

### ITALY

#### Japanese Photography

Villa Manin Center for Contemporary Art will present the first large-scale exhibition in Italy dedicated to Hiroshi Sugimoto. The show, curated by Francesco Bonami and Sarah Cosulich Canarutto, brings together 50 large-scale photographic works and two sculptures by the Japanese artist.

The great variety of works on display touches on various themes of Sugimoto's work, from the first *Dioramas* in 1975 to the series *Theaters*, *Seascapes*, *Portraits*, *Conceptual Forms*, up to the new projects *Lightning Field* and *Talbot*.

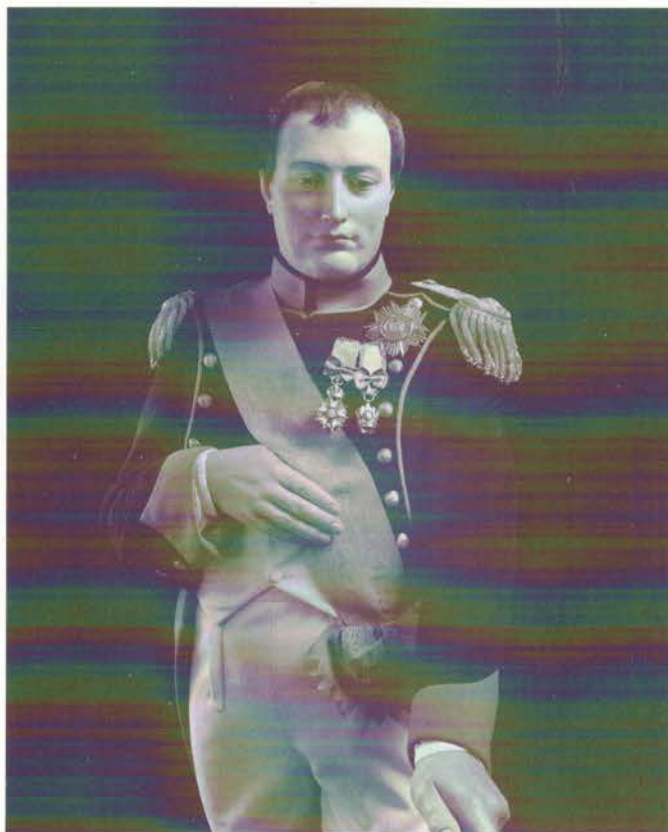
Strongly inspired by the conceptual and minimalist tradition, Sugimoto's works deal with the idea of photography and deny its limits and definitions. As Francesco Bonami says: "Sugimoto's work is a search into the origins of history, be this the zoological history of the earth or that of human actions, seen, symbolically, through the passing of time inside the camera lens and by using film as the surface of memory."

The artist, impressed on his very first visit to Villa Manin by the 17th-century building which will host the show, has conceived the entire installation plan creating, between his works and the exhibition spaces, a series of references and allusions which can be apparent but also more subtle, as to involve the visitor in a mental game that unravels through the various rooms.

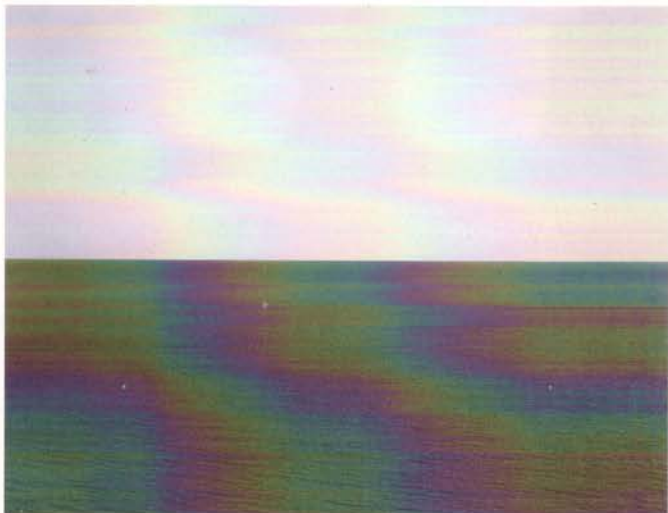
An example of this is the bedroom on the ground floor—the one that Napoleon used to sleep in when he chose Villa Manin as his headquarters for a redefinition of Europe. In this room the photograph *Napoleon Bonaparte* is displayed, a work from his series *Portraits*, through which the artist portrays historical and contemporary personalities. All the photographs of

this theme have been taken by isolating and illuminating on black backdrops wax statues present in various museums, thus emphasizing the reference to the models by which they are inspired, such as the paintings by Jacques-Louis David and Hans Holbein.

Sugimoto has been respectful of the exhibition spaces, unveiling the walls and frescoes of the dogal residence: a few photographs—placed on simple easels designed by the artist himself—characterize each room, with the exception of the one that combines, almost like



Hiroshi Sugimoto, *Napoleone Bonaparte*, 1999, 149.2 x 119.4 cm. Stampa a gelatina d'argento. Courtesy the artist.



Hiroshi Sugimoto, *North Pacific Onean (Okurosaki)*, 2002, 119.4 x 149.2 cm. © Hiroshi Sugimoto.

a family reunion, Henry VIII and the portraits of his wives.

His *Dioramas* are characterized by scenes of primitive life taken in natural history museums and that disorientate the viewer, who is used to associate a certain type of documentary photography with the reproduction of reality.

The series entitled *Theaters* was taken in cinema-theatres of the 1920s and 1930s such as the Radio City Music Hall in New York and the Metropolitan Theatre in Los Angeles. Here Sugimoto tried to condense the flow of time and the perception of space into a single moment, leveling out the exposure time and that of the duration of the film projection. The white and bright rectangle that derives from it illuminates the otherwise dark room and contains the traces of a longer unit of time.

Time is also the protagonist of the series *Seascapes*, where water and air meet exactly halfway in the image, in an attempt to recreate the first, absolute vision of the sea experienced by the ancient explorers.

The desire to test his ability to reproduce the "non-representable" has led the artist, over the years, to confront tangible models in order to express theoretical and spiritual concepts, such as the curved surfaces of *Conceptual Forms* that represent numerical formulae. With the use of sophisticated games of illusions and references, Sugimoto pushes the viewer to actively confront the image and the ambiguous weave between time and memory it communicates.

A fully illustrated exhibition guide will be available, featuring critical texts, images, and a biographical section. At the conclusion of the show, a large catalogue will be published, presenting the photographs by the artist of the installed works.

Hiroshi Sugimoto was born in 1948 in Tokyo. Following a degree in economics, he moved to the United States in 1970 to study photography at the Art Center College of