

AnOther

A Softer Side of Nobuyoshi Araki

— July 9, 2015 —

An exhibition of the photographer's new work shows a gentler approach from the Japanese provocateur

Text [Karen Orton](#)

Who: Age has not made Nobuyoshi Araki less perverse, but it's definitely softened the edges. At 75, the Japanese photographer still loves a good phallic symbol, but look further and there's a gentleness and appreciation of beauty that goes beyond women in states of undress. Alternately a misogynist or a subversive genius, depending on whom you ask, Araki is best known for his photos of kinbaku, a Japanese style of bondage using ropes tied into intricate patterns. In the photos, models hang from the ceiling in ropes, eat bananas and lift their kimonos a little higher than you'd expect – they run the gamut from suggestive to explicit. Araki hasn't slowed down with age, still hugely energetic and a voracious photographer of every aspect of daily life in Japan, he has now published over 400 books and been in over 280 solo exhibitions, with his work having inspired some of the biggest names in music and fashion.

What: 77 of Araki's new photographs are being shown in "Eros Diary", an exhibition at the Anton Kern Gallery in New York. There is still Araki as we know him, but even the erotic images are a little more restrained – a kimono falling open, a dress strap off the shoulder. But there are also cloud-covered skies, children making their way to school, and telling signs of sadness and decay: a decomposing sea creature, a tree-lined cemetery in full spring bloom, and a tear filled eye.

Why: For Araki, "life is itself photography", and his work is a diary that captures the intricacies of daily life, from the mundane to the sacred. It's been a particularly difficult time for Araki – he is fighting prostate cancer and has lost his vision in one eye, and recently, his beloved cat Chiro died. Never far from his mind, is his wife and original muse, Yoko, who passed away in 1990. He signs every photo with the date of their wedding day, it's a reverential act that highlights her absence in his life. That melancholy and increasing awareness of death is clear in Araki's new body of work, but there's also reflection, humour, and of course, sex.

