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| **Nojima, Yasuzô (野島康三) (1889-1964)** |
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| Nojima Yasuzô, born Nojima Hiromasa, was a central figure in Japanese modern photography and the development of Japanese artistic modernism in general. His photographic style was instrumental to the refinement of two aesthetic movements in Japan: pictorialism (*kaigashugi shashin*), which was imported from Europe in the late nineteenth century and remained influential through the 1920s, and ‘new photography’ (*shinkō shashin*) in the 1930s. Nojima’s early style in the 1910s and 1920s reflects the painterly concerns of pictorialism, favoring poetic landscapes and sensitive portraits produced with heavy pigment printing.  In the 1930s, inspired by photography trends in Germany, Nojima’s photos became increasingly spontaneous and experimental, with nudes and portraits becoming his subject of choice. His female subjects showed what Luisa Orto describes as ‘a heaviness and earthiness that was far removed from standard traditions of Japanese feminine beauty’ (355). Besides his photographic output, Nojima was also involved in the founding of the seminal art photography journal *Kôga* (*Pictures of Light*) in 1932, and in the creation of a photography section of the juried exhibition society Kokugakai in 1939.  Nojima was born in the city of Urawa, Saitama prefecture. His interest in photography began in 1906, when he was a student at Keiô University, which he left in 1909 to devote himself entirely to photography. In 1912 he joined the Tokyo Photographic Research Society (Tokyo Shashin Kenkyûkai), where he frequently won awards in the society’s juried exhibition, the Kenten. He opened a photography studio in Tokyo in 1915. In 1919, he started one of Japan’s earliest and most influential commercial art galleries, Kabutoya Gado, where he held exhibitions and promoted both photographers and painters, especially Umehara Ryûzaburô, Kishida Ryûsei, and others associated with the Shirakaba (White Birch) movement. Nojima’s photographs from this time focused on figures and landscapes in the painterly, lyrical, pictorialist mode.  However, Nojima’s work was not without controversy. In 1920, police confiscated three of his female nude photographs from the Kenten exhibition on grounds of obscenity. His style changed after 1931 — the year the exhibition *Film und Foto* opened in Tokyo — which introduced photography trends that were being explored in Europe at the time. This exhibition led many Japanese photographers to break from pictorialism and to embrace a more experimental, spontaneous style. For Nojima, this ‘new photography’ (*shinkô shashin*) remained focused on portraits and the nude figure, but he selected unusual models, posed them less conventionally and often more sensually, and framed his photographs in ways that cropped or distorted his models’ bodies and features. Nojima’s 1933 solo exhibition, *The Woman’s Face in Photography: Twenty Photographs*, was particularly influential, and helped establish him as one of Japan’s premier modernist photographers.  File: Nojima\_Model\_F.jpg  Figure 1: Nojima, Yasuzô. *Model F* (1931). Bromoil print. National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto. |
| Further reading:  (Philip)  (Orto) |