

Yamamoto and Seto

Jackson Fine Art presents two Japanese photographers who present completely divergent attitudes on contemporary life and culture.

Masato Seto is a Taiwanese photographer raised in Japan who made a series called Binran girls 2007-2008 made in Taiwan at night of girls who sell betel nuts to passers-by in roadside stands open 24 hours. A particular part of Taiwanese and other south Asian cultures, the habit of chewing seeds produces a stimulating effect making the seeds popular with truckers as well as older members of the population who favor the seeds as a pick me up. These strident color photographs, shot at night with ample artificial light, project onto the young female *vendeuses* airs of loneliness and urban anxiety, though, according to the photographer, the majority of the glass framed stands are located in suburban neighborhoods. The girls, he says, are content with selling their wares, which he claims, consist only of drinks and prepared nuts. There is an ambiguity in what exactly they are selling. Is it Binran or something more. Regardless, their provocative dress and vacant stares lead us to believe that the stage is set and that there is more going on that meets the eye.

Seto, raised in Japan of Japanese and Vietnamese parents, is particularly aware of small groups on the edges of society. His earlier book **Picnic** (2006) recorded couples relaxing in the public parks of Japan, in images referencing the frankness found in Edouard Manet's painting *Dejeuner sur L'Herbe*. (1863). A student of Daido Moriyama, Seto has learned from the master of the urban street scene. Yet Seto channels his passion into a more removed, reserved anthropological mode. The Binran series codifies many issues of street photographers: where to stand, how to frame the subject, how much to invade the personal space of the subject. By stepping back to include each glass-framed street shop, creating a frame within a frame composition, Seto includes the viewer in his decision making process.

Masao Yamamoto presents new work that departs from his multi-part installations in the past, a hallmark of his work since his first exhibitions. In his latest project, entitled Kawa-Flow, Yamamoto displays single framed black and white prints of depopulated nature scenes made in Japan. The series title refers to the journey from the present to the future, from a concrete situation to the unknown ahead. While his earlier work, tiny tea-stained prints, conveyed nuance in the delicacy of the print as object, the newer, bolder work have nuance embedded into the pictorial structure. Whether it's a graphic, Bauhaus-inspired image of electrical wires telescoping into the far distance (1549) or a delicate cloud-covered mountain range, he focuses on the timeless values contained in appreciating the beauty of our surroundings. Originally trained as a painter, the artist developed his own visual language based upon the groupings of small details and moments. The more forceful signature emerging in most recent photographs points to a more aggressive interest in permanence and in the structures ever-present in the natural world. These singular works are self-sufficient, not relational, as the earlier work. What we need from art we can find in every single image.

Seto was born in Udon Thani, Thailand, to a Japanese father and a Thai mother of Vietnamese decent. He moved to Fukushima Prefecture, Japan in 1961, and studied photography at Tokyo

Shashin Senmon Gakko, graduating in 1972. After further study under Daido Moriyama, Seto became an assistant to Masahisa Fukase in 1978. In 1981 he became a freelance photographer

Masato Seto's work is included in many international collections such as The Metropolitan Museum of Photography in Tokyo, Japan; Kawasaki City Museum in Kanagawa, Japan; Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, California; and The Sir Elton John Collection, USA.

Trained as a painter, Masao Yamamoto has been a free-lance photographer since 1975. Of all the images he has taken, none has a discreet identity in terms of title; each piece is numbered but part of a continuous series. Like a community, the images are independent of one another but at the same time part of a collective.

Masao Yamamoto's work is exhibited and included in many public and private collections nationally and internationally including Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX; Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, CA; The International Center of Photography, New York, NY and the Sir Elton John Collection.