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Christian Kōun Alborz Oldham
Selections from the Photographic Archive of Kosen Ohtsubo, Presented by Christian Kōun Alborz Oldham, and in cooperation with Kosen Ohtsubo, Ryusei-ha, and Empty Gallery
July 23 - August 6

Opening Reception: Saturday, July 23 at 4:00PM
Open hour: Sunday afternoons from 1:30-2:30PM
Email to make an appointment outside of these times.

If one were to ask how much water the flowers in a garden drink, would one ask the watering can or the flower? Christian's practice involves other people. To know and interact with Christian is to become involved in the production and dissemination of his work. Because we are involved in other aspects of his work (outside of this show) we are compromised narrators. This is, seemingly, by topiary design.

It is important for us to express through this show a reflection on the context in which we've come to know each other, one which has been insulated by Christian's long-term commitment to this particular project — both technically and philosophically. It reminds us to tend to our relationships and appreciate how they grow and change over time.

Born in Ashio, Tochigi prefecture in 1936, Kosen Ohtsubo is considered to be one of the most significant living practitioners of the art form of ikebana. While formally trained in electrical engineering from Tokyo Denki University, Ohtsubo rose to prominence in the world of ikebana due to his use of common materials such as vegetables and refuse. For decades, he served as the Headmaster's Advisory Instructor of the Ryusei Ikebana School, headquartered in Tokyo, Japan and has presented his work and demonstrations of ikebana technique in such countries as India, Hong Kong, Spain, Holland, England, Korea, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and the United States. Ohtsubo has had two major publications printed in 1981 and 1995.

This show features 12 prints throughout different eras of Ohtsubo's career. 12 chosen for the number of months in the Gregorian calendar. Each image represents one month, each exhibition providing a year of rotational images for display.

The images and prints themselves are not art works. They are records of arrangements that have since ceased to exist in physical form. Surveying an artist's career of over 60 years with more than 500 documented arrangements has been a conundrum. How do you properly provide context for an artist's work that has since decayed and been disposed of without long-term institutional support?

This show marks the creation of an economy meant to provide an affordable distribution of Ohtsubo's documentary images that can be purchased and exhibited in admirer's spaces of choice. The images will be produced in an unlimited edition and will create a modest revenue that supports Ohtsubo, Oldham, the Ryusei School of Ikebana, and participating galleries for their contributions in allowing these images to be produced and circulated.

This is the first exhibition in a series intended to slowly publish documentation of Ohtsubo's extensive archive of ephemeral ikebana arrangements.

This show would not be possible without the cooperation of Kosen Ohtsubo, Keiko Ohtsubo, the Ryusei School of Ikebana, and Empty Gallery to whom we express our sincerest gratitude.