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PRESS RELEASE



KAMAITACHI
PHOTOGRAPHS BY EIKOH HOSOE
Essays by Donald Keene, Eikoh Hosoe, and Shuzo Takiguchi

Kamaitachi, (Aperture, October 2009), a classic and groundbreaking body of work, was originally released in 1969 as a limited edition of one thousand copies. A unique collaboration between photographer **Eikoh Hosoe** and **Tatsumi Hijikata**, the founder of *ankoku butoh* dance, the work documents their visit to a farming village in northern Japan that resulted in an improvisational performance with the local villagers inspired by the legend of *kamaitachi*, a weasel-like demon who haunts the rice fields and slashes those he encounters with a sickle.

In 2005, in close consultation with the artist, Aperture released a limited-edition facsimile in homage to the original. Aperture is now pleased to make available, for the first time ever, this enchanting body of work in an affordable trade edition. This new version was painstakingly reworked by renowned graphic artist Ikko Tanaka, designer of the original volume, shortly before his death.

Hosoe and Hijikata, who first met in 1959, share the same birthplace, the Tohoku countryside in Northern Japan, where most of the images were made. Hosoe photographed Hijikata's spontaneous interactions with the landscape and the people they encountered. A magnificent and seductive combination of performance and photography, the two artists enact an intense investigation of tradition and an exploration, both personal and symbolic, of Japanese society during a time of massive upheaval and change. In an accompanying personal essay published here for the first time, Hosoe writes about how he became one of the Beat Generation artists, who were willing to try anything new, and who wanted to explore how traditional documentary photography and personal expression could be combined into what we describes as "subjective documentary."



This excerpt from Hosoe's essay perfectly reflects the spirit of the work: "As the series evolved, it became a kind of collaboration between me, Hijikata, and the villagers who participated in our shenanigans. Later on, I felt I probably owed an apology to those people, who must have been surprised when these two young men appeared out of nowhere and inserted themselves into their daily lives and rituals, snatching babies from cribs and shouting over their shoulders, 'Sorry, we're just borrowing your baby for a few seconds.' In our performance, we became, for just a moment, two kamaitachi."

Aperture is honored to reinterpret this paragon of Japanese bookmaking, that includes four never-before-published images from the classic Kamaitachi series and a new text by preeminent Japanese scholar Donald Keene.

EIKOH HOSOE (born in Yamagata Prefecture, Japan, 1933) is an integral part of the history of modern Japanese photography; he remains a driving force, not only for his own work, but also for his efforts as a teacher and ambassador, fostering artistic exchange between Japan and the outside world. Hosoe is represented by Howard Greenberg Gallery, New York. He lives in Tokyo.

DONALD KEENE (essay) is a Columbia University Professor Emeritus and Shincho Professor Emeritus of Japanese Literature.

SHUZO TAKIGUCHI (essay, 1903–1979) was a poet and art critic, credited for having introduced Surrealism to Japan at the end of the 1920s.

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Also available: A deluxe limited edition with print.

Please contact Aperture for information.

Aperture—located in New York's Chelsea art district—is a world-renowned non-profit publisher and exhibition space dedicated to promoting photography in all its forms. Aperture was founded in 1952 by photographers Ansel Adams, Dorothea Lange, Barbara Morgan, and Minor White; historian Beaumont Newhall; and writer/curator Nancy Newhall, among others. These visionaries created a new quarterly periodical, *Aperture* magazine, to foster both the development and the appreciation of the photographic medium and its practitioners. In the 1960s, Aperture expanded to include the publication of books (over five hundred to date) that comprise one of the most comprehensive and innovative libraries in the history of photography and art. Aperture's programs now include artist lectures and panel discussions, limited-edition photographs, and traveling exhibitions that show at major museums and arts institutions in the U.S. and internationally.

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