

土田ヒロミの

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Tsuchida Hiromi's Nippon Times and People:
Urbanization, the bubble, the millennium, the festivals, Hiroshima



Saturday, December 15, 2007, through Wednesday, February 20, 2009
Third Floor Gallery, Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography
Organized by the Metropolis of Tokyo, the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography,
and the Sankei Shimbun Co., Ltd.

< Introduction >

The Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography is proud to announce an exhibition of the work of Tsuchida Hiromi.

Since he committed himself to photography in the late 1960s, Tsuchida has captured the swiftly transforming face of Japan through iconic themes such as local customs, Hiroshima, rapid economic growth, and the economic bubble. Tsuchida's perspective is always unique, each work has a clear concept, and through it he expresses, using a series of experimental approaches, his awareness of issues confronting Japan as a nation. This photographer's work has evolved in contrasting modes of self expression and scrupulous documentary. Through it he provides a nuanced appreciation of the problems Japan harbors in terms of their social and historical context.

The work of Tsuchida Hiromi is a major focus of the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum's collection. This exhibition includes both photographs from the collection and other work to present a comprehensive view of his oeuvre, including recent work. In these troubled times, Tsuchida's photographs may provide new insight into ways to reconsider the relationship between Japan and the self.

< Works in the Exhibition >

Part Japanese

ZOKUSHIN: Gods of the Earth: Myself joined to the past (1968-1974)

Counting Grains of Sand: Expanding economy and urbanizing myself (1975-1989)

Party: The Bubble economy and me dancing (1980-1990)

New Counting Grains of Sand: New Century and myself becoming fake (1995-2004)

ZOKUSHIN: Gods of the Earth, Continued: Codifying the Japanese festivals (1980-2004)

Part Hiroshima

Hiroshima, 1945-1979 (1976-1979)

Hiroshima Monument (1979-1983)

Hiroshima Collection (1982-1994)

Part Daily Self-Portraits

Aging—Myself shifting through time (Since July, 1986), Video work, installation

< About the Work >

ZOKUSHIN: Gods of the Earth: Myself joined to the past **(1968-1974)**

Tsuchida photographed these images at locations throughout Japan between 1968 and 1975. When he went freelance in 1971, he felt that, to test himself, he first needed to confront Japanese culture; the result is *ZOKUSHIN: Gods of the Earth*. In this series, he has captured aspects of that culture in local customs, living legacies spanning the ages, and the people who embody those traditions, through his images of ancient religious spaces, festival spaces, Mount Fuji, the Ise Shrine, Yoshino, Aomori, and other significant sites.





Counting Grains of Sand: Expanding economy and urbanizing myself (1975-1989)

These works present the Japanese as crowds, photographed in many locations throughout Japan between 1975 and 1985. Starting in 1975, when he stepped back from working on the *ZOKUSHIN: Gods of the Earth* series, Tsuchida spent a decade shooting this series, mainly in the Tokyo area. The driving concept was an experiment in making the question of his own existence--as a man who had left a village in the mountains of Fukui Prefecture for an increasingly urbanized life--his

subject. The series covers festivals (including the New Year's visit to a temple or shrine and cherry-blossom viewing), leisure (including amusement parks, the beach, and exhibitions), imperial family events, scenes on the street and in parks, school ceremonies, memorial services for the war dead, May Day, and betting on sporting events. These images provide a view of the occasions on which Japanese turned out en masse in the 1980s.



Party: The Bubble economy and my dancing (1980-1990)

The decade between 1980 and 1990 was an extraordinary time in Japan, as the economic bubble went up. It was party time, literally, with festive events held all over the place. These images capture people lavishly dressed, with bold makeup and striking hairstyles, attending gala parties, liminal events removed from the ordinary world, night after night. The nature of Japanese in groups and the essence of the Japanese, which were a focus of the *ZOKUSHIN: Gods of the Earth* and *Counting*

Grains of Sand series, are addressed here as well.

New Counting Grains of Sand: New Century and myself becoming fake (1995-2004)

In this continuation of the *Counting Grains of Sand* series, in color, Tsuchida considers the increasingly virtual aspects of the age amidst the collapse of Japan's economic bubble. His images of these groups, in which the participants are not



moving together along a single vector but maintain a certain distance from each other, give a vivid sense of a change in the nature of the group since his earlier series. Tsuchida, incorporating digital technologies in his work, is developing an unexpected portrait of our times.



ZOKUSHIN: Gods of the Earth, Continued: Codifying the Japanese festivals (1980-2004)

In resuming his *ZOKUSHIN: Gods of the Earth* series, Tsuchida has created festivals themselves, in color, capturing their forms as codes. The inspiration for this series came from photographing *oiran* (women elaborately costumed as high-ranking

courtesans) in Asakusa in 1981. Here his stress is less on folklore categories than on the fascination of the forms themselves. Using a large-format camera, he worked in studio portrait style, but out of doors. These images communicate the diversity of Japanese culture and its depth and robustness, transmitted over the generations but evolving in form.

Hiroshima Trilogy

Tsuchida began working on this three-part series in 1973. As a photographer who recognized himself as a documentarist, he felt compelled, upon becoming a freelancer in 1971, to record the tragedy of the atomic bomb victims. Thus began his journey in search of Hiroshima. It was in 1976 that he decided on a methodology and actually began shooting. His *Hiroshima 1945-1979* covers 107 people in their 30s and 40s, photographed over a period of several years. It is an update on people whom he had encountered as children in the 1951 book *Genbaku no ko* (Children of the atom bomb; Iwanami Shoten), a record of survivors' experiences. That work was followed in 1979 by *Hiroshima Monument*, in which he records the physical traces of the bomb blast. In 1980, he published *Hiroshima Collection*, a series presenting materials related to the atomic bombing, including articles that had belonged to the victims in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum.



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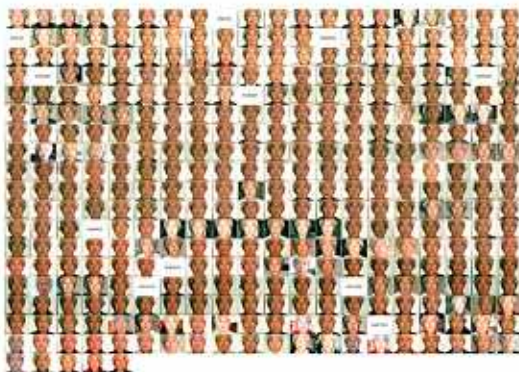
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1.&2.From *Hiroshima Collection* (1992-1994)
4.&5.From *Hiroshima Monument* (1979-1983)

3.From *Hiroshima 1945-1979* (1976-1979)



Aging—Myself shifting through time (Since July, 1986)

Since 1986, Tsuchida has photographed his own face every day in a project motivated by his becoming aware of his own ageing. The conventional approach in considering a society with an ageing population structure or of ageing itself is to photograph other people, off in old folks' homes. Instead, Tsuchida addresses these questions through the far more personal method of self portraits in his on-going application of

the fixed-point observation technique.

< Profile of Tsuchida Hiromi >

Born in Fukui Prefecture in 1939, Tsuchida joined Pola Cosmetics, Inc., after graduating from the Department of Engineering of Fukui University. While working at Pola, he began studying photography at the Tokyo College of Photography, exhibiting his work, and beginning to be active as a photographer. Making the decision to define photography as his vocation, he left Pola.

His first book of photographs was *ZOKUSHIN: Gods of the Earth*, an examination of the ethnic qualities of the

Japanese as a people. "I wanted to check my coordinates as a Japanese" (from *ZOKUSHIN: Gods of the Earth*, Ottos Books). This series was an affirmation of himself as a man raised in Fukui and likely gradually to put down roots in the city, a reaffirmation of an identity being erased through urbanization. In these photographs, he treats the Japanese, the masses, as "gods of the earth," with their ethnic qualities symbolized by the very human characteristics of their eight million deities. In these photographs, which capture the uninhibited, free side of the Japanese character, it is possible to discover a spiritual primal experience in the places where Japanese ways of behavior and attitudes towards life are grounded.

Tsuchida followed that series with *Counting Grains of Sand*, in which he reversed his point of view. Focusing on the group-oriented aspect of Japanese culture, he photographed people accommodating themselves to life in overly crowded cities. In his *Hiroshima* series, for which he won the Ina Nobuo Award, he included the landscape at ground zero, which still bears the scars of the bombing; portraits, 33 years later, of those who, having lived through the bombing, contributed essays to *Genbaku no ko* (Children of the atom bomb, Nagata Shin, ed., Iwanami Shoten); and photographs of items that had belonged to the victims and were donated to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. This work has been highly praised for raising the question of attitudes to the war, whose lessons may be apt to fade in contemporary society.

Exhibition catalogue: *Tsuchida Hiromi's Nippon*

The museum will publish a catalogue that includes the major works in the exhibition. For further information, please contact Nadiff x10, the museum shop, at 03-3280-3279.

Gallery tours with floor lectures by the curators will be held at 2 p.m. on the second and fourth Friday of each month during the exhibition.

< Exhibition Summary >

Tsuchida Hiromi's Nippon

Times and People: Urbanization, the bubble, the millennium, the festivals, Hiroshima

- Organized by: The Metropolis of Tokyo, the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography, and the Sankei Shimbun Co., Ltd.
- Sponsored by: Nippon Mining & Metals Co., Ltd., Nikon Corporation, Nikon Photo Products Inc., Epson Sales Japan Corporation, Pola Corporation, FUJIFILM Imaging Co., Ltd.
- Supported by: Sankei Sports, Yukan Fuji, Fuji Sankei Business i, iza!, Sankei Express
- Venue: Second-floor Exhibition Gallery, Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography
- Exhibition dates: Saturday, December 15, 2007, to Wednesday, February 20, 2008
- Hours: 10:00 am to 6:00 pm (until 8:00 pm on Thursdays and Fridays); admissions end 30 minutes before closing time.
- Exception: Open 11:00 am to 6:00 pm on January 2 to 4.*

Closing days: Mondays (unless a public holiday is on a Monday, in which case the museum will be closed on the following Tuesday) and at year-end and New Year from December 29 to January 1.

Admission: Adults 500 (400) yen, college students 400 (320) yen, high school and junior high school students and persons over 65 years old 250 (200) yen.*
* *Figures in parentheses () are admission fees for groups of 20 or more.*
* *Any child below junior high school age, student enrolled in a junior high school in Tokyo, or person with disabilities (with that person's caregiver) will be admitted free of charge.*
* *On the third Wednesday of each month, admission is also free for those 65 and older.*
* *Admission is free for Friends of the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography.*

< For further information >

Exhibition organizers

Yoshiko Suzuki and Mikiko Kawamura

E-mail: y.suzuki@syabi.com or m.kawamura@syabi.com

Tel. 03-3280-0034; fax 03-3280-0033

Public relations

Akiko Kushiro and Akiko Shimazu

E-mail: a.kushiro@syabi.com or a.shimazu@syabi.com

Tel.: 03-3280-0034; fax: 03-3280-0033

Images for press use:

Data for the illustrations of work in the exhibition included in this press release are available for press use; please contact the public relations officers above.

Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography
Yebisu Garden Place, 1-13-3 Mita, Meguro-ku, Tokyo 153-0062