

**Masayuki Yoshinaga  
BOSOZOKU photographs**

**February 4 - March 5, 2005**

**Opening reception: Friday, February 4, 6 - 8pm**

This exhibition is the first in the United States featuring Masayuki Yoshinaga's photographs of bosozoku, Japanese teen motorcycle gangs. Yoshinaga's color photographs, approximately 30 in the show, honestly tell the sensational stories of the bosozoku bike gangs who dedicate their young energy to the thrills of breakneck speed driving (boso) on city streets at night.

Yoshinaga has been photographing bosozoku for eight years. He was first fascinated by their outlandish costumes and general appearance. Bosozoku youths, both boys and girls, express their intensity not only in high risk driving but also in showing off idiosyncratic group uniforms and distinctive customized motorcycles. According to Yoshinaga, "bosozoku must be the youngest age group in Japan to create a scene solely for the expression of a public spectacle." Yoshinaga also reveals that despite the violent side of bosozoku activities on which most photographers focus, bosozoku members are for the larger part innocent, energetic, carefree teenagers who represent a unique Japanese subculture. Yoshinaga, who used to be a juvenile delinquent himself, delves deeply into their world and introduces their natural presence through close communication.

Yoshinaga portrays bosozoku in two types of situations. At night, he rides in a car prepared by bosozoku members and cruises with them. The joy of group activities and the tension of the high-speed driving are breathtakingly documented and contrasted with ordinary Japanese landscapes. Yoshinaga's camera also catches the childlike faces of the bikers, and contrasts them with the rather sensual highway scenes in the dark. Yoshinaga also invites bosozoku to a photo studio. Each biker poses, wearing a uniform on which a group name, a chrysanthemum crest and group credos are embroidered in gold thread, as well as hachimaki (headband) and tasuki (a cord used to tuck up the sleeves of a kimono). Yoshinaga places artistically painted custom-made motorcycles with modified header pipes and handlebars to the side.

In his other series, Yoshinaga also pays attention to marginalized people who try to express themselves in a Japanese mainstream society, including Asian and Middle Eastern people living in Japan and street kids wearing extraordinary costumes like cartoon characters. Although Yoshinaga asks his subjects to pose, his sincere approach brings out their relaxed expressions.

Masayuki Yoshinaga was born in Osaka in 1964, and currently lives and works in Tokyo. He has had solo exhibitions at the Parco Galleries in Tokyo and Nagoya, and at Mikawadai High School Gymnasium in Tokyo sponsored by Fuji Film. His bosozoku photographs were also exhibited at the Dazed & Confused Gallery in London as part of the JAM: Tokyo-London Exhibition at the Tokyo Opera City Gallery in 2001 and the Barbican Gallery in London in 2002. To date, his work has been published in six monographs.

**The gallery is located on the second floor of 453 West 17th Street between 9th and 10th Avenues, New York City. Hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 10am to 6pm.**

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