

HAYWARD GALLERY

Press Release

Date: Tuesday 10 October 2023

Contact: Laura Gosney, Press Manager (Visual Arts), laura.gosney@southbankcentre.co.uk
Megan Edwards, Press Officer (Visual Arts), megan.edwards@southbankcentre.co.uk

Images are available to download [here](#)

This press release is available in a variety of accessible formats. Please email press@southbankcentre.co.uk

Hiroshi Sugimoto: Time Machine

11 October 2023 — 7 January 2024



CREDITS IN NOTES TO EDITORS

From 11 October 2023 — 7 January 2024, the Hayward Gallery presents **Hiroshi Sugimoto: Time Machine**, the largest survey to date of the internationally renowned artist.

Over the past 50 years, Hiroshi Sugimoto has created some of the most alluringly enigmatic photographs of our time: pictures that are precisely crafted and deeply thought-provoking, familiar yet tantalisingly ambiguous. Featuring key works from all of the artist's major photographic series, this survey highlights the artist's philosophical yet playful inquiry into our understanding of time and memory, and the ambiguous character of photography as a medium suited to both documentation and invention.

The exhibition also includes lesser-known works that illuminate the artist's interest in the history of photography as well as in mathematics and optical sciences. Often employing a large-format wooden camera, mixing his own darkroom chemicals and developing his black-and-white prints by hand, Sugimoto has repeatedly re-explored ideas and practices from 19th century photography, including subjects such as dioramas, wax figures and architecture. In the process, his work has stretched and rearranged concepts of time, space and light that are integral to the medium.

Hiroshi Sugimoto says: *"The camera is a time machine capable of representing the sense of time... The camera can capture more than a single moment, it can capture history, geological time, the concept of eternity, the essence of time itself... The more I think about that sense of time, the more I think this is probably one of the key factors of how humans became humans."*

Ralph Rugoff, Director of the Hayward Gallery, says: *"Hiroshi Sugimoto is a brilliant visual poet of paradox, a polymath postmodern who embraces meticulous old school craftsmanship to produce exquisite, uncanny pictures that reference science and maths as well as abstract art and Renaissance portraits. Juggling different conceptions of time, and evoking visions ranging from primordial prehistory to the end of civilisation, his photographs ingeniously recalibrate our basic assumptions about the medium, and alter our sense of history, time and existence itself. Amidst all his peers, his work stands apart for its depth and striking originality of thought."*

Time Machine commences with a selection of Sugimoto's black-and-white photographs of natural history dioramas, a series he began in the mid-1970s. The **Diorama** photos draw attention less to the natural world than to its theatrical representation in museums, whilst at the same time conjuring what the artist has called the 'fragility of existence'.

The subject of time is also explored in two subsequent bodies of work featured in the exhibition: shot in movie palaces as well as drive-ins, Sugimoto's **Theaters** (1976 -) capture entire films with a single long exposure, thus compressing all the dramatic action that appeared on screen into a single image of radiant whiteness. His renowned **Seascapes** (1980 -), which depict evenly divided expanses of sea and sky unmarked by any trace of human existence, are equally beguiling in their temporal reference, evoking the immediacy of abstract painting even as they speak to Sugimoto's interest in focusing on vistas that, as he remarks, "are before human beings and after human beings."

For **Architecture** (1997 -), a series of deliberately out-of-focus studies of iconic modernist buildings - ranging from the Eiffel Tower to the Twin Towers - Sugimoto displays the expansive ambiguity that informs his art, at the same time conveying a sense of the visual germ of an idea in an architect's imagination, as well as fashioning ghostly images of what he has described as "architecture after the end of the world." For his subsequent **Portraits** (1999) series, meanwhile, the artist focused his camera on wax models of famous historical figures from Madame Tussauds; rendered more life-like in black-and-white, figures ranging from Queen Elizabeth II to Oscar Wilde and Salvador Dali take on a disarmingly lively appearance, underscoring the camera's potential for altering our perception. As the artist has noted, "However fake the subject, once photographed, it's as good as real."

A final section of *Hiroshi Sugimoto: Time Machine* focuses on photographs that evoke different notions of timelessness, including his **Sea of Buddha** (1995) series, which portrays an installation in a 12th century Kyoto temple featuring 1001 gilded wooden statues of Buddha; and **Lightning Fields** (2006 -), spectacular camera-less photographs created by exposing sensitised paper to electrical impulses produced by a Van der Graaf generator.

The exhibition comes to a stunning conclusion with a gallery dedicated to Sugimoto's **Opticks** (2018 -), intensely coloured photographs of prism-refracted light. Taking inspiration from Newton's research into the properties of light whilst calling to mind colour field painting and artists like Mark Rothko, *Opticks* presents deeply immersive fields of subtly varying hues.

Alongside his photographs, two of Sugimoto's elegantly contoured and polished aluminium sculptural models are presented, alluding to both mathematical equations and the abstract forms favoured by modernists such as Constantin Brâncuși.

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully-illustrated, 216pp catalogue with newly commissioned essays and an illustrated chronology, co-published with Hatje Cantz. Texts by Ralph Rugoff (on *Dioramas*), James Attlee (on *Theaters*), Mami Kataoka (on *Seascapes*), Lara Strongman (on *Portraits*), Geoffrey Batchen (on *Lightning Fields*), Edmund de Waal (on *Sea of Buddha*), Margaret Wertheim (on *Conceptual Forms*), Allie Biswas (on *Opticks*) and David Chipperfield (in conversation, on *Architecture*). PDF review copies will be available from August 2023.

The show is set to tour internationally in 2024, at the UCCA Center for Contemporary Art (23 March - 23 June 2024) and The Museum of Contemporary Art Australia (2 August - 27 October 2024).

Hiroshi Sugimoto: Time Machine is curated by Hayward Gallery Director Ralph Rugoff with Assistant Curators Thomas Sutton and Gilly Fox, and Curatorial Assistant Suzanna Petot.

Across the run of *Hiroshi Sugimoto: Time Machine*, the Hayward Gallery's HENI Project Space is hosting two free exhibitions. Please find full details on these below.

- ***Amol K Patil: The Politics of Skin and Movement***
11 October - 19 November 2023
Press release [here](#)
- ***Heecheon Kim: Double Poser***
1 December 2023 - 7 January 2024
Press release [here](#)

-ENDS-

NOTES TO EDITORS

Image Credits (from left to right, top to bottom)

Installation view of Hiroshi Sugimoto, *Opticks* series. Chromogenic prints. Photo: Mark Blower. Courtesy the artist and the Hayward Gallery.

Installation view of Hiroshi Sugimoto, *Polar Bear*, 1976. Silver gelatin print. Photo: Mark Blower. Courtesy the artist and the Hayward Gallery.

Installation view of Hiroshi Sugimoto, *Conceptual Forms* and *Mathematical Model 006*. Gelatin silver print, aluminium and steel. Photo: Mark Blower. Courtesy the artist and the Hayward Gallery.

Exhibition Listing Information

Hiroshi Sugimoto: Time Machine

11 October 2023 - 7 January 2024

Hayward Gallery, Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road, London SE1 8XX

Full price standard: £18

Concessions available & Southbank Centre Members go free

Link to ***Hiroshi Sugimoto: Time Machine*** web page [here](#)

The Hayward Gallery opening times:

Wed – Fri, 10am – 6pm

Sat, 10am – 8pm

Sun, 10am – 6pm

Closed Mon & Tue

The gallery will close at 4pm on Sunday 24 Dec and Sunday 31 Dec

Further information:

www.southbankcentre.co.uk

Twitter: [@haywardgallery](https://twitter.com/haywardgallery)

Instagram: [@hayward.gallery](https://www.instagram.com/hayward.gallery)

Facebook: www.facebook.com/haywardgallery/

Public Programme Information:

Hiroshi Sugimoto in Conversation with Ralph Rugoff

Wednesday 11 October, 7pm

Hayward Gallery

Hear artist Hiroshi Sugimoto in a discussion with Hayward Gallery director Ralph Rugoff, against the backdrop of his new survey exhibition.

More information [here](#)

Brian Dillon on Hiroshi Sugimoto

Wednesday 8 November, 7pm

Level 5 St Paul's Pavilion, Royal Festival Hall

Writer and critic Brian Dillon delivers a spoken response to the work of Hiroshi Sugimoto, inspired by the Hayward Gallery's latest exhibition.

More information [here](#)

How to Think Like Hiroshi Sugimoto

Saturday 2 December, 2pm

Level 5 Function Room, Royal Festival Hall

Join artist Katie Paterson, curator Lena Fritsch, critic Ravi Ghosh and Hayward Gallery director Ralph Rugoff for a discussion about the inventive and inquisitive mind of Hiroshi Sugimoto.

More information [here](#)

Limited Editions

Hiroshi Sugimoto Limited Editions (available from Damiani Books)

Snow White is a unique limited edition book containing seventy-six artworks by Hiroshi Sugimoto, all from his iconic *Theaters* series. For this limited edition, Sugimoto has printed Teatro dei Varii, Colle di Val d'Elsa, 2014, in an edition of twenty-five gelatin silver prints.

Price: €11,000

The Long Never is a unique limited edition book containing sixty-five artworks by Hiroshi Sugimoto and an original text by Jonathan Safran Foer. The book is accompanied by a gelatin silver print from Sugimoto's Lightning Fields series.

Price: €10,000

Each print and book is signed by the artist and housed in an aluminium box.

To find out more, visit the Southbank Centre shop [here](#)

To enquire, please email shop@southbankcentre.co.uk

About Hiroshi Sugimoto

Born and raised in Tokyo, Japan, Hiroshi Sugimoto divides his time between Tokyo and New York City. Studying economics and Western philosophy, he received a B.A. from St. Paul's University in Tokyo in 1970, and in 1974 obtained a B.F.A. in photography from Art Center College of Design in Los Angeles. Over the past five decades, his photographs have received international acclaim and have been presented in major institutions across the globe. His work is also represented in major public collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery, London; Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; and Tate Gallery, London. The artist has received many notable awards, including Japan's prestigious Praemium Imperiale Award (2009), the Royal Photographic Society's Centenary Medal (2017) and the National Arts Club Medal of Honor in Photography (2018). Whilst best known as a photographer, Sugimoto has more recently added architecture and sculpture to his multidisciplinary practice and has been the artistic director and producer of a number of theatre/dance performances.

About the Hayward Gallery

The Hayward Gallery, part of the Southbank Centre, has a long history of presenting work by the world's most adventurous and innovative artists including major solo shows by both emerging and established artists and dynamic group exhibitions. They include those by Bridget Riley, Bruce Nauman, Anish Kapoor, Lee Bul, Andreas Gursky, Tracey Emin, Jeremy Deller, Kader Attia and Matthew Barney, as well as influential group exhibitions such as *Africa Remix*, *Light Show*, *Psycho Buildings* and *Space Shifters*. Opened by Queen Elizabeth II in July 1968, the gallery is one of the few remaining buildings of its style. The Brutalist building was designed by a group of young architects, including Dennis Crompton, Warren Chalk and Ron Herron and is named after Sir Isaac Hayward, a former leader of the London County Council.

About the Southbank Centre

The Southbank Centre is the UK's largest arts centre occupying a prominent riverside location that sits in the midst of London's most vibrant cultural quarter on the South Bank of the Thames. We exist to present great cultural experiences that bring people together and we achieve this by providing the space for artists to create and present their best work and by creating a place where as many people as possible can come together to experience bold, unusual and eye-opening work. We want to take people out of the everyday, every day. The site has an extraordinary creative and architectural history stretching back to the 1951 Festival of Britain. The Southbank Centre is made up of the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room and Hayward Gallery as well as being home to the National Poetry Library and the Arts Council Collection. It is also home to six Resident Orchestras (Aurora Orchestra, Chineke! Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, London Sinfonietta, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and Philharmonia Orchestra). www.southbankcentre.co.uk

For all press enquiries please contact:

Laura Gosney, Press Manager (Visual Arts), laura.gosney@southbankcentre.co.uk

Megan Edwards, Press Officer (Visual Arts), megan.edwards@southbankcentre.co.uk



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



SOUTHBANK CENTRE
