

KUWABARA KINEO - THE COMPLETE 'TOKYO - SHOWA MODERN' EXHIBITION OF 190 PRINTS

桑原甲子雄写真展 「東京・昭和モダン」 全190点



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KUWABARA (Kineo), 1913-2007.

Complete set of 190 original prints from the 'Tokyo, Showa Modern' exhibition.

Loose silver gelatine prints measuring ca. 56x45,5cm. Overall in fine condition.
[Tokyo], n.d. [but printed ca. 1990s]. POA

Kuwabara Kineo was born in 1913 in the Shitaya District, in the vicinity of Ueno Station. He was a self-taught amateur photographer who worked in the family business (pawn-broker) but spent much of his spare time - particularly during the 1930s - on the streets photographing everyday life. He later said that it was an encounter with Hamaya Hiroshi which inspired him to take photography seriously and from 1934 onwards he walked tirelessly around Ueno, Asakusa, Setagaya, as well as the fashionable districts of the Ginza in order to find his own language.

He was clearly influenced by prevailing modernist trends called 'shinko shashin' (新興写真 New photography) in Japan. But he soon found his own style and his favourite subjects of kids, adults, shops, stalls, cinemas, and stations stayed clear of the high artificiality that was part of the prevailing photographic fashion. Kuwabara remained close to the ground, close to downtown life, close to the moment and the people that made those moments. He often included adverts, billboards, shop-signs and announcements in his compositions. In the relatively short time between 1932 and 1939 he managed to take over 20,000 images. He submitted entries to important magazines like Camera Art, Shashin Salon, Photo Times, and Asahi Camera. His favourite Camera was the Leica C model which he acquired in June 1934.

After the war he became a noted art critic and editor for several major photo magazines (ARS Camera, Sankei Camera, Camera Geijutsu, The Photo Image, and others) but until the 1970s his own work was practically unknown. It was



chiefly due to the efforts of Araki Nobuyoshi that his snapshots from the 1930s reached a wider audience. Araki felt a strong kinship to Kuwabara's work due to his method of continuously hunting for shots on the streets of Tokyo. The first solo exhibition of his work was held in 1973 at the Ginza Nikon Salon entitled 'The Lost Metropolis'. It was the first time that photographs from that period were shown publicly and for many survivors of the war his work was a source of great nostalgia. In the following year he published a photobook entitled 'Tokyo Showa ju-ichi nen' [Tokyo during Showa 11] (Shobunsha, 1974) which established him as a major figure in Japanese photography.

These images of daily life in Tokyo during the 1930s bring the entire period to life. They show history in a nonchalant way - as it was - speaking to us deeply. There is hardly any distance between the people and the photographer, there are notes of approaching danger in the newspaper headlines, the image of the sun rising after the military coup is particularly ominous... but overall there is a lack of concern, people just go about their daily life energetically or calmly. Kuwabara is close to them. He is hunting, catching moments of significance.

Kuwabara Kineo described his method as follows: "A snapshot is not something where you just press the shutter, you have to breathe with the subject every second and release the shutter at the very moment when the matching of spirit causes a scattering of sparks, and I think that this is the important [moment of] beauty which neither the mouth nor the brush can convey".

Provenance: This set of prints belonged to Kuwabara Kineo himself. They were produced for a large retrospective of his work in 1995 entitled 'Tokyo, Showa Modern' (TSM) at the Tokyo Station Gallery. The photographs are preserved in three large cardboard parcels (measuring 78x59x12), each with printed label "Nihon Bijutsu Shoji kabushiki gaisha" (Japan Art Services Company) who specialise in the packaging and transport of exhibition works.

A full list of photographs is available upon request.



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TSM 4 Large photo-montage on the wall of the Morinaga restaurant, 1936



TSM 88 Man with two girls in a pram. Asakusa Koen, 1936



TSM 23 Morinaga Camp Store near the beach in Kamakura, 1934



TSM 141 Family in front of Tokyo station, 1935



TSM 63 Five men waiting in the sun. Asakusa Koen, Hyotan Lake 1937



TSM 126 Doll in the window of a mannequin maker. Asakusa-ku Matsukyocho, 1937



TSM 53 Girl with parasol in front of Yurakucho Station 1936



TSM 10 Two Mogas on the Ginza. 1934



TSM 116 A pharmacy in Shitaya-ku Shimokurumasaka-cho, 1938



TSM 11 Night at Ueno Station 1936



TSM 12 Ticket barrier in Ueno Station 1936



TSM 15 Show at the International Theater in the Asakusa district 1939



TSM 18 Ascending the steps at Ryodaishi Bridge 1936



TSM 8 Asahi Newspaper headquarters in Kojimachi, Yurakucho 1936



TSM 28 Sun rising over the Imperial Palace. Day after the 2.26 Military Coup, 1936



TSM 32 Fixing an electricity pole in front of Ueno Station 1936



TSM 37 Entrance to Ueno Station 1935



TSM 42 Student on Ryodaishi Bridge 1937



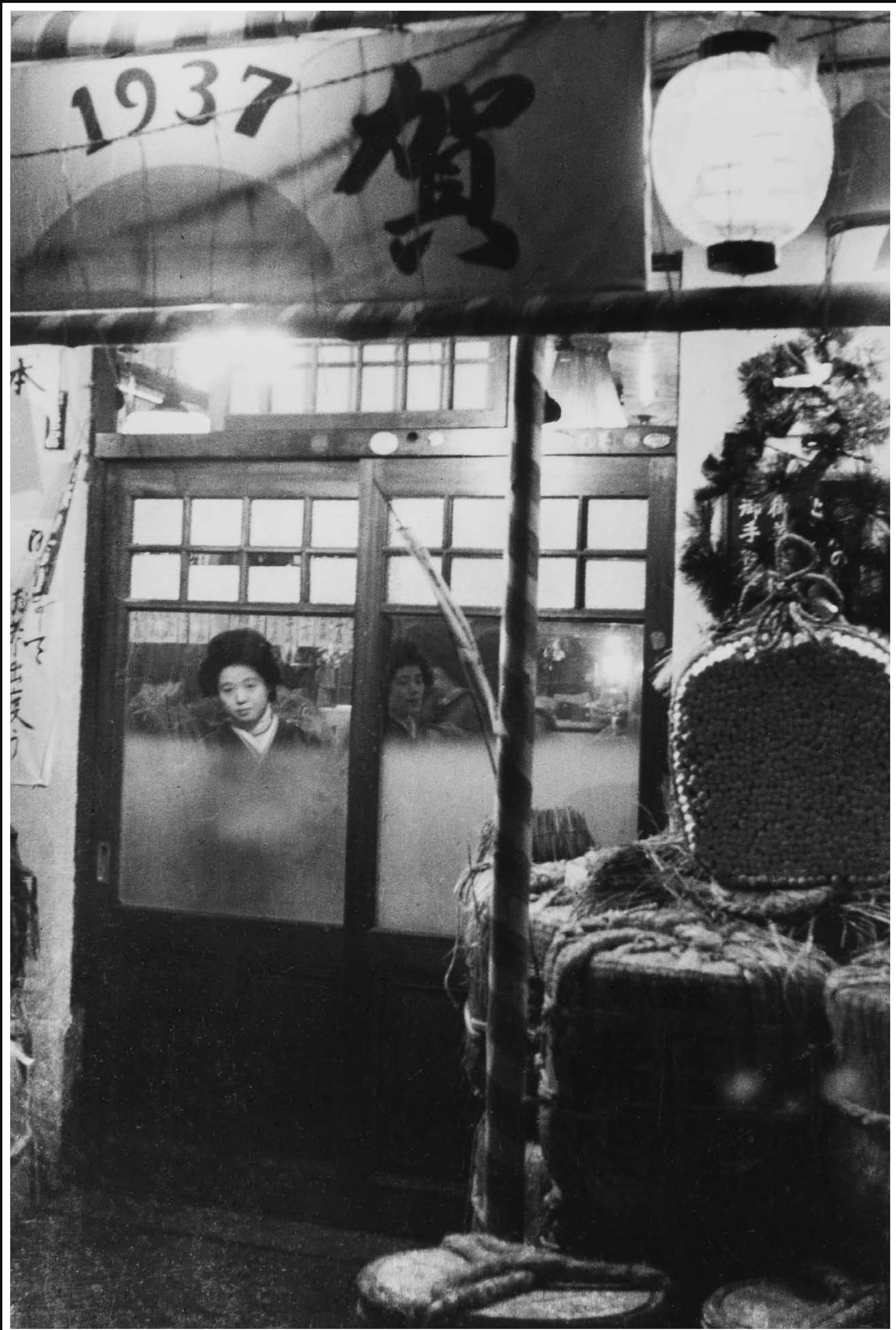
TSM 41 Dancing on Yuigahama beach in Kamakura 1934



TSM 47 Ueno Station subway 1936



TSM 53 Two men in hats passing Yurakucho Station 1936



TSM 57 New Year's Day at a small restaurant near Kaminari-mon Gate 1937



TSM 56 Cart, car and tram in Nihonbashi 1935



TSM 55 Reflection in a shop window in front of Ueno Station 1938



TSM 60 In front of Police headquarters at Kasumigaseki 1936