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MARCEL DUCHAMP



Photographic works by Soshi Matsunobe

Left: "Ghost of Copy (Gray) #56" (2021), inkjet print on semi-gloss paper, 40.4 x 59.4 centimeters (15.9 x 23.39 inches)

Right: "Ghost of Copy (Gray) #15" (2021), inkjet print on semi-gloss paper, 40.4 x 59.4 centimeters (15.9 x 23.39 inches).

Photos courtesy of the artist and The Container, Tokyo.

SOSHI MATSUNOBE'S NEGATIVE-POSITIVE VISION

by Edward M. Gómez

This year, Tokyo experienced a summer marked by on-again, off-again sunshine or on-again, off-again rain, depending on how one chose to measure Mother Nature's mercurial temperament. What's dry was wet, and what's wet was dry.

Similarly, the young artist Soshi Matsunobe, who was born in 1988 and lives and works in Shiga Prefecture, in southwestern Japan, confounds viewers with his clever mixing-up of negative and positive photographic images in the making of his collage-like pictures. In addition, often he purposefully mutes the contrast of his black-and-white images to give them a soft, meditative character. His photographic works can feel energetic, calm and calming, and beguiling, all at the same time.

Through October 11, 2021, they may be seen in *Ghost of Copy*, an exhibition at **The Container**, one of Tokyo's must-see outposts for experimental and conceptual art. Founded by the Israeli-British independent curator Shai Ohayon, this offbeat contemporary-art gallery is housed in a replica of a standard, half-length shipping container.

This little box of a venue is tucked inside **Bross Tokyo**, a cutting-edge hair salon in a stylish city that takes the art of creative coiffure rather seriously. The gallery and the salon are located near Nakameguro Station, one terminus of the Hibiya metro line in west-central Tokyo, a hip neighborhood filled with cafés, small boutiques and what seems like a surfeit of dentists' offices, dry cleaners — and hair salons.



The artist Soshi Matsunobe (left) and Shai Ohayon (in the background, seated), the founder-director-curator of *The Container*, Tokyo, setting up the *Ghost of Copy* exhibition. Photo by brutjournal.

Matsunobe is presenting his photographic works in an unusual manner: His exhibition consists of an old-fashioned, 35mm-carousel slide projector that has been placed on a pedestal. Set on automatic rotation, it projects slide-film photographs of his original digital photographs directly onto an empty steel wall at one end of *The Container's* interior. Only a couple of framed, on-paper prints accompany this installation to give visitors a sense of how the artist's photographic images appear when presented in a more conventional manner.

"I had to find a professional lab that was able to prepare my original digital photographs as slides and then mount them for use in the projector," Matsunobe said when he and Ohayon were installing the exhibition, which opened in late July. The artist added, "No one uses slide film anymore!"

He explained that he shoots images of scenes from his everyday life in an agricultural region of Japan, and of objects in his studio and a ceramics workshop in which he also spends time. The compositions of his photographic works are made up of alternating or juxtaposed, negative and positive black-and-white passages. The play of such opposing elements gives his compositions a certain rhythmic pulse, even as Matsunobe's intentional muting of tones — there are no high, strong contrasts in his pictures — serves to slow them down. In his exhibition, eighty images flicker by in a looped projection, whose overall character feels as ephemeral as his pictures are uncertain and ghostly.



Photographic works by Soshi Matsunobe

Left: "Ghost of Copy (Gray) #60" (2021), inkjet print on semi-gloss paper, 40.4 x 59.4 centimeters (15.9 x 23.39 inches).

Right: "Ghost of Copy (Gray) / Negative Sheet" (2021), inkjet print on milk-white film, 28.3 x 35 x 8 centimeters (11.14 x 13.78 x 3.15 inches).

Photos courtesy of the artist and The Container, Tokyo.



In a pamphlet published to accompany the exhibition, Ohayon writes, "Soshi Matsunobe is in a perpetual search to capture the intangible. [...] Over the last decade, he [has] created works in sculpture, installation, drawing, and photography with a clear interest in the physicality of spaces, or lack thereof." He notes that the artist has a keen eye and deep sense of appreciation for "the rarely discussed beauty of the most mundane, everyday objects – from boxes and rubber bands to stones."

Ghost of Copy serves up spectral images of a rice paddy; dandelions; a glass-front cabinet standing upside-down, like some kind of slain or toppled animal; large concrete structures; and other subjects. In addition to the projected images, Matsunobe is displaying "Ghost of Copy (Gray) / Negative Sheet" (2021), a grid-format collage resembling a black-and-white roll of film's printed contact sheet. This work serves as a visual summary of all of the images that appear in the slide-projected exhibition.

Ohayon sees this survey of Matsunobe's photographic works as what he calls "a kind of virtual sketchbook."

The artist said, modestly, "I hope that viewers will enjoy looking at my photographs, and that these images might help them to slow down and think appreciatively and maybe a bit philosophically about the nature of everyday things that we normally take for granted."



Installation view of Soshi Matsunobe's *Ghost of Copy* exhibition at *The Container*, Tokyo. Photo by **brutjournal**.

Soshi Matsunobe: *Ghost of Copy*
on view through October 11, 2021 at The Container
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