

'small things in silence'

Yamamoto Masao



Opening: Thursday, Dec 3rd 2015

Show: Dec 4th 2015 until Feb 6th 2016

"I have been expressing myself through art for the past 40 years.

During these years I constantly asked myself:

What did I see? What did I not see?

What did I say? What did I not say?

My quest for answers to these questions led to my creations.

*I was unsure about my niche in this universe, my 'place' in this existence;
and I needed to believe in art in order to keep on living.*

On my journey of self-discovery, I stopped often and made many detours.

*The works I 'dropped' along the way mark my footsteps – chaotic and inconsistent as they
might be.*

*When I look back upon my path, I realise that the one consistent motif in my work was my
obsession for small things. I feel joy when I discover seemingly insignificant things that may be
easily overlooked. I am interested in those awkward feelings – such as when you miss a
buttonhole or are stalled and lost in a disorienting fog. I prefer whispering my messages in a soft
voice instead of speaking them out loud. My messages may be so soft as to be mistaken for
illusions.*

I know I will carry these feelings with me for a long time.

*I hope that the faint waves that my work emits, grow into quiet, yet eloquent messages that will
be reaching you.*

Yamamoto Masao

(August 2013)

GALLERY FIFTY ONE is honoured to present the solo exhibition 'Small things in Silence' by the Japanese photographer-painter Masao Yamamoto (°1957). Yamamoto's delicate, small sized portraits, landscapes and still-lives capture a suggestive imagery. Infused by the Japanese cultural tradition his search for beauty results in a poetic visual language wherein the spectator complete its meaning.

The traditional Japanese aesthetics is one of suggestion: a method to express emotions without being explicit. This tangle of sensibility can be experienced in the visual language of Yamamoto.

At first his photographs are the results of his gaze, his place in the world, but his images are also an invitation to the viewer to become part of the work by completing the idea of what is unsaid or undefined.

This power of suggestion also reflects in the way he captures and processes his most dominant subjects, landscapes and still-lives: unclear and fluid images often printed in black and white. To enhance the sense of nostalgia Yamamoto frequently does manual modifications on his prints: dying in tea or coffee, adding color paint like tiny stains, scratching or tearing the edges.

This practice is found in his first three series: a box of KU (box of the emptiness), Nakazora (space between heaven and earth) and Kawa (flow). In his latest series Shizuka (cleanse), he composes found pieces of roots against a black backdrop in his studio, suggesting a greater 'sense' in these humble treasures of nature.

This exhibition will give an overview of Yamamoto's twenty-year career as a photographer. A large body of artwork enfolds a fragile, refined sensation of timelessness. His intrinsic, simplistic compositions of small things in nature, which are overlooked, will provide the spectator a stream of conscience in an ephemeral way that evokes dreams and memories.