

恒樂園



PERSONAL STRUCTURES ART PROJECTS #11

NOBUYOSHI ARAKI: MONSTROUS PARADISE

This book is the documentation of Personal Structures Art Projects #11. It has been published as a limited edition. This DeLuxe edition comprises of 100 numbered copies in a box with a video of the Shibuya street crossing and a photo mounted on aluminium.

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The origin of this project goes back to 1999. The Dutch artist Rene Rietmeyer met with Araki at the opening of his exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo. While being introduced, Araki turned to the Japanese girl that was with Rene and whispered in her ear some Japanese words. The girl smiled and gave Araki a kiss. Then Araki signed one of his photos and wrote the text of those words just spoken on it. "I want to stick my finger inside". That sentence stuck.

Years passed and Rene Rietmeyer together with his lovers Sarah Gold and Karlyn de Jongh created and published several art projects with artists such as On Kawara, Roman Opalka, Lawrence Weiner and Yoko Ono. However, they always kept dreaming of the possibility to create an Art Project together with Araki.

The Art Projects that they created with artists such as Ben Vautier, Herman de Vries, Hermann Nitsch and Arnulf Rainer, all had in common that Sarah and Karlyn were naked and even performed sexual acts as part of the projects. It seemed no more than natural to try to organize photo sessions with Araki whereby Sarah and Karlyn would be naked, preferably hanging down from the ceiling.

It proved to be not easy to make contact with Araki. Rene called him in November 2012 on the phone, but even in a second try with a Japanese translator, it was not really possible to explain Araki what we wanted to achieve, the use of spoken language in Japanese seemed too complex for our translator. All that Araki at the end could do was to tell us to contact his representative. We wrote an email and Natsuko Odate reacted: "I talked with Araki and he was very happy to be involved in your project".

In March 2013 we explained to Natsuko that we were willing to come to Tokyo at any time to start the project. Natsuko wished to meet first in Venice, Italy to discuss exhibition options at the European Cultural Centre. We met in Venice and exchanged several emails in the two years after that, but making progress seemed difficult. In June 2015 Rene called Natsuko and wrote a detailed email in a last attempt to make the project happen. Finally, in July 2015 Natsuko wrote: "Araki would be happy to see you, so please let me know your schedule for your trip." We agreed upon a first meeting on 18th August 2015 at 6 pm at the 'Bar Rouge' in Shinjuku, Tokyo.

Araki: the photographer mainly famous for his depiction of naked or partly naked Japanese girls which are tied up, sometimes even hung from the ceiling; some looking straight into the camera, vulnerable and helpless - others looking away, innocent.

Being an admirer of his work and with the goal of going to Tokyo to do a very personal project with Araki, it was all very exciting. Araki has lived his entire life in Japan and there he has been documenting his surroundings; not only the women he photographed, all his subjects have always smelled Japanese.

There seem to have been only two exceptions: the Icelandic singer Björk and the American woman Lady Gaga. And now we, me and my girlfriend Karlyn, two unknown Dutch girls, were hoping to become the subject of a new photo series by Araki.

Since Araki speaks only Japanese, all our thoughts and hopes had been discussed with his manager Natsuko.

She knew we wanted to be photographed – preferably hung naked from a ceiling or taken to a sex club, being used – whatever Araki would come up with, we would do it.

Japan is unusual and different at any time; it felt surreal when we made our way towards the meeting point, Bar Rouge. In the middle of the chaos of Shinjuku we found the door nice on time. Willing to walk into the unknown, surrounded by tiny little bricks, down the stairs entering a world which has its own rules and time zone, warm erotic red surroundings, photos by Araki on the wall, Bar Rouge.

We sat down and shortly after Araki, with a small camera in his hand, and Natsuko arrived as well. As a gift we had brought two little toy animals with us, hoping he would like this not-so-standard present. They were a great success. Araki started playing with them straight away totally absorbed in the moment with his two new friends, the monsters. Araki did not speak much English and even with Natsuko as a translator he was difficult to follow.

However successful the gift, our dreams scattered soon. It seemed not possible to get Araki to start a photo series with us as models. Were we too old, not attractive enough to be seen naked, or even dressed up; what made him decide not to use us? We had been working with many artists before: naked on a cross drinking blood for Hermann Nitsch, undressed for Ben Vautier, walked for days naked through a forest with Herman de Vries and had fucked each other for Arnulf Rainer's artworks, and now we were sitting here in Tokyo, came all the way from Europe, ready for ART, and there it was NADA, no photos from us by Araki. Fuck! That really sucked. He simply did not want us, he wanted the little monsters, combined with dead flowers. The two little monsters will represent us, he told us, he will make a series of photos with them, the three-horned chameleon and the salamander.

What lucky beasts. They will have all the adventures, they will be part of the flower arrangements made by Araki, he will create his stories and he will document his fantasies. We, the two Dutch girls, were going to be represented by the two little monsters we had just brought him from Europe. He seemed to vision it already clearly ahead of him and called it: “Monstrous Paradise”.

Back in Venice, Italy, all what we now could do, was hope that Araki would make an interesting series of photos. A few months later, in November 2015, Natsuko requested our patience: “Araki is still working on his new series for the publication” and “We can start discussing the dates for an exhibition, as well as the venue. His wish is always to show the latest works”. It was one year later, in October 2016, that Natsuko wrote: “Araki is still struggling to work on the photo series”. Then, eventually after another 15 months of waiting and too long a silence, we did get an email in January 2018 with very good news: “Araki finally has done the preparation of the publication”.

In April 2018 we then received 200 images, the series “Monstrous Paradise”, works by Nobuyoshi Araki. Seeing the images, we understood why he had needed so long, each image showed a very carefully arranged setting, his fantasies, a special way of presenting stories so typically Araki, we had not expected that high quality. He had taken very good care for the project, he had taken it extremely seriously, we could not have hoped for more. This series was perfect.

With the help of Yuki we called Araki at his home, just to double check if we could proceed with our plans, “I was already wondering why I did not hear from you, I did send you the signatures, just put them in the back”. Now it was up to us, to make the quality publication we had promised him and present his latest works, “Monstrous Paradise”, to a larger public.



























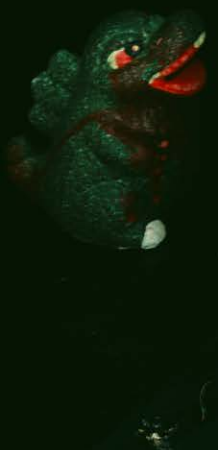




























































































































































































































SARAH GOLD

Sarah Gold (*1978, Netherlands). MA in Art History, independent curator and author. Since 2005 with the project Personal Structures, organizing symposia and exhibitions in a.o. Amsterdam, New York and Tokyo as well as at the 54th and 55th Venice Biennale. With the Global Art Affairs Foundation & ECC Global, publishing books and creating Art Projects, in cooperation with a.o. Yoko Ono, Lawrence Weiner, Hermann Nitsch and Arnulf Rainer; since 2015 concentrating on being an artist herself.

Photo taken in Venice, Italy, 18 September 2018 16:05

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Personal Structures Art Projects are projects which are documented as special edition artists' books. Each project centralizes one artist and emphasises their work. All books in this series have been published by the Global Art Affairs Foundation and the European Cultural Centre, the Netherlands. An excerpt of each project will additionally be published in the ongoing series Personal Structures: Time · Space · Existence.

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED IN THIS SERIES:

LAWRENCE WEINER: SKIMMING THE WATER [MÉNAGE À QUATRE]

HERMANN NITSCH: UNDER MY SKIN

ROMAN OPALKA: TIME PASSING

ON KAWARA: UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

ARNULF RAINER: UNFINISHED INTO DEATH

LEE UFAN: ENCOUNTERS

BEN VAUTIER: INTROSPECTION TRUTH ART & SEX

HERMAN DE VRIES: BEING THIS JOY EXPERIENCE UNITY

YOKO ONO: ARISING

HEINZ MACK OTTO PIENE: COUNTDOWN TO ZERO

