

WHITE CONDUIT PROJECTS

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Tomoko Yoneda – Afterimage

Presented by **White Conduit Projects** in partnership with **Apt** / www.aplondon.com

PV: Thu 23 Oct, 6:30 - 9:00 pm

RSVP essential by 15 Oct: info@whiteconduitprojects.uk

Fri 24 Oct - Fri 21 Nov

Venue: Apt, 235 St John Street, London, EC1V 4NG

Words, words, words **Jonathan Watkins**

Here is a photograph of a green and pleasant woodland. Dappled light falling through oak and birch trees onto luxuriant undergrowth. By Japanese artist Tomoko Yoneda, it is entitled Forest – Location of the Battle of the Somme, Delville Wood, France. Delville Wood was blown to bits in the world war summer of 1916, to the extent that only one tree survived. What we see here is the result of replanting in a place where thousands of young men lost their lives. We only know this because of the words accompanying Yoneda's image.

In the same way, the artist foils a river scene that is all soft pinks, blues and greys. There is a boat, centred, with a wedding party on board. Then we learn that the newly-weds are setting sail for matrimonial bliss on the Yalu River, a "river that divides North Korea and China, Dandong, China". How to navigate such young love between an increasingly muscular superpower and perhaps the most repressive regime in the world?

There is not even a hint of romance on the straight and muddy road in another photograph. It strikes us as unremarkable until we read that it is "The 50th Parallel. Former border between Russia and Japan". This is Sakhalin, an island shared and then ceded by the Japanese to Russia at the end of the Second World War.

There are various Japanese locations, shot in blurred black and white – an empty Takarazuka theatre, a deer park in Nara, a view of Kobe at night from Mount Rokko – that are seemingly random until we read the series title: The Parallel Lives of Others: Encountering with Sorge Spy Ring. And so it dawns on us that these are meeting places for the renowned Soviet agent Richard Sorge and those in his orbit during the 1930s and early 1940s. (He was hanged for treason in 1944.) The images are filmic, evocative of the espionage that of course they cannot depict. They cannot speak for themselves.

Every image, no matter how explicit or covert its subject matter, is mediated. A work of art, a picture, everything is not how it looks but, rather, how it is seen. Clearly this is a fundamental proposition of Yoneda's practice. Words – words, words, words! – can radically transform what we see. More profoundly, the artist is suggesting that all our experience is informed by the ideas and values that constitute our cultural baggage. Unputdownable, we can't go anywhere without it. We can't even read without it.

A child of the twentieth century, Tomoko Yoneda clearly is preoccupied with its history. As with the landscapes described above, this is exemplified by her ongoing series Between Visible and Invisible. Here,

literally, we see texts by influential figures such as Walter Benjamin, Carl Jung and Albert Camus through the glasses lenses of Berthold Brecht, Sigmund Freud and Jean Paul Sartre, respectively, and so are encouraged to imagine how each reader might have “read” the text now in focus, in the light of what we know about them. Or, at least, what we think we know.

* * *

My grandfather was badly wounded on the first day of the Battle of the Somme. I’ve visited those places of carnage, long since grown over, as a kind of pilgrim. For this reason I read “Forest – Location of the Battle of the Somme, Delville Wood, France” very differently to almost everyone now reading this text



Forest—Location of the Battle of Somme, Delville Wood, France, 2002, from Scene, Chromogenic Print, image size: 76 cm × 96 cm, paper size: 103 cm X 122 cm

Friday 24 Oct – Monday 3 Nov
Tuesday 10:30 – 17:00
Wednesday 10:30 – 17:00
Thursday 10:30 – 17:00
Friday 10:30 – 17:00

Tuesday 4 Nov to Friday 21 Nov
Tuesday 11:00 – 17:00
Wednesday 11:00 – 17:00
Thursday 11:00 – 17:00

For arranging an appointment,
please email to:
info@whiteconduitprojects.uk
cc to: info@apt.london

Born in Hyogo, Japan, 1965, Tomoko Yoneda earned a BAF in Photography at The University of Illinois-Chicago in 1989 before completing an MA in Photography at the Royal College of Art in 1991.

Select exhibitions include 1995 ⇌ 2025

Prism of the Real: Making Art in Japan 1989-2010, The National Art Centre, Tokyo (2025); Prolonged Emergencies, The National Museum of Art, Osaka (2025); Faultlines, Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation (2025); Our Lives Since January 17, 1995, Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Art (2025); Crystals, ShugoArts, Tokyo (2024); Forms of the Shadow, Vienna Secession (2024); Tomoko Yoneda, Fundación MAPFRE, Madrid (2021); Constellations: Photographs in Dialogue, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (2021-22); 12th Shanghai Biennale (2018); Tell Me a Story: Locality and Narrative, Rockbund Museum, Shanghai (2016); Discordant Harmony, Kuandu Museum of Fine Arts, Taipei (2016) and Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, Japan (2015); Beyond Memory, Grimaldi Gavin, London (2015); SeMA Biennale Mediacity Seoul (2014); 10th Gwangju Biennale (2014); We shall meet in place where there is no darkness, Himeji City Museum of Art, Hyogo, Japan (2014) and Tokyo Photographic Art Museum (2013); Aichi Triennale (2013); The First Kyiv International Biennale of Contemporary Art: Arsenale 2012, Ukraine (2012); Japanese House, ShugoArts, Tokyo (2011); An end is a beginning, Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo (2008) and Think with the Senses – Feel with the Mind, 52nd Venice Biennale (2007).

Selected public collections include Fundación MAPFRE, Madrid; Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge; Kadist Art Foundation, Paris and San Francisco; Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Paris; Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis; Mori Art Museum, Tokyo; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; The British Council, London; The National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin; The National Museum of Art, Osaka; The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo; Tokyo Photographic Art Museum, Tokyo; UBS Bank Art Collection, London; Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, USA; Yokohama Museum of Art, Yokohama.

In 2021, a retrospective exhibition of her work was held at Fundación MAPFRE, Madrid, and accompanied by a fully illustrated monograph.

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