

Osamu James Nakagawa Gama Caves



Gama, #010, 2010

sepiaEYE is pleased to announce our inaugural exhibition, *Gama Caves*, by Osamu James Nakagawa, opening April 10, from 6–8 pm. The exhibition will be on view April 11–May 31, 2014 at our new space, 547 West 27th Street, 6th Floor in Chelsea.

The subject of Nakagawa's latest book, *Gama Caves* is a continuation of his focus on the landscape of Okinawa and its place in history, and is the final chapter in his series, *Okinawa Trilogy*.

Stemming from his personal fascination with Okinawan history and culture, Nakagawa captured the battle-scarred cliffs, *Banta*, in 2008. Concurrently, he photographed the contemporary landscape indexing significant historical sites for his series *Remains*, 2001–2009. Spurred on by the news that Japanese high school history textbooks would exclude the Japanese army's involvement in the atrocities of the Battle of Okinawa, Nakagawa—with the encouragement of his wife (a native Okinawan), a blessing from a *yuta* (shaman), and with guidance from the area locals—embarked on a journey into the caves.

Gama, a word the Okinawans use for their unique limestone caves, were used as places of worship and for burial. The events of WWII transformed the *gama* into makeshift bunkers, bases, and hospitals for the Japanese soldiers, and into shelters for the Okinawan people. As the war progressed towards its brutal end, the Okinawan people found themselves caught between orders from the Japanese military and the advancing American army. The *gama* became intertwined with their eventual demise, either by forced suicide or by Allied bombing.

The intense stillness of the photographs belies the arduous undertaking Nakagawa endured. After receiving permission from the locals to venture into the caves, a physical pathway had to be found. Once within the darkness and among the bats, Nakagawa laboriously captured the interiors with long exposures and by sweeping light around the

FOR IMMEDIATE
RELEASE

EXHIBITION LOCATION

547 West 27th Street, #608
New York, NY 10001

EXHIBITION DATES

April 11– May 31, 2014

RECEPTION

Thursday, April 10th, 2014
6–8pm

PRESS CONTACT

info@sepiaeye.com
sepiaeye.com



cave edges for hours. Later in his digital darkroom, he further enhanced the images, literally drawing out the details with light and color, hoping to capture the *mabui* (spirits) of the caves.

The resulting images similarly beg the viewer to take their time; as the darkness of the cave falls away, fragments become clearer: remnants of a shrine, graffiti scratched into rocks, bones, the shimmering colors of the limestone, walls burned by American flamethrowers, debris from the ocean, crushed rice bowls, bottles. *Gama Caves* reveals the passage of time hidden in the constancy of darkness.

Osamu James Nakagawa was born in New York City, and raised in Tokyo and Houston. He received a MFA from the University of Houston in 1993. He received a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2009 and the 2010 Higashikawa International Photo Festival Award for New Photography in Japan. Works from *Banta* and *Gama* have been shown at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Les Rencontres d'Arles, France; Nooderlicht Photofestival, Netherlands; Ballarat International Foto Biennale, Australia; and the Sakima Art Museum, Okinawa among others. His work can be found in the permanent collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House, New York; Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; The Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago, and others. Nakagawa currently teaches at Indiana University in Bloomington, as an Associate Professor of Photography.

Gama Caves is published by Akaaka Art Publishing, Inc. and is a hardcover book featuring 33 works from the series with text by Anne Wilkes Tucker, Mariko Takeuchi, Isao Nakazato, and Ben Takara.



Gama, #026, 2011