



Etherton Gallery Booth, AIPAD 2018, New York

Etherton Gallery places Takeshi Ishikawa Archive of W. Eugene Smith Photographs with Library of Congress on the 100th Anniversary of his Birth

Tucson, AZ: Etherton Gallery is pleased to announce an acquisition that celebrates the continued vital importance of the photography of W. Eugene Smith (1918-1978) on the 100th anniversary of his birth. The gallery has placed the Takeshi Ishikawa Archive of W. Eugene Smith Photographs with the Library of Congress. The archive comprises 100 vintage gelatin silver prints from Smith's last photo essay, *Minamata*, which document the effects of mercury poisoning by the Chisso chemical company on the residents of Minamata, a small fishing village in southeastern Japan in the early 1970s. *Minamata* stands as the first major documentary project devoted to an environmental crisis. The Archive also includes 15 portraits of W. Eugene Smith made in Minamata by Takeshi Ishikawa. The 15 photographs by Takeshi Ishikawa are a gift to the Library of Congress from Takeshi Ishikawa and Etherton Gallery.

W. Eugene Smith lived in Japan between 1971 and 1974, working primarily in the village of Minamata. He printed all the photographs included in the Archive between 1971 and 1974 during his stay. Before Smith left Japan for good in 1974, he gave a large group of photographs to his young Japanese assistant, Takeshi Ishikawa. Ishikawa met Eugene Smith and his wife Aileen Sprague Smith in Tokyo in 1971. He moved to Minamata with the Smiths, lived with the couple, photographed alongside Smith and assisted him in Smith's makeshift darkroom. Ishikawa selected the best examples of the prints that Smith made for the Archive. The Archive includes photographs of the Chisso Corporation trial, iconic images of the affected families, and views of Minamata Bay. Several of these photographs are unpublished and were exhibited outside Japan for the first time at The AIPAD Photography Show in 2018 by Etherton Gallery.



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With this acquisition The Library of Congress becomes the largest holder of Smith's *Minamata* work by any museum other than the W. Eugene Smith Archive at the Center for Creative Photography. Said Etherton Gallery owner Terry Etherton, "I am so pleased that we were able to work with the Library of Congress to secure a home for The Archive. The Takeshi Ishikawa Archive of W. Eugene Smith photographs will provide an incredible resource for those interested in the work of one of the great documentary photographers of the 20th century."

In an era of political and environmental challenges and upheaval, the story behind Smith's *Minamata* project remains all too relevant today. Chisso had known since the 1950s that untreated mercury caused severe neurological disorders, birth defects and the destruction of the local fisheries, but hid it from the local population and dumped untreated effluent into Minamata Bay. Set against the profound transformation of Japan following World War II, the allegations against Chisso created a huge scandal in Japan. Thanks to Smith, for the first time, an environmental disaster was treated as a humanitarian crisis worthy of international concern.

The gallery would like to thank the Staff, Librarians and Acquisitions Committee at the Library of Congress and photographer Takeshi Ishikawa, for their commitment to W. Eugene Smith's work, in particular the groundbreaking *Minamata* photographs.

BIOS

W. Eugene Smith (1918-1978)

W. Eugene Smith is credited with establishing the model for the extended photo essay, and his work set the standard by which documentary photography was measured for many years. A native of Wichita, Kansas, Smith began a deep engagement with photography as a teenager. After being awarded a scholarship to study at the University of Notre Dame, he left for New York after one year, where he joined the staff of Newsweek and freelanced for *LIFE* Magazine, *Collier's*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *The New York Times*, and other publications. In 1939, Smith began working intermittently as a staff photographer for LIFE, with which he had a contentious relationship for the rest of his career. During World War II he was a war correspondent in the Pacific for Ziff-Davis Publishing and *LIFE*. He was severely wounded in the Battle of Okinawa in 1945. Following a lengthy recuperation, he returned to *LIFE* and produced many of his best photo essays, including "Country Doctor," "Spanish Village," and "A Man of Mercy." "Country Doctor" has been described as "the first extended editorial photo story." In 1955, he joined Magnum, the international cooperative photography agency and began work on a photographic study of Pittsburgh, for which he received Guggenheim Fellowships in 1956 and 1957. Smith continued to freelance for a variety of magazines for the rest of his career. From 1959 to 1971, he returned to Japan to work for Hitachi and also taught at the New School for Social Research, and the School of Visual Arts in New York. His last photo essay, "Minamata," completed in 1974, documented the effects of mercury poisoning by the Chisso chemical company on the residents of Minamata, a small fishing village in southeastern Japan. During that time, Smith was attacked by Chisso corporate thugs and badly wounded. Following his return to the United States, Smith's friends became concerned about his rapidly deteriorating health. They arranged for him to teach at the University of Arizona in Tucson. Smith passed away following a stroke on October 15, 1978 at the age of 59.

In recognition of his outstanding contribution to photography, the W. Eugene Smith Memorial Fund was established after his death to support the projects of photographers "who in their own way will



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explore and report upon aspects of the contemporary world that are of significant importance. "W. Eugene Smith's archive is held at the Center for Creative Photography at the University of Arizona.

Takeshi Ishikawa

Takeshi Ishikawa was born on Shikoku Island in Japan in 1950. In 1972, he obtained a degree in commercial photography from Tokyo Visual Arts. As a result of a chance encounter with W. Eugene Smith (1918-1978) on a Tokyo street in the fall of 1971, Ishikawa became Smith's assistant on the *Minamata* project. At the time he met Smith, Smith and his wife Aileen were preparing to leave for Minamata, Japan to document the effects of mercury poisoning on the local population. Smith hired Ishikawa to build a darkroom in their Tokyo apartment, translate Japanese texts and assist with the logistics of their move. Ishikawa soon joined the couple in Minamata and lived with them for three years. He provided translation services, photographed alongside Smith and assisted him in Smith's makeshift darkroom. In November 1974, the *Minamata* Project ended and Smith left Japan. Before he left, he gave Ishikawa a large group of photographs in thanks. Four months after Smith's departure Ishikawa followed him to New York. Ishikawa helped bring to fruition the publication of *MINAMATA* and the accompanying exhibition at the International Center for Photography. He became a freelance photographer in 1975. Ishikawa's own Minamata photographs remained unpublished until 2008, when on the 30th anniversary of Smith's death, he published *Minamata Note 1971-2012: W. Eugene Smith, Myself and Minamata*. Ishikawa has enjoyed a successful career as a documentary photographer in Japan. He is best known for a long-term project begun in 1980, documenting hijra communities throughout India.

Etherton Gallery

Established in 1981, Etherton Gallery is best known for its expertise in post-World War II American photography. In over 300 exhibitions featuring well over 100 artists, the gallery has showcased the icons of the history of photography as well as the contemporary artists changing its course. Etherton Gallery is dedicated to making great works of photography accessible to novices and experienced collectors alike. The gallery is a long-standing member of AIPAD (the Association of International Photography Art Dealers), and Terry Etherton serves on the Board of Directors. Etherton Gallery participates in fine art photography fairs including the AIPAD Photography Show New York, Classic Photographs Los Angeles, Photo LA, and Paris Photo. The gallery has placed work in numerous private and public collections among them: The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri; and Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Terry Etherton is an accredited member of the American Society of Appraisers and is available for appraisals, absentee bidding and collections consultation.

For more information, please contact Daphne Srinivasan or Hannah Glasston at Etherton Gallery:
(520) 624-7370 or info@ethertongallery.com