

Paris Photo 2025, Booth B51 – MIYAKO YOSHINAGA

MIYAKO YOSHINAGA's duo presentation features works by **Melissa Shook** (1939–2020) and **Ken Ohara** (b. 1942), highlighting Shook's large-format Polaroid portraits from 1984 alongside Ohara's ultra-long-exposure portraits of Angelenos from 1998. Though stylistically distinct, both projects explore the bonds between individuals and families, capturing moments that unfold either instantaneously or over time through the camera's intricate mechanisms.

Presumably working in the 20 x 24 Studio at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston — where artists and students made use of a large-format Polaroid camera between 1982 and 1986 — **Melissa Shook** invited her parents, her teenage daughter Krissy, and Krissy's friend Cheryl to participate in a photo session. Krissy and Cheryl posed in a variety of outfits with a fashion-modeling flair, while Shook and her parents appeared in plain, everyday attire. Shook photographed the upper and lower bodies separately, then joined the two frames vertically, seemingly to amplify the impact of the large-format Polaroid. Krissy dominates the project with multiple solo frames of her upper body.

Rather than pursuing formal studio portraits, Shook captured the subjects' spontaneous gestures and body language in the presence of the imposing optical machine. In the lower frame, a prop trunk — used as a platform — remains visible as part of the scene's original context. While the themes of family, friendship, and collaborative acts are at the core of the work, Shook's Polaroid — reminiscent of portraiture from a bygone era, yet disarmingly direct and intimate — strikes the viewer with a haunting sense of awe.

In a contrasting yet complementary approach, **Ken Ohara** also explores human connection, using extreme duration. In 1998, Ohara produced over one hundred portraits that connected individuals living in Los Angeles suburbs, including himself. For each session, he brought his equipment to the subject's home or workplace and photographed them with the camera shutter open for exactly one hour. These extraordinarily long exposures induced fatigue, tension, and at times, a hypnotic effect — revealing a deeper, more introspective layer of the subjects' psyches.

Each black-and-white image, painstakingly developed and printed, renders the subject with blurred textures but an undeniable aura of presence. Ohara emphasizes that it is not the structure of his method but his subjects' voluntary responses to it that define the project's essence. Titled *With*, the series constructs an unusual relational space between photographer and subject, reexamines the artist's control over the resulting image, and subtly inverts the power dynamic between them. Our presentation includes a palm-sized folding album featuring original 5 by 7-inch contact prints.

About the Artists

Melissa Shook (American b. 1939 – d. 2020) grew up on Long Island and lost her mother at 12, leading to memory loss of her childhood. Given a Pentax camera on her 20th birthday, she became serious about photography after studying under Paul Byers at Columbia. Shook documented her partner Darryl Clegg and daughter Krissy, later creating daily self-portraits exploring memory and motherhood. Her intimate work earned MoMA's attention in 1975. Moving to Boston, she became MIT's first female photography instructor, then taught at the University of Massachusetts Boston for 31 years, profoundly influencing students and shaping documentary self-portraiture in photography. Shook's intimate explorations of self and family in the 1960s and 1970s evolved into documentary projects from the 1990s onward, centered on homeless women and others living at the margins of society.

Ken Ohara (b. 1942, lives in Los Angeles) was born in Tokyo, Japan. After briefly studying photography at Nihon University, Ohara moved to New York City at the age of 19. From 1966 to 1970, he worked as an assistant for Richard Avedon and Hiro. In 1970, his first book *ONE* earned support from The Museum of Modern Art's photography curator John Szarkowski. In 1974, His work was featured in "New Japanese Photography," a groundbreaking survey show at The Museum of Modern Art, New York. From 1974 to 1975 He was a recipient of a Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship, and for the following 15 years he worked as a commercial photographer. In the 1990s, Ohara reemerged as an artist and participated in the "Ghost in the Shell: Photography and the Human Soul," a 1999/2000 project at Los Angeles Country Museum of Art curated by Robert Sobieszek. In 2006/2007, the retrospective exhibition "Ken Ohara: Extended Portrait Studies" was held at Museum Folkwang, Essen, Germany and traveled to two other German museums.