

STEPHEN WIRTZ GALLERY

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TAKU ARAMASA

Sakura

Exhibition dates: April 20-May 28, 2005; Opening reception for the artist Thursday, May 5, 2005, 5:30-7:30 p.m.

Private reception and artist talk, Tuesday May 3, 2005, 6:00-7:30 p.m.

Stephen Wirtz Gallery announces *Sakura*, an exhibition of a new series of photographs by the acclaimed Japanese photographer Taku Aramasa.

Presented in *Sakura* are black and white pinhole photographs of the glorious displays of blooming cherry trees at the time of *Sakura Matsuri*, the annual cherry blossom festival in Japan. Aramasa employs the pinhole process for this series, a primitive photographic technique that functions like a miniature camera obscura, where light passes through tiny opening in a lensless camera and registers the image directly on film. The considered choice of this basic photographic method with its inherent immediacy reflects Aramasa's desire to directly mirror his experience of this spectacular event in nature. The images are soft rather than sharp, due to the lack of a focusing lens and the long exposures required, and this resulting "blurriness" and distortion lends an effect of delirious motion to the imagery as the ephemeral blossoms fall from the trees and dust the landscape.

Sakura Matsuri has been depicted in paintings and songs of ancient times in Japan, and there are many rituals and traditions associated with the springtime blooming, an event of great national celebration. Millions gather to marvel at the spectacular display of the blooming, and revelers travel from region to region during the spring months following the cherry blossom front as it sweeps from Okinawa northward to Hokkaido. Aramasa's uniquely visionary examination of this phenomenal yearly occurrence follows from his long history as a chronicler of the culture of modern Japan through photography. Aramasa is perhaps best known for his photography of deserted internment camps that once housed Japanese Americans during WWII in the United States and Russia, as well as photographs of Japanese immigration.

Sandra Phillips, Chief Curator of Photography at SFMOMA writes "Aramasa is a talented and knowing artist, whose main interest in photography has been to understand modern Japan as a country and culture...These pictures of the ancient ritual of the Japanese: looking at and admiring the annual display nature provides, are another form of inquiry into Japanese culture ancient and modern."

TAKU ARAMASA, born Tokyo, 1936, graduated from Musashino Art College, Tokyo in 1960. His work is included in the collections of the International Center of Photography, New York, NY, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography. Monographs on his work include: *America/Promised Land*, (2000), *The Silent Land: Prison Camps in Siberia*, (1995), *Portrait of Native America*, (1993), *Who Am I? War Orphans Left in China*, (1990), *A Portrait of Japanese Immigrants to South America*, (1985), and *To My Angels*, (1980).

Stephen Wirtz Gallery is located at 49 Geary St., 3rd Fl., San Francisco, CA 94108, (415) 433-6879. Gallery hours are Tuesday-Friday, 9:30-5:30, Saturday 10:30-5:30.