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*Press Release - Yasuhiro Ishimoto's Photographs of Greene & Greene Architecture to Go on View for First Time in the U.S.
March 15, 2016*

**“YASUHIRO ISHIMOTO: BILINGUAL PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE ARCHITECTURE OF GREENE & GREENE”
FEATURES 52 WORKS BY THE INFLUENTIAL 20TH-CENTURY JAPANESE-AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHER**

On view June 18 – Oct. 3, 2016 | Susan and Stephen Chandler Wing, Virginia Steele Scott Galleries of American Art

SAN MARINO, Calif.— Japanese-American photographer Yasuhiro Ishimoto's photographs of Greene & Greene architecture will be shown for the first time in the United States in a focused loan exhibition on view at The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens from June 18 through Oct. 3, 2016. The influential photographer turned his lens toward the work of California Arts and Crafts architects Greene & Greene in 1974, producing a suite of images for the Japanese design magazine *Approach*. Before his death, Ishimoto expressed his wish to have these photographs shown in the United States. Now, more than 40 years after the photos were made, his wish will come true.

Forty-six sumptuous black-and-white photographs printed by the artist and on loan from The Museum of Art, Kochi in Japan will showcase the *Approach* magazine commission along with six seminal photographs that Ishimoto made of the 17th-century Katsura Imperial Villa in Japan in 1954.

“Yasuhiro Ishimoto: Bilingual Photography and the Architecture of Greene & Greene” coincides with the reopening of a refreshed permanent display of Greene & Greene furniture (organized in collaboration with the Gamble House/University of Southern California). The proximity of the two galleries will allow visitors to experience the designs of Charles and Henry Greene (known for principled, hand-crafted, and distinctive early 20th-century Arts and Crafts homes) just a few yards away from their photographic interpretations by Ishimoto.

“Yasuhiro Ishimoto's beautifully sensitive photographs of famous Greene & Greene commissions are extraordinary in their composition, texture, and perception, and will add new meaning for visitors, as they wander the galleries and explore our collections,” said Kevin Salatin, Hannah and Russel Kully Director of the Art Collections at The Huntington. “We are seriously committed to collecting, and displaying, works that represent both the field of American Arts and Crafts as well as its predecessor, the European Design Reform movement. Being able to showcase Ishimoto's work provides a fascinating, and exquisite, interpretation of that world.”

Although the Japanese influence on the architecture of the Greene brothers has been widely acknowledged, this exhibition is the first in the United States to examine the influence from a Japanese perspective.

“Ishimoto's images represent a unique vision, fashioned by his birth and education in the United States and a subsequent career in Japan, where he ultimately became a naturalized citizen,” said Anne Mallek, former curator of the Gamble House, a 1908 Greene & Greene structure in Pasadena, Calif. “He developed a new and personal perspective, liberated from historical precedent or framework, so he could capture a 17th-century villa near Kyoto, or the Greenes' work, in a manner bordering on the abstract. His images don't set the works of architecture apart from the viewer, nor do they put them on a pedestal. One is pulled in, as if to observe with the photographer the details that only the architects and craftsmen may have cared about in creating the structure.” Mallek curated the exhibition with Edward R. “Ted” Bosley, Gamble House director.

American post-World War II photographer Minor White called Ishimoto a “visual bi-linguist”—someone who, by circumstances of birth and education, became uniquely suited to interpret cultural links between Japan and America. Born in San Francisco in 1921 to immigrant parents, Yasuhiro Ishimoto grew up in Japan and returned to California to attend college in 1939. In 1942, he was removed to a Colorado internment camp, where he spent the war years nurturing an interest in photography. He later enrolled at the Chicago Institute of Design, founded by ex-Bauhaus instructor László Moholy-Nagy. Ishimoto returned to Japan in the 1960s.

“Yasuhiro Ishimoto: Bilingual Photography and the Architecture of Greene & Greene” features a gallery booklet and wall text in both English and Japanese, with the installation organized into six thematic categories: pattern, rhythm, post and beam, details, views, light and dark.

In a striking example of the photographer’s attention to architectural details, *Blacker House with Interior Detail* captures a portion of the staircase of the 1907 Robert R. Blacker house in Pasadena. The photograph focuses on the softness of a carved spiral, or whirlpool form—traditionally known in Japanese as *naruto*—bringing to life the velvety smooth texture of the hand-sanded teak, as well as the layers and insertions of wood members. The composition demonstrates Ishimoto’s sensitivity to the timeless artistry inherent in the Greenes’ work, in the same manner that his photographs of *Katsura Villa* 20 years earlier had translated the details of its 17th-century buildings for modern audiences.

Another highlight of the exhibition is a view of the *Gamble House’s* west elevation. The photo captures the house in the late afternoon sun as it highlights the ends of projecting rafter tails, while throwing the undersides of the eaves and sleeping porches into deep shadow. “Ishimoto is playing with contrast here, and how light can transform a building graphically,” said Mallek. “He’s emphasizing its horizontality as the elongated shadow of the sleeping porch roof extends at an angle down the façade of the house.” The image also sympathizes with Charles Greene’s suggested purpose for the extended rafters on the house—Greene once said they were included “because they cast such beautiful shadows.”

Such design elements may have been born of the Greenes’ interest in Japanese construction, and many of Ishimoto’s photographs of *Katsura Villa* and of the Greenes’ work would appear to authenticate this connection. In both groups of images, the artist focuses on the graceful intersections of vertical and horizontal lines in post-and-beam structures, as he does in *Gamble House Sleeping Porch Detail*. This photograph of a structurally complex porch corner of intersecting beams and distinctively shaped railings seems to have been made with a loving eye—planks of wood become soft and undulating, and the use of natural light makes smooth surfaces reflective while architectural shapes glow with a magical quality.

“Ishimoto rarely made an image of a structure in its entirety, but chose rather to examine details and create abstractions, focusing on pattern, light, and structure,” said Mallek. “All of the images telegraph his sensitivity to material, texture, form and light.”

Credit

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About The Huntington

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