

HAMILTONS

NOBUYOSHI ARAKI: HANAGURUMA | 03 MAY - JUNE 15 2022



For the first time in the UK, Hamiltons Gallery presents a series of rare, unique *sumi* ink drawings by Nobuyoshi Araki. From 3 May to 15 June 2022 these unseen artworks will be presented alongside a series of well-known photographs from the artist's career.

Nobuyoshi Araki is one of Japan's most renowned photographers and contemporary artists. Araki's work is often controversial, but his artistic genius is undeniable; every image reveals extreme technical mastery which influences many creative fields, including photography, film, painting, and in this case, ink drawing.

Araki's inspiration for these expressive ink drawings derives from his regular jaunts in Tokyo's Shinjuku district at a bar named Hanaguruma, which translates to 'Flower Carriage'. The artist spent many nights in Hanaguruma, where he would sketch portraits, photograph, drink and generally hang out into the late hours. The tiny bar, which closed its doors in 2015, consisted of a simple counter and two seats, and was frequented by an array of visual artists and performers from Nan Goldin, Robert Frank to Bjork and Lady Gaga. Those who visited were encouraged to make their mark on the walls with signatures, drawings, and Polaroids.

The portraits that Araki created in Hanaguruma were made using *sumi* ink which is an ancient monochrome ink derived of specific soot, ground with water and gelatine, used for calligraphy and painting. The technique of *sumi* ink drawing first developed in Japan around the mid-14th Century and is the embodiment of Japanese aesthetics. Using a simply made, natural black ink often applied to handmade paper, the artists are able to capture a timeless beauty and complexity of the natural world.

The focus of the art of ink drawing or *sumi-e* has since its inception has been on the quality of the line, the goal of *sumi* drawing is not to accurately represent a subject but instead to convey a general sentiment or feeling of it. The bold or subtle use of brushstrokes allowed *sumi* artists to eliminate from their paintings all but the essential character of their subject. This is clear in Araki's portraits from Hanaguruma; his lightning-quick sketches barely trace the outline of his subjects' faces, sometimes with vibrant accents such as a blaze of red lips or the outline of an eye. The confidence with which Araki illustrates his sitters allows the viewer to imagine sitting next to him in Hanaguruma as his brush flashes across his sketchbook capturing the essence of everyone around him.

Hamiltons' exhibition presents these drawings alongside several important photographs from the artists' career. These prints reinforce the fact that the drawings are not only of passers-by, but of the women from his subconscious, his muses, his inspiration, and the source of his creative drive, included will be 'Suicide in Tokyo, 1994' and 'Shino, 2002'. The drawings are, like the women in his pictures, the foundation of his identity and artistic practise.

The exhibition **Nobuyoshi Araki: Hanaguruma** will run from **03 May to 15 June 2022** at Hamiltons Gallery, London.

BIOGRAPHY

Japanese artist Nobuyoshi Araki, born in Tokyo in 1940 is one of the most celebrated figures of photography. His irreverent and sexually explicit images have frequently ignited controversy both in Japan, and abroad. Araki's provocative photographs depict both banal and deeply erotic subjects ranging from flowers and Tokyo street scenes to female bondage and his own biographical accounts.

Araki belongs to a generation of artists who emerged in the 1960s whilst Japan was experiencing radical economic growth and urbanisation as a result of post-war recovery. Photography was evolving rapidly both in its traditional guises such as photojournalism and advertising as an art. The societal transformations, cultural shifts and overt commercialism influenced him, and can be seen throughout his work; for example, karaoke bars, Japanese toys and Tokyo street scenes often feature. He likewise often reflects Japanese traditions, in both historical and stylised references. The women in his pictures, although not in traditional scenes, are usually Japanese, wearing traditional dress.

Araki studied photography at Chiba University, later working at Dentsu advertising agency where he met his late wife Yōko. Araki has published over 450 books to date, including some of the most important photobooks of the 20th century; *Sentimental Journey*, *Tokyo Lucky Hole*, *Winter Journey* and *Shino*. Likewise, he has created films and in more recent years photographed superstars Lady Gaga and Björk. Araki's photography has been exhibited internationally in both solo and group exhibitions, including the Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain, Paris and Centre National de la Photographie, Paris, with works residing in many significant public and private collections including the Tate Modern, London and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

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