

Tiptoeing
into the
Darkness ... with
Love

Photographer
Nobuyoshi Araki
Interviews
Photographer
Kohei Yoshiyuki

Nobuyoshi Araki: I don't know you that well. I know who you are, but readers don't know much about you. Why don't you tell them about yourself? I'm sure they would like to know when you were born, for instance. How old are you? What interests you? What kind of work are you doing? I'll bet you're not in your twenties.
Kohei Yoshiyuki: I was born in 1946.

NA: As the genius of photography, I'd like to introduce Yoshiyuki Kohei to our readers. You were first featured seven or eight years ago, then?
KY: More like five or six years ago.

NA: You were featured first in *Shukan Shincho*, and then in *Camera Mainichi*?
KY: That's right.

NA: You created a huge sensation by taking voyeuristic photographs of people having sex, and of voyeurs—peepers—watching people having sex, with infrared film. A lot of people made a lot of noise about them, but my critique consisted of exactly one line: "These are what I call photographs" (laughter). After that we met and chatted now and then, but I haven't seen you for quite a while. Recently I received an invitation to your solo show. I couldn't go because I was busy, but I mentioned it to the editor of *Weekend Super*, and heard later that he went to see it. When I asked him about it, he said he liked the way the photographs were exhibited.
KY: I turned out all the lights in the space, and gave each visitor a flashlight. That way I was reconstructing the original settings. I also blew the photos up to life size.

NA: You recreated the original settings.
KY: Yes.

NA: I'm sure that right now you have a concept or idea in your mind about exhibiting them. Can you tell us about it?
KY: This is how I would have done it if I had exhibited the photographs back when I shot them. But there was a lot going on then, and the magazine feature came out first. The concept remained in the back of my mind, though. Last year, when I lost my job, I thought, why not?

NA: I didn't get to the exhibition, so I don't know exactly what you mean. Viewers went into a dark room with a flashlight and looked at the photographs? But that way, you can only see part of them.
KY: Yes, that's how I wanted them to be viewed. I wanted people to look at the bodies in the photographs an inch at a time. But this is an uneasy situation. When it's completely dark, the whole photograph is illuminated, but the viewer looks at it section by section. My original concept involved a corridor where points of light would be focused on the photographs. Viewers would look at them slowly ... carefully.

NA: I see what you mean.
KY: They might even touch the photos. That's how I wanted to exhibit them. But then I realized that viewers would suffer if I forced them to look at the photographs in that way. So, that time I just used a board as a partition in the middle of the space.

NA: I didn't see the photographs, but that sounds interesting. And I think people could see what you were aiming for. But you're focusing too much on how you show them. Five years ago, you wanted to exhibit them in a certain way, and the idea implanted itself in your brain until it became sort of an obsession. It's like coming into some money and deciding to buy a nice gift for a girl you had a crush on long ago.
KY: Yeah, I guess you could say that.

NA: And it's how you'd feel when the girl said, "Oh no, nobody does that anymore," isn't it?
KY: In a way.