

STEPHEN WIRTZ GALLERY

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MASAO YAMAMOTO

é

Exhibition dates: September 9-October 9, 2004

Opening reception for the artist Thursday, September 9, 2004, 5:30-7:30 pm

Stephen Wirtz gallery announces *é*, an exhibition of new photographs and photographic installations by Masao Yamamoto that explore the meaning and symbolism of the archaic Japanese character ㊦ (pronounced é).

Yamamoto's newest photographs in his continuous series are inspired by the revelations of the many connotations of é [㊦], and his prints and the imagery they present similarly resist discrete categorization. É is evocative of various meanings, including "to meet," "a painting," "a blessing," and "wisdom," the mental activity of identifying and assessing the logic of truth. The sound made by the pronunciation of é is emotionally expressive. Additionally, Yamamoto has long been intrigued with the mysterious shape of the archaic é, which looks more like a symbol than a character. Yamamoto is moved by these concepts and in this exhibition he endeavors "to spend some time walking in the surroundings of é."

Exhibited will be individual framed prints as well as wall installations consisting of assemblages of multiple prints, each 5 x 7 inches and smaller. These are arranged in collage, dispersed freely throughout the space and attached directly to gallery walls, occupying unexpected areas of placement. The imagery suggests a realm of inconclusiveness featuring chance encounters in nature as well as sublime studio images of objects exquisitely arranged in still-life or the classically posed female nude. The photographs are purposefully weathered, torn, stained, creased, and rubbed by the artist imbuing each with a unique and precious quality. These miniature works of art have the feeling of found objects and can be effectively described as visual haiku. The exhibition *é* conceptually follows from *A Box of Ku* and *Nakazora*, earlier thematic groupings of the artist's prints as meditations on abstract Buddhist concepts.

Margaret Loke in *The New York Times* writes "...Mr. Yamamoto's "Box of Ku" affords a most delightful chance to stop and take momentary stock of time's passage and to look once more at the world with fresh new eyes."

Masao Yamamoto (born 1957, Aichi, Japan) lives in Yokohama, Japan. His work is exhibited internationally, and included in the collections of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and Princeton University. His fifth publication, *Omizua*, was recently released by Nazraeli Press.

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