

Anton Kern Gallery

Nobuyoshi Araki *I, Photography*

For Immediate Release

July 12 – August 31, 2018

Opening reception: Thursday, July 12 from 6–8pm

I, Photography presents four distinct bodies of work by Japanese photographer Nobuyoshi Araki. The exhibition takes its title from a phrase in the opening manifesto of *Sentimental Journey*, a document of the intimate and mundane moments of his honeymoon. In the spirit of that text, the four series of photographs on display are united by the artist's use of the camera as a tool for reflecting on the complexities of life.

The 22 photographs from Araki's *Lovers Allure* series exemplify his best-known subject, eroticism and the female form. His subjects pose nude in black and white in bedrooms and bathrooms, on tatami mats and in other intimate, domestic spaces. The surfaces of these prints have been painted with eye-popping ribbons of color, a reference to the visceral nature of sexual desire. The series *Erotos*—derived from Thanatos, the ancient Greek personification of death and Eros the god of love—further injects the artist into his portrayal of sex and eroticism. Black and white close-up depictions of body parts, often caught in sexual acts, are juxtaposed with still life photographs of fruits and objects that have been rendered in high contrast with every detail of their surfaces unflinchingly captured.



Nobuyoshi Araki, Untitled from *Flower Cemetery*, 2017.

If sex marks a central preoccupation for the artist and one side of the life-cycle, death is the other. For Araki, photography is a diary: a record of what happens from day to day and a space where his “self” can be reflected in his subjects. Hung in the main gallery, Araki's newest series, *Flower Cemetery* serves as the focal point of this exhibition. Still life photographs of flower arrangements are haunted by disused, children's dolls, toys and plastic figures. Focusing his lens on cut flowers, a source of intense but temporary beauty, the artist reflects on mortality. Populated by ungainly plastic figures in scenes that are both humorous and disquieting, these images can be read as a method of deflected self-portraiture.

Whereas *Erotos* and *Flower Cemetery* balance life with death, his photos of the sky offer a moment of reflection and escape. Though seemingly based in landscape, Araki began taking the photos from *Northern Sky* following the death of his wife.

Flowers, cities, the sky, people and still lifes continue to comprise the artist's central subjects, none given greater weight than the rest. Taken together, these images illustrate the impulse to communicate the full scope of his life's experience. Obscuring the line between the morbid and the beautiful, Araki celebrates the truth that death is inseparable from life.

The artist lives and works in Tokyo, Japan. He has shown extensively in museums and galleries internationally. Recent solo shows include: *The Incomplete Araki*, Museum of Sex, New York, NY (2018); *Nobuyoshi Araki*, Taka Ishii Gallery, New York, NY (2018); *Nobuyoshi Araki-I, Photography*, Marugame Genichiro-Inokuma Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo (2018); *Araki. Tokyo*, Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich, Germany (2017); *ARAKI*, Fondazione Bisazza, Montecchio Maggiore, Italy (2017); and *Araki Nobuyoshi: Photo-Crazy A*, Tokyo Opera City Gallery, Japan (2017).

Gallery Hours

Tuesday through Saturday
10am – 6pm

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