Showcasing Underrepresented Voices:
Building the Japanese Women Photographers Collection
at the University of Pennsylvania Libraries

Committee on Japanese Materials, CEAL
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Outline

- Inspiration and context
- How I built this collection
- What is in the collection
- Challenges in building the collection
- Conclusion: reflections and the road ahead

Note: Photobook images have been removed from original PowerPoint slides due to copyright concerns. Citations and links to Penn Libraries’ holdings of these books can be found in the final slides.
Collection: Inspiration and Context

Growing need for this collection due to:

- Trends in the history of Japanese photography
  - 20th century: systematic exclusion of women as professional photographers
- Trends in print photobook collections
  - Since 1990s: surging numbers of female photographers, exhibits, and photobooks
  - But print collections of photobooks (and photographic canon) worldwide still skew heavily toward male photographers
Women Photographers’ Growing Digital Presence

Behind the Camera

Behind the Camera is an open-source website that creates new critical directions on the history of photography, feminist art history, and the history of modern Japan. It is a pedagogical tool for the growing global investment in diverse and expanded histories of photography and gender studies.

“Behind the Camera” DH Project (Kelly McCormick, Carrie Cushman, & team):
https://behindthecamerajapan.arts.ubc.ca
Building Collection (1): Compiling Lists

Featuring photographers:

• With whom I was already familiar
• Who were discussed in scholarship on Japanese photography
• From spreadsheet that eventually became the timeline in “Behind the Camera” DH project (thanks to Dr. Kelly M. McCormick)
• From publicity for exhibits and events in Japan
• From artist bios on vendors’ sites
Building Collection (2): Identifying Works Already in Our Collection
Building Collection (3): Building Selection
Lists and Acquiring Titles

Dashwood Books

Zen Foto Gallery
What is in the collection?

• As of March 2023: 285 books either acquired or on order
• Artist books and commercial publications
• 1st-edition imprints and reprints
• Mostly circulating; also some special collections/non-circulating
• Mostly published since 1990, but slowly acquiring older/rare books
• Both famous and emerging artists
• Inclusive (e.g., includes artists in the diaspora)
• Great diversity! (in content and themes; style, materials, layout; whether commentary on gender is explicit; integration of text and image; etc.)
Challenge (1): Gender

Distinguishing photographers by gender:
  • Can be problematic to make assumptions about gender identity
  • “Women” photographers collection: presumes, reflects, reifies gender binary

But benefits can outweigh costs:
  • Bringing more visibility to women artists
  • Changing the canon
Challenge (2): Discovery

The 133 books in this collection that are currently cataloged are scattered across physical locations and classification ranges. Per our discovery tool:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library</th>
<th>Classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIBRA</td>
<td>Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Van Pelt-Dietrich Library Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fisher Fine Arts Library</td>
<td>D - History: General &amp; European</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special Collections</td>
<td>H - Social Science, Economics, Sociology</td>
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<td>Kislak Center for Special Collections</td>
<td>P - Literature &amp; Languages</td>
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<td></td>
<td>C - History: Auxiliary Sciences</td>
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<td></td>
<td>F - History: Western Hemisphere</td>
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<td></td>
<td>G - Geography, Anthropology, Recreation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N - Fine Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B - Philosophy, Psychology, Religion</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S - Agriculture</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

76 books are in the Technology classification.
Addressing Discovery Challenges
Conclusion: Reflections and the Road Ahead

- Rewarding project: challenges male-centered photographic canon
- Positive response from scholars about collection’s current and future usefulness
- Helpful (for me as new librarian) to understand how to do distinctive collection projects like this in the future
- Segues with department’s and institution’s shared priority to document and give platforms to underrepresented voices
  - → inspiration, momentum, and support for continuing this project into the future
Works Cited in Original Slides (1)

https://franklin.library.upenn.edu/catalog/FRANKLIN_9978865624103681

———, *Here’s What the Japanese Flag Means to Me* [日の丸を視る目] (2011)  
https://franklin.library.upenn.edu/catalog/FRANKLIN_9978069605603681

———, *Life in Philly* [ライフ・イン・フィリー] (2009)  
https://franklin.library.upenn.edu/catalog/FRANKLIN_9961057883503681

———, *Red Flower* [赤花] (2017)  
https://franklin.library.upenn.edu/catalog/FRANKLIN_9978843217703681

https://franklin.library.upenn.edu/catalog/FRANKLIN_9978069607503681

———, *Grain and Image* [肌理と写真] (2017)  
https://franklin.library.upenn.edu/catalog/FRANKLIN_9978069607003681

———, *Yokohama gorakusō* [Yokohama 互楽荘] (2017)  
https://franklin.library.upenn.edu/catalog/FRANKLIN_9978069607003681
Works Cited in Original Slides (2)

Iwanami Yūki 岩波友紀, *Threads in the Dark* (2021)
https://franklin.library.upenn.edu/catalog/FRANKLIN_9978867216603681

Katayama Mari 片山真, *Mother River Homing* (2021)
https://franklin.library.upenn.edu/catalog/FRANKLIN_9978922803703681

Kawauchi Rinko 川内倫子, *Des oiseaux* (2021)
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Nagashima Yurie 長島有里枝, *Self-Portraits* (2020)
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Works Cited in Original Slides (3)

https://franklin.library.upenn.edu/catalog/FRANKLIN_9978105321303681

https://franklin.library.upenn.edu/catalog/FRANKLIN_9978870665703681

Okabe Momo 岡部桃, *Dildo* (2013)
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Okada Yurina 岡田佑里奈, *Dream In Out* (2022)
https://franklin.library.upenn.edu/catalog/FRANKLIN_9978922804003681

Tokyo Rumando, *I’m Only Happy When I’m Naked* [S: ハダカニチカゾクコトガトテモシアワセ] (2018)
https://franklin.library.upenn.edu/catalog/FRANKLIN_9977889913303681

https://franklin.library.upenn.edu/catalog/FRANKLIN_9977889906303681
Thank you!

Questions?
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