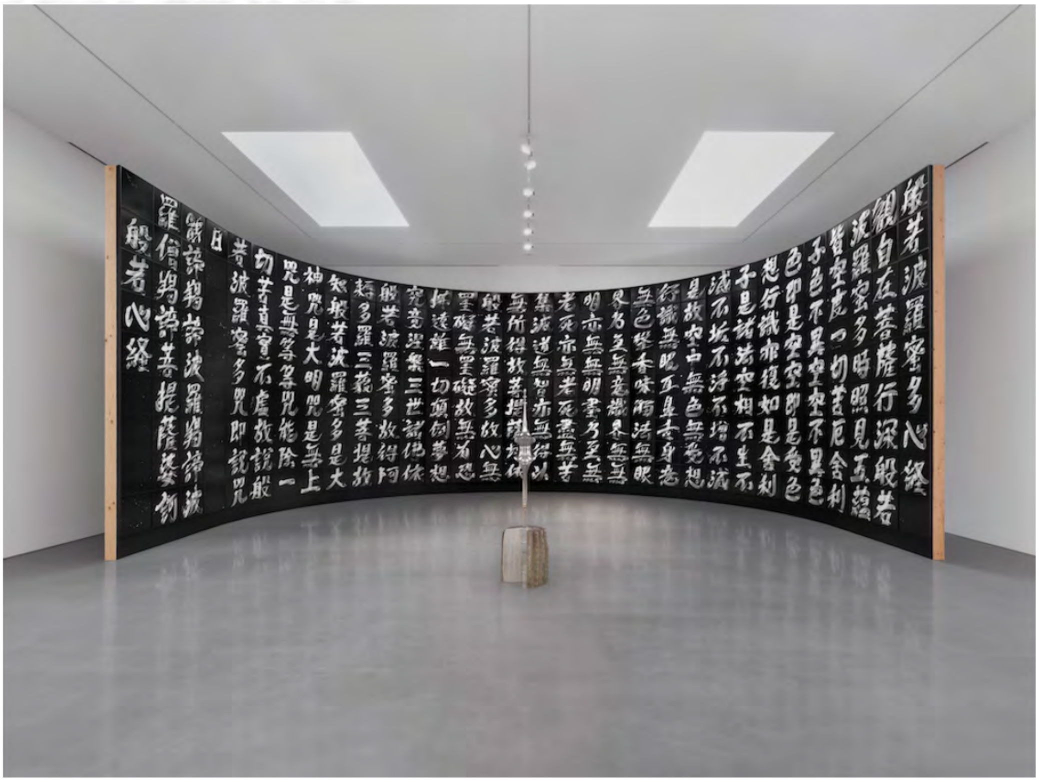
Artillery
17 January 2025

HIROSHI SUGIMOTO

At Lisson Gallery

BY DR. ROTEM ROZENTAL | JAN 17, 2025



The entrance to Hiroshi Sugimoto's exhibition at Lisson Gallery, "Form is Emptiness, Emptiness is Form" is partially blocked by a curved wooden wall. The wall commands recognition, separating the exhibition from the outside world. It immediately invites the visitor to become a conscious, active participant, as if asking us to wait behind the scenes for our cue to enter center stage. At the very least, the entrance articulates a request for commitment on the part of the viewer and establishes certain visual rules and sensorial dynamics. Beyond active participation, the massive installation indicates that the space will defy our expectations.

The show marks the return of the renowned conceptual photographer, artist, and architect to Los Angeles for the first time in over a decade. Sugimoto, who was born in Tokyo and graduated from LA's Art Center College of Design in 1972, uses cameras and photographic processes to explore time, light, and the relationships between truth, fiction, and vision. In past bodies of work spanning a decades-long career, Sugimoto documented dioramas at New York's American Museum of Natural History and movie theaters across the country; he presented wax figures isolated from their museum context in ethereal, dramatic portraits; he captured bursts of electrical energy on dry plates in his darkroom; and he photographed horizon lines worldwide, framing cloudless skies and sharp lines as an origin point for his own consciousness. The artist's in-depth investigations of visual perception, natural elements and photographic properties articulate a concern with collective and personal histories and the markings of time, as well as the limitations and possibilities of human perception.

Exhibition view of *Optical Allusion* at Lisson Gallery Los Angeles, 15 November–January 2025. © Hiroshi Sugimoto, Courtesy of Lisson Gallery

Past the verso of the curved wall, viewers find themselves immersed in the meditative *Brush Impressions, Heart Sutra* (2023)—288 gelatin silver prints, each of which measures 19.5 x 23.5 inches and presents a Kanji character (Japanese writing that uses Chinese characters). Together, they depict the Heart Sutra, a key scripture in East Asian Buddhism. Considered the most frequently recited text in Mahayana Buddhism, it discusses the fundamental emptiness of all phenomena and the transience of forms and objects. The title of the show is a direct quote from the Sutra, unveiling Sugimoto's own preoccupation with challenging traditional notions of disciplinary, conceptual, and sensorial boundaries. To produce the calligraphic prints, Sugimoto used a fixer as his painting material, applied to expired photo paper. When he turns on the lights in the darkroom, the color of the surface is fixed in black, while the calligraphy remains white. The resulting image is a camera-less work that speaks to the bare elements of photography.

Directly in front of the wall hovers *Kuen's Surface* (2024), a slender, delicate sculpture made of stainless steel and acrylic. Sugimoto developed the sculpture's form out of a mathematical equation that describes a surface with a constant negative curvature. This abstracted form seems to float a few inches above a curved block of stone (Sugimoto found the stone, a Chinese tool originally hitched to a donkey and used for farming). The sculpture elegantly engages with geometric ideas through handcrafted physical forms.

Across from them are six images of Buddhas: groupings of sculptures found at a Kyoto shrine that has about one thousand figurines. The artist photographed the sculptures at dawn, and they appear to emerge from the dark. Sugimoto's work exists at those meeting points—between darkness and light, horizons and skies, negative and positive, the possibility of emptiness and the inescapable presence of form—posing an infinite question rather than a finite response.

New Acquisition: Hiroshi Sugimoto's "Sea of Buddha 049 (Triptych)"

MAY 1, 2025

Rebecca Morse, *Curator, Wallis Annenberg Photography Department*
Rika Hiro, *Associate Curator, Japanese Art*
Acquisitions

Sea of Buddha is a series of 49 photographs depicting 1,001 Buddhist statues at a temple commonly known as Sanjūsangendō (Hall of Thirty-three Bays) in Kyoto. In this work, Japanese artist Hiroshi Sugimoto captures the statues as religious icons and embodiments of time, memory, and transcendence. Sugimoto views the collective presence of these seemingly identical figures as a form of "conceptual art" from 12th-century Japan

The statues are Bodhisattva, specifically the thousand-armed Kannon—a Japanese term for the Sanskrit Avalokiteshvara, which literally means "sound-perceiver" of the cries of all sentient beings. The statues were originally commissioned by the retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa in 1164, a time viewed as the era of mappō, or the decline of Buddha's teachings. Social elites of this era endorsed building temples and statues in the quest for saviors. Sanjūsangendō's uniqueness is a visual manifestation of the omnipotence of Kannon across time through this collection of life-size unique wooden sculptures arranged along a narrow, 394-foot-long wall—a true architectural and artistic anomaly. At the center is a large, seated Kannon made by the sculptor Tankei of the Kei school, a notable lineage of Buddhist sculptors of medieval Japan.

Hiroshi Sugimoto, *Sea of Buddha 049 (Triptych)*, 1995, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, gift of the 2025 Collectors Committee, © Hiroshi Sugimoto, courtesy of Lisson Gallery, photography by Dawn Blackman

After seven years of rigorous negotiations, Sugimoto finally received permission to photograph the statues in 1995. As an artist known for mastery of light, he spent 10 consecutive days capturing images of the gilded statues as they faced east, momentarily and subtly illuminated by the rising sun. By removing all adornments and lighting added since the late medieval period, Sugimoto recreated how the statues might have originally been experienced, conjuring a vision of a Buddhist paradise. His compositions, which are framed from above eye level, enhance the otherworldly effect. The photographs convey a sense of timelessness and the vastness of both spiritual and philosophical wisdom. Sugimoto has the grandeur of the seated Kannon in three large gelatin silver prints assembled—thus titled triptych—along with a hand-crafted wooden frame.

Based in New York and Tokyo, Sugimoto works in photography and architecture. In 1970, after graduating from Rikkyō University in Tokyo, he moved to Los Angeles and enrolled in ArtCenter College of Design, where he learned to make a photograph that was “perfectly crafted and exquisitely printed.” He devoured the writings and recipes of Ansel Adams, who had taught at ArtCenter in the late 1930s, educating himself in the mechanics and artistry of photography. With a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree, Sugimoto moved to New York in 1974 where he opened an antique store and became an expert in Asian antiquities.

Sugimoto’s work can best be described as an expression of “time exposed.” Different from photographers who capture a split second, Sugimoto uses an 8 × 10 large-format camera and extremely long exposures to create conceptual works that embody an extended period and are naturally contemplative. His series *Seascapes* (1980–), for example, is made by exposing the film for up to three hours, embedding that time in the image. Sugimoto’s interest in the dichotomy between life and death is reflected in his series *Dioramas* (1976–), made at Natural History Museums across the world, in which the taxidermied animals appear alive. *Sea of Buddha* is an exquisite culmination of ideas expressed in his earlier work. This monumental photograph skillfully unites a sense of infinity with the concept of salvation, further exploring the tenuous line between life and death.

APOLLO

Apollo Magazine
February 13th 2015

Seeing Like A Camera: Hiroshi Sugimoto

Birds of South Georgia (2012), Hiroshi Sugimoto

Hiroshi Sugimoto talks to Thessaly La Force about how his art collection influences his work

Thessaly La Force

13 FEBRUARY 2015

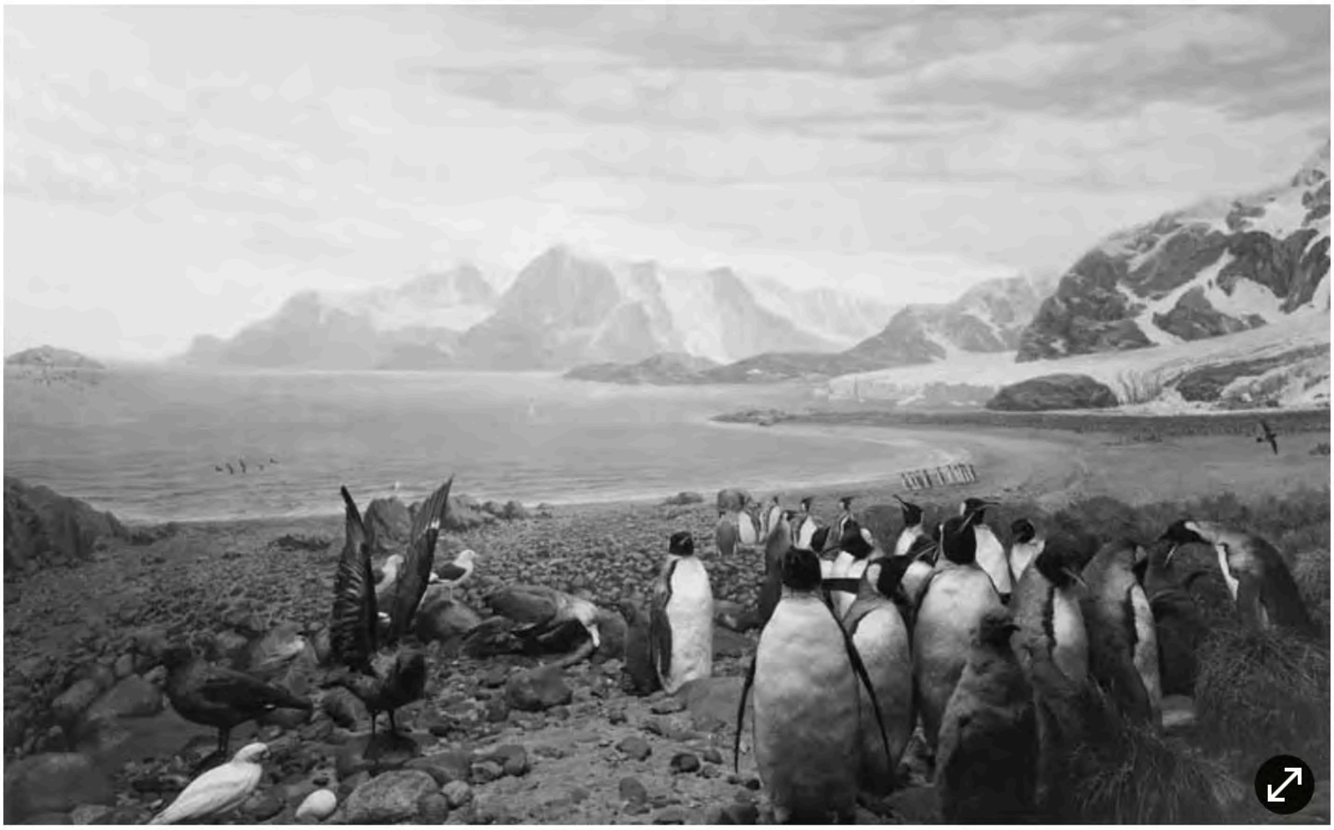
Hiroshi Sugimoto is best-known for his large-format photographs of dioramas, seascapes and buildings, but he is also a collector and was once an antiquities dealer. He talks to Apollo about the links between his collection and his art, and about capturing the passing of time.

On a cold January afternoon, Hiroshi Sugimoto is in his New York studio, where he and his assistants have recently packed off to London a wide assortment of his own personal collection of fossils, antiques, first-edition books, and various relics of lost worlds for an upcoming exhibition of artists' collections at the Barbican Centre.

Outside, the air is freezing – but inside, on one of the higher floors overlooking 24th Street, heat pipes through the studio, plentiful but inefficient, and the glow of the fluorescent lights against the concrete floors gives the impression of an office filled with people slowly wrapping up their day.

In an art world where there is a lot of chatter about galleries and studios opening further and further east – in Chinatown, the Lower East Side, and across the river into Brooklyn's Bushwick and Greenpoint – Sugimoto's Chelsea studio is something of an anachronism. Here, the mega galleries dominate these large stretches of city blocks – Gagosian is just down the street; David Zwirner, Hauser & Wirth, and Pace are not far off, too. The current Chelsea landscape sometimes feels more like a marketplace than a home to creativity, where tourists take art selfies in front of reflective Murakami sculptures, and bright, young painters fetch extravagant sums. But there is a longevity to Sugimoto's presence that makes him impervious to these small motions of change.

Sugimoto was born in Tokyo, in 1948, and now splits his time between there and New York. His main preoccupation as an artist is with time, and how best to capture its meaning. His tool is the camera, and he self-deprecatingly likes to say that he applied to study photography because it was the easiest discipline to be accepted in at the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California, where he received his BFA in Fine Arts. But given the last century's long debate about the value and place of photography in fine art, Sugimoto's body of work is proof that the medium belongs firmly alongside sculpture and painting. If a photograph is a record of *what* we see, then Sugimoto is obsessed with *how* we see. One of his earliest and most impressive series is the ongoing *Dioramas* series, which he began in the mid 1970s, in which he photographed prehistoric scenes of life on display at the American Museum of Natural History.



Birds of South Georgia (2012),
Hiroshi Sugimoto Photograph
courtesy the artist © Hiroshi
Sugimoto, courtesy Pace Gallery

Sugimoto is a master of the long exposure and the large-format camera; the scenes are static and preserved, but in the true black and white tones of his gelatin silver prints, they are not entirely lifeless, either. Sugimoto's ability to trick the eye – even in just an instant – juxtaposed with his open acknowledgement of the scene's artificiality, demonstrates both his playful curiosity and also his rigorous technique. 'The stuffed animals positioned before painted backdrops looked utterly fake,' Sugimoto has said before of the *Dioramas* photographs. 'Yet by taking a quick peek with one eye closed, all perspective vanished, and suddenly they looked very real. I'd found a way to see the world as a camera does. However fake the subject, once photographed, it's as good as real.'

Sugimoto moved to New York City in 1974 after finishing his studies in California. There was a time when, like many young and struggling artists, his work did not yet support him financially and he remembers, after driving across the country in a VW van with his friends, marvelling at the economy of contemporary art – an industry then dominated by powerhouse-dealers such as Leo Castelli and Ileana Sonnabend. He tried his luck at a variety of jobs – he disliked working as an assistant to a commercial photographer – but eventually he and his wife opened a successful antiques shop on West Broadway in SoHo in 1979. 'My wife was also a painter. We were married,' Sugimoto says. 'But it was difficult to live as two artists together, so we decided to divorce. For the first time, I asked my father to borrow some money to open the shop – but I didn't tell him we were going to divorce and I needed money.' Their gallery initially specialised in Japanese folk art, but grew to include a rare collection of Eastern antiquities, and the income it generated kept Sugimoto and his estranged wife afloat. When Sugimoto's career took off, the need to run the shop became less urgent, but his interest in collecting remained. 'Suddenly, my art started selling; I didn't have to buy things for my clients, so I stopped it,' Sugimoto says. 'But,' he adds with a sly smile, 'I kept buying for myself.'

We are now facing each other at the centre desk in his studio's main office, both of us seated in tan, swivelling Siège Tournant chairs. The Empire State Building can be seen from the one large, northern-facing window. Sugimoto's table tops are covered in the mess of a man caught in the middle of working – with various books splayed open next to stacks of paper. He has brought to the table an 18th-century French book of anatomical illustrations, which he has placed to my left. A slender case of Second World War German-made glass eyes sits to my right, alongside an army doctor's optical surgery kit and an antique set of eye lenses. These are some of the objects in the studio that haven't yet been flown to London.

Sugimoto speaks both English and Japanese but is, unsurprisingly, most comfortable expressing himself visually. As he walks me through a list of what's been packed off and what still remains here, he makes a point of showing me precisely what the value of each object is to him. He flips to an illustration of a woman's rib cage in the French anatomy book. 'This looks like a beautiful lady being opened while she is alive,' he says, pointing to her face, which, it's true, is expressive and aware despite the fact that her back is spliced open to reveal the bones and tissues. 'On the contrary,' Sugimoto says, 'in British 18th-century anatomy books, the body's expressions are completely dead. But this is almost like an angel – an angel being opened.'

There are no rules when it comes to hunting for antiques. Sugimoto says he could find something he loves at a flea market, at Sotheby's, on the street. 'It doesn't matter how much I paid for it,' he insists. Like many collectors, the price is immaterial to his desire to possess it – an impulse that can be as whimsical as it is deeply and inexplicably emotional. I am reminded of a short story by V.S. Pritchett called 'The Camberwell Beauty,' involving the obsessional nature of antique dealers: '...there is one object he broods on from one year to the next, most of his life; the thing a man would commit murder to get his hands on if he had the nerve, but I have never heard of a dealer who had; theft perhaps...'

Sugimoto's collection includes stone-age tools, meteorites, Roman amulets, the remains of an Egyptian cat, and perhaps most astonishing, fossils that are anywhere from 20 to 30 million years old. If you think about it, Sugimoto says to me, a fossil is just like a photograph. 'One side is negative, one side is positive. Same thing.' Sugimoto is much more Zen about his practice of collecting than he is about his art. But obsession goes some way to explain his owning, for example, early editions of Isaac Newton's *Optics* and the *Principia Mathematica*. 'I can study them,' Sugimoto explains to me patiently. 'I just want to stay with them and I want to live with them. Some collectors want to buy [something] at auction and put it in storage and put it back to auction after a few years – as if it's just investment. I'm interested in how the human eye captures images and reads the images and makes meaning out of them,' he says. 'So, in general, I just want to know what is going on in our world. And how a human being is aware of the outside of themselves. As a photographer, that's what I was interested in in the first place: the perception of human existence. How do you read what is outside your body?'

Empire State Building (1997), Hiroshi Sugimoto. Photograph courtesy the artist © Hiroshi Sugimoto, courtesy Pace Gallery

Many of Sugimoto's exhibitions integrate his collection with his own artworks. One will invariably conclude that Sugimoto's skill in these combinations is without ego or presumption. He is fully aware of how his own work appears when it's placed next to the petrified spearhead of a caveman. Sugimoto is not concerned with making his own work appear timeless; he is more interested in capturing an idea of history – a precise sensation of weight that time can create – with an image. When I ask Sugimoto if he worries that the human lifespan is too short a time to do everything we might want to do, he is charmingly unfazed. 'Well, living to 100 is nothing,' he says. He raises his arm to the window: 'The Empire State Building on Manhattan island – it probably won't survive for more than 200 or 300 years. The age expectation of concrete is probably 100, 200 years old. It will deteriorate. Through my collection I get a sense of time, of the passage of time, the history, the meaning of history. I just want to feel it through the object.'

After our interview, but before I leave the studio, I ask one of Sugimoto's staff to show me his *chashitsu*, his room for Japanese tea ceremonies, which he built a few years ago in a neighbouring space on the same floor. It is cold, dark, and unheated – there are no guests expected for today – and I stand silently, looking at the *tatami* mats where the artist must sit for the ancient Japanese ritual. The alcove walls are currently bare – customarily, Sugimoto chooses a work of art to hang that matches his guest. I can't quite believe that Sugimoto would so willingly part with any of his collection – there is nothing about the artist that strikes me as precious, but his objects clearly bring him a rare sense of wonder and joy. Yet when I asked him if he could one day live with nothing, his answer was thoughtful and honest. Perception, according to the photographer, must happen in both negative and positive spaces. 'To have nothing, yes, it must be a nice feeling,' Sugimoto concedes. 'Sometimes the teahouse is empty. Today it is empty. I need a nice, clean empty space to stay with sometimes. It will always teach me something.

LISSON GALLERY

FT Weekend
13 April 2024

Saturday 13 April / Sunday 14 April 2024

ARTISTS | PAVILIONS | CURATORS | EXHIBITIONS

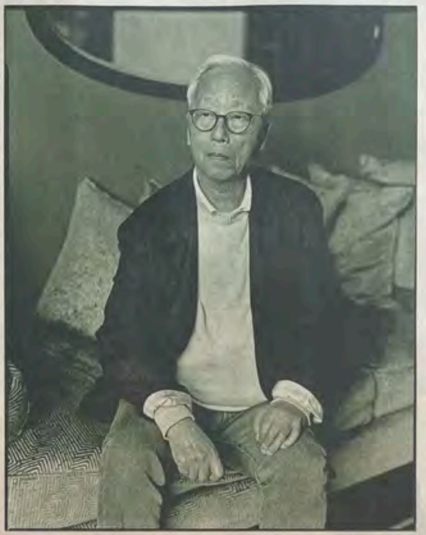
Venice Biennale

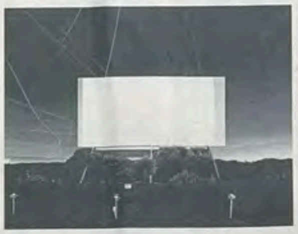
FT Weekend

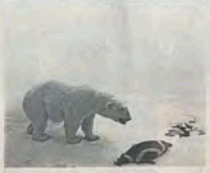
'I feel like Michelangelo' Photographer Hiroshi Sugimoto – PAGE 5

Lightning strikes twice

Hiroshi Sugimoto | He never set out to become an artist but his highly varied career has produced some of photography's defining images. By *Melanie Gerlis*





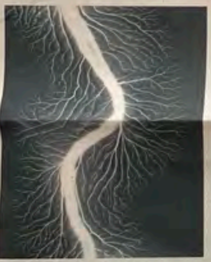


Main: Hiroshi Sugimoto photographed in Paris by Alexandre Guirkinger for the FT. Left: 'Union City Drive-in, Union City' (1993) and 'Polar Bear' (1976) by Sugimoto

My work will be on the ceiling — I feel like Michelangelo," says artist Hiroshi Sugimoto, describing his piece at Venice's newest space for contemporary art, the Palazzo Diedo, which opens next week. Restored by the Berggruen Arts & Culture foundation, the 18th-century building will have commissions from 11 artists on permanent display.

Sugimoto's seven by six metre ceiling work, a close-up of an electrical current, comes from the *Lightning Fields* series, part of his investigation into frozen time; it has been printed on fabric then stretched and suspended for the palazzo. "If you look up, it's as if you've been hit by lightning," smiles Sugimoto, his contained demeanour replaced with childish delight.

He gets more than a ceiling, though. On show elsewhere in the building are nine of his latest *Opticks* works, for which he splits light through a prism that he has designed himself, based on the principles of Isaac Newton; he then photographs its coloured projections, creating mesmeric abstractions. (Works from this series will be on show at Lisson Gallery in New York from May 2.)



It seems surprising that the artist, who has described himself as "the last black and white, conventional, traditional photographer", should have plunged so deeply into the full spectrum. "As I get towards the end of my life, I am finally turning to colour," Sugimoto says when we meet in Paris in early April. It is one of many references he makes to dying, despite being a sprightly 76. Conversely, he also describes his recent survey at London's Hayward Gallery, now in its next iteration in Beijing's UCCA museum, as "a mid-career retrospective", with a gleam in his eye.

He is certainly not slowing down. Before his palazzo show came the opening of *Staged*, an exhibition of his photographs of Alberto Giacometti's sculptures, held in the jewel-like rooms of the Institut Giacometti in Montparnasse (until June 23). Giacometti is not the only modern master Sugimoto has been associated with: his *Seascapes* series, ethereal images of where the ocean meets the sky, is often compared to Mark Rothko's paintings and they were shown together at Pace gallery's landmark London opening in 2012.

"We have a similarity of vision. Some of my works are very like Rothko, but there is a huge price difference," he says, grinning again. Indeed, Rothko's works often come to market with eight-figure prices tags (his auction record stands at $86.6mn) whereas for Sugimoto, the top price paid is $1.9mn.

The difference, he believes, is partly because "photography is a second-class citizen in the art world", something that stems, he half-jokes, from the fact that "when it was invented in 1839, painters were so jealous!" He concedes, though, that the potential to reproduce a photo caps prices in a market that prizes individual works. (He points out that his *Opticks* are produced in an edition of one.) He emphasises that his process is "as much about the hand as the eye": he mixes his own chemicals and develops his own work.

'I was expected to take over the family business, but my father could see that I was a radical Marxist'

The self-taught Sugimoto never set out to be an artist but was conscious that he did not fit the mould for which he was born. "I was the eldest child, I was expected to take over the family [pharmaceuticals] business, but my father could see that I was a radical Marxist, so he let my younger brother take that on," he says. He describes his parents as supportive of his artistic leanings; they paid for him, aged 22 in 1970, to study commercial photography at the ArtCenter College of Design in Los Angeles. Here, he says, the school let him skip two years once they saw his work.

Sugimoto stayed in the US for more than 50 years, moving to New York in 1974 where, he says, "everything was faster and deeper, people were so intelligent." He funded his early work by running a Japanese antiques dealership and had his first break in photography thanks to the Museum of Modern Art.

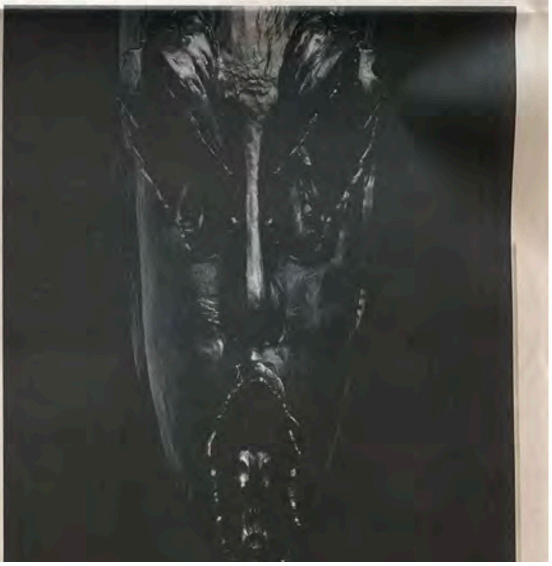
"They had a portfolio review system for young artists, where you could drop off your work and pick it up one week later. I went to pick mine up, in a Mickey Mouse T-shirt and jeans, and the receptionist said that John Szarkowski — the emperor of photography — wanted to see me," Sugimoto recalls. Szarkowski, MoMA's director of photography between 1962 and 1991, wanted to acquire two of Sugimoto's striking *Diorama* works — photos of the stuffed-animal displays in New York's American Museum of Natural History, whose layers of reality still prove provoking and discomfiting today. A few years later, in 1981, Sugimoto's first private buyer was the artist Robert Rauschenberg, who bought a *Diorama* work after he saw the artist's show at Sonnabend Gallery.

Come 1995, Sugimoto was able to stop his antiques trading business when the Metropolitan Museum of Art held his first major solo institutional show. Career highlights since are too many to mention for an artist who has always sought the secret to capturing both the conceptual and the abstract within the truth of a photograph. Landmark projects outside of photography include redesigning the sculpture garden at Washington DC's Hirshhorn Museum.

He won't be in Venice for the Biennale's opening. "I've done such festivities for many years, I'm tired," he says, adding that he also has prior commitments at home in Japan. His move back there was forced by the pandemic, "when I happened to be in Tokyo and then couldn't leave for three years". The situation soon suited his ambitions for what he describes as "the final stage of my art creation", namely the Enoura Observatory, a cultural complex that he designed on Japan's coast.

The homecoming is particularly sweet, he says, as his earliest memory, the source of the *Seascapes*, is of riding on a train "past that exact coastline". The observatory is an extension of his foundation, into which he says he puts all the profits from his commercial work. "My family [he has two children and three grandchildren] knows that I want to die cash-zero. They can have my art," he says. For a "mid-career" artist who shows no sign of stopping, that seems like a good deal.

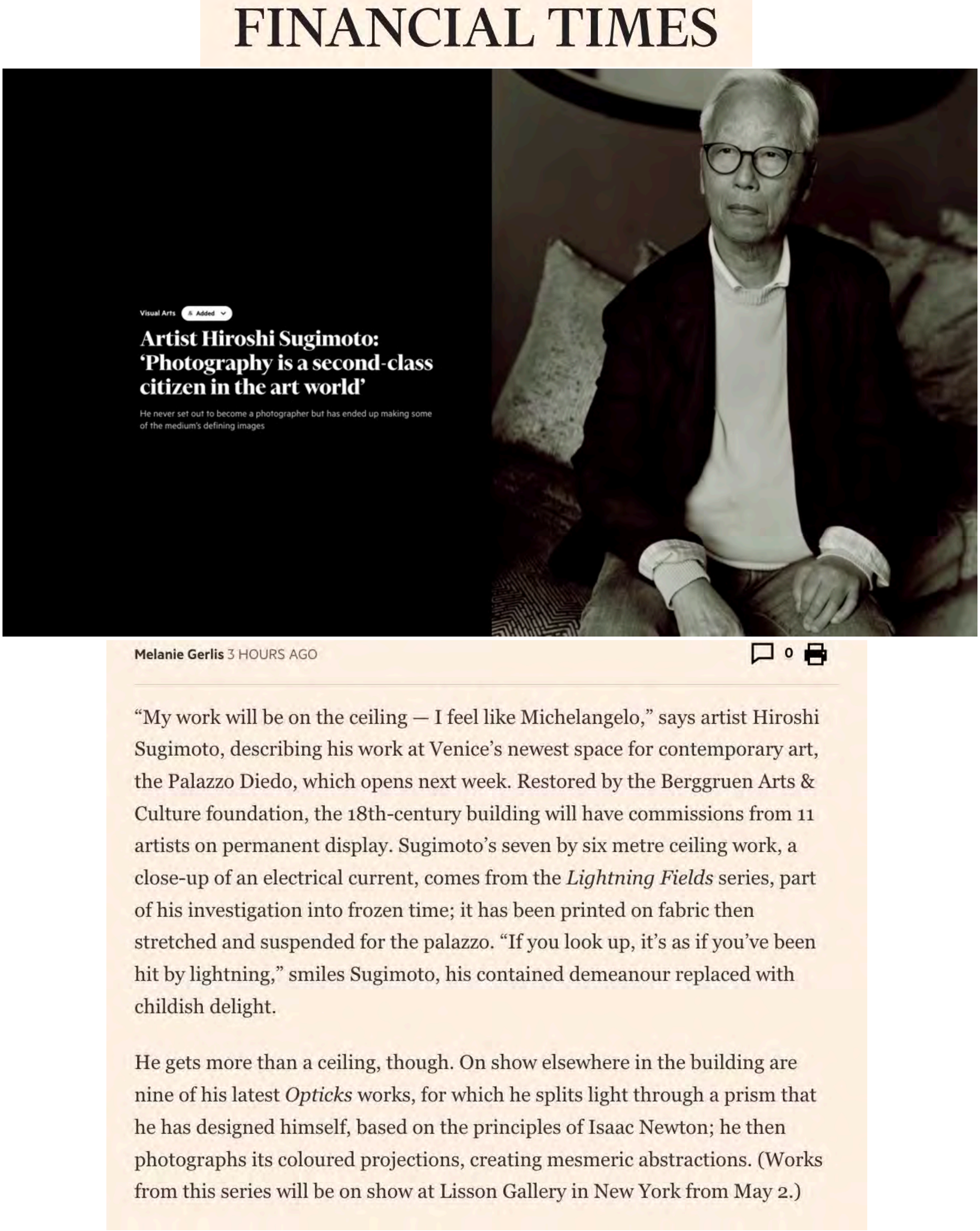
Palazzo Diedo opens April 19, berggruenarts.org. 'Hiroshi Sugimoto: Optical Allusion' opens at Lisson Gallery, New York, on May 2, lissongallery.com



Left: 'Lightning Fields 225' (2009) by Hiroshi Sugimoto

LISSON GALLERY

Financial Times
13 April 2024



FINANCIAL TIMES

Artist Hiroshi Sugimoto: ‘Photography is a second-class citizen in the art world’

He never set out to become a photographer but has ended up making some of the medium’s defining images

Melanie Gerlis 3 HOURS AGO

“My work will be on the ceiling — I feel like Michelangelo,” says artist Hiroshi Sugimoto, describing his work at Venice’s newest space for contemporary art, the Palazzo Diedo, which opens next week. Restored by the Berggruen Arts & Culture foundation, the 18th-century building will have commissions from 11 artists on permanent display. Sugimoto’s seven by six metre ceiling work, a close-up of an electrical current, comes from the *Lightning Fields* series, part of his investigation into frozen time; it has been printed on fabric then stretched and suspended for the palazzo. “If you look up, it’s as if you’ve been hit by lightning,” smiles Sugimoto, his contained demeanour replaced with childish delight.

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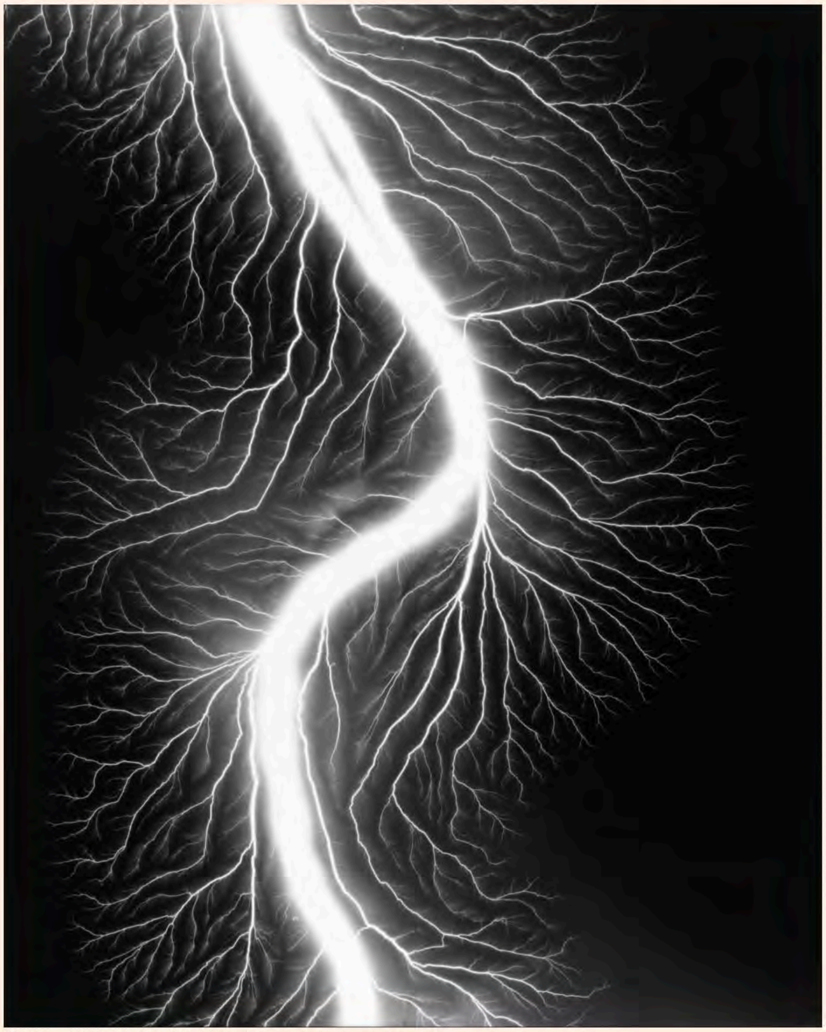

'Lightning Fields 225' (2009) by Hiroshi Sugimoto © Courtesy the artist

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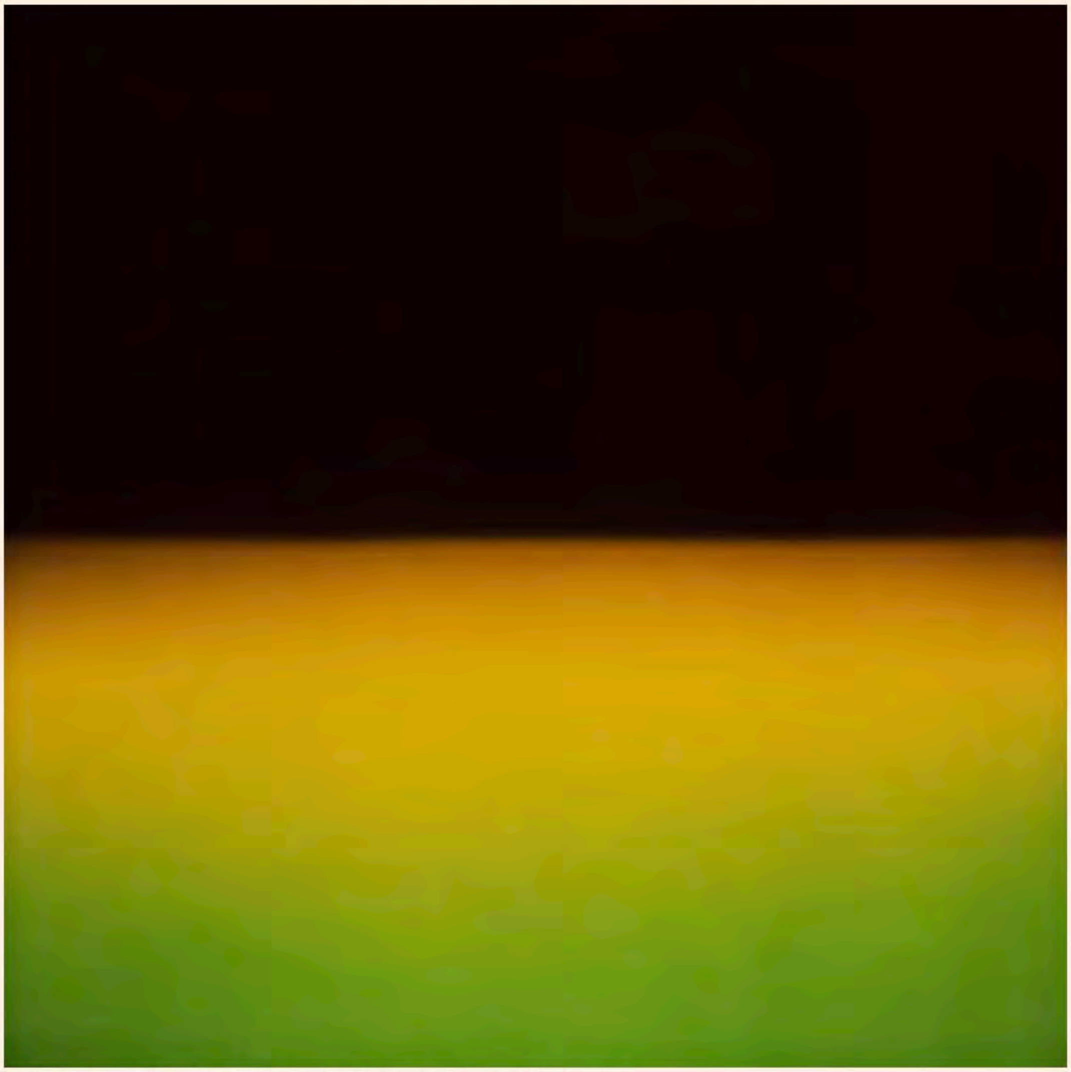

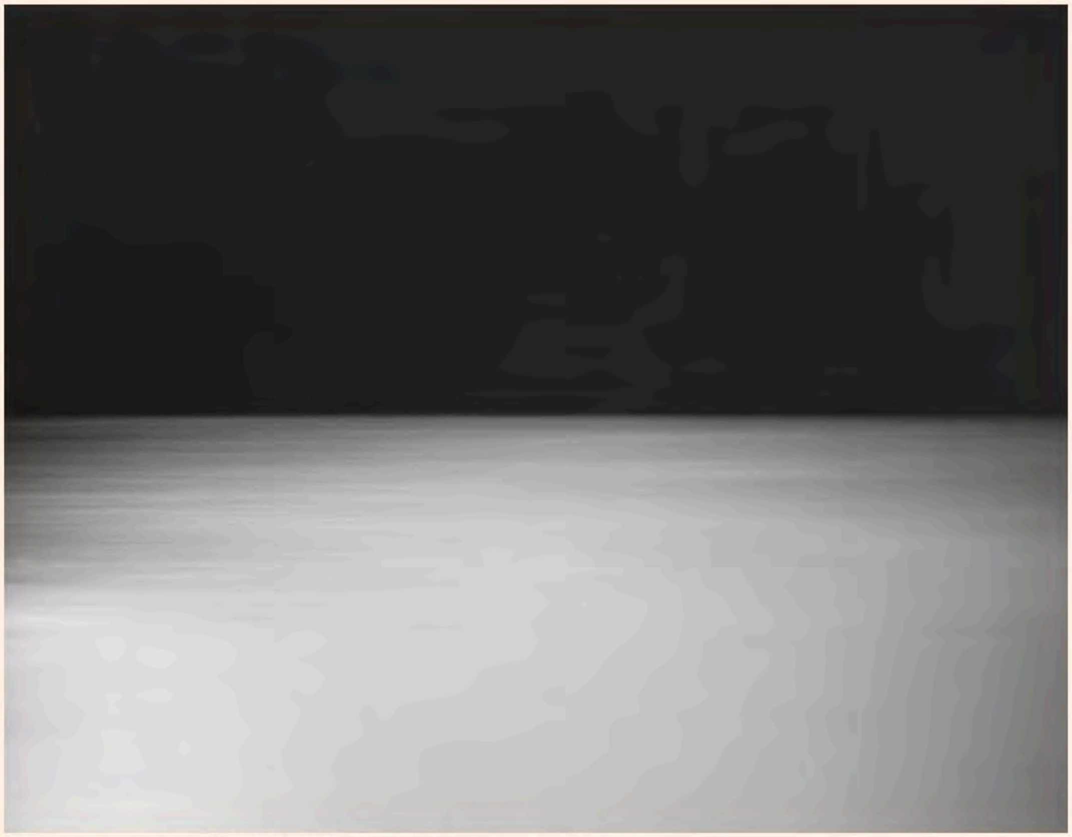

‘Bay of Sagami, Atami’ (1997) by Hiroshi Sugimoto © Courtesy the artist

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The self-taught Sugimoto never set out to be an artist but was conscious that he did not fit the mould for which he was born. "I was the eldest child, I was expected to take over the family [pharmaceuticals] business, but my father could see that I was a radical Marxist, so he let my younger brother take that on," he says. He describes his parents as supportive of his artistic leanings; they paid for him, aged 22 in 1970, to study commercial photography at the ArtCenter College of Design in Los Angeles. Here, he says, the school let him skip two years once they saw his work.

Sugimoto stayed in the US for more than 50 years, moving to New York in 1974 where, he says, "everything was faster and deeper, people were so intelligent." He funded his early work by running a Japanese antiques dealership and had his first break in photography thanks to the Museum of Modern Art.

"They had a portfolio review system for young artists, where you could drop off your work and pick it up one week later. I went to pick mine up, in a Mickey Mouse T-shirt and jeans, and the receptionist said that John Szarkowski — the emperor of photography — wanted to see me," Sugimoto recalls. Szarkowski, MoMA's director of photography between 1962 and 1991, wanted to acquire two of Sugimoto's striking *Diorama* works — photos of the stuffed-animal displays in New York's American Museum of Natural History, whose layers of reality prove provoking and discomfiting still today. A few years later, in 1981, Sugimoto's first private buyer was the artist Robert Rauschenberg, who also bought a *Diorama* work after he saw the artist's show at Sonnabend Gallery.

'Polar Bear' (1976) by Hiroshi Sugimoto © Courtesy the artist

Come 1995, Sugimoto was able to stop his antiques trading business when the Metropolitan Museum of Art held his first major solo institutional show. Career highlights since are too many to mention for an artist who has always sought the secret to capturing both the conceptual and the abstract within the truth of a photograph. Landmark projects outside of photography include redesigning the sculpture garden at Washington DC's Hirshhorn Museum.

He won't be in Venice for the Biennale's opening. "I've done such festivities for many years, I'm tired," he says, adding that he also has prior commitments at home in Japan. His move back there was forced by the pandemic, "when I happened to be in Tokyo and then couldn't leave for three years". The situation soon suited his ambitions for what he describes as "the final stage of my art creation", namely the Enoura Observatory, a cultural complex he designed on Japan's coast.

'Diana, Princess of Wales' (1999) by Hiroshi Sugimoto © Courtesy the artist.

'Salvador Dalí' (1999) by Hiroshi Sugimoto © Courtesy the artist

The homecoming is particularly sweet, he says, as his earliest memory, the source of the *Seascapes*, is of riding on a train "past that exact coastline". The observatory is an extension of his foundation, into which he says he puts all the profits from his commercial work. "My family [he has two children and three grandchildren] knows that I want to die cash-zero. They can have my art," he says. For a "mid-career" artist who shows no sign of stopping, that seems like a good deal.

Palazzo Diedo opens April 19, berggruenarts.org. 'Hiroshi Sugimoto: Optical Allusion' opens at Lisson Gallery, New York, on May 2, lissongallery.com

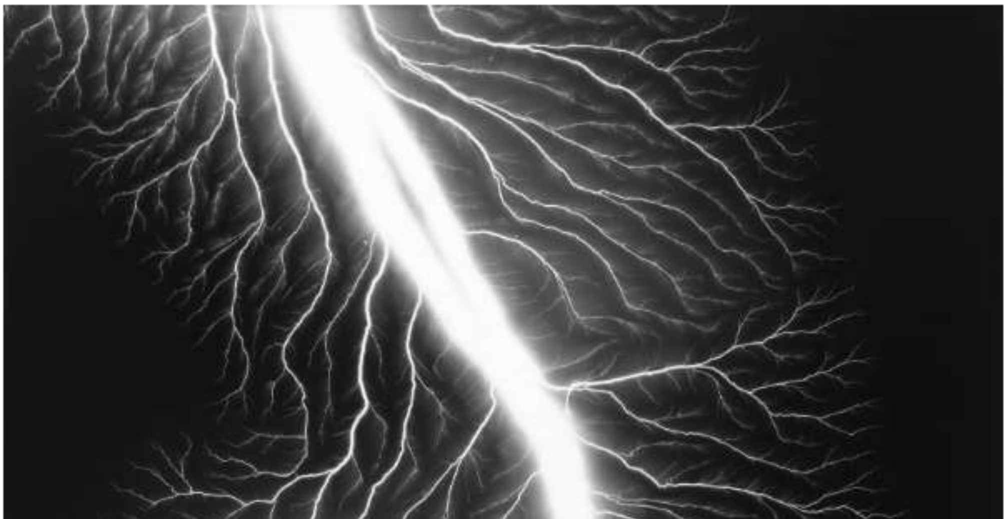
The New York Times
21 November 2023

The New York Times

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK

What Is Photography? (No Need to Answer That.)

Two exhibitions by Japanese artists raise deep questions about the medium, and — refreshingly — leave them hanging.



"Lightning Fields 225," by Hiroshi Sugimoto (2009), was produced by sending bolts of electricity across sheets of unexposed film. Hiroshi Sugimoto

By Emily LaBarge

The critic Emily LaBarge saw shows of photography by Hiroshi Sugimoto and Daido Moriyama in London

Published Nov. 21, 2023 Updated Nov. 23, 2023

There's more than one answer to the question "What is photography?," and this fall in London, there is a dazzling array of possibilities on show in retrospectives of the Japanese artists Hiroshi Sugimoto and Daido Moriyama.

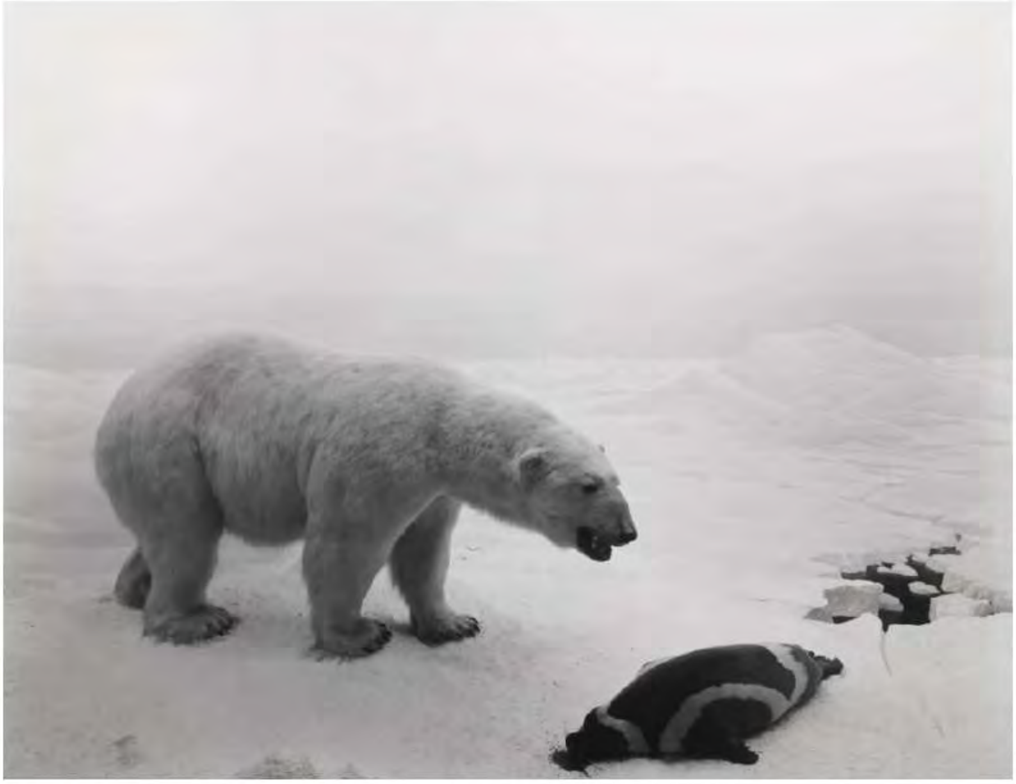
Born 10 years apart (Moriyama in 1938, in Osaka, and Sugimoto in 1948, in Tokyo), both photographers came of age in Japan's postwar photography boom. During this time of political change and technological innovation, practitioners explored, and frequently critiqued, the photograph as journalistic document, art object and mass media advertisement. Photo books and photography magazines proliferated, as did connections with American art scenes including Minimalism, Pop and the grainy realism of street photography.

"Diana, Princess of Wales," from Sugimoto's 1999 series "Portraits," in which the artist photographed waxworks of famous people. Hiroshi Sugimoto

"Oscar Wilde," from Sugimoto's "Portraits" series. Hiroshi Sugimoto

Both photographers are also invested in the more ephemeral, even metaphysical, qualities of the medium: How it freezes or reconstitutes time, brings the dead or the inanimate to life, unsettles concepts of memory, reality and vision itself. If these questions unite Sugimoto (whose London show runs at [the Hayward Gallery, through Jan. 7, 2024]) and Moriyama (at [the Photographers' Gallery, through Feb. 11]) their many-decade oeuvres could scarcely be more different.

“All my life I have made a habit of never believing my eyes,” Sugimoto has said. Across four floors of the Hayward’s stark, Brutalist galleries, nine black-and-white series spanning 1976-2022 are staged in austere displays. Each body of work addresses the seen and the unseen, exterior and interior life, with deceptive simplicity.

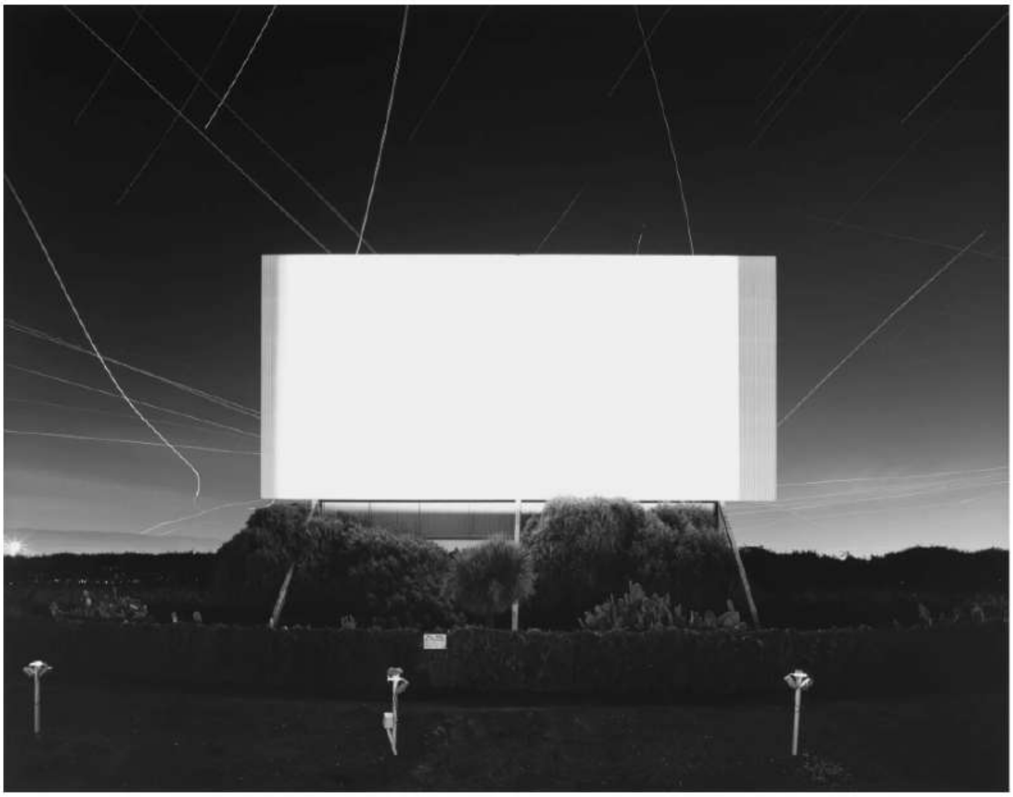


“Polar Bear” (1976) from Sugimoto’s “Diorama” series, photographed in the American Museum of Natural History, in New York. Hiroshi Sugimoto

A sequence of “Diorama” photographs, begun shortly after Sugimoto arrived in New York in 1974, capture scenes from the American Museum of Natural History with otherworldly precision. Using an old, large-format camera, long exposure times and elaborately tuned lighting, Sugimoto enhanced both the artifice and the verisimilitude of the institution’s taxidermy wildlife tableaus behind glass.

“Polar Bear” (1976) shows the majestic white animal roaring over a fresh kill: the bloodied body of a seal whose inert form is bulky and dark against an Arctic white background that stretches into the distance. Look closely and behind the bear — with its luscious coat of fur, its big paws so heavy in the snow you can almost hear it crunch — the line between two and three dimensions is just visible: a jagged crevasse in the ice floe beneath the two animals merges *almost* seamlessly with a painted backdrop of receding icy peaks.

The eye judders between these realities. The dead bear, momentarily brought to life by the vividness of the photograph, dies again, and is preserved again, a copy of a copy, frozen between past and present. Similar fates await a pair of ostriches defending their new hatchlings against a family of wart hogs ("Ostrich-Wart Hog," 1980) and a placidly floating mother manatee and her calf ("Manatee," 1994).



"Union City Drive-in, Union City, 1993" from Sugimoto's "Theaters" series. Hiroshi Sugimoto

Sugimoto's play with photographic abstraction is evident in a series of "Seascapes," dominated by long horizons and blank skies, "Lightning Fields" produced with bolts of electricity sent across sheets of unexposed film and rich chromatic studies ("Opticks") made by shining light through a prism. But it's the "Theaters" series, arguably his most famous, that maintains the most beguiling promise of photography to capture a flickering in-between state.

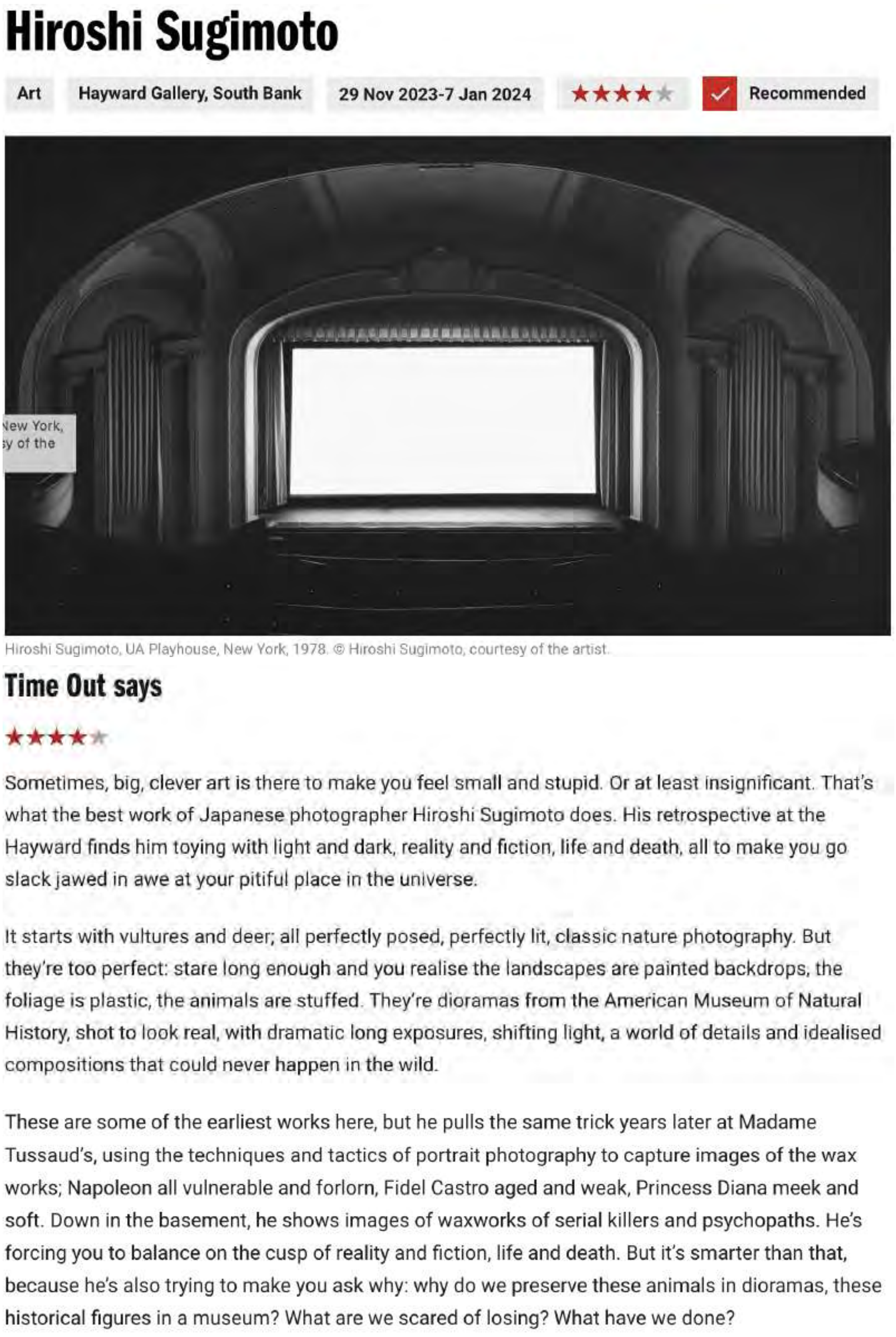
In cinemas, drive-ins and abandoned palace-style theaters across the United States (and sometimes Europe), Sugimoto set his camera's exposure time to the length of a movie screening. His device sees what no naked human eye can apprehend: a bright white vortex of time elapsed, frame upon frame upon frame, at once stilled and in motion. In Massachusetts, Indiana, New York, Philadelphia, the shadowy rows of seats, crumpled velvet curtains and decorative wall moldings are irradiated by a central focus that is not an image but a light so bright and uncontainable that its edges are smudged like a ghost.

"Kanagawa" (1967) from Daido Moriyama's photo book "A Hunter." Daido Moriyama Photo Foundation

Across town at the Photographers' Gallery, also unfolding across four floors, the Moriyama retrospective does away with any sense of the photograph as a rarefied art object. Where Sugimoto's images are clear, large, refined, singular and precious, Moriyama's are multiple, democratic, immersive, rapid and haphazard, and varied in size, material and presentation.

Timeout
10 October 2023

Time Out



Hiroshi Sugimoto

Art | Hayward Gallery, South Bank | 29 Nov 2023-7 Jan 2024 | ★★★★☆ | ✓ Recommended

Hiroshi Sugimoto, UA Playhouse, New York, 1978. © Hiroshi Sugimoto, courtesy of the artist.

Time Out says

★★★★☆

Sometimes, big, clever art is there to make you feel small and stupid. Or at least insignificant. That's what the best work of Japanese photographer Hiroshi Sugimoto does. His retrospective at the Hayward finds him toying with light and dark, reality and fiction, life and death, all to make you go slack jawed in awe at your pitiful place in the universe.

It starts with vultures and deer; all perfectly posed, perfectly lit, classic nature photography. But they're too perfect: stare long enough and you realise the landscapes are painted backdrops, the foliage is plastic, the animals are stuffed. They're dioramas from the American Museum of Natural History, shot to look real, with dramatic long exposures, shifting light, a world of details and idealised compositions that could never happen in the wild.

These are some of the earliest works here, but he pulls the same trick years later at Madame Tussaud's, using the techniques and tactics of portrait photography to capture images of the wax works; Napoleon all vulnerable and forlorn, Fidel Castro aged and weak, Princess Diana meek and soft. Down in the basement, he shows images of waxworks of serial killers and psychopaths. He's forcing you to balance on the cusp of reality and fiction, life and death. But it's smarter than that, because he's also trying to make you ask why: why do we preserve these animals in dioramas, these historical figures in a museum? What are we scared of losing? What have we done?

“

Quiet pictures of the inevitability of time’s passing and your utter powerlessness in the face of it

”

Sugimoto loves big questions, and his two best series ask the biggest of all. ‘Theatres’ is endless images of abandoned cinemas, their screens glowing a spectral white, their walls crumbling. Sugimoto shot each with an exposure long enough to capture a whole film. A whole work of art, summed up and gone in an instant, reduced to nothing but the light it emitted. No people, no story, no culture, just time disappearing. They’re ghostly, haunting images that shine almost too brightly in the dark gallery, quiet pictures of the inevitability of time’s passing and your utter powerlessness in the face of it.

‘Seascapes’ is nothing but bodies of water, shot with that same long exposure, their waves smoothed out into soft flat blurs, their horizons now a sharp split of sky and water, creating miserable, monochrome Rothkos. They’re beautiful, meditative images that would have looked the same taken a million years ago as today, just blank, endless grey; all there’s ever been, all there’ll ever be.

There’s lots to *not* like here. The images of lighting-like electrical phenomena feel horribly studenty, and the photos of Buddhist statues and mathematical models just look like they’re built for some coked-up banker’s living room.

But at his best, Sugimato makes you feel small, like time is passing and always will, like the universe is huge and you’re insignificant. When I was at the show, Sugimoto was walking around the empty galleries playing ‘Let It Be’ out of his phone and singing along. And that’s the point: the universe is big and you aren’t, time is endless but yours isn’t, but don’t worry about it, just let it be.

Written by Eddy Frankel Tuesday 10 October 2023

The Guardian
10 October 2023

Art and design

Review

Hiroshi Sugimoto review – Japan's great faker brings the dead back to disturbing life

Hayward Gallery, London

At this supersized survey show, we see the master photographer going to extremes, compressing time, resurrecting bygone worlds and having creepy fun with the waxworks at Madame Tussauds

★★★★☆

'Even its toenails look polished' ... Polar Bear, 1976, by Sugimoto. Photograph: © Hiroshi Sugimoto, courtesy of the artist

Charlotte Jansen

Tue 10 Oct 2023 11.36 BST

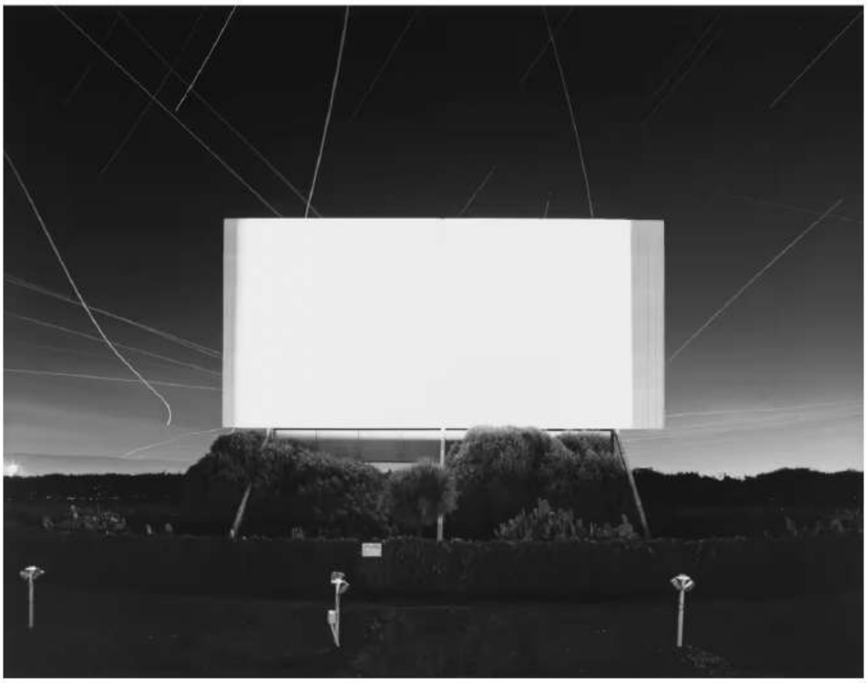
In 1976, Hiroshi Sugimoto set out to bring a taxidermied polar bear back to life. He had seen one on display in a diorama at the American Natural History Museum in New York (he has lived there and in Toyko since 1974). Finding all its stuffed animals and their realistic painted backdrops irresistible, he located some cumbersome 19th-century photography apparatus, the kind that would have been used when the dioramas were made, and photographed the scenes using a 20-minute exposure.

The giant, pristine black and white silver gelatin prints appear at first to be panoramic vistas of wildlife - but the details slowly unravel and betray them. The carnivorous polar bear, lurching towards its dead prey lying in a pool of blood on crisp snow, is too groomed - even its toenails looked polished. It all looks a bit off. For Sugimoto the work was a success, though. He had made the polar bear look alive once more.

> “ *This real/fake dialectic seems destined to perturb photography for ever*

Now you can be the judge, at Sugimoto's supersize survey show at the Hayward Gallery, which offers a set of visual conundrums, as the artist attempts to resurrect, revive and reanimate a bygone world through an intensive - and at times frankly eccentric - photographic process.

This was the beginning of Sugimoto's journey as an artist and the start of his largest exhibition to date, covering five decades in which themes rebound and recur - the dioramas alone continued to preoccupy him for four decades. The real/fake dialectic is one of the central premises in the show, something that seems destined to perturb photography for ever.



An incredible technical feat ... Union City Drive-in, Union City, 1993. Photograph: © Hiroshi Sugimoto, courtesy of the artist

It has continued to preoccupy Sugimoto too, as this exhibition also highlights images from his 1999 Portraits series - inspired by the displays of another major tourist attraction, London's Madame Tussauds. Sugimoto was drawn to the sculpted wax likeness of Henry VIII, and the fact it was based in turn on a 16th-century portrait painting by Hans Holbein the Younger.

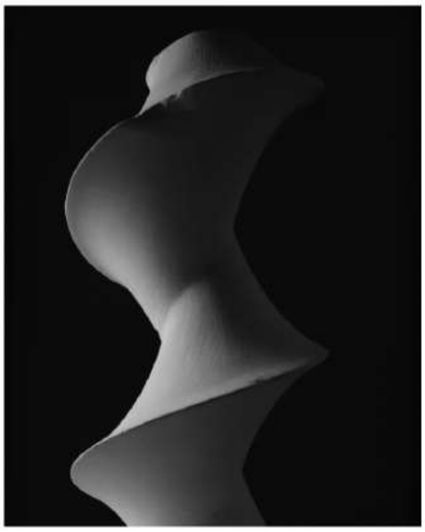
Sugimoto set about photographing various waxwork figures, restaging them against plain black backgrounds to throw the viewer off, and emulating the scale of traditional 16th-century portrait paintings. They are portraits of portraits, layers of representation compressed - Sugimoto loves a succinct expression. But as to whether they are "as good as real" (as Sugimoto has suggested even fake subjects can be when photographed with the right staging) is doubtful. They are certainly uncanny anachronisms.

Sugimoto is a master at creating an eerie ambience. Before you even get to the creepy waxwork portraits, you pass through the haunting series, called Theaters, that he began in the 1970s. A two-hour film, he realised, is just 172,800 still images. He tried to turn it into one. Each of the photographs in the series captures an entire film in a single exposure - a similar approach to representing an entire life or history in one image. In the darkened, chilly galleries the glow emanating from the photographed screens is UFO-like.

> *The Chamber of Horrors series, depicting murderers and psychopaths, seems like a gory gimmick*

Unlike the stuffed animals and cold waxworks, these feel really alive. While they're about the compression of time, there is also a feeling of being enamoured with the past and with architectural finery, as Sugimoto set up his camera at classical and abandoned theatres, opera houses and drive-in cinemas around the world. A few details give a clue of the time that has passed, such as flicks across a dark sky above a drive-in theatre in Union City, New Jersey. Getting these right was an incredible technical feat.

Yet for all their careful choreography and grandeur, after so many, the series becomes a little repetitive and methodical. A second series shot at Madame Tussauds is presented as the Chamber of Horrors, but feels unnecessary, both to the show and to Sugimoto's work. In this series of small, straightforward photographs of the theatrical, gruesome scenes at the original Chamber of Horrors at the museum, depicting a clutch of murderers and psychopaths, it's not clear where the actual artistry is - or why they're in the exhibition, other than to provide a gimmick of gore. They sit uncomfortably with the rest of the show.



'Carving with a camera' ... Conceptual Forms, Dini's Surface: a constant negative curvature obtained by twisting a pseudosphere, 2004. Photograph: © Hiroshi Sugimoto, courtesy of the artist.

The sexy side of the show is in fact in a lesser known suite of photographs of curving abstract forms, in which Sugimoto set out to "carve with a camera", surrounding actual carved objects, mathematical models, in scintillating aluminium, turning geometric theory into tangible object (using some advanced Japanese tech to produce them). The Onduloid is the show's real starlet - a turning shape that fascinates Sugimoto, and takes his interests in composition, geometry and space in a new direction.

Upstairs things get weirder, a tour around some of Sugimoto's most performative processes and experiments. The camera-less Lightning photographs are the closest to wilding out as Sugimoto gets, embracing the wabi-sabi and deliberately trashing sheets of film with electricity. Taking this even further, he also mixed his own sea water, and dunked film in it, before jabbing at it with electrical tools.

> *By stilling the sea, Sugimoto seems capable of controlling the world*

These works make you realise how tightly controlled and precise the other series are, unrelenting in their pursuit of an idea within a set of conditions. Sugimoto's Seascapes, among his most famous works, are in a way the embodiment of this, their tonal grey scales turning the meeting of sky and sea into impeccable abstract works. Stilling the sea, Sugimoto seems capable of controlling the world with his camera.

Sugimoto is perhaps more of a 19th-century expeditionist than artist, relishing the physical challenge and feats of the camera. Time Machine plunges you into the past, contemplates survival, and questions our puny acts of preservation in the inevitable erasure of history.

It's an incisive and clear presentation of Sugimoto's work of the past five decades and a true reflection of an artist with an unfaltering devotion to his method and ideas of how to use the medium of photography - but so much so that at times the work is prone to pretension and indulgence. This exhibition exposes both sides of Sugimoto. Fans of his work, and those who salivate over clever concepts and abstruse techniques, will be enthralled.

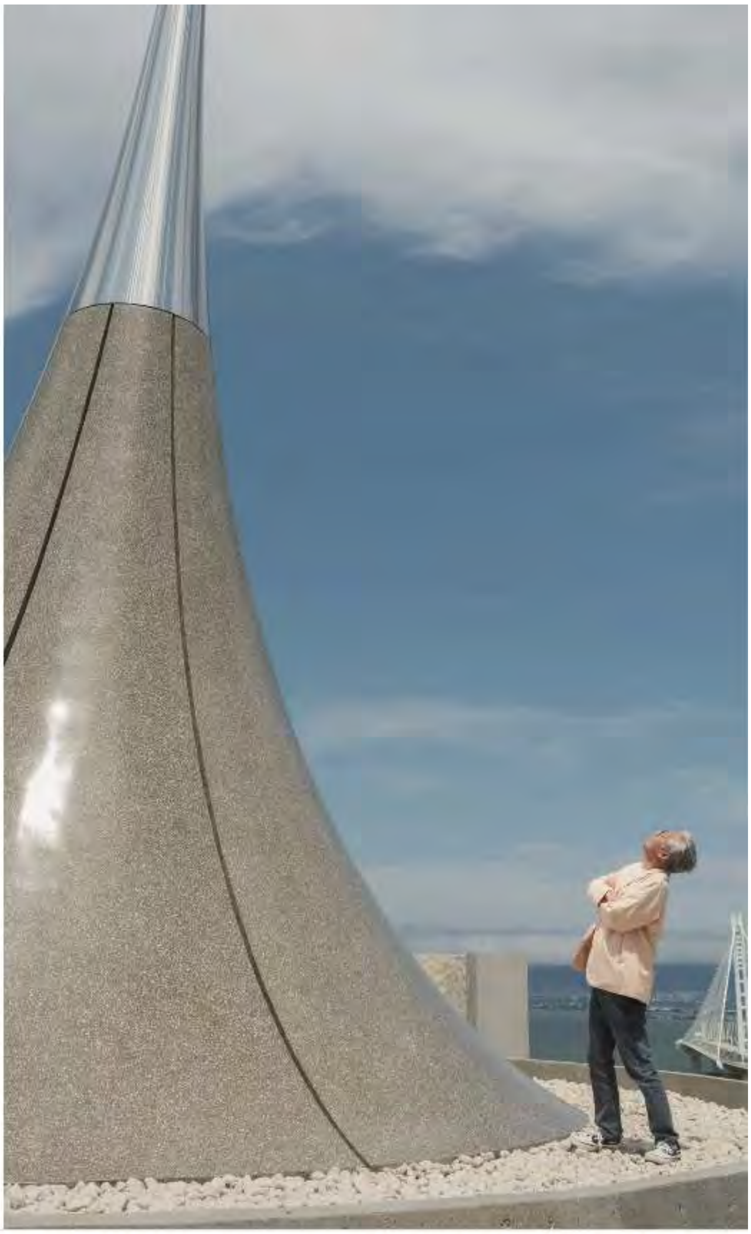
● At Hayward Gallery, London, 11 October to 7 January 2024

The New York Times
9 June 2023

The New York Times

A New Hiroshi Sugimoto Sculpture in San Francisco Reaches for Infinity

His sliver of an artwork, “Point of Infinity,” marks the start of the city’s Treasure Island Art Program.



Hiroshi Sugimoto’s sculpture is meant to serve as an anchor — or beacon, given its height — for the area’s new public art program.
Jessica Chou for The New York Times

By **Jori Finkel**
Reporting from San Francisco

June 9, 2023

The San Francisco skyline has radically changed over the past two decades because of all the real estate development. It's changing again now, but subtly, because of an artwork. The Japanese artist Hiroshi Sugimoto, famous for his slyly deceptive photography, has just planted a slender, 69-foot-tall stainless steel sculpture on a hilltop in Yerba Buena Island, meant to serve as an anchor — or beacon, given its height — for the area's new public art program.

From some viewpoints it looks like the tip of a sewing needle poking out above the trees and cellular towers of this island in the San Francisco Bay. From others it seems an elegant high-tech cousin of the Transamerica Pyramid, the chunkier building across the bay. Because of its particular curved geometry, which tapers from a concrete base of 23 feet to a top that is less than one inch in diameter, the sculpture looks as if it's growing infinitely smaller and taller as it reaches for Earth's outer atmosphere.

The artist paradoxically calls his skyscraper "Point of Infinity," and, even more than the beautiful sliver of mirror-finished stainless steel itself, he hopes to showcase that Zen koan-like notion. "The infinity point, where two curved lines are supposed to meet, only exists in the human mind; it's a creation of human consciousness," said Sugimoto, 75, who called the sculpture "beyond expectation" on Monday during his first visit to it on site. "I wished to make it reach all the way to infinity, but that's technically impossible," he added, laughing at himself, his habit even or especially when making gnomic pronouncements.

"I wished to make it reach all the way to infinity, but that's technically impossible," said Sugimoto of his sculpture, laughing at himself. Jessica Chou for The New York Times

The sculpture also serves a more practical or political purpose, marking Yerba Buena Island and the adjoining Treasure Island, a naval base from 1942 to 1997, as a new cultural destination. With a budget of $2 million, "Point of Infinity" is the first major artwork developed under the Treasure Island Art Program, run by the San Francisco Arts Commission and funded by a "one percent" program, which takes a cut of construction costs from new development on the islands.

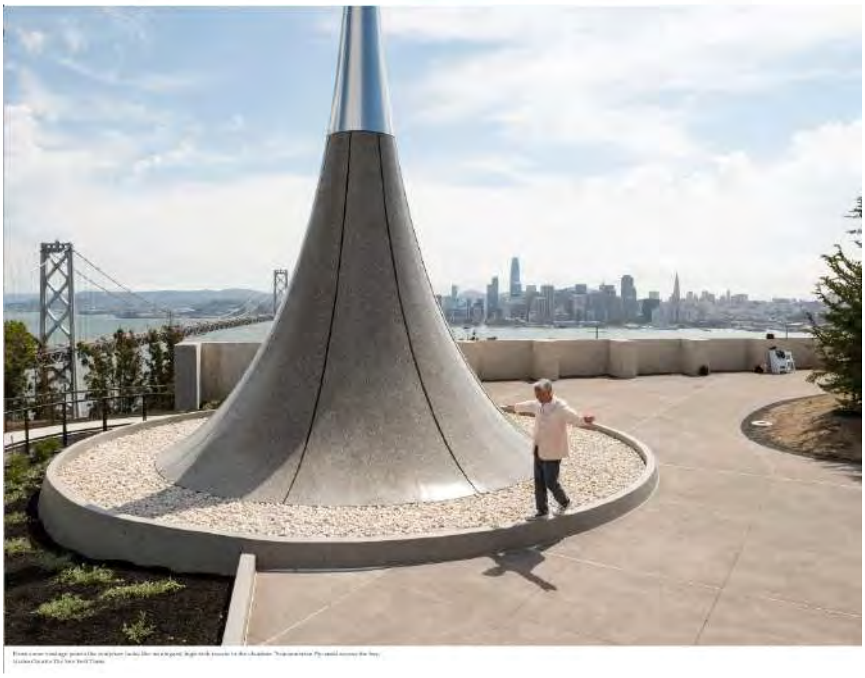
The Treasure Island Development Authority plans to create 8,000 housing units, with 27 percent of them to be deemed affordable. Roughly 75 percent of the 400-acre site is designated as public space, making it "the city's biggest allotment of public, open space since the creation of Golden Gate Park," said Jill Manton, who directs the Treasure Island Art Program, describing parks, walkways and plazas where they can site public art.

The Fine Arts & Exhibits Special Section

- **Taking Sides:** The Museum of Russian Art in Minneapolis made a choice: It stands with Ukraine.
- **Showcasing Local Artists**: The de Young Open in San Francisco is a sprawling exhibition where just about anything goes in terms of subject, style and medium.
- **An All-Ages Playground**: City Museum in St. Louis invites its visitors to explore and play with art.
- **Art on Fire**: A Texas museum tackles climate change with art that seems all too frighteningly real.
- **More From the Special Section:** The art world expands its notion of what art is and who can make it.

She said the program's overall budget for art could exceed $50 million "if everything progresses as planned" but acknowledged volatility in the real estate market. The three developers involved in the project also recently sued each other.

The art planning process has not been smooth either. Sugimoto's work on the project began in 2017 after the city issued an open call for artists. By the end of that year, he was selected by a committee as one of seven finalists (out of a pool of 495 applicants) to develop proposals for three sites. Two finalists, Pae White and Antony Gormley, also made it to the next stage and revamped their plans, only to have them nixed in the end, Manton said, "over aesthetic concerns." She recently enlisted Kehinde Wiley instead to submit a proposal for one of those sites, a major waterfront plaza.



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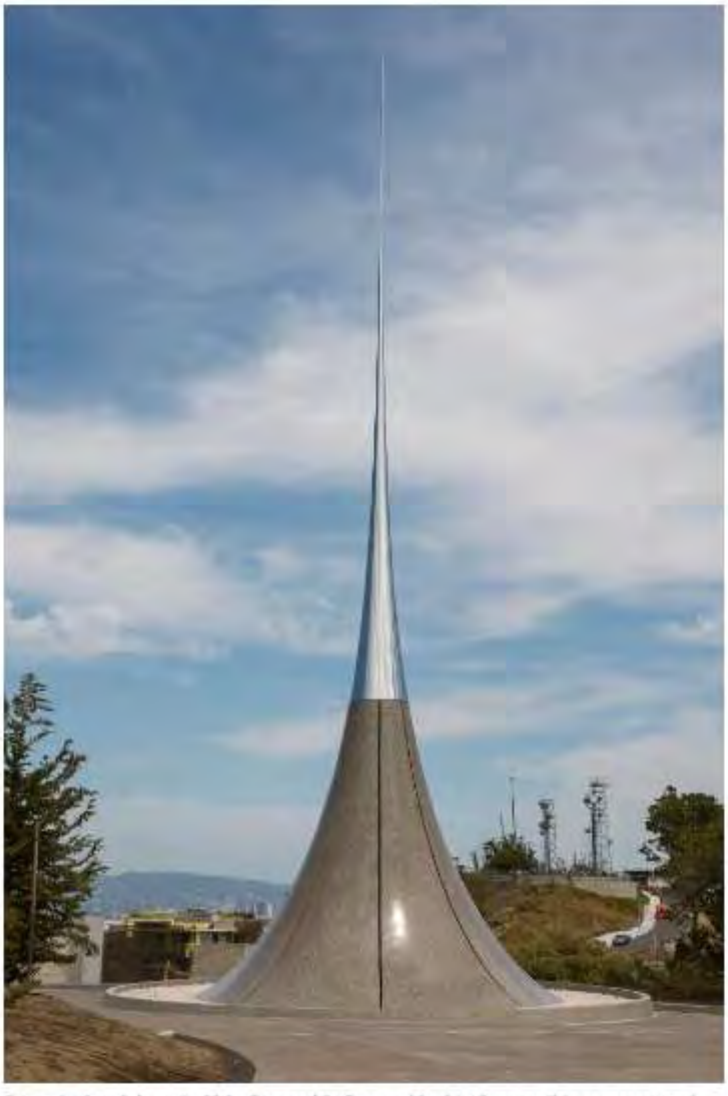
[illegible] The New York Times

"With Antony and Pae, they were selected and asked to redesign. With Sugimoto, we wanted the sculpture exactly as proposed," she said. "It's so simple and elegant. It's a very conceptual work but I think will appeal on many different levels, whether you know anything about art or not."

As a photographer, Sugimoto came to prominence by making images that are both highly persuasive and strangely self-effacing. His rugged wildlife scenes capturing close-ups of polar bears or African antelope turn out to be dioramas he shot at the American Museum of Natural History. His pictures of brilliant white screens in ornate movie palaces actually come from photographing with one long exposure the entirety of a film as it plays. His photograph of Queen Elizabeth I, pure historical fiction, is really a portrait of her wax sculpture at Madame Tussauds.

With "Point of Infinity," too, he says he's interested in the play of presence and absence, or "the presence of immateriality" suggested by its hyperbolic geometry. He was immediately drawn to this geometry in 2003 when he saw a small, 19th-century mathematical model in a classroom at Tokyo University, designed to illustrate "a surface of revolution with a constant negative curvature," also known as a pseudosphere.

He soon photographed that plaster model. But the surface was rough, its tip was broken, and he thought he could do better "using the very highest Japanese accuracy." He has since made a handful of high-precision sculptures in different sizes, with the same formula, branching into sculpture around the same time he started an architectural practice. One recent hyperbolic form, "Sundial" in Tokyo, reaches nearly 40 feet.



"It's so simple and elegant," said the director of the Treasure Island Art Program. "It's a very conceptual work but I think will appeal on many different levels, whether you know anything about art or not." Jessica Chou for The New York Times

The largest of the group by far, "Point of Infinity," is also a sundial in a sense, though without hour markings. Instead, Sugimoto will place a granite marker on the ground to align with the shadow cast by the artwork at solar noon on days of the spring and fall equinox. A ring of white gravel surrounds the sculpture to prevent it from becoming a skateboarding ramp.

For his part, Sugimoto sees "Point of Infinity" not as a sculpture but, nodding to Marcel Duchamp, as a readymade, because it's based on a mathematical model. "It's a found object, but price-wise it's the same as a sculpture," he said, laughing again.

He referred to the project's costs frequently, describing spikes in fabrication and global shipping over the past four years. Built in 29 sections, "Point of Infinity" was fabricated by Sanwa Tajima in Japan and shipped in eight containers to Oakland. The San Francisco Arts Commission contributed an extra $350,000 in response to inflation, and the artist is absorbing other cost overruns himself.

There could be one other major expense left: altering the cement walls lining the small hilltop park, remnants from a water tank on site. Noticing how they cut into city views, Sugimoto this week requested that the Arts Commission shave the walls down by about a foot to 42 inches. Manton says they are looking into it but "there are code and safety concerns."

Assuming that doesn't cause delays, the park, currently considered a construction site, should officially open to the public sometime this fall. Variously called Tower Park and Yerba Buena Island Hilltop Park, it will be renamed Infinity Point Park.

Sugimoto said he'd like to return around then to photograph the sculpture. "I will come back with this huge 8 x 10 camera. It's cheaper to do it by myself," he said, flashing another smile, "rather than asking for a professional photographer."

Hiroshi Sugimoto Jessica Chou for The New York Times

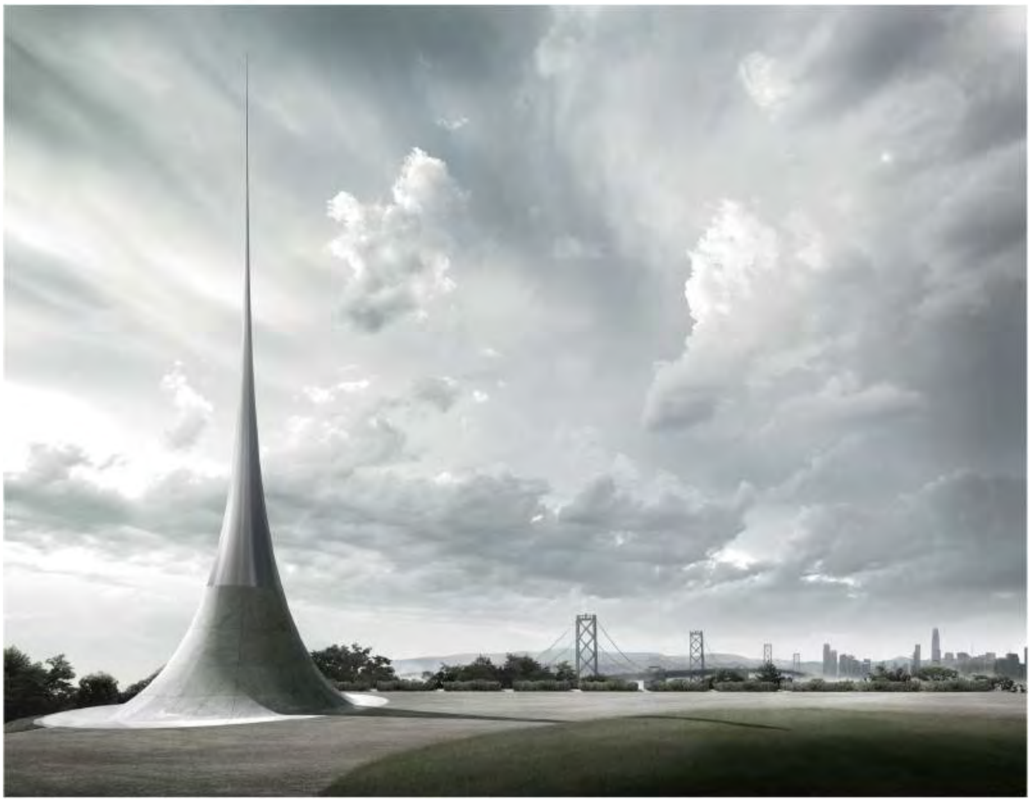
San Francisco Arts Commission
1 March 2023

sfac

NEWS RELEASE

New Monumental Sculpture by Internationally Renowned Artist Hiroshi Sugimoto To Be Installed on Yerba Buena Island As Part of the Treasure Island Arts Program

Artwork scheduled for installation in Summer 2023



SAN FRANCISCO, March 1, 2023 – The San Francisco Arts Commission (SFAC), in partnership with the Treasure Island Development Authority (TIDA), are pleased to announce the upcoming installation of the first permanent sculpture commissioned for the Treasure Island Arts Program by internationally renowned artist, Hiroshi Sugimoto.

The sculpture, titled ***Point of Infinity***, will be placed on top of Yerba Buena Island in summer 2023. This artwork marks Sugimoto's first large scale public sculpture to be installed in the United States and the first of many public commissions that will be presented as part of the Treasure Island Arts Program.

"The concept of infinity is a human invention. The point of infinity is a paradox, but should it exist in the natural world, it must be in a faraway place beyond the edge of the universe, or maybe it is no more than an illusion born inside the human brain. Nonetheless, ever since its birth, the human race has persisted in seeing this illusion. We call it art," explained artist **Hiroshi Sugimoto**. "The form of the sculpture is created from two converging hyperbolic curves that get closer and closer but never meet. In the material world, it is physically impossible to make a point that reaches all the way to infinity. What I can do, however, is suggest infinity by making an approximate point that can exist in the material world as a mathematically modeled structure with a 21-millimeter-wide tip."

Starting at a width of 23 feet at the base, the sculpture rises to a height 69 feet (21 meters) and tapers to a diameter of 7/8 inch (21 millimeters). Eight glass fiber reinforced concrete panels compose the base of the sculpture to a height of 18 ½ feet, and then seamlessly transition to mirror-polished marine grade 316 stainless steel that rises another 50 ½ feet.

The sculpture acts as a monumental sundial, evoking the *Tower of the Sun* sculpture from the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition on Treasure Island. A stone marker will be placed in the plaza to mark the precise location of the noon shadow on the spring and autumnal equinoxes. While referencing the grandeur and innovation of the 1939 World's Fair, Sugimoto's sculpture is an elegant and contemplative reflection on the concept of time and humanity.

"The San Francisco Arts Commission is thrilled to have worked closely with Hiroshi Sugimoto, the Treasure Island Development Authority and the Treasure Island Community Development to bring this monumental installation to San Francisco and launch an historic new era for public art in San Francisco," said **Ralph Remington**, Director of Cultural Affairs. "*Point of Infinity* is the first of many public art installations that will transform Yerba Buena Island and Treasure Island into a world class public art destination. I look forward to all the incredible works that will come as a result of this ongoing partnership."

"The Sugimoto sculpture is an important inaugural work to implement a vision that incorporates art into Treasure Island's 300 acres of public parks and open space," said **V. Fei Tsen**, President of the TIDA Board. "Treasure Island and Yerba Buena Island have a spectacular position in the middle of the San Francisco Bay. Our intention is to create an experience that marries art with nature."

Point of Infinity will be situated in one of two new hilltop parks totaling 5.4- acres designed by MacArthur 'Genius' Grant recipient Walter Hood of Hood Design Studio Inc. The park is located on the westernmost peak of Yerba Buena Island with sweeping, 360-degree views of the San Francisco skyline, San Francisco Bay, Alcatraz, Clipper Cove Beach, Golden Gate Bridge, and greater Bay Area. The public park serves as a centerpiece of the community as well as a cultural and ecological arboretum, revealing layers of history, and sits upon the foundations of a decommissioned water tank that has been transformed into a scenic overlook. The sculpture is located on top of the former water tank and will be a beacon for people around the Bay Area and visible from many vantage points including the Bay Bridge and San Francisco.

"We are incredibly pleased that Hiroshi Sugimoto's *Point of Infinity* will be the first monumental sculpture created under the Treasure Island Arts Master Plan. Sugimoto is one of the most important artists working in the world today, and his thoughtful meditation on time and place will elevate the public realm at Treasure Island and Yerba Buena Island," said **Chris Meany**, Co-CEO of the Treasure Island Community Development and Managing Partner of Wilson Meany. "We sincerely thank Hiroshi for his amazing work, Walter Hood for creating the park in which the sculpture will sit, and the San Francisco Arts Commission and Fraenkel Gallery for their support of this incredible effort."

The artist was selected from a public competition in 2017 that received submissions from 495 artists from around the world. The new hilltop park was established as one of the first major artwork opportunities in the Treasure Island Arts Master Plan that was developed in June 2017 and guides the implementation of a projected $50 million in public art funds generated by Treasure Island private development over the next 20 years.

"In the competition proposals, it was evident that this specific location resonated with the artist and inspired this work, and we are very gratified that the first piece in the Treasure Island Art Program will be such an original, thoughtful, and iconic piece," stated **Bob Beck**, Treasure Island Director.

About the Artist

Born in 1948 in Tokyo, Japan, Hiroshi Sugimoto moved to the United States in 1970 and since then, has lived and worked in New York and Tokyo. As a multi-disciplinary artist, Sugimoto's practice expands to photography, sculpture, installation, architecture, garden design, writing, calligraphy, culinary arts, and the production and direction of performing arts programs. Sugimoto's art bridges Eastern and Western ideologies while examining the nature of time, perception, and the origins of consciousness. His photographic series include Dioramas, Theaters, Seascapes, Architecture, Portraits, Conceptual Forms, Lightning Fields, and Opticks among others.

In 2008 he established the architecture firm New Material Research Laboratory and in 2009 he founded Odawara Art Foundation, a charitable nonprofit organization to promote traditional Japanese performing arts and culture. Sugimoto also established KANKITSUZAN, an agricultural foundation in 2011 to explore and maintain a symbiotic relationship between Nature and Human, adjacent to the Enoura Observatory.

Sugimoto's artworks have been exhibited around the world and are in numerous public collections including the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, The Guggenheim Museum New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Smithsonian's Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden among others.

About the San Francisco Arts Commission

The San Francisco Arts Commission (SFAC) is the City agency that champions the arts as essential to daily life by investing in a vibrant arts community, enlivening the urban environment, and shaping innovative cultural policy. Our programs include: Civic Art Collection, Civic Design Review, Community Investments, Public Art, SFAC Galleries, and Art Vendor Licensing. To learn more about the agency and other public art opportunities, visit sfartscommission.org.

About Treasure Island Development Authority

The Treasure Island Development Authority (TIDA) is the public entity that is overseeing the implementation of the Master Plan for the redevelopment of Treasure Island and Yerba Buena Island. As a part of the master plan, Treasure Island and neighboring Yerba Buena Island are being transformed into a new, environmentally sustainable, 21st-century San Francisco neighborhood featuring 8,000 new homes - including approximately 2,200 permanently affordable homes – and new restaurants and shops. Located in the middle of San Francisco Bay and featuring 300 acres of parks, trails and open space, public art installations, and exciting events, this visionary redevelopment will be a regional recreational destination as well as a reimagined neighborhood. More information is available at sf.gov/TIDA.

About Treasure Island Community Development

Treasure Island Community Development (TICD) is the master developer for Treasure Island — a partnership of Stockbridge Capital Group, Wilson Meany, and Lennar Corp. Learn more about Treasure Island at TISF.com and Yerba Buena Island at YerbaBuenaIslandSF.com.

About Wilson Meany

Wilson Meany is a boutique San Francisco-based developer of mixed-use, residential, retail, office and master plan urban infill properties. Among Wilson Meany's signature projects are the historic San Francisco Ferry Building, the Art Deco icon of 140 New Montgomery, the massive Bay Meadows redevelopment and the former Hollywood Park racetrack. Visit wilsonmeany.com to learn more.

The New York Times Style
6 February 2023

THE NEW YORK TIMES STYLE MAGAZINE

In This Manhattan Apartment, Every Room Is a Testament to Japanese Tradition

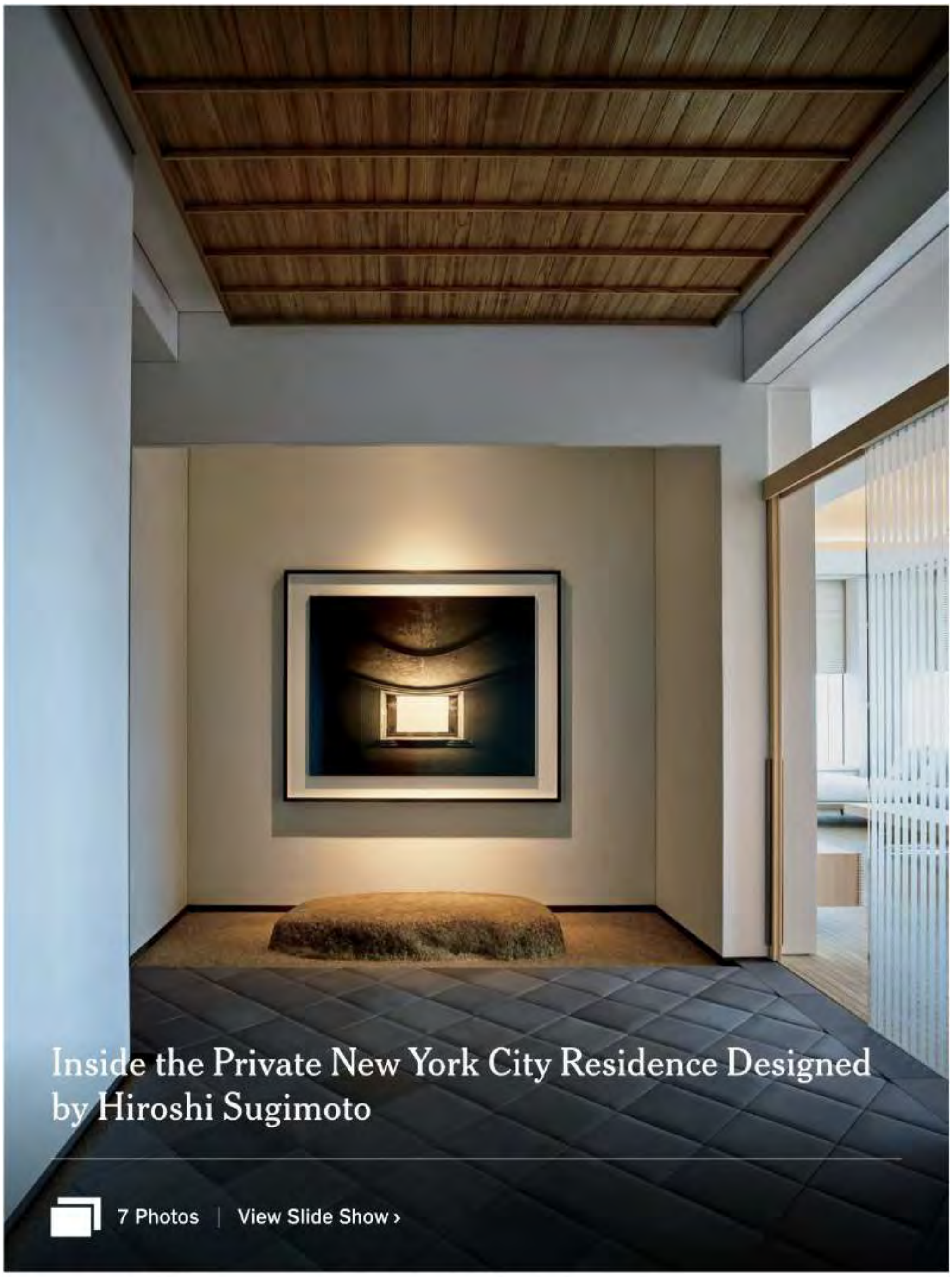
The artist Hiroshi Sugimoto's first architectural project in New York City is a defiant celebration of a bygone age.

By Thessaly La Force
Feb. 6, 2019

THE ORIGINAL IDEA wasn't very ambitious: a tearoom in an empty apartment. Though not just any tearoom: This would be a tearoom that served as a work of art. The artist Hiroshi Sugimoto, 70, had made tearooms before. There is one in his Chelsea studio in New York City; in 2014, he created "Mondrian," a glass teahouse on the island of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice that debuted during the city's architecture biennial. The couple who had made the request were devoted collectors of Asian art and already owned works by him. They understood that to Sugimoto, who was born and raised in Tokyo, where he still lives half the year, the tea ceremony is more than just a cultural ritual. As he has written:

> In the sixteenth century it became the custom for cultivated Japanese people of a certain social status to enjoy the rituals of the tea ceremony. The quotidian act of preparing a cup of tea for a visitor was raised to the level of art, with meticulous care lavished upon the unique goal of entertaining one's guests. In a small room, a single but magnificent picture would be hung. Flowers to set the picture off were arranged in the alcove. Especially strict attention went into selecting a bowl of the right color and shape from which to drink the tea. Finally, every movement of the host conducting the ceremony had to be as graceful as a dance by Nijinsky.

Sugimoto's point was that the Japanese tea ceremony possesses the same elements of art valued in the West: There is dance in the movement of the person performing the ceremony, music in the sound of the water moving between vessels and states of cold and hot, sculpture in the form of the ceramic bowls. The earliest record of tea being grown in Japan dates to the ninth century, when a Japanese monk, having brought seeds back from China, served tea to Emperor Saga in 815. The ceremony as we know it today was largely developed in the 16th century by the tea master Sen no Rikyu. It is intended as a marriage of practicality — to unite enemies over a cup of tea — and art. The harmony and gracefulness of the performance is almost as crucial as the quality of the tea being poured. Though Sugimoto has made his name as an artist who has long questioned the meaning of an image — consider his earliest photographs, beginning in the 1970s, of the dioramas at the American Museum of Natural History, in which tableaus of animals and primitive man took on an uncanny reality when framed by Sugimoto's lens, or his 1990s images of architectural masterpieces, where monumental buildings shimmer out of focus like an early Gerhard Richter painting — he is also a cultural completist, someone who finds his inspirations from both the ancient world and the contemporary. To Sugimoto, dismissing the tea ceremony as nostalgic or quaintly historical is to ignore its aesthetic meaning in the context of contemporary art.


Inside the Private New York City Residence Designed by Hiroshi Sugimoto
7 Photos
View Slide Show ›

Photograph by Anthony Cotsifas. Styled by Michael Reynolds

But as Sugimoto contemplated the commission, the idea of “just a tearoom” began to metamorphose into something bigger, more ambitious. The couple’s original architect had dropped out, leaving the 7,700-square-foot apartment, located on an upper floor of a skyscraper in the middle of Manhattan, untouched, with bare walls and dusty cement floors. The couple had already visited a few architectural works of Sugimoto’s in Tokyo, including a restaurant in Aoyama and an art gallery in Ginza. They wondered: Would Sugimoto be interested in designing the entire apartment? He agreed, though both sides were unaware that it would eventually require four years, multiple trips to Japan, the shipping of rare materials (stones salvaged from an old Kyoto tram station, enormous planks of ancient cedar wood) from Japan to New York, the flying in and housing of specialized craftsmen from Japan to complete finishing details, the training of New York-based contractors in other site-specific tasks and the dedicated input of several experts, including the Brooklyn-based architects Susan Yun and Felix Ade of Yun Architecture; the main contractor, Xhema of New York; and the former curator of the bonsai collection at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Julian Velasco, who imported and shaped two ficus trees grown in Florida, 75 and 85 years old, for an indoor garden Sugimoto designed.

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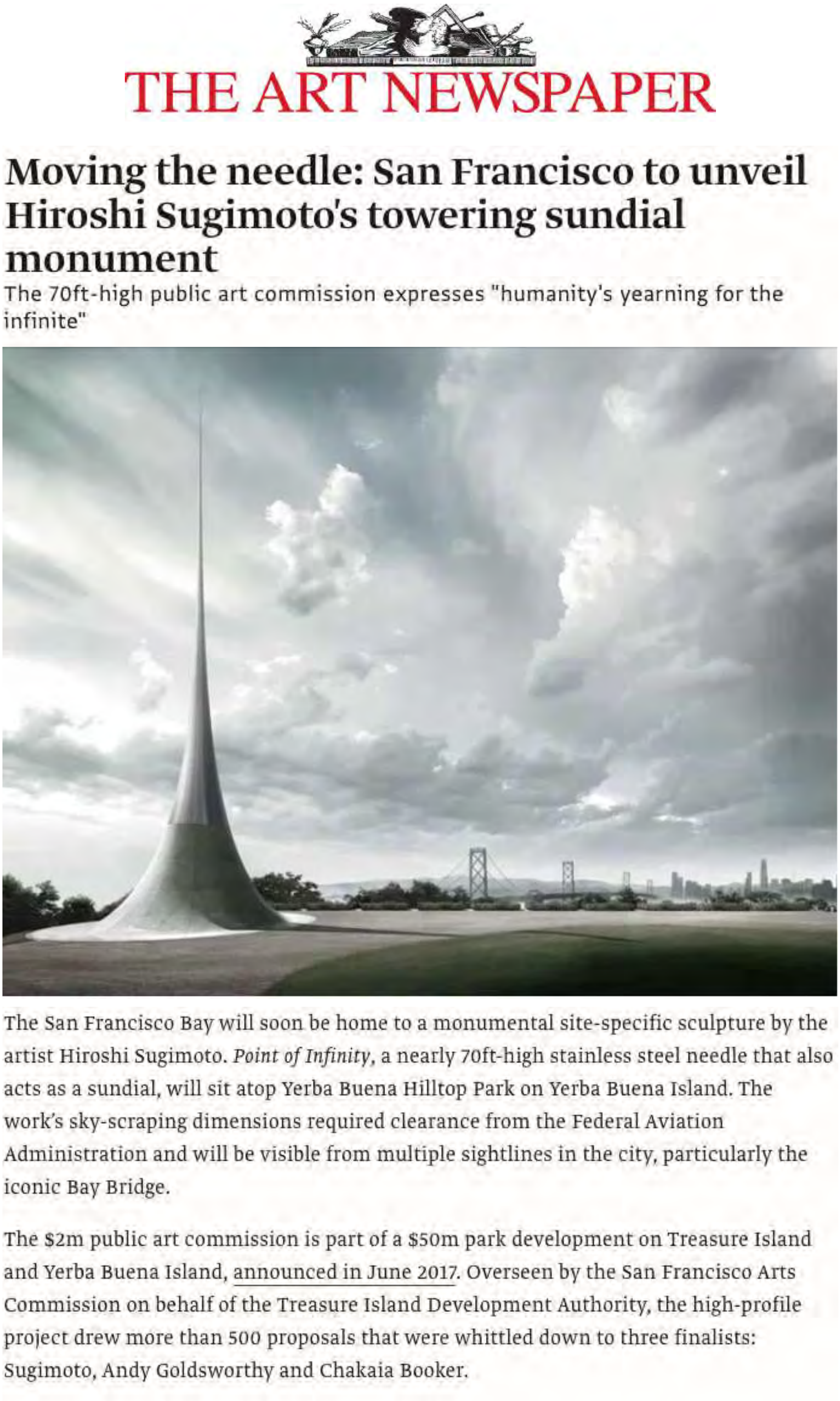
The Art Newspaper
13 January 2023



THE ART NEWSPAPER

Moving the needle: San Francisco to unveil Hiroshi Sugimoto's towering sundial monument

The 70ft-high public art commission expresses "humanity's yearning for the infinite"

The San Francisco Bay will soon be home to a monumental site-specific sculpture by the artist Hiroshi Sugimoto. *Point of Infinity*, a nearly 70ft-high stainless steel needle that also acts as a sundial, will sit atop Yerba Buena Hilltop Park on Yerba Buena Island. The work's sky-scraping dimensions required clearance from the Federal Aviation Administration and will be visible from multiple sightlines in the city, particularly the iconic Bay Bridge.

The $2m public art commission is part of a $50m park development on Treasure Island and Yerba Buena Island, announced in June 2017. Overseen by the San Francisco Arts Commission on behalf of the Treasure Island Development Authority, the high-profile project drew more than 500 proposals that were whittled down to three finalists: Sugimoto, Andy Goldsworthy and Chakaia Booker.

Nearly five years after Sugimoto's appointment, little about the project has been revealed —until now. As the San Francisco public art commissioner, Jill Manton, tells *The Art Newspaper*, "It's taken a number of years. I've gotten used to saying it's on 'city time'— there was a long pause between the idea and the reality because it was a complicated project."

Sugimoto himself has only just approved the final fabrication of the sculpture. The piece underwent "a dry fit" on 8 December to ensure that all its parts could be assembled correctly. The work will be shipped in February, and the journey to San Francisco's port will take around two months. The opening is currently planned for May.

Point of Infinity is not an arbitrary title—the work is based on the mathematical formula for infinity. According to the artist's project proposal, the starting point was "not to 'make' a sculptural shape but to ask myself what should be 'given' to this very specific place". He set out to explore the limits of human memory and invention, conceiving "a hyperbolic curve that would suggest both infinity and eternity: two converging curved lines, getting closer and closer but never meeting".

"In the material world, it is physically impossible to make a point that reaches all the way to infinity," writes Sugimoto. "What I can do, however, is suggest infinity by making an approximate point that can exist in the material world, as a mathematically modeled structure with a 1 1/8-inch-wide tip."

The sundial-monument also evokes the Tower of the Sun, the centrepiece of the 1939 World's Fair in San Francisco, for which Treasure Island was originally constructed. A large stone will be etched with the position of the sun's shadow on the vernal and autumnal equinoxes at noon. "The creation of the pyramids is shrouded in mystery. By contrast, this tower will act as a symbol expressing humanity's yearning for the infinite even 50 centuries in the future," the artist writes.

The commission came about somewhat circuitously, Manton explains. She had approached Sugimoto's San Francisco dealer, Fraenkel Gallery, to ask if the artist would be interested in creating a public work for San Francisco International Airport, and then casually mentioned the Treasure Island opportunity. "Once he heard about it, he was dead set on applying," Manton says. "I have to say that Sugimoto's [proposed] work really was singularly the most stunning and exquisite." The project was put to a selection panel (and presented to the public, though they didn't have a direct vote) which chose *Point of Infinity*.

A city like San Francisco, known as a haven for both artists and patrons, is often caught between serving community and capital interests. When the development masterplan was first unveiled, Manton caught wind and petitioned the mayor's office to "make Treasure Island a destination for the arts" that would "benefit the public realm instead of private art on private property". Through the city's Percent for Art policy, which levies a 1% fee on private developers to finance public art initiatives, Treasure Island "will generate about $50 million over the 20-year course of the development project", she explains.

Sugimoto's project is the first big step in achieving that plan—but it doesn't end there. The San Francisco Arts Commission has recently engaged five photographers to document the evolution of the island over the next year, launched a youth photography programme, and temporary exhibitions of public sculptures are in the works. The organisation is also gearing up to commission a public artwork for the city's Waterfront Plaza. All of this is "not only cultural development, but community engagement and urban development", Manton says, adding: "I feel like this very much fits into how the arts can be utilised for the greater good."

The New York Times
07 December 2021

The New York Times

A stacked stone sculpture at Hiroshi Sugimoto's Enoura Observatory, about an hour from Tokyo on Japan's eastern coast. Shina Peng for The New York Times

By Hiroshi Sugimoto
Mr. Sugimoto is an artist, architect and writer.

Dec. 7, 2021

This personal reflection is part of a series called Turning Points, in which writers explore what critical moments from this year might mean for the year ahead. You can read more by visiting the Turning Points series page.

Turning Point: *For some stranded away from home, the seemingly endless months of the pandemic became a kind of sabbatical.*

In medieval times, people typically lived out their entire lives in the same community. It was only with the advent of modernity and the invention of trains, automobiles and airplanes that people started to broadly roam the surface of the earth. Even an artist like me can circle the earth two-and-a-half times, as I did in 2019. I'm usually based in New York, and my ever-expanding workload comprised solo exhibitions, lectures, theater productions and architectural projects. Then came Covid-19. I happened to be in Japan when the pandemic began. Because of the global shutdown, I have rediscovered the simple pleasure of living in the same community — in this case the Shirokane district of Tokyo — for more than a year and a half.

In 1665 London, the plague was rampant. Isaac Newton retreated to Woolsthorpe-by-Colsterworth, his native village in eastern England, for a year and a half to avoid the spread of infection. There he threw himself into his research. This was when he came up with the theory of gravity, after witnessing an apple fall. This was when, after setting up a prism on the second floor of his house, he discovered that daylight refracts into a spectrum of seven colors. This was when he developed his theory on infinitesimal calculus. This work laid the foundations of modern physics and mathematics. Some good can come out of a pandemic. My work as a photographer owes a debt of gratitude to Newton's prism experiments then.

I chose to follow Newton's example, treating these 18 months in Japan as a sabbatical and focusing intently on my work. In my case, that meant pushing my final work — the one that will be my legacy — closer to completion. I have called this project the Enoura Observatory, a multidisciplinary cultural complex that includes a gallery, two stages for the performing arts, a teahouse, shrine and numerous pavilions. It is set on 10 acres of hillside overlooking Sagami Bay in the Kataura district of Odawara, and the architecture hews to a style that the ancients once built for the observation of the heavens. Seven thousand years ago, humans began erecting structures to verify that the sun rises in the east and sets in the west, and that time progresses as the seasons change. I imagine this gave them a sense of place and purpose in the universe. These archaeoastronomical structures are now reduced to ruins in places like Egypt, Peru and Ireland.

At the Enoura Observatory, a 100-meter-long gallery space overlooking Sagami Bay. Shina Peng for The New York Times

Civilizations rise and fall. In a bid to prepare for the possible collapse of our modern civilization, I am making a garden that will devolve beautifully into ruins of stone. Perhaps someday a future society, with little knowledge of our time, will discover this site and will ponder its meaning.

Here at Enoura, where I toil every day, I have appointed myself master of a crew of stonemasons. For guidance I refer to "Sakuteiki," or "Notes on Garden Design," written by Tachibana Toshitsuna in the 11th century. In his book, Tachibana states that the most important thing is "to listen to the voices of the stones." Each stone has its own unique character. By listening to the stone and recognizing this character, I can identify the purpose of each one and see how they need to come together to work in harmony.

While I have been unable to leave Japan, I have been working remotely on my next major project, in Washington, D.C. I have taken on the challenge of revitalizing the sculpture garden of the Hirshhorn Museum. Gordon Bunshaft, the architect of the Hirshhorn and designer of the original garden, was deeply influenced by the stone gardens of medieval Japan. Inspired by Bunshaft's dream of a modernist stone garden, I decided that a Japanese dry stone wall could act as a symbolic link between the ancient and the modern, providing the perfect background for the museum's modernist sculptures.

Just before the outbreak of Covid-19, I was visiting quarries on the East Coast of the United States, listening to the voices of their stones. Now as I work to build the Enoura Observatory, while listening to the voices of the stones, I think of the Hirshhorn sculpture garden. The stones that link these two sites, halfway around the world, existed long before the advent of humanity, and their voices will continue to endure long after the fall of our civilization.

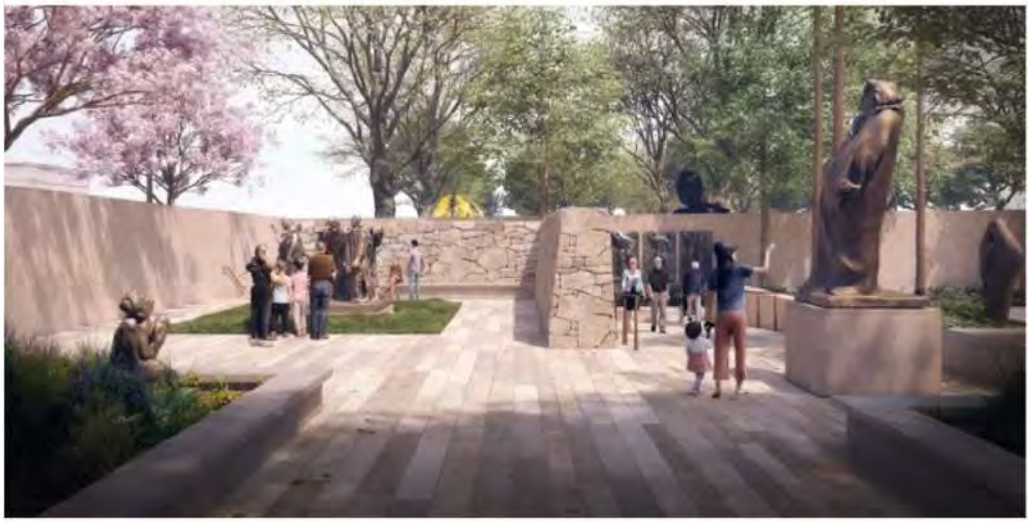
Hiroshi Sugimoto is an artist, architect and writer.

The Art Newspaper
2 December 2021

THE ART NEWSPAPER

Federal agency approves disputed redesign of Hirshhorn Museum's Modernist sculpture garden

National Capital Planning Commission welcomes revisions to Hiroshi Sugimoto's proposal for an expanded reflecting pool and stacked stone walls



Rendering of the redesigned Hirshhorn Museum sculpture garden
Courtesy of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

After a two-year debate that pitted preservationists against the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, DC, the federal National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) approved a controversial redesign of the art institution's Modernist sculpture garden today. The vote was 6-0, with one abstention.

The commission's decision appears to be the last hurdle in federal approvals for the $60m renovation, with construction expected to begin in the fall of 2022 and to last for three years. The Commission of Fine Arts voted 5-2 in July to approve the project, which potentially could be completed in time for the Hirshhorn's 50th-anniversary celebrations in 2024-25.

Critics of the redesign, which the museum says is intended to bolster the 1.5-acre garden's visibility along the National Mall and enhance the comfort of visitors, had accused planners of violating the Brutalist 1974 aesthetic of Gordon Bunshaft, who designed the museum and garden. They also expressed concern that it would mar the vision of Lester Collins, the landscape architect who added trees and vegetation as a counter to the unremitting sun baking the garden's walkways in 1981.

The museum enlisted the renowned Japanese artist and architect Hiroshi Sugimoto in 2019 to execute the redesign. His plan calls for opening and modernising an underground tunnel below Jefferson Drive that connects the garden with the museum's plaza, a change that has generally drawn applause. The redesign also added new entrances, a flexible central space for performance art and temporary exhibitions, and a series of interconnected outdoor "galleries" with stacked stone walls for the museum's sculptures.

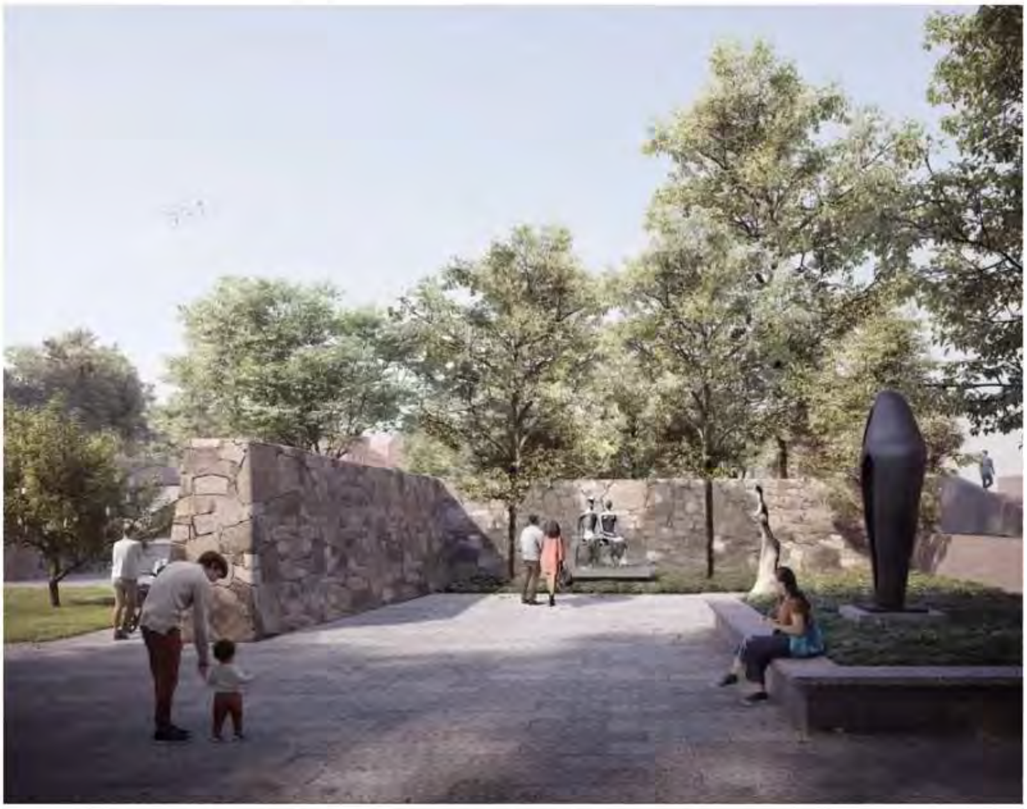
Artist and architect Hiroshi Sugimoto in the lobby of the Hirshhorn Museum
Photo by Farrah Skeiky. Courtesy of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

Of particular concern to Modern landscape enthusiasts and preservationists were Sugimoto's plans for an extension to the garden's original rectangular reflecting pool, whose shape critically echoed a window and balcony that Bunshaft designed for the museum's concrete and granite cylindrical building. They also objected to the substitution of Japanese-inspired stacked stone for concrete in a deteriorating interior partition wall, saying that it would clash with Bunshaft's smooth concrete surfaces. Last December, the NCPC instructed the Hirshhorn to either revise those elements or provide a rationale for them.

The museum and Sugimoto responded this summer with a counterproposal: the apron they had proposed to add to three sides of the garden's signature reflecting pool would be eliminated, and a new pool of similar dimensions with an art and performance platform would be installed to the south. The inner partition wall, lowered to improve sight lines, would be reconstructed in concrete rather than stacked stone. They emphasized that the other stacked stone walls envisaged by Sugimoto for the garden would be compatible with the colour of the garden's concrete perimeter wall.

A series of commissioners applauded the redesign at today's meeting, suggesting that it addressed the key concerns of preservationists while advancing the overall goal of making the garden more hospitable to visitors and meeting the museum's programming needs. "I really do appreciate the substantial modification," said one of the commission's members, Peter May. "I'm surprised by how much it has changed." He acknowledged that some preservationists were unlikely to be satisfied: "I'm sympathetic to those questions, but it is a judgment call," he said. He added that the solution struck "the right balance" between contemporary needs and historical concerns.

In a statement greeting the decision, Melissa Chiu, director of the Hirshhorn, praised a "robust public process that allowed us to hear and incorporate the views of so many who care deeply about the garden".



A rendering of the redesigned east garden of the Hirshhorn Museum sculpture garden
Courtesy Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

But Charles A. Birnbaum, president and chief executive of the nonprofit Cultural Landscape Foundation, a leading critic of the stacked stone walls and the proposed change to the reflecting pool, suggested that Modernist preservation concerns had been given short shrift in the approval process. "The outcome today concerning the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden redesign demonstrates that nationally significant works of landscape architecture, especially important Modernist designs in the nation's capital, continue to be held to a different standard than building architecture by their stewards and regulatory agencies," he said in a statement.

Birnbaum has particularly faulted the approving agencies for failing to assess the redesign's impact on the visual and spatial characteristics of the garden.

Liz Waytkus, executive director of the nonprofit group Docomomo US, which champions the preservation of Modern architecture, also lamented the commission's decision. "We want to celebrate changes like the reopened underground section," she said of the redesign in an interview. But she expressed concerns about the addition of the second pool, saying that it could overwhelm the garden's central area by diminishing the "negative spaces" that throw crucial design elements of the museum and garden into relief.

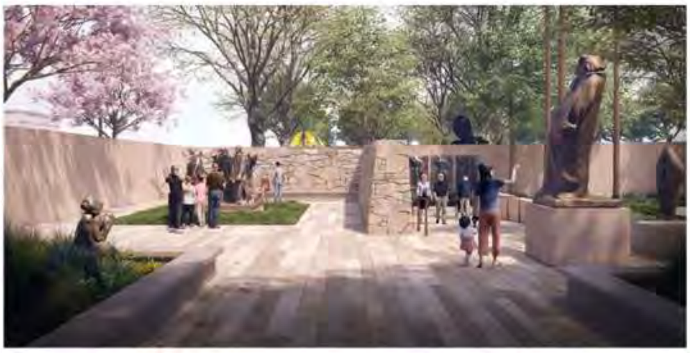
"You need negative space when you design so you can emphasise what you have designed, and when you just throw a lot of garbage in there, you get a lot of garbage," she said.

The redesign now appears to be a "done deal", however, she adds. "We will still be in this process," Waytkus says. "There's more time for discussion, but I don't expect that there is anything more for us to do."

Smithsonian
2 December 2021

Smithsonian

HIRSHHORN WINS APPROVAL FOR HIROSHI SUGIMOTO'S SCULPTURE GARDEN REVITALIZATION



Dec. 2, 2021

Hirshhorn Wins Approval for Hiroshi Sugimoto's Sculpture Garden Revitalization
Multi-Year Federal Review Process Concludes with Mission-Forward, More Accessible Design

The Smithsonian's Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden has successfully completed the public consultation process for the revitalization of its Sculpture Garden. The National Capital Planning Commission voted to approve the final proposal, joining the Commission of Fine Arts, which voted on July 15 to approve the project.

"We welcome these approvals, which have followed a robust public process that allowed us to hear and incorporate the views of so many who care deeply about the garden," Hirshhorn Director Melissa Chiu said. "The final design by Hiroshi Sugimoto, the renowned Japanese artist and architect, will enhance the experience of millions of Hirshhorn visitors in coming years."

With the approvals, the Smithsonian Institution and the Hirshhorn Museum will move forward with site development plans proposed in the spring of 2019. The plans were reviewed and revised in a series of eight public consultation meetings which addressed the museum's mission, as well as the sculpture garden's architectural legacy and landmark status.

Sugimoto's design accomplishes two important goals: making the Sculpture Garden more accessible and inviting to the 30 million people who pass it on the National Mall each year and offering flexible venues for the kinds of large-scale sculpture and time-based and performance works that are the hallmarks of contemporary art today.

The entrance on the north perimeter will be broadened from 20 to 60 feet, widening sightlines into the Sculpture Garden and doubling the number of ramp entries. On the south side, the design will reopen the underground passageway connecting the Sculpture Garden to the Hirshhorn's distinctive circular plaza and museum building.

The Hirshhorn is the only Smithsonian museum directly integrated into the National Mall. The revitalization project will connect the 1.5-acre garden on the National Mall with the 4-acre plaza surrounding the museum, which welcomes 1 million visitors annually. The project will address long-overdue repairs to infrastructure, increase the Hirshhorn's display of modernist sculpture in the east garden by almost 50 percent, and honor the vision of landscape architect Lester Collins, who redesigned the garden in 1981, by expanding the number of native plantings in the garden by 70 percent, thus offering a 150 percent increase in shade and seating.

"Our vision for the Hirshhorn, the only national museum of modern art free and open to the public year-round, champions artists first and foremost," Chiu said. "The art of our time is often immersive, interactive and ready to break free of walls, and we believe that a museum of the 21st century needs to be responsive to the art being made today." She noted that the Hirshhorn's original architect, Gordon Bunshaft, took the same approach when he designed the museum half a century ago.

Sugimoto has adapted and reenvisioned the garden, which Bunshaft said was inspired by Japanese gardens, with a thoughtful, considered and contemplative approach, Chiu said. "Sugimoto's vision is very much aligned with the garden's original influences but takes a view toward the future. Our next chapter is one that is more inclusive and accessible and elevates the experiences and voices of today," she said.

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About Hiroshi Sugimoto

Sugimoto has had major exhibitions in museums and galleries throughout the world, including the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Serpentine Gallery. His work is held in leading collections, including the Museum of Modern Art, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, the Centre Georges Pompidou and the National Gallery in London. Sugimoto has had a long relationship with the Hirshhorn, beginning with his first major U.S. retrospective in 2006 and, most recently, his innovative redesign of the museum's lobby. He has designed a variety of indoor and outdoor spaces that create a beautiful linkage between art and architecture, including a series of installations at Versailles (2019), the Atrium Garden for the Japan Society in New York (2017) and the Enoura Observatory for the Odawara Art Foundation in Japan (2017).

About the Sculpture Garden

Since opening in 1974, the Sculpture Garden has seen layered periods of significance, including Bunshaft's original design and Collins's subsequent 1981 redesign. This next phase of the Sculpture Garden—the first comprehensive update since in more than 40 years—under Sugimoto's stewardship will allow it to meet the needs of the 21st century and add to the museum's palimpsest of remarkable design. Sugimoto's deep roots with the Hirshhorn extend back to 2006, when his career survey exhibition was held at the museum. Years later, his thoughtful reconsideration of the museum's lobby transformed the space into an inclusive, town square–style meeting place. Now he will continue the Hirshhorn's redesign journey, with an anticipated opening of the revitalized Sculpture Garden in 2024–25, the Hirshhorn's 50th anniversary year.

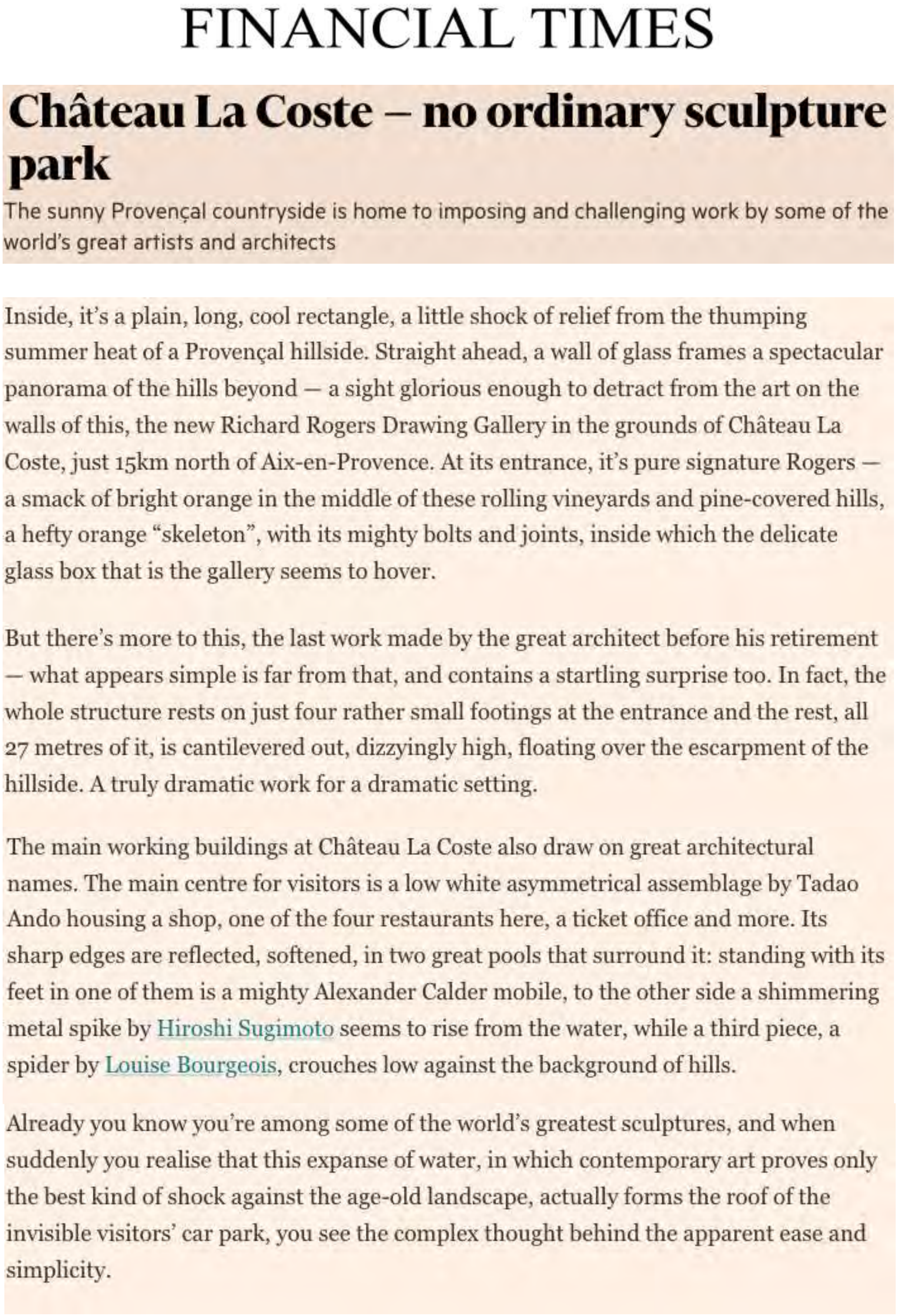
About the Hirshhorn

The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden is the national museum of modern and contemporary art and a leading voice for 21st-century art and culture. Part of the Smithsonian, the Hirshhorn is located prominently on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. Its holdings encompass one of the most important collections of postwar American and European art in the world. The Hirshhorn presents diverse exhibitions and offers an array of public programs on the art of our time—free to all. The Hirshhorn Museum is open Wednesday–Sunday, 10 a.m.–5:30 p.m. The outdoor sculpture garden is open daily 10 a.m.–4:30 p.m. For more information, visit hirshhorn.si.edu. Follow the museum on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube.

Images (left–right): A rendering of the new design for the Hirshhorn's Sculpture Garden by Hiroshi Sugimoto, East Garden summer view with expanded shade and seating. Credit: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

Hiroshi Sugimoto in the lobby of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden. Artist: Hiroshi Sugimoto; architect: NMRL/Tomoyuki Sakakida. Photo: Farrah Skeiky

Financial Times
25 September 2021



FINANCIAL TIMES

Château La Coste – no ordinary sculpture park

The sunny Provençal countryside is home to imposing and challenging work by some of the world's great artists and architects

Inside, it's a plain, long, cool rectangle, a little shock of relief from the thumping summer heat of a Provençal hillside. Straight ahead, a wall of glass frames a spectacular panorama of the hills beyond — a sight glorious enough to detract from the art on the walls of this, the new Richard Rogers Drawing Gallery in the grounds of Château La Coste, just 15km north of Aix-en-Provence. At its entrance, it's pure signature Rogers — a smack of bright orange in the middle of these rolling vineyards and pine-covered hills, a hefty orange "skeleton", with its mighty bolts and joints, inside which the delicate glass box that is the gallery seems to hover.

But there's more to this, the last work made by the great architect before his retirement — what appears simple is far from that, and contains a startling surprise too. In fact, the whole structure rests on just four rather small footings at the entrance and the rest, all 27 metres of it, is cantilevered out, dizzyingly high, floating over the escarpment of the hillside. A truly dramatic work for a dramatic setting.

The main working buildings at Château La Coste also draw on great architectural names. The main centre for visitors is a low white asymmetrical assemblage by Tadao Ando housing a shop, one of the four restaurants here, a ticket office and more. Its sharp edges are reflected, softened, in two great pools that surround it: standing with its feet in one of them is a mighty Alexander Calder mobile, to the other side a shimmering metal spike by Hiroshi Sugimoto seems to rise from the water, while a third piece, a spider by Louise Bourgeois, crouches low against the background of hills.

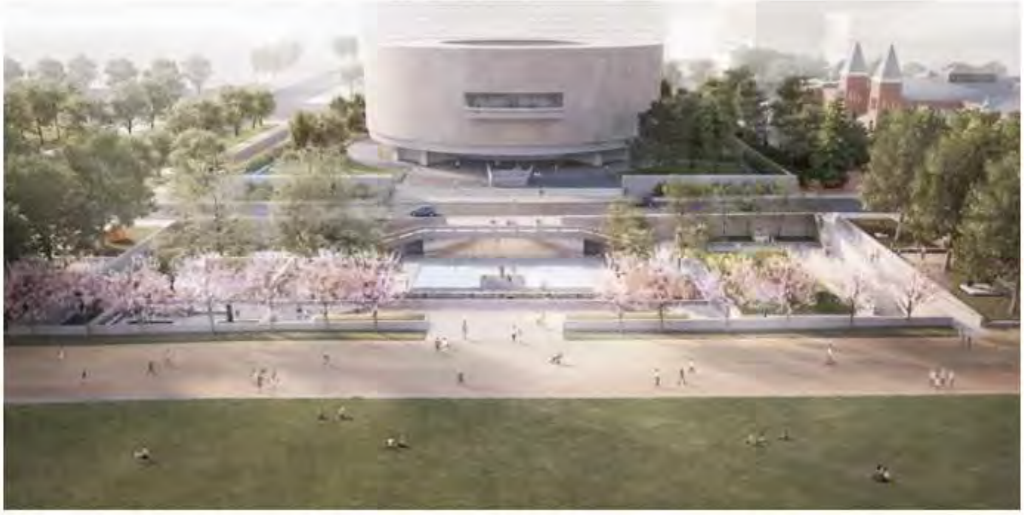
Already you know you're among some of the world's greatest sculptures, and when suddenly you realise that this expanse of water, in which contemporary art proves only the best kind of shock against the age-old landscape, actually forms the roof of the invisible visitors' car park, you see the complex thought behind the apparent ease and simplicity.

The Art Newspaper
7 July 2021

THE ART NEWSPAPER

Hiroshi Sugimoto's new Hirshhorn sculpture garden will create a more open and artistically inspired future for the museum

The artist's designs for the sunken sculpture park creating a more inviting space for visitors coming from the National Mall



A rendering of the design for the Hirshhorn's Sculpture Garden by Hiroshi Sugimoto, southward aerial from the National Mall in spring
Credit: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

As the chief curator and deputy director of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, DC for 14 years, I watched visitors be drawn hypnotically to Gordon Bunshaft's dynamic circular building on the National Mall. Yet just as often, these same visitors, and countless more who strolled along the Mall, often passed by the adjacent sunken sculpture garden, unaware of its concealed beauty and the importance of the objects on display—a mere few feet from their path.

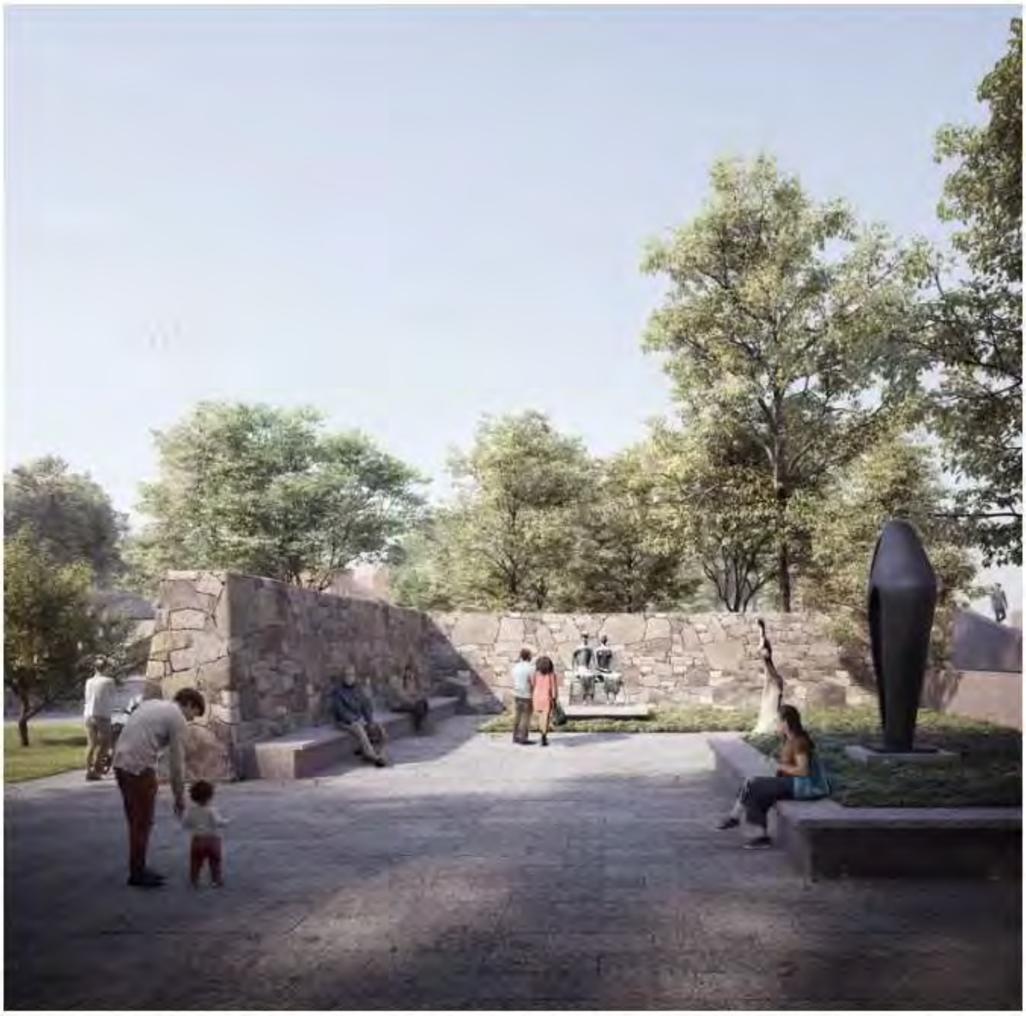
The garden will be more visible if the Hirshhorn is allowed to move forward with a thoughtful and sensible renovation designed by the artist and architect Hiroshi Sugimoto. I cannot think of a better individual to take on this long-needed project. Through his 2006 Hirshhorn retrospective (which I co-curated with David Elliott) and his more recent reimagining of the lobby, Sugimoto thoroughly understands the building. He has a deep appreciation of old and new design, materials and composition, light and shadow, and a keen ability to balance the traditional with the progressive. In selecting Sugimoto, the Hirshhorn has identified not only an artist-architect but a bridgebuilder connecting the Modern with the contemporary.

In 1974 and 1981, respectively, Gordon Bunshaft and Lester Collins contributed their American interpretations of Japanese garden design, a convention met without reproach. In the 21st century, though, it is imperative to invite a Japanese artist-designer to add the next layer to the evolving landscape. And although he is best known as a photographer, Sugimoto has created noteworthy structural installations and architectural projects as well as rock gardens and tea houses. His Odawara Art Foundation in Japan includes galleries, an observatory, an optical glass stage, tunnels celebrating the solstice, garden paths, and two Noh theatre stages.

Hiroshi Sugimoto in lobby of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden
Photo: Farrah Skeiky

His plan for the Hirshhorn not only makes the garden more accessible by opening up the entrance from the Mall side—and potentially will bring thousands of more visitors into contact with Modern and contemporary sculpture, performance art, and the main Bunshaft building—but gives it a sense of weightlessness and playfulness while maintaining the intimacy of the submerged parcel.

It is essential to see this project in the larger context of the changing role of museums, including an ever-increasing need for agility and flexibility to respond to rapidly shifting approaches to art-making. There is also a vital requirement for audience engagement as museums take a more proactive role in this time of social change. Since the late 1970s, museums have grappled with ways to be more open, shifting away from conventional isolated repositories of rarefied objects toward centres engaged with the community. From Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano's inside-out Pompidou building and piazza to the use of an unpretentious warehouse for the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art's Geffen Contemporary to Moshe Safdie's more recent emphasis on open pavilions surrounded by nature and trails at the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, museums continue to find ways of being more interactive, current, and alive, and of dissolving boundaries between the contemplative spaces inside and the surrounding city or landscape outside.



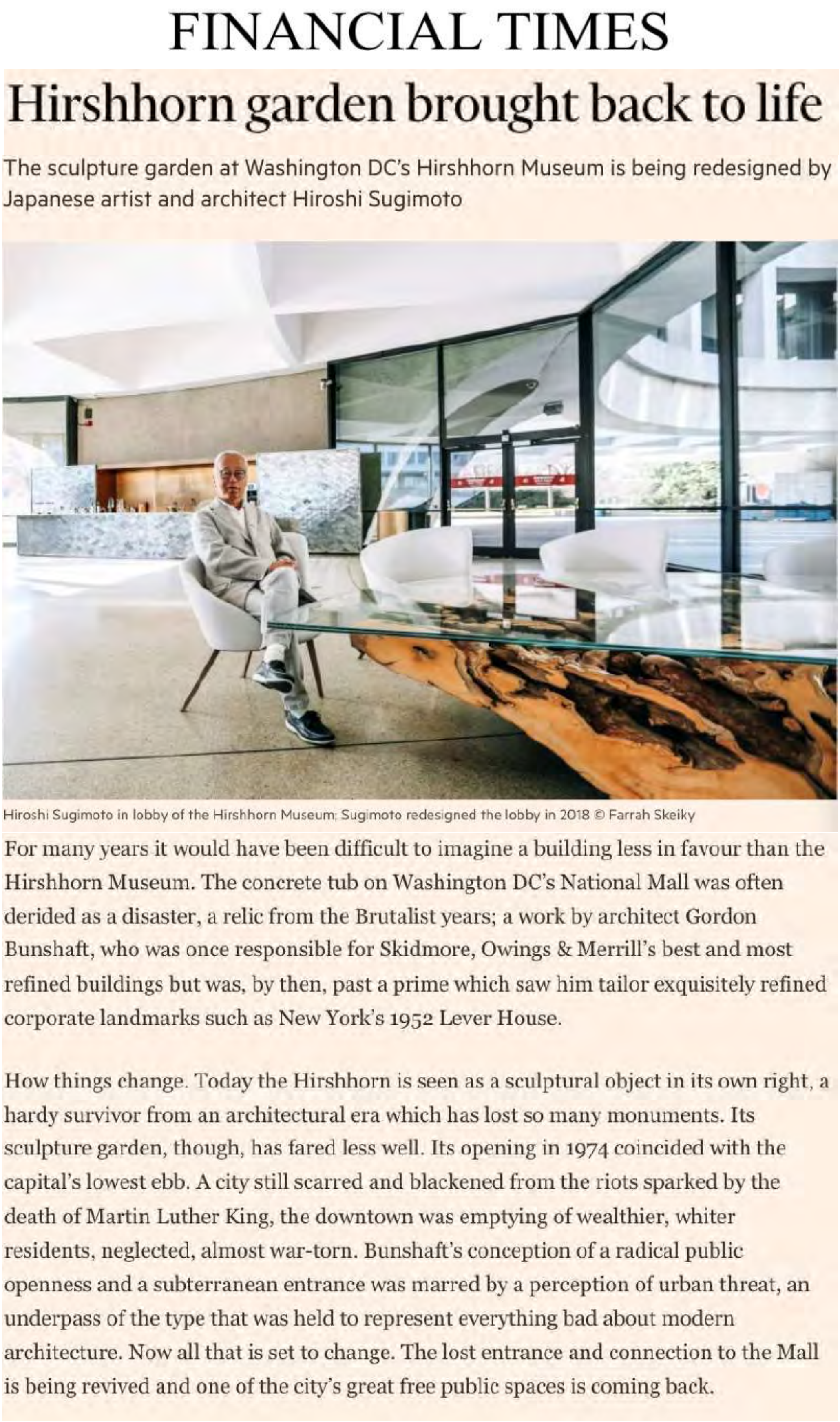
A detail from Hiroshi Sugimoto's rendering of the design for the Hirshhorn's Sculpture Garden on the National Mall features a detail of the east gallery display of Henry Moore's King and Queen and Barbara Hepworth's Figure for Landscape

Credit: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

The proposed revitalisation builds on efforts we introduced to make the Hirshhorn a living entity. Along with an emphasis on after-hours events and performances, we began bringing the garden into the contemporary realm. For example, we participated in a city-wide Yoko Ono project, *IMAGINE PEACE*, during which the artist donated a *Wish Tree* for the garden onto which visitors tied their inner dreams and desires. Doug Aitken's *SONG 1*, a 360-degree commissioned projection on the building's curved exterior walls, expanded the concept of public interaction and brought thousands of people onto the National Mall at night, as well as turning the Hirshhorn building into an everchanging piece of liquid architecture. Art, generally seen on the inside of museums, was transposed to the outside, to be seen for hours by visitors lying in the grass or glimpsed by drivers through car windshields. The new garden design will likewise expand the traditional notion of a sculpture park, including not only the fusion of landscape and sculpture but creating contemplative spaces, performance areas, and acting as a transitional passage from outside to inside, physically and psychologically.

Over the last year, the pandemic and the shocking attack on Congress in January have created a situation requiring museums on the National Mall to change and transform in even more profound ways. With the opening of the National Museum of African American History and Culture and other projects, the Smithsonian has already done an outstanding job of framing the National Mall as a place of flourishing culture with a connection to the broadest public. The Hirshhorn's garden renovation will be another step in this direction toward interaction and openness. Sugimoto's design will create an inviting space that embraces the past but looks forward to a more inclusive and artistically inspired future.

Financial Times
09 October 2020



FINANCIAL TIMES

Hirshhorn garden brought back to life

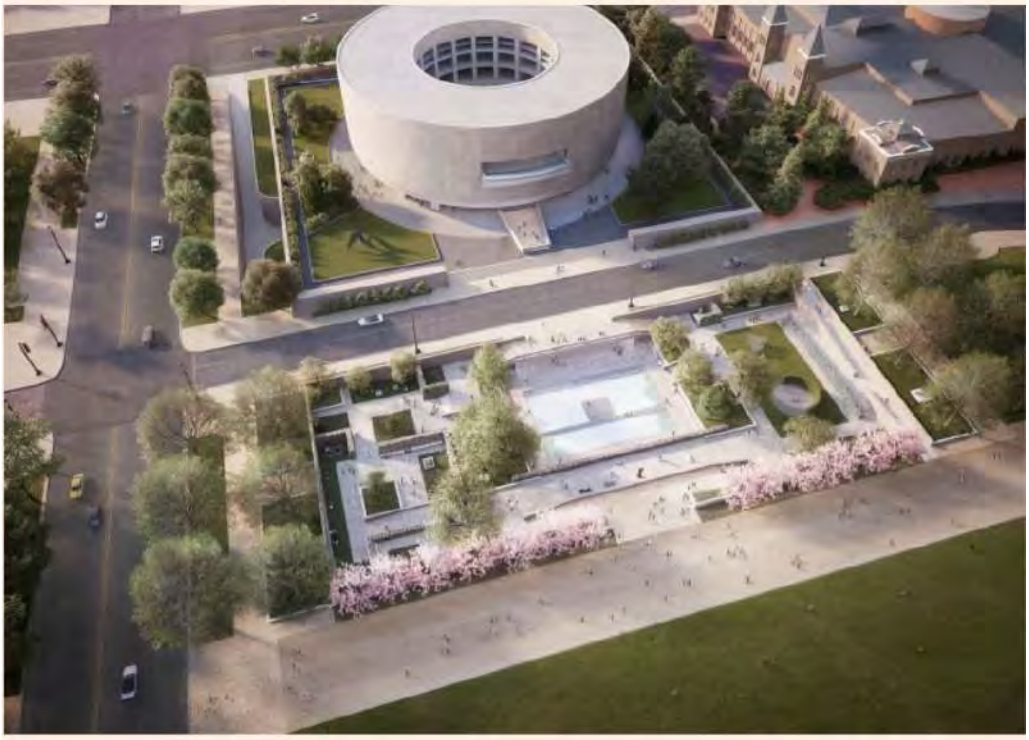
The sculpture garden at Washington DC's Hirshhorn Museum is being redesigned by Japanese artist and architect Hiroshi Sugimoto

Hiroshi Sugimoto in lobby of the Hirshhorn Museum; Sugimoto redesigned the lobby in 2018 © Farrah Skeiky

For many years it would have been difficult to imagine a building less in favour than the Hirshhorn Museum. The concrete tub on Washington DC's National Mall was often derided as a disaster, a relic from the Brutalist years; a work by architect Gordon Bunshaft, who was once responsible for Skidmore, Owings & Merrill's best and most refined buildings but was, by then, past a prime which saw him tailor exquisitely refined corporate landmarks such as New York's 1952 Lever House.

How things change. Today the Hirshhorn is seen as a sculptural object in its own right, a hardy survivor from an architectural era which has lost so many monuments. Its sculpture garden, though, has fared less well. Its opening in 1974 coincided with the capital's lowest ebb. A city still scarred and blackened from the riots sparked by the death of Martin Luther King, the downtown was emptying of wealthier, whiter residents, neglected, almost war-torn. Bunshaft's conception of a radical public openness and a subterranean entrance was marred by a perception of urban threat, an underpass of the type that was held to represent everything bad about modern architecture. Now all that is set to change. The lost entrance and connection to the Mall is being revived and one of the city's great free public spaces is coming back.

Architect, photographer and artist Hiroshi Sugimoto has already intervened into the building with a well-received lobby design completed in 2018 and he was chosen earlier this year to redesign the sculpture garden and entrance. I speak to the architect from his studio in Tokyo and ask him, frankly, what he thinks of the Hirshhorn, a building that had been controversial for so long.



Computerised rendering of Sugimoto's design for the sculpture garden, located on Washington DC's National Mall

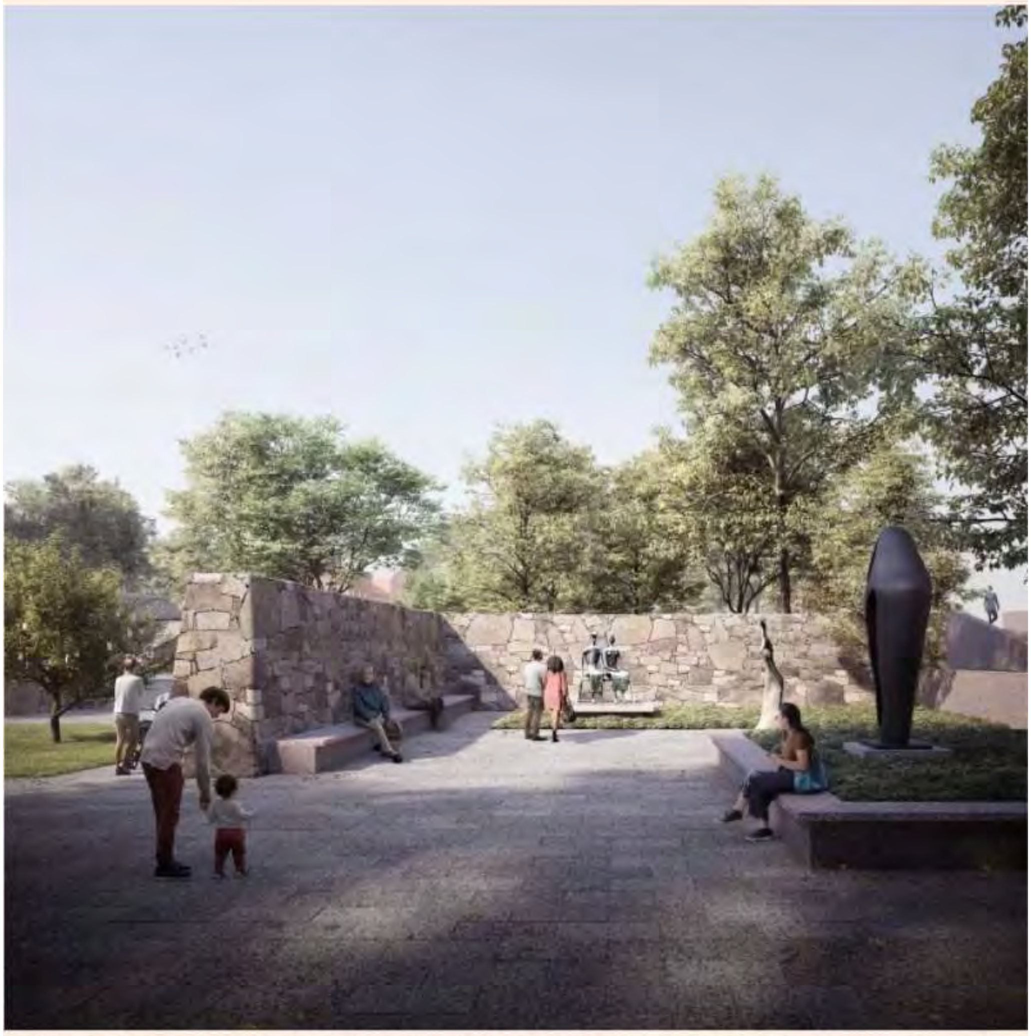
"Over 20 years," he says, "as an artist, I've had huge shows in major museums all over the world. I became a user of the spaces designed by star architects. I even published a book, in Japanese, in which I gave a score to all these buildings. So [Frank] Gehry in Bilbao scored very low as there was limited space to make my art look . . . beautiful. [Daniel] Libeskind in Ontario, nobody there knew how to turn the lights on. The opening was a nightmare. But I had a show at the Hirshhorn in 2006. I gave Bunshaft five stars."

What exactly is it that makes it work? "The space might not be friendly for all artists," he replies, "but for me it was a new challenge, not just a white cube. I had to hang the seascapes along the long, curved wall. Most architects think their spaces look better without any art.

"When the lobby redesign was completed," Sugimoto says, "I thought that was the end of my job. Then Melissa [Chiu, director of the Hirshhorn] asked me to redesign the garden and I thought it was a joke. If I'd have known how huge this job was, dealing with the bureaucracy, I'd have said no, but by the time I'd agreed there was no way to step back!"

As a keen collector of modern art, Bunshaft was himself always interested in how things should be displayed. The Hirshhorn's setting and landscape, however, had been significantly degraded from his original design.

"With the sculpture garden, this is the only museum with a presence on the National Mall," Chiu tells me. "All the other buildings are set back. Bunshaft's original plan featured a reflecting pool traversing the Mall. We want to open it up, we should be completely accessible."



Computerised rendering of the design for the sculpture garden, which features works by Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth

The curious thing is that the sculpture garden, with its remarkable collection including works by Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, Auguste Rodin, Yayoi Kusama and Yoko Ono among many others, might seem the most accessible aspect of the museum (outside the slightly forbidding concrete bunker of the museum). Yet the museum, Chiu tells me, gets 1m visitors a year and the garden only 150,000.

"What should a sculpture garden look like in the 21st century?" she asks. "It should recognise the collection and its history but also be forward looking. We've been collecting performance art, for instance; it should be alive." The centre of the revivified space will feature a stage at the centre of a new reflecting pool.

"Lester Collins, who redesigned the garden [in 1981]," says Chiu "was influenced by Chinese cup gardens [a landscape designed to draw attention to a particular object] and Bunshaft had also been influenced by Japanese gardens; Sugimoto has recognised that design aesthetic and my observation has been that he treats art, architecture and the environment so sensitively."

So what is the grand design? The artist/architect picks up his phone and treats me to a manual fly-through of the huge (and incredibly intricate and beautiful) 1/30 scale model in his studio. A row of cherry trees, shown in full, fluffy pink blossom ("Each tree," Sugimoto tells me, "took one day to create. One. Whole. Day"), form a permeable delineation between the National Mall and the museum. The garden now begins at the same level as the mall, a major change from the old, completely sunken incarnation, though a few steps later take it back down a little and the sculptures appear immediately, generously spaced, with most seen against the background of a dry stone wall.

"They're premodern walls," Sugimoto says. "It's a medieval style of Japanese architecture, I like this half-natural and half-artificial wall." It contains, perhaps, an echo of the rubbly freestone styles so popular in mid-century architecture, from the Flintstones through the modernist avant-garde, a neat background to robust chunks of modern sculpture.

The new pool is a ripple from the original, unrealised 1970s plans and Bunshaft's concrete walls are still there, though some are being substantially rebuilt after suffering decades of DC climate.

There was a little opposition to the loss of the original fabric but it seems a reasonable proposition to retain their form at least. More radical is the new entrance. "The original passage has unfortunately been closed for years," says Sugimoto, "and I wanted to revitalise this space, to remake it as a piece of art. There will be a semi-reflective curved wall in buffed stainless steel — we're testing the material in Tokyo now. It will make it look not dark but like a light tunnel. The reflections in the stainless steel will not be like a mirror but like an Impressionist painting."

> **“**
>
> **With architecture I have to explain everything in a logical way. It's been a new thing for me**

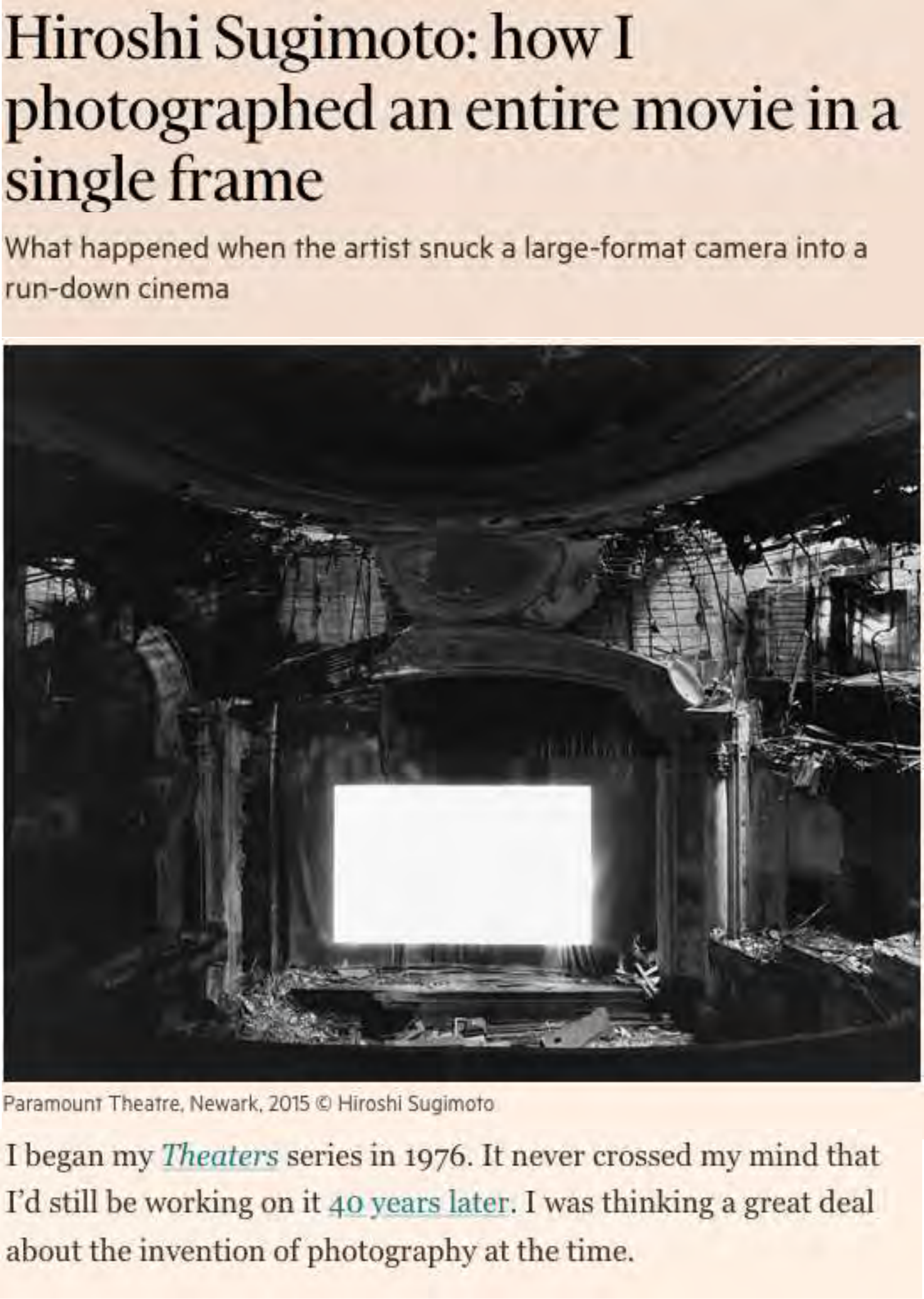
When the Hirshhorn was built, it caused a public outcry. It looked like a building at the tail-end of the fashion for concrete Brutalism and a kind of bunker aesthetic. Other buildings of its era are constantly under threat — the FBI HQ which opened the following year only a couple of blocks north, for instance, or Marcel Breuer's American Press Institute in suburban Reston, Virginia (both 1974). But what was once seen as an eyesore has become a treasure and a garden that was once deemed too threatening is being opened up again as real public space, free and easily accessible. No budget has been given but it is, according to Chiu, "a three-year project". And, in an era of social distancing, sculpture gardens certainly seem perfectly positioned as the cultural forum of the future.

Redesigning and reviving the landscape context of the museum on the US capital's most symbolic street and working with all the government agencies and codes was, of course, always going to be tricky. But it was a major step for an artist/architect whose interventions have mostly been low key, albeit often as stunning as his artworks.

"In art I make my decisions with intuition," he tells me. "But with architecture I have to explain everything in a logical way. It's been a new thing for me. And everything here becomes a political decision. I have to be agreeable and cost-conscious. It's been . . . challenging for me, a young up-and-coming architect." He looks at me and grins. Sugimoto is 72.

Financial Times
3 January 2020

FINANCIAL TIMES



Hiroshi Sugimoto: how I photographed an entire movie in a single frame

What happened when the artist snuck a large-format camera into a run-down cinema

Paramount Theatre, Newark, 2015 © Hiroshi Sugimoto

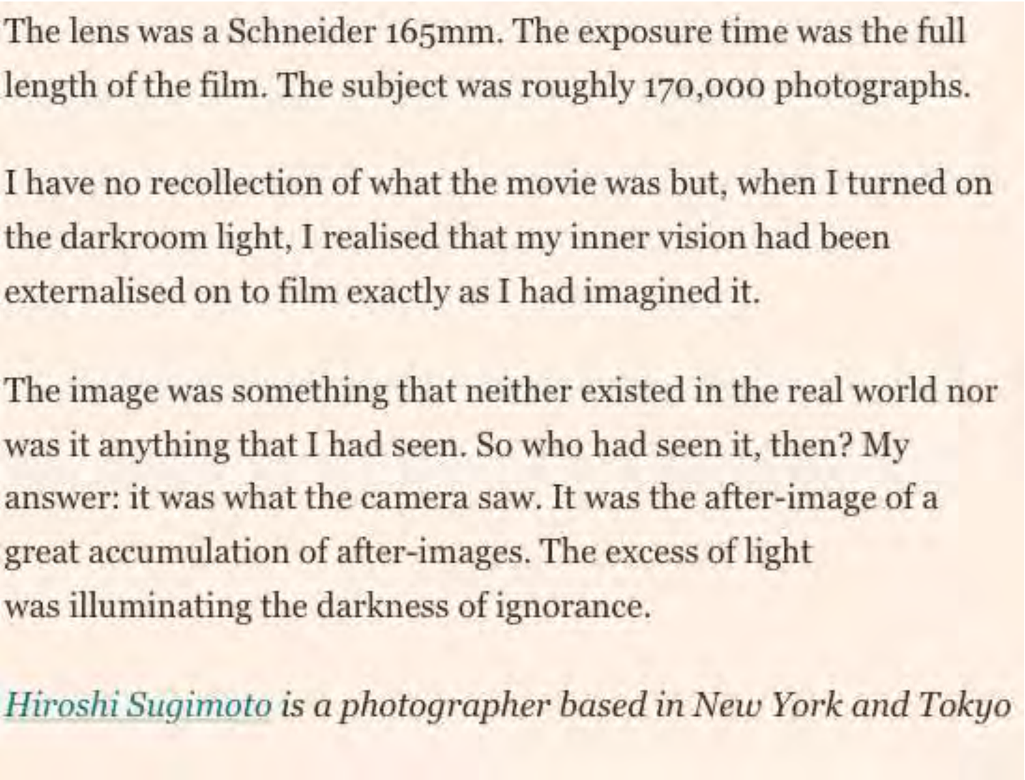
I began my *Theaters* series in 1976. It never crossed my mind that I'd still be working on it 40 years later. I was thinking a great deal about the invention of photography at the time.

A photograph fixes dead reality in the form of an after-image. But when you are shown a series of those same after-images, dead reality seems to come back to life — that's what a movie is. To watch a two-hour movie is simply to look at 172,800 photographic after-images.

Since the birth of civilisation, the human race has been fascinated by the idea of resurrection. I wanted to photograph a movie, with all its appearance of life and motion, in order to stop it again.

The movie theatre I first selected was St Marks Cinema in Manhattan's East Village. It was a rundown place that cost a dollar to get into and had a far-from-vigilant staff. I successfully smuggled in a large-format camera and stealthily set it up.

Teatro dei Rinnivati, Siena, 2014 © Courtesy the artist and Marion Goodman Gallery, New York, Paris & London



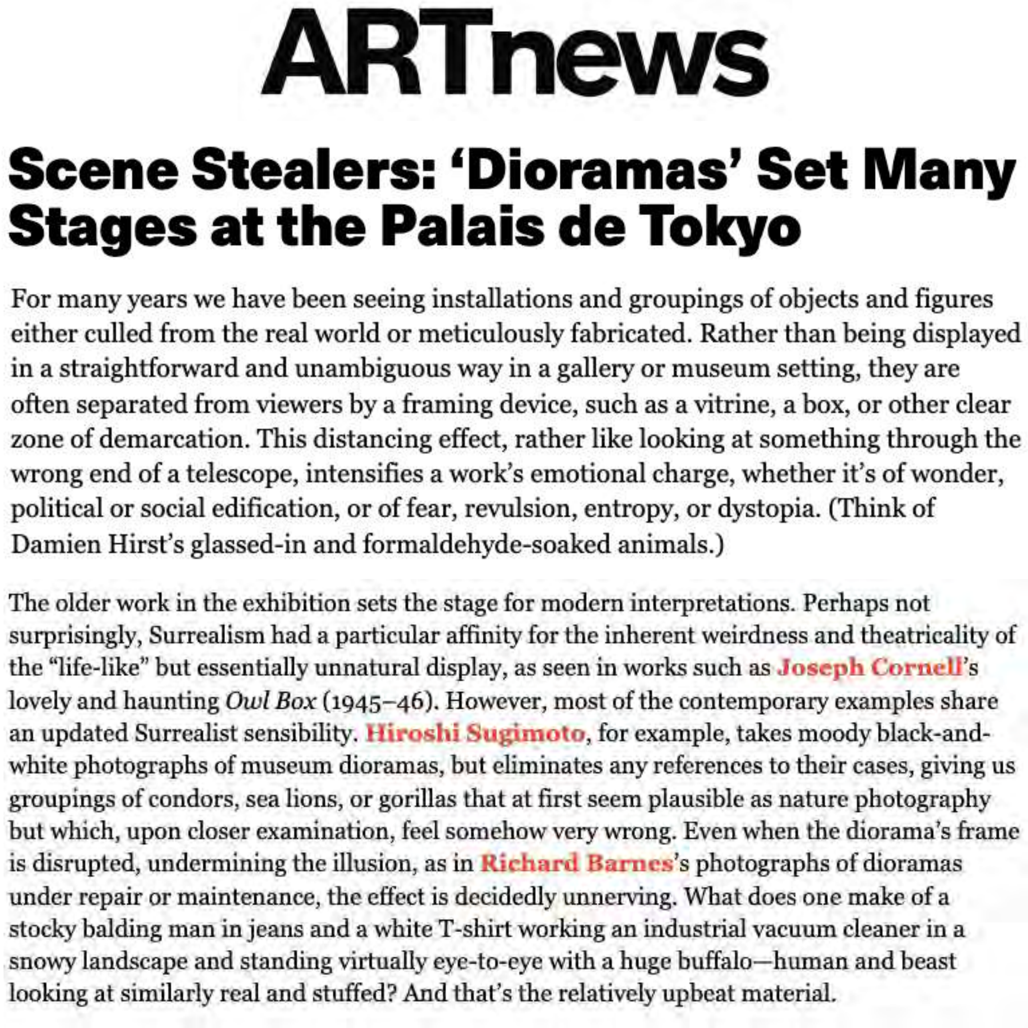
The lens was a Schneider 165mm. The exposure time was the full length of the film. The subject was roughly 170,000 photographs.

I have no recollection of what the movie was but, when I turned on the darkroom light, I realised that my inner vision had been externalised on to film exactly as I had imagined it.

The image was something that neither existed in the real world nor was it anything that I had seen. So who had seen it, then? My answer: it was what the camera saw. It was the after-image of a great accumulation of after-images. The excess of light was illuminating the darkness of ignorance.

Hiroshi Sugimoto is a photographer based in New York and Tokyo

ARTnews
21 November 2019



ARTnews

Scene Stealers: 'Dioramas' Set Many Stages at the Palais de Tokyo

For many years we have been seeing installations and groupings of objects and figures either culled from the real world or meticulously fabricated. Rather than being displayed in a straightforward and unambiguous way in a gallery or museum setting, they are often separated from viewers by a framing device, such as a vitrine, a box, or other clear zone of demarcation. This distancing effect, rather like looking at something through the wrong end of a telescope, intensifies a work's emotional charge, whether it's of wonder, political or social edification, or of fear, revulsion, entropy, or dystopia. (Think of Damien Hirst's glassed-in and formaldehyde-soaked animals.)

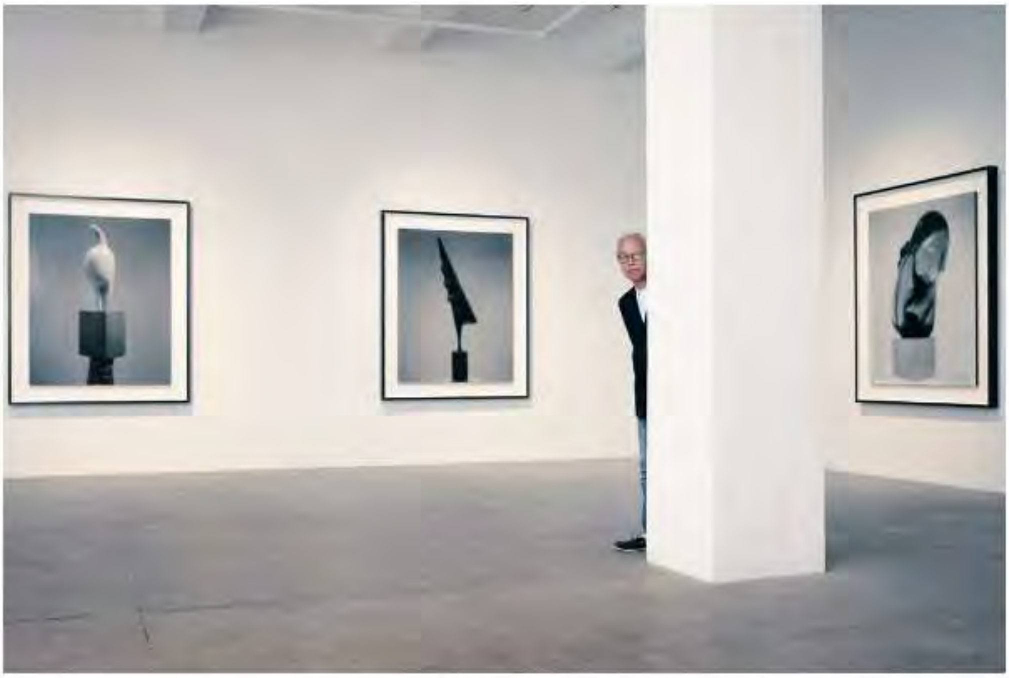
The older work in the exhibition sets the stage for modern interpretations. Perhaps not surprisingly, Surrealism had a particular affinity for the inherent weirdness and theatricality of the "life-like" but essentially unnatural display, as seen in works such as **Joseph Cornell**'s lovely and haunting *Owl Box* (1945–46). However, most of the contemporary examples share an updated Surrealist sensibility. **Hiroshi Sugimoto**, for example, takes moody black-and-white photographs of museum dioramas, but eliminates any references to their cases, giving us groupings of condors, sea lions, or gorillas that at first seem plausible as nature photography but which, upon closer examination, feel somehow very wrong. Even when the diorama's frame is disrupted, undermining the illusion, as in **Richard Barnes**'s photographs of dioramas under repair or maintenance, the effect is decidedly unnerving. What does one make of a stocky balding man in jeans and a white T-shirt working an industrial vacuum cleaner in a snowy landscape and standing virtually eye-to-eye with a huge buffalo—human and beast looking at similarly real and stuffed? And that's the relatively upbeat material.

The New York Times
01 Oct 2019

The New York Times

Hiroshi Sugimoto Has Hard Thoughts and a Soft Focus

In his new book, the photographer reveals the essence of important buildings. In conversation, he has a few unvarnished things to say about some of them.



Hiroshi Sugimoto during installation of his current exhibiton at the Marian Goodman Gallery, "Hiroshi Sugimoto: Past Presence," on view through October 26, 2019. From left to right, Sugimoto's photographs of Constantin Brancusi's "Maiastra," "The Cock," and "Mlle Pogany." Jesse Dittmar for The New York Times

By **Roberta Smith**

Published Oct. 1, 2019 Updated Oct. 3, 2019

Of all contemporary photographers, none has so rigorously explored the nature of his medium as Hiroshi Sugimoto. Since the mid-1970s, and working exclusively in black and white, he has devoted series of images to natural history dioramas, the interiors of movie palaces lighted only by their uncanny glowing screens and the historic personages of Madame Tussauds wax museum.

His photographs have stretched and reshaped the concepts of time, space and light endemic to the medium, and in the process they have altered our grasp of history, visual perception and existence itself. He has anointed fossils "the pre-photography time-recording device" and called photography "a process of making fossils out of the present."

About two decades ago, Mr. Sugimoto turned to photographing iconic, mostly modernist buildings (the exception: the Temple of Dendur at the Metropolitan Museum of Art) and two years ago inaugurated a building of his own design, his idiosyncratic Odawara Art Foundation Enoura Observatory perched above Sagami Bay in eastern Japan. This month brings the publication of "Hiroshi Sugimoto: Architecture," many of whose 100 images have never been published before, including two of the Enoura Observatory.

Roberta Smith, co-chief art critic of The New York Times, sat down with the artist to discuss the new publication, museum architecture and another Sugimoto book that has yet to appear in English. The interview has been condensed and edited.

“Summer Solstice Light Worship 100 Meter Gallery,” 2018, is a photograph of a gallery that is part of the Enoura Observatory. The gallery is 100 meters above sea level and is 100 meters in length. Hiroshi Sugimoto

How did you start photographing buildings?

I was first commissioned by MOCA in Los Angeles, for their survey of 20th century architecture. I don’t accept commissions but in this case, I thought, wow, it might be interesting, if it gives me the challenge of visiting the icons of 20th century architecture.

I was already very interested in architecture.

Your photographs of buildings are deliberately blurred, which reduces the architecture to a kind of essence, a geometric form without finishing or details.

Losing all the details brings back the fundamental concept. I'm trying to bring it back to the original vision of the architect.

When it is in a purer state. You've written that "a building is the result of an ideal making a compromise with reality."

Yes.

I'm interested that the captions in the new book don't give the reader a lot of information about the buildings.

Just a name.

The name of the building, but not who designed it, when or where.

So it's for the most professional people.

Well, not everybody knows everything. I know quite a few of them, but had to Google others. The Italian buildings from the '30s I didn't know.

I see. Just the name of the building. No location.

That says something about how you want them perceived. We're supposed to experience the image on its own.

Right.

This looking at so much architecture seems to have led you to ask yourself, "What would I do if I were an architect?"

Yeah, sometimes I thought if I were this architect, I wouldn't have done this.

You would have changed that.

Right. This is a mistake or failure. So several years ago I made this book in Japanese as a report criticizing the design of museums.

I know. I read about this book online and my first thought was: When is it going to be translated into English?

I never thought of translating it into English. It's mostly for the Japanese market. I was kind of free to say whatever I said. I have this rating page; each museum has a short explanation and up to five stars.

So a lot of people think that, in the United States, the best museum, or one of the very best museums, is the Menil in Houston. Have you seen that one?

Houston. Yes, yes. That's beautiful. The light from the ceiling is very nicely diffused but I never had a show there. The book only covers all the museums that have given me a one-man show.

Hands-on experience.

I was really into each building. And I suffered a lot. This is a consumer report. A user's manual.

Well, I'm begging you to translate it into English.

It was published like six, seven years ago, so now I have more museums to criticize.

Better still, an expanded English edition. I read that you ranked Peter Zumthor's Kunsthaus Bregenz as the best.

He designed a space to make art look its best, which is quite unusual for an architect.

Here's another 5-star.

Renzo Piano's Hermès building in Ginza

“Maison De Verre,” 2014. Hiroshi Sugimoto

It looks like Pierre Chareau’s Maison de Verre, your photographs of which appear in the new book for the first time. Piano has done some pretty good museums. Have you photographed the new Whitney?

No. This was before the Whitney.

Right. Have you seen it?

Yeah, yeah.

What do you think?

It’s a storage area. It’s not a gallery. It brings people into the storage.

You should really publish this in English. You’re very opinionated. You once wrote that art today is “stilling into a breezeless lull.”

The worst museum in my consumer report is one César Pelli designed, the National Museum of Art in Osaka. Such a bad building.

What did you think of the César Pelli Museum of Modern Art?

In New York?

The 1984 expansion. That’s when they had escalators across the big windows in the lobby overlooking the garden, diagonally. I mean, hello?

I attended the opening and was amazed. It was like a shopping mall.

I know.

And the beautiful original MoMA, with — I still remember when I went there, like in the early ’70s. The beautiful staircase —

It went up two levels.

And then “Guernica” was there at the top.

"MoMA, Bauhaus Stairway," 2013. Hiroshi Sugimoto

"MoMA, Taniguchi Staircase," 2013. Hiroshi Sugimoto

And the galleries had linoleum floors. Remember that? It was very humble and unpretentious.

Right. I photographed that Bauhaus staircase.

It's in the new book opposite your photograph of the Taniguchi staircase in the lobby of MoMA's 2004 redesign.

Right.

So did you like the Taniguchi better?

Taniguchi, no, no, no. I liked the original one better. The Taniguchi staircase is O.K. But compared to this, it's —

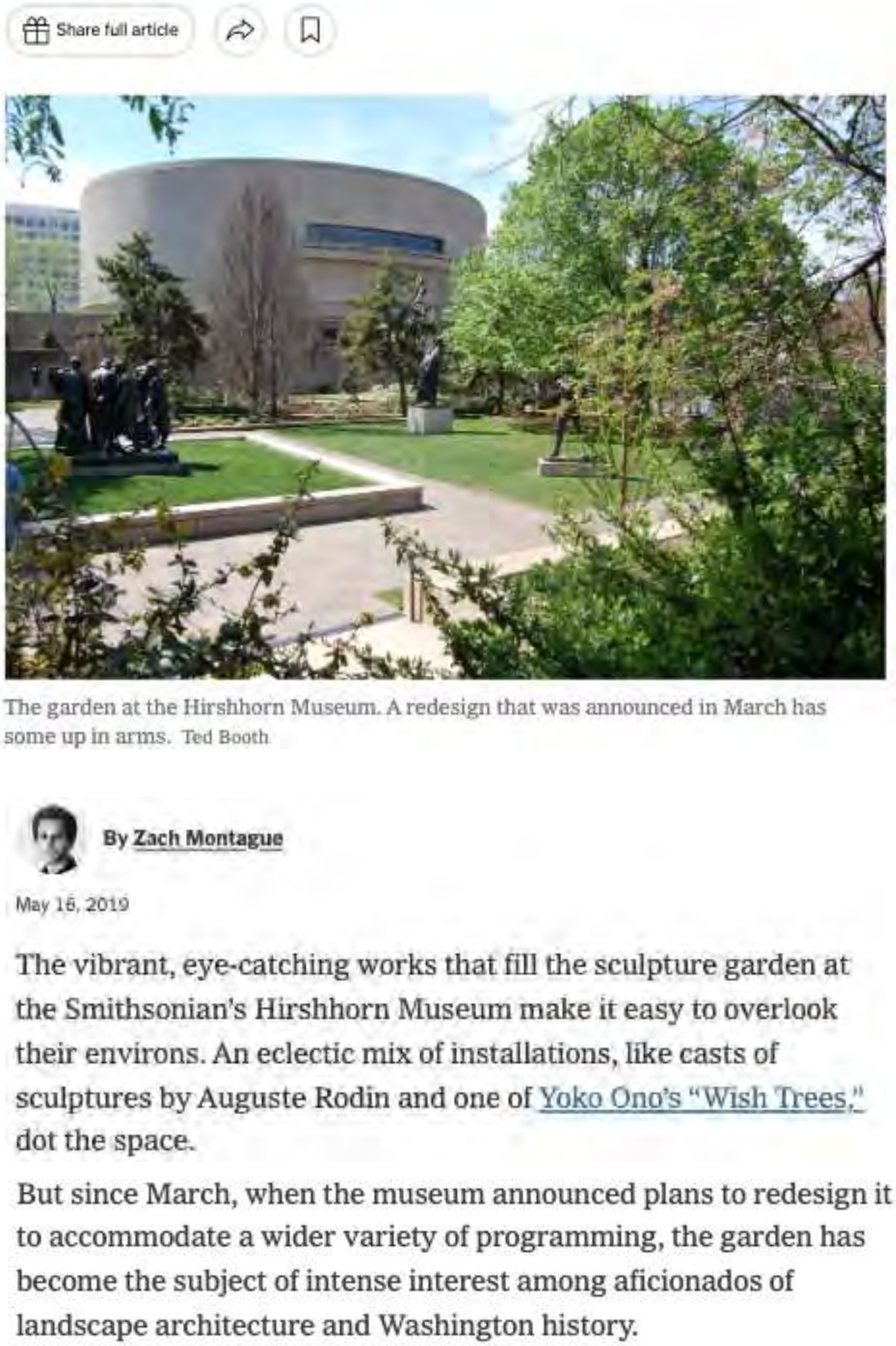
They've restored the second flight of the Bauhaus staircase. So you can go all the way up to the third floor again. No "Guernica" of course, but it's a big improvement.

Oh yeah? Oh, I didn't know that.

LISSON GALLERY

The New York Times
16 May 2019

The New York Times



The garden at the Hirshhorn Museum. A redesign that was announced in March has some up in arms. Ted Booth

By Zach Montague

May 16, 2019

The vibrant, eye-catching works that fill the sculpture garden at the Smithsonian's Hirshhorn Museum make it easy to overlook their environs. An eclectic mix of installations, like casts of sculptures by Auguste Rodin and one of Yoko Ono's "Wish Trees," dot the space.

But since March, when the museum announced plans to redesign it to accommodate a wider variety of programming, the garden has become the subject of intense interest among aficionados of landscape architecture and Washington history.

First designed by the architect Gordon Bunshaft, and opened in 1974, the sculpture garden was disparaged by critics for its open and barren concrete layout, which could become sweltering in the summer. In response, the museum commissioned the prominent Washington landscape architect Lester Collins to rethink the space. His renovation, completed in 1981, transformed the garden into the shadier, leafier version visitors experience today, replete with lawns and trees.

To those familiar with Mr. Collins's work, the garden ranks among his most notable creations, and some fear that his vision, which has defined the space for nearly 40 years, could be lost in the redesign. This week, the Cultural Landscape Foundation, an education and advocacy group, designated the garden as an at-risk landscape as part of its Landslide program, which calls attention to significant works of landscape architecture that are threatened.

Charles Birnbaum, the founder and president of the foundation, said, "I think it's the most significant extant work that he did in Washington."

Richard Longstreth, a professor emeritus of American studies at George Washington University, said Wednesday, "It is in many ways, I think, one of the finest modernist landscape designs we have in the federal city."

"When the original Bunshaft design grounds didn't really work very well," he added, "Collins came in and did something very special and very lyrical, and to ignore that is to ignore history."

As conceived, the plan would add a large performance space in the center of the garden, clear the way for larger sculptures, and provide an entryway directly from the National Mall. But the degree to which this would diminish Mr. Collins's imprint is not yet clear.

The Smithsonian Institution, which operates the Hirshhorn, says that the new scheme is being done thoughtfully, making the space more accessible while maintaining its character over all.

"We are looking at, potentially, removal of the influences of both Bunshaft and Collins," said Carly Bond, a historic preservation specialist at the Smithsonian. "But I think we do feel that the design we have put forward in concept does build off influences of both designers, and the organization very much is still the same."

Though the renovation remains in a preliminary planning stage, the museum has tapped the architect and artist Hiroshi Sugimoto to provide a new vision for the grounds. Mr. Sugimoto recently helped renovate the museum's lobby, as well.

The Hirshhorn garden plan is only the latest project in Washington to stir controversy about land use and historical preservation. A proposed World War I memorial to be built in Pershing Park sparked a prolonged dispute after local architects and historians organized to preserve the park's original design.

"This is what we're seeing again and again," Mr. Birnbaum said. "It's really about having more open spaces to accommodate more people and more programs."

In part because the museum lies on federal land on the National Mall, the redesign will be subject to public federal approval processes and open to public comment.

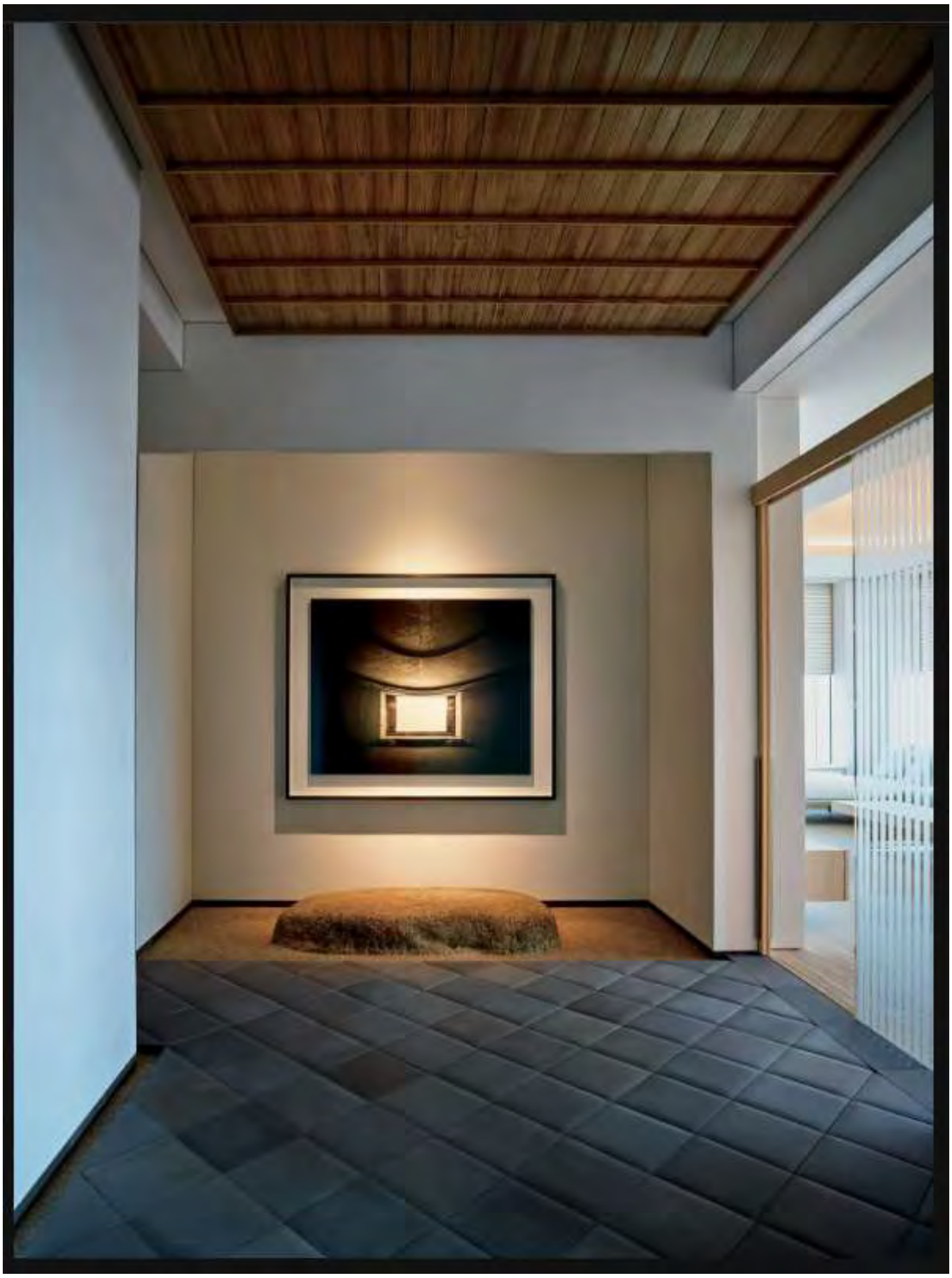
"I hope that this is the beginning of a renaissance to understand Collins's contributions to the Hirshhorn, by extension Washington, D.C., and his greater contributions to the designed American landscape," Mr. Birnbaum said.

Among Mr. Collins's other projects were designs at the National Zoo and more than two dozen parks along Pennsylvania Avenue.

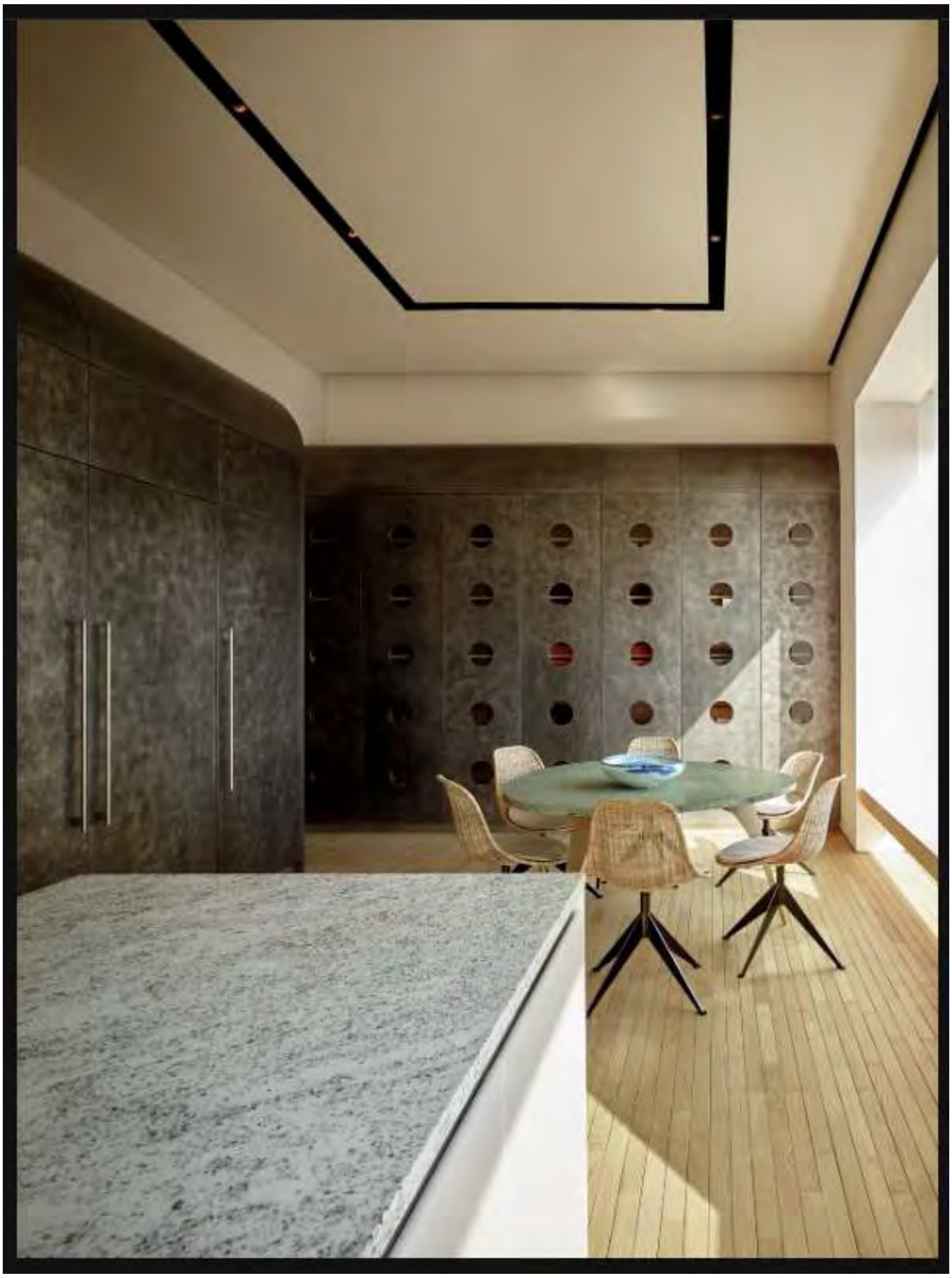
The New York Times
02 May 2019

The New York Times

Inside the Private New York City Residence Designed by Hiroshi Sugimoto

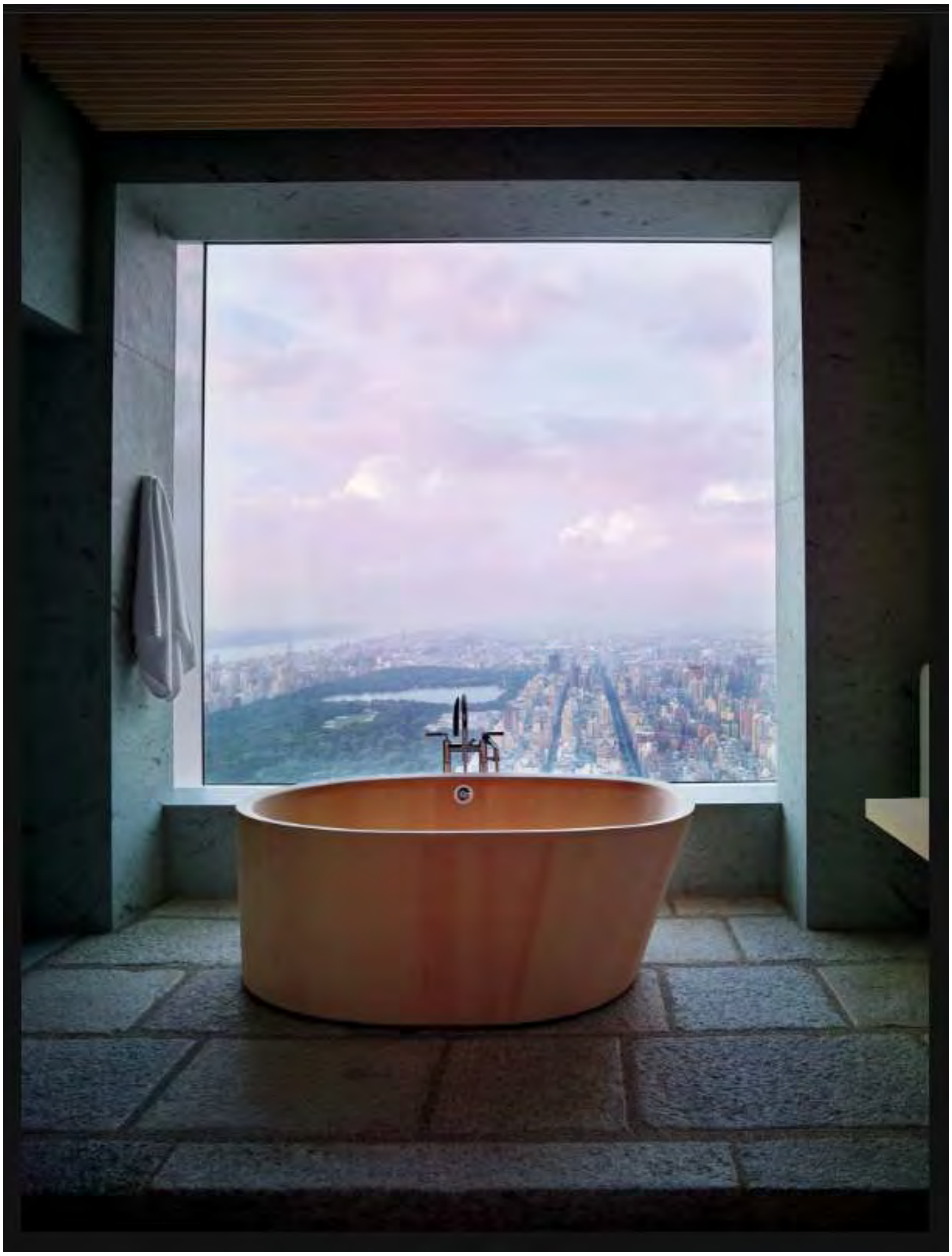


Here, a look inside the private New York City residence designed by the artist Hiroshi Sugimoto. In the hallway, a 2013 Sugimoto print of a theater at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris with a centuries-old garden stone from Japan below. The black tiles were custom-made by a ceramist in Nara, south of Kyoto.



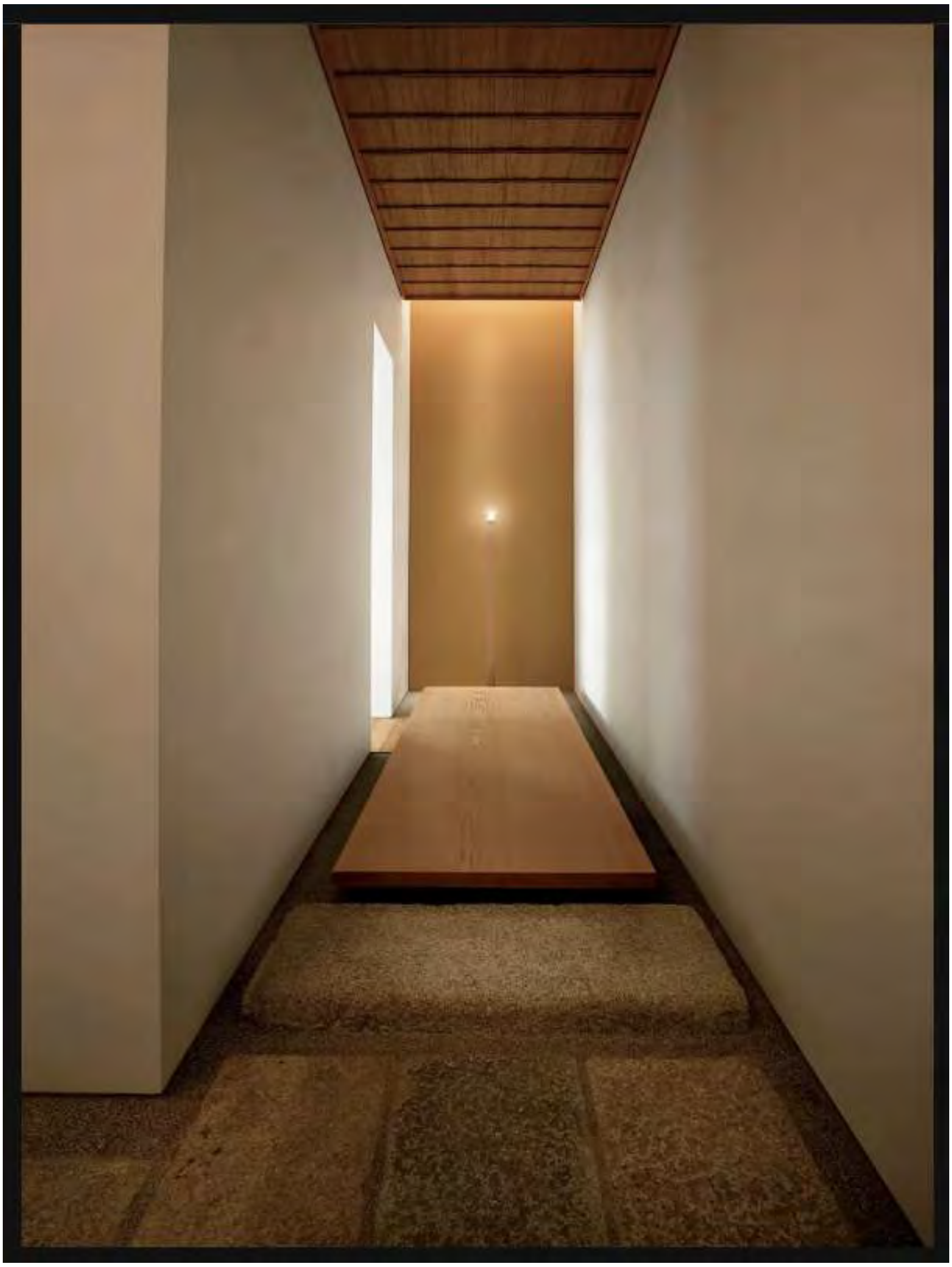
The kitchen, sheathed in hand-hammered metal. The cabinets have round windows that allude to a ship's portholes. The Towada stone table and the cane chairs are designed by Sugimoto's New Material Research Laboratory in Tokyo.

Photograph by Anthony Cotsifas. Styled by Michael Reynolds



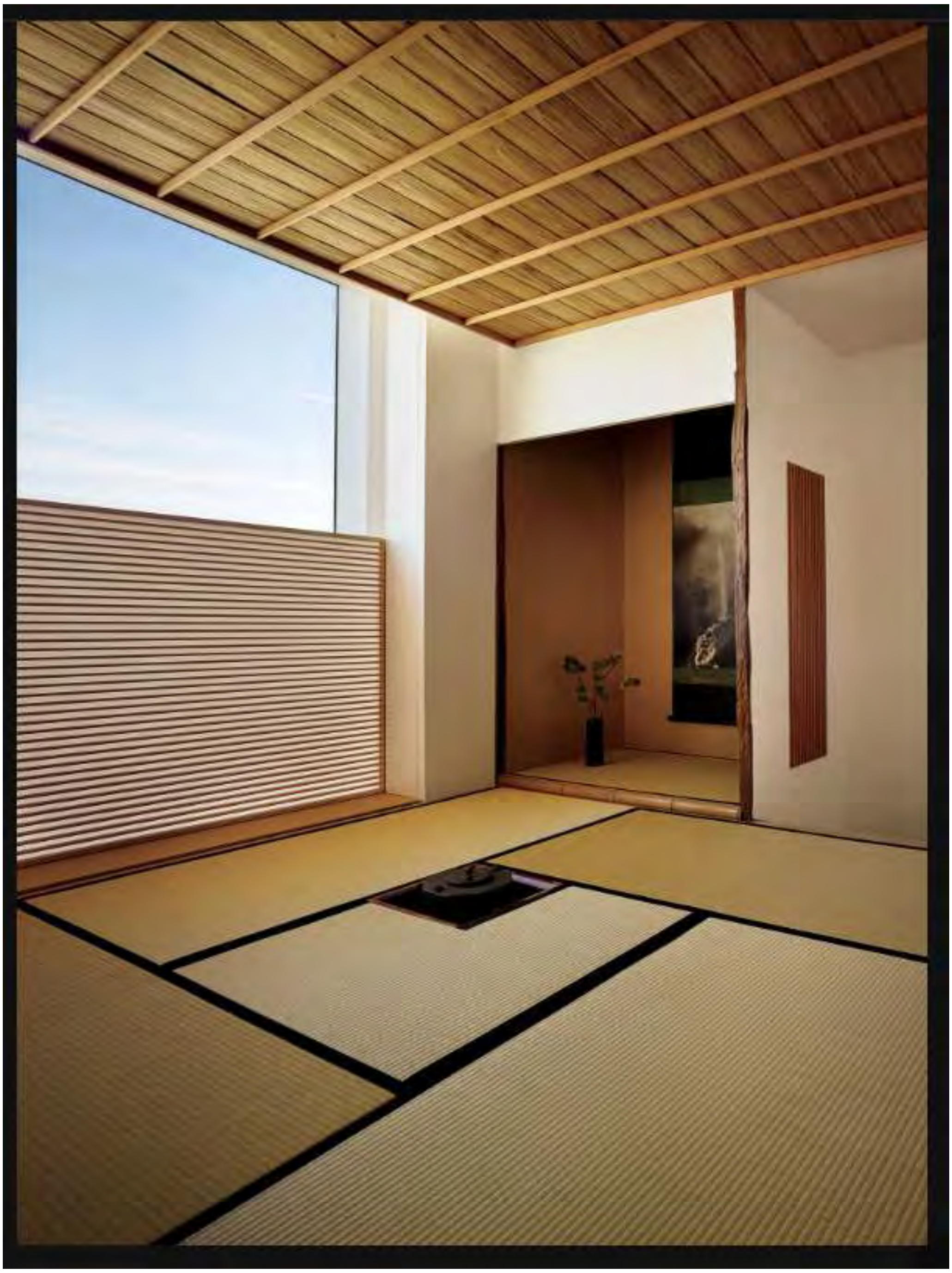
One of the apartment's two master bathrooms. The walls are made entirely of Towada stone, and the cypress bathtub sits atop old stones salvaged from a defunct tram station in Kyoto. The ceiling is cedar.

Photograph by Anthony Cotsifas. Styled by Michael Reynolds



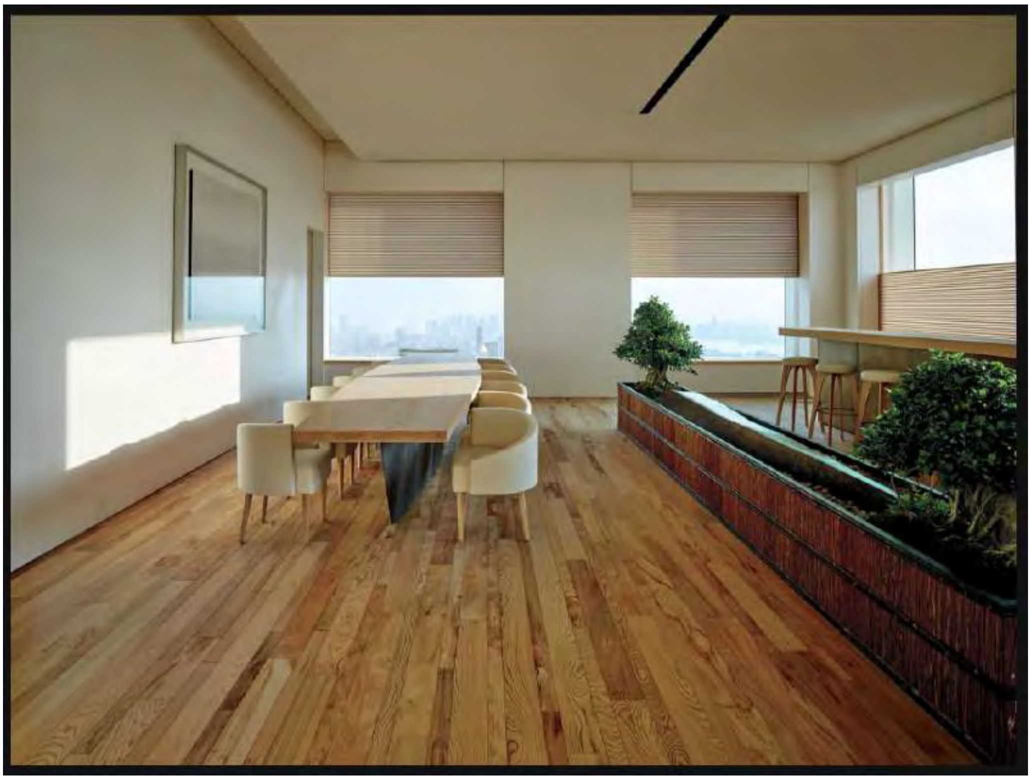
The entryway, with “Five Elements,” a glass sculpture containing a miniature seascape by Sugimoto on a thin cedar pedestal next to a large plank of hand-cut cedar, and more stones from the Kyoto tram station.

Photograph by Anthony Cotsifas. Styled by Michael Reynolds



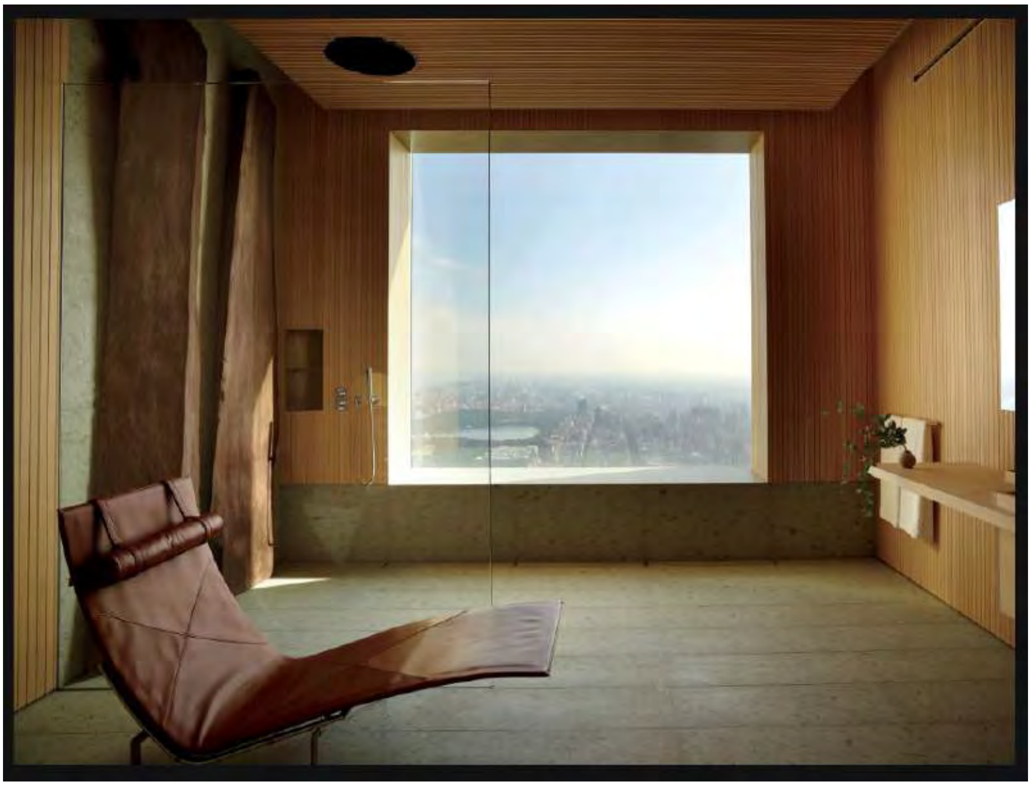
The tatami-mat-floored tea-ceremony room that was Sugimoto's original commission. The custom shoji-inspired shades, when lowered, allow only the sky to be visible.

Photograph by Anthony Cotsifas. Styled by Michael Reynolds



The dining room, with floors made from ancient cedar from Yakushima island. To the left is the dining table; at the right is a sushi bar. The two ficus bonsai trees reflect Sugimoto's original impulse to create an indoor garden.

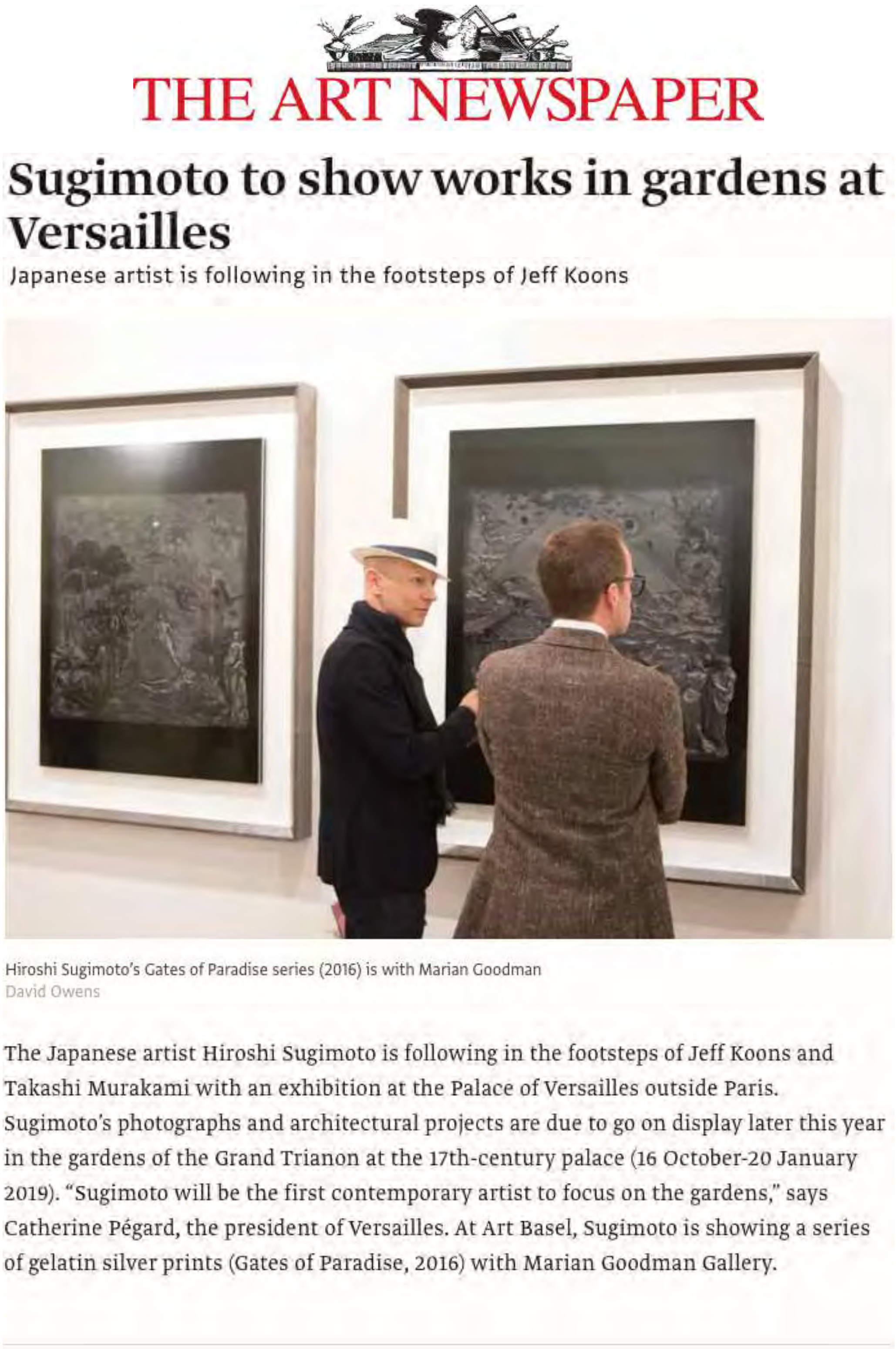
Photograph by Anthony Cotsifas. Styled by Michael Reynolds



The second master bathroom, with a rainfall shower and two rust-colored slabs of Komatsu stone from Japan.

Photograph by Anthony Cotsifas. Styled by Michael Reynolds

The Art Newspaper
15 June 2018



THE ART NEWSPAPER

Sugimoto to show works in gardens at Versailles

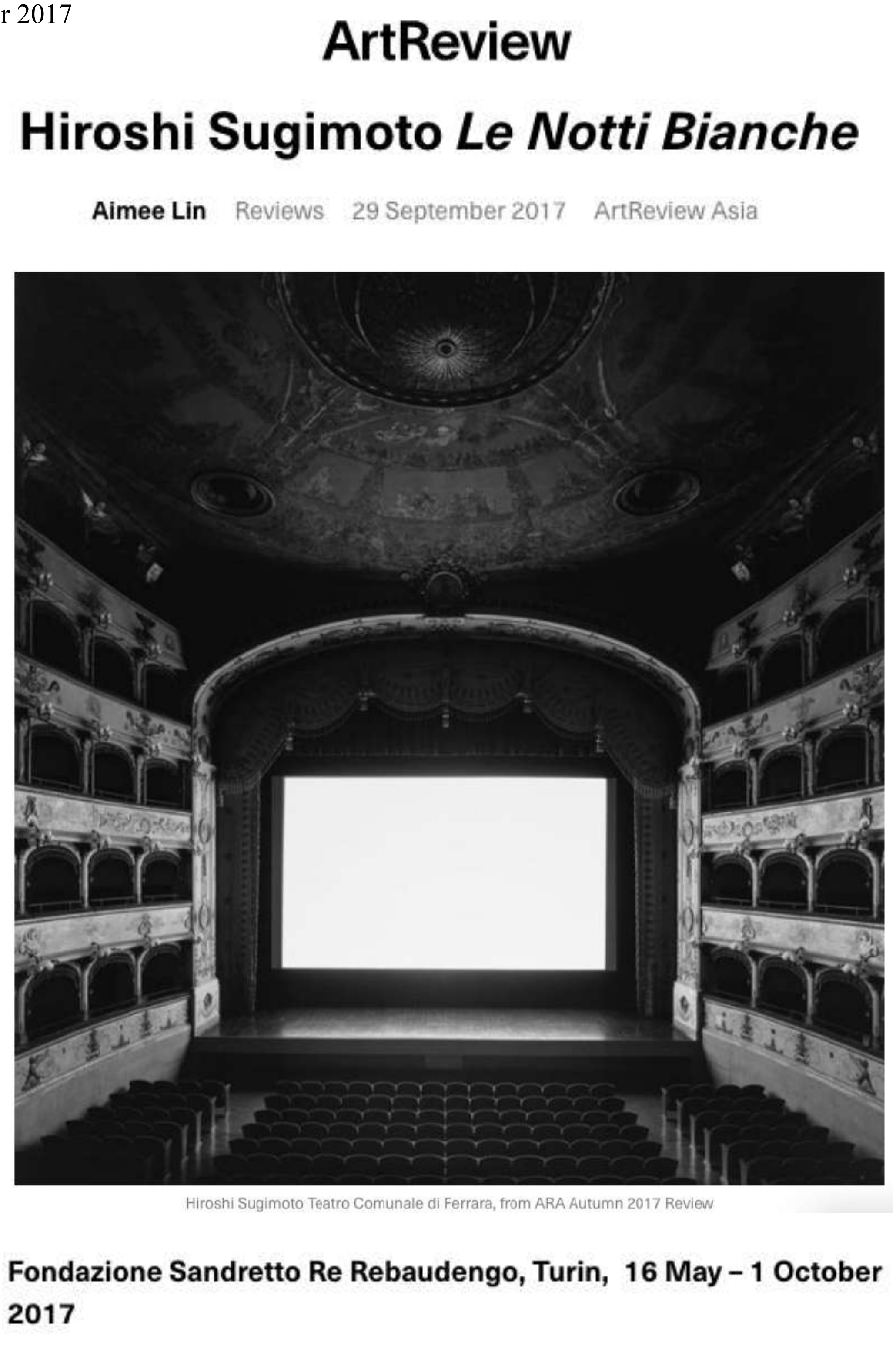
Japanese artist is following in the footsteps of Jeff Koons

Hiroshi Sugimoto's Gates of Paradise series (2016) is with Marian Goodman
David Owens

The Japanese artist Hiroshi Sugimoto is following in the footsteps of Jeff Koons and Takashi Murakami with an exhibition at the Palace of Versailles outside Paris. Sugimoto's photographs and architectural projects are due to go on display later this year in the gardens of the Grand Trianon at the 17th-century palace (16 October-20 January 2019). "Sugimoto will be the first contemporary artist to focus on the gardens," says Catherine Pégard, the president of Versailles. At Art Basel, Sugimoto is showing a series of gelatin silver prints (Gates of Paradise, 2016) with Marian Goodman Gallery.

LISSON GALLERY

ArtReview
29 September 2017



ArtReview

Hiroshi Sugimoto *Le Notti Bianche*

Aimee Lin Reviews 29 September 2017 ArtReview Asia

Hiroshi Sugimoto Teatro Comunale di Ferrara, from ARA Autumn 2017 Review

Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, 16 May – 1 October 2017

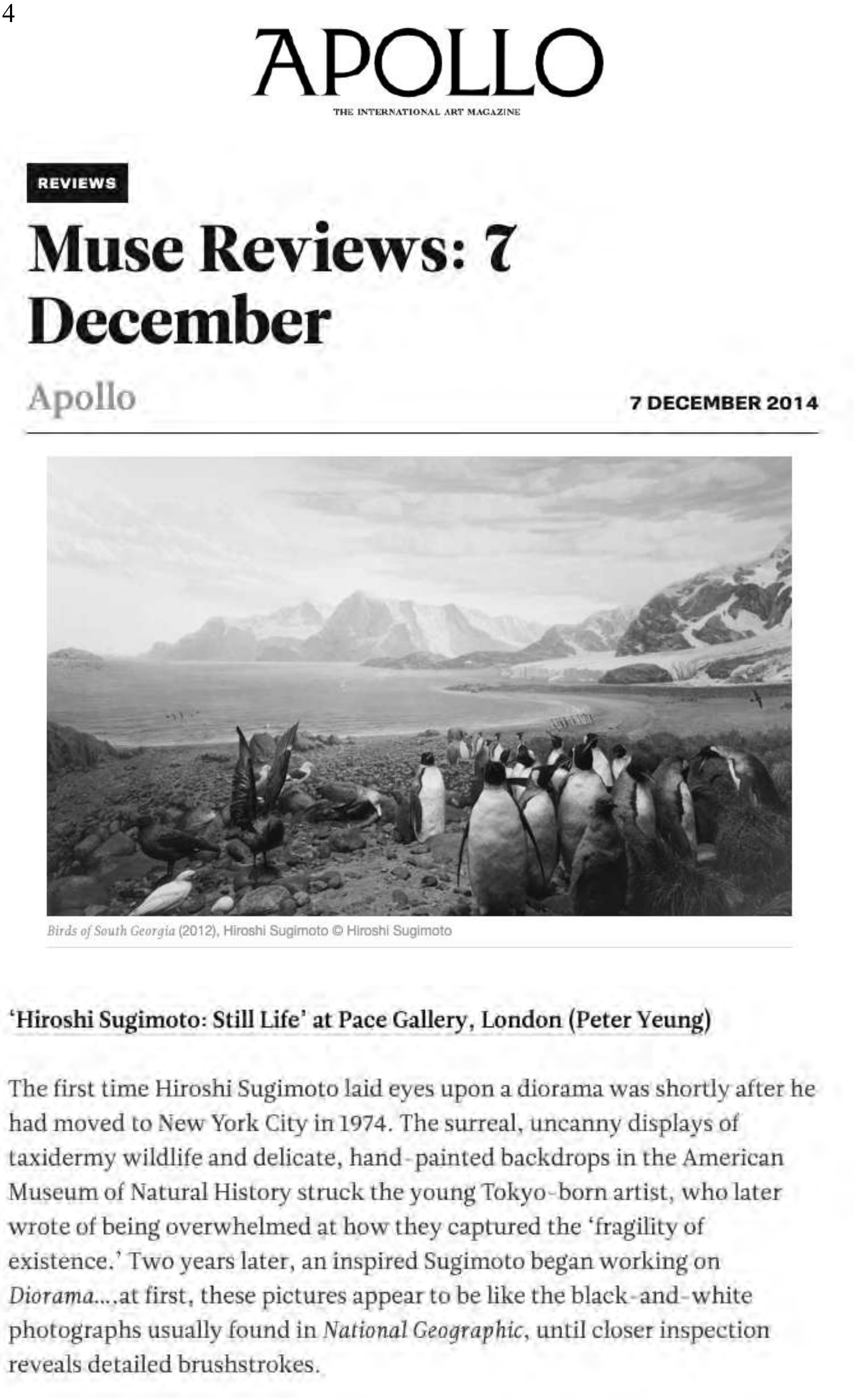
Following a 12-year hiatus in the production of Hiroshi Sugimoto's *Theaters* series (begun during the late 1970s), *Le Notti Bianche*, showcases 20 photographs of theatres and opera houses produced in Italy over the last three years. These 'new' theatres are in fact old: markers of the country's history. They include the famous Teatro Carignano in Turin (built in 1752), the private theatre in Villa Mazzacorati, Bologna (inaugurated in 1763) and Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza (Andrea Palladio's final design, built between 1580 and 1585, it is the oldest surviving enclosed theatre in the world) and Teatro all'antica in Sabbioneta (constructed between 1588 and 1590 it was the first purpose-built freestanding theatre in the world). Sugimoto sees the theatre as a place for collective 'religious' experience, and notes in his essay 'Image of the Void' (included in *Time Exposed*, 1995) that movie theatres in the United States 'have adopted elements of religious architectures from all over the world without principle'. By visiting classical theatres in Italy – all built before the invention of cinema – he aims at exploring the root of the architectural form and its cultural meaning: the ways in which the architectural features of American movie theatres of the 1920s (which were featured in the artist's early *Theaters* works) derive from the older, palacelike theatres of Europe.

Like those earlier works, the photographs on view here explore the perception of time, of space and the relationship between the two by blending three kinds of time into one: the time of a film screening, the time of a camera exposure and the time of human attention (watching the film). The production of the photographs depends on the length of time of a particular movie, screened on the theatre stage (as Sugimoto previously did on the movie-theatre screens), which determines their exposure times. In the case of the Italian photographs, these films are national classics (selected by Sugimoto) such as Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Salò* (1975), Luchino Visconti's *Le Notti Bianche* (1957) and Federico Fellini's *I Vitelloni* (1953). But the object (classical theatres in Italy) and the selection of films are not the only features that differentiate these works from the earlier photographs. When Sugimoto rebooted the project in 2014, he added a new gesture: having taken the familiar photograph of the theatres' stage, he reversed the scenario to photograph the auditorium from the stage. Each theatre is now represented by two images that, here, are hung face-to-face on opposing walls, so that visitors, standing in between, can only see one of them at a time.

While this new mode of representation obviously provides a more complete representation of the actual space of the theatres, it also inspires further reflection on the space of theatre in more general terms. The theatre as a place for focused, cultural activities where comprehensive art appreciation becomes a collective quasi-religious experience, a space that, despite being a social space, has one absolute centre: the screen/stage. In his new series of works, by turning the camera around and looking back to the rows of seats, Sugimoto has captured two spaces that face each other, bound in an antithetical relationship – the 'Look at me' of the stage is now complemented by the 'We were here' of the auditorium.

In the pictures of the stages, the space of the screen onto which the films were projected becomes, due to overexposure, a void across the space: as if a spirit (or as Sugimoto puts it in 'Image of the Void', 'the kami [god] of film') has just arrived, or the soul of a movie-watcher has disappeared in the act of losing oneself while watching the film. In the auditorium images, the functional facilities, such as the seats and the main entrance, may appear quiet and empty, yet their hidden message is one of fullness, of numerous ghosts speaking in low voice: 'I was once here, watching'. Indeed, the antithetical structure of the spaces and the images reminds me of a classical Zen metaphor: the void is a consequence of fullness.

Apollo
7 December 2014



APOLLO
THE INTERNATIONAL ART MAGAZINE

REVIEWS

Muse Reviews: 7 December

Apollo

7 DECEMBER 2014

Birds of South Georgia (2012), Hiroshi Sugimoto © Hiroshi Sugimoto

'Hiroshi Sugimoto: Still Life' at Pace Gallery, London (Peter Yeung)

The first time Hiroshi Sugimoto laid eyes upon a diorama was shortly after he had moved to New York City in 1974. The surreal, uncanny displays of taxidermy wildlife and delicate, hand-painted backdrops in the American Museum of Natural History struck the young Tokyo-born artist, who later wrote of being overwhelmed at how they captured the 'fragility of existence.' Two years later, an inspired Sugimoto began working on *Diorama*....at first, these pictures appear to be like the black-and-white photographs usually found in *National Geographic*, until closer inspection reveals detailed brushstrokes.

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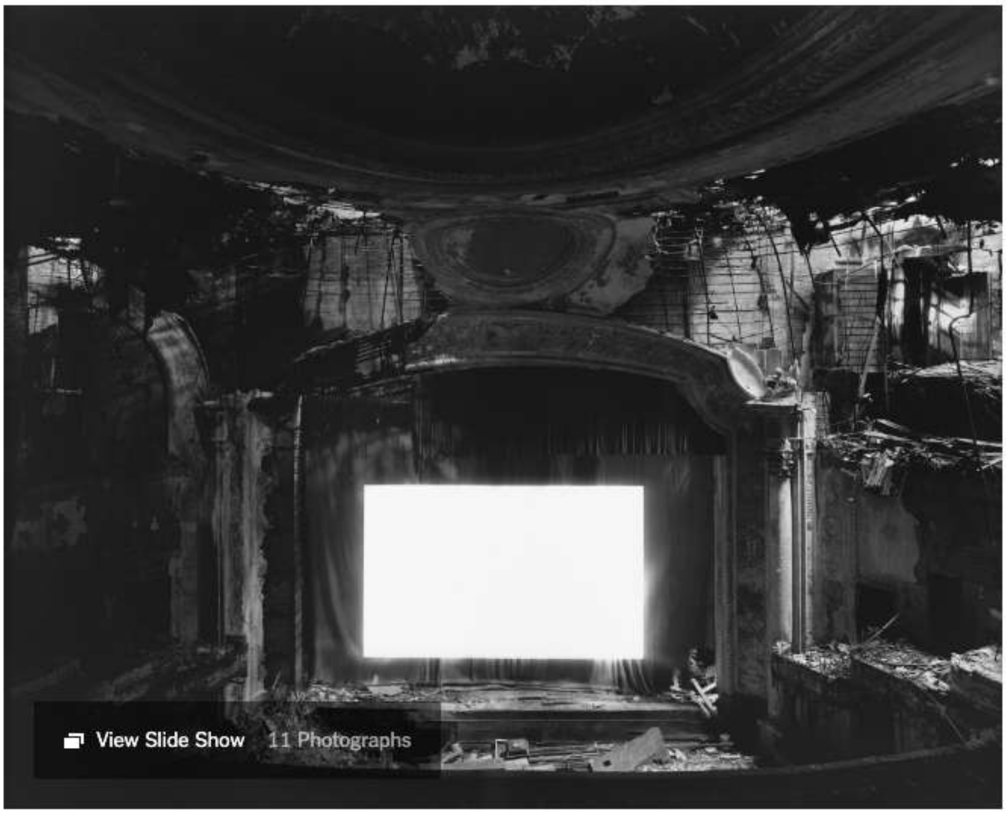
The New York Times
9 May 2017

The New York Times


View Slide Show 11 Photographs

Hiroshi Sugimoto

Hiroshi Sugimoto: Illuminating Opera Houses and Abandoned Movie Palaces

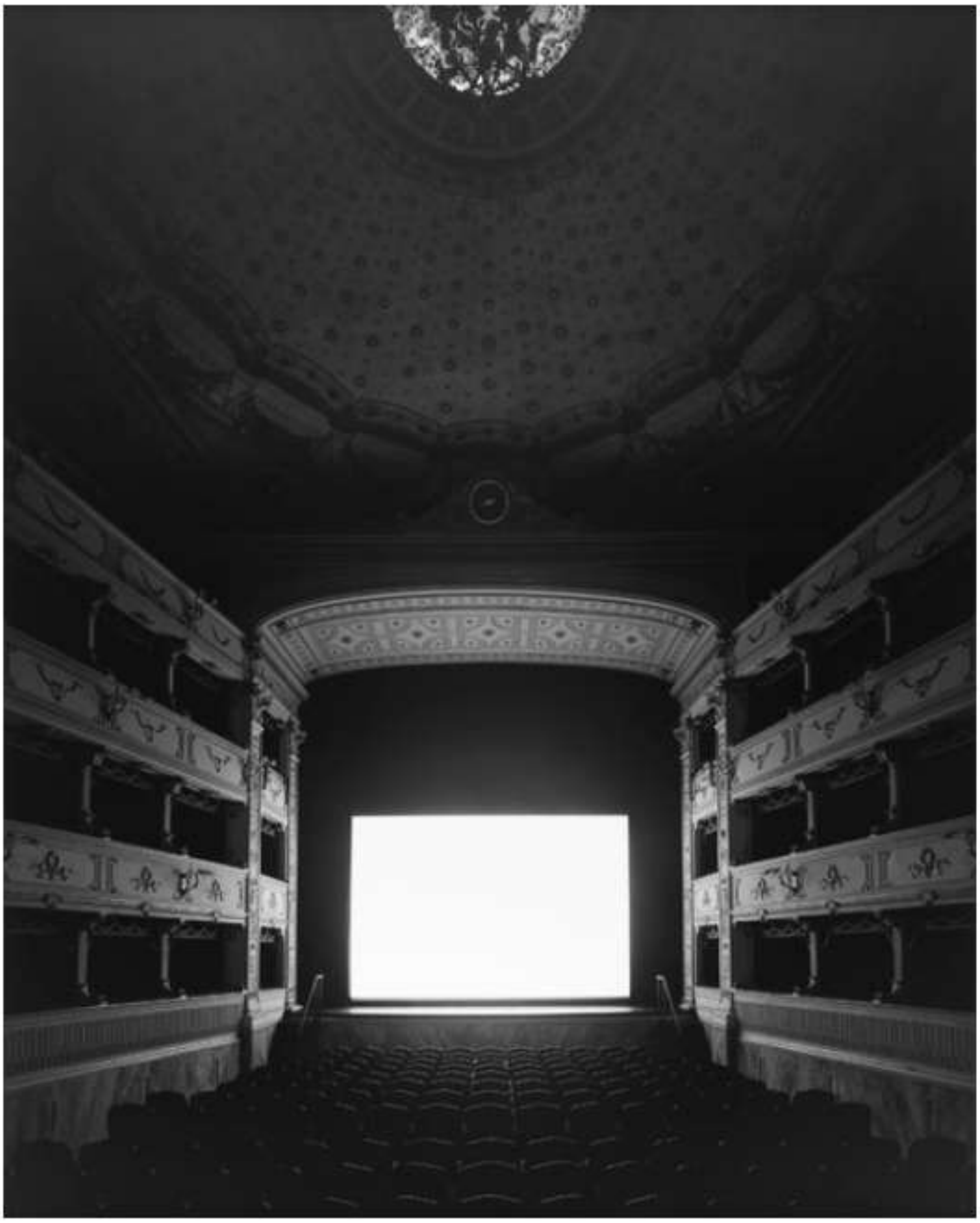
By James Estrin May. 9, 2017

Growing up in 1950's Tokyo, Hiroshi Sugomoto sometimes was brought to tears by the movies he saw with his mother. He still remembers feeling ashamed by those public displays of emotion. Above all, he remembers the emotional connection he felt being inside the theaters.

After teaching himself photography in his early teens, one of his first subjects was Audrey Hepburn — or at least a 20-foot-tall image of her projected onto a theater screen. He discovered that by employing a shutter speed of a 30th of a second he could produce a still image of a single frame of the movie. But he eventually realized, in New York City in 1976, that the light that entranced him on screen could also illuminate the interiors of America's remaining movie palaces.

This vision led to his seminal, and surreal, "Theater" series that captures the splendor of cinema and is also a meditation on the nature of time. By leaving his shutter open for the full length of a movie to create a single still image with a luminescent white screen, Mr. Sugimoto offers a meditation on impermanence and the fleeting nature of civilization.

"Usually a photographer hangs around and captures the moment, but I created my own illusion that doesn't exist in reality," he said. "It's just my own imagination — but I get to make my imagination visible."



"Summertime" (1955) at Teatro dei Rozzi. Siena, Italy. 2014. Hiroshi Sugimoto

Forty years after the beginning of that series, Mr. Sugimoto has turned his attention and technique to capturing the majestic opulence of Italian opera houses. The results are on display at the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo — a contemporary art museum in Turin, Italy — from May 16 to Oct. 1. For the first time, he has also included images of the reverse view from the screens of the audience seats.

While some of the opera houses had existing screens to aid in staging live performances, most of the time Mr. Sugimoto brought projectors with him and built the screens. He played the complete versions of classic films about Italy by Fellini, Visconti and others.

Different film genres, he has learned, demand different exposures. Upbeat films and comedies tend to be brighter, he said, while sad movies are darker. Occult movies are the darkest, because they are mostly shot inside, so he opens up the aperture on his large-format camera by two stops, he explained.

"The brightest movies are spaghetti westerns because they are all shot outside," he added.

The opera house series reflects his passion for architecture and his fascination with the history of theater, reaching back to ancient Japanese and Greek plays. These interests are not just limited to photographic expression.

Mr. Sugimoto recently designed a center for his Art Foundation in the coastal city of Odawara in Japan. The seaside complex is a "traditional Japanese style structure," he said, and includes a tea house, exhibit space and two outside theaters where he will host live performances.

Hiroshi Sugimoto at his Manhattan studio. May 3, 2017. Fred R. Conrad

In addition to designing buildings, he is also working with a choreographer and a composer on a ballet influenced by Noh theater, commissioned by the Paris Opera, and is also organizing a Bunraku Japanese puppet show, to be performed at Lincoln Center in 2018.

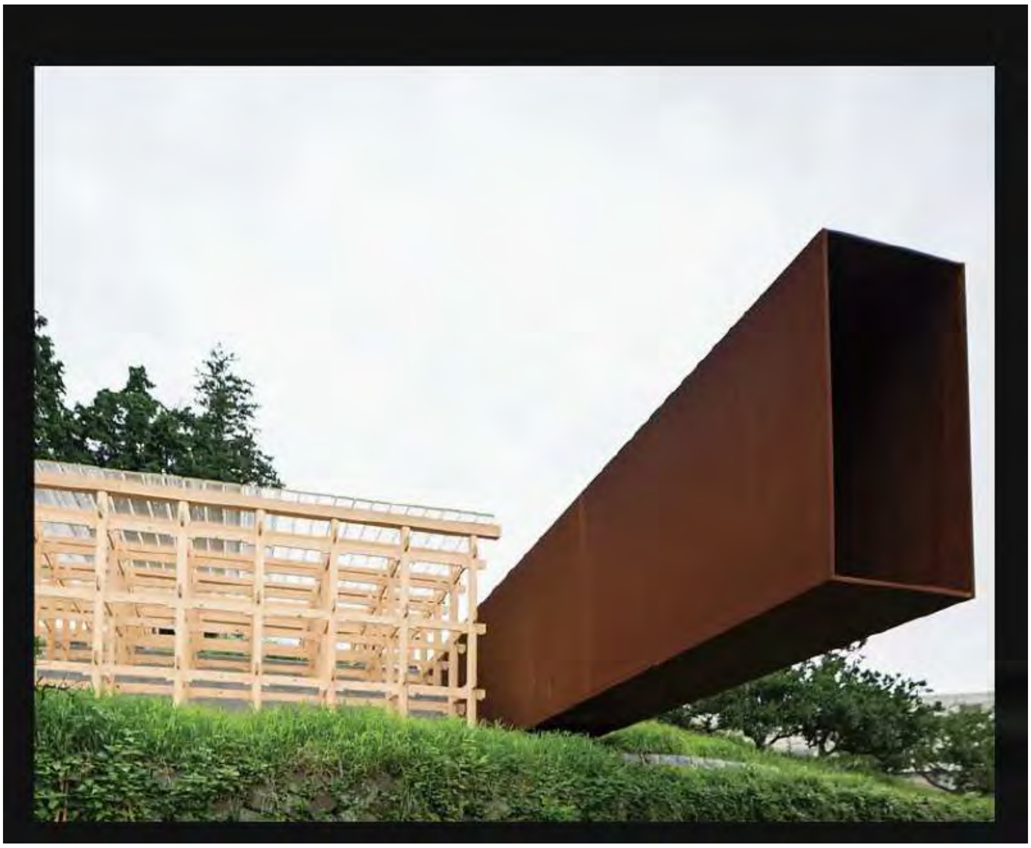
The grand movie palaces he documented in the 20th century are now mostly abandoned and he has begun documenting their decay by temporarily reviving them by projecting films. These emotional, visceral images reveal the death of the glory days of cinema, when the screens were large, and the stars even larger.

"Look at Greece and the beautiful Parthenon," he said. "It once was glorious, and now it's in terrible condition" he said. "History is passing and we will not be forever. I can look out my window and watch New York City being built now. But maybe 500 years later, 1,000 year later, this might be ruins too."

The New York Times
3 April 2017

The New York Times

Hiroshi Sugimoto's Most Ambitious Project



The 69-year-old Japanese artist Hiroshi Sugimoto, who made his name as a photographer, is transitioning into architecture. His most ambitious undertaking is his own Enoura Observatory, a complex in the Enoura district of Odawara, a city on the eastern coast of Japan, about an hour from Tokyo. This is Enoura's glass Noh stage, alongside a 70-meter-long "underground chamber."

Sugimoto Studio

The reception area. The complex, set to open in October, is the culmination of the artist's career, a series of structures he hopes will still exist hundreds of years from now. The structures include exhibition spaces, two Noh stages, a teahouse and the offices of his Odawara Art Foundation.

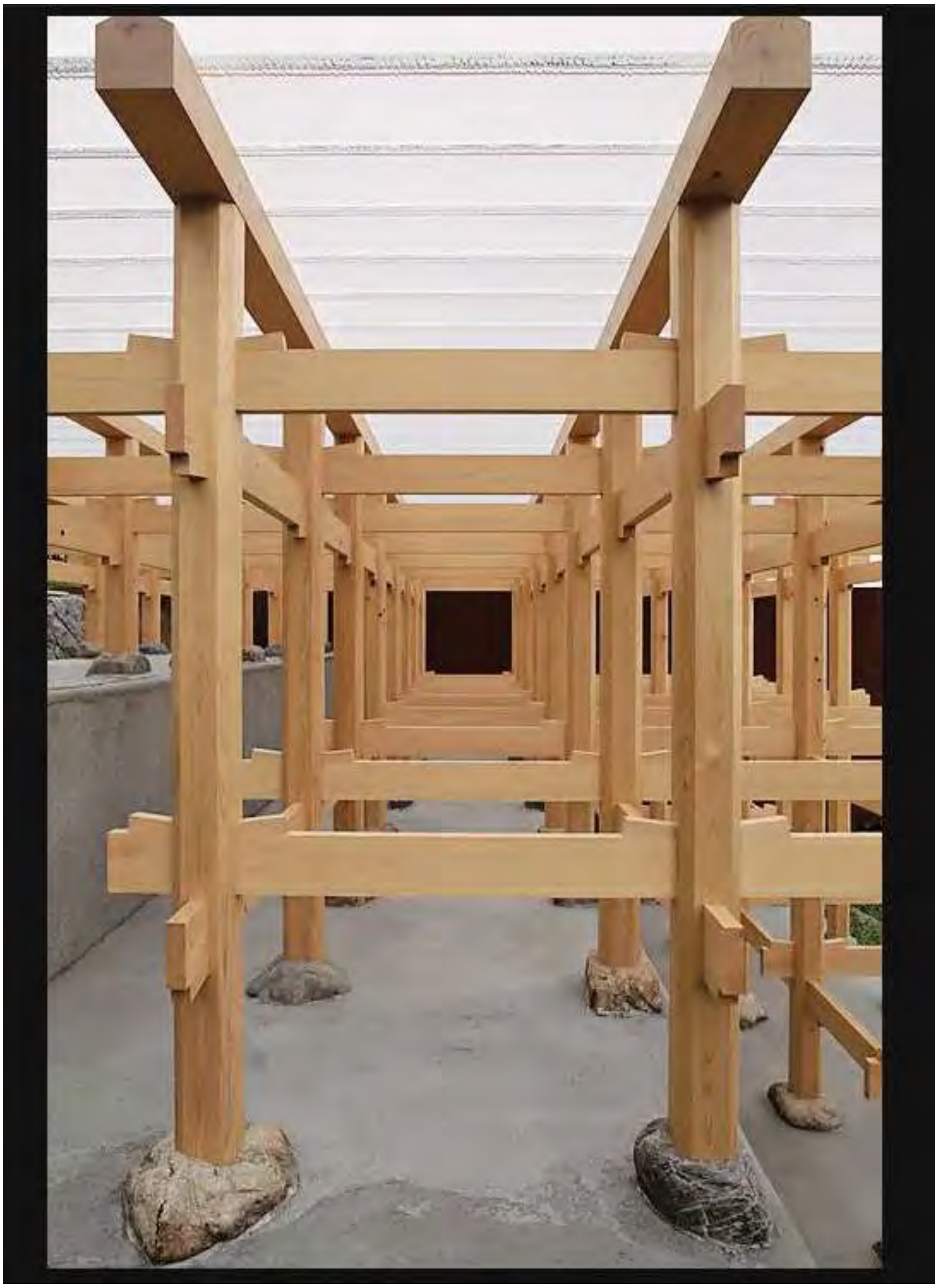
Sugimoto Studio

The 100-meter-long gallery space. With Enoura, Sugimoto aims to define a "new Neolithic aesthetic."

Sugimoto Studio

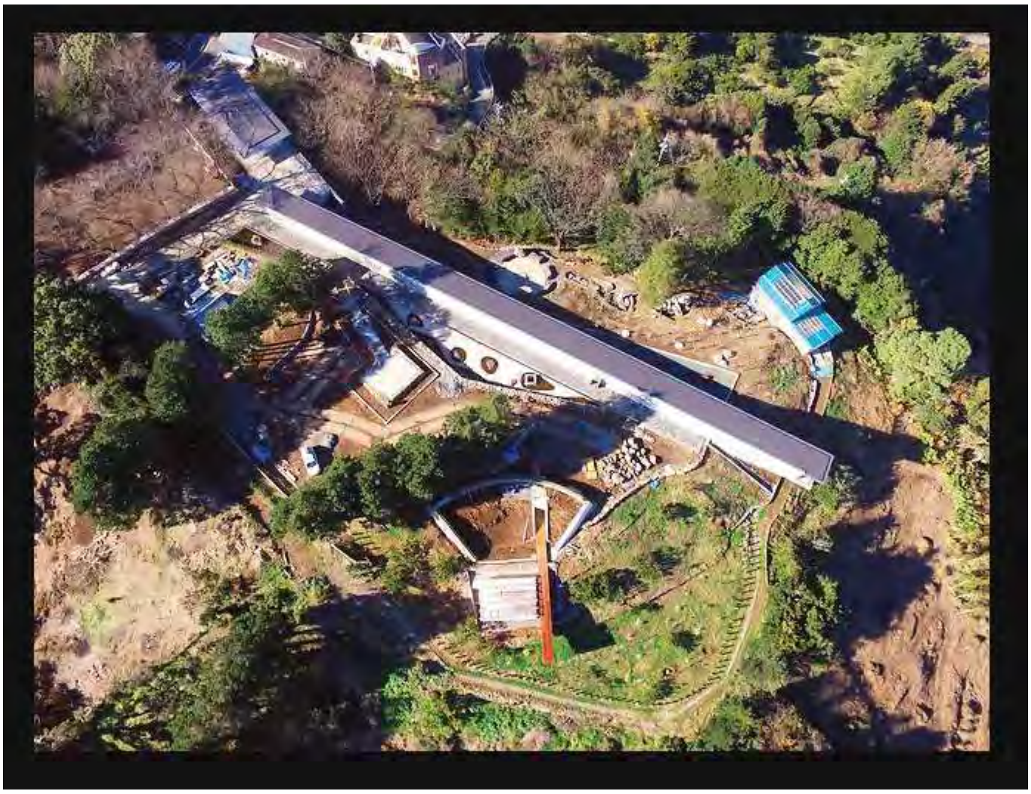
The future site of a rock bridge leading to a second Noh stage.

Sugimoto Studio



The wooden supports beneath the glass stage.

Sugimoto Studio

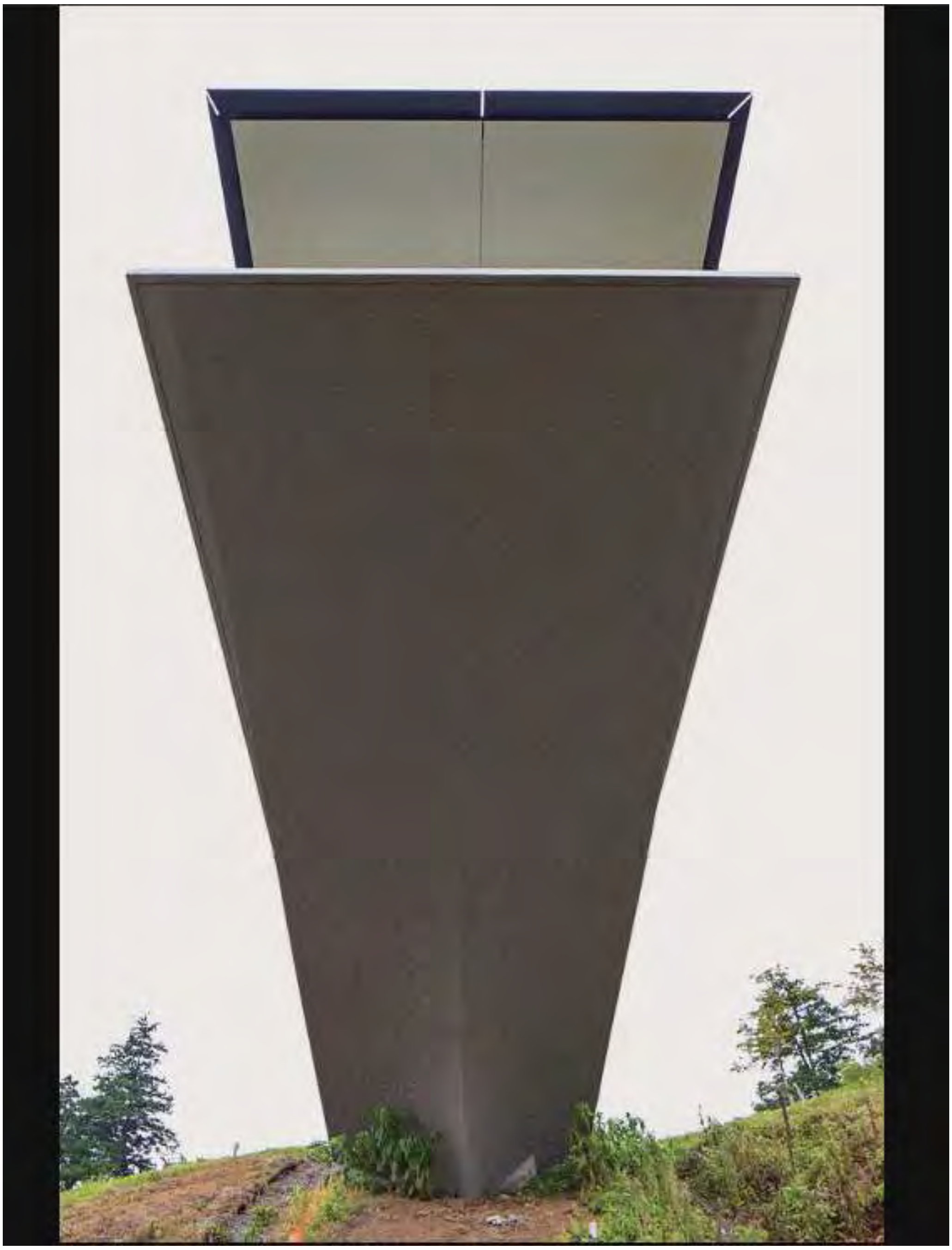


An aerial view of Enoura.

Sugimoto Studio

Sugimoto inspecting a stone slab. Rather than designing architecture that looks its best new, he seeks to create buildings that will "still look nice after civilization is gone," he says.

Sugimoto Studio



The gallery, seen from below.

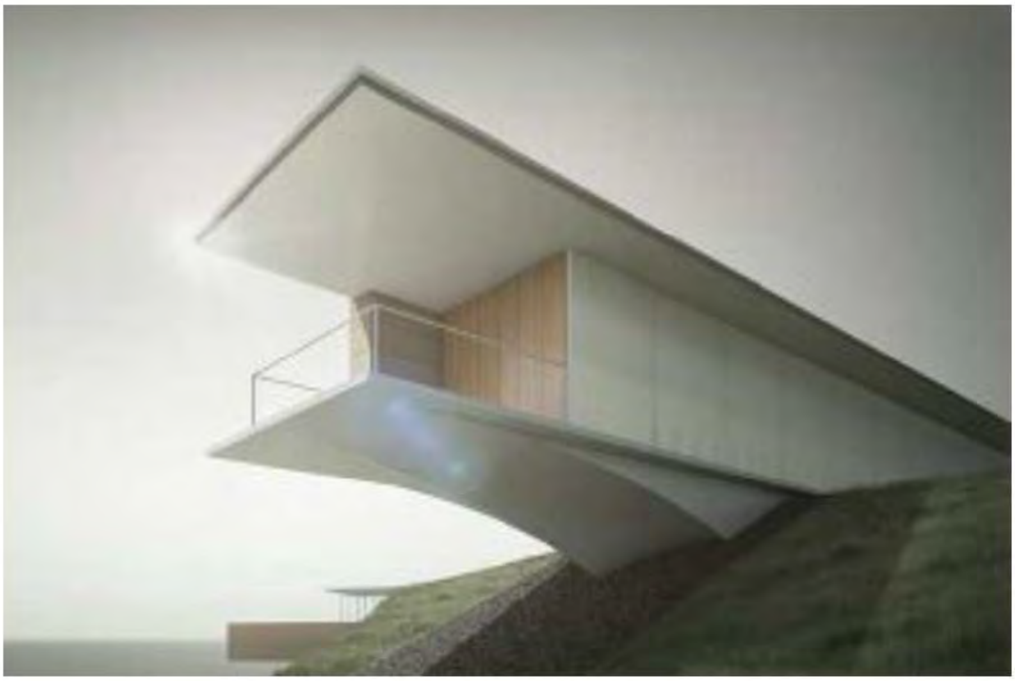
Sugimoto Studio

ArtReview
16 March 2015

ArtReview

Hiroshi Sugimoto designs mountain-side building for his Odawara Art Foundation

ArtReview News 16 March 2015 artreview.com



Hiroshi Sugimoto Art complex

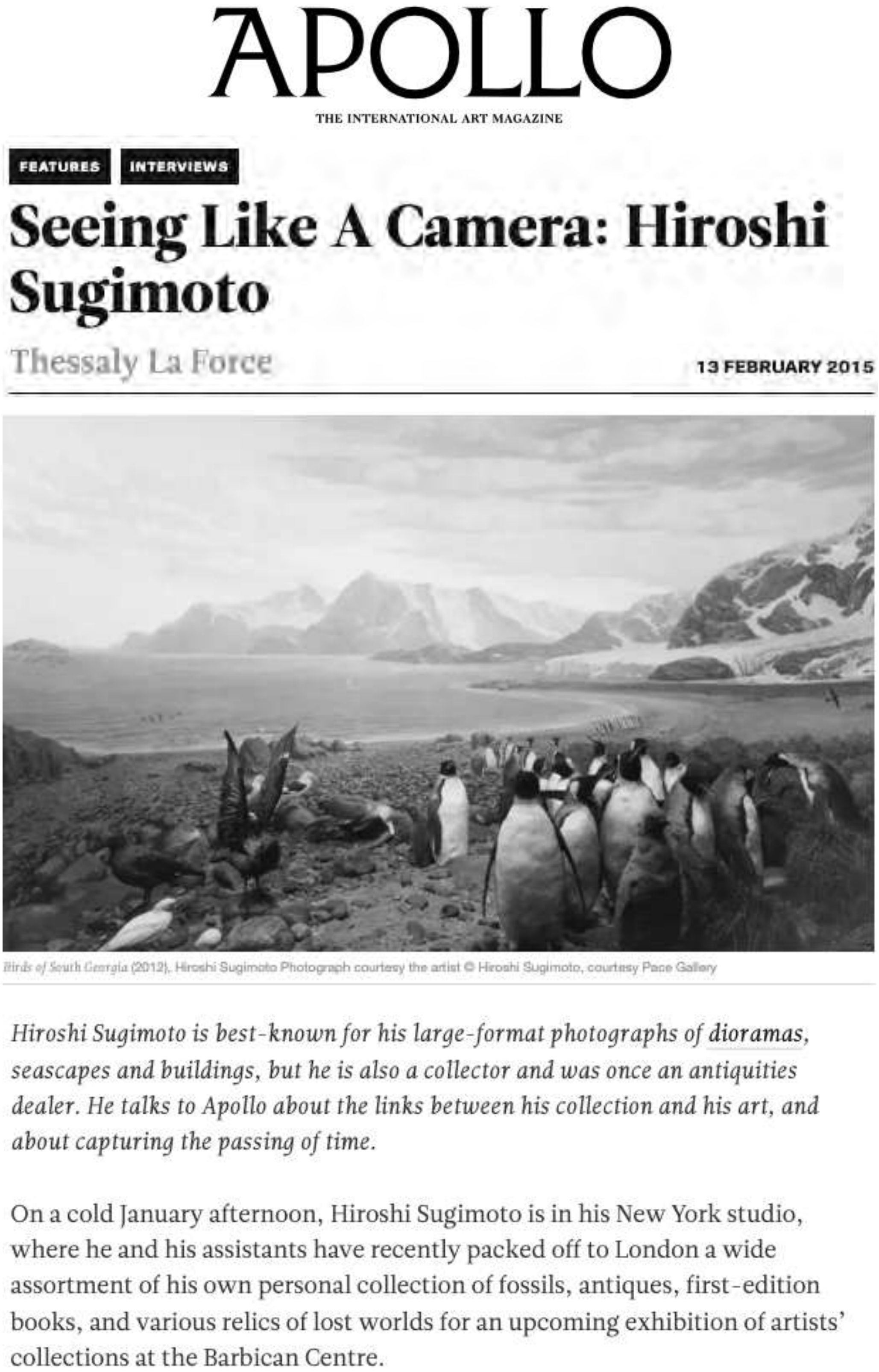
Japanese photographer Hiroshi Sugimoto has designed the plans for the building that will house the Odawara Art Foundation, a non-profit organisation founded by the artist in 2009, the Art Newspaper reports. The project was funded through a $6m grant awarded by the Japan Society, who will collaborate with the foundation to produce exhibitions and performances.

In tune with the foundation's ambition to promote Japanese culture and history, the arts complex will include exhibition halls, a contemporary Noh theatre with a stage that appears to float above the sea, a tea ceremony room as well as an underground tunnel from which visitors can view the sunrise during the winter solstice.

The foundation will spread over 9,500 square metres on the coast of the Sagami Bay in eastern Japan, and is due to open by 2017. The exhibition programme, along with the costs associated with the project, have not been revealed.

16 March 2015.

Apollo Magazine
13 February 2015



APOLLO
THE INTERNATIONAL ART MAGAZINE

FEATURES INTERVIEWS

Seeing Like A Camera: Hiroshi Sugimoto

Thessaly La Force

13 FEBRUARY 2015

Birds of South Georgia (2012), Hiroshi Sugimoto Photograph courtesy the artist © Hiroshi Sugimoto, courtesy Pace Gallery

Hiroshi Sugimoto is best-known for his large-format photographs of dioramas, seascapes and buildings, but he is also a collector and was once an antiquities dealer. He talks to Apollo about the links between his collection and his art, and about capturing the passing of time.

On a cold January afternoon, Hiroshi Sugimoto is in his New York studio, where he and his assistants have recently packed off to London a wide assortment of his own personal collection of fossils, antiques, first-edition books, and various relics of lost worlds for an upcoming exhibition of artists' collections at the Barbican Centre.

Outside, the air is freezing – but inside, on one of the higher floors overlooking 24th Street, heat pipes through the studio, plentiful but inefficient, and the glow of the fluorescent lights against the concrete floors gives the impression of an office filled with people slowly wrapping up their day.

In an art world where there is a lot of chatter about galleries and studios opening further and further east – in Chinatown, the Lower East Side, and across the river into Brooklyn's Bushwick and Greenpoint – Sugimoto's Chelsea studio is something of an anachronism. Here, the mega galleries dominate these large stretches of city blocks – Gagosian is just down the street; David Zwirner, Hauser & Wirth, and Pace are not far off, too. The current Chelsea landscape sometimes feels more like a marketplace than a home to creativity, where tourists take art selfies in front of reflective Murakami sculptures, and bright, young painters fetch extravagant sums. But there is a longevity to Sugimoto's presence that makes him impervious to these small motions of change.

Sugimoto was born in Tokyo, in 1948, and now splits his time between there and New York. His main preoccupation as an artist is with time, and how best to capture its meaning. His tool is the camera, and he self-deprecatingly likes to say that he applied to study photography because it was the easiest discipline to be accepted in at the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California, where he received his BFA in Fine Arts. But given the last century's long debate about the value and place of photography in fine art, Sugimoto's body of work is proof that the medium belongs firmly alongside sculpture and painting. If a photograph is a record of *what* we see, then Sugimoto is obsessed with *how* we see. One of his earliest and most impressive series is the ongoing *Dioramas* series, which he began in the mid 1970s, in which he photographed prehistoric scenes of life on display at the American Museum of Natural History.

Birds of South Georgia (2012), Hiroshi Sugimoto Photograph courtesy the artist © Hiroshi Sugimoto, courtesy Pace Gallery

Sugimoto is a master of the long exposure and the large-format camera; the scenes are static and preserved, but in the true black and white tones of his gelatin silver prints, they are not entirely lifeless, either. Sugimoto's ability to trick the eye – even in just an instant – juxtaposed with his open acknowledgement of the scene's artificiality, demonstrates both his playful curiosity and also his rigorous technique. 'The stuffed animals positioned before painted backdrops looked utterly fake,' Sugimoto has said before of the *Dioramas* photographs. 'Yet by taking a quick peek with one eye closed, all perspective vanished, and suddenly they looked very real. I'd found a way to see the world as a camera does. However fake the subject, once photographed, it's as good as real.'

Sugimoto moved to New York City in 1974 after finishing his studies in California. There was a time when, like many young and struggling artists, his work did not yet support him financially and he remembers, after driving across the country in a VW van with his friends, marvelling at the economy of contemporary art – an industry then dominated by powerhouse-dealers such as Leo Castelli and Ileana Sonnabend. He tried his luck at a variety of jobs – he disliked working as an assistant to a commercial photographer – but eventually he and his wife opened a successful antiques shop on West Broadway in SoHo in 1979. 'My wife was also a painter. We were married,' Sugimoto says. 'But it was difficult to live as two artists together, so we decided to divorce. For the first time, I asked my father to borrow some money to open the shop – but I didn't tell him we were going to divorce and I needed money.' Their gallery initially specialised in Japanese folk art, but grew to include a rare collection of Eastern antiquities, and the income it generated kept Sugimoto and his estranged wife afloat. When Sugimoto's career took off, the need to run the shop became less urgent, but his interest in collecting remained. 'Suddenly, my art started selling; I didn't have to buy things for my clients, so I stopped it,' Sugimoto says. 'But,' he adds with a sly smile, 'I kept buying for myself.'

We are now facing each other at the centre desk in his studio's main office, both of us seated in tan, swivelling Siège Tournant chairs. The Empire State Building can be seen from the one large, northern-facing window. Sugimoto's table tops are covered in the mess of a man caught in the middle of working – with various books splayed open next to stacks of paper. He has brought to the table an 18th-century French book of anatomical illustrations, which he has placed to my left. A slender case of Second World War German-made glass eyes sits to my right, alongside an army doctor's optical surgery kit and an antique set of eye lenses. These are some of the objects in the studio that haven't yet been flown to London.

Sugimoto speaks both English and Japanese but is, unsurprisingly, most comfortable expressing himself visually. As he walks me through a list of what's been packed off and what still remains here, he makes a point of showing me precisely what the value of each object is to him. He flips to an illustration of a woman's rib cage in the French anatomy book. 'This looks like a beautiful lady being opened while she is alive,' he says, pointing to her face, which, it's true, is expressive and aware despite the fact that her back is spliced open to reveal the bones and tissues. 'On the contrary,' Sugimoto says, 'in British 18th-century anatomy books, the body's expressions are completely dead. But this is almost like an angel – an angel being opened.'

There are no rules when it comes to hunting for antiques. Sugimoto says he could find something he loves at a flea market, at Sotheby's, on the street. 'It doesn't matter how much I paid for it,' he insists. Like many collectors, the price is immaterial to his desire to possess it – an impulse that can be as whimsical as it is deeply and inexplicably emotional. I am reminded of a short story by V.S. Pritchett called 'The Camberwell Beauty,' involving the obsessional nature of antique dealers: '…there is one object he broods on from one year to the next, most of his life; the thing a man would commit murder to get his hands on if he had the nerve, but I have never heard of a dealer who had; theft perhaps…'

Sugimoto's collection includes stone-age tools, meteorites, Roman amulets, the remains of an Egyptian cat, and perhaps most astonishing, fossils that are anywhere from 20 to 30 million years old. If you think about it, Sugimoto says to me, a fossil is just like a photograph. 'One side is negative, one side is positive. Same thing.' Sugimoto is much more Zen about his practice of collecting than he is about his art. But obsession goes some way to explain his owning, for example, early editions of Isaac Newton's *Optics* and the *Principia Mathematica*. 'I can study them,' Sugimoto explains to me patiently. 'I just want to stay with them and I want to live with them. Some collectors want to buy [something] at auction and put it in storage and put it back to auction after a few years – as if it's just investment. I'm interested in how the human eye captures images and reads the images and makes meaning out of them,' he says. 'So, in general, I just want to know what is going on in our world. And how a human being is aware of the outside of themselves. As a photographer, that's what I was interested in in the first place: the perception of human existence. How do you read what is outside your body?'

Empire State Building (1997), Hiroshi Sugimoto. Photograph courtesy the artist © Hiroshi Sugimoto, courtesy Pace Gallery

Many of Sugimoto's exhibitions integrate his collection with his own artworks. One will invariably conclude that Sugimoto's skill in these combinations is without ego or presumption. He is fully aware of how his own work appears when it's placed next to the petrified spearhead of a caveman. Sugimoto is not concerned with making his own work appear timeless; he is more interested in capturing an idea of history – a precise sensation of weight that time can create – with an image.

When I ask Sugimoto if he worries that the human lifespan is too short a time to do everything we might want to do, he is charmingly unfazed. 'Well, living to 100 is nothing,' he says. He raises his arm to the window: 'The Empire State Building on Manhattan island – it probably won't survive for more than 200 or 300 years. The age expectation of concrete is probably 100, 200 years old. It will deteriorate. Through my collection I get a sense of time, of the passage of time, the history, the meaning of history. I just want to feel it through the object.'

After our interview, but before I leave the studio, I ask one of Sugimoto's staff to show me his *chashitsu*, his room for Japanese tea ceremonies, which he built a few years ago in a neighbouring space on the same floor. It is cold, dark, and unheated – there are no guests expected for today – and I stand silently, looking at the *tatami* mats where the artist must sit for the ancient Japanese ritual. The alcove walls are currently bare – customarily, Sugimoto chooses a work of art to hang that matches his guest. I can't quite believe that Sugimoto would so willingly part with any of his collection – there is nothing about the artist that strikes me as precious, but his objects clearly bring him a rare sense of wonder and joy. Yet when I asked him if he could one day live with nothing, his answer was thoughtful and honest. Perception, according to the photographer, must happen in both negative and positive spaces. 'To have nothing, yes, it must be a nice feeling,' Sugimoto concedes. 'Sometimes the teahouse is empty. Today it is empty. I need a nice, clean empty space to stay with sometimes. It will always teach me something.

'Magnificent Obsessions: The Artist as Collector' is at the Barbican Centre from 12 February–25 May.

Apollo Magazine
7 December 2014

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THE INTERNATIONAL ART MAGAZINE

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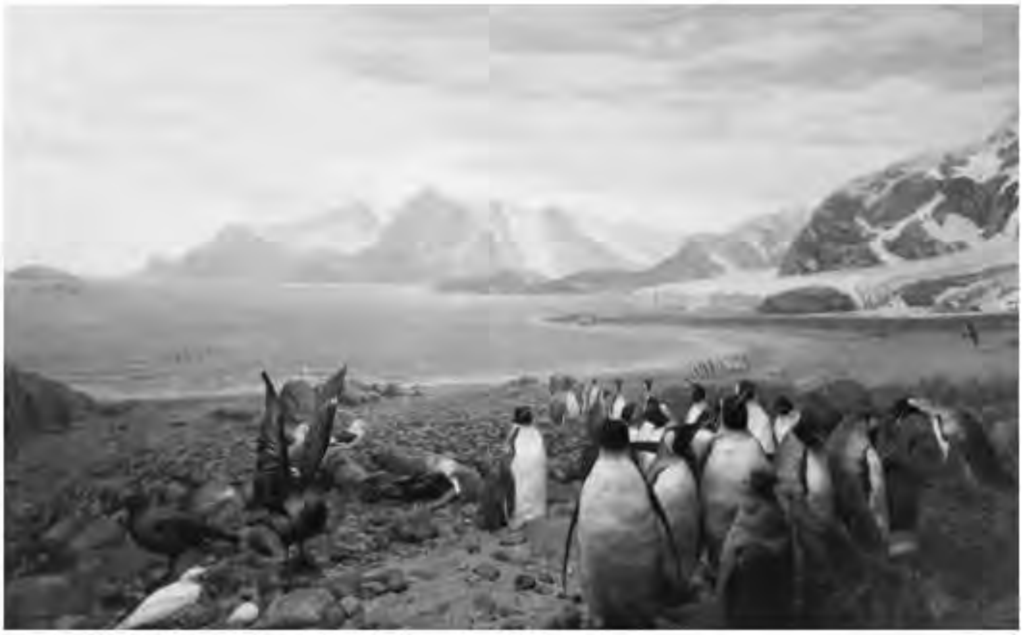
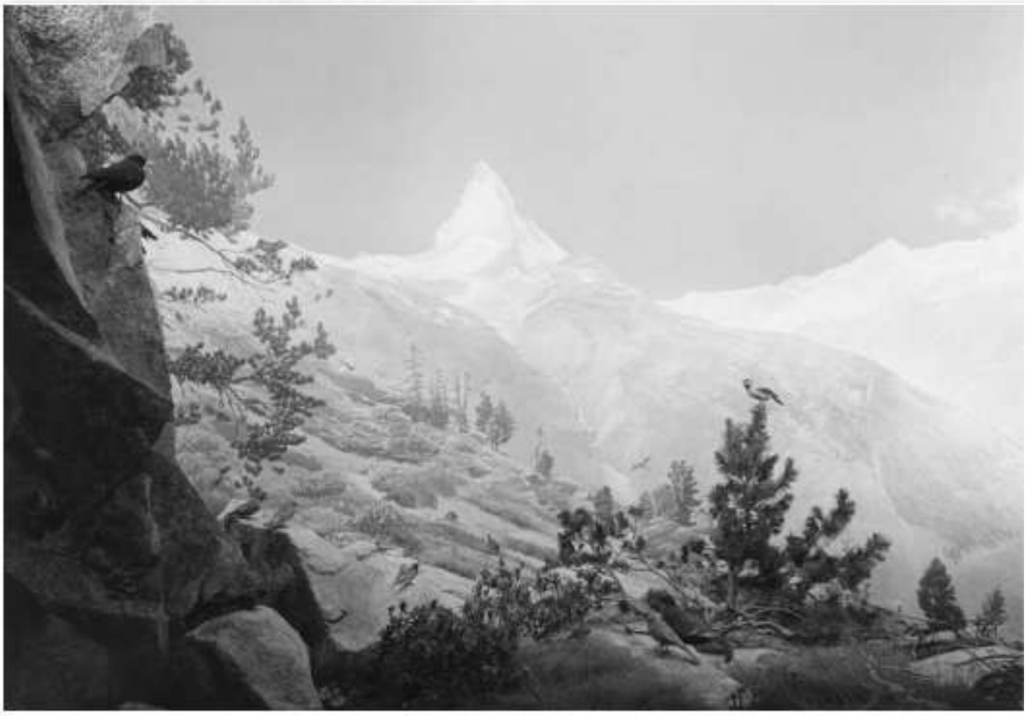


Birds of South Georgia (2012), Hiroshi Sugimoto © Hiroshi Sugimoto

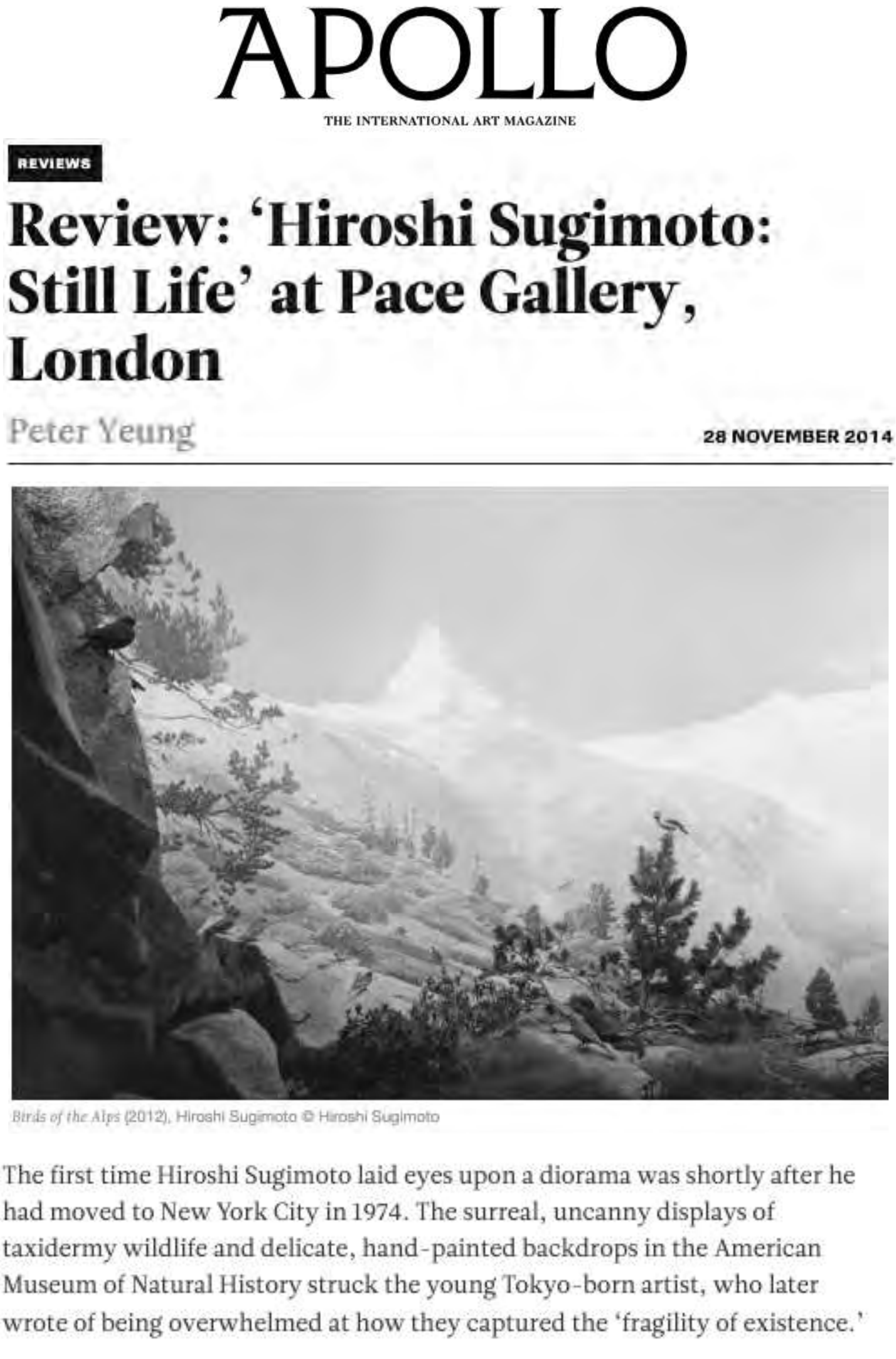


Birds of the Alps (2012), Hiroshi Sugimoto © Hiroshi Sugimoto

'Hiroshi Sugimoto: Still Life' at Pace Gallery, London (Peter Yeung)

The first time Hiroshi Sugimoto laid eyes upon a diorama was shortly after he had moved to New York City in 1974. The surreal, uncanny displays of taxidermy wildlife and delicate, hand-painted backdrops in the American Museum of Natural History struck the young Tokyo-born artist, who later wrote of being overwhelmed at how they captured the 'fragility of existence.' Two years later, an inspired Sugimoto began working on *Diorama*....at first, these pictures appear to be like the black-and-white photographs usually found in *National Geographic*, until closer inspection reveals detailed brushstrokes.

Apollo Magazine
28 November 2014



APOLLO
THE INTERNATIONAL ART MAGAZINE

REVIEWS

Review: 'Hiroshi Sugimoto: Still Life' at Pace Gallery, London

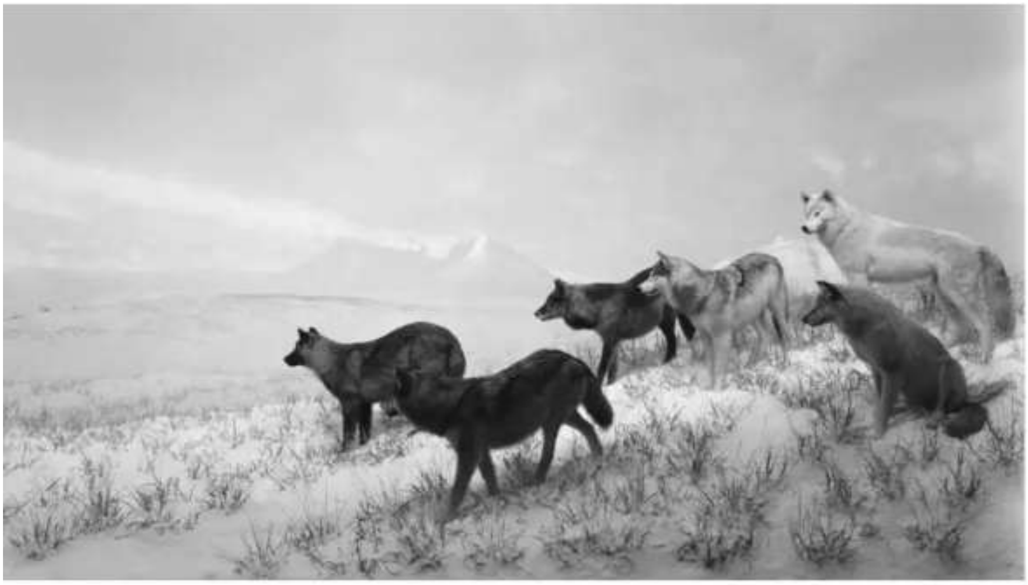
Peter Yeung

28 NOVEMBER 2014

Birds of the Alps (2012), Hiroshi Sugimoto © Hiroshi Sugimoto

The first time Hiroshi Sugimoto laid eyes upon a diorama was shortly after he had moved to New York City in 1974. The surreal, uncanny displays of taxidermy wildlife and delicate, hand-painted backdrops in the American Museum of Natural History struck the young Tokyo-born artist, who later wrote of being overwhelmed at how they captured the 'fragility of existence.'

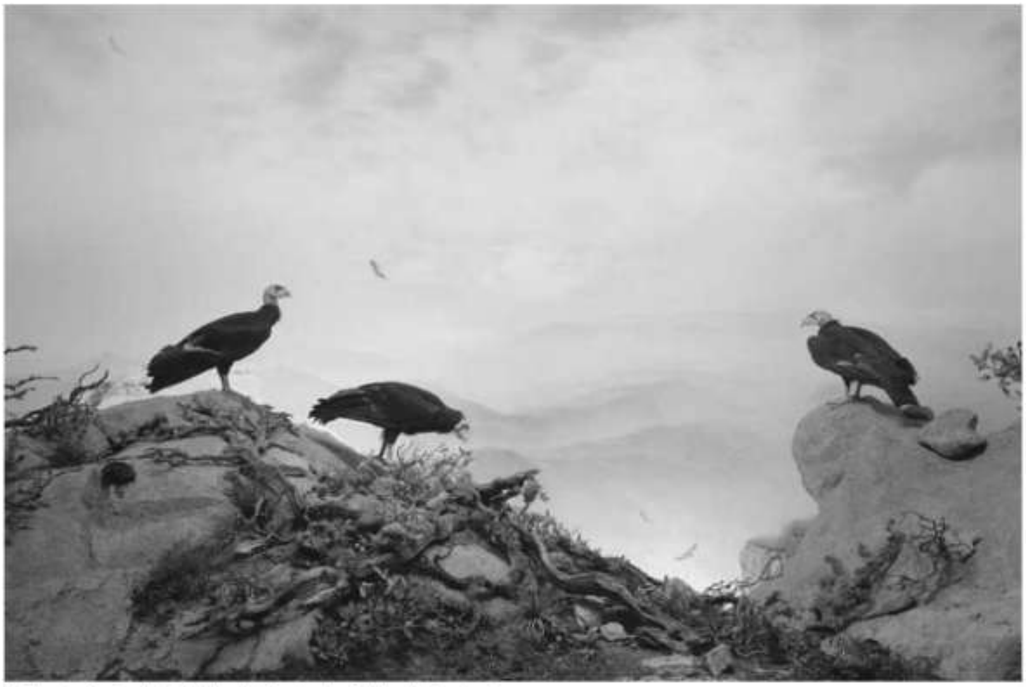
Two years later, an inspired Sugimoto began working on *Diorama*. The photographic series has already spanned four decades, during which time he has travelled to natural history museums across the United States, documenting their dioramas with an 8×10 large-format camera. His intention is to subvert the supposed objectivity of photography by deceiving the viewer: at first, these pictures appear to be like the black-and-white photographs usually found in *National Geographic*, until closer inspection reveals detailed brushstrokes. Gerhard Richter's early photorealistic portraits are an obvious influence.



Alaskan Wolves (1994), Hiroshi Sugimoto © Hiroshi Sugimoto

Pace London's exhibition presents a lustrous selection of these monochrome images, which combine form and concept majestically. The photographs on show were taken in the New York museum between 1976 and 2012 (some recently printed for the first time), and feature dizzying landscapes from the Alps and Alaska, to the Galapagos and California. But although 'Still Life' speaks of worldly beauty, it suggests the inherent violence in the natural world too: a grizzled polar bear glares at a bloody seal carcass, lizards crawl beside gnarled cacti, and warthogs raid an ostrich's nest for eggs.

For Sugimoto, photographs are like fossils, in that they both halt the flow of time in a certain way. Perhaps that's idea that he is playing with now, since there is little change in style between the first and last of these photographs, despite the gap in time between their production. Though, it may also be because Sugimoto's artistry rarely wavers or alters (even in high school, he would frequently visit the cinema to take photographs of Audrey Hepburn in her latest film).

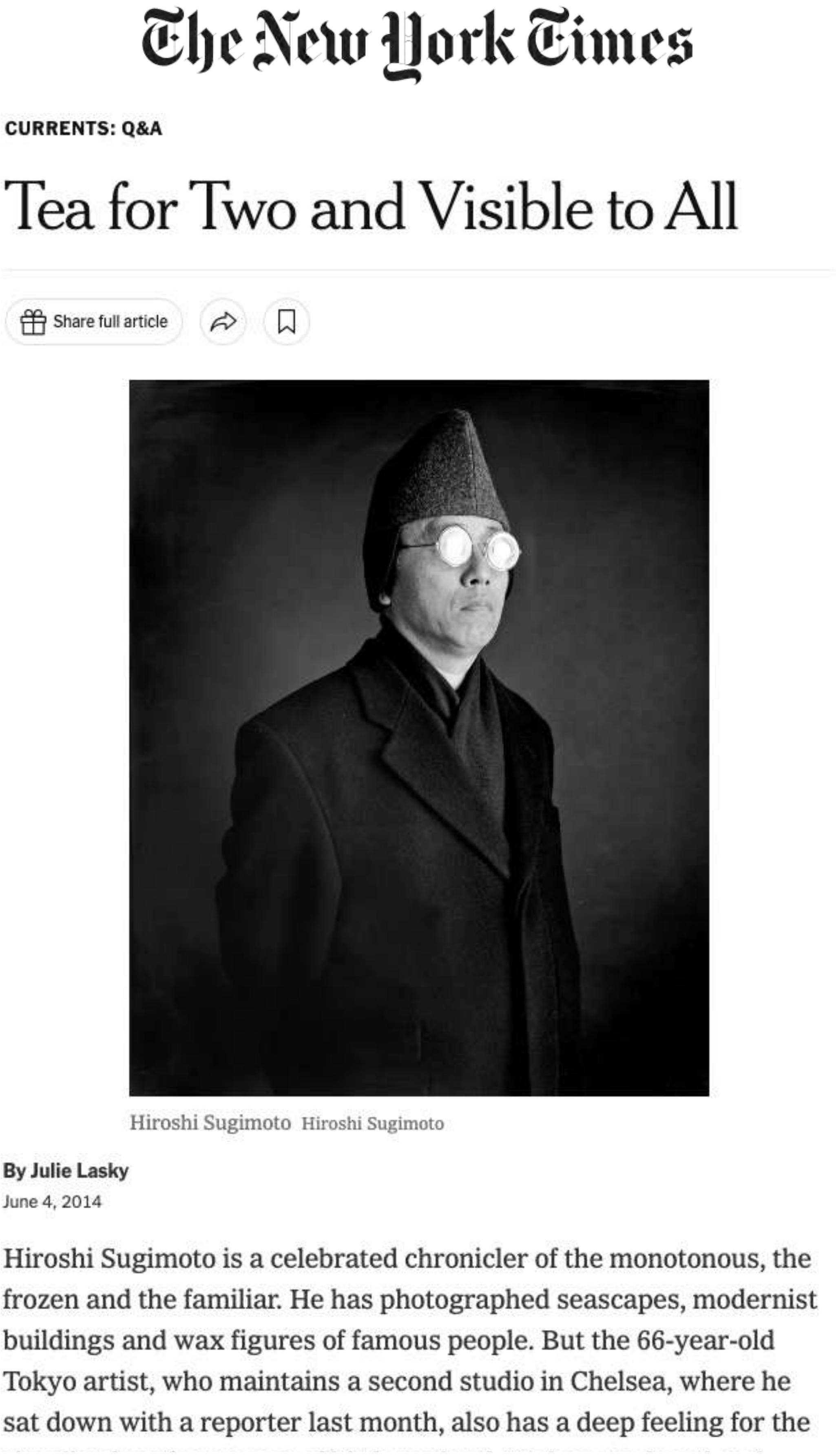


California Condor (1994), Hiroshi Sugimoto © Hiroshi Sugimoto

This sort of *trompe l'oeil* photography is no longer the most original of ideas – as Joan Fontcuberta's puckish images at the Science Museum earlier this year attest – but when Sugimoto first began, his concept was radical. There are no labels in the exhibition, which omits the didactic elements of a museum display, and thereby amplifies the works' aberrance. Furthermore, these photographs are still bold and arresting – some using exposure times of up to 20 minutes, some prints stretching almost five metres wide – and they remain undoubtedly memorable.

'Hiroshi Sugimoto: Still Life' is at Pace London until 25 January 2015.

The New York Times
4 June 2014



The New York Times

CURRENTS: Q&A

Tea for Two and Visible to All

Hiroshi Sugimoto Hiroshi Sugimoto

By Julie Lasky
June 4, 2014

Hiroshi Sugimoto is a celebrated chronicler of the monotonous, the frozen and the familiar. He has photographed seascapes, modernist buildings and wax figures of famous people. But the 66-year-old Tokyo artist, who maintains a second studio in Chelsea, where he sat down with a reporter last month, also has a deep feeling for the ritualized performances of his homeland. He has produced and directed his own versions of the traditional Japanese puppet theater called bunraku, and the building he designed for his multidisciplinary Odawara Art Foundation in Japan will have a noh theater stage perched 100 meters above the sea when it opens in 2016.

On Friday, Mr. Sugimoto unveils a teahouse at Le Stanze del Vetro, a museum on the island of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice. In this glass cube set over a tiled pool, the traditional tea ceremony will be performed for the public. The project is the first in a series of temporary artist-designed structures at the museum and will be on view during the Venice Architecture Biennale. (This interview was edited and condensed.)

Q. You're known for photographing architectural monuments, among other subjects. But lately, you've taken to architecture yourself. Why?

A. I'm a consumer of space in museums. To design my own shows, I have to be able to make floor plans and wall plans. So I trained myself how to make architectural drawings a long time ago.

You saw this work as a corrective?

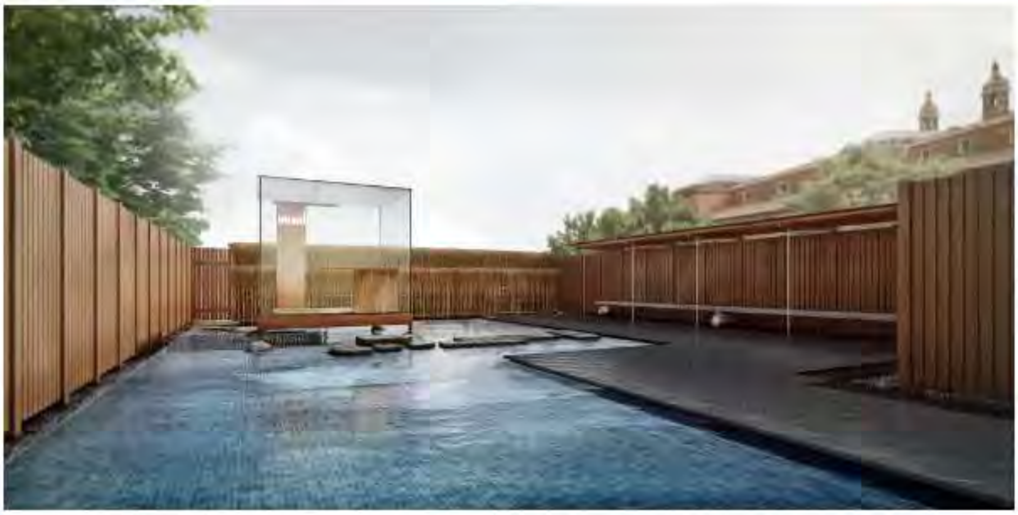
I take every museum show as a challenge from the architect; I just enjoy fighting with them. They teach me a lot — what not to do. For architects, especially the famous star architects, it's probably the empty space that is the perfect space. They don't want to have art inside of their beautiful artistic space.

Let's talk about your own beautiful artistic space: the teahouse you built in Venice.

Basically, I wanted to make an intimate teahouse: only one tea master and one guest. Your vision is completely surrounded by this wooden fencing; it has a design motif borrowed from the famous Ise Shinto shrine. But you can still see greenery and the tip of the church next door.

I see on your plan a reference to 'antiquities' in the pool. What are they?

I found 13th- or 14th-century Venetian antique columns. Now we're globalized, so I can expand my Japanese aesthetics to use any material I want. The most important stones are from Japan, but the mosaic tiles covering the pool are provided by an Italian maker, Bisazza.



The glass teahouse project by Hiroshi Sugimoto is at Le Stanze del Vetro in Venice. And because Venice is famous for glassware, he has made the tea bowls out of Venetian glass. Hiroshi Sugimoto

People can watch the performance from the edge of this pool. I especially designed it so that 21 people can be able to sit here. I like odd numbers.

Why?

Odd numbers always have a center. I like to have a center.

Will the teahouse have a traditional ikebana flower arrangement and hanging scroll?

They are all omitted. I designed the environment so that, seen through the transparent structure, it is itself a beautiful painting. And also the greenery, you can see it; you can borrow it from the church next door. So those are all ikebana.

You've named your teahouse Mondrian, but I'm not seeing any primary colors. Please explain.

There is so much abstraction in the design of the teahouse. Here is a picture of the only surviving teahouse by the 16th-century master

Sen no Rikyu. It is almost the same size as mine: two-tatami size. This is the wall that he designed with two windows — shoji. This is very Mondrian to me. And this is 400 years ahead of Mondrian.

The teahouse has to be named, and the name makes some kind of sense or some kind of joke. So Mondrian, it's bridging Japan and the West. Wrapping more than 300 years.

Please talk about the things you designed for the tea ceremony.

Usually in a teahouse you need a charcoal pit for heating water. But in this glass cube, if I burned charcoal, it would get too hot inside. And so I commissioned the design of a bucket where you can keep water hot for at least an hour or an hour and a half.

And then there is also the tea bowl. Since Venice is famous for the glassware, I am making them of Venetian glass. I took the measurements from a very famous tea bowl and adapted it to a square shape.

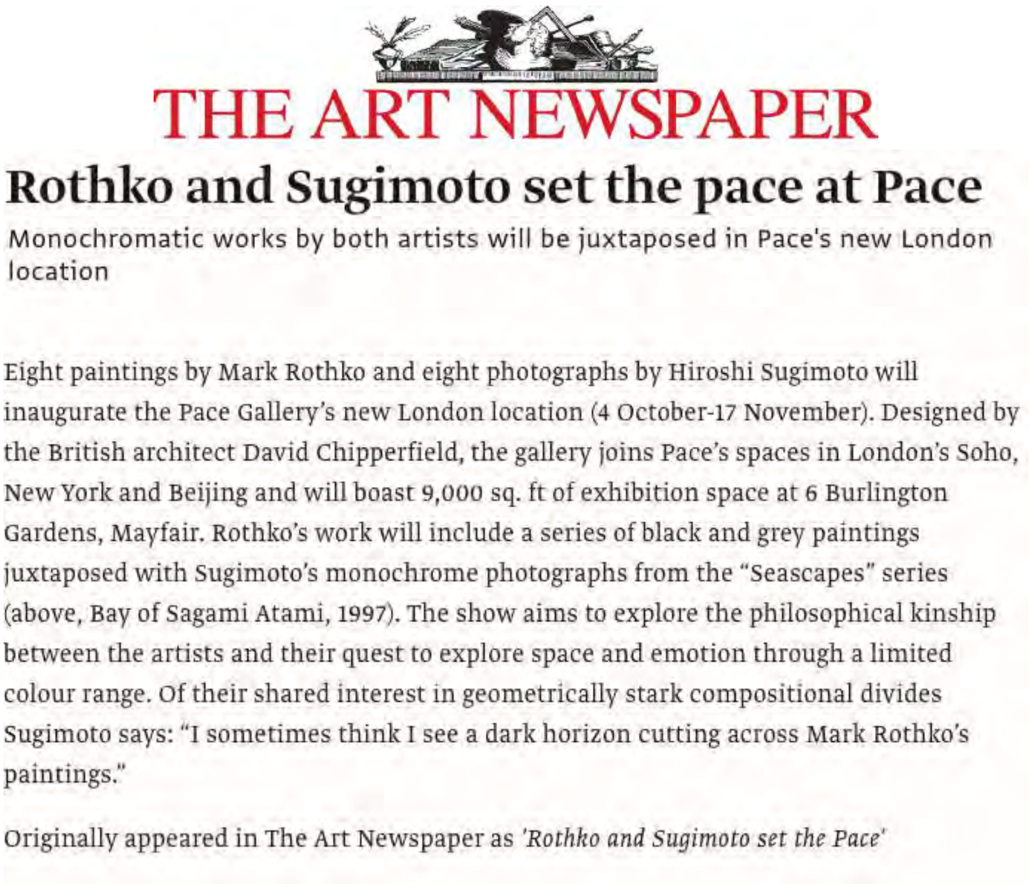
In other words, your tea bowls are glass boxes?

Why not? Everything is 'why not?' That's a good title.

You should use it for your next teahouse.

I'm bringing the spirits back from the dead. The tea ceremony, to me, is kind of a dead tradition. To make it alive and modified to the modern world, I need that contemporary spirit and energy. People believe that tradition should not be changed, but that's not true for me.

The Art Newspaper
1 October 2012



THE ART NEWSPAPER

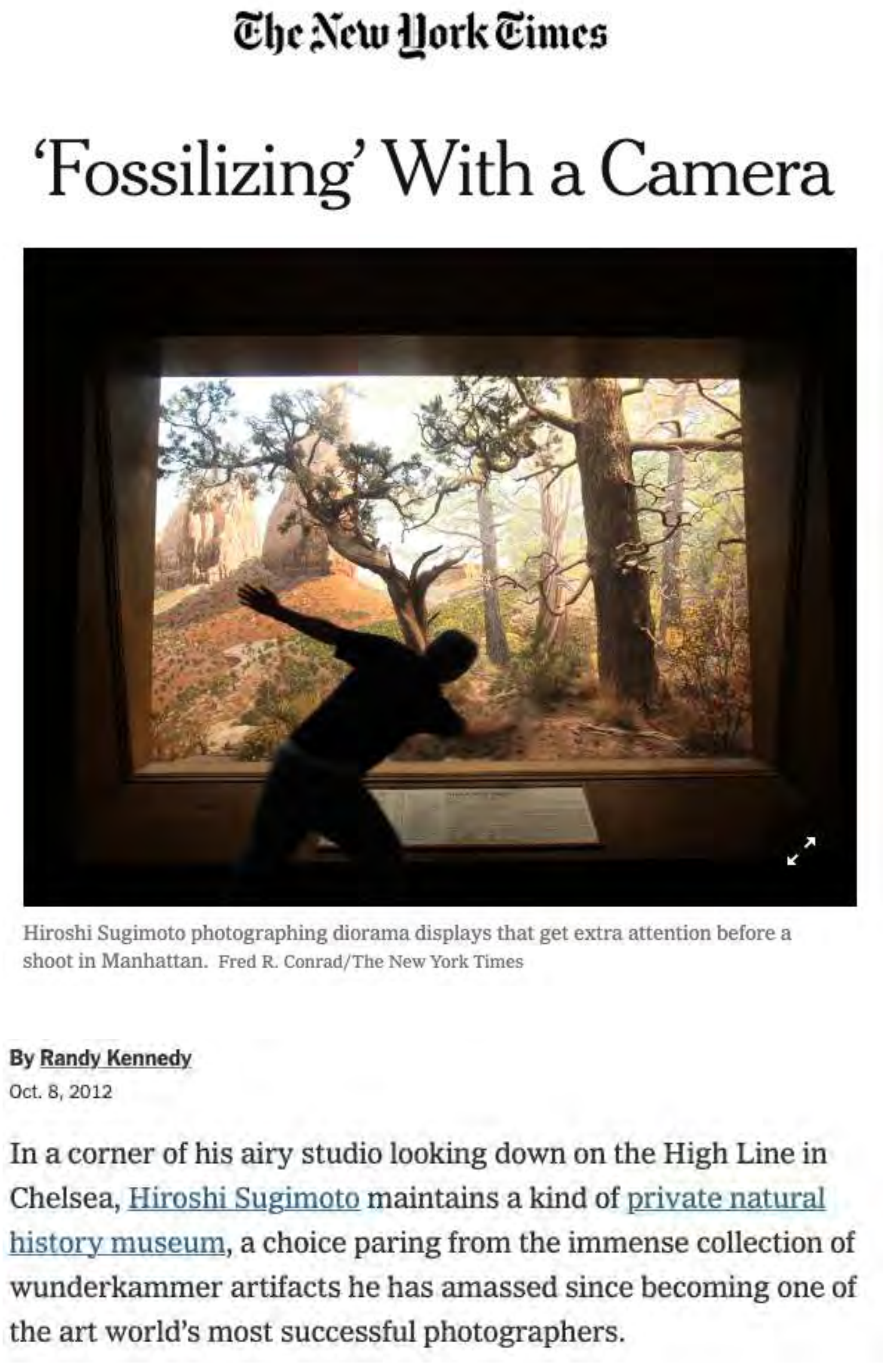
Rothko and Sugimoto set the pace at Pace

Monochromatic works by both artists will be juxtaposed in Pace's new London location

Eight paintings by Mark Rothko and eight photographs by Hiroshi Sugimoto will inaugurate the Pace Gallery's new London location (4 October-17 November). Designed by the British architect David Chipperfield, the gallery joins Pace's spaces in London's Soho, New York and Beijing and will boast 9,000 sq. ft of exhibition space at 6 Burlington Gardens, Mayfair. Rothko's work will include a series of black and grey paintings juxtaposed with Sugimoto's monochrome photographs from the "Seascapes" series (above, Bay of Sagami Atami, 1997). The show aims to explore the philosophical kinship between the artists and their quest to explore space and emotion through a limited colour range. Of their shared interest in geometrically stark compositional divides Sugimoto says: "I sometimes think I see a dark horizon cutting across Mark Rothko's paintings."

Originally appeared in The Art Newspaper as *'Rothko and Sugimoto set the Pace'*

The New York Times
8 October 2012



The New York Times

‘Fossilizing’ With a Camera

Hiroshi Sugimoto photographing diorama displays that get extra attention before a shoot in Manhattan. Fred R. Conrad/The New York Times

By **Randy Kennedy**
Oct. 8, 2012

In a corner of his airy studio looking down on the High Line in Chelsea, Hiroshi Sugimoto maintains a kind of private natural history museum, a choice paring from the immense collection of wunderkammer artifacts he has amassed since becoming one of the art world’s most successful photographers.

There is a speckled shard of moon rock. There is a soccer-ball-size chunk of iron meteorite that fell in Namibia, almost too heavy to hoist off the windowsill where it now sits. There are fossilized dinosaur eggs that look like props from "Alien." And there is a small manmade object that Mr. Sugimoto fetched from a cabinet on a recent afternoon: an Egyptian cat sarcophagus from around 200 B.C., with the elegantly cast form of the memorialized feline perched atop the sealed rectangular bronze box.

He handed it to a visitor and told him to shake it. Something dry rattled around inside, making a sad, ancient maraca sound.

"It's in there but we'll never be able to see it," he said, smiling placidly.

Like many contemporary photographers, Mr. Sugimoto's work grapples with questions of perception and photography's claims to truth. But his interests have always reached further, to an almost scientific concern with time and time's inconvenient companion, mortality.

Among the first pictures that brought this Japanese-born photographer acclaim were ones he began more than 30 years ago of dioramas at the American Museum of Natural History. The photographs were, in a sense, nature twice removed — once by the naturalist's rifle and the taxidermist, the second time by Mr. Sugimoto's large-format camera and what he produced from it in the darkroom.

Hiroshi Sugimoto Fred R. Conrad/The New York Times

He compares the work to successive stages of fossilization. And on a moderately crowded weekday morning not long ago, Mr. Sugimoto was out fossilizing again, in the Natural History Museum's inky-dark Hall of North American Forests. It was the first time in more than two decades that he had returned to the dioramas to continue working through an idea that won't leave him alone. (He last shot in the museum in 1994, before that in 1982, and initially in the late '70s.)

The series has often focused on scenes of animals — polar bears, musk oxen, African antelope, ostriches — that come off, in his stark black-and-white translations, as surreal, tricking the eye much more effectively than the dioramas themselves into believing that they are images of nature taken on the Serengeti or in the Artic, too perfectly composed to believe.

But this time around, Mr. Sugimoto, 64, has directed his attention to darker matters, to plant-and-tree-dominated dioramas that present what he sees as a vision of the earth after humankind and most complex animal life have had their existential whirl and disappeared, a relatively brief interlude on the planet's 4.5 billion-year calendar.

"Maybe it is my age," he said during an interview in his studio. "I'm starting to take a very long view." He gestured out the window to the Manhattan skyline. "In a 100 years, if we weren't here, this whole city would start to look like a forest again."

Mr. Sugimoto — whose work is now on view in London in a show inaugurating the Pace Gallery's outpost there, pairing his bare seascapes with Mark Rothko's late black-and-gray paintings — picked nine new dioramas to shoot at the history museum. And because the museum was able to permit him only a day's access to photograph, during regular open hours, he and his many assistants plotted that day with all the precision of a military flanking maneuver.

First, weaving through patrons, the assistants had to erect tall frames for black curtains that cloaked the chosen dioramas, to eliminate reflection on the glass. Then Mr. Sugimoto set up his beloved R. H. Phillips and Sons 8x10 camera inside the curtains, focused it and took Polaroid film test shots, which he examined painstakingly in the beam of a spotlight shining down on the nearby bust of a long-dead botanist.

When the shutter was finally snapped, for exposures lasting as long as five minutes, the work was sometimes not even then at an end. In one diorama, "Timberline in the Northern Rocky Mountains," a permanent spotlight shining on a painted cloud bank was too bright and would have marred the exposure.

Hiroshi Sugimoto goes over details before shooting a diorama at the American Museum of Natural History. He had to plan extensively for a recent one-day shoot at the museum. Fred R. Conrad/The New York Times

So an assistant, Hiroshi Sumiyama, got inside the curtains, dressed head-to-toe in solid black — a cheap Halloween ninja costume that everyone on the team, including Mr. Sugimoto, wore that day to eliminate the possibility of reflection. Holding up a black pole, he energetically waved a placard attached to the top of the pole during the length of the three-and-a-half-minute exposure, to "dodge" down the brightness of the clouds in a way that is usually done in the darkroom.

Because he was reflecting no light and constantly moving — it looked like a kind of hopped-up ceremonial dance — his form would not show up on the picture, though his darkening efforts would. "Ritual over," Mr. Sugimoto said, after the shutter snapped closed. In his ninja suit, he added, deadpanning: "I'm inviting the spirits into my photography. It's an act of God."

Elisabeth Sussman, a curator and photography expert at the Whitney Museum of American Art, which includes Mr. Sugimoto's work in its collection, said that his pictures have always worked at "extremes between this kind of Buddhist meditativeness and an incredible formal control."

"And they also have this wonderful simultaneous quality of conceptualism and photographing what's right in front of us, or what we think is right in front of us," she said.

Mr. Sugimoto said he continued to return to the Museum of Natural History — and to other natural history museums around the world — in part because he sees something in them, a realer-than-real, that he is able to capture a little better each time. "I'm trying to make it as close as possible to my wished vision of what it should look like," he said.

Back in the studio a few days earlier, after displaying his artifact collection, he showed off an auction catalog of new items on his wish list, ones that also spoke eloquently of nature and its strangeness, but in a very different way than a meteorite. The auction was for ancient torture devices, including a spiked neck ring that looked like something Duchamp would have happily declared a readymade.

Mr. Sugimoto shrugged. "I collect weird things," he said. "And I make weird things."

The New York Times
11 November 2010

The New York Times

Stealing Mother Nature's Thunder

Share full article

By Carol Kino
Nov. 11, 2010

HIROSHI SUGIMOTO is often venerated as a Zen master of film photography. But in "The Day After," an exhibition that opened Nov. 6 at the Pace Gallery in Chelsea, he has assumed a new persona — that of a wild and visionary scientist.

The show focuses on Mr. Sugimoto's latest work: a series of monumental "Lightning Field" photographs, all from last year, that seem to sizzle with majestic lightning bolts. Marked by incandescent whites, velvety blacks and subtle textural detail, they suggest the birth of stars and planets.

These photographs are the largest that Mr. Sugimoto has ever made, and they took him some four years of intensive research to perfect. "I have always been curious about science," he said in a recent interview at his Chelsea studio. "But now it's getting very serious."

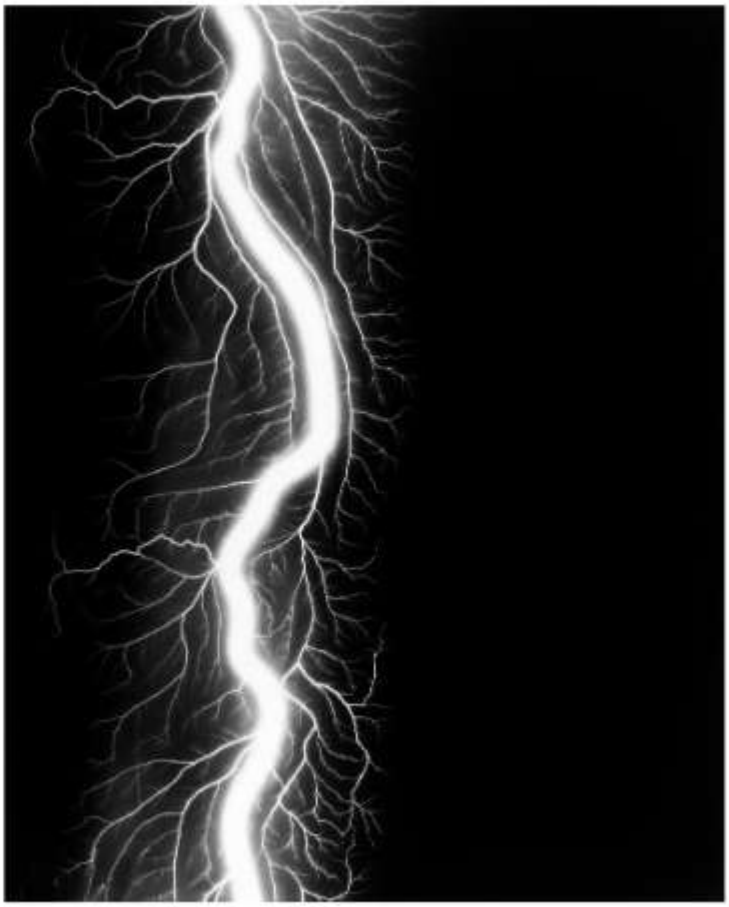
DANGER
HIGH VOLTAGE

Hiroshi Sugimoto, whose latest work is the "Lightning Field" series, demonstrates electrical discharges with a Tesla coil generator and a discharge electrode. Hiroshi Sugimoto, Courtesy of Pace Gallery

He generates his lightning photographs without a camera, rather like a photogram. But instead of placing an object on photosensitive paper, then exposing it to light, he produces the image by causing electrical sparks to erupt over the film's surface. The process "creates a similar situation to the first meteorite hitting the Earth," he said, before embarking on a discussion about the panspermia hypothesis, which holds that life was created when meteorites laced with amino acids plunged into the primordial seas. "That's the theory that's most believable now," Mr. Sugimoto observed wryly. "But it sounds like a fairy tale to me."

He has conceived of "The Day After" as a spectacular sound-and-light installation focused on the origins of life and the intersection of art and science. Along with pieces from his own fossil and meteorite collections the show includes a sculpture that emits miniature purple lightning bolts. There are also photographs from his "Diorama" and "Seascape" series.

Mr. Sugimoto said he considers his entire oeuvre, including his pictures of movie theaters and wax dummies, to be "a construction of human and life history." Now, he added, "I'm using my photography methods to go back into time, to the beginning of life formation."



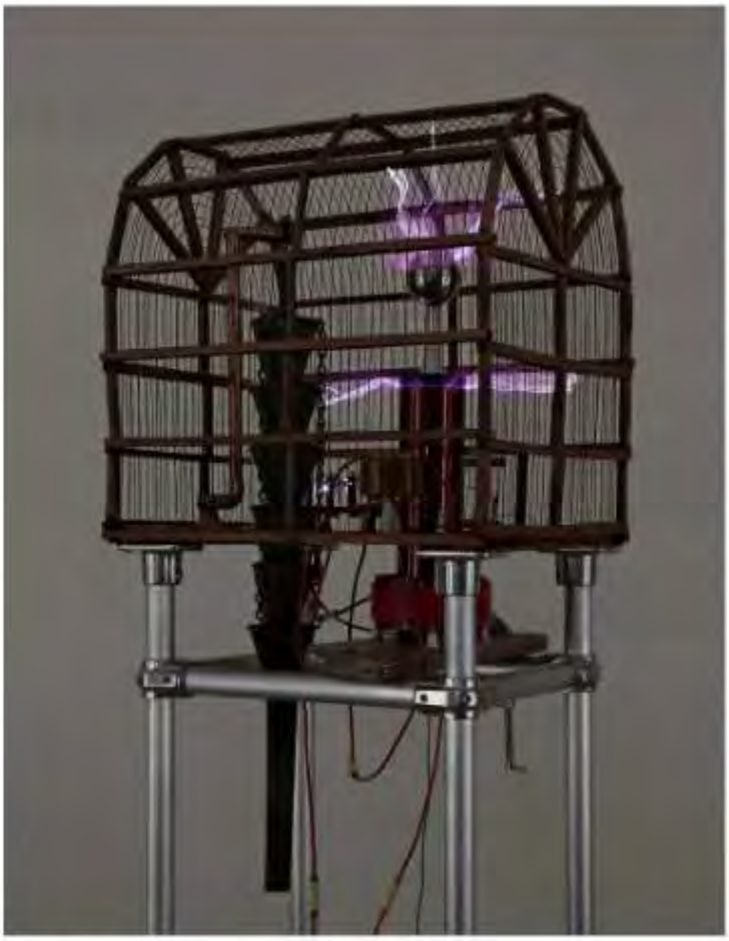
Hiroshi Sugimoto, Courtesy of Pace Gallery

Lightning Field Photographs

Mr. Sugimoto said that forging a "Lightning Field" photograph can be a bit risky, involving a 7-by-2.5-foot sheet of film laid on a metal plate, a 400,000-volt Van de Graaff generator and an electrical-discharge device that he calls a wand. (He has several, each one made from a metal kitchen utensil taped to a plexiglass handle.)

To start Gregg Stanger, who manages Mr. Sugimoto's studio, connects the wand to the generator with an insulated wire. Then he and Mr. Sugimoto sequester themselves inside a pitch-black darkroom. (Although they wear rubber-soled shoes, they have both been shocked many times.) Mr. Stanger flips the generator switch, and Mr. Sugimoto waves the wand until the air crackles with static electricity.

Mustering the right dose of charge is a matter of intuition, but Mr. Sugimoto knows he's near the jackpot when "all the hair on my arms stands up," he explained. As things start "getting into the danger zone," and he senses that "it's ready to spark," he lowers the wand toward the film. Then "Bam!" he said. "It's a big bang. It's a miniature lightning field." But he doesn't know exactly what pattern the electricity has wrought until he has developed the film.



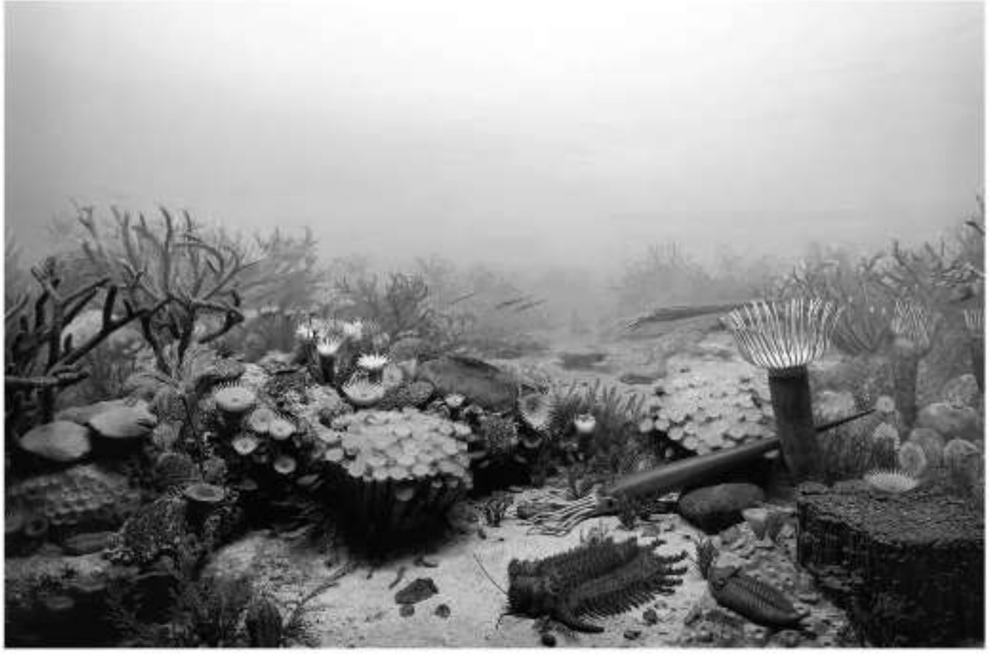
Hiroshi Sugimoto, Courtesy of Pace Gallery

Then Mr. Sugimoto searches for the perfect 8-by-10 portion of the film to enlarge. By this point he has scores of negatives to choose from. "It's like trying to cut the center out of the entire sky," he said, joking. "I tell people that I hired a god to do it for me. Gods are not so expensive anymore."

Faraday Cage

Using an antique birdcage, a Tesla coil and other found objects, this assemblage pays homage to three of Mr. Sugimoto's mentors from history: Marcel Duchamp, who invented the mechanical readymade; William Henry Fox Talbot, who invented negative-positive photography; and Michael Faraday, the 19th-century English physicist and chemist who discovered the basic laws of electromagnetism.

At first the Faraday cage evokes Duchamp: it's based on his drawing for the Bachelor Machine, the contraption that occupies the lower half of "The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even" (1915-23). But the Tesla coil, which sputters with purple electrical arcs, is a nod to the moment Mr. Sugimoto decided to make a serious study of electricity.



Hiroshi Sugimoto, Courtesy of Pace Gallery

While visiting the Fox Talbot Museum in Britain some years back Mr. Sugimoto was stunned to discover that Fox Talbot had once conducted joint research into static electricity with his friend and colleague Faraday.

"All the books mentioned his photography activities only," Mr. Sugimoto said. Since he was already pursuing similar research, Mr. Sugimoto decided to plunge in where Fox Talbot left off.

He said he has learned that it takes many years to transform scientific discoveries into art. But "if I keep practicing," he added, "then maybe I will find the secret of the universe."

Hiroshi Sugimoto, Courtesy The Pace Gallery

Seascapes and Dioramas

Mr. Sugimoto finished his first "Diorama" photograph in 1976, soon after moving to New York. Back then, like Timothy Leary and other pharmacological experimentalists before him, he was using hallucinogenic drugs to explore his consciousness.

"I ingest a hallucinogenic substance," he said excitedly, recalling those days, "and then all of a sudden this small piece of material gets into my body and changes my sight and sounds and vision and memory. Then I lose my sense of time. I can speak to anybody in history."

One day, without drugs, he had a similar sensation on a visit to the American Museum of Natural History. He was familiar with the dioramas there, full of "dead stuffed animals, posing for me," he said, but the fusty scenes suddenly seemed to spring to life.

"If I can photograph them as I see them," he remembered thinking, "maybe people will share the same vision." The rest is photographic history.

Similarly he conceived of his "Seascape" series as a way to evoke the birth of human consciousness. As he traveled the world, photographing vast expanses of water, he decided to take the perspective of "the first human who appeared on this planet," he said.

He was also driven by a potent childhood memory: the moment he caught his first glimpse of the ocean and "became aware of myself."

A version of this article appears in print on Nov. 14, 2010, Section AR, Page 22 of the New York edition with the headline: Stealing Mother Nature's Thunder. Order Reprints | Today's Paper | Subscribe

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The Brooklyn Rail
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THE BROOKLYN RAIL

Hiroshi Sugimoto: History of History Stylized Sculpture: Contemporary Japanese Fashion from the Kyoto Costume Institute

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Photograph by Hiroshi Sugimoto, (2007). Dress by Rei Kawakubo for Comme des Garçons Noir, (Autumn/Winter 1994). Wool, nylon. Collection of the Kyoto Costume Institute.

A lot of what photographer Hiroshi Sugimoto does ought to be really annoying. He's famous for making very large photographs of things that might seem hardly worth photographing: museum dioramas, celebrity waxworks, empty movie theaters, expanses of the calm ocean. Through what alchemy does he make these depictions of depictions and chronicles of blankness seem worth looking at, even enchanting?

That same magic is on display in two shows at San Francisco's Asian Art Museum, both masterminded by the Japanese-American photographer himself.

History of History, a traveling exhibition that has already appeared in New York, Washington, and Toronto, combines objects from Sugimoto's personal collection—including prehistoric fossils, fragments of ancient Japanese textiles, antique scrolls, and miscellaneous collectibles—with his own photographs and conceptual pieces in a way that blurs the distinction between curator and installation artist.

It would be easy enough to see *History of History* as an exercise in the ego, for he's not only showing off his museum-quality possessions but also including his own work (a photograph of a waterfall here, another of a waxed effigy there) among these timeless treasures. Indeed, to create "Time's Arrow," the piece that appears on the cover of the show's catalogue, Sugimoto took a fragment of a 13th-century bronze reliquary and placed one of his own seascape photographs inside the frame originally made to hold a sacred relic of the Buddha.

Two museum galleries nearby house a second show, also designed by Sugimoto, of contemporary Japanese fashion. Twenty outfits by Issey Miyake and four other celebrity couturiers, titled *Stylized Sculpture*, are reverentially displayed in hushed rooms whose dark walls are punctuated by a few large Sugimoto black-and-whites of mannequins modeling the clothes.

In the hands of another artist, a show like *History* could easily come across as a self-glorifying antique shoppe, *Stylized Sculpture* as the trend-hound fashion boutique next door. But Sugimoto manages to imbue both installations with a humility that underscores, not the artist's distance from the unglamorous lives of the rest of us, but our shared experience of time, loss, and the consolations of wonder.

"Testament of a Penis" (side view), (2003). Stone rod, Jomon Period, 100th- 4th Centuries BC, 46". Hospital gurney, 1950's, granite, chrome-plated steel piping, aluminum, and rubber, 22×84 1/4" x 15.4"

Some Conceptual and Minimalist work leans toward holier-than-thou asceticism or a kind of angry contempt for people who still want art to put on a show for the eye and heart as well as the mind. But Sugimoto's photography, austere though it is, is more seductive than challenging; he seems to want to lure us down his latest conceptual path rather than shock and awe us with what he has found there. One reason, perhaps, is that he takes as his subjects things we all like to look at—famous people, famous buildings, movie screens, the ocean—but uses them to investigate mortality, impermanence, and other ideas that our day-to-day mind-set shies away from.

In *History of History* Sugimoto uses his collecting to explore his photography's philosophical underpinnings. He introduces a display of fossils by describing them as "prehistoric photography" because of the way they preserve the past. Arrays of little squares of ancient Japanese fabrics evoke modernist collage and also the endless labors, esthetic and otherwise, of all the generations who've preceded us.

Religious artifacts—a 12th-century carving of a graceful Shinto deity, a 15th-century Buddhist painting of a symbol-laden white deer, a stone phallus dating from one or two millennia earlier—are accompanied by a text on Japanese religious history that encourages us to reflect on how humans' eternal truths are continually rewritten, along with the rest of our ever-shifting history.

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Stylized Sculpture, meanwhile, its mannequins adorned in amazing high-tech ruffles and brutalist draperies, speaks to the same point, for what is more eternal and more evanescent than fashion? And Sugimoto's photos of these clothes, placed alongside the things themselves, call to mind his natural history diorama series, his soft-focus depictions of architectural landmarks, and the fantastical aspect of even the most quotidian documentary photograph.

Unique to the San Francisco edition of *History of History* is a set of seven hanging scrolls, fragments from an eighth-century *Flower Ornament Sutra*. Deep blue and covered with delicate calligraphy in shiny silver ink, the fragments have a wavy brownish-red border of singe marks, evidence of the scroll's miraculous survival of a 1667 fire that destroyed the temple hall where it was housed. Sugimoto has arrayed the "burnt sutra" on a series of silk banners, each dyed a slightly different blue-green, to create an installation that looks like a gorgeous piece of contemporary art but is also a monument to the randomness of survival, to both the nobility and folly of human endeavor.

History of History confronts us with the dead weight of infinity while offering the solace of philosophy, of art, of our mind's ability to find some kind of meaning, however impermanent, in our dilemma. In this context the seascape Sugimoto inserted into the Buddhist reliquary—blank white sky above, smooth dark water below—seems the opposite of egotistic. It points to a yin and yang of human limitation and aspiration, to the comfort we can take in recognizing how little any of us, including the artist himself, matters amid the vastness in which we find ourselves.