

Press Release

Alison Bradley Projects is pleased to announce *KUNIÉ SUGIURA*, an intimate survey curated by **Pauline Vermare**.

Kunié Sugiura (b. Nagoya, 1942) moved to the United States in 1963 at the age of 20 to attend the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC). As the only student specializing in photography, Sugiura was quick to realize the potential of the medium, pushing its boundaries and questioning its very essence.

This exhibition traces Sugiura's nearly six-decade practice, beginning with her *Cko* series, produced as a third-year student at SAIC. These photographs demonstrate her burgeoning interest in surface and abstraction. Using traditional tools of photography—models, a camera, and chromogenic printing, Sugiura began to explore the possibilities of photography beyond the image. With this series, Sugiura began a career in which she has continued to broaden the definition of what a photograph can be.

Upon her graduation from SAIC in 1967, Sugiura moved to New York, where she lives and works to this day. It was during this period that she began her “photocanvas” and, subsequently, her “photo-paintings.” With these works, Sugiura delves into her affinity for painterly modalities while maintaining an allegiance to photographic materials; the end result is neither painting nor photograph. Responding to the New York art world which she newly inhabited, Sugiura began to create artworks that defied classification, an amalgam of painting, sculpture and photography all her own.

Sugiura eventually removed the camera entirely with her embrace of the photogram. By placing objects directly onto photographic paper before exposing it to light, the artist played into a long history of creating photogenic drawings, toying with the tension between carefully constructed imagery as well as elements of chance. Whether capturing botanicals, kittens, artists, or scientists, Sugiura uses her subjects to embrace certain contradictions— between light and dark, chance and intention, or objectivity and abstraction.

This intimate survey of Sugiura's career demonstrates her technical mastery of photography, as well as the ways she has continuously expanded the historical bounds of photography. In the coexistence of disparate media, Sugiura creates a complete mode of representation. In visualizing and working with contradiction, the artist's own deeply personal aesthetic comes to light. Adventurous experimentation bears Sugiura's delicate sensibility, evoking the inner worlds of both the artist and her subject matter.

Alison Bradley Projects is honored to present this overview of **Kunié Sugiura's** prolific and groundbreaking career.

Artist Biography

Kunié Sugiura (b. Nagoya, 1942) was born and raised in Japan. After briefly studying science in Tokyo, she moved to the United States to study photography at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She received her BFA in 1967.

During the 1970s, Sugiura's practice combined photography with acrylic paint on canvas. Her photo-paintings remain some of her most seminal works. In the 1980s, she began creating photograms using objects from everyday life including flowers, plants, animals, which led her to create her famous Artist and Scientist series that depict the silhouettes of luminaries such as Yayoi Kusama, Jasper Johns, Carolee Schneemann, or Dr. James Watson.

Sugiura's work has been shown in numerous solo and group exhibitions worldwide. Her works can be found in prestigious private collections, museums and cultural institutions, including The Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven; the Princeton University Art Museum; the Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach; the Denver Art Museum; the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography; Tochigi Prefecture Museum of Art; Hiroshima MOCA, Hiroshima; the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo; and the Tate Modern, London.

Sugiura lives and works in Chinatown, New York City.

Curator Biography

Pauline Vermare (b. Paris, 1978) is a French photography historian, curator and writer based in New York. She was previously the Cultural Director of Magnum Photos NY and a curator at the International Center of Photography (ICP) and the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). Between 2009 and 2022, she worked at the Henri Cartier-Bresson Foundation in Paris. Pauline grew up in Japan and later studied Japanese at the Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales in Paris (INALCO). In 2017, she organized the exhibition "All About Saul Leiter" at the Bunkamura Museum

in Tokyo. Vermare is the author of numerous essays and interviews on Japanese photography, including "But then, sometimes, it gets quite still: Yumiko Izu's timeless photographs of Saul Leiter's studio" (in Yumiko Izu, *Saul Leiter in Stillness*, Libro Arte, 2020), "Everything was beautiful and nothing hurt: the enlightening illuminations of Kikuji Kawada" (in Kikuji Kawada, *Vortex*, Akaaka, 2022), "The Japanese photographers who build experimental artist books: Hiroko Komatsu and Osamu Kanemura" (*Aperture Magazine*, June 28, 2022), and wrote the portraits of Tsuneko Sasamoto and Toyoko Tokiwa for *Histoire Mondiale des Femmes Photographes* (Textuel, 2020). She presented a masterclass on Japanese women photographers for the *Maison Européenne de la Photographie* (2021) and organized the exhibition "10/10: Celebrating Contemporary Japanese Women Photographers" with the international festival *Kyotographie* (2022). She is currently working with *Aperture* on a project focusing on Japanese women photographers.