

TOKYO REVISITED. DAIDO MORIYAMA WITH SHOMEI TOMATSU

An immersive journey through post-war and contemporary Tokyo with more than 500 images by two masters of world photography. A realistic and poetic illustration of the human condition.

April 14 – October 16, 2022 | curated by Hou Hanru, Elena Motisi

www.maxxi.art | [#tokyorevisited](https://twitter.com/tokyorevisited) | [#daidomoriyama](https://twitter.com/daidomoriyama)

Press kit and pictures maxxi.art/area-riservata/ password **areariservatamaxxi**

"Basically in my life I have mostly walked, observed and photographed"
Daido Moriyama

ROME, April 13, 2022. Walking into MAXXI, Rome's National Museum of 21st century arts, you might find yourself in Tokyo, amidst dazzling neon lights and dark alleys; between the deafening noise of traffic and silent backstreets; between the chaos and frenzy of contemporary society and moments of rest and intimacy; between millenary traditions and futuristic projections; between poetry and violence in which art becomes life and life becomes art.

This is **TOKYO REVISITED. DAIDO MORIYAMA WITH SHOMEI TOMATSU**, the new MAXXI exhibition celebrating two giants of photography, curated by Hou Hanru and Elena Motisi. Held in partnership with the Maison européenne de la photographie (MEP) in Paris, it runs from **April 14 to October 16, 2022**.

The exhibition offers a full immersion into post-war and contemporary Tokyo with hundreds of works by one of the best living Japanese photographers, Daido Moriyama (Osaka, 1938), and by his late mentor Shomei Tomatsu, who passed away 10 years ago (Nagoya, 1930 - Naha, 2012).

Roaming around like nomads or *stray dogs* - to quote the title of one of Moriyama's most famous works, *Misawa (Stray Dog)*, 1971, which he has often identified as a self portrait - the two artists criss-crossed the streets of Tokyo taking pictures of all that moved under their eyes, not seeking beauty, but exploring and showing every corner of the city. While Tomatsu was more focused on social and political aspects, Moriyama, with his trademark "grainy, blurry and unfocused" style, plunged himself with glee in the overwhelming spectacle of the consumerist society.

Both artists treat photography as a way of life rather than as an artistic genre. And both are eminent representatives of a unique photographic style born and rooted exclusively in the urban context of Tokyo, which stands out in the global artistic panorama as one of the most original, dynamic and poetic expressions of art.

As **Daido Moriyama** said in an interview published in the exhibition catalogue, "Whatever I look at, looks interesting to me, and whatever I see is stimulating. Being stimulated naturally makes me press the release button, which results in more photographs. Every shot calls for another one, which again leads directly to the next. I guess that chain reaction is what keeps me on my feet and ready to shoot."

So, to photograph is to live. With a unique technique, focusing on everyday aspects of urban life that are often unnoticed, and also on incongruous elements (street corners, shop windows, men, women, animals, plants, street signs, even garbage) that are represented as of beams of light and shadow, with a very high contrast but also an unstoppable fluidity.

Moriyama is not a reportage photographer, who record life objectively for the sake of collective memory, he prefers instead to look for his own sense of existence through the action of photographing

This photographic journey is spread out over **500 images**, most of which (370) are original prints from Japan, along with a kaleidoscope of prints that form gigantic wallpapers covering an area of 600 square metres. Moriyama's photographs, displayed on yellow walls, are alternated with those of Tomatsu, set against a light blue backdrop. Through them, visitors are encouraged to explore the city of Tokyo, let themselves be carried away and get lost in a world of images, sounds, colours and projections.

Giovanna Melandri, MAXXI President, says: "Great photography takes centre stage in this season's exhibitions at MAXXI, to investigate the world and ourselves through the eyes of exceptional masters. From the Amazon of Sebastião Salgado, a sellout since its opening in October, to the Italy of Gianni Berengo Gardin, which will open

at the beginning of May, and the Tokyo of Daido Moriyama and Shomei Tomatsu. Emerging from the tragedy of war defeat into a consumerist frenzy that overturned an ancient culture, up to the explosion of technological power, Tokyo is an exceptional and unique observatory. In the snapshots of Daido Moriyama and Shomei Tomatsu, realistic and poetic at the same time, Tokyo, a naked city, becomes the symbol of the contemporary human condition".

Hou Hanru, curator, says: "Certainly, snapshots by both Tomatsu and Moriyama... are *snapshots* in the real sense of the word. Deeply rooted in the reality of post-war Tokyo, they are chaotic and uncontrollable, consciously and unconsciously transgressing the established social order by emphasising the density of the accumulation and overlapping of "things": human beings, animals, plants, objects, scenes. They have been driven by spontaneous situations... Together, through *dérive* (drifting) in the city, they created a kind of Deleuze-Guattari style *machine désirante*, which produces a system of "psychogeographic-mapping" of Tokyo (and occasionally other cities that they visited), the "naked city", or "naked reality" rather than the truth, as Daido Moriyama argues".

Elena Motisi, curator, adds: "Moriyama's is almost a joycean visual story which, like a novel, represents the events of life and of the city with a free flow that has as many connections as disconnections. The story is unstructured and free of punctuation: it is an open process, an endless story that continually rewrites and overwrites itself.

Moriyama takes pictures of himself and of the outside world, without necessarily putting a filter between these two realities, without distinguishing between subject and object as canonically understood. Self-portraits fill the exhibition at MAXXI in a continuous cross-reference of faces, refractions and shadows in which the author becomes an actor."

The exhibition is organised around **10 broad themes** that feature prominently in the work of both artists, including: urban photography as a nomadic lifestyle; the city as a place for human performance, changing dizzyingly, constantly and intoxicatingly with neon lights, colours and noises (*Actor Shimizu Isamu*, 1968); infrastructure as an element that changes the urban fabric (*Platform*, 1977); the Shinjuku nightlife district, a maze of dark alleys and dimly lit bars where stunning snapshots are taken of stinging details, rebellious lifestyles and signs of resistance; the world of art and entertainment with influences from the Beat Generation to William Klein and Andy Warhol (*ACCIDENT*, 1969); inner reality (which, reflecting a personal experience of the artist, is expressed in the *Pantomime* series of 1964 with photographs of foetuses); intimacy and erotica (*Blood and Roses*, 1969); the role of self-portraiture; publishing and photobooks, which have a long tradition in Japan and are shown in a dedicated area also including all the issues of *Record* magazine for free consultation; the impact of digital and colour photography (*Pretty Woman*, 2017).

Tokyo is the single common thread through this narrative. And just like in real life in the city, themes intersect, overlap and interconnect, to form a realistic yet profound and poetic account of the human condition. Moriyama and Tomatsu's Tokyo is fascinating and cosmopolitan, full of energy and conflicts, ancient and hyper-technological and, just like Rome, caught in the eternal struggle between its historical ruins and futuristic projections.

TOKYO REVISITED reuses part of the structures created for a previous exhibition, so as to provide visitors with the impression of "crossing" Tokyo, connecting it with the reality of Rome: two cities which, in different ways, are grappling with the eternal re-elaboration of links between their respective historical ruins and their future ambitions.

The exhibition will be supported by a series of talks, debates and screenings building on some of its running themes, from experimental cinema to the expressiveness of Japanese Botoh dance theatre. The museum will also organise visits for schools and guided tours for young people and adults.

MAXXI PRESS OFFICE +39 06 324861 press@fondazionemaxxi.it

partner della mostra exhibition partner

media partner

