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Masao Yamamoto
Nakazora
December 1 - January 19, 2002

Project Gallery: Linda Connor *Towards Light*
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The Yancey Richardson Gallery is pleased to present "Nakazora" an installation of photographs by Japanese artist Masao Yamamoto. In his intentionally stained, bent and scratched photographs Yamamoto explores notions of memory, ambiguity and the passage of time. The small prints, measuring 4 x 6 inches or smaller, will be shown in various ways: unframed and taped directly to the wall, grouped together in a single frame, "installed" within a book or spilling out of an antique leather suitcase. In all of these instances, he sees the groupings as haiku or short stories and the images as individual phrases or words in his "dictionary".

Yamamoto encourages people to handle his prints. Indeed, Yamamoto considers his photographs objects to be carried in one's pocket, placed in a notebook or slid into a drawer. In his installations, Yamamoto often places the old leather suitcase upon a table with a single chair. The viewer is encouraged to sit and sift through the photographs examining each one and venturing on a visual and experiential journey. As they are handled by various viewers, the prints become repositories of experience, history and memory. Viewers are also encouraged to make their own groupings or "stories" with the images.

The haiku-like images of simple objects and scenes - concentric circles on dark water, a glowing solitary haystack, a long shadow cutting across a narrow empty road, a dove perched on a pile of books, a smoldering bonfire - produce a sharp prick of recognition. In Zen Buddhist practice, which informs Yamamoto's work, the unanswered question or *koan* is given by the teacher to the student to be held in the mind until a moment of realization. In contemplating Yamamoto's work, one sees that the photographs do not so much describe a scene as present a question.

Yamamoto does not feel his images have a fixed realization. He views each printing of an individual image as a separate and unique event and does not try to create a multiple of an earlier print. As a result, prints of the same image may differ in size or tonality; they may be printed on matte or glossy paper; they may have a bit of red paint applied or not.

Yamamoto supplies the following definition of the term "Nakazora":

The space between sky and earth, the place where birds, etc. fly. Empty air. Mid-air. An internal hollow. Vague. Hollow. Around the center of the sky. Or, emptiness. A state when the feet do not touch the ground. Inattentiveness. The inability to decide between two things. Midway. The center of the sky (the zenith). A Buddhist term.

Born in 1957 in Japan, Yamamoto originally studied painting. Since 1986 he has had over twenty solo exhibitions in Japan, Europe and the United States. Yamamoto's photographs are included in the collections of The Center for Creative Photography, Tucson; The International Center for Photography, New York; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; and The Philadelphia Museum of Art. Yamamoto currently resides in Yokohama, Japan.

The Yancey Richardson Gallery is located at 535 West 22nd Street, NY, NY 10011. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 10 to 6. For additional information or press prints, please contact the gallery at phone 646-230-9610, fax 646-230-6131 or e-mail info@yanceyrichardson.com.