

21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa

PRESS RELEASE

# Hiroshi Sugimoto History of History

November 22 (Sat), 2008 to March 22 (Sun), 2009



金沢21世紀美術館  
21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa

## History of History

Art is technique: a means by which to materialize the invisible realm of the mind. As such, my art is an emblematic rendering of part of my mind in visible form—or perhaps we might say, samplings from my consciousness. Over my many years as an artist, I have endeavored to hone my technique.

The origins of art thus share a common timeframe with the origins of humankind, its beginnings coinciding with the advent of human consciousness. In the course of honing my own technique, I've had to take many predecessors as my models so as to acquire what is to be learned from them—or again perhaps we might say my models have been sampled from the horizons reached by those predecessors. Whenever I obtained one sample and gained an understanding of a technique, each new mindset made me want the next sample and the next. Understanding one thing always brought the realization that more profound unknowns lay beyond. And so my sample gathering caused a chain reaction that led on who-knows-where.

The samples collected here represent offshoot selves, or no, former selves assembled out of necessity in order to learn something or absorb some nurturing sustenance toward further transforming my own art. From these samples, I may now infer how the past relates to my works via an imaginary journey to verify the site of innumerable actualities. I pick up a paleolithic stone tool and it fits snugly in the palm of my hand. I experience the revolutionary technical leap of paleolithic man and the epiphany enters my consciousness—then I reach for an even better neolithic stone tool. In one instant, I have taken in hundreds of thousands of years of human development. I look at hieroglyphic writing in the Egyptian Book of the Dead and see images of gods. This piece of linen thought to have once wrapped a dead body hands me a five-millennia yardstick. The slow passage of ages past seems to speed up and rush headlong at my present self. Changes that once took a thousands years are now achieved in a matter of decades. Time's arrow keeps accelerating asymptotically toward some critical juncture.

Civilizations have come and gone since the dawn of heaven and earth, writing and rewriting history at every turn. History is simply the victors' story as passed down by the survivors. And yet the losers' stories that have become mere relics for lack of anyone to relate them, those closed pages still tell me things. Just as lifeforms extinct for millions of years still speak to me via their fossils. Throughout my life I've taken one step back from history and gazed fondly at my collection of relics..

These relics I've assembled present a history of what history has forgotten, of where stories ended between closed covers.

Hiroshi Sugimoto

## **“Hiroshi Sugimoto: History of History” : Exhibition Concept**

Hiroshi Sugimoto (1948-), an artist active at the forefront of contemporary photographic art, has since 2003 undertaken an expressive form he calls “History of History,” in which he juxtaposes his own photographic works with items from his private collection. “History of History,” which has toured the USA and Canada until now, presents new facets with each showing, a fact reflecting Sugimoto’s ongoing involvement in collecting and in producing art works.

“Fragments of Hōryūji Textiles,” “Fragments of Shōsōin Textiles,” and “Nigatsudō Yakegyō gire (Section of Burned Sutra of the Nigatsudō)” —Sugimoto’s current collection includes everything from ancient artifacts and art works—objects discussed within a generally established framework—to space food, space photographs, 18th-century medical books, and Time magazines published during the Second World War. This exhibition, which will augment such items with Sugimoto’s own photographic creations, including new works such as “Lightning Fields,” will constitute a new rendering of “History of History.” This is exemplified by the installation work “Antigravity Structure.” Composed of new Sugimoto photographic works and ancient architectural members in his collection from the east pagoda of Taimadera, a temple built in the Tempyo Era, the installation embodies the essence of “History of History.”

Nine of the spatially autonomous galleries of the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa will throw light on the varying aspects of Sugimoto’s artistic world. As a synergy, they will also provide an overall understanding of the organic relationships binding Sugimoto’s historical view, worldview, and creativity.

## Exhibition Features

### **An exhibition providing an overview of “History of History”**

Since 2003, Hiroshi Sugimoto has undertaken an expressive form he calls “History of History.” Traveling to museums throughout the USA and Canada, “History of History” manifests new aspects with each showing. This exhibition offers a new “History of History” that includes new works and recently collected items. It is a large-scale exhibition providing an overview of “History of History” as it has evolved until now.

### **A beautiful collaboration with the galleries of 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa**

Employing nine galleries of 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa (Gallery 5 and Galleries 7-14), the exhibition offers displays utilizing the individual character of each gallery. A particular example is “Antigravity Structure,” a work presented in Gallery 8, composed of photographs taking Nara’s Taimadera temple as a motif and ancient building materials once used in the temple’s pagoda. For this work, a display fully utilizing the gallery’s 12-meter ceiling height is planned.

### **First display in Japan of new Hiroshi Sugimoto works**

The exhibition presents Sugimoto photographic works never before shown in Japan. Such works as “Lightning Fields,” “Lightning Fields Illuminated,” and photographs of Taimadera temple from “Antigravity Structure” demonstrate the new character of Sugimoto’s recent art expression.

### **Display of recent additions to Sugimoto’s collection**

Sugimoto still now engages in collecting with great zeal. In recent years, he has collected space food, space photographs, 18th-century medical writings, and Time magazines published during World War Two. Combined with Sugimoto’s photographic works, such newly collected items find rebirth in a new “History of History.”

## Exhibition Outline

**Title (Japanese):** Sugimoto Hiroshi Rekishi no Rekishi  
**Title (English):** Hiroshi Sugimoto: History of History  
**Period:** November 22 (Sat), 2008 to March 22 (Sun), 2009  
**Hours:** 10 a.m.-6 p.m.  
(Until 8 p.m. on Fridays & Saturdays and 5 p.m. on January 2 and 3)  
**Closed:** Mondays (but open 11.24 [Mon], 12.22 [Mon], and 1.12 [Mon])  
Also closed 11.25 (Tue), 12.27 (Sat) to 1.1 (Thu), and 1.13 (Tue)  
**Organized by:** 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa; The Asahi Shimbun  
**In cooperation with:** Hermes, Gallery Koyanagi  
**Works:** About 180  
**Admission:** General: ¥1,000 (¥800); College students: ¥800 (¥600); Elem/JH/HS: ¥400(¥300)  
( ) indicates group ticket (20 or more) and advance ticket fee  
**Advance Tickets:** Ticket PIA  
(Tel 0570-02-9999; Exhibition ticket code: 688-368)  
Family Mart, Circle K, Sankus, Yahoo! Ticket  
**Period:** October 22 (Wed) 2008 to March 22 (Sun) 2009  
(Booking until March 19 [Thu])

## Related Events

### ■ Artist Talk

**Date:** November 22 (Sat) 2008, 1:00-2:30 p.m.  
(Admittance from 12:30 p.m.)  
**Venue:** Lecture Hall, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa  
**Admittance:** Limited to the first 70 arrivals  
(Numbered tickets will be distributed before the Lecture Hall from 10 a.m. that day)  
**Charge:** Free (with an admission ticket to this exhibition)

### ■ Lecture: "Hiroshi Sugimoto through Photographs"

**Lecturer:** Yuji Akimoto (Director, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa)  
**Date:** January 11 (Sun) 2009, 2:00-3:30 p.m.  
(Admittance from 1:30 p.m.)  
**Venue:** Lecture Hall, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa  
**Admittance:** Limited to the first 70 arrivals  
**Charge:** Free (with an admission ticket to this exhibition)

### ■ Lecture: "About 'History of History'"

**Lecturer:** Akira Tatehata  
(Director, The National Museum of Art, Osaka)  
**Date:** December 21 (Sun) 2008, 2:00-3:30 p.m.  
(Admittance from 1:30 p.m.)  
**Venue:** Lecture Hall, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa  
**Admittance:** Limited to the first 70 arrivals  
**Charge:** Free (with an admission ticket to this exhibition)

### ■ Lecture & Discussion "Form as 'History of History'"

**Date:** March 20 (Fri, a holiday), 2009, 2:00-4:00 p.m.  
(Admittance from 1:30 p.m.)  
**Venue:** Lecture Hall, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa  
**Admittance:** Limited to the first 70 arrivals  
**Charge:** Free (with an admission ticket to this exhibition)

#### Lectures

- I "Hiroshi Sugimoto's Photographic Acts"  
2:00-2:30 p.m.  
Mariko Takeuchi (Photography critic, researcher of the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo)
- II "Hiroshi Sugimoto's Japanese Art History"  
2:35-3:05 p.m.  
Kazuko Kameda (PhD candidate, University of British Columbia)

#### Panel Discussion 3:15-4:00 p.m.

- "Form as 'History of History'"  
- Panelists: Mariko Takeuchi, Kazuko Kameda  
- Moderator: Daisuke Murata (Curator, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa)

### ■ Gallery Talks by Curators

**Date:** November 30 (Sun)  
December 12 (Fri) and 20 (Sat)  
January 17 (Sat)  
February 6 (Fri) and 21 (Sat)  
March 15 (Sun)  
**Time:** 2:00-3:00 p.m.  
**Rendezvous:** Lecture Hall, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa  
**Charge:** Free  
(with that day's admission ticket to this exhibition)

Note: All events are subject to change. For details, please see the Museum's website.

## ARTIST PROFILE



### **Hiroshi Sugimoto**

Born in Tokyo, 1948, Sugimoto left Japan in 1970 to study photography at Art Center College of Design in Los Angeles. In 1974, he moved to New York and began working in photography. Among the many series he has produced since 1975 are Dioramas, Theaters and Seascapes. Sugimoto established his reputation with clear concepts and distinguished technique. His works are included in the collections of major art museums throughout the world. Sugimoto received the Hasselblad Foundation International Award in Photography in 2001. Since his retrospective first opened at Mori Art Museum in Tokyo in 2005, the show has toured to the U.S.A. and Europe.

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## Images for Promotional Use

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5~18: Courtesy of Hiroshi Sugimoto

1



*Caribbean Sea, Jamaica*  
1981  
Gelatin-silver print  
119.4 × 149.2 cm

2



*Lightning Fields 019*  
2007-2008  
Gelatin silver print  
150.5 × 120.7 cm

3



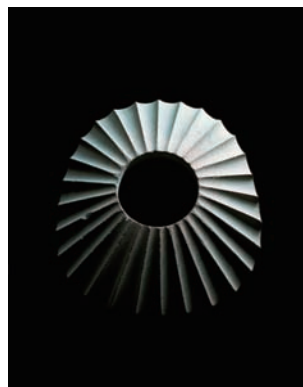
*Lightning Fields 042*  
2007-2008  
Gelatin silver print  
150.5 × 120.7 cm

4



*Antigravity Structure (detail)*  
2008  
Mixed media  
Dimension variable

5



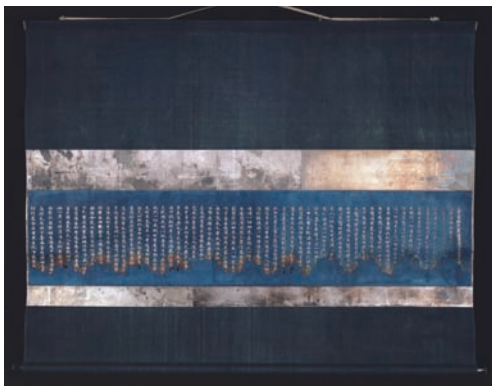
*Wheelstone*  
Kofun period (4th century)  
Jasper  
L 16.5 cm

6



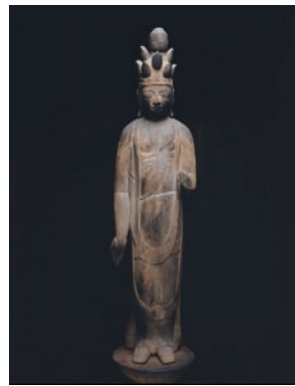
*Fragments of Shosoin Textile*  
Nara period (8th century)  
silk

7



*Nigatsudō Yakekyō gire*  
(Section of Burned Sutra of the Nigatudō)  
Nara period (8th century)  
Silver on dark-blue paper  
86 × 110 cm each

8



*Standing Figure of Juichimen Kannon*  
(*Ekadāsamukha*)  
Heian period (10th- 11th century)  
Wood H 107.5 cm

9



*Monju Bosatsu (Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva)*  
Kamakura period (13th century)  
Color on silk  
91 x 39 cm

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SUGITA Genpaku, MAEDA Ryōtaku, NAKAGAWA Jun' an, etc., *Kaitai Shinsho*, Japanese translation of *Anatomical Tables* Late Edo period (1774 first edition) Woodblock print book; ink on paper 18 x 25.4 cm

11



*Time Magazine*  
1926-1959  
Printed periodical magazine; ink on paper

12



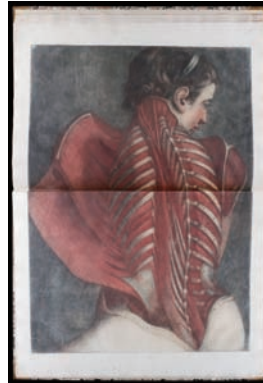
*26 War Criminals*  
1946-1948  
Gelatin-silver print  
21 x 44.4 cm

13



*Book of the Dead, Mummy Wrapping Fragment*  
Ca 1400 B.C.  
Color pigment on linen  
43.2 x 26 cm

14



*Planche XIV: Muscles du Dos*  
from Jacque GAUTIER D'AGOTY  
*Myologie Complette en Couleur et Grandeur Naturelle*  
1745-48  
Color Mezzotint; ink on paper  
59.2 x 43 cm

15



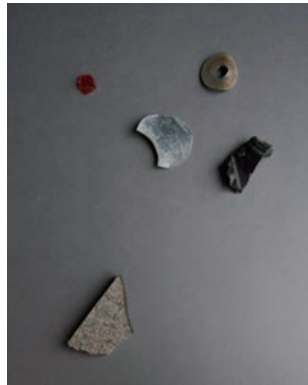
*Angel Coming in Welcome (Tenshi Raigō-zu)*  
2007  
Rembrandt Van Rijn,  
*Angel Appearing to the Shepherds*, 1634  
Etching; ink on paper  
26.3 x 22 cm

16



*Karl Marx*  
1883  
Gelatin -silver print  
16.5 x 10.4 cm

17



*Peekskill Meteorite*  
Ordinary chondrite, stony meteorite  
Peekskill, New York, USA  
9 October 1992  
5.3 x 2.9 x 0.6 cm

18



*Space food from Apollo 11 Mission*  
1969  
Space food with plastic container  
36 x 9 cm