For Immediate Release

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YASUMASA YONEHARA AT BARRY FRIEDMAN, LTD.
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NEW YORK- Barry Friedman is pleased to present a solo exhibition of unique photographs by the Japanese photographer Yonehara Yasumasa. This body of work depicts Yonehara’s signature style and artistic vision, as well as his long-standing interest in female Japanese cliques and subcultures. The gallery will have an opening reception for the artist on Thursday, October 23rd, from 5:00 – 8:00 pm. The artist will be signing copies of his new publication “Tokyo Amour” during the opening. The book is priced at $55.

Yasumasa Yonehara is recognized within the contemporary arena as a photographer whose work pushes the envelope on multiple fronts. His modestly sized, 2 x 2 inch photographs, serve as an eye into the lives of Japanese youth. He uses a standard, Japanese-made Cheki camera that is comparable to the Polaroid, both in terms of effect and the resulting images. The artist chooses this camera over more technical alternatives because he is interested in obtaining images that truly capture his subjects in a pure, immediate nature, without alternations or embellishments.

From the outset of his career, Yonehara has been immersed within and recognized as part of commercial and popular Japanese culture. From controversial publications to cutting-edge photographs, Yonehara has maintained steady involvement in the establishment and dissemination of trends and movements within this setting. With his contributions to publications, such as The Egg, Yonehara helped foster media attention for marginalized youth groups, most notably the Ganguro Girls, who were considered reactionary in comparison to normative Japanese values and aesthetics. Yonehara’s photographs shed light on the complex socio-sexual issues that young females are confronted with in a world where mass media has become increasingly globalized.

In this series of photographs, several significant issues are at play. The interaction between the artist and his subjects, namely young, seductive Japanese women, is highly characterized by voyeuristic undertones. In this sense, the artist nods to the longstanding themes of the ‘male gaze’ and the ‘sexualized female’ in mass media that subsequently instigated significant discourses in postmodern theory. The artist’s passion for and
appreciation of his subject matter filters into the eroticized depictions of each of the female models, and in this sense, Yonehara consciously assumes the role of the male voyeur. On the same note, the girls’ eagerness to be depicted in a highly sexual, alluring manner is also acutely evident. These half-naked girls strive to outdo themselves with each successive shot, and it is through these sequences of photographs that we become aware of their desires to be considered beautiful, sexy, seductive women by their audience.

The artist sheds light on the contradictions that exist within the contemporary Japanese social spectrum, specifically as a result of global and western impacts. On the one hand, there exists a domineering precedent of Japanese traditions delineated foremost by honor and dignity, and on the other hand an exposure to a very liberal, sexual, media-fueled western popular culture. Through Yonehara’s work, the viewer comes to realize that contemporary Japanese youth has found it increasingly difficult to consolidate these two polar ends. However, the girls exhibit rigorous enthusiasm to be photographed, and in a sense, this communicates their willingness to be recognized as active participants in western popular culture.

Yonehara’s work has been so consistently informed by youth culture, that it assumes a plural identity both as art, and as commercial artifacts that represent various socio-political movements and initiatives. His work functions as a window into his subjects’ psyche, into the confusion and alienation they often experience while trying to define their identities and understand their roles in today’s world.


Several books and catalogues have been published on Yasumasa’s work. In 2002, “Snapping Everywhere”, a collection of photographs taken with a Cheki camera, was published. “Love Bikini” was published in March 2004, and “Hot Shots” in July of that year. More recently, in February 2008, he published MTV-PINKS accompanied by a DVD set.

Also on view during the same period will be work by the Italian photographer Michele Alassio and the Czech artist Frantisek Vizner.