

MAR 3 EXHIBITION REVIEW: JUST VISITING THIS PLANET AT MIYAKO
YOSHINAGA GALLERY

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“Just Visiting This Planet” is the Miyako Yoshinaga Gallery’s winter group show reveling in artistic freedom and expression. It includes photographs from six contemporary Japanese photographers: Emi Anrakuji, Hitoshi Fugo, Mikiko Hara, Mayumi Lake, Yu Yamauchi, and Daisuke Yokota, honoring Kazuo Ohno and the documentary made about him.

After fighting in World War II, Japanese dancer Kazuo Ohno returned home and began to dance again. In time, he and Tatsumi Hijikata were credited with founding Butoh, a form of Japanese dance theater noted as being “unclassifiable”. Although there is no strict definition for it, Butoh is often marked by slow, controlled movements, and dancers in white body paint, with a focus on taboo and grotesque imagery. Butoh was created to combat the strictness of traditional Japanese dance. In 1991, Peter Sempel celebrated the free nature of Butoh and Ohno in his documentary, “Just Visiting This Planet,” which followed Ohno as he danced in Berlin, Venice, Vienna, and New York.

Artists in the exhibition share Ohno's appreciation for life and his maverick identity. Emi Anrakuji, a Tokyo-based photographer, documents her body in her work. Black-and-white photos taken from her series, "Just Love," are featured, coming off harsh and forceful. Pieces from the Hitoshi Fugo series "Flying Frying Pan" are also included. Capturing the feeling of impermanence and freeing himself from the confines of narrative, Fugo analyzed his frying pan for fifteen years, the object unrecognizable in his gaze. Fleeing from narrative as well, Mikiko Hara's soft snapshots capture a single moment in time, purposely untethered to meaning. Dark and beautiful, Mayumi Lake's contributions from her series, "Latent Heat," are charged with emotion, while Daisuke Yokota's "Untitled No. 421" is similarly haunting, its layered and textured image confounding and wonderful. Yu Yamauchi's work "N 51°12' 08.5"E 9 8° 5 9'4 2.6 " - #18" is only viewable online, but "N 4 7 °5 5 ' 0 7 . 8 " E 1 0 6 °5 5 ' 0 3 . 5 " - #07" can be seen in the exhibit, its specificity in unity with the other works.

Each one of these artists' works reflects Butoh and Ohno's own life. Inventive and putting creativity above all else, Anrakuji embraces the taboo, obsessively capturing her nude body, while Fugo explores the unconventional and the microscopic world of culinary tools. Hara and Yamauchi record life authentically on their cameras, Hara avoiding the specific while Yamauchi embraces it. As Ohno often did, Lake explores her past through her pieces, and Yokota experiments with their presentation, unafraid and striking. Together, these photos are a menagerie of the unexpected and dramatic, and are a gorgeous close-up of Japanese culture and photography. As Ohno advised in *Just Visiting This Planet*, "do the impossible, don't think."