

L'ŒIL DE LA PHOTOGRAPHIE

THE EYE OF PHOTOGRAPHY

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Masao Yamamoto, *Tori*

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Tori, meaning bird in Japanese, is Masao Yamamoto's sixth exhibition at Yancey Richardson Gallery and reflects the artist's lifelong obsession with birds. The show includes both hand printed photographs, spanning Yamamoto's career, as well as new additions of traditional hanging scrolls. The images give the impression of being somewhere in-between painting and photography, having been manipulated by dye and ink. The photographs are precious little masterpieces, averaging on 5x3 inches, and express a mysterious intimacy as if the viewer is given a window into another world.

Tori reflects Yamamoto's artistry, centered around the belief that humans are just a small part of nature. The works on view are presented like glimpses of memories from another life form, living simultaneously with us on this planet, but also highlights the similarity between birds and humans. One of the best examples, and most human-like of the photographs, is an image of a pigeon gazing at its own reflection in a pond. Contemplating oneself and one's place in the world is a phenomena attributed to mankind alone, a belief challenged by Yamamoto's photograph. Another striking image in the show is a larger scale portrait of a white owl. The portrait is faded to a soft and aged image, bringing to mind turn-of-the-century photographs, and once again expresses the very human quality of the bird.

YANCEY RICHARDSON GALLERY

In this show, size really does matter, since the small scale of the artworks makes the viewer get close and personal with the images and therefore offers no escape from the opportunity to thoroughly examine them. The discovery is a sort of parallel universe, at the intersection of man and nature, told through poetic images where all beings have lives, days and moments. The softness, and intimacy of the motifs, heightened by the small scale of the work, gives an aura of fragility and speaks of the transience of life. It reflects on our place in the world as an equal part of nature, not a species apart from it.

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Helena Calmfors is a Swedish art critic based in New York, USA. Her writings have appeared in Musee Magazine or Note Magazine.

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Yancey Richardson Gallery

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