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A-Visual Imagery of the Atomic Age: Kawada Kikuji's *Chizu (The Map)*

THESIS

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## ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

A-Visual Imagery of the Atomic Age: Kawada Kikuji's *Chizu (The Map)*

by

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This thesis explores the experimental force of Kikuji Kawada's 1965 photobook *Chizu (The Map)*, examining how this photobook-as-object evolves throughout its renditions over the decades and how it visualizes the human condition of anthropogenic violence in the atomic age. Captured two decades after the detonation of the atomic bomb, *The Map* photographic series presents a comprehensive documentation of Kawada's first encounter with the post-atomic landscape of Hiroshima. Through fragmented and seemingly abstract images of the Atomic-Bomb Dome (*Genbaku Domu*), postwar industrial waste landscapes, desolate sites of war, victims of radioactivity, and war relics, Kawada captures the lingering permanency of nuclear warfare embedded onto physical surfaces and creates a visual metaphor of the psychological landscape of postwar Japan.

In highlighting Kawada's images of the stained walls of the A-Bomb Dome, this research foregrounds Akira Mizute Lippit's concept of *a-visibility*, illustrating how these images create a visualization of the atomic spectacle, a phenomenon that is prevalent in contemporary visual culture to render visual the unseeable, fleeting moment of the nuclear flash. Through the evolution of *Chizu*, first published in 1965 and subsequent renditions in 2005 and 2021, this

research traces how Kawada's vision for the photobook transforms over time, each version unraveling new layers of interpretation to the a-visibility of the atomic spectacle and invites the contemporary viewer to contemplate its ecological ramifications into the present and future. While previous scholarship has focused on the context of *Chizu* that details postwar trauma of nuclear violence, I argue that the re-emergence of *Chizu* into contemporary time evokes a reexamination of its context through the legacy of the atomic age, by which the Anthropocene is marked by the lingering uncertainty of the future of humanity.

The vexed legacy of the Nuclear Age demands attention today  
as it did in 1946 and its aftermaths must be closely  
attuned to matters of visibility.

– Claudette Lauzon and John O’Brian,  
“To See through Post-Atomic Eyes” (2020)

## **INTRODUCTION: A-Visibility in Kawada Kikuji’s *Chizu***

Kawada Kikuji’s gelatin silver print *The A-Bomb Memorial Dome, Ceiling, Stain and Flaking Off* (1960-1965) depicts the disintegrating interior floor of the Prefectural Industry Exhibition Hall in Hiroshima (Fig. 1). Taken two decades after the detonation of the atomic bomb in August 1945, the photograph captures an enshrined moment from the ‘zero hour,’ representing an eerie memento of the atomic bomb’s violent imprint on the skeletal remains of the infrastructure that now stand as the Hiroshima Peace Memorial (Genbaku Dōmu).<sup>1</sup> Vividly, the photograph illustrates a whirlpool of the hardened conglomerate of infrastructural matter dispersed across the spatial field of the Genbaku Dōmu ceiling. The ambiguous pictorial space of this high-contrast grayscale image encapsulates an all-consuming landscape of an inexplicable void. At first glance, it appears as an abstract composition of eroded and fragmented forms. The expansive pattern of the crackling surface imparts a tactile quality, reminiscent of an aerial snapshot of a boundless, desolate landscape.

By obscuring the vantage point, this approach of scale ambiguity highlights the anti-narrative nature of the vast, oblique terrain. For the observer, the enigmatic lack of visual clarity challenges the viewer’s ability to fully grasp the experience being depicted, yet the tactile quality of the image renders visible a presence of reality through site and materiality.<sup>2</sup> Kawada’s

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<sup>1</sup> The Japanese term for the Hiroshima Peace Memorial “Genbaku Dōmu” is interchangeably used throughout the paper as the A-Bomb Dome in conjunction to Kawada’s use of the term alongside scholars discussing *Chizu*. This architectural structure became a war memorial in Hiroshima, Japan – being the only structure that survived in the epicenter of the detonation of the atomic bomb on August 6, 1945. Since its conservation in 1967, the base floor site that Kawada visited has been an area not open to the public.

<sup>2</sup> John Hillman, “How Does Photography Appear to Appear?”, (*Membrana – Journal of Photography, Theory and Visual Culture* 8 (1), 2020), 72-79.

photograph fosters a palpable sense of mystery through the notion of visualizing the presence of reality within the uncanny snapshot of the Genbaku Dōmu. This compels the viewer to engage with the image, evoking a state of contemplation through the active act of observation. Susan Sontag, in her essay “On Photography,” describes how photographs, while they may manipulate the subject through fragmented alterations of the pictorial space, still carry a resemblance to reality. “The picture may distort; but there is always a presumption that something exists, or did exist, which is like what’s in the picture,” she articulates, expressing that photographs are held as records of the truth even in their eminent pictorial ambiguity.<sup>3</sup> This notion holds true to Kawada’s photograph; a strange image of an ambiguous grim landscape, where the decaying remnants of the Genbaku Dōmu holds a trace of the atomic bomb despite the image’s fragmented composition.

Through the act of viewing, the simulation of unraveling the visual layers of *The A-Bomb Memorial Dome, Ceiling, Stain and Flaking Off* is an attempt to find a presence of reality within the visible absence of something tangible. This photograph captivates the dichotomy of visibility – the invisible and the visible – affirming Kawada’s expressive intent to realize his vision of capturing the Genbaku Dōmu. In a 2018 interview with the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) Kawada articulates, “I believe this photo represents one big world of Hiroshima.”<sup>4</sup> This statement encapsulates his concept for the detail shot, framing the microcosmic vantage point of the A-Bomb Dome basement ceiling as an essential element in his broader, macrocosmic vision of post-atomic Hiroshima. Kawada then follows this statement with the notion that although this image is seemingly abstract, it is not inherently abstract in nature. “I

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<sup>3</sup> Susan Sontag, “On Photography” in *Communication in History: Technology, Culture, Society* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 175.

<sup>4</sup> San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, “Kikuji Kawada on the Atomic Bomb Dome and postwar Japan,” July 9, 2018, 0:59, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p6ulxiSdY4w>.

believe I kept one step away from becoming abstract,” says Kawada, “In creating Chizu, I tried to extract something abstract by cutting details from something concrete.”<sup>5</sup> In utilizing the interior of the A-Bomb Dome as the tangible subject, Kawada extracts a fragmented close-up depiction of the material degradation to reveal a visual metaphor of the underlying permanency of nuclear violence. Thus, by juxtaposing the visible decay of atomic ruins to the unseen instant of the nuclear flash, this photograph conjures the post-atomic landscape of Hiroshima.

Kawada’s *The A-Bomb Memorial Dome, Ceiling, Stain and Flaking Off* was a part of the culmination of his vision of post-war Hiroshima presented in the publication of the 1965 photobook *Chizu (The Map)*. In collaboration with Japanese graphic designer Kōhei Sugira and published by Bijutsu Shuppansha, the original limited edition of *Chizu* (700 copies) was issued in 1965. In the SFMoMA interview, he characterizes *The Map* photographic series as an examination of Hiroshima's social and environmental conditions made up of three components: through fragmented compositions of the A-Bomb Dome, war memorabilia, and discarded material remnants of post-war industrialization.<sup>6</sup> The uncanny aesthetics in *Chizu* unfolds a spatiotemporal oscillation of time and memory. Identifiable objects of war and the presence of the American military complex in Japan are juxtaposed with the mysterious images of stains across the photographic series. As a member of the image generation of Japanese photographers (VIVO) in the 1960s—who contemporaneously affirmed an expressive intent to build a visual language out of individual subjectivity depicting the human condition of post-war Japan—Kawada explores the interrelation of the past and present through the subject of material surfaces, site, and objects of memory.<sup>7</sup> Through this emerging ethos of photography in post-war

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<sup>5</sup> Kawada, “Kikuji Kawada on the Atomic Bomb Dome and postwar Japan,” at 2:54-3:30.

<sup>6</sup> Kawada, “Kikuji Kawada on the Atomic Bomb Dome and postwar Japan,” at 0:18-0:50.

<sup>7</sup> The IBASHO Gallery presented their 24th exhibition titled *VIVO* (2017) in which they featured photographers of the 1960s image generation – Eikoh Hosoe, Kikuji Kawada, Ikko Narahara, Akira Sato, Akiro Tanno, Shomei

Japan utilizing a subjective lens, we began to see a nuanced approach to how to visualize the atomic spectacle.

The conception of *Chizu* transpired during Kawada's first visit to Hiroshima in 1958, when he assisted Japanese photographer Domon Ken in a photo campaign for an issue of *Shūkan Shinchō* (Weekly Shinchō). In a 2021 interview with Photo Gallery International directed by Yasuyuki Takagi, Kawada detailed the making of *Chizu* following his encounter on the site of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial.<sup>8</sup> After completing his assignment, Kawada wandered onto grounds of the A-Bomb Dome and into the basement floor of the building. There he was struck by the grotesquely eroded ceiling and walls of the basement, standing in an eerily dark space engrossed by a haunting multi-sensorial experience of his surrounding environment. "I felt like I had encountered this terrifying, unknown place," Kawada states, "I had the illusion that I can almost hear faint voices... and crackling sounds coming out of the walls."<sup>9</sup> It was as if he could still feel the presence of the individuals that once stood in the same place moments before the detonation of the atomic bomb. This subconscious hallucinogenic illusion was an epiphany moment for Kawada. He later articulates that these stains shifted how he wanted to photograph Hiroshima, a landscape "not suitable for reportage" but rather one that evoked an inexplicable journey of unraveling layers of memory through a multi-sensorial experience.<sup>10</sup> Kawada soon returned to Hiroshima, this time returning with a 4x5 Linhof view camera to photograph the stains across the A-Bomb Dome basement. In his photographic process, he utilized the technique of long exposures and a closed aperture—opting out of using his flash—and positioned the camera

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Tomatsu – making visible their influence in the shifting aesthetics of postwar Japanese photography.  
<https://ibashogallery.com/exhibitions/24-24-vivo-eikoh-hosoe-kikuji-kawada-ikko/overview/>.

<sup>8</sup> Joshua Chuang and Miyuki Hinton, "Conversation with Kikuji Kawada" in *Chizu (Maquette Edition)*, (London: MACK; New York: New York Public Library, 2021), 11.

<sup>9</sup> Joshua Chuang and Miyuki Hinton, "Conversation with Kikuji Kawada," 12.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

in close proximity to capture the stained surface that were exposed by the light peering through the structure.<sup>11</sup> This approach of emphasizing the material deterioration of the building's caved infrastructure became a central visual theme of *Chizu*: capturing the passage of time through the metaphor of surfaces holding memory.

The immediate decade following the end of World War II marked a pivotal shift in Japanese visual culture. As a world living in the atomic age, we began to see an emergence of a new visual language and definition of [nuclear] catastrophe, with evolving modes of visual media that sought to create a visualization of the atomic bomb detonation.<sup>12</sup> Claudette Lauzon and John O'Brian in their 2020 book *Through Post-Atomic Eyes* centers the visual legacy of a post-atomic world through the medium of photography, arguing that the atomic detonation's effect on optical reception has shifted the way we visualize and understand nuclear catastrophe.<sup>13</sup> The desire to capture the impossibility of visualizing the 'zero hour' became a phenomenon of the twentieth-century: the *atomic spectacle*. The challenge of visualizing the incomprehensible and unseeable atomic flash has been attempted to be answered through visual media; How can one visually convey the fleeting moment of aporic blankness? The visibility of the atomic spectacle is a phenomenon of the twentieth century that has been examined into the twenty-first century by the discipline of visual studies. Akira Mizuta Lippit in his 2005 book *Atomic Light: Shadow Optics* describes the phenomenology of the atomic spectacle by invoking the notion of *a-visibility* defined through the oscillation of visibility of the atomic blast. Lippit dissects *a-visibility* as a paradox of visibility, suggesting that "invisibility functions not as the negation of

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> The term "Atomic Age" was coined by journalist William L. Laurence in his 1947 book *Dawn Over Zero: The Story of the Atomic Bomb* (p.3), where he describes that the beginning of the Atomic Age was conceived in the initial testing of nuclear weapons in New Mexico, there came a new era of catastrophe.

<sup>13</sup> Claudette Lauzon and John O'Brian, *Through Post-Atomic Eyes*, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020), 6.

visibility but as a form of visibility.’<sup>14</sup> Synthesizing Lauzon and O’Brian’s analysis of photography in the post-atomic age with Lippit’s perception of visibility, one might interpret Kawada’s *Chizu* through this contemporaneous discourse of the atomic spectacle. After its initial publication in 1965, Kawada recently reissued *Chizu* in 2021 through a *maquette* edition. In between its initial conception and present edition, a 2005 re-print of the photobook was also produced; each time with new literature attached to it that points to a new way of interpreting the photographic series. Kawada’s decades-long revisiting of *Chizu* unravels its mystery through the introduction of new scholarship attached to each new edition.

Utilizing Lippit’s concept of a-visibility, I examine the larger interpretive examination of *Chizu* – analyzing its expanding recognition and nuanced scholarship throughout the photobook’s renditions over the decades. My intervention spells out how while these images allude to a-visibility, an amorphous visual language to visualize the unseeable, arguing that the reprinting of the photobook with new accompanying text fills in the hole of comprehending the a-visual. By tracing the chronology of the photobook’s editions from its original 1965 publication through its most recent 2021 publication, what we are seeing in each version is a new effort to try and produce the amorphous visual language to visualize the unseeable. But what does it mean for this photo book to resurface over time? How does it connect to the periods in which it comes back? Kawada’s evolving renditions for *Chizu* calls for the exploration of new interpretations that connect this six-decade old project into contemporary time. In the first section, I explore the theme of postwar sentiment through the analysis of the didactics across the

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<sup>14</sup> Akira Mizuta Lippit, *Atomic Light: (Shadow Optics)*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 84. Lippit utilized 1940s Western and Japanese visual culture to define the notion of a-visibility. Beginning his chapter “An Atomic Trace” with Willem de Kooning’s apprehension of the *atomic spectacle*, de Kooning engaged with the phenomenology of a-visibility in direct connection with the light flash of the atomic detonation that overrides visibility.

original 1965 publication of *Chizu*. Here Kawada presents to the viewer his all-encompassing vision of post-atomic Japan through the visual metaphor of cartography. In the second section, I will be engaging with the theme of stains (*shimi*) foregrounded in the 2005 reprinting of *Chizu*. In this reprint, Kawada presents to the viewer his phenomenology of stains that foregrounds his visual sensorium at the A-Bomb Dome. In the third section, I will be engaging with the 2021 *Chizu (Maquette Edition)* and exploring the theme of temporality through Kawada's vision of the photobook as an 'object of the future.' In the final section, I will be attempting to insert *Chizu* into the methodology of ecology. Bridging Kawada's notion of the uncertainty of the future to the nuanced art historical discourse of the visual culture of the Anthropocene, I argue that the key is not only to unpack the ambiguities of *Chizu* visually, but to also understand how the reintroduction of this photobook in contemporary time can help us make sense of the legacy of the nuclear age.

## **I. Vision of Post-Atomic Hiroshima: Atomic Bomb-scape Encounter and Fragmented Cartography**

Published on August 6, 1965, two decades after the detonation of the atomic bomb in Hiroshima, the first edition of *Chizu* was issued. Designed by Ishio Toshiro and Sugiura Kōhei, the 15 cm x 22.5 cm book is wrapped in a brown cardboard slipcase, with the title “Kikuji Kawada – *Chizu*” printed onto the upper-right register in Kanji and below it written out in English (Fig. 2). Below the title, an epigraph taking the center of the cover details:

“We are adrift in an era without courage, ambition, action, or even beautiful memories. Ask! Today, where is our map? Where is our vision and our brilliant order?”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Kikuji Kawada, *Chizu*, (Tokyo: Bijutsu Shuppansha, 1965).

This statement predicates an act of urgency, a prelude to the viewer’s engagement with the photographs before diving into the images. Viewers are challenged to contemplate the question of the state of the world, through a *map* that depicts a state of chaos with no clarity of the future. Below the epigraph, an illustration of a compass and a topographical map rendering are displayed directly in the middle of the page.<sup>16</sup> Here, Kawada is directly engaging with the title of the photographic series, utilizing image and language to create an allegory that sets the stage for the viewer. The interactive engagement with the book continues: inside the slipcase is a black folio that blankets the book. Etched in silver ink, the title is displayed vertically followed by the word *map* in different languages—“map, kápta, landkarte, carta, mapa”—with sporadic illustrations of terrain rendering contour lines wrapped around the entirety of the cover.<sup>17</sup> The repetition of the use of the word *map* and inextricably linked illustrations of terrain cartography echoes to the reader the central theme of the photobook that is explored. Upon opening the folio, the continuum of etched silver words are embossed throughout the interior folds, words highlighting post-atomic phrases in English, katakana, and kanji such as “Enola Gay, manhattan, keloid, hiroshima, uranium.”<sup>18</sup> Subsequently, the unraveling of the folio reveals the cover of the photobook, a grayscale monochromatic picture of a burning crumpled up piece of paper with phrases “ENOLA-GAY, keloid, 8/6, atom, chocolate, gum, gun, lucky, energy” on the folio printed across its surface (Fig. 3). The repetition of words, images, and materiality across the multi-layered unboxing of the photobook demands the immersive attention of the viewer. The sporadic yet thematic arrangement of phrases reinforce the violent post-atomic landscape, creating a semiotic interplay between the text and imagery. The book itself is comprised of 190

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<sup>16</sup> Kikuji Kawada, *Chizu*, See Figure 2.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, See Figure 2.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, See Figure 3.

photographs bound to one volume, including 23 gatefold pages spread across the book. Inside the book, the viewer is met with the repetitive detail images of material deterioration of the A-Bomb Dome juxtaposed with photographs of kamikaze memorabilia, American commercial goods, postwar media, and symbols of the Japanese nation. With no didactics attached to these images to reveal titles or context, the viewers are immersed in an experience of peering into the images that make up the visual language of *Chizu*. The viewer is left to contemplate the post-atomic phrases.

Alongside to the photobook is a folded brown paper containing a poem by Oē Kenzaburō titled “Map,” on one side in Japanese and the other in English. Oē’s poem evokes a visceral memory of first encountering the violence of the world through the narrative of a violent shove to the ground, where he meets eye to eye with the soiled ground. Oē expands on this moment of impending violence, revealing that the stained ground, upon where his face was pressed against, transformed before him into a vision of the map of the world— a world imprinted by the scars of violence.<sup>19</sup> He follows this notion of a world marked by violence by drawing a connection to the metaphor of maps, articulating that Kawada’s *Chizu* renders a vision of violence held through surface memory. Parallel to his experience, Oē articulates:

Whenever I look at the pictures, subtle, monomaniac and in deep dark, of the photographer of the MAP I go back to the distant memory of my own. Innumerable maps I have seen since that day, but no map was so real and definite as the one I found on the soiled ground and on which I poured tears of indignation and fear. The unique style of the photographer of the MAP is clearly shown on the pictures of the dark and minute surface of walls, which is much repeated. He must be seeing there his own map of the violent world, I believe.<sup>20</sup>

In this stanza, Oē extends the metaphor of the map, symbolically alluding to violence, to describe Kawada’s narrative of *Chizu*— a visuality of a map embedded into surfaces. Between Kawada’s

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<sup>19</sup> Kenzaburō Oē, “Map,” foreword in Kikuji Kawada, *Chizu* (Tokyo: Bijutsu Shuppasha, 1965), See Figure 4.

<sup>20</sup> Oē, “Map” in *Chizu*.

epigraph and Oē's poetic forward, the concept of a map is directly related to the symbolic visualization of a landscape interlinked with postwar collective trauma. Kawada in *Chizu* ventures through the visual metaphor of cartography to illustrate the landscape of Hiroshima, two decades after the atomic bomb evoking a visual narrative that captures the *psychological landscape* of postwar Hiroshima.<sup>21</sup> Thinking about the definition of a map, a two-dimensional geological rendering of a landscape that represents a part of the Earth's surface on a macrocosmic aerial view scale, the viewer looking through the abstracted yet indexical images of surfaces that hold a tactile quality to it visually renders a symbolic representation of a vast landscape.<sup>22</sup> In *Chizu*, microcosmic surface abrasions become a macrocosmic image of a post-atomic reality. Using fragmented up-close images of surfaces across the photographic series, Kawada reveals his own vision of post-war Hiroshima, a society living with the lingering permanency of the atomic bomb, thus creating a *map* of Japan.

In the opening image of *Chizu*, the viewer is confronted with an up-close snapshot of an individual in slight flexion over a surface and exposing the blistering keloids spread across their back (Fig. 4).<sup>23</sup> The horizontal beam of light cast over the individual's back accentuates the appearance of bodily abrasions, drawing the viewer's attention to the keloids. The fragmented composition holds an evocative uncanny force; where the light breaks the ambiguity of the image, casting a shadow of the subject that faintly reveals the silhouette of the human form. The use of high contrast and fragmented, intimate close-up composition of the subject's scarred back elicits an emotional response from the viewer. We are directly confronted with the image of an

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<sup>21</sup> Joshua Chuang and Miyuki Hinton, "Conversation with Kikuji Kawada," in *Chizu (Maquette Edition)*, (London: MACK; New York: New York Public Library, 2021), 12.

<sup>22</sup> OMerriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. "map," <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/map>.

<sup>23</sup> Kikuji Kawada, A-Bomb Victim of Hiroshima., in *Chizu [The Map]*, 1965. Throughout the 1965 publication of *Chizu* captions are not provided. Images described across this paper that directly come from the photobook are titled the way that they were titled in the 2005 Nazraeli Press reprint of *Chizu*.

atomic bomb victim. Although there is not an attached caption to the image that details what the photograph is, the focus on the bodily abrasions of the subject this image symbolizes the notion of violence embedded into surfaces. Here the viewer is left to contemplate the permanency of the atomic bomb and a violence that penetrated bodies. The image of an unidentified individual can be seen as a ubiquitous representation of a war-scarred society. The ambiguity of the image along with the fact that there is no context, leaves us to contemplate the title, *Chizu*, parallel to this photograph being the opening of the series. Alluding to Oē's poetic forward, one can conclude that this image of the atomic bomb victim is another visual representation of the *cartography* metaphor, where personal experiences of violence are connected to the trauma of a war-torn society. The visual metaphor of the *map* is further explored as viewers continue to dive into the images of *Chizu*, turning the page, the viewer is presented with an abstracted image of material deterioration. The image depicts a static, splintering, and coagulated landscape, running across the entirety of the space (Fig. 5). While the photograph is static in its analog material form, the metaphysical landscape of the stains enables a visualization of movement. These stains evoke the tactile aesthetics of an aerial snapshot of a vast distant landscape. Reflecting the repeated use of post-atomic phrases and cartographic renderings on the cover, this image echoes the visualization of an *atomic bomb-scape*. This term, atomic bomb-scape, derived from Shomei Tomatsu in his excerpt "The Christ of the Nuclear Age" in his 1966 photobook *Nagasaki 11:02* in which he defined the topographical condition of Nagasaki as a landscape decimated by the atomic bomb, categorizing the physical aftermath of the incendiary wartime landscape of Nagasaki as a twentieth-century nuclear age description of *ruin*.<sup>24</sup> The ecological ramifications of the atomic bomb in Hiroshima similarly embodies Tomatsu's notion of an atomic bomb-

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<sup>24</sup> Shomei Tomatsu, "The Christ of the Nuclear Age" in *11:02 Nagasaki*, (Tokyo: Shashin Dojinsha, 1966).

scape. In *Chizu*, the landscape is visualized by Kawada through the stains in the A-Bomb Dome. This image of an embodied atomic bomb-scape is taken from the textured stains; the scars of the atomic detonation immutably etched onto the walls of the A-Bomb Dome. Expanding on the notion of a map as metaphor across the imagery in *Chizu*, Maggie Mustard in her 2018 dissertation “Atlas Novus: Kawada Kikuji’s *Chizu (The Map)* and Postwar Japanese Photography” argues that Kawada creates a *temporal atlas* within fragmentary imagery that unravel visualized narratives of postwar Japan – a nation scarred and disoriented by nuclear trauma.<sup>25</sup> The fragmented cartography revealed in *Chizu* does not directly simulate a rendering of a conventional map, rather a multitude of visual traces of the atomic bomb captured by photographs that construct a seemingly incomprehensible vision of Hiroshima, a society two decades after the detonation of the atomic bomb trying to grapple with its lingering aftermath. Mustard describes Kawada’s stain images of the A-Bomb Dome as the essence of the *temporal atlas* of *Chizu*, a symbolic image that captures “the indelibly visible and the thing that is terrifyingly invisible”.<sup>26</sup> This notion encapsulates Lippit’s phenomenology of a-visibility. The stains of the A-Bomb Dome are a symbol of Hiroshima through the vision of Kawada analogous to the attempt of creating a visualization of nuclear flash.

In synthesizing the map metaphor presented by Oē and Mustard with Lippit’s concept of a-visibility, I argue that Kawada comprehensively grapples with these ideas in *Chizu* through his design and sequencing of images. This photobook acts as an entity that demands the direct engagement of the viewer through its immersive nature. The gatefolds spread across the photobook acts as a tool for this interaction. For example, the image of a Japanese Flag –

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<sup>25</sup> Maggie Mustard, “Atlas Novus: Kawada Kikuji’s *Chizu (The Map)* and Postwar Japanese Photography,” PhD diss., (Columbia University, 2018), 5.

<sup>26</sup> Mustard, “Atlas Novus: Kawada Kikuji’s *Chizu (The Map)* and Postwar Japanese Photography”, 119.

flattened, trampled, and creased— is split across one gatefold (Fig. 6). When the folds are opened, an image of a stark flashing beam light is revealed, juxtaposed with an image of a radiant light peeking through the top of a shattered ceiling (Fig. 7). This act of revealing the flash of light and the closing of the gatefolds to display the image of the flag visualizes both the map metaphor and the a-visibility of the atomic bomb. The viewer confronts the flash of light, evoking a vision of an impending moment of the ‘zero hour,’ to the image of a nation symbolized through the Japanese flag. Comprehensively, these images make up a part of Kawada’s visualization of post war Hiroshima – a nation devastated by nuclear violence. While the images across *Chizu* are inherently visually illegible, Kawada captures his vision of Hiroshima through fragmented images of abraded surfaces and materiality that comprehensively narrates a national sentiment of war trauma. Although accompanied by limited text to contextualize the seemingly incomprehensible photographs, the repetition of tactical aesthetics in connection to Oē’s map metaphor and all-encompassing visual narrative foregrounds the lingering permanency of atomic war in Japanese society. Collapsing the dichotomy of the past with the present, the uncanny with the familiar, and the invisible with the visible, Kawada’s *Chizu* is a series that engages with his own vision of the landscape of postwar Hiroshima through an emphasis on fragmented images of surfaces that are marked by nuclear violence. With the limitations of the decontextualized images across *Chizu*, viewers are left to contemplate and make meaning of the photographs through the act of looking. But what happens when *Chizu* is reprinted forty years after its initial publication? How does Kawada reintroduce his vision of Hiroshima?

## **II. *Shimi*: Kawada’s Phenomenology of Stains**

Four decades later, a limited-edition reprint of *Chizu*'s original publication was introduced by Nazraeli Press in 2005 (500 copies). In this edition of the photobook, one of the key differences is that its outer appearance completely changed. The 16 cm x 24 cm hardcover book is wrapped in a dust jacket detailing a monochromatic image of abstract forms: with the only text being the title on the spine. Unlike the 1965 edition, there is no text on the cover, rather the dust cover of the book illustrates an image of stains (Fig. 8).<sup>27</sup> Accompanying the photobook is a separate booklet containing the texts that include an English and Japanese version of a caption index and essay by Kawada titled "The Illusion of the Stain". For the first time, Kawada details an insight of his experience of initial encounter, subsequently transporting the viewer into the multi-sensory environment of the A-Bomb Dome basement. He begins the essay by recounting a recurring subconscious confrontation with the stain etched across the ceiling of the A-Bomb Dome, a site that is embedded in his memory in which *illusions* of violent remnants of atomic bomb explosion creeps through the material deterioration.<sup>28</sup> The stains across the A-Bomb Dome are the tangible presence of the atomic bomb detonation, the only thing that was left in the proximity of the epicenter. Lingering at the site of the A-Bomb Dome is an eerie landscape of the visible hardened conglomerate of infrastructural matter deteriorating over time, stimulating a haunting invisible presence of the 'zero hour.' In the presence of the site of the A-Bomb Dome, Kawada initiates a multi-sensory, mystic experience engaging with the landscape; he writes:

This scene created a vivid hallucination which renounced documentation by photography and strengthened the power of imagination to rival an omen. In a brief moment, dozens of people disappeared within a flash of burning rays measuring over 4,000 degrees at the surface, followed by the pouring black rain which over time, resulted in the sudden

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<sup>27</sup> Kikuji Kawada, *The A-Bomb Memorial Dome. Ceiling. Stain and Flaking-Off*, 1965. This image was utilized to create the cover of Kikuji Kawada's *Chizu*, (Tokyo: Nazraeli Press, 2005). See Figure 9.

<sup>28</sup> Kawada Kikuji, "The Illusion of the Stain", in *Chizu*, (Tokyo: Nazraeli Press, 2005).

appearance of the “stain”... It was there that I first saw the raw image of the atomic bomb for myself.<sup>29</sup>

In this statement, Kawada transcends the a-visibility of the atomic spectacle envisioned through the stains, fostered through a surreal simulation of the ‘zero hour’. While the fleeting moment of total instantaneous light scorched by incendiary radioactive flames, overrides visibility, Kawada’s first-hand experience in the environment of the A-Bomb Dome vividly brought him into the fleeting moment of aporic blankness. Even beyond its physical visibility, the direct encounter with the site constructs the transcending a-visibility of the atomic spectacle in *Chizu*, an imagery captured by Kawada’s act of photographing the stains. I propose that by delineating the act of photographic conception of the stain images, we can grapple with Kawada’s visual sensorium of the A-Bomb Dome. Kawada’s post-atomic visual sensorium can be examined through four-registers of photographic conception: the subject, the act of looking, subconscious reception, and the act of taking the shot.

The four registers of photographic conception that make up Kawada’s stain images explore the conditions of visibility in the aftermath of the atomic bomb. The first register is the objective— the residue of material decay across the A-Bomb Dome interior. This is followed by the second register— the reception of the objective through the act of looking. Simultaneously, the third register is in effect— the subconscious evocation connected to the act of looking at the material condition of the A-bomb Dome. Lastly, the final register—capturing a photograph immortalizing what he is looking at and the emotions attached to the subject. Conclusively, the registers make up a never-ending cycle of a post-atomic visual sensorium— Kawada sees the stains in the A-Bomb Dome, has a hallucinatory reaction, takes a photograph, and the photograph reveals an image of the ‘zero hour’ imprinted onto the walls. A site underscoring a

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<sup>29</sup> Kawada, “The Illusion of the Stain”, 2005.

metamorphosis in geological time (eliminating human traces or no presence of human time), is a site that holds the imprinted flash of the ‘zero hour’, even in its state of material deterioration two decades later. Although the images of the stains are static, Kawada emphasizes the sensorial significance of directly being on the site, detailing that:

The “stain” was like a breeding slime mold invading its surroundings. The metaphorical amoeba-like illusion didn’t loom up from that photograph until some time after. The only way to come across an image that produces multiple metaphors is to take shot after shot... The “stain” on the wall is all that remains to faithfully articulate why no one is left to testify. Maybe a photograph’s imaginative power can confront an enigma that goes beyond absence.<sup>30</sup>

In this statement, Kawada makes a note of the changing environment of the A-Bomb Dome in which although it details the penetrating stillness of violence of nuclear detonation, the stains are ever changing. Through this, he believes that it is important to take a lot of photographs of the stains, a landscape that is constantly changing and can depict that change of time through multiple photographs. The imagery of stains across *Chizu* are merely different from one another, each in its own compositional focus on a miniscule section of the A-Bomb Dome basement interior, yet comprehensively make up a visual rhythmic pattern. The repetition of the stain imagery across the photographic series creates a visual representation of Kawada’s illusion, one that stimulates a haunting hallucination. Comprehensively, *Chizu* can be interpreted to represent Kawada’s own attempt to visualize the a-visibility of the atomic bomb. Transcending the invisibility of the atomic flash to its visual traces of *stains*. Through this notion of site experience, Kawada documents the visual sensorium of the A-Bomb Dome through a metaphysical lens.

The concept of a-visibility and Kawada’s phenomenology of stains shape the immersive visual sensorium of *Chizu*; captured through his photographic documentation of the A-Bomb Dome. The a-visibility of the atomic spectacle—rendered in the stains of the Dome—evokes a

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

visual of the invisibility of the ‘zero hour,’ that opens a direct multi-sensorial encounter with the site. Fiona Crisp in her 2020 journal, “Material Sight: A Sensorium for Fundamental Physics”, discusses re-imagining the spatial and temporal encounter with desolate material site through the optical medium of photography, emphasizing how analog images of spaces “in a state of stasis”, bends the perception of time and space into a spatiotemporal site that paradoxically exists between “*sometime* and *no-time*” and “*somewhere* and *nowhere*”.<sup>31</sup> This concept of the visual sensorium of a static desolated site through photography— a tool to capture a vision of an aporic space—is evocative of an encounter of absence, where the image of the site depicts a lingering trace of bleakness. Applying Crisp’s framework to *Chizu*, Kawada’s imagery of the stains evokes a visual sensorium of the ‘zero hour’ within the remote site of the A-Bomb Dome. The eerie images extract a visceral response from the viewer, who is thrown into a boundless whirlpool of stains. Through Kawada’s lens of photographing stains, he transcends the a-visibility of the atomic spectacle through the concept of creating a visual sensorium of the A-Bomb Dome captured through the act of taking photographs of the site, a site that continues to be unseen by the world, having penetrated visual traces of the atomic bomb while its surfaces transform and degrade over time. I propose that the concept of the visual sensorium is communicated through *Chizu* by Kawada’s sequence of placing images. Although these photographs are indecipherable, the design of the photobook allows for the manipulation and contemplation of a visual narrative from the viewer. For instance, the first gatefold presented in the photobook unveils an image of stains, spread across the double centerfold pages detailing a sublime grotesque landscape (Fig. 9). The photobook’s tactility, the demand for the viewer’s manipulation of the book, creates a visual sensorium, an embodied experience of being all immersed into the mysterious landscape

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<sup>31</sup> Fiona Crisp, “Material Sight: A Sensorium for Fundamental Physics,” (Barcelona: *Artnodes*, 2020), 4.

of stains through the act of opening and closing the folds. Maggie Mustard has alluded to this notion of a visual sensorium presented in *Chizu*, asserting that the visual “dissection of Kawada’s stains” relies on its inherently tactical aesthetic—putting forward his encounter with the stains as a crucial part of its photographic conception.<sup>32</sup> Subsequently, Mustard’s concept of *Chizu*’s tactility as an intrinsic element to engage with the macrocosmic imagery of stains can be applied to the macrocosmic images of the A-Bomb Dome site. For example, the second gatefold sequence in the photobook depicts an image of the Dome with a light beaming from an arched tunnel entrance, casting shadows across the etched surfaces of the structure (Fig. 10). This broader image of the Dome allows viewers to envision a more comprehensive depiction of the site, reinforcing Crisp’s concept of a visual sensorium. With this, Kawada transcends the a-visibility of the atomic spectacle in the A-Bomb Dome, directly immersing the viewer into a layered sensory experience embodied by the stains that make visible the unseeable fleeting moment of atomic light.

The reprint of *Chizu*, four decades after its initial release, emphasizes Kawada’s evolving approach to the photographic series. Shifting away from the 1965 publication focus on the map metaphor, the reprint demands the active viewer’s interaction with the images through a multi-sensorial experience. Through the act of unfolding, touching images, and profound looking, the tactile engagement of the viewer connects with Kawada’s own encounter with the stains. In this, Kawada transcends the optical medium of photography, that captures a static image in time, to a focus on experience with a site that holds the visible traces of the atomic bomb detonation, something that is nevertheless unseeable. I put forward that the reprint emphasizes a new focus of *Chizu*, one that directly engages with Kawada’s photographic conception of the site. In my

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<sup>32</sup> Mustard, “Atlas Novus: Kawada Kikuji’s *Chizu* (The Map) and Postwar Japanese Photography”, 92.

own experience looking through the book, I pondered Kawada's phenomenology of stains, experiencing the epiphany of his photographic vision as he captured the landscape of post-atomic Hiroshima through the marks of the A-Bomb Dome. Within the sequence of stain images across *Chizu*, Kawada includes a self-portrait, an image that details his silhouette with a camera amidst a vast landscape of abstracted forms (Fig. 11). This image reinforces the significance of his personal embodied experience of the site, underscoring his witnessing of the eerie post-apocalyptic landscape peeking through the cracked surfaces of the Dome.

Upon reflecting on the reintroduction of *Chizu* into the early twenty-first century, I began to consider its significance and relevance within contemporary time. The collapse time and space exerted in the photographic series is something that persists as an evocative force, enabling this series that documents the landscape of postwar Hiroshima to be revisited and reinterpreted. Over a decade after its initial reprint, *Chizu* was reintroduced in 2021 by MACK Publications in collaboration with the New York Public Library, this time presented through the lens of its original conception as a preliminary *maquette*. What implications does this rendition of *Chizu* as a maquette deepen viewers' understanding of the series and foster new ways of viewing?

### **III. Photobook-as-object Headed Towards the Future: Revisiting the Maquette**

The conception of the 2021 MACK publication of *Chizu* transpired six decades after its original printing. In collaboration with the New York Library, this new edition of *Chizu* is described by Joshua Chuang, Associate Director of Arts, Prints and Photographs, as a facsimile of Kawada's preliminary maquette from 1964, the maquette that was acquired by the New York Library in 2001.<sup>33</sup> The 2021 edition consists of a two volume photobook accompanied by a

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<sup>33</sup> Joshua Chuang, "Introduction" in *Chizu (Maquette Edition)*, (London: MACK; New York: New York Public Library, 2021), 5.

separate volume of text, contained in a cardboard slipcase that features the title on the front with a summary of the edition on the back (Fig. 12). Minimalistic in design, it mimics the preliminary aesthetic of a maquette—a conceptual prototype leading toward a final design—detailed by Chuang in the introductory essay to simulate Kawada’s concept of pasting full-bleed darkroom prints together back to back to create a book-like structure.<sup>34</sup> The first volume in the maquette is dedicated to Kawada’s imagery of stains, differentiating itself with an image of stains printed across the entire book jacket (Fig. 13). Inside, the volume presents a series of full-bleed monochromatic images of the stains, each varying in a one or two page spread. The second volume is dedicated to the photographs that illustrate post-war memories: Kamikaze identifications, imported American goods, industrial waste, and iconographic images of the social landscape of Hiroshima in the 1960s. Following these two volumes, a third contains text that is split into two sections—one titled “A Map of *Chizu*” and the other containing essays authored by Joshua Chuang and Historian Miyuki Hinton that provides context of this reprint’s conception (Fig. 14). In Chuang’s introduction of “A Map of *Chizu*” he introduces a comparative map of the maquette edition to the physicality of the 1965 publication, diagramming the spread of images in each edition and marking the variation of cropping, redactions, and tonality.<sup>35</sup> This provides a comprehensive visual of *Chizu* evolution across its editions overtime, but also emphasizing the mere difference between its conceptual state and its published state. Hinton and Chuang in their interview with Kawada for the publication of this edition asked him about his initial conception of the maquette in collaboration with Sugiura and his design choice of splitting the series into two volumes. Kawada articulates that the desire to split the series into

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<sup>34</sup> Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. “maquette,” <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/maquette>.

<sup>35</sup> Joshua Chuang, “A Map of Chizu” in *Chizu (Maquette Edition)*, (London: MACK; New York: New York Public Library, 2021), 1.

volumes was conceptualized by Sugiura as he believed the series is broken into two parts: one that details objects and the other that “transcends objects”.<sup>36</sup> Although this concept reflected his artistic vision for the photobook, he expressed that the shift in physicality of the maquette to the 1965 Bijutsu Shuppansha edition resulted from the rejection of the two volume design concept by various publishers.<sup>37</sup> Four decades later, Kawada was able to revisit his initial vision of *Chizu* through this 2021 edition. By introducing the preliminary conception of *Chizu*, this edition invites viewers to examine how this photobook-as-object transcends temporal boundaries, an object that in its evolution prompts reflection of its legacy across time.<sup>38</sup> This reprint contemplates on the legacy of *Chizu*, from its preliminary conception, first publication, and what it means to reintroduce this six-decade old project with contemporary perspectives. At the end of the introduction, Chuang emphasizes that Kawada envisions *Chizu* as a photobook with an extended lifespan.<sup>39</sup> This vision is set forth in this edition of *Chizu*, encouraging a second look of the series, this time in its raw, conceptual state. Furthermore, this edition raises the question of temporality: how a photographic series documenting the past persists into the present, and how the contemplation of the future is evoked.

In addition to Kawada’s statement of *Chizu*’s evolutionary nature, Miyuki Hinton in her essay “Tracing the Life That Left a Shadow: Kikuji Kawada’s Making of *Chizu*”, highlights Kawada’s creative philosophy that redefines his work through the passage of time. She articulates that Kawada values the concept of evolution in his work, embracing the multiplicity of progression rather than a singular fixed idea. Hinton writes:

Concerned with progression and valuing multiple, fragmented, and at times inconsistent truths over the completion of a single ideology, he tends to fluidly change the form and

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<sup>36</sup> Chuang and Hinton, “Conversation with Kikuji Kawada”, 14.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 14.

<sup>38</sup> Chuang, “Introduction”, 5.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 8.

placement of images or series... This is true for his series *Chizu*... revisited and reprinted by the artist to this day in an ongoing cycle of reincarnations.<sup>40</sup>

The ongoing evolution of *Chizu* positions this maquette edition in direct dialogue with Kawada's artistic process. Hinton's concept of temporality being embedded into his artistic practice can be applied to the way viewers engage with *Chizu*, contemplating how this works reflects into the current moment in time. She concludes her essay by suggesting that this edition of *Chizu* offers an opportunity to continue to unravel its layers of meaning, inviting contemporary perspectives to envision its future.<sup>41</sup> As a reader, I began to reflect on my own interpretation of *Chizu*, one that evoked a contemplation of its temporality not only in its physical evolution but also considering its broader thematic visual narratives. All encompassing, Hinton and Chuang present the 2021 rendition of *Chizu* as a testament of its ever-changing nature, one that sets forth Kawada's artistic vision of *Chizu* as a photobook-as-object "headed toward the future."<sup>42</sup>

My first encounter with *Chizu* occurred when I acquired my own copy of the 2021 maquette. Upon my initial viewing, I was struck by the eerie post-apocalyptic undertone of these photographs, sites without traces of life and seemingly entirely abandoned. Without context for what was being depicted, I was compelled to look deeper. This marked the beginning of my journey to attempt to understand the visual narrative that *Chizu* foregrounds, laying the foundation to this research project. After spending over a year examining how *Chizu* has been interpreted through its various editions, I came to understand that *Chizu* is not meant to offer a fixed interpretation. Rather, it invites interpretations to unfold over time. I was particularly intrigued by the question of why this series, six decades after its initial publication, was being

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<sup>40</sup> Miyuki Hinton, "Tracing the Life That Left a Shadow: Kikuji Kawada's Making of *Chizu*" in *Chizu (Maquette Edition)*, (London: MACK; New York: New York Public Library, 2021), 21.

<sup>41</sup> Hinton, "Tracing the Life That Left a Shadow: Kikuji Kawada's Making of *Chizu*", 28.

<sup>42</sup> Chuang, "Introduction", 9.

reintroduced today. While looking at the “A Map of *Chizu*” section of the text volume in the maquette, I noticed that the images of stains were juxtaposed with those of industrial material waste (Fig. 15). Here I had an epiphany moment, I began to see how *Chizu* relates to the present time. The realization that the legacy of the nuclear age is etched into contemporary time, a violence that penetrated the world underscored through the lingering uncertainty of the future of humanity. As I turned the page, I saw this notion reiterated, this time with an image of industrial waste followed by one depicting vandalism on the walls of the atomic dome (Fig. 16). The sequence of images—the stains, industrial material wasteland, and the etched walls of the A-Bomb Dome—intersects temporal boundaries, merging the atomic bomb-scape of Hiroshima to the present encroachment of industrialization, an epoch marked by the ramifications of anthropogenic violence. This sequence highlights how the contemporary human condition is interlinked with environmental catastrophe, resulting in a lingering reminder of the omnipresent uncertainty of the future state of human existence. Through this notion, I argue that *Chizu* can be interpreted in the present as a photographic series that reveals the crucial ecological shift caused by the aftermath of the atomic bomb emphasized through the materiality of the site. The surfaces depicted across *Chizu* carry residual physical traces of nuclear violence, illustrating an a-visual imagery of the atomic age. The uncertainty surrounding the future of humanity is an ongoing discourse in art history, with scholars attempting to understand the nuclear condition through contemporary visual culture. I raise the question; how can *Chizu* shape our understanding of the legacy of the nuclear age?

#### **IV. Capturing the Disfiguration of Humanity: Aesthetics of the Anthropocene**

The early twenty-first century has been marked by ecological crises driven by human interventions on the Earth system, including the encroachment of industrialization, the expansion of globalization, and the ubiquitous impact of capitalism. These interventions have raised fundamental questions about how the current geological epoch is defined, specifically in relation to how anthropogenic activity has reshaped the planet's environmental and geological timeline. This crucial ecological shift has led to the emergence of a new theoretical framework that centers humanity as the primary agent of ecological catastrophe. The concept I am particularly engaging with is the notion of the Anthropocene, a term coined by chemist Paul J. Crutzen and biologist Eugene F. Stoermer, described by historian Dipesh Chakrabarty in his book *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age* as a new geological epoch marked by the penetrating impact of the contemporary human condition on the Earth's system and environment.<sup>43</sup> Chakrabarty asserts that while the beginning date of the Anthropocene is unclear, geographers Simon L. Lewis and Mark A. Maslin has suggested that this epoch began during the period of 1610 to 1964, eras that emphasize the beginning of industrialization and the radioactive aftermath of the nuclear condition.<sup>44</sup> Scholars across disciplines share the concern for the enduring ecological ramifications of anthropogenic violence and the uncertainty for the future of humanity. Scholar Jungkyu Suh in his 2021 dissertation, "Nuclear Eventuality: How the Nuclear Bomb Contaminated the Present with the Future" argues that the detonation of the atomic bomb marks a defining moment in the Anthropocene, in which this event of human-inflicted violence operates both as the agent and victim of its ecological ramifications.<sup>45</sup> Reflecting on how scholars engage

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<sup>43</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty, *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021), 167.

<sup>44</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty, *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age*, 168.

<sup>45</sup> Jungkyu Suh, "Nuclear Eventuality: How the Nuclear Bomb Contaminated the Present with the Future," PhD diss., (Purdue University, 2021), 164.

with the emerging concept of *ruin* in the context of the nuclear condition, we can consider how visual culture contributes to understanding this pressing uncertainty of the future. Etienne Turpin and Heather Davis in their 2015 book *Art in the Anthropocene* argue that the current anthropogenic climate “demands a different kind of aesthetic and sensorial attention”, one that renders a visual awareness of the increasing ecological crisis.<sup>46</sup> The aesthetics of the Anthropocene represents a nuanced theme in contemporary art, exploring the intersection of the current climate crisis with the speculative implications of a post-human future. In direct conversation with the aesthetics of the Anthropocene, Travis Holloway in their 2022 book *How to Live at the End of the World: Theory, Art, and Politics for the Anthropocene* highlights the pivotal shift of contemporary visual culture, which reflects on how the increasing catastrophic condition of climate contributes to a foresight of an allegory of the end of the world. They express that the concept of *humanism* is being reimagined through contemporary art by introducing the focus on materiality in art that ‘stands in for the elements’, immersing us into an epoch that departs the presence of man into a world controlled by the inexplicable chaos of catastrophe.<sup>47</sup> These aesthetics render visible a world without the presence of humans, reflecting the urgent need to address climate change and end anthropogenic violence. We are confronted by the recursive spiral between humans and the environment, in which the environmental catastrophe is depicted as being an ultimatum for human existence.<sup>48</sup> This urgency has fostered a desire to raise ecological awareness among a broader audience through art. Standing in as an

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<sup>46</sup> Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin, *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies*, (London: Open Humanities Press, 2015), 12.

<sup>47</sup> Travis Holloway, “Art: The Transition from Postmodern to the Anthropocene” in *How to Live at the End of the World: Theory, Art, and Politics for the Anthropocene*, (Stanford University Press, 2022), 42.

<sup>48</sup> Holloway, *How to Live at the End of the World: Theory, Art, and Politics for the Anthropocene*, 50.

apologue of humanity, art has fostered a visualization of the Anthropocene that can help us understand the conditions of today that are seemingly *invisible*.

In recent years, museums have curated exhibitions that engage with the legacy of the ecological ramifications of anthropogenic activity. These exhibitions bridge the scientific discourse of human induced environmental catastrophe with artistic visions of the future— often an allegory of a post-human world. A notable example is the Mori Art Museum’s 20th anniversary exhibition *Our Ecology: Toward a Planetary Living*, an exhibition reflecting upon the way in which art visualizes the global environmental crisis deeply rooted in the history of human-centric activity and how it articulates the uncertainties surrounding our future.<sup>49</sup> In an interview with adjunct curator Martin Germann and curator Reiko Tsubaski, Chakrabarty discusses how art plays a critical role in engaging with the climate crisis and helps visualize the possibilities of the future.<sup>50</sup> Expanding on this concept, we can observe how ecology became a central discourse in art history. By examining the ecological ramification of the Anthropocene through visual culture, we begin to recognize how the repercussions of anthropogenic activity fall back on humanity itself. The focus on the Anthropocene ultimately collapses temporal boundaries, intersecting the past, present, and the future in a way that underscores the disruptive impact of human activity on the planet.

In conversation with this current discourse of ecology in art history, I began to explore how Kawada’s *Chizu* could be contextualized within this framework. A year after the publication of the maquette, in 2022, the Museum of Fine Arts Boston announced their acquisition of *Chizu*, a collection that includes 87 photographic images, negatives, a first-edition copy, and an archive

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<sup>49</sup> Martin Germann, “Now, Our Economies Became Our Ecology: Witnessing Shifting Terms and Perspectives” in *Our Ecology: Toward a Planetary Living*, (Tokyo: Mori Bijutsukan, 2023), 33-34.

<sup>50</sup> Martin Germann and Reiko Tsubaski, “Interview with Dipesh Chakrabarty,” in *Our Ecology: Toward a Planetary Living*, (Tokyo: Mori Bijutsukan, 2023), 235.

of Kawada's film contact sheets.<sup>51</sup> The MFA's acquisition of Kawada's work derived in part from its 2015 exhibition *In the Wake: Japanese Photographers Respond to 3/11*, which featured the work of Japanese photographers that documented the ecological and nuclear disaster caused by the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 11, 2011. This exhibition prompted Kawada to reexamine *Chizu* through a new lens. "I detected a subtle voice that shepherded my *Chizu/The Map* into a new direction", he expressed, "I have ever since envisioned the MFA as the place where the images and history of *Chizu/The Map* may be retained and regenerated today and in the future."<sup>52</sup> Kawada's reexamination of *Chizu* in dialogue with the theme of ecological catastrophe led me to consider how the images within *Chizu* stimulate the narrative of reflection on the broader consequences of the aftermath of nuclear weapons. I argue that Kawada's *Chizu* emphasizes the enduring violence of the atomic bomb, a violence that in its totality has marked humanity, extending into the future. The anxiety of a post-human world is embedded into the eerie undertone of the photographic series, where the presence of nuclear violence and postwar industrialization are etched onto the surfaces photographed across *Chizu*. These images that capture the visual traces of the nuclear war, prompt us to see the lingering ecological and existential consequences of anthropogenic violence.

The legacy of the aftermath of the atomic bomb detonation can be examined through Kawada's photograph *The Ruin of a Stronghold. An Anti-Aircraft Gun Position* (1965). This image details the site of a fortified rounded structure below ground level, with a beam of light shining through the opened ceiling hole, casting a shadow on the structure's material decay (Fig. 17). Across the deteriorated walls of the structure, inscriptions appear, marking a presence of

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<sup>51</sup> Museum of Fine Arts Boston, "MFA Boston Acquires Groundbreaking *Chizu / The Map* Photographs by Kawada Kikuji", (MFA Press Release, 2022), 2.

<sup>52</sup> Museum of Fine Arts Boston, "MFA Boston Acquires Groundbreaking *Chizu / The Map* Photographs by Kawada Kikuji", 2.

humans that once occupied and interacted with the site. The writing on the walls in the desolate landscape of the stronghold evoke an apocalyptic atmosphere, creating an illusion of a post-human landscape. Joanna Zylińska in her 2017 book *Nonhuman Photography*, introduces a conceptual framework rooted in posthuman theory, which positions photography as the vital optical medium in the Anthropocene, which enables a mode of visualizing representational approaches of posthuman landscapes.<sup>53</sup> The visualization of a post-human landscape primarily delineates from a site of materiality, one that decenters human presence, and focuses on how materials hold geological traces of anthropogenic violence. Zylińska articulates that the concept of “after the human” photography reflects the “present imagining of this disappearance of the human world.”<sup>54</sup> Through this phenomenon, she suggests that it is a new visual conjugation of the Anthropocene. The aesthetics of the Anthropocene are in turn directly related to the desire of picturing a desolate landscape in conjunction with a site of ruin that is reminiscent of human existence. Kawada’s *The Ruin of a Stronghold* encapsulates Zylińska’s concept of *posthuman* photography, visualizing an existence of a landscape beyond human time. The focus of capturing the material site of the stronghold, makes visible the permanent effects of the atomic bomb detonation.

Reflecting on the aftermath of the atomic bomb, I began to contemplate its profound impact not only on the environment but also on humanity itself. In Kawada’s photograph titled *A Keloid Arm*, a close-up detail shot of a bent elbow is depicted, across the entirety of the scarred skin’s surface are blistering keloids (Fig. 18). The viewer is confronted with bodily disfigurement caused by the atomic bomb, a lingering violence of radioactivity penetrating the skin of victims. Neil Matheson in his 2018 essay, “Hiroshima-Nagasaki Remembered Through

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<sup>53</sup> Joanna Zylińska, *Nonhuman Photography*, (Massachusetts: *The MIT Press*, 2017), 7.

<sup>54</sup> Joanna Zylińska, *Nonhuman Photography*, 9.

the Body: Haptic visuality and the skin of the photograph”, foregrounds the phenomenon of the *atomic shadow* and the indexical nature of photography that render visible the fleeting moment of the atomic flash—penetrated onto bodily and ground surfaces. He argues that the photographs of the bodies of victims hold a form of *sensory memory* of the atomic bomb, “pointing to the way in which the surface of the body itself came to bear the indexical trace of the nuclear flash”.<sup>55</sup> This notion echoes Lippit's concept of the a-visibility of the atomic spectacle, where the invisibility of the atomic flash is rendered visible through the penetrating incendiary aftermath. By considering the body as a surface that holds visual traces of the atomic bomb detonation, we begin to see how the disfiguration of humanity is rooted into anthropogenic violence. Through Kawada's image *A Keloid Arm*, we can see how the focus of an up-close detailed shot of the victim's skin surfaces reveals the permanent ramifications of nuclear warfare, a violence that marked humanity and the environment.

While the images in *Chizu* contemplate the permanency of nuclear warfare, this photographic series also engages with the social landscape of 1960s Hiroshima— a society enduring the trauma of war while simultaneously experiencing a period of reconstruction. Hiroshima's postwar reconstruction development focused primarily on the restoration and expansion of the manufacturing industry of automobiles, shipbuilding, and steel manufacturing.<sup>56</sup> The rebuilding of its industrial economy derived from the national government's Reconstruction of War-damaged Areas plan in 1945 which fostered the increase of the manufacturing industry in the Hiroshima Prefecture during the 1950s.<sup>57</sup> Although this era of postwar industrialization

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<sup>55</sup> Neil Matheson, “Hiroshima-Nagasaki Remembered Through the Body: Haptic visuality and the skin of the photograph”, (Photographies 11 (1), 2018), 78.

<sup>56</sup> Fumi Okawa, “Economic Reconstruction in Postwar Hiroshima: Formation of Industrial Clusters and Application of the Diamond Model”, (Institute for Peace Science, Hiroshima University, issue. 22, 2008), 77.

<sup>57</sup> “6 Rebuilding of Industrial Economy,” Hiroshima for Global Peace, Accessed November 6, 2024, <https://hiroshimaforpeace.com/en/reconstruction/page-1-7/>.

accelerated the expansion of economic redevelopment, the economic upturn fostered a vast ecological deterioration in the topographical and social landscape of Hiroshima, leaving behind decades long environmental repercussions: material industrial wastelands. The notion of a material industrial wasteland can be visualized through Kawada's photograph, *Iron Scraps*, an image detailing a vast landscape of iron material scattered across the entirety of a site (Fig. 19). Marliena Parlati in her 2019 article "Memory in T/Rubble: Tacking (Nuclear) Ruins" articulates that the postwar landscape of Hiroshima and Nagasaki "predicates between past ruins and present waste land", where in its still efforts of reconstruction has an impending trace of anthropogenic violence.<sup>58</sup> In *Chizu*, Kawada details the waste landscape of industrial materials that reveals the impact of postwar industrialization, a site that presents the encroachment of industrialization as a key agent to the present environmental crisis. While detailing the invasiveness of industrial waste during the reconstruction period of postwar Japan, I was reminded of the present human condition that continues to rely and expand on globalized industrialization. In turn we are left with industrial wastelands that not only affect the environment but also threaten human life. Comprehensively, Kawada's *Chizu* reintroduced in contemporary time allows for us to think about the legacy of the nuclear age, and how anthropogenic violence has ecological ramifications on the planet, fostering an uncertainty for the future of humanity.

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<sup>58</sup> Marliena Parlati, "Memory in T/Rubble: Tacking (Nuclear) Ruins," (*CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 21.1, 2019), 7.

## CONCLUSION: Visuality in the Atomic Age

Contemporary visual cultures have grappled with the paradox of making the ephemeral atomic flash visible. The desire to render the fleeting moment of the atomic spectacle visible reflects on the ongoing attempt to comprehend the nuclear condition and generate unprecedented visual imagery of the nuclear age. The question persists: How can one visually convey the fleeting moment of aporic blankness, a moment that transcends visibility? Through *Chizu*, Kawada employs the stained walls of the A-Bomb Dome to render visible the atomic spectacle and its visible traces among its surfaces. The surface infrastructure of the dome bears witness to the 'zero hour' through its material decimation, obscuring the impossibility of sight of the atomic bomb detonation through its violent aftermath presence and absence of sight. In exploring Kawada's approach of the a-visual, we must consider how the dynamic nature of the photographic series oscillates time, space, and memory through its seemingly enigmatic visual narrative and renditions over time. The significance of the resurfacing of *Chizu* in contemporary time lies within its evolving form, which over the decades has foregrounded the lingering presence of the nuclear condition but also gestures towards the uncertainties of the future of humanity in a world marked by the permanency of anthropogenic destruction. By contemplating *Chizu*'s historical significance of visualizing the post-atomic landscape of Hiroshima, the contemporary viewer is confronted to think about the nuclear condition not as a past moment in history, but an ongoing lingering slow violence that persists into the present and continues to affect the contemporary human condition in the unmarked epoch of the Anthropocene, fostering an uncertain future of humanity.

## FIGURES

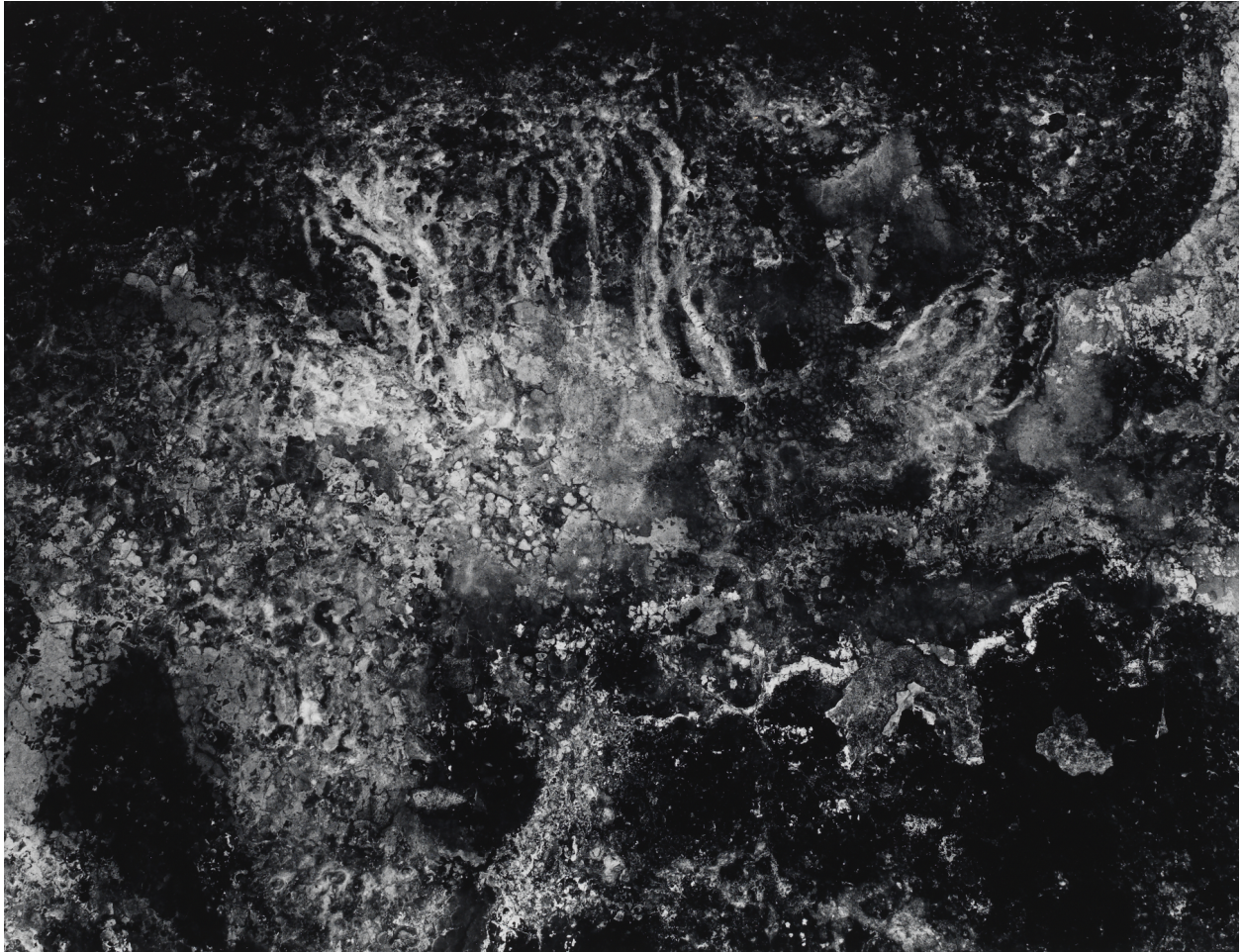


Figure 1. KAWADA Kikuji, *The A-Bomb Memorial Dome, Ceiling, Stain and Flaking Off*, from *Chizu [The Map]*, 1960-1965, gelatin silver print, 18.42 x 24.13 cm, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art [© Kikuji Kawada].

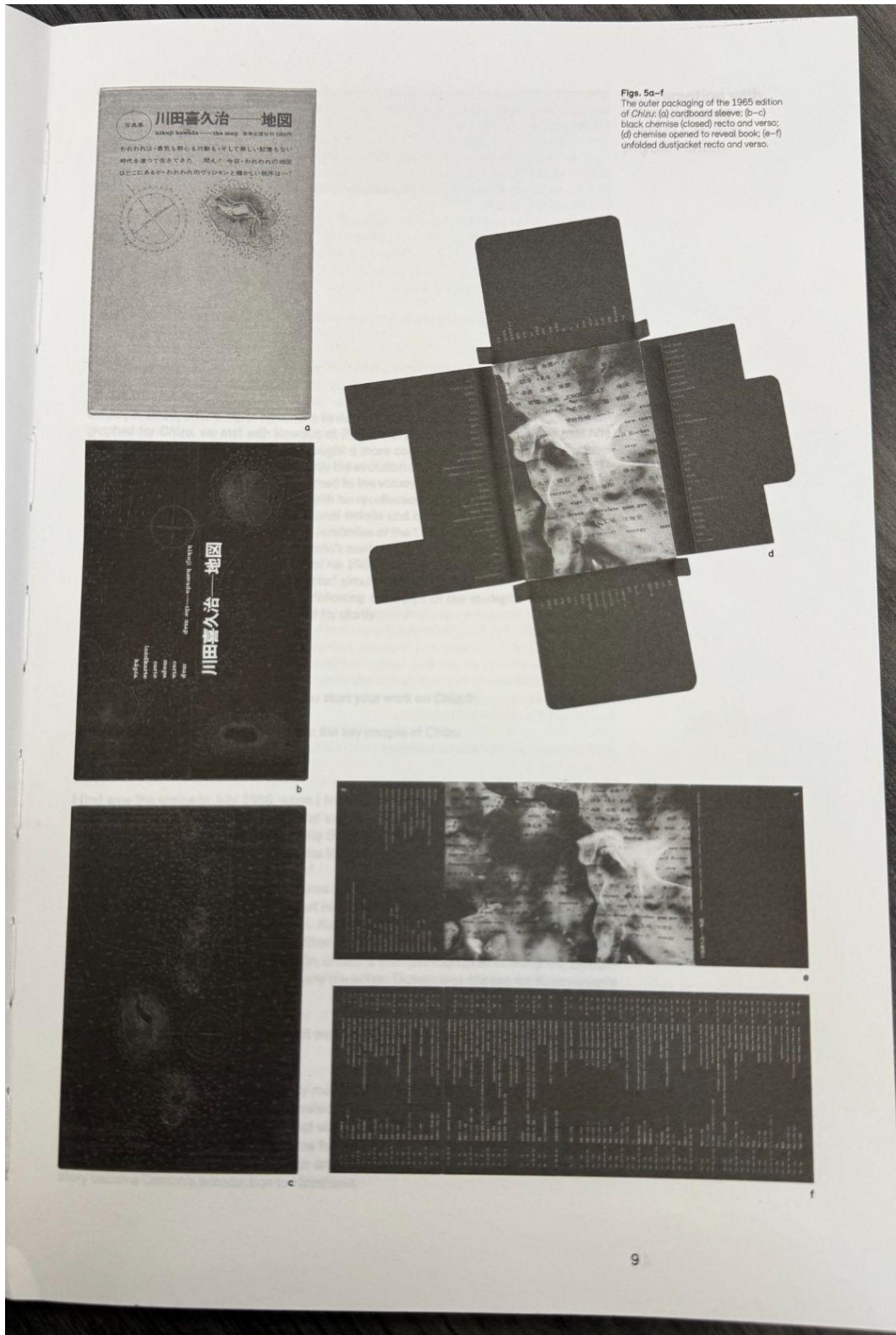


Figure 2. KAWADA Kikuji, *Chizu (Maquette Edition)* (London, UK, New York, N.Y.: MACK; New York Public Library, 2021), Showing full layout of *Chizu [The Map]* (1965), 9, fig. 5a-f.

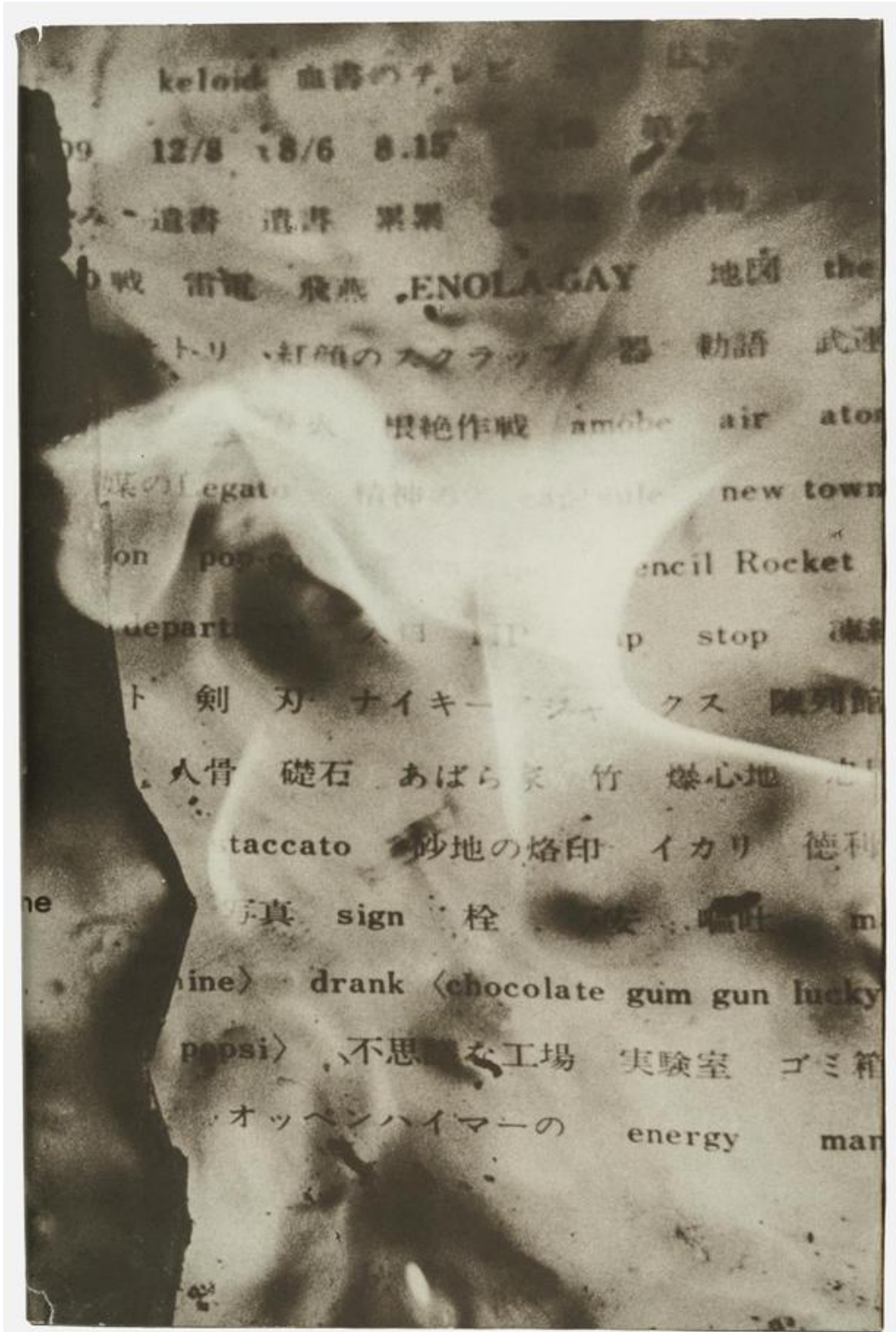


Figure 3. Front cover dust-jacket of Kawada Kikuji, *Chizu [The Map]*, 1965, 22.9 x 15.2 x 2.2 cm, Museum of Fine Arts Boston [courtesy of L. Parker Stephenson Photographs].



Figure 4. KAWADA Kikuji, *A-Bomb Victim of Hiroshima*, in *Chizu [The Map]*, 1965. Appears as reproduced in *Chizu (Maquette Edition)*, 2021.



Figure 5. KAWADA Kikuji, *The A-Bomb Memorial Dome. Interior. Stain and Flaking-Off.*, in *Chizu [The Map]*, 1965. Appears as reproduced in *Chizu (Maquette Edition)*, 2021.

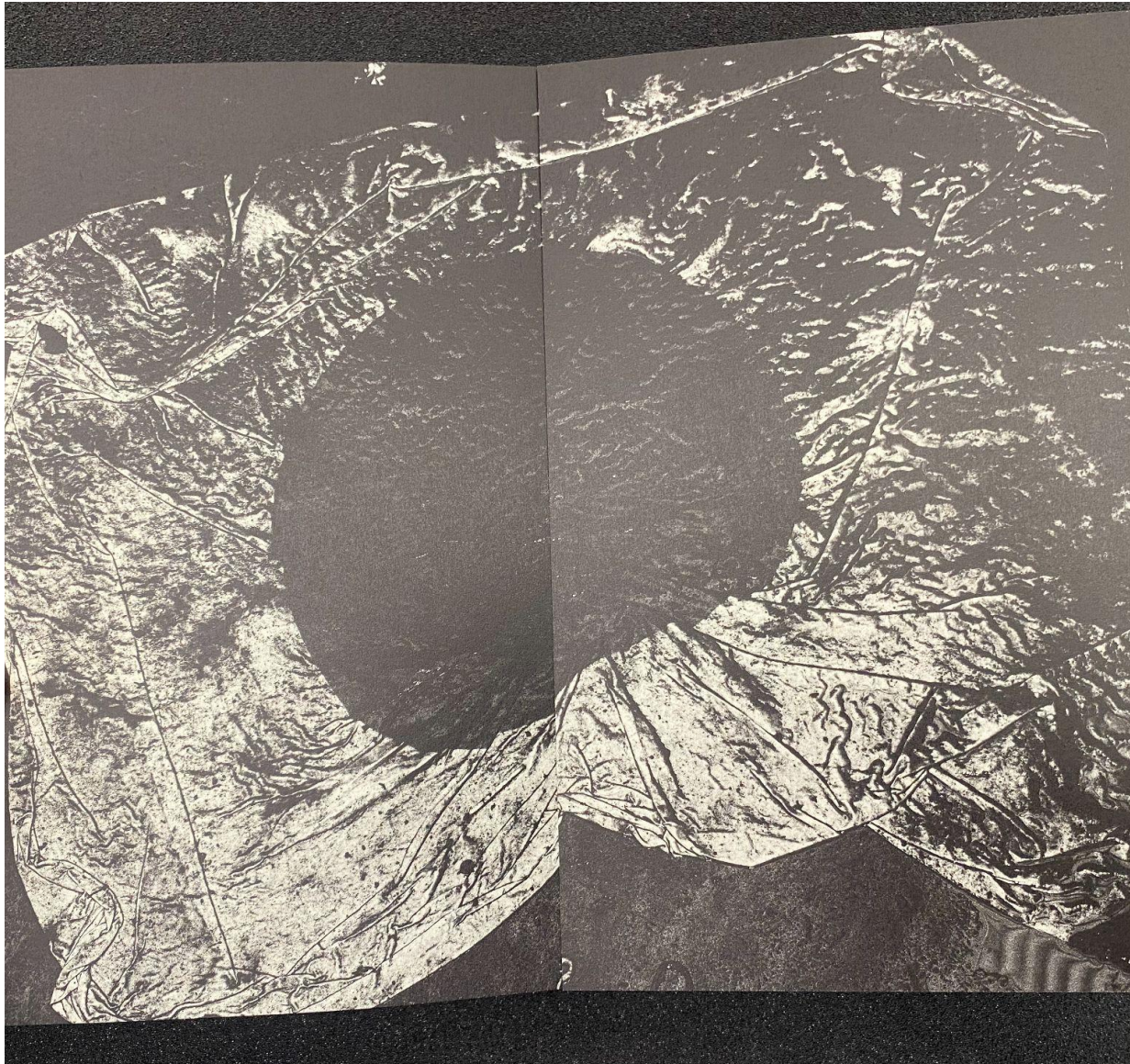


Figure 6. KAWADA Kikuji, *Hinomaru - The Japanese National Flag.*, from *Chizu [The Map]*, 1965. Appears as reproduced in *Chizu*, 2005.

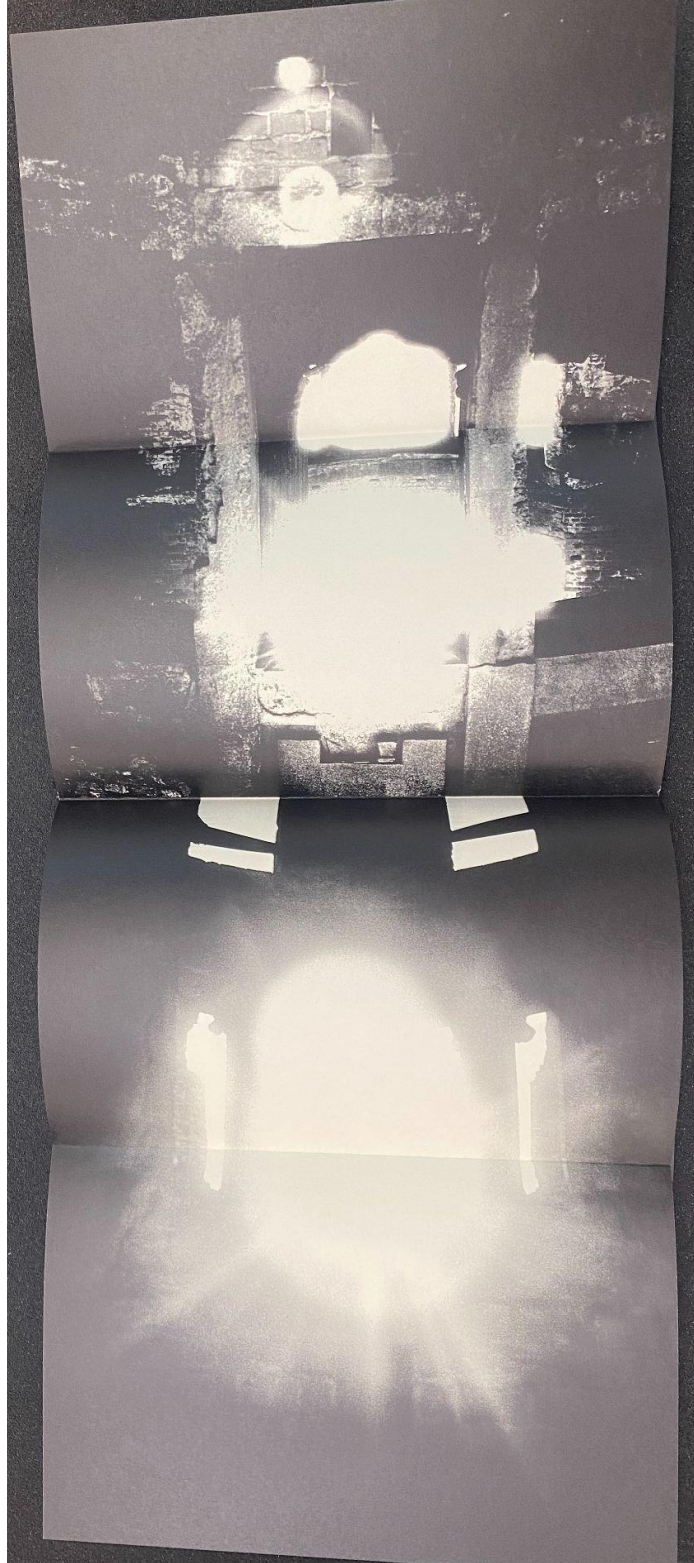


Figure 7. KAWADA Kikuji, *The A-Bomb Memorial Dome and the Sun*, unfolded gatefold of *Hinomaru - The Japanese National Flag, Chizu [The Map]*, 1965. Appears as reproduced in *Chizu*, 2005.



Figure 8. KAWADA Kikuji, *The A-Bomb Memorial Dome. Ceiling. Stain and Flaking-Off.*, in *Chizu [The Map]*, 1965. Appears as reproduced in *Chizu (Maquette Edition)*, 2021.

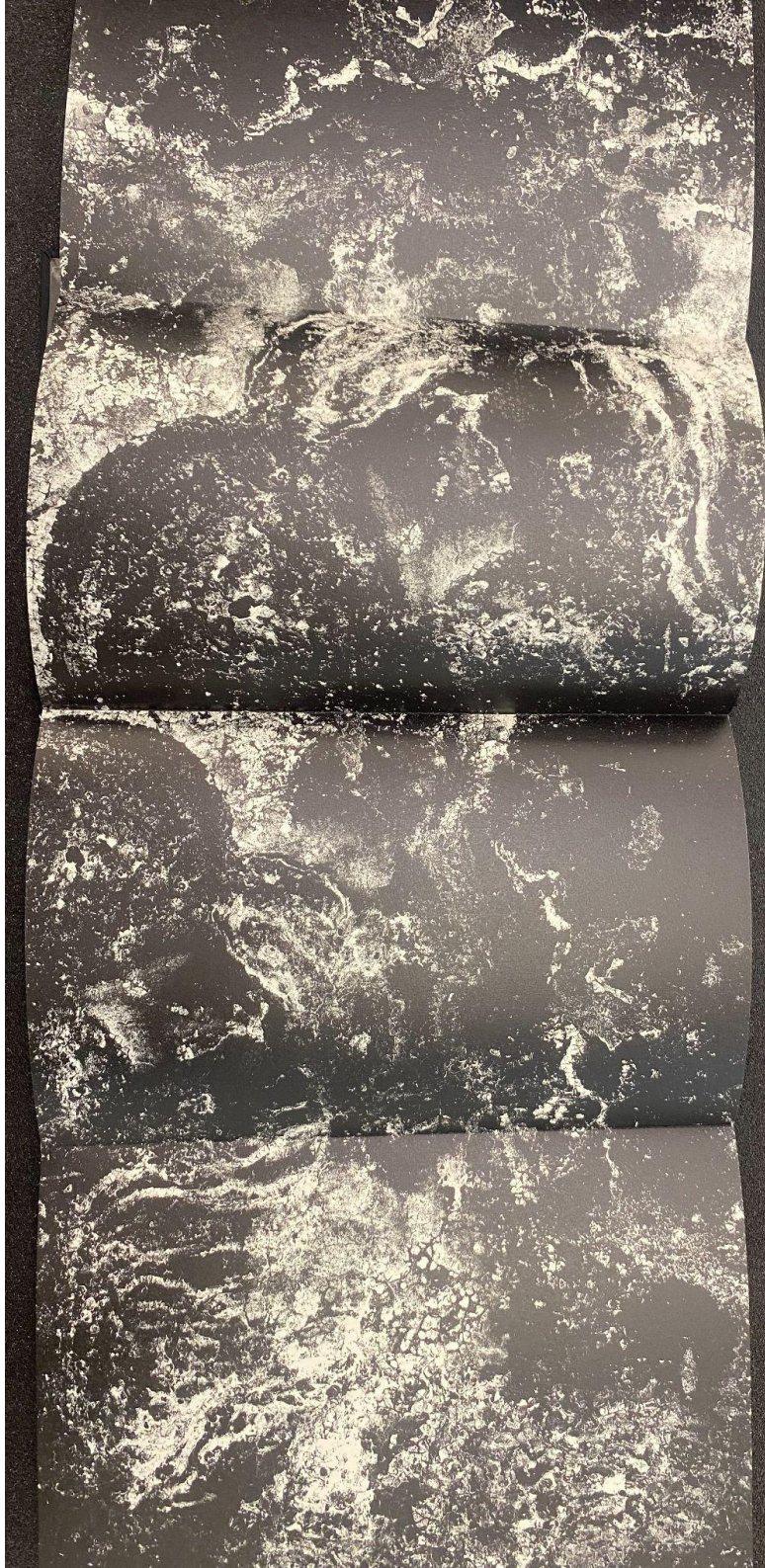


Figure 9. KAWADA Kikuji, *The A-Bomb Memorial Dome. Ceiling. Stain and Flaking-Off.*, in *Chizu [The Map]*, 1965. Appears as reproduced in *Chizu*, 2005.

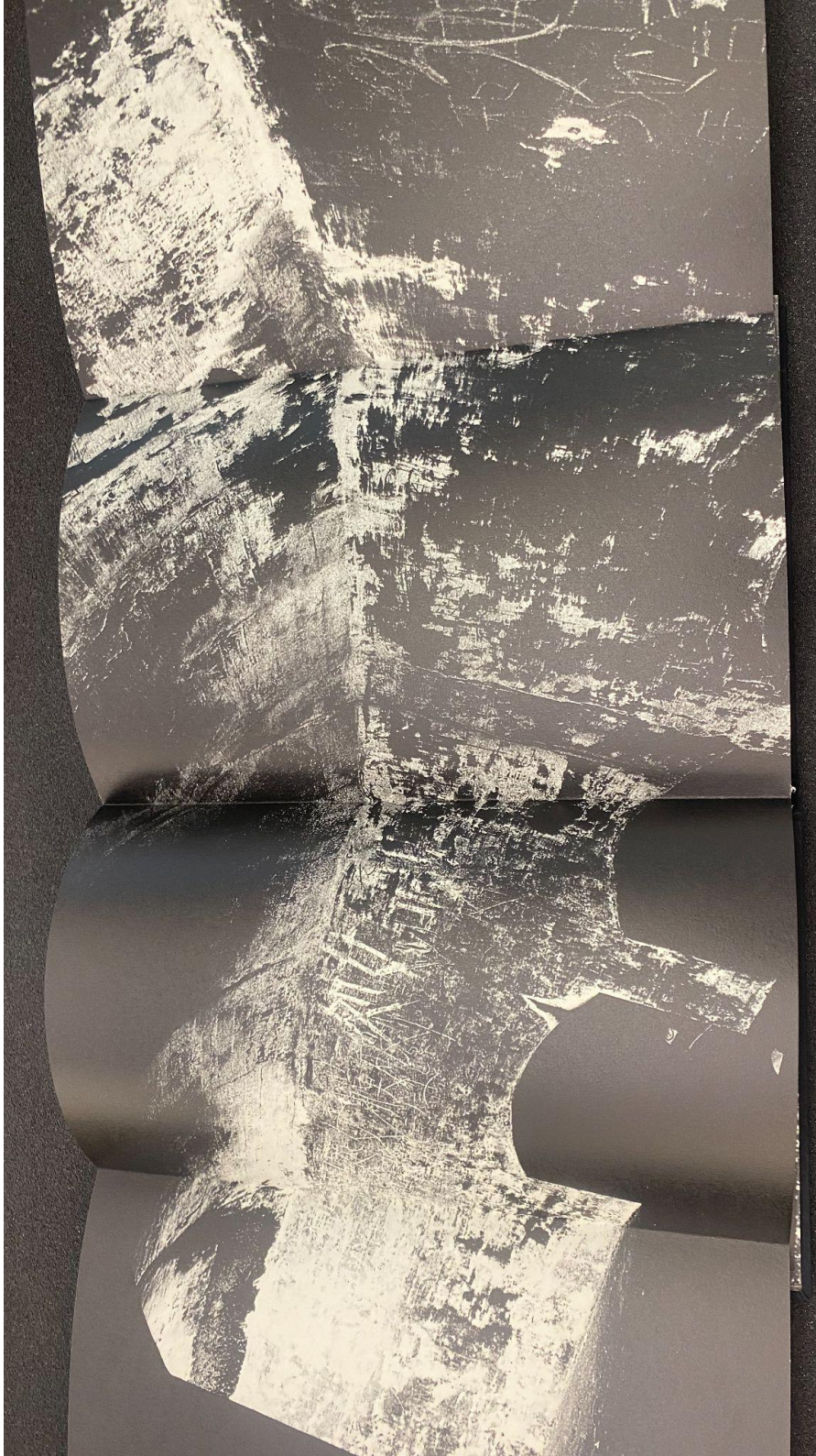


Figure 10. KAWADA Kikuji, *Tochka. Interior. Scribbles.*, in *Chizu [The Map]*, 1965. Appears as reproduced in *Chizu*, 2005.

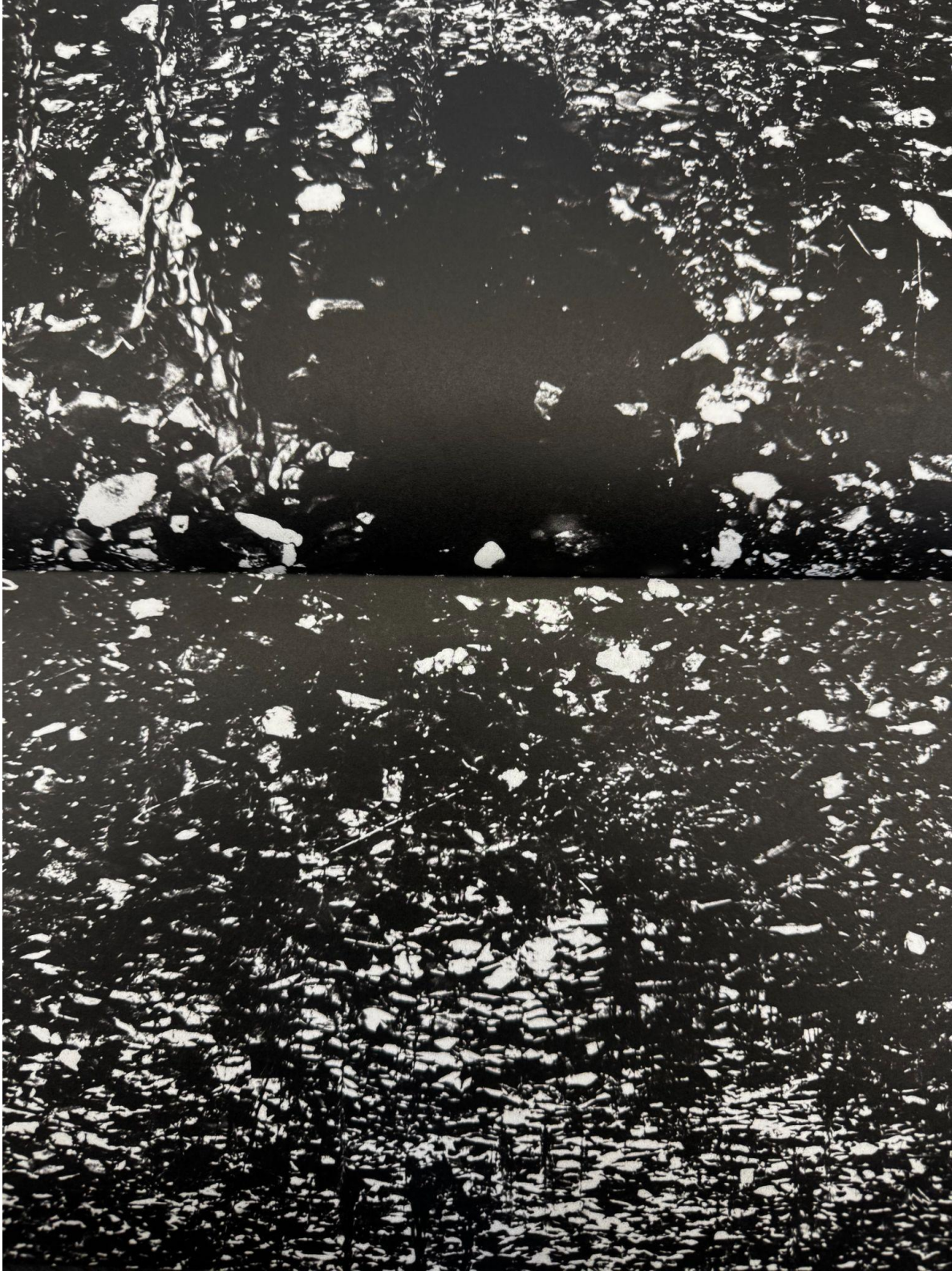


Figure 11. KAWADA Kikuji, *Self-Portrait at the A-Bomb Dome*, in *Chizu* [*The Map*], 1965.  
Appears as reproduced in *Chizu (Maquette Edition)*, 2021.

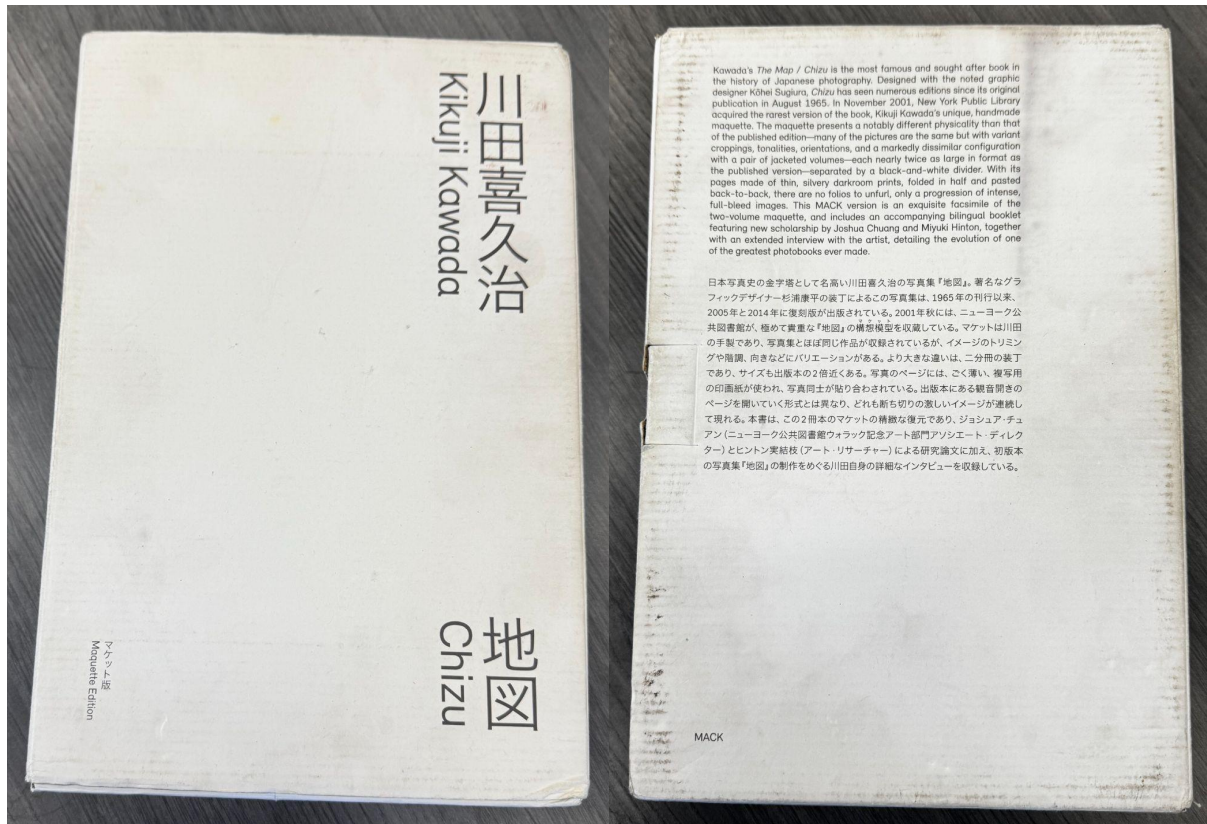


Figure 12. Slipcover of Kawada Kikuji, Joshua Chuang and Miyuki Hinton, et al. *Chizu* (Maquette Edition) (London, UK, New York, N.Y.: MACK; New York Public Library, 2021). Front (left) and back (right).

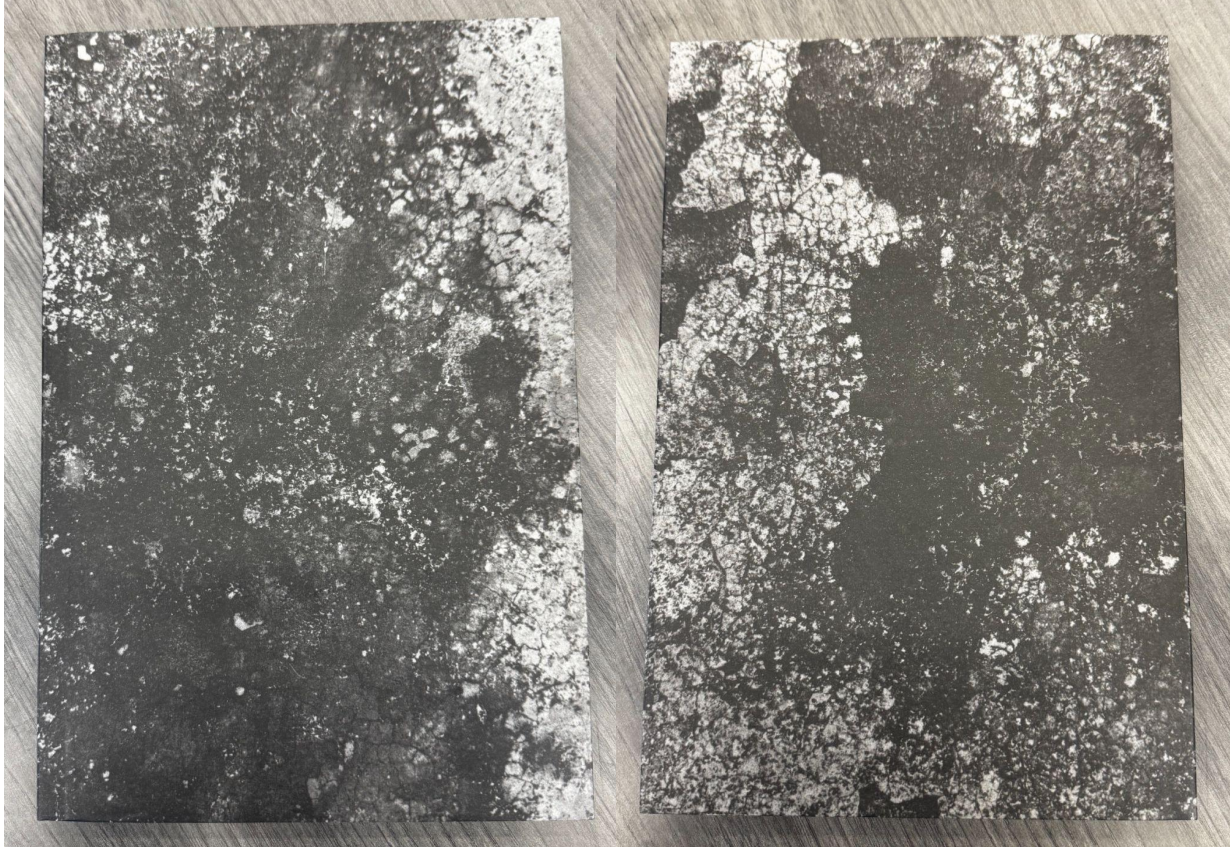


Figure 13. Front cover dust-jacket of Volume I in *Chizu (Maquette Edition)*, 2021. Front (left) and back (right).



Figure 14 a. Full layout of text volume in *Chizu (Maquette Edition)*, 2021. A detailed comparative diagram of the 1965 publication of *Chizu* to the layout of the 2021 maquette is provided (left) as well as a section dedicated to the comprehensive text section (right).

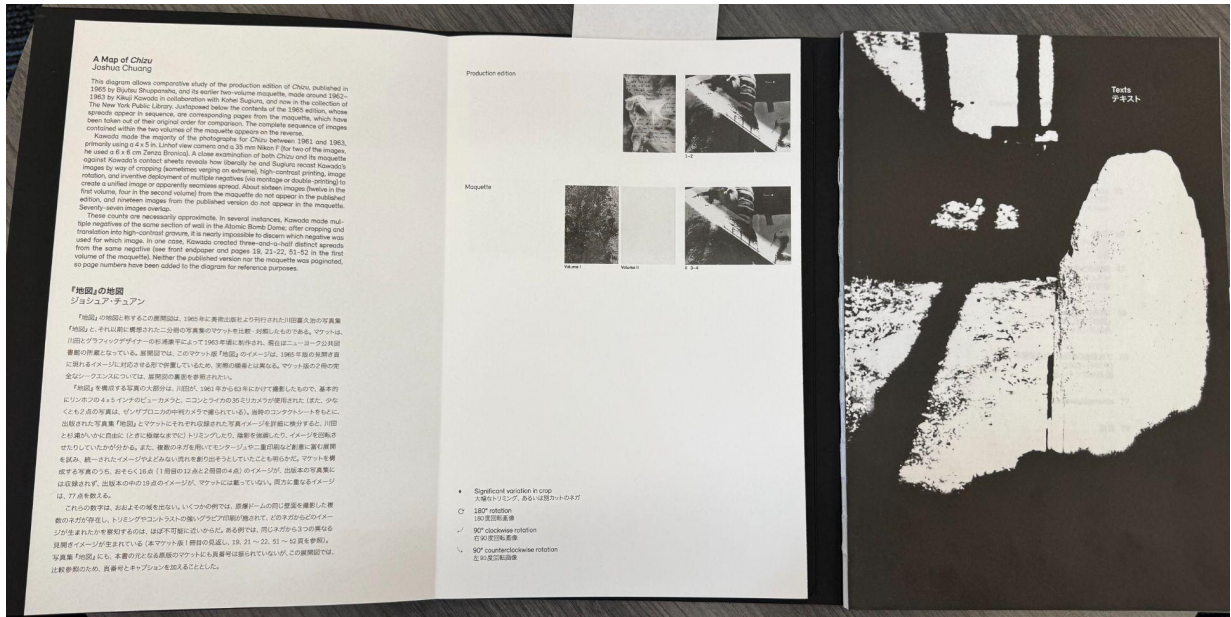


Figure 14 b. First and second page of “A Map of Chizu” in *Chizu (Maquette Edition)*, 2021. First page details a short excerpt by Joshua Chuang introducing the comparison diagram of the original publication of *Chizu* (1965) to the 2021 maquette edition.

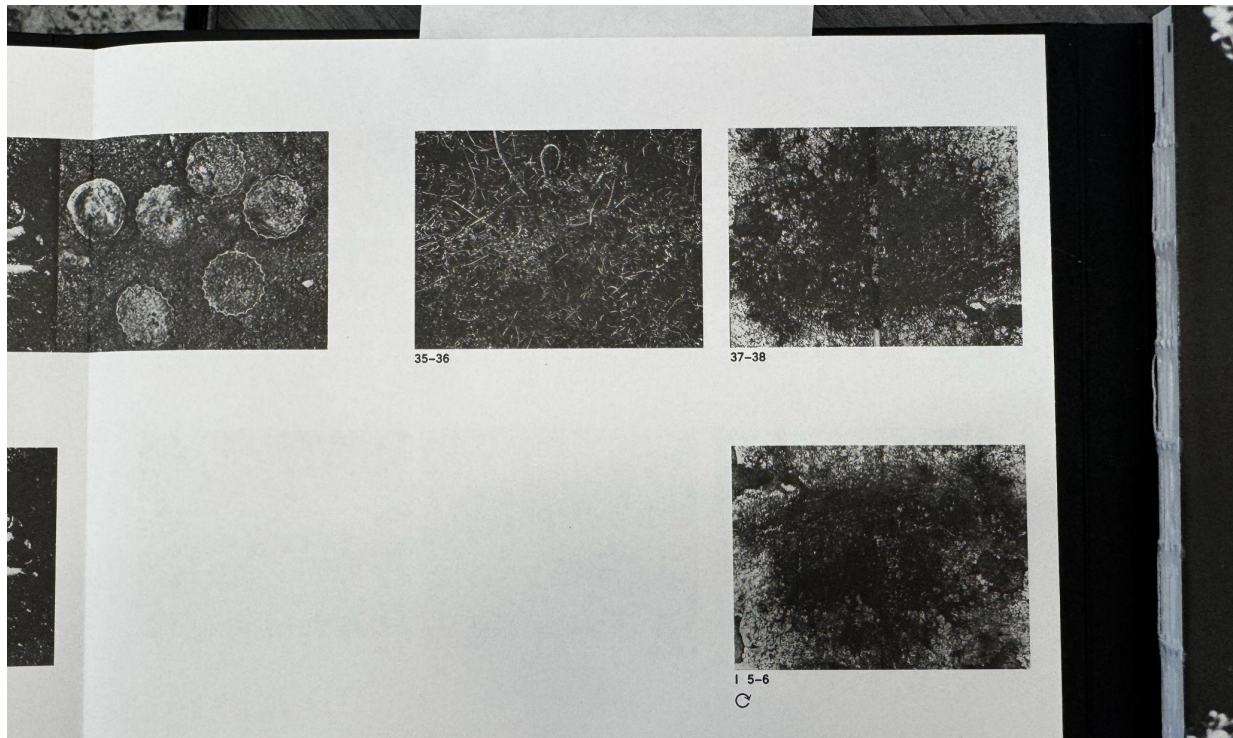


Figure 15. KAWADA Kikuji, *Iron Scraps* (left) and *The A-Bomb Memorial Dome. Ceiling. Stain and Flaking-Off.* (right), in *Chizu [The Map]*, 1965. As reproduced in "The Map of Chizu" in Kawada Kikuji, Joshua Chuang and Miyuki Hinton, et al. *Chizu (Maquette Edition)* (London, UK, New York, N.Y.: MACK; New York Public Library, 2021).

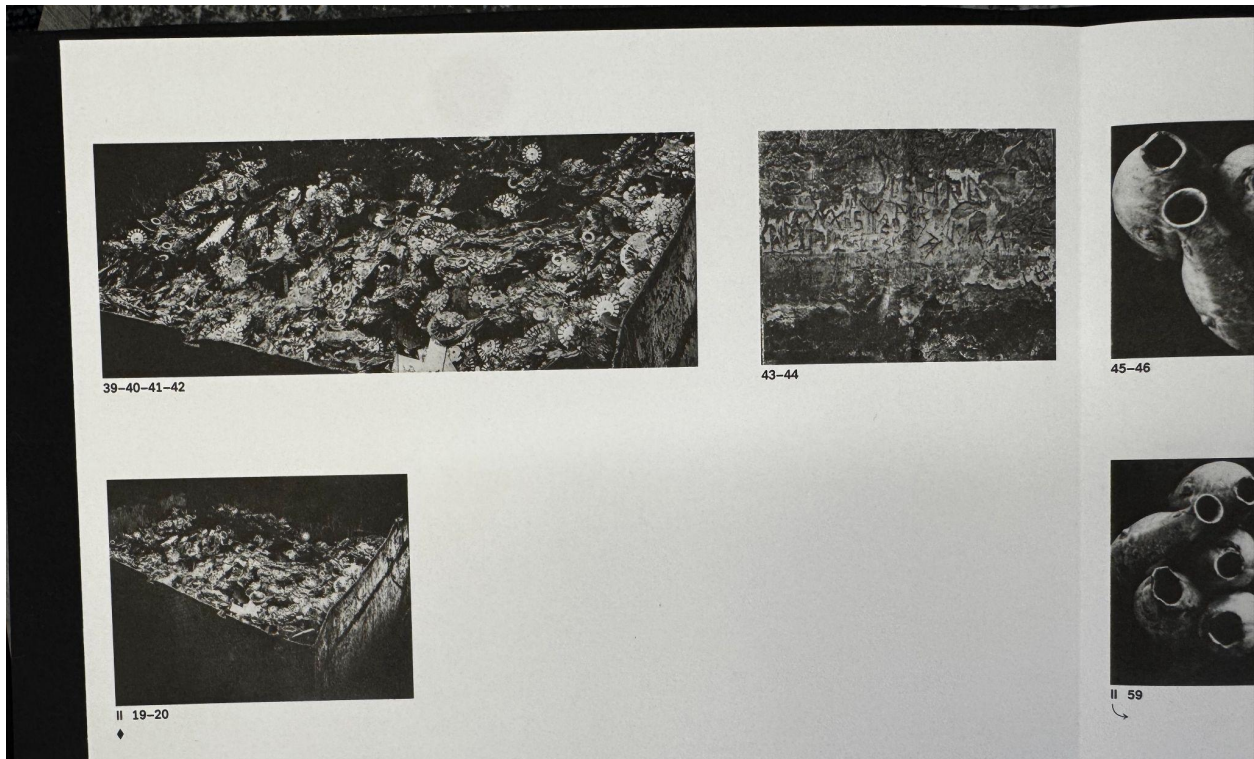


Figure 16. KAWADA Kikuji, *Iron Scraps* (left) and *The A-Bomb Memorial Dome. Scribbles by Tourists.* (right), in *Chizu [The Map]*, 1965. As reproduced in “The Map of Chizu” in Kawada Kikuji, Joshua Chuang and Miyuki Hinton, et al. *Chizu (Maquette Edition)* (London, UK, New York, N.Y.: MACK; New York Public Library, 2021).



Figure 17. KAWADA Kikuji, *The Ruin of a Stronghold. An Anti-Aircraft Gun Position.*, from *Chizu [The Map]*, 1959-1965, gelatin silver print, 27.9 x 35.6 cm, Museum of Fine Arts Boston [courtesy of L. Parker Stephenson Photographs].

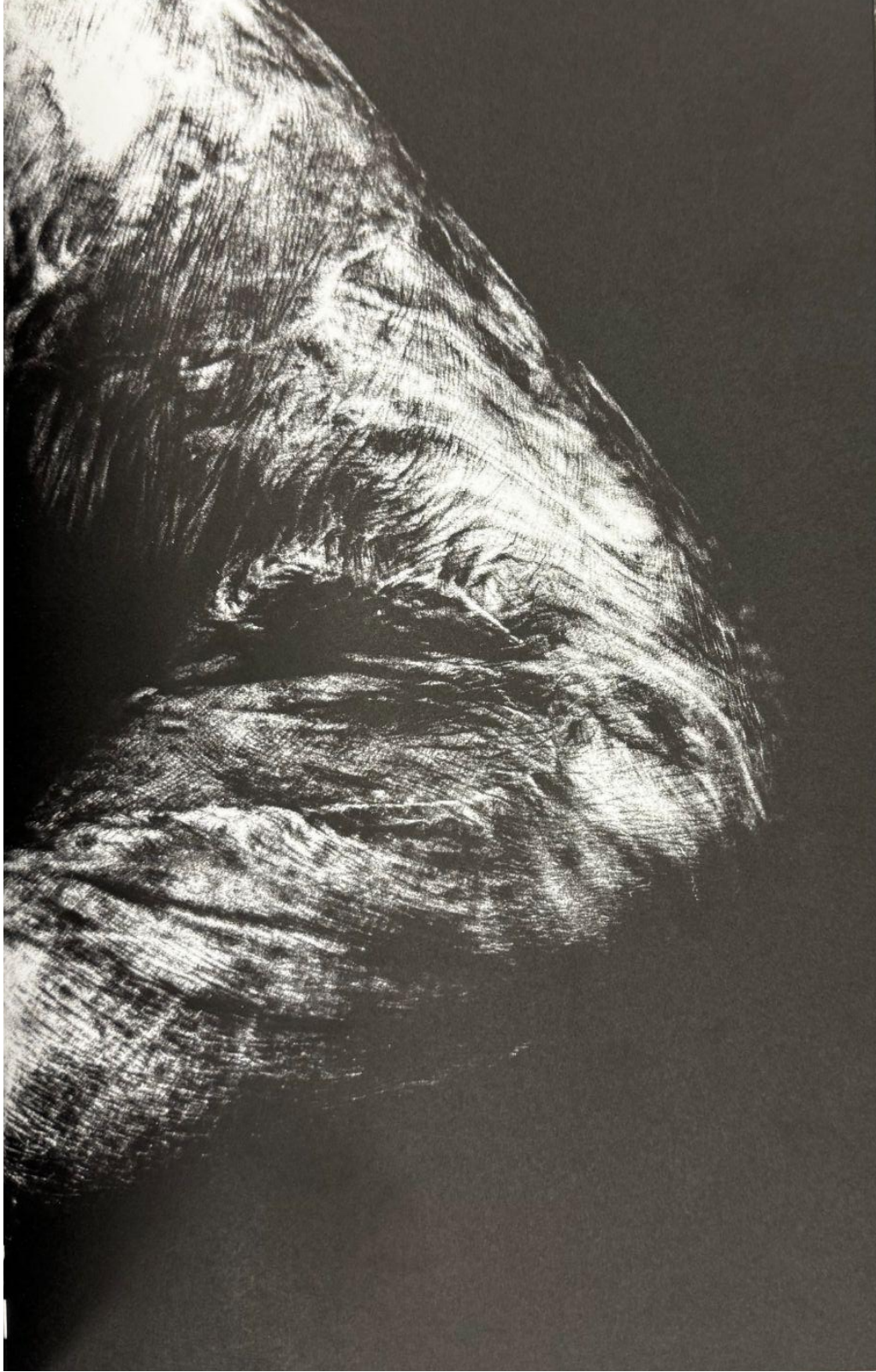


Figure 18. KAWADA Kikuji, *A Keloid Arm*, in *Chizu [The Map]*, 1965. Appears as reproduced in *Chizu (Maquette Edition)*, 2021.



Figure 19. KAWADA Kikuji, *Iron Scraps*, from *Chizu [The Map]*, 1960-1965, gelatin silver print, 25.4 x 20.3 cm, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art [© Kikuji Kawada].

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