

# Hara Museum of Contemporary Art

Press Release 2012/4/25

## Hiroshi Sugimoto: From naked to clothed

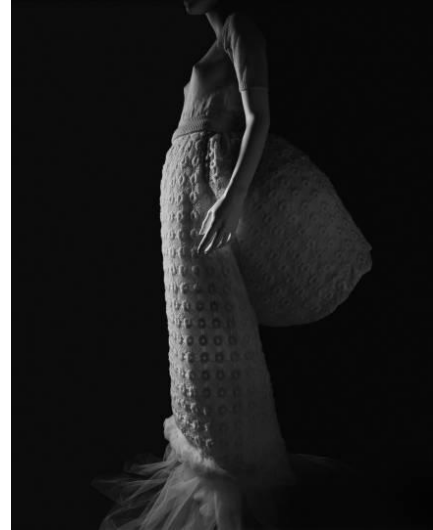
March 31 (Saturday) – July 1 (Sunday), 2012

### "The history of clothing as old as humanity itself" -- Hiroshi Sugimoto

The fashions of Gabrielle Chanel, Yves Saint-Laurent, Rei Kawakubo and other seminal designers of the 20th century are captured on film in Hiroshi Sugimoto's *Stylized Sculpture* series, the centerpiece of an exhibition that asks the question: What does it mean to be clothed?



[1]



[2]

The Hara Museum of Contemporary Art is proud to present a solo exhibition by the contemporary artist Hiroshi Sugimoto.

In his explorations of the medium of photography, Sugimoto has won international acclaim for his many works that shine light on the human race and the world. We live in an age of easy alteration or retouching of images through digital technology. Prior to the digital age, however, Sugimoto had come to the realization that the photograph was a thing of fiction and had investigated the essential nature of the human eye by capturing the world through the camera's eye. His subtle black-and-white photographs are backed by artist's penetrating ideas and superb technique, and his unrivaled images mesmerize the viewer.

At the center of this exhibition is the photographic series *Stylized Sculpture*, which showcases the fashion of such seminal 20<sup>th</sup> century designers as Gabrielle Chanel, Yves Saint-Laurent and Rei Kawakubo. This series reflects the vision of the artist who sees the history of clothing as "being as old as that of humanity itself," and who equates the human body clothed in "artificial skin" as "modern sculpture." In these images, each of which was photographed on carefully selected mannequins instead of live models, the series hints at the significance that clothing has for humans and delves into the relationship between clothes and the human race.

In addition to this series, selections from Sugimoto's *Dioramas* and *Portraits* series are included to further delineate the history of the human race along the lines of the exhibition's theme. Interwoven with these are Sugimoto's design work for the Bunraku puppet theater and costume design for Noh theater, as well as selected items from the artist's personal art collection, which together comprise clues to decipher the human body and what it means to be clothed from Sugimoto's very special perspective.

Images: [1] *Earliest Human Relatives* 1994 gelatin silver print 42.3 x 54.1 cm ©Hiroshi Sugimoto / Courtesy of Gallery Koyanagi

[2] *Stylized Sculpture 003 (Rei Kawakubo 1995)* 2007 gelatin silver print 149.2 x 119.4 cm Dress: Collection of the Kyoto Costume Institute ©Hiroshi Sugimoto / Courtesy of Gallery Koyanagi

## [Exhibition Details]

**Title:** *Hiroshi Sugimoto: From naked to clothed*

**Dates:** March 31 (Saturday) –July 1 (Sunday), 2012

**Place:** Hara Museum of Contemporary Art 4-7-25 Kitashinagawa, Shinagawa-ku, Tokyo 140-0001

Tel: 03-3445-0651 E-mail: info@haramuseum.or.jp Museum website: <http://www.haramuseum.or.jp> Mobile site:

<http://mobile.haramuseum.or.jp> <http://www.art-it.asia/u/HaraMuseum> (blog) Twitter: <http://twitter.com/haramuseum> (twitter)

**Organized by:** Hara Museum of Contemporary Art

**Sponsored by:** Dom Pérignon

**Cooperation provided by:** The Kyoto Costume Institute, The Odawara Art Foundation, Gallery Koyanagi

**Number of works:** Approximately 30, centered around 15 works from the *Stylized Sculpture* series.

**Hours:** 11:00 am – 5:00 pm, Wednesdays until 8:00 pm (last entry 30 minutes before closing)

**Closed:** Mondays (open on April 30), May 1

**Admission:** General 1,000 yen; Students 700 yen (high school and university) or 500 yen (elementary and junior high); Free for Hara Museum members, students through high school every Saturday during the school term; 100 yen discount per person for groups of 20 or more.

**Directions:** 5 minutes by taxi or 15 minutes on foot from JR Shinagawa Station (Takanawa exit); or from the same station take the No.96 bus, get off at the first stop (Gotenyama), and walk 3 minutes

### **Related Events:**

- An Artist Talk will be held on April 4 (Sunday). The talk will be given in Japanese only.
- A special "Dom Pérignon Evening" set for two will be offered on Wednesday nights. Each person gets one glass of Dom Pérignon vintage 2003 and two appetizers. A limit of five sets (for 10 persons) will be available per evening. Reservations are required. Please contact the Cafe d'Art for more details at 03-5423-1609.
- A half-hour tour by a museum curator will be given in Japanese on Sundays and public holidays from 2:30 pm. For English guide, please inquire.

**H A R A  
MUSEUM**

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♥

## [Exhibits]

### **Photographic works:**

All works are gelatin silver prints (black and white photographs)

### ***Stylized Sculpture* (15 works)**

As the centerpiece of this exhibition, the series *Stylized Sculpture*, which takes clothing (and the human body) as its subject matter, embodied in the fashions (from the Kyoto Costume Institute) of such seminal 20th century designers as Madeleine Vionnet, Gabrielle Chanel, Cristobal Balenciaga, Yves Saint-Laurent, John Galliano, Issey Miyake, Yohji Yamamoto and Rei Kawakubo. These images are informed by the artist's view of the human body and the man-made skins that envelop it as "contemporary sculpture." The older items include designs from the 1920s, and since the idealized human form has changed over time, each piece was photographed on carefully selected mannequins instead of live models so as to draw out the original beauty of the design.

### ***Dioramas and Portraits* (9 works)**

The photographic works in the *Dioramas* series were taken of displays at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, while those in the *Portraits* series were taken of displays at Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum in London. The former reproduces in minute detail prehistoric environments and early humanoids, and the latter famous historical and contemporary figures. Though artificial, the figures, when seen through the eye of the camera, seem to have an eternal, timeless quality to their existence. They express in a straightforward way the special character of Hiroshi Sugimoto's photographic works. *Dioramas* was an early series that catapulted Sugimoto into the limelight.

### **Other Works:**

- Bunraku puppets: Items made for *Sugimoto bunraku: Sonezaki shinju tsuketari Kannon meguri* ("Kannon Pilgrimage" from The Love Suicide at Sonezaki), produced and directed by Hiroshi Sugimoto (2011).
- Noh drama costumes: Items worn by Mansai Nomura in the Noh performance *Nogaku Sanbaso--OUR MAGIC HOUR* (2011).
- Selected works from the artist's personal art collection.

## ***From Naked to Clothed***

*Why do we humans wear clothes? We dress up, we want to be something other than what we are. Or no, we are the guise of self we put on. Going naked is frowned upon in today's world. We feel shame at our naked self. We're all dress-up dolls. We wear clothes to play our everyday selves. We only go naked for brief intervals, when bathing or procreating. And we need lots of pretense and acting to put us in the mood for procreation, lots of clothing to get ecstatic about the naked body.*

*But then even after that brief interval of procreative activity, we go on wearing our guises. The guises others know us by. We wear our intelligence, however much we have or don't have, likewise our assets and tastes. Clothes are not the only costumes. Expressions, gestures, glances, we wear them all automatically. Not by our own volition, our clothing decides our look. Our clothes don't become us, we become our clothes. We choose face masks to best match our clothing.*

*We were happier long ago when we lived naked.*

*Hiroshi Sugimoto*

### **[Related Information]**

The documentary *Memories of Origin - Hiroshi Sugimoto the Contemporary Artist*, which was nominated for a 2011 International Emmy Award in the Art Programming category, will open at Theater Image Forum (Shibuya-ku, Tokyo) on Saturday, March 31, 2012. (Note: This film is in Japanese only.) For details, go to <http://sugimoto-movie.com>.

### **[Artist Profile]**

Hiroshi Sugimoto was born and raised in the old downtown area of Tokyo, Japan. He graduated from the faculty of politics and sociology at Rikkyō University in Tokyo. In 1974, he received his BFA in Fine Arts at the Art Center College of Art and Design in Los Angeles. Afterwards, Sugimoto settled in New York City. As a contemporary artist, he has held solo exhibitions at major art museums throughout the world. In 2009, he founded the New Material Research Laboratory in Tokyo and helped design the Izu Photo Museum, which opened in Nagaizumi, Shizuoka prefecture. In 2009, Sugimoto founded the Odawara Art Foundation and *Sugimoto bunraku: Sonezaki shinju tsuketari Kannon meguri* ("Kannon Pilgrimage" from The Love Suicide at Sonezaki) was presented at the Kanagawa Arts Theatre (KAAT) in 2011 as part of its activities. His many honors include the Mainichi Art Prize in 1988; an honorary doctorate from the Parsons School of Design, New York in 2000; the 21st Praemium Imperiale in 2009; and the Medal of Honor with Purple Ribbon in 2010. His publications include *Rekishi no Rekishi* (New Material Research Laboratory), *Kuukankan--Sense of Space* (Magazine House), *Utsutsu Na Zou* and *Aato no Kigen - Origins of Art* (Shincho-sha).

<http://www.sugimotohiroshi.com>

### **[Major Works]**

The works that propelled Hiroshi Sugimoto into the limelight were his *Dioramas* (see above) and *Theaters* series, which he began in the latter half of the 1970s. In *Theaters*, a series which makes visible the essential act of looking, Sugimoto used long exposures to capture the light of entire movies as they were projected onto the movie screen. In his *Seascapes* series, which he began in 1980, he photographed the world's seas using the same proportion of sky and water in each image in order to explore the question: Can modern humans see landscapes as primitive humans once did in the same way? With three series, Sugimoto established his international reputation. Thereafter, he produced a rich variety of photographic works, including his *Architecture* series, which extracts the form and essence of modernist architecture with deliberately out-of-focus images, and *Lightning Fields*, which forgoes the use of the camera altogether to produce images through the direct application of an electrical charge to the film. Furthermore, in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Sugimoto further expanded his range of activities by delving into the fields of architectural design and theater arts, including Bunraku puppet theater and Noh theater, the fruits of which are also included in this show.

**[Hiroshi Sugimoto and the Hara Museum/Hara Museum ARC]**

This present exhibition is the first by Hiroshi Sugimoto to be held at the Hara Museum. However, the artist held a solo exhibition in 1996 at the Hara Museum's annex, Hara Museum ARC (established in 1988 in Shibukawa, Gunma prefecture; designed by Arata Isozaki). This show, first held at the Metropolitan Museum in New York and reconfigured to suit the space at Hara Museum ARC, featured the Japanese debut of *Sea of Buddhas*, a series depicting the 1,001 *Senju Kannon* figures at Sanjusangendo Temple in Kyoto. This monumental 48-print series, which records the manifestations of faith through the eye of the camera, was acquired by the Hara Museum Collection, which also includes seven works from Sugimoto's *Seascapes* series.

**[Images for Publication]**

The images on the first page constitute the main visual of the exhibition.

Please include the following credit along with the captions below. Information related to material and size may be omitted in case of space limitations.

Please do not trim or alter the images. Putting text over the images is also prohibited.



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[3] *Stylized Sculpture 008 (Yves Saint-Laurent 1965)* 2007 gelatin silver print 149.2 x 119.4 cm

Dress: Collection of the Kyoto Costume Institute ©Hiroshi Sugimoto / Courtesy of Gallery Koyanagi

[4] *Stylized Sculpture 011 (John Galliano 1997)* 2007 gelatin silver print 149.2 x 119.4 cm

Dress: Collection of the Kyoto Costume Institute ©Hiroshi Sugimoto / Courtesy of Gallery Koyanagi

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