

Bruce Yonemoto

February 6 – March 15, 2008



Untitled (NSEW 4), 2007, Digital Print, 24" x 18"



Untitled (NSEW 5), 2007, Digital Print, 24" x 18"

Alexander Gray Associates is pleased to present new photo-based works by Los Angeles media artist Bruce Yonemoto. Continuing his ongoing research and interest in Hollywood cinema and its role in shaping cultural identity, Yonemoto presents a group of new photographs that examine American wars, heroism, and ideas of national building.

In the series, *NSEW*, Yonemoto appropriates American Civil War-era photographic portraiture. Such photographs were precious memories of soldiers, treasured by family members on both sides of the Union, and play an important role in documenting the Civil War. Hollywood's representations of the Civil War shaped Twentieth-Century relationships to race, evident in early cinematic features including D. W. Griffith's landmark 1915 feature film, *Birth of a Nation (The Clansman)*, and the Victor Fleming's 1939 epic, *Gone With the Wind*. These two approaches to representation—early photography and early Twentieth-Century film—are the fodder for Yonemoto's striking portraits.

The photographs depict Asian-American male models posing in full Civil War regalia, dressed in uniforms rented from Western Costume, Hollywood's oldest rental collection that provided costumes for *Birth of a Nation* and *Gone With the Wind*. Yonemoto's ongoing interest in the representation of Asian-Americans in U.S. history is furthered by the "casting" of Asians as Civil War soldiers and costuming them in uniforms and clothing representing both the North and the South, Yonemoto raises questions about war, servitude, and ethnicity and national. In fact, Chinese immigrants fought on both sides of the Civil War, and as part of Yonemoto's "re-enactment" with these photographs, a third "side" of the war is formed, based on race and ethnicity, rather than political divisions or ideals. Further questioning the visibility of Asians in American debates about race—typically codified as Black or White—the photographs question the role of the audience identification through photography. Also at play is fetishistic nature of current war re-enactment subcultures, and this phenomenon's inherently sexual and racial role-playing.

Yonemoto's work has been exhibited internationally, including individual exhibitions at Tomio Koyama Gallery, Tokyo; Blum & Poe, Los Angeles; the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO; the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia; the Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, OH; and the Santa Monica Museum of Art, CA. His work has been included in numerous biennials, including the *Corcoran Biennial* (2002); *Fukui International Video Biennale* (1993); the *Whitney Biennial* (1993, 1987). In 1999, the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles presented a retrospective exhibition of Bruce and Norman Yonemoto's work. Recent exhibitions include *Sounds Like the Sound of Music* at the Santa Barbara Contemporary Art Forum (2008), *Exile of the Imaginary* at the Generali Foundation, Vienna (2007) and *In Other Words* at Bard College, Center for Curatorial Studies (2006). Bruce Yonemoto is Professor and Chair of Studio Art at the University of California, Irvine. He is a 2008 recipient of a Creative Capital Foundation grant.

Alexander Gray Associates is a contemporary art gallery and advising firm based in New York. Our exhibition program focuses on mid-career visual artists who emerged in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Through consulting and collection advising, we provide expertise for our individual and corporate clients. Our ultimate goal is to provide a direct experience with Modern and contemporary art that encourages discourse around art's role in the advancement of culture. Gallery hours: Tuesday-Saturday, 11:00 AM – 6:00 PM.