

ARTFORUM

Nobuyoshi Araki
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A selection of nearly two hundred unframed seventeen-by-fourteen-inch images from Nobuyoshi Araki's "Ginza" series, 1963–72, covers two walls of this exhibition, forming a haphazard archive of his lesser-known street photographs. While many of the pictures capture Tokyo's bustling high-end shopping district, as suggested by legs in motion, jarring angles, and pedestrian traffic, Araki also includes an unusual number of portraits. These close-ups of passersby, caught midstride, provide points of access for the viewer, who could otherwise be overwhelmed by the crowded grid of photographs.

Araki focused on subjects that interested him, and in his contemporaneous "Subway" series, culled from another public theater, he creates clusters of images that follow the movements of his subjects as if in stop-motion. Unlike in the street scenes, most of the people on the subway are caught in positions of public repose, primly self-contained rather than animatedly moving. Whereas in "Ginza," Araki focuses on a cross-eyed man—whom he photographs four times—in "Subway" the artist takes multiple shots of a couple in conversation and a woman yawning.

Seemingly incongruous with his documentation of street life, the exhibition also includes some of Araki's erotic prints from 1970. In these small, delicate photos, a single nude model with hips jutting out poses in a variety of domestic interiors and, more provocatively, in a playground. Throughout the show, viewers can trace the obsessive confidence of a restless photographer, one capable of wrenching subtle expressiveness from all of his subjects.