

DAIDO MORIYAMA
A RETROSPECTIVE
06.09.2024 – 23.02.2025

"I don't know if individual photographs contain ideas, worlds, history, humanity, beauty, ugliness or nothing at all. I actually do not really care. I just extract and record things around me, without any pretence."

Daido Moriyama

With a career spanning almost sixty years, Daido Moriyama transformed the way we see photography. He used his camera to interrogate the world, challenging the role of photography, image circulation and consumption.

Born in Ikeda, Osaka in 1938 Moriyama was raised in post-war Japan. Following its defeat in World War II, Japan was subject to a US Military occupation which brought with it rapid westernisation and economic transformation. During these decades of enforced change, Moriyama envisioned photography as a democratic language, promoted by the mass media. He captured the clash of Japanese tradition and western influences. Inspired by American artists such as William Klein and Andy Warhol, he also showed the contradictions of capitalist society.

This retrospective traces Moriyama's artistic path, starting from his works for Japanese magazines, his challenging of photojournalism, his contribution to the Provoke generation, and the radical proposition summarised by his photobook *Farewell Photography* (1972). During this period, he also established his unique aesthetic, famously known by the Japanese catchphrase *are bure boke* meaning grainy, blurry, out of focus. Books and magazines were his fertile ground for photographic production and debates, and take a central role in this exhibition.

In the early 1980s, Moriyama slowly overcame a creative and personal crisis. His subsequent work developed a visual lyricism with which he reflected on his identity, and the essence of photography, memory and history. During this period, Moriyama also renewed his interest in street photography, covering hundreds of miles in Tokyo, New York, Paris, and London, among other cities. Well-known for his gritty black and white images, he also embraced colour and digital photography, tools that suited his focus on contemporary consumer society. The exhibition ends with *Record* magazine, the culmination of his life-long investigations and a publication which Moriyama continues to produce to this day.

Moriyama has spent his career asking a fundamental question: What is the essence of photography? He rejected the dogmatism of art and the

fetishisation of vintage prints, instead embracing the accessible and reproducible aspects of photography as its most radical asset.

Daido Moriyama. Retrospective was organized by Instituto Moreira Salles (IMS) in cooperation with the Daido Moriyama Photo Foundation, with the contribution of Yutaka Kambayashi, Satoshi Machiguchi and Kazuya Kimura, and the assistance of Daniele Queiroz (IMS).

Magazine and book spreads reproductions: Getsuyosha Publishing House and Instituto Moreira Salles

All photographs were printed in Japan under the supervision of the artist

JAPAN, A PHOTO THEATER 1964–1968

“I wondered if, by removing each of the photographs I had taken over the last few years from their original context, treating them as fragments, and then recomposing these various fragments in a completely different context, with the same treatment, I could reconstruct the confused visions of everyday life?”

Daido Moriyama

Daido Moriyama began publishing his photographs in the early 1960s, following his move to Tokyo in 1961. He planned to join Vivo, a cooperative founded in 1959 by Japanese photographers Akira Tanno (1925-2015), Akira Satō (1930–2002), Shōmei Tōmatsu (1930-2012), Ikkō Narahara (1931-2020), Kikuji Kawada (b. 1933) and Eikoh Hosoe (b. 1933). Vivo disbanded that same year, however Hosoe convinced Moriyama to stay and work as his assistant.

Following Japan’s defeat in World War II, the country was faced with the realities of a US Military occupation. With this came the westernisation of its culture as the country reconstructed its economy. Images in popular, high circulation magazines prioritised humanistic photography and highlighted national themes. Printed in the rich tones of the *rotogravure* process, the magazines captivated readers with portfolios, reviews, and contests, providing a broad education in photographic art for both the general public and specialists.

Pantomime, Moriyama’s first significant series, appeared in the literary magazine *Gendai no Me* (The Contemporary Eye) in 1965 and featured photographs of human fetuses preserved in formaldehyde. In *Camera Mainichi*, he presented photographs of Yokosuka, the US military base made famous by Tomatsu’s series *Occupation* (1960).

Shortly after this, Moriyama was commissioned to photograph the experimental theatre of Shūji Terayama and Tokyo’s working-class neighbourhoods. Although Moriyama aimed to deal with Japan’s great social conflicts, the bohemian atmosphere soon seduced him. Moriyama published two dozen articles in different magazines, crafting a multifaceted panorama of Japanese society, earning him the Japan Photo Critics Association’s Newcomer’s Award in 1967.

With the prize in hand, Moriyama took a bold step, publishing the book *Nippon Gekijō Shashinchō*, 1968 (Japan, A Photo Theater) with texts by Terayama. Built as an opera, the book creates a fragmented, surreal reality based on extracts of editorial features.

Mineral pigment prints, 2022. Daido Moriyama Photo Foundation Archives

**ACCIDENT / PREMEDITATED OR NOT
1969**

The late 1960s saw global upheaval. General strikes spread throughout Europe, and the Black Power Movement in the United States was ignited by the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. In Japan, the New Left was growing, and political protests emerged in response to the Vietnam War and the controversial renewal of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security with the US.

Inspired by his recent contact with the work of American artist Andy Warhol, Moriyama began one of his most ambitious projects, a monthly series in *Asahi Camera* magazine. Over the course of a year, he reflected upon the vulnerability of human existence and the distance between real events and their images, addressing the contradictions of photojournalism, the surveillance of citizens, the exploitation of crime reports and celebrity magazines, and the social transformations triggered by the westernisation of Japan and rapid industrialisation.

Moriyama's photographic vocabulary included his favoured Kodak Tri-X film as well as zoom lenses, high-contrast papers, photocopiers, and TV stills. His photographic exercises explored the concepts of visual theory in mass-circulation magazines. He also challenged the role of photographers, viewers and media organisations in fabricating news, exposing their responsibilities in building collective memory and history. Images from this and other magazines series' reappeared repeatedly in Moriyama's later works.

Digital gelatin silver prints, 2022. Daido Moriyama Photo Foundation Archives

PROVOKE
1968–1970

“What we photographers can do, and should do, is capture with our own eyes those fragments of reality that are completely impossible to capture with existing words, and continue actively to create materials which confront those words and thoughts.”

Provoke #2, editorial

In 1968 art critic Kōji Taki (1928–2011, Japan), poet Takahiko Okada (1939–1997, Japan), and photographers Takuma Nakahira (1938–2015, Japan) and Yutaka Takanashi (b.1935, Japan) launched the independent magazine *Provoke*. The publication's subtitle *Provocative Materials for Thought* reflected the heated climate of the time.

Immersed in the texts of Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud and Jean-Paul Sartre, the group wanted to free society from its bourgeois constraints, which they considered to be reinforced through the editorials of commercial magazines of the day. They opposed the self-proclaimed neutrality of photojournalism and social documentary practices, represented by commercial magazines, advocating instead for an autonomous visual language.

Moriyama contributed to *Provoke's* second issue (1969). Themed ‘Eros’, it focused on the relationship between images and fetishism. His grainy photographs featured a mysterious woman, whose erotic poses unfolded with the flipping of the magazine pages. In the same issue, a text by Takahiko Okada critiqued capitalism's suppression of individual desire through which real feelings were progressively repressed and replaced by the consumption of images.

“In spite of feeling that we will not be able to justify ourselves, we may have to act in such a way as to intensify our own internal contradictions,” wrote Kōji Taki in *Provoke #3*. In the same issue, Moriyama presented supermarket shelves packed with canned goods and other products. Unlike Andy Warhol's colourful soup cans, these blurry and dark images evoke the unbridled Americanisation and dissolution of traditional Japanese life. The photographs epitomised the *are, bure, boke* style (grainy, blurry, out of focus). The black tones, high contrast, and graininess of the silver print were intensified in the developing and printing, in direct contrast to journalistic sharpness, offering a more ambiguous and subjective perspective of the world.

In 1970, the group released a fourth issue, entitled *First, Abandon the World of Pseudo-Certainty*. It was the swan song of a project that aimed to overthrow everything, not yet knowing what to put in its place.

Mineral pigment prints, 2022. Daido Moriyama Photo Foundation Archives
Provoke #2, March, 1969. Photos taken in Shibuya, Tokyo, 1969
Provoke #3, August, 1969. Photos taken in Aoyama, Tokyo, 1969

**ON THE ROAD
1968–1972**

“When I am travelling, I take photographs that are guided by my feelings and physical obsessions or fetishes.”

Daido Moriyama

In 1968, inspired by Jack Kerouac’s influential Beat generation novel *On the Road* (1957), Moriyama hitchhiked around Japan. The road offered him the opportunity to focus on a single subject over a prolonged period, shooting images “with the automatic speed of a machine gun.”

“I was more used to the hard motel room beds than to my bed, to the drive-in curried cutlets than to my wife’s homemade meals. So, before the glow of the road dimmed, in a rush, I would tumble back out onto the highway”, explained Moriyama.

After publishing a few features and travelling for three years, Moriyama reexamined his work in the book *Kariudo* (A Hunter), 1972). As in Kerouac’s novel, this road diary juxtaposes fragments of cars, highways, street scenes, and people captured as if in a brief glance from the window of a moving car.

Photographs from works such as the *Accidents* series and *Provoke* were also inserted into this autobiographical narrative, reinvested with new meanings. Images taken on these road trips, such as *Stray Dog*, would become iconic in Moriyama’s oeuvre, reappearing again in subsequent decades.

Digital gelatin silver prints, 2022. Daido Moriyama Photo Foundation Archives
Pages from “On the Road: Tokyo Ringroad, National Highway 16”, Camera Mainichi, Oct. 1969

COLOUR
1970s–1980s

Daido Moriyama is known for his dense, contrasting black-and-white images. His colour photographs are less known - partly due to the high cost of printing in colour, and scarcity of colour magazines at the time.

The colour photographs shown here were selected from the photographer's archive in Tokyo. Moriyama took some of the images for personal essays; others were published in magazines such as *Camera Mainichi*, *Asahi Camera*, and *Asahi Journal* in the 1970s and 1980s. Sometimes alternative versions of the original colour photographs - such as the black-and-white version of the woman in a white dress in an alleyway in *Yokosuka* (1970) - have become well-known.

Moriyama used Fujichrome paper for the prints. This enabled him to enlarge directly from the positive slide, offering greater colour saturation and contrast.

Fujichrome prints, 2013. Daido Moriyama Photo Foundation Archives

ANOTHER COUNTRY IN NEW YORK 1971–1974

“New York is filled by a vague scent of mescaline, while the smell of Andy Warhol is billowing out of every street.”

Daido Moriyama

The US Military occupation was a sensitive topic in Japanese society, as a reminder of the country’s defeat but also of post-war modernisation and economic development. For Moriyama, the United States was also home to his idols, such as William Klein (1926–2022) and Andy Warhol (1928–1987).

In 1971, Moriyama went to New York on his first trip abroad, accompanied by his friend the graphic artist Tadanori Yokoo (b. 1936, Japan). He carried a half-frame camera, allowing twice the number of exposures. In addition to saving film, the half-frame offered the chance to create image pairings similar to that of images on a publication spread.

Yokoo recalled, “I had to admire the way he went back to the same streets we had walked before and casually click the shutter for the thousandth time. It made me think of a dog pissing on telephone poles as if he made it a rule to leave his mark wherever he went.”

Moriyama’s curiosity for the city is tangible. Buildings, neon signs, passers-by, and hotel rooms endlessly repeat themselves. The dark and grainy images, the snapshot compositions and slanted viewpoints – often photographed without looking through the viewfinder – shroud Manhattan in mystery. Rather than sharpness and clarity, Moriyama reflects the city as a subjective, personal experience.

Moriyama published a New York portfolio in *Asahi Camera* in 1972, and was invited to show the work at Shimizu Gallery in Tokyo in 1974. Instead of presenting prints on the gallery walls, he conceptualised the 'Printing Show', bringing a rented photocopier into the gallery space and individually assembling photobooks. Culminating in *Another Country in New York* – he combined different sets of photocopied images where visitors could choose from two-screen printed cover designs. This informal and interactive approach reflected some of the Conceptual and Pop Art strategies he so admired in contemporary American practitioners.

Gelatin silver prints, 2012. Daido Moriyama Photo Foundation Archives
Spreads from “New York”, *Asahi Camera*, April 1972

FAREWELL PHOTOGRAPHY
1972

"I tried to dismantle photography but ended up being dismantled myself."

Daido Moriyama

In 1972, Moriyama released the book *Shashin yo Sayonara* (Farewell Photography), which reflected his increasing radicalised distrust of photographic reality. "It might seem like a somewhat ironic title, but it's about my feelings of hate and wanting to say farewell to spiritually peaceful photographs, to photographs that show no doubt what photography means, in other words photographs that lack reality," he explained.

Edited by Kineo Kuwabara (1913–2007), the book features a series of images previously discarded or ignored by the photographer, such as rejected negatives, film ends or alternative takes. A breathless sequence of grainy, cropped, solarized, and scratched images that draw attention away from photography's illusory spaces and into the two-dimensional photographic plane. Exploring the limits of the medium and embracing accidents and mistakes, fragments of magazine features, TV screens, posters, and personal essays merge, with no apparent connection or narrative, reinforcing the disjunction between the real world and its photographic image.

The original graphic cover of the book features text announcing the date and time of a public conversation between Moriyama and his intellectual partner Takuma Nakahira, which took place on 2 August 1971. The transcript of which was included in the book and explored Moriyama's artistic vision and conflicts: "That naivety to think you could try and create masterpieces, that naive humanism to try and help people through your art - that is just too optimistic for me. I am already struggling just to keep grasp of my own existence."

Farewell Photography received little attention at the time. In the following decades, it proved to be one of the most profound investigations on the nature of photography and a radical representation of visual and political scepticism.

The wallpaper in this installation features the complete layout of *Farewell Photography*, running from the top right corner following a horizontal, right to left, sequence.

Mineral pigment prints, 2022. Daido Moriyama Photo Foundation Archives
Spreads from *Farewell Photography*, 1972

**LIGHT AND SHADOW
1981–1982**

“To focus on reality or be concerned with memory, choices that, at first glance, seem opposite are, in fact, identical twins for me.”

Daido Moriyama

After the dismantling of the medium in *Farewell Photography* (1972), Moriyama sank into a personal and creative crisis. Through the persistent support of editor friends, he finally returned to photography in the early 1980s, determined to investigate the essence of the image and of himself.

In 1981, the series *Hikari to Kage* (Light and Shadow) debuted in the newly founded magazine *Shashin Jidai*. Based on daily walks, the six chapters still echoed the dark and claustrophobic tone of previous works, but also imbued everyday objects with a resplendent, sculptural glow, offering a monumental sense of reality.

The following year, Moriyama started *Inu no Kioku* (Memories of a Dog) for *Asahi Camera* magazine, investigating his past by revisiting places that had marked his youth. Accompanied by autobiographical prose, the fourteen chapters addressed sensitive subjects such as relations with his father, US Military bases, the anxieties of childhood and adolescence, and unexpected deaths. All combined with reflections on his favourite writers, filmmakers, and photographers such as Nicéphore Niépce (1765–1833, France) and Eugène Atget (1857–1927, France).

Memories of a Dog wasn't about running down nostalgic paths, but celebrating the emotion that welled up when a mental image and a scene from the outside world coincided. Walking became a way of looking for this encounter, and photography the celebration of that moment. In 1982, images of both series' were combined in the book *Hikari to Kage* (Light and Shadow).

Mineral pigment prints, 2022. Daido Moriyama Photo Foundation Archives

**LABYRINTH
2012**

While *Memories of a Dog* intertwined his past and present, *Labyrinth* (2012) expands on these ideas by revisiting Moriyama's vast photographic archive.

The contact sheets featured in *Labyrinth* show photographic sequences from the 1960s to the 2000s, including iconic images such as actor Isamu Shimizu (b. 1938, Japan), the woman featured in *Provoke #2*, Moriyama's fellow photographer Masahisa Fukase (1934–2012, Japan), and the fedora from *Light and Shadow*. Private moments alternate with urban views of Tokyo, Paris, New York, and São Paulo.

Rather than offering a treasure map of his career, Moriyama presents a multi-faceted labyrinth by shuffling his film strips, disrupting the original sequences. The erratic mixing of times and places resembles the way he perceives his own life story and memories, in contrast to a linear, chronological convention. Memory is not a continuous, organised line, but a superimposition of scenes that blend past, present, and future. For this exhibition, Moriyama also created new large-scale photographic grids, that combine different moments in his career.

Gelatin silver prints, 2012. Gallery Akio Nagasawa collection

**PRETTY WOMAN
2017**

Working in colour as well as black-and-white, the series *Pretty Woman* offers a garish immersion into urban consumerism through the trope of the female figure, in all its forms. Appropriating his title from the well-known Hollywood movie, and famous Roy Orbison song, Moriyama presents a chaotic and saturated universe, filled with products, goods, mirrors, reflections, and passers-by.

The saturated colours and artificial gloss suggest the world of advertising, equally seductive and repellent. By enveloping the walls of the galleries with his images, Moriyama also reflects on reality and its representation, life and simulation, echoing his own predictions - long before the dominance of the screen - of a world hypnotized by images and ensnared by consumption.

Mineral pigment prints, 2022. Daido Moriyama Photo Foundation Archives

**LETTRE À SAINT-LOUP
1990**

“There may remain some fragments of memory still lying in the depths of my experience waiting to be awakened, and they are ready to evoke new memories at any time. Of course, I need to interpose a camera into that place.”

Daido Moriyama

Moriyama’s investigation of the essence of photography also led him to its origins and to the oldest surviving photographic image: *View from the Window at Le Gras*, created in 1826 by Nicéphore Niépce in Saint-Loup-de-Varenes, France, using a camera obscura and fixed onto a tin plate.

Moriyama writes about the image, captured in an eight-hour exposure: “That arabesque of light and shadow, that scene filtered by light soaked into the depths of my memory, just as if I had seen it myself suddenly one summer day. And that scene, bleached by the sun, at that time, at that place, awakens various memories within me, and is suddenly revived in my fingertips as I snap a picture in the present.”

A selection of images inspired by this original photograph was published by Moriyama in 1990 in the book *Saint-Loup he no Tegami* (Lettre à Saint-Loup) - a letter to a medium he has continually questioned, deconstructed, and reassembled over the course of his nearly sixty-year career.

Gelatin silver prints, 2014. Daido Moriyama Photo Foundation Archives

RECORD
1972–1973. 2006–ongoing

“In my ongoing photo sessions in cities, I happen to lose sight of my own mental integrity in the chaos of the streets. It is probably a kind of momentary state of confusion that arises between seeing and what is seen, the photographic session and the photo, and for me this really seems to be one of the fundamental mysteries behind the replication mechanism called ‘photography’.”

Daido Moriyama

In 1972, Moriyama created 記録 (*Kiroku*), an independent magazine for uncompromising personal work. The Japanese word *kiroku*, meaning ‘record’ or ‘document,’ is similar to 記憶 (*kioku*), the word for ‘memory’-concepts central to his practice.

The magazine was published in five issues, until it was discontinued in 1973. In 2006, Moriyama relaunched the project, which continues to this day. Walking in cities around the world, offers Moriyama the opportunity to explore his obsessions and fetishes, and reflect on his optimism and pessimism for the world. He can produce an issue in one day, or dedicate issues to imaginary conversations with influential figures for him such as David Lynch (b. 1946, USA), Roland Barthes (1915–1980, France) or James Baldwin (1924–1987, USA).

With more than fifty editions, *Record* is an ongoing diary, a platform for experimentation, and a space where Moriyama can continue to challenge photography and himself, divesting the medium of its artistic pretences, and highlighting the ordinary. It is also a love letter to the city, as a space for personal, collective and creative experience.

This installation presents *Record* Magazines issues #1 to #49, with an accompanying soundtrack.

Video editing and soundtrack: Coletivo Coletores