

Toshihiro Komatsu Solo Exhibition “Mise en Abye”

■Period	Saturday, April 9th, 2022 - Saturday, May 14th, 2022
■Venue	KANA KAWANISHI PHOTOGRAPHY 2-7-5-5F, Nishiazabu, Minato-ku, Tokyo 106-0031
■Hours	Wednesdays through Fridays, 13:00-20:00 Saturdays, 12:00-19:00 (closed on Sundays, Mondays, Tuesdays, and National Holidays)



CT000522

2021 | lambda print | 620 × 880 mm | © Toshihiro Komatsu, courtesy KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY

KANA KAWANISHI PHOTOGRAPHY is pleased to present “Mise en Abye,” a solo exhibition by Toshihiro Komatsu starting April 9, 2022.

Toshihiro Komatsu, a graduate of Tokyo University of the Arts and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Graduate School of Architecture, completed a residency in Amsterdam and New York and has held solo exhibitions at MoMA PS1 and the Queens Museum. Since returning to Japan, Komatsu has participated in international art festivals such as Setouchi Triennale (2013) and Echigo Tsumari Art Triennale (2012/2015), and has produced site-specific installations, temporary pavilions, photographic projects, and other artistic practices that renew our perception.

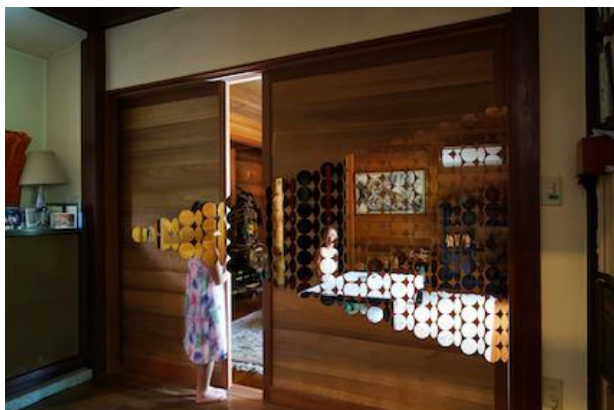
In this exhibition, Komatsu will present new works from *CT*, a series of photographs that cancel out the layers of architectural spaces. The title of this exhibition is “Mise en Abye,” which is a formal technique of placing a copy of an image within itself, often in a way that suggests an infinitely recurring sequence. The exhibition will consist of new works photographing Japanese architecture as the photographic subjects, a change from his previous works, which were created with European architecture.

The photographic subjects this time are wooden buildings with a warm color scheme and a built-in a *ranma* (an openwork screen above the sliding partitions between two rooms), such as a *kyo-nagaya* (row houses in Kyoto) or an old house in the *shoin* style where the imperial family once stayed, or an abandoned wooden elementary school. Layers are hollowed out in a geometric pattern as if you can see into the space behind, but upon closer inspection, you realize that you cannot get to such view without removing the walls. Gordon Matta-Clark, an artist active in New York in the 1970s, made slits in the real space of buildings to update the view, but our eyes and brains, nowadays accustomed to erasing the layers on the display, seem to readily

■Please contact below for any image inquiries■

accept the view presented by Komatsu in *CT* as an expression that shakes the very foundations of human perception, including memory, vision, and spatial cognition.

We cordially invite all to this exhibition consisting of new works by Toshihiro Komatsu, featuring Japanese architecture as his photographic subjects for the first time.



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CT006161

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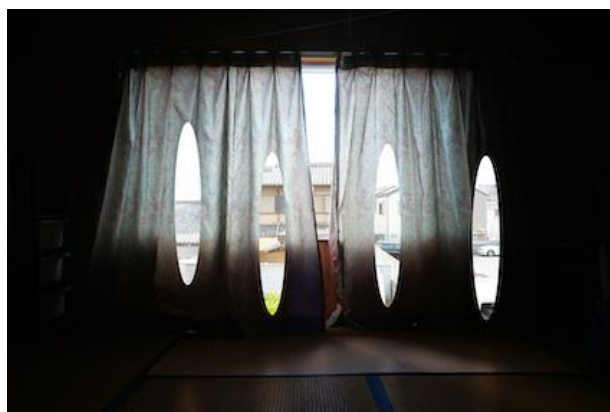
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2021 | lambda print | 620 × 880 mm

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CT058972

2021 | lambda print | 620 × 880 mm

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Artist Statement

I photograph the houses and school buildings with a digital camera as if scanning the human body with a CT scan, and reveal what exists “behind” the other side hidden by walls, barriers, and curtains as if you could see through it.

Instead of physically cutting and drilling slits and holes in the actual architectural space, the work is created by using photographs taken in “front” of and “behind” the walls as layers, and the “front” wall is partially drilled through to reveal what is “behind,” creating a dazzling visual disturbance between reality and fiction.

A Kyoto row house where my step-grandmother in Uzumasa lived ever since she married until she passed away at the age of 93. The birthplace of my wife in Iwakura, Kyoto, whose father was an architect. A former wooden elementary school in Niigata that was an exhibition site for the Echigo Tsumari Art Triennale. An old house built approximately 130 years ago in the *Shoin* style in Kitahyogo, where the imperial family once stayed. The photographs provide a perspective on buildings filled with people's memories and history.

Toshihiro Komatsu

Toshihiro Komatsu: Inside and Outside of Architecture/Photography

It is architecture, and it is photography. Toshihiro Komatsu's *CT* series can be described in this way. However, if we divide them into “content” and “form,” his intentions will not be conveyed. The two are inseparable, and this makes a peculiar space to emerge, different from that of ordinary photography.

A certain “presence” is captured in photographs, and this is especially true when the photographs are taken in architectural spaces where people have lived for many years. In such cases, we do not perceive the architect's original intention, but rather the way the people who live in the building have continuously remodeled it in response to their daily necessities. If we look closely at the various objects placed in the room, we can see a mixture of the old and the new. Chronologically, they are all in disarray. They are integrated by the aged wooden pillars and beams.

The absence of the people living in the space in the photographs also contributes to the “presence” of the room. In the past works in the *CT* series, basically, no human being appeared in the photographs. It might be said that “the absence” of the inhabitants were captured in the photographs. In this context, the inclusion of the photographs of a mother and child, sitting together, could be described as a new direction to this series. This is because it suggests a “connection” between what has passed and what will be inherited by the next generation.

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In addition, it should be noted that the word “camera” originally means a “room.” In this case, the photographer and the photographed are in an analogous relationship. In fact, since the *CT* series requires the space be partitioned by a wall, the photographed object gives the impression of an “enclosed space.” Although Komatsu himself is behind the camera and not present in the photographs, he can be considered to be inside the photographs by being inside the rooms of the building. This sense of “being inside” is similar to Komatsu’s installation works.

The ambivalence of the position of being both outside and inside provides an opportunity to explain the specificity of space in this series. It is easy to become aware of the hole in the wall of the room in the foreground, but it is also noteworthy that the depth of field seems to have been reduced. This is different from the continuous infinite depth of Renaissance paintings, which are often discussed in connection with the camera. As the metaphor of a “window” suggests, the creator/viewer is positioned outside of it. This difference is not so great as to be a contradiction. It is only a slight discrepancy. Nevertheless, this discomfort leads to the evocation of the “presence” created by the architecture.

Komatsu’s work, which appears as if there is a hole in a wall that is ought not to be seen through to the back, might be thought of as a visual trick. But perhaps the opposite is true. As was the case with photography of the late 1960s and 1970s, when many tricky expressions appeared, Komatsu’s theme is to question the very nature of human “seeing” by evoking physicality. The nested structure of the building (architecture) and the camera (photography) is set up for this purpose.

Tadasu Fujii (art critic, curator, professor of Tokyo Zokei University)

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 “Aperture—Penetrating a Gaze” (2020, KANA KAWANISHI GALLERY, Tokyo), “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 Photographic Art Museum).