

GAGOSIAN GALLERY



Art in Review

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HIROSHI SUGIMOTO

7 Days/7 Nights

Gagosian

522 West 21st Street, Chelsea

Through March 7

In a continuing project, Hiroshi Sugimoto photographs vast bodies of water as meditative near-abstractions. The seascapes parallel his well-known photographs of movie theaters and wax dummies, but they have always seemed to occupy a different, more sacrosanct category. In a new installation of his own design, Mr. Sugimoto plays up the mystical, quasi-religious aspects of the seascapes.

Seven of them, most of which date from the 1990s, hang in a row on the back wall of a pristine skylighted gallery. Taken with a large-format camera under varied weather conditions, they show the horizon as either a crisp line ("Sea of Japan, Rebun Island") or an atmospheric blur ("Aegean Sea, Pilion").

Just when you settle into a grisaille reverie, security guards discreetly steer you around the wall into a second gallery that is in some ways the negative image of the first. Seven nocturnal seascapes hang on black-painted walls, illuminated by spotlights that mainly pick up the white borders of the frames. It's difficult to make out the clouds, water and other elements of the actual photographs, but the entire room becomes a magical space akin to a camera obscura.

The shrinelike setup of "7 Days/7 Nights" can seem a tad pretentious for the temple of commerce that is Gagosian. "I was thinking about the most ancient of human impressions," Mr. Sugimoto elaborates in a statement in the press release. "The time when man first named the world around him." Still, he makes a visceral and seductive connection between the photographic gradient and the primordial ocean. KAREN ROSENBERG