

MISA SHIN GALLERY

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Press Release
August 2024

Han Youngsoo
Unknown City

Saturday, August 24 - Saturday, September 21, 2024

Opening Reception: Saturday, August 24, 17:00-19:00

Hours: Tuesday-Saturday 12:00-19:00 (Closed on Mon, Sun, Public holidays)



Han Youngsoo, *Myeongdong, Seoul, Korea 1956*, 1956 (printed in 2024)
Toned gelatin silver print, image size, 90 x 60 cm

MISA SHIN GALLERY is pleased to present *Unknown City*, the first solo exhibition in Japan of the works of leading Korean photographer Han Youngsoo (1933-1999), from August 24 to September 21, 2024.

Born to a wealthy family in the city of Kaesong in 1933, which was once the royal capital of Goryeo and now lies in North Korea, Han Yongsoo showed a talent for painting from an early age and taught himself photography.

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As a young officer in the South Korean Army during the Korean War (1950-53), he took part in the brutal combat on the front line. Returning to Seoul full of deep sadness and anger, Han witnessed first-hand the grit and resilience of people who found a way to survive amidst the broken, devastated, and ruined landscape, and he picked up his camera and began to photograph the city.

Han joined *Shinsunwhui*, the first group of Korean photographers in the realism movement, and he began to pursue photography wholeheartedly. Through his lens, he documented cities that were recovering from tragedy even as they suffered the aftereffects of the war, and also the drastic changes occurring in society and in people's lives amid the onslaught of modernism. From this perspective, he captured a moment in time when people were bouncing back from the war and truly beginning to exude the energy for life: a man and woman in Western clothing framed by a hole in a destroyed building; a tram and automobiles running up and down a street along with a handcart, all casting long shadows; a group of boys running happily up a snowy trail; and a couple engrossed in reading in front of a floral folding screen, reminiscent of a scene from a Wong Kar-wai film.



Han Youngsoo, *Seoul, Korea 1956-1963*
1956-1963 (printed in 2024)

Toned gelatin silver print, image size 45 x 30 cm



Han Youngsoo, *Seoul, Korea 1956-1963*

1956-1963 (printed in 2024)

Toned gelatin silver print, image size 30 x 45 cm

The women captured through Han's lens all have different occupations and fashion styles: there is a woman in a stylish raincoat walking past a beautiful tile-capped property wall that must have escaped wartime damage; there is a woman in sheer traditional dress blocking the dazzling summer sun with a parasol; and there is a woman walking down the road in a chic fur coat and high heels. The photos show confident women who were beginning to play a leading role in the reconstruction of Korea as entrepreneurs and consumers in a country where many men had been lost in the war.

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Han Youngsoo, *Seoul, Korea 1956-1963, 1956-1963* (printed in 2023)
Toned gelatin silver print, image size 60 x 90 cm

With their perfect composition, timing, and attention to detail, Han's photographs of Seoul during the turbulent period after the Korean War are today acclaimed as the richest and most human depictions of those times.

This exhibition features fifteen of Han's photographs taken between 1956 and 1963, before he established his own studio in 1966 and achieved major success as a commercial photographer.

Han Youngsoo

1933-1999. Born in Kaesong, South Korea. Recent major exhibitions include "Han Youngsoo: Photographs of Korea 1956-1963" at Harvard University Asia Center (Cambridge, 2019) , "Han Youngsoo: Photographs of Seoul 1956-1963" at International Center of Photography (Jersey city, 2017), "Seoul, Where I Grew Up" at the Seoul Museum of History (Seoul 2017).

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Access

Route by subway:

12 minutes' walk via Nanbu-zaka from Hiroo Station on the Tokyo Metro Hibiya Line.

15 minutes' walk via Rakuen-zaka from Shirakane-Takanawa Station on the Tokyo Metro Nanbu / Mita Line

16 minutes' walk via Sendai-zaka from Azabu-juban Station on the Tokyo Metro Nambu Line / Toei Oedo Line

Route by bus:

3 minutes' walk after getting off at Sendai-Sakaue on the Toei-Bus [橋 86].

3 minutes' walk after getting off at Sendai-Sakaue on Chii-Bus, Azabu-West route.

(Hiroo Station ~ Azabu-Juban Station ~ Roppongi-Keyakizaka ~ Hiroo Station)

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