

Toshihiro Komatsu Solo Exhibition “Aperture—Penetrating a Gaze”

- Period Saturday, February 29th, 2020 - Saturday, March 28th, 2020
- Hours Tuesdays through Fridays, 13:00 - 20:00
Saturdays, 12:00 - 19:00 (closed on Sundays, Mondays, and National Holidays)
- Venue KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY
4-7-6 Shirakawa, Koto-ku, Tokyo 135-0021 JAPAN
tel +81 3 5843 9128 e-mail gallery@kanakawanishi.com

▼OPENING RECEPTION

18:00 - 20:00

Saturday, February 29th, 2020



SCOPE20198

2019 | MDF, mirror, alkyd resin paint | 175 × 348 × 503 mm | © Toshihiro Komatsu, courtesy KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY

KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY is pleased to announce the opening of Toshihiro Komatsu’s solo exhibition, *Aperture—Penetrating a Gaze* from Saturday, February 29th, 2020.

After receiving his M.F.A. at Tokyo University of the Arts, Graduate School (1993), and his M.S. at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Department of Architecture (1999), Komatsu’s works have been showcased in museums including MoMA PS1 (New York) and Queens, Museum of Art (New York) after participating in residency programs in Amsterdam and New York, as well as international art festivals including the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale (2012/2015) and Setouchi Triennale (2013) after returning back to Japan.

■Please contact below for any image enquiries■

Renowned for works that renew cognitions of phenomena, Komatsu's work consists of mediums of photography, pavilions (temporary architecture), and site-specific installations. For the exhibition *Aperture—Penetrating a Gaze*, Komatsu will showcase the periscope structured *SCOPE* series in which allow viewers to experience the contortion between visual sights and spatial cognition, as well as the photographic *CT* series, which disaffirms layers of architectural spaces within a two-dimensional sphere.

Hitomi Iwasaki, Curator and Director of Exhibitions at the Queens Museum, New York, coins the nature of Komatsu's work in two phrases; "the natural desire to visually see objects and phenomena," and "porosity, or the gap between vision and cognitive areas related to visions."

The gallery welcomes all to this precious opportunity where Komatsu's work will be showcased in a commercial gallery in Japan for its very first time.



CT(blue room 6)

2018 | lambda print | 620× 880 mm

© Toshihiro Komatsu, courtesy KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY



CT(pink room 6)

2018 | lambda print | 620× 880 mm

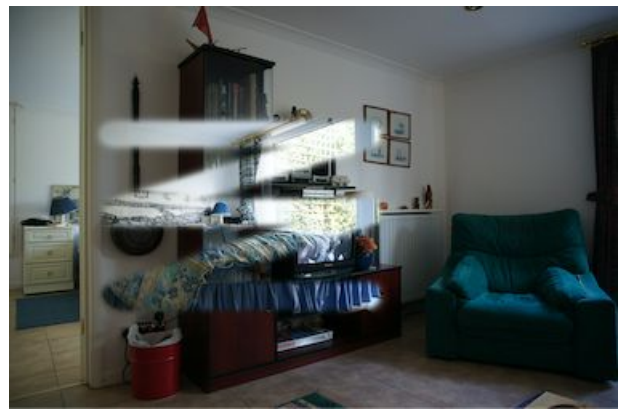
© Toshihiro Komatsu, courtesy KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY



CT11972

2016 | lambda print | 620× 880 mm

© Toshihiro Komatsu, courtesy KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY



CT12824

2016 | lambda print | 620× 880 mm

© Toshihiro Komatsu, courtesy KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY

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 Toshihiro Komatsu and His Works

“Seeing comes before words. [...]

It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world.”

— *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger, 1972.

The utterly natural human desire to see thing and phenomena

The urge to see, the very natural human desire to comprehend the world by seeing it. The role of an artist is not to newly create an unknown matter that does not exist in the real world, but is rather to “re-” present what has always been right there but fell out of our everyday vision and recognition. Using both visibility and spatiality as its subject, material, and method, the work by Toshihiro Komatsu brings to the fore the principle of visual art—often so too common and basic to the extent that we, viewers become oblivious or misunderstand it. *Mettere al mondo il mondo* is the title for a series of works by the Italian conceptual artist Alighiero Boetti (1940-1994) in the 1970s. This phrase, *bringing the world into the world* in English summarizes his consistent attitude in his artistic practice in which Boetti freely and playfully inserted philosophical and political nuances underneath as if to say “I am just pointing out at the things you are not looking.” Art may just be a reset button when our visions and perceptions become too habitual.

Porosity, or the gap between vision and visual perception

Space and vision. To transform a physical space into a two-dimensional image. Komatsu’s *CT* series complicates the flatness of photography and the fictitiousness of represented spatial realism by manipulating its pictorial surface. He introduces various ‘pores’ into the photographic expressions that may be a visual, physical, or at times conceptual rendering of reality. Incorporating highly sophisticated mediation with optical and constructive knowledge and technology, Komatsu juxtaposes elements that seemingly diametrically oppositional: personal vs. socio-historical, emotional vs. intellectual, active vs. passive, or systematic vs. poetic. While ubiquitous, the densely layered complex imagery of digital imaging is presented in *CT* as printed photograph on paper in a traditional picture frame, not on a computer or a large LED screen. The colorful interior walls of a European house are penetrated by (instead of superimposed with) impactful graphic effects of geometric patterns, which result in disrupting the autonomy of the foreground. By cancelling off the perspective balance of the depicted space with this effect akin to an optical illusion, it confuses the border between reality and fiction. A tension rises between the visual/optical cognition and the habitual imprinting of our eye and mind, which makes us believe “it appears this way, so it should be this way.”

SCOPE further accelerates this tension. The *SCOPE* series, installed on the wall, are objects that could be described as sculptural works. With its mirror-lined inner structure, the work promotes viewers’ anticipation for unpredictable visions it might offer. *SCOPE* generates an infinitely fragmented visual experience where reality and illusion are intertwined. Inside the object, geometric forms such as triangles and parallelograms are formed by the reflected mirror surfaces facing each other. Functioning as a reflector that expands and agitates the viewers’ vision into unexpected directions, *SCOPE* is an optical trap, or a rabbit hole, mounted on the wall.

By confusing the expected results of the act of seeing, the work challenges our visual habitude.

“The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled. Each evening we see the sun set. We know that the earth is turning away from it. Yet the knowledge, the explanation never quite fits the sight.” — *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger, 1972.

The urge to see and understand—whether in a physical environment or a realm of consciousness—is a constant human exploration to visually grasp the world in order to position ourselves within. Komatsu’s work lies as a very natural extension of the mechanism for human existence.

Hitomi Iwasaki, Director of Exhibitions/Curator, Queens Museum
2020, New York

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Artist Statement “Penetrating a Gaze”

In the winter of 1994, the Kanto region was hit by heavy snow. My first periscope work resembled a glass exhibition case called *Vitrine*, which I placed by the window in my room while the exterior environment transformed with snow. Right before leaving for Europe, I thought of converting the interior/exterior relationship of my room into an artwork, and brought in the exterior view into the room by reflecting it from the window. The view through the mirror box appeared as an illusion, with snow nullifying gravity and making distinctions among up/down and left/right to become all obscure.

In the Netherlands, where I moved in from Germany in the summer that year, I created *Illumination* (1995), a spatial installation where several periscopes were hung from windows of my residency studio, with the other windows left covered to create a light-controlled space. Obscure phantoms of light kept appearing and disappearing in the dimly lit studio, which resembled revolving lanterns. There is a custom called “spy” in the Netherlands, where a mirror is placed by the window to look into a visitor ringing the bell at the entrance. In the group exhibition *Secrets* (1996) at the Gate Foundation’s gallery in Amsterdam, periscopes were installed on the window of the exhibition room that once was used as the office of secret police. The periscopes allowed viewers to peep into the interior of the building across from the gallery (The Netherlands Institute for War Documentation), which made the work possible to monitor its neighbor.

When periscopes were installed in the exhibition room at the MoMA PS1, New York, they penetrated not only its windows but also vertically downwards in the middle of the floor, and allowed viewers to overview the spacious exhibition hall located directly underneath. The work converted the museum into an *Observatory* (1999), where viewers could observe outside and underneath the exhibition room. In the exhibition *Adjoining Spaces* (2000-2001) at Queens Museum the following year, the periscopes hollowed out and penetrated through the exhibition wall, and valiantly interfered with the museum’s photograph collections shown in another gallery room on the second floor, questioning the system of museums. The work magnificently extended the audience’s gaze into multiple directions and towards another exhibition room located behind itself. Other periscopes were also vertically mounted on the opposite side of the exhibition room, and allowed viewers to peek into the exhibition space on the lower floor. My intervention allowed two completely unrelated exhibitions on view at the museum to be visually connected, beyond its physical constraints of the architecture.

In the *O-House* (2000) presented at *Toride Art Project 2000*, multiple periscopes were installed inside a one-story wooden house that had been abandoned in the suburbs. While several periscopes indirectly showed the scattered objects left in the room as they were by the previous inhabitant, the periscope placed in the center of the house penetrated through the facade and projected the suburban daily life outside in contrary of the ruined house. In *Intersection* (2005) shown at MOCA Taipei, a museum which formerly was an elementary school built during the Japanese rule ages, periscopes completely penetrated across a former classroom from its corridor to the facade. When a viewer looked through the aperture of the periscope from the corridor, the classroom that was ought to be there was gone, and only the bustling traffic of the city Taipei appeared as kaleidoscopic fragments.

As above, periscopes have been changing their shapes depending on the context of each venue, and many of them have evolved into site-specific works. The new periscope work, *SCOPE*, is based on the context of a neutral gallery space, making itself a specific object rather than any existing medium such as a painting or a

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sculpture. A white cube surrounded by white walls that serve as a room to exhibit art is an unrealistic space isolated from the outer world, with almost the same appearance whether it was in Tokyo or New York. Multiple pieces of *SCOPE* installed on a gallery wall would allow the viewers' gaze to pass through the wall of a white cube and widely expand in unexpected directions, both inward and outward. Connecting the outside and inside, *SCOPE* gives a sense of place to the uncharacteristic white cube. The exterior mentioned here is the secularized everyday world outside the white cube, such as streets, a row of trees, electric poles, pedestrians, and surrounding buildings. Such external elements of reality and the unrealistic space inside the white cube become visually mixed together by *SCOPE*.

This exhibition also features the photographic series titled *Computed Tomography*, or CT scan, an abbreviation for this term. Just like scanning a human body, I used my digital camera as a scanner and photographed architectures and revealed its hidden areas behind the wall, ceiling, and floor. The photographic subjects in the series were a ruined house with violently painted walls of multiple colors that were originally built as a charity by a church in London, as well as a short-term furnished apartment I resided in. Instead of cutting and splitting the actual architectural space as Matta-Clark once did, I made virtual slits into the layered digital images to make them look as though they were cut. The slits of various shapes with blurred outlines unrealistically cut the furnishings such as TVs and cupboards, to penetrate a gaze into the following room and to outside of the building.

—Toshihiro Komatsu

Artist Profile

Toshihiro Komatsu was born in Hamamatsu City, Shizuoka Prefecture, Japan in 1966. He received his M.F.A. at Tokyo University of the Arts, Graduate School in 1993, and his M.S. at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Department of Architecture. His major solo exhibitions include *Topophilia: Japanese Houses* (2020, KANA KAWANISHI PHOTOGRAPHY, Tokyo), *TOSHIHIRO KOMATSU* (2009, Wimbledon College of Art, London), *Sanatorium* (2006, Youkobo Art Space, Tokyo), *Clairvoyance Sept. 21, 2005* (2006, galerie 16, Kyoto, Japan), *Queens Focus 03: Adjoining Spaces* (2000-2001, Queens Museum, New York), and *Special Projects* (1999, MoMA PS1, New York). Group exhibitions and art festivals include *Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale 2015* (2015, Niigata, Japan), *On the Exhibition Room* (2015, CAS, Osaka, Japan), *ISLAND VIEW—Why artists focus on islands* (2014, Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, Tokyo), *Setouchi Triennale 2013* (2013, Kagawa, Japan), and *On Happiness: Contemporary Japanese Photography* (2003, Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography, Tokyo).

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