs with no more than a short paragraph of introductory text.[39] Consistent with much of the journalism that *Asahi Journal* published during this time, many articles in the series reported on peripheral areas. Still, some of his photographs that ran alongside the article illustrated this site, including views from inside and outside a house. The production of Okinawa as an object went hand in hand with its conversion into private property, and its “Rebuilding” in the image of the mainland; in Motobu, Nakahira found Tanaka’s construction paradigm overlaid on the possessive dynamic of subject and object that he had already been criticizing.

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[38] Nakahira, “Chinretsu sareru hinkon,” 78.

[39] For Nakahira’s contributions to “Another Country,” see Chapter 4.

Figure 97

Nakahira Takuma, spread from “Poverty on Display,” published in *Asahi Journal*, May 3, 1974.

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The assimilation of Okinawa to Japan was not just a process of economic subjugation. In 1975, the sitting crown prince made a highly publicized, and highly protested visit to the Expo site, spelling out the imperial grammar in which the event was couched.[40] Okinawa was now fully under the control of Japan again, and it not only needed to be incorporated into the networks of capital and construction that had already been built out through the mainland—it

[40] Tomimoto Minoru’s short film *The Summer of 1975* frames the Expo in terms of protest, with a major focus on the visit of the crown prince to Okinawa.

also needed to be assimilated to the national framework of Japan.[41] In this regard, Nakahira's selection of houses marked for preservation is significant, because they refer back to a longer history of national assimilation through cultural preservation. This formulation may sound paradoxical: on the face of it, assimilation ought to flatten out all difference. But Wendy Matsumura's research shows that even from the 17th century, the preservation of Okinawan cultural difference was the prerequisite of its assimilation to the mainland: in Okinawa, she argues, "national consolidation was pursued through policies of differentiation."[42] Even further, the notion of cultural preservation itself was a key mode of this consolidation.[43] Paradoxical as it might be, an objectified form of otherness—for example, these straw-roofed houses—was required for Okinawa to be thoroughly assimilated to Japanese identity. Okinawa was thus not simply a space into which capital could flow; it was also a screen onto which national fantasies were projected. This, too, was a reason for Nakahira's turn to Amami.

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[41] Official documents prepared by the Ministry of International Trade and Industry make this intent clear. See Ministry of International Trade and Industry, Industrial Strategy Department, *Okinawa kokusai kaiyō hakurankai no kiroku*.

[42] Matsumura, *The Limits of Okinawa*, 3.

[43] In the early 1600s, the Satsuma domain enacted an "order that prohibited the Japanization of Ryūkyū's customs and habits" in order to preserve, even if only in appearance, its cultural distinction. Matsumura, 29. Later, the "Preservation of Old Customs Policy" of 1879, drafted by the Meiji state, pacified once-rebellious local nobility by maintaining existing policies of intricate taxation and collection that kept independent producers as tied to local rulers as before. Sugar farmers in particular went into severe debt, given the persistence of these policies that allowed the government—once the Ryūkyū kingdom, now the Meiji state—to reap the profits of an effective monopoly. This craven policy was grounded in "the assumption of cultural difference." Matsumura, 28. That is to say, "whatever material transformations took place in the prefecture, its difference could be explained away as a result of the collective backwardness of the long-standing customs and culture of its people"—and not as a result of an economic power grab. Matsumura, 45. As a result, Matsumura writes, "the policy transformed Okinawa into a distinct cultural sphere and a ground for Japanese capital's primitive accumulation process." Matsumura, 28.

Okinawa as Anthropological Object

> From the start, Tōmatsu's trick was to completely clear away the time and space of Okinawa, and to replace them with his time, *yamato* time. This is a *yamato* cultural tactic, one form of colonialism.
>
> Higa Toyomitsu[44]

In the short essay that introduced the Amami series, Nakahira positioned his photographs in relation to a discourse of racial self-identity that informed Japanese nationalism. Taking account of Ainu, Gilyak and Orok people in the north, and Okinawan people in the south, he criticized the "myth that is the single-race nation-state," when the people living in Japan are not homogenous.[45] By taking "Okinawa" as an object through which to define "Japan," a certain tradition of Japanese anthropology has provided an intellectual justification for its material exploitation. The photographs Hirata published on various covers of *Kaiyōhaku News* functioned as simple illustrations of Tanaka's policies of development. But Tōmatsu Shōmei's 1975 book *Pencil of the Sun* operated in a far more complex mode, connecting photography to this anthropological thinking towards Okinawa. Tōmatsu's photographs show Okinawa as a land out of time—but also as a graspable space.[46] The Okinawan photographer Higa Toyomitsu used the word *yamato* to describe Tōmatsu's

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[44] Higa Toyomitsu and Onaga Naoki, "Tōmatsu Shōmei to okinawa no 40 nen o kataru," *N27*, no. 1 (June 2013): 68.

[45] Nakahira, "Amami — nami to haka to hana, soshite taiyō." Nakahira named Shimao Toshio (who lived on Amami Ōshima for many years) and Kuroda Kio as contemporary writers who had pushed him to work against this myth.

[46] Michael Bourdaghs has argued that "the creation of the clear geographical boundaries of the Japanese nation in the Meiji period also required the temporalization of space. Peripheral regions such as Okinawa and Hokkaido, whose cultural differences had previously been thought to mark spatial exteriority, were now integrated into the space of the nation by means of time. Their cultural particularity was renarrated, so that it now signified not spatial exteriority, but rather earlier stages of development in the linear time of a single national history. Similar attempts were made in the twentieth century to narrate the relation between Japan and its new overseas colonies." Michael Bourdaghs, *The Dawn That Never Comes: Shimazaki Tōson and Japanese Nationalism*, Studies of the Weatherhead East Asian Institute (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 162–63.

"cultural tactic." This term designates the ethnic group of mainland Japanese people, in other words the subject of the "myth that is the single-race nation-state." Tōmatsu was, and remains today, one of the most famous photographers in Japan. His work on Okinawa during the 1970s and earlier was very well-known, and Nakahira was certainly aware of his photographs. The idea of Japan as a *yamato* nation sparked Nakahira's interest in traveling to Amami, as a way to "discover the invisible line that separates Japan from Okinawa."[47] Seen through the spatial dynamics of Tōmatsu's photographs, *Pencil of the Sun* prepares Okinawa for its consumption as colonized territory.

Figure 98

Tōmatsu Shōmei, from *Pencil of the Sun*, 1975.

[47] Nakahira, "Amami — nami to haka to hana, soshite taiyō."

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Tōmatsu's photographs in this book clearly delineate their space. In the first part, Tōmatsu showed black-and-white photographs that he had taken on Okinawan islands over the course of various trips. Okinawa had been a major focus of Tōmatsu's work since 1969, when he published the photobook *OKINAWA* 沖縄 *OKINAWA*. He returned to Okinawa for over a year in 1972, spending about six months on Miyako Island.[48] The photographs that he published in *Pencil of the Sun* orient space in easily graspable ways. For example, one of Tōmatsu's photographs looks down a dirt road, whose surface is marked by the shadow of a low-flying bird. This shadow is the only mark that disturbs its otherwise perfectly even point of view: the sides of the road lead directly to the vanishing point in the center of the image, towards which the power lines also lead.

Most of the other photographs of roads that appear in *Pencil of the Sun* extend into the center of the frame, and reach the vanishing point or horizon without any trouble. Another photograph shows a young girl carrying a small child, positioned next to a house with a straw roof, like the one Nakahira saw in Motobu. The girl and child offer an immediate sense of the house's scale, orienting the photograph in space. People appear throughout these photographs, sometimes in ways that position them as spatial markers, setting off foreground and middle ground from background, as in a photograph of four men walking towards the ocean, where the horizon appears clearly. Across the photographs, the horizon appears over and over again—it is sometimes tilted, but it is hardly ever obscured. In the main, the

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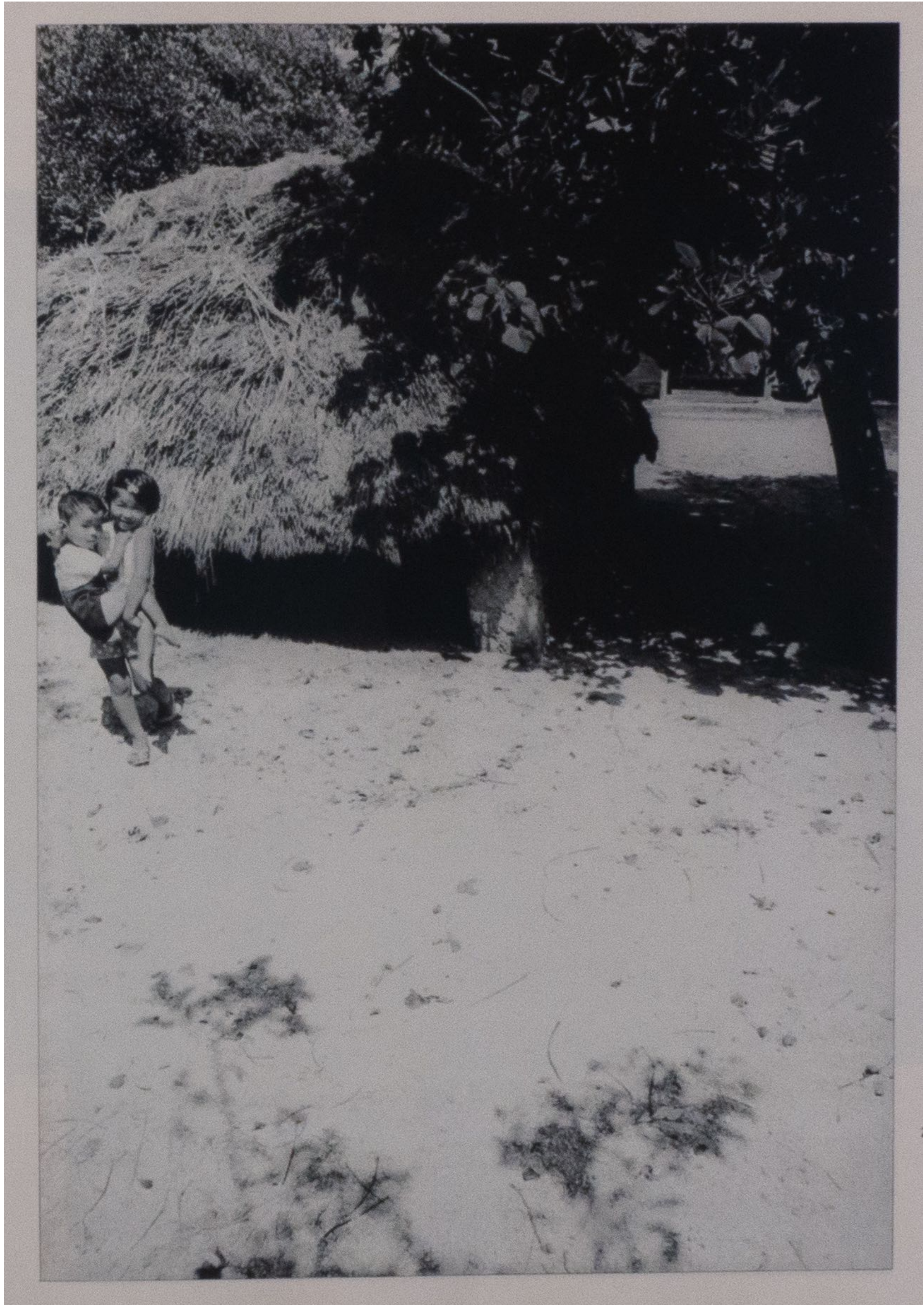
[48] For details of Tōmatsu's movements, see Koyashiki, "Tōmatsu Shōmei no 'Okinawa' to Okinawa — 'Tōmatsu shinwa' o kaitai suru," 19. Tōmatsu published his photographs from Okinawa, including color work, across camera magazines in the early 1970s. See, for example, Tōmatsu Shōmei, "Karafuruna! Amari ni mo karafuruna!!," *Asahi Camera*, March 1972.

photographs hew to fairly straightforward categories: landscapes, portraits, street scenes, and all manner of photographs that show Okinawan modes of dress, architecture, and religion.

Figures 99 and 100



Both Tōmatsu Shōmei, from *Pencil of the Sun*, 1975.

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In this regard, Tōmatsu's work fits within the anthropological tradition that stabilizes a national "subject" called Japan through the objectification of Okinawa. In fact, Tōmatsu pointed to the earlier work of the Japanese anthropologist Yanagita Kunio as one of his motivations for visiting Okinawa in the first place.[49] While the title of Tōmatsu's book makes a clear reference to William Henry Fox Talbot, it makes an equally obvious reference to *Tower of the Sun*, a massive work produced for the 1970 Osaka Expo by one of the most

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[49] Tōmatsu noted his interest in Yanagita's 1961 book *Ocean Road* (*Kaijō no michi*), about the "southern islands." See Tōmatsu Shōmei, *Shu mo doro no hana: Okinawa nikki* (Tokyo: Sanseidō, 1976), 236. For a critique of Yanagita's discourse on the "southern islands"—"south," of course, from the perspective of Japan—see Murai Osamu, *Nantō ideorogī no hassei: Yanagita Kunio to shokuminchi shugi* (Tokyo: Ohta Publishing Company, 1995), 13.

widely known artists in Japan, Okamoto Tarō.[50] In a noted book from 1961, *Forgotten Japan: A Theory of Okinawan Culture*, Okamoto also drew on Japanese anthropology to establish the idea of Okinawa as an object on which to project an unmarked "Japanese" identity.[51] The book is a travelogue, illustrated with Okamoto's own black-and-white photographs showing various Okinawan customs. The title of the book gives away Okamoto's thesis, that the culture of Okinawa is actually "an important mirror that reflects contemporary Japan."[52] If Okinawa is an "important mirror," it is only "important" in and through its relationship to Japan, which is positioned as the viewing subject looking at a reflective object. Okamoto concluded the book suggesting that Okinawa crystallizes, as if frozen in amber, a now-inaccessible Japan: "something of an essence of Japan is living here. I cannot doubt the real sense that we can brush up against the original passion of our way of living."[53] Locating objectified forms of difference in the cultural sphere, as Okamoto did, maintained an imagined integrity of Japan. In keeping with the conventions of other anthropological works already published on Okinawa, Tōmatsu interspersed a written travelogue with his photographs.

Ahmed's discussion of orientation in relation to Orientalism is particularly helpful in the case of Japan and Okinawa. In Ahmed's terms, the "Orient provides the object, as well as the instrument, that allows the Occident to take shape, to become a subject, as that which

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[50] Koyashiki Takumi has suggested the connection between the titles of these two works. See Koyashiki, "Tōmatsu Shōmei no 'Okinawa' to Okinawa — 'Tōmatsu shinwa' o kaitai suru," 30. *Tower of the Sun* is a 70 meter tall structure which still stands in Osaka today. This gigantic, three-faced, decapitated bird rose up through the center of a building designed by Tange Kenzō, angering the modernist architect.

[51] For an analysis of the relationship between Nakahira, Tōmatsu and Okamoto, see Kohara, "'Nantō' e / 'nantō' kara." In addition to *Forgotten Japan*, a 1966 publication by writer Torigoe Kenzaburo and photographer Iwamiya Takeji is another precursor to Tōmatsu's photographic travelogue. See Torigoe Kenzaburo and Iwamiya Takeji, *Kamera kikō ryūkyū no shinwa* (Kyoto: Tankō Shinsha, 1966). Iwamiya was an important mentor to the young Moriyama Daidō.

[52] Okamoto Tarō, *Wasurerareta nihon: Okinawa bunkaron* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron-sha, 1961), 11.

[53] Okamoto, 146.

‘we’ are around.”[54] Okinawa functions as an internal orient, around which a stable concept of the Japanese nation can define itself. Ahmed explicitly connects her line of thinking to the space of the nation, writing that “it is not that nations have simply directed their wishes and longings toward the Orient but rather that the nation ‘coheres’ an effect of the repetition of this direction.”[55] For “Japan” to affirm its self-identity, it has historically needed “Okinawa” as a stable, differentiated other, as Matsumura’s scholarship on the preservation of Okinawan cultural difference demonstrates. When Okamoto writes that “we can brush up against the original passion of our way of living,” he does not even need to specify that “we” means “we Japanese.” The subject needs the object; the house with the straw roof must be marked off.[56] Its placard reads “Protected House”—protected by who, for whom?

In her discussion of Orientalism, Ahmed turns the screw, by shifting the register of this category from geographic to corporeal space: “Rather than othering being simply a form of negation, it can also be described *as a form of extension*. The body extends its reach by taking in that which is ‘not’ it, where the ‘not’ involves the acquisition of new capacities and directions—becoming, in other words, ‘not’ simply what I am ‘not’ but what I can ‘have’ and ‘do.’ The ‘not me’ is incorporated into the body, extending its reach.”[57] This was literally true of Japan extending its “reach” into Okinawa, and making it into an “instrument,” both for material development and for securing the “essence” around which the nation could cohere. In fact, the scope of *Pencil of the Sun* extends even beyond Okinawa. In its second part, Tōmatsu published color photographs that he had taken in Southeast Asia, a geographical expansion of his project that also maps onto the history of Japanese colonization.

[54] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, 116.

[55] Ahmed, 118.

[56] For a cutting analysis of recent scholarly attitudes towards objects, see Severin Fowles, “The Perfect Subject (Postcolonial Object Studies),” *Journal of Material Culture* 21, no. 1 (March 2016): 9–27.

[57] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, 115.

Figure 101

Tōmatsu Shōmei, from *Pencil of the Sun*, 1975.

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By orienting Okinawa as a space unmarked by Japan, though, Tōmatsu's photographs present it as an other that can be "incorporated into the body, extending its reach." Take this photograph of a man wearing a U.S. Army uniform. The photograph is not a casual snapshot, as the man looks at directly at Tōmatsu's camera and offers up a broad smile, knowingly performing his role of a photographed subject. Quite intentionally, I think, Tōmatsu has posed this man in front of a house with a tiled roof, another form of architecture that is clearly identifiable as Okinawan. This roof in the background frames up the man's face in the foreground; the spatial relationship between the two is stable and clear. Because the roof

itself is a cultural marker, it "marks" this man as Okinawan, and presents his loosely worn uniform of the occupying U.S. Military as a kind of punchline—the creased eyes of his open face contradict the ostensible strictness of the uniform he wears. In the travelogue that accompanied Tōmatsu's photographs, he wrote: "My interest suddenly shifted, from America as the positive symbol of materialistic culture, to the negative spiritual culture of Okinawa."[58] Tōmatsu makes a conscious play on the photographic concepts of "positive" and "negative." Where is Japan in this schema—or, more to the point, in this photograph? Even though the photograph cannot confirm whether the person it depicts is Okinawan, it produces a clear binary relation between foreground and background, in other words between Okinawa and the United States. The U.S. Army uniform performs a certain misdirection here, offering a way for Tōmatsu to deflect attention away from the colonial position of Japan with respect to Okinawa. He is willing to make visible the conditions of American occupation, while hiding his position as a mainland Japanese in the grammar of that articulation.

In recent years, Okinawan scholars and photographers and scholars have mounted a sharp critique of Tōmatsu's photographic projects. Writing in the Okinawan journal *N27*, Koyashiki Takumi has argued that Tōmatsu was "completely mistaken" to call Okinawa a zone of "spiritual culture," when its culture is in fact highly material—a materiality that comes about through the combination of climate, plants and "people with bodies."[59] Even further, he points to the fact that "otherness" itself is a valuable commodity on the global market, especially as a "cultural salve"; as a result, he offers the following critique of Tōmatsu's work: "The land and people of Okinawa are cut off and commodified through

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[58] Tōmatsu Shōmei, *Taiyo no enpitsu* (Tokyo: Camera Mainichi, 1975), n.p. Tōmatsu also published his written travelogues from Okinawa in magazines; see, for example, Tōmatsu Shōmei, "Kodawari no tabi," *Shūmatsu Kara*, February 1974. In 1976, Tōmatsu's Okinawa diaries were published as Tōmatsu, *Shu mo doro no hana: Okinawa nikki*.

[59] Koyashiki, "Tōmatsu Shōmei no 'Okinawa' to Okinawa — 'Tōmatsu shinwa' o kaitai suru," 34.

Tōmatsu's photographs, and the condition of these photographs of 'Okinawa' circulating on the market is, in fact, the nothing more than the ideology of 'occupation.'"[60] Tōmatsu had made his name as a photographer through a series on the presence of the United States in postwar Japan titled "Occupation," and the idea of "Americanization" motivated much of his work. Here, Koyashiki turned Tōmatsu's keyword against him, pointing to his own status as an occupier from the mainland. Higa Toyomitsu's critique of Tōmatsu's work as a "*yamato* cultural tactic, one form of colonialism" appeared as part of a conversation in the pages of *N27*, which has published various other texts that reconsider Tōmatsu's relationship to Okinawa.[61]

In the same conversation, Higa positioned Nakahira against Tōmatsu: "Nakahira Takuma saw through Tōmatsu more than anyone. Today, Nakahira's texts can be taken as critiques of Tōmatsu. He couldn't name Tōmatsu directly, though. But Nakahira faced off with Tōmatsu through Okinawa, and he went off to Amami in search of the national border. I might be wrong, but I think that Nakahira became unable to photograph Okinawa."[62] Seen in this light, the subtitle of "Amami" ("Waves and Graves and Flowers, and Then the Sun") pokes at the subtitle of *Pencil of the Sun* ("Okinawa, The Sea and Sky and Islands and People, and Then to Southeast Asia"). Higa also points to Nakahira's refusal, which, seen in light of his theoretical and practical twists and turns, looks like a consistent strategy. "The Illusion Called Document" suggested that photographers might "quit being photographers," Nakahira burned his negatives on the beach, his color photography tried to push against color itself, and the photograph *Blue Sky* refused to depict the landscape of Okinawa. In fact, the specific location of *Blue Sky*, Miyako Island, could be read as another thinly-veiled

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[60] Koyashiki, 37.

[61] See, in particular, Shimoji Keiko, "Tasha no manazashi, arui wa marebito teki na," *N27*, no. 1 (June 2013).

[62] Higa and Onaga, "Tōmatsu Shōmei to okinawa no 40 nen o kataru," 70.

provocation in Tōmatsu's direction, as Nakahira would have known very well that Tōmatsu had lived there. Okinawa offered the bright daylight celebrated by "Why an Illustrated Botanical Reference Book?"—but Nakahira "became unable to photograph Okinawa." This position of refusal led him to photograph the Amami Islands, as a mode of taking up some other orientation toward Okinawa. These photographs were pitched against the *yamato* tradition of anthropological thinking, which buttresses the "myth that is the single-race nation-state." What kind of space would be adequate to that goal?

A Last Thread

In so many ways, this dissertation has narrated the impossibility of being a photographer, and Nakahira's early color photography presented this hopeless condition in an extreme form. The Amami photographs perform similar operations, by consistently blocking off the horizon, or collapsing foreground and background. In short, they disorient the view expected by a mainland Japanese perspective of the "southern islands" as graspable space. In this sense, Nakahira was working through his own positionality as a *yamato* photographer visiting Amami and Okinawa. The refusal to depict the colonized landscape is doubled in the refusal to represent the horizon. Nakahira's treatment of space in these photographs, produced through his own corporeal position, also speaks to a political position.

In a certain sense, then, the Amami photographs perform similar operations as his *Provoke* photographs. Although they appear to mark a radical departure from *Provoke* photography, they continue many of the same strategies. Blur and grain are gone; harsh black-and-white is gone. But the reduction of space is still here: both bodies of work block off viewpoints, tilt the horizon, and press objects close to the viewer while pushing others far away. The photographer Ōtsuji Kiyoji, who commented on "Amami" in another issue of *Asahi Camera*, found a connection between the series and *Provoke*:

> To say the conclusion, the *bure boke* photographs that Nakahira took up until now and this month's sharp photographs are the same. […] I think that Nakahira's consistent attitude has been, 'I do not offer any personal meaning.' He has claimed that his work is not a perfect realization of the way that he wanted to look. That's why he photographed using *bure boke*, and the sharpness that he is using now is another form of it. I'm not sure this is correct, but it makes sense to me. Things [*mono*] from the time of *bure boke* flew off somewhere—I don't know whether to say to 'image' or 'illusion'—but in any case, they fell back on personal thoughts. So when it came time to once again reject that, and claim that the phrase 'the world is like this' cannot be decided unilaterally, I think he just had no choice but to photograph in a vivid [*ari ari*] and sharp way.[63]

The idea that Nakahira's Amami and *Provoke* photographs "are the same" appears to be entirely paradoxical, given the major differences between them: the Amami photographs are in color, they are taken during the day, and they use vertical orientation more frequently. Yet Ōtsuji's keen comments demonstrate an extremely careful understanding of Nakahira's own development as a photographer and writer, moving from *Provoke* through his critique of media to his interest in rejecting a "unilateral" view of the world. Ōtsuji's discourse tracks Nakahira's consistent interest in the gap between photographs and corporeal experience. Nakahira's *Provoke* work was an attempt to unify these two terms as if romantically; "The Illusion Called Document" plumbed the most pessimistic resonances of this gap; *Circulation* brought them together again through flow; and "Amami" was an attempt to reconcile them on the basis of encounter as a form of relation with the world.

[63] Ōtsuji Kiyoji, Suzuki Shiroyasu, and Nakamura Rikkō, "Wadai no shashin wo megutte," *Asahi Camera*, March 1976, 154–55.

Figure 93

Nakahira Takuma, "Amami." Published in *Asahi Camera*, February 1976.

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Look at the last photograph of the series, which shows a few bushels of grass left under a tree.[64] Pampas grass is a material used for producing a roof—just like the one that Nakahira had seen in Motobu that was marked off for preservation. This grass is not yet an object that can be culturally "marked." But it does not exist in a "raw" state, either. Gestures

[64] This plant is Japanese Pampas Grass, *susuki* in Japanese. This observation was made by Machi Kenjirō of the Setouchi Municipal Museum, Amami Ōshima. Machi Kenjirō, Interview, March 15, 2022. I am extremely grateful for the insights that Machi shared with me while looking at Nakahira's photographs of Amami.

of human intervention appear in the grass; it has been tied together into three distinct bushels, which stand somewhat upright as they lean against a tree. One long strand of grass has been laid across them, more or less horizontally. It does not strictly parallel the horizontality of the camera's frame, as it surely would if this were a Renger-Patzsch photograph. It angles slightly upwards, rhyming with the slightly tilted angle of the bushels themselves. Perhaps Nakahira even left this strand there himself, although there is no way to know for sure. On Nakahira's analysis, the demarcation of the house in Motobu produced it as an object for consumption by mainland Japanese tourists who would visit the Expo site. What does this single transverse strand signify? It is tied to no language; it speaks to no position. It offers something to the viewer of the photograph that exceeds any cultural coding.

Figure 102

Nakahira Takuma, "Amami." Published in *Asahi Camera*, February 1976, detail.

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But look again: it is not simply laid across the three bushels. Instead, it is lightly woven through the bushel at the left, and it intersects gently with some of the strands at the right. In short, it is in an intertwined relation that is in concert with the mode of relationality that these photographs hold out. It is not that Nakahira himself holds out this relation. Because if anything in them might correspond to an encounter, this could not come from Nakahira alone. The strand has offered something, and Nakahira was there to receive it—to register it, perhaps, in a bodily sense.[65] There is, then, a certain intentionality to Nakahira's work, by physically placing himself in Amami, and organizing photographic space in an off-kilter way. But there is no need to search out an authorial presence in the photographs, as Trachtenberg wishes to do with Evans. To think with Lee's idea of encounter, or Nakahira's idea of the world as "the magnetically charged place where my gaze is interwoven with the gaze of things," means shifting away from the photographer as a site of authorial coherency.[66]

The relation between photography and encounter, in the sense that Lee used the term, may be a contradiction in terms. But perhaps "document of encounter" names the strategy that Nakahira began to pursue here: an impossible document, to be sure, and one that could not be verified or transmitted. It certainly does not correspond to anything like the ideas of documentary photography that were being pursued at this time, in the name of politicizing photography. It could only come from the space of disorientation, from the sort of encounter that Nakahira said had the terrifying potential to "shake the foundation of my being," something that he felt from Okinawa, and Evans alike.[67] There is no way to say what

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[65] On the idea of the "author as receiver," see Silverman, "The Author as Receiver."

[66] Nakahira, "Naze, shokubutsu zukan ka," 1973, 20.

[67] Around this time, Nakahira wrote an essay on Evans, suggesting that his photographs produce an anxiety about the relationship between human consciousness and the world. See Nakahira Takuma, "Chinmoku no naka ni uzukumaru jibutsu — Wōkā Ebanzu ni furete," in *Mitsuzukeru hate ni hi ga...:*

Nakahira was feeling as he took these photographs. But crosswise strand marks the condition of how the photographer is a body in the world: held in place loosely, through an intertwining.

Conclusion: Burn Out

> He was like a firework, there was no way he could continue like that.[68]
>
> Takara Ben

They way "Amami" oriented space offered up a last response to the question of being a photographer in the world, through a disorientation that was still hanging on by a thread. But this was, truly, Nakahira's last answer, because disorientation reached his own body, and sent him over the edge. In a 1973 essay nominally about the photographs of Eugène Atget, Nakahira wrote candidly about his recent hospitalization due to "symptoms of constant perceptual irregularity" that he experienced as a result of his dependence on sleeping pills.[69] Nakahira claimed that to look is to transform the world into meaning, a process that happens through the confirmation of the distance between the world and the looking self. He then asked: "But what if that distance breaks down?"[70] Nakahira's symptoms collapsed this distance acutely: he described the horrifying sensation that things were piercing so directly

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hihyō shūsei 1965-1977 (Tokyo: Osiris, 2007), 358–63. One of the photographs from the "Amami" series shows a burial mound, a clear reference to one of Evans' most famous photographs, which Nakahira discussed in the essay.

[68] Takara Ben, Interview, March 9, 2022.

[69] Nakahira Takuma, "Yujen Aje — toshi e no shisen arui wa toshi kara no shisen," in *Mitsuzukeru hate ni hi ga...: hihyō shūsei 1965-1977* (Tokyo: Osiris, 2007), 328.

[70] Nakahira, 328. Nakahira wrote that Atget's photographs produce an effect of "dissimilation" (*ika*): they keep the world strange, without immediately transforming it into—that is, assimilating it to—meaning. Nakahira, 330. Atget's photographs were suffused with this unstable distance, which manifested in corporeal terms no longer as "eros," but terror.

into his eyeballs that when he rode a train, he had to lock himself in the bathroom and close his eyes in order to protect his retinas. I do not intend to pathologize Nakahira, or even to take this account of his sensations on faith. But the description is important because it suggests a correspondence in Nakahira's own body with the disorientations that his photographs began to represent.

The Amami photographs, with all of their perceptual unmooring, set the course of Nakahira's work as a photographer for the rest of his life.[71] According to his close friend, the Okinawan poet Takara Ben, Nakahira hardly ate anything when he visited Okinawa, but mostly took pills and drank alcohol.[72] Nakahira's body reached a breaking point in the early hours of September 11, 1977, when he fell down some stairs after a party at his house in Zushi, near the beach where he had burned his negatives a few years prior. He suffered acute alcohol poisoning, fell into a coma, and never fully regained consciousness. He lost much of his memory, and did not publish another critical essay for the rest of his life. He did, however, return to photographing—and he eventually arrived at the clearly-focused, full-color, perceptually disoriented technique that he had first worked out in earnest on Amami. During the last twenty years of his life, he photographed exclusively in this way.

A few years before he visited Amami, Nakahira had published a conversation with a young photographer, in which he gave advice to up-and-coming photographers who wanted to make it as professionals. His main advice was to "make yourself into an episode," in other words to transform one's own life into a myth.[73] Nakahira's 1977 "accident," as it is often

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[71] After Amami, Nakahira traveled further north to the Tokara Islands, and made another series that was split into color and monochrome. Nakahira soon admitted that his emotions had gotten the better of him because he shot in monochrome. See Nakahira Takuma, Takanashi Yutaka, and Watanabe Tsutomu, "Zadankai: wadai no shashin wo megutte," *Asahi Camera*, April 1977, 216.

[72] Takara, Interview.

[73] See Nakahira Takuma, "Miru koto kara mirareru koto e — shashinka, ika ni kuu ka , kuubeki ka," *Bijutsu Techō*, January 1973.

called, fulfills this demand in the extreme.[74] The legend of a top photographer and writer whose career is thrown off course by an accident—who in fact loses his memory—only to return to photographing, is compelling.[75] The fact that Nakahira's late color work appears to realize the "illustrated botanical reference book" only adds to the intrigue. But this easy mythologization of Nakahira's "accident" should not be taken at face value. In fact, even the idea that his incapacitation was entirely "accidental" might be a fallacy. There is a cruel irony to Nakahira having effectively liquidated his consciousness. After all, he had taken botanical life as the model of his praxis; what better way to secure the unity of theory and practice than to become, in more or less literal terms, a vegetable?

It is not that Nakahira suffered from "burnout," in the sense of gradual fatigue, but that he "burned out," in a flash—like a firework, as Takara suggested. Takara notes that Nakahira had encouraged him to read the entire works of Fanon, and at one point Nakahira gave Takara a volume of Fanon's writing.[76] Fanon also passed through an analysis of objectification, in terms of the racialization of colonial subjects, and he consistently articulated these processes in phenomenological terms. For this reason, he is an important precursor of the emerging field of critical phenomenology, which understands the concrete effects of difference through bodily sensation.[77] At the conclusion of *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon offers a thoroughly corporeal image of potentiality that emerges from his reflections on the violent objectification of colonial racism: "Why not simply try to touch the

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[74] Kuraishi Shino has pointed out the degree to which Nakahira has been mythologized. See Kuraishi, "Henshū nōto," 157.

[75] Nakahira knew this story himself: he had written glowingly of the 1961 French film *The Long Absence*, in which the main character is a man who has lost his memory. See Nakahira, "Dōjidaiteki de aru koto wa nanika?," 82.

[76] Takara, Interview; Takara, "Nakahira Takuma ron."

[77] See, for example, Kinkaid, "Re-Encountering Lefebvre: Toward a Critical Phenomenology of Social Space."

other, feel the other, discover each other?”[78] He proposes, one might say, encounter. With the last line of the book, Fanon directs the following “final prayer” towards himself: “O my body, always make me a man who questions!”[79] This may be an unusual prayer for a photographer. After all, shouldn’t a photographer address their eyes? But Nakahira’s work shows how deeply the bodily address of Fanon’s prayer resonates for photographers. Does that mark an end, or a beginning?

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[78] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2008), 206.

[79] Fanon, 206.

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