

Daido Moriyama is a prolific photographer whose interests go beyond merely taking photographs, seeing situations with both eyes, capturing them with one lens. When he was born in 1938 in Osaka, Japan had only been accessible to foreigners for about eighty years, and the still young medium of photography quickly took on a fundamental role in the documentation of its transformation into a modern industrialised nation. Moreover, photography benefited from Japan’s opening and there thus developed a distinctive language and subject repertoire enriched by the broad range of traditional Japanese techniques in the visual arts. Although by the time he was born photography as a medium was already accessible to a wider public, practical experience had to be gained in a photographer’s studio, and when Moriyama moved to Tokyo in 1961 he learned about photographic techniques while assisting the Japanese photographer Eikoh Hosoe.¹ A few months after he started working in the studio, Moriyama and the camera became inseparable, and the situations he would capture would leave their mark on photography.

The Nicola Erni Collection is pleased to show a selection of unique canvases by Daido Moriyama produced with the silkscreen technique as well as a special limited-edition installation complementing these two-dimensional works. The work titled *Tiles*, installed in the entrance hall, announces a recently produced series of silkscreens that revisits the photographs he took over the past decades and revolutionises his oeuvre in a new formal composition. On a six metre-long canvas coated in matt gold, eight photographs from the same series are placed tightly next to each other in two rows. Hundreds of black dots running over the horizontal work in a repetitive pattern are regularly interrupted by lines that are in fact the corners and wall joints of a bathroom. Daido Moriyama was clearly enchanted by the round tiles of the hotel bathroom in Aizuwakamatsu, a city in Fukushima Prefecture, where he stayed in 1987.² Taken from different angles and distances, the bathroom – its walls and facilities – are captured, or rather dissected, as one can barely reconstruct the architecture of the space. While the formal composition of the canvas foregrounds Moriyama’s practice of taking repeated snapshots, the motif – the round tiles – references the technique used in the work’s creation: the silkscreen from a photographic source translates the tones of the original into clusters of inked dots, and if the source is already a reproduction of a photograph, the dot pattern is likewise part of the respective image.³ The tiles thus formally accentuate the nature of the silk-screen technique. *Tiles* not only grounds Moriyama’s photographic practice but also pays tribute to the origins and history of Pop art and to its master Andy Warhol, who greatly inspired Moriyama at the beginning of his career.

The *Lip Bar* built in the tapered space on the top floor of the Nicola Erni Collection’s new building is a three-dimensional wonder. From the outside one expects, here in this ancillary, cabinet-like space, the display of smaller works to compliment the other monumental canvases surrounding it. But a potted bamboo plant and an old fuse box outside already announce an altogether different type of room. Inside the four-metre-long *Lip Bar*, one finds its walls and the functional bar completely covered with forty-five square metres of wallpaper featuring one of Daido Moriyama’s most iconic images, waiting to be taken in while enjoying a Japanese beer. Repeated row after row, the *Lips* image is omnipresent but feels almost natural in its role as a backdrop for a social venue.

The idea for Daido Moriyama’s *Lip Bar* has its roots in Tokyo’s vibrant Shinjuku district, also known as Golden Gai, where countless tiny bars and drinking spots – some 200 and most with space for ten customers or less – are located.⁴ The particular artistic affinities of the bars’ owners – the ‘mamas’ or ‘masters’ – define not only the interior design and theme of the venues but also the public attracted to each place and their individual experience. Thanks to Moriyama’s favourite bar Kuro and its ‘mama’ (a contemporary artist herself), a local festival called Goldengai Art Waves was initiated in 1999 to display works of art by artists and performers within different bar venues.⁵ It was for the 2005 edition of the festival that he used this one particular close-up *Lips* image to completely envelop the interior of Kuro. Using his bright signature image in a repetitive manner in a setting very familiar to him, the *Lip Bar* merges the artistic language and early photographic activities of Daido Moriyama in a similar fashion as *Tiles* but in a different physical form. Both works are very much about the quick decisions he makes with the camera outside the studio walls. Having the site-specific location of the *Lip Bar* in mind, we move back and forth between the intimate inside and the fast-moving cities outside, visualising urban monumentality but also essential details in close-ups that we would not have discovered without him.

Tokyo’s Shinjuku district and the Golden Gai area where Kuro is located is one of Moriyama’s favourite places to photograph. ‘I see Shinjuku as a stadium of people’s desires’, the photographer once said.⁶ He knows the area inside out: it is the vibrant area where he lives.⁷ His photographic observations of Tokyo’s streets span from the beginning of the 1960s until today. It is the

unexpected, the spontaneous, the detail within the countless impressions of the city that Moriyama follows with a sense of urgency. ‘To follow’, however, means to come after a thing or a person and does not capture the action and practice of Daido Moriyama as a photographer. More precisely, he has an inner urge to trace his wanderings through the city, and these wanderings cannot take place without the camera. It is invariably an interplay between chasing and challenging that happens between him and his subjects. Simon Baker, the current director of the Maison Européenne de la Photographie in Paris, underlines this relationship with the observation that Moriyama makes no categorical distinction between life and work, pointing out that the photographer often refers to his images as ‘snaps’ – a term often used to describe the practice of amateur photographers.⁸ Snaps are unplanned and taken quickly, often in great numbers.

Is this snapshot quality visible within the sensual *Lips* image ubiquitous throughout the bar? At first glance, not really. Although the grainy quality could indicate an enlarged crop from a bigger image, the shape of the full lips, the perfectly applied lipstick and shiny white teeth seem to be staged. In fact, it is an image of an advertisement he photographed on the street (probably in the year 2000) which he then cropped to make the context invisible – an artistic strategy he has been employing ever since.⁹ The *Lips* image lays bare yet another of Moriyama’s practices: he incorporates his images – in repetition – in different media and surfaces and in new compositions. In the exhibition at the Nicola Erni Collection, the *Lips* image is also reiterated in the work entitled *Lips Lips Lips (red, black and white)*, another monumental silkscreen, which Moriyama created in 2018. In six rows extending over the nine-metre-long canvas, seventy-eight *Lips* images are printed one after the other, visually building up a connection between Andy Warhol’s 1986 *Sixty Last Suppers*, which is installed on another wall in the same space.

While the *Lips* image wallpapered on the bar and silkscreened on the canvas does not, at first glance, seem to be a snapshot, other images consciously display Moriyama’s manner of taking pictures. In *Smash-up*, the third of the horizontal canvases exhibited, an image of a crash between two cars is repeated successively in four rows. The image is part of the 1969 *Accident* series depicting images of car accidents that Moriyama had re-photographed from tabloid newspapers, magazines and road-safety posters.¹⁰ The streak of reflected light on the left side of the image gives away his method. As he explained, whether the image is a copy or not is unimportant, as long as it impacts him: ‘I shot it because it was extremely real to me.’¹¹ As with the *Lips* image, Moriyama’s image of the accident is taken out of its original context, but here the difference is that the snapshot quality is inscribed into the image. And though Warhol also photographed frontpage news stories during the early 1960s, it is not immediately evident whether Warhol was present at the accident site.

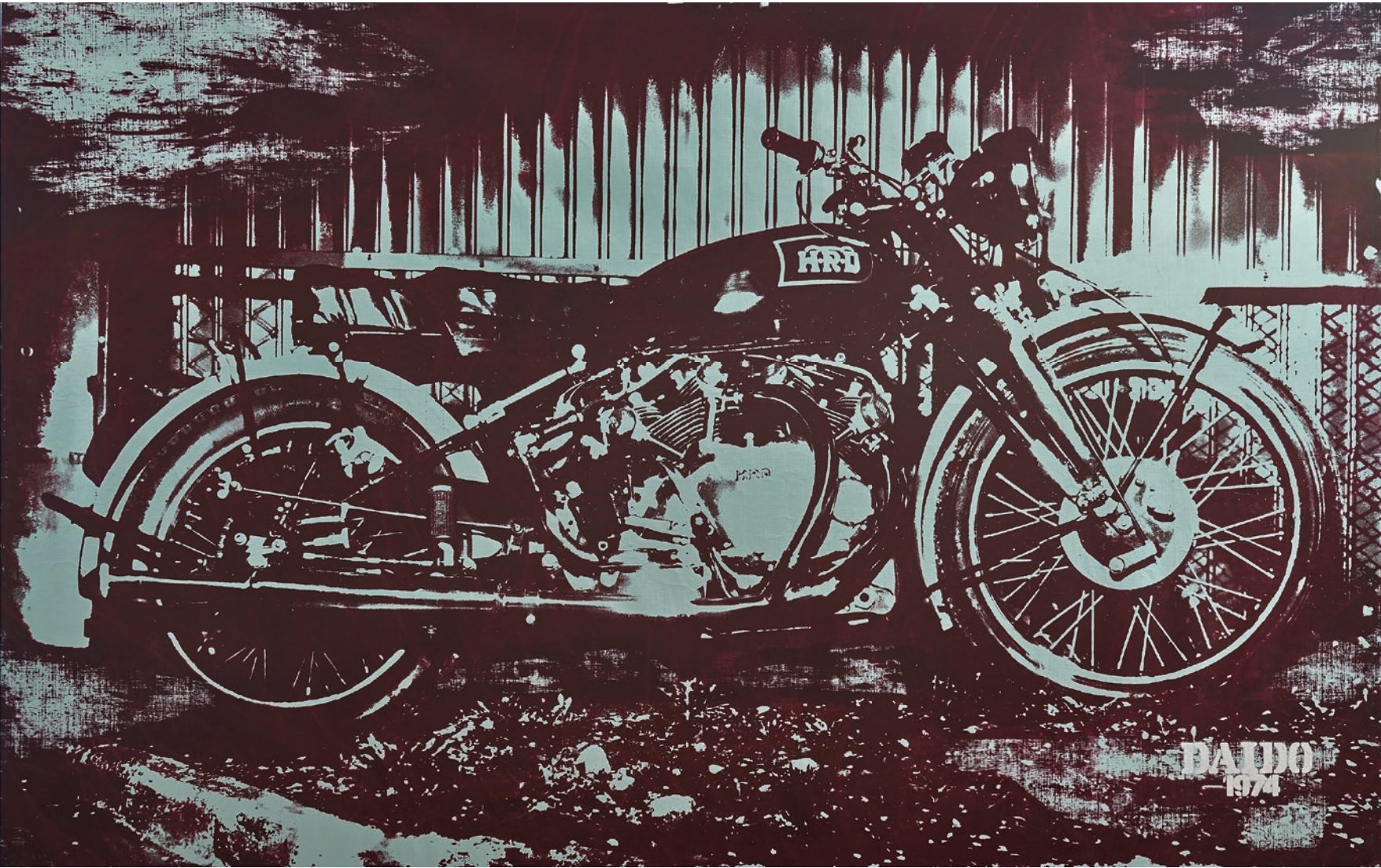
The three horizontal works by Daido Moriyama all feature repeated images, a monumental horizontal canvas and silkscreen production. This last common feature is, in fact, a revisiting of a technique from the beginning of his career when Moriyama first produced a series of silkscreened works. *Vincent, Black Shadow* of 1974 is one of his early silkscreens and depicts a motorcycle in high contrast. This work was shown in Japan in May 1974 in one of Moriyama’s first exhibitions of large-format prints.¹² By this time he had already decided to abandon presenting his photographs to the public in magazines and instead focus on exhibitions. Also certainly of relevance, two months prior he held the *Moriyama Daido Printing Show*, at which he photocopied prints of his images as the material for books he bound within a silkscreened cover.¹³

Reminiscent of Moriyama’s early artistic approach, the composition and repetition found in the three horizontal works as well as the *Lip Bar* take up not only Warhol’s manner of displaying works in sequences but also his use of the silkscreen process. Though of recent execution, the exhibited works should be understood as monumental memoirs in the manner they project his most relevant, preferred artistic techniques and images in a new yet familiar way.

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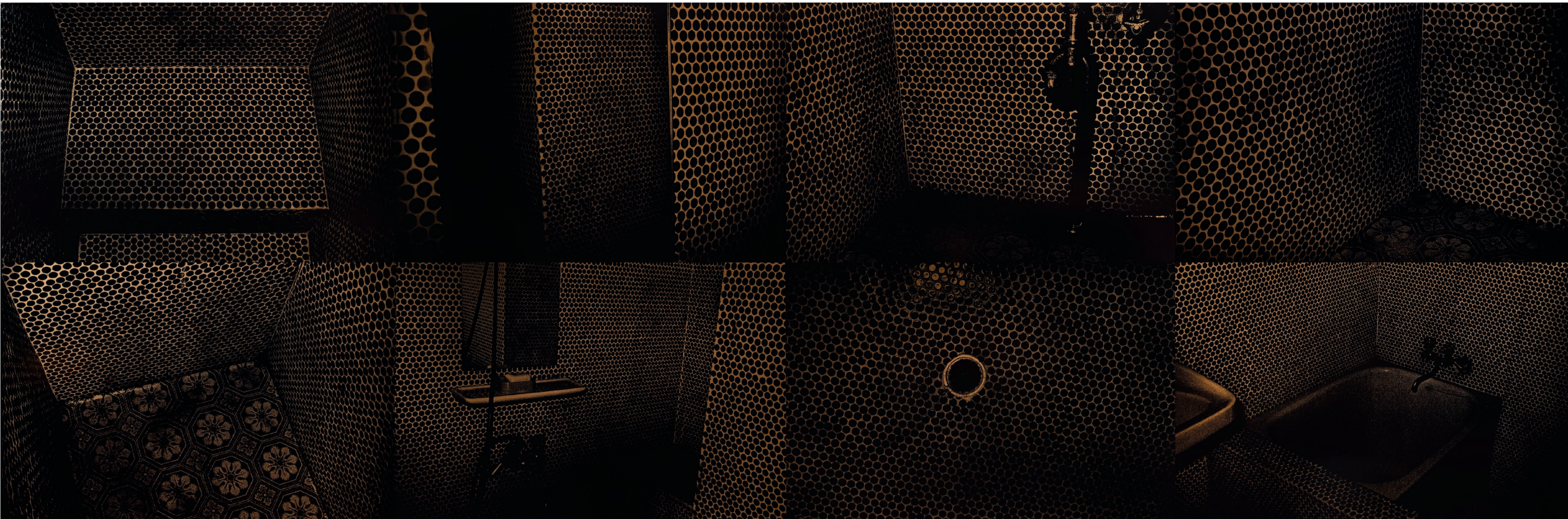
1 Daido Moriyama, Michael Hoppen Gallery, www.michaelhoppengallery.com/artists/53-daido-moriyama/overview, accessed 5 May 2021.
2 Daido Moriyama, Akio Nagasawa (gallery), www.akionagasawa.com/en/artist/daido-moriyama/ginza, accessed 2 May 2021.
3 Georg Frei and Neil Printz (eds.), *The Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 1: *Warhol: Paintings and Sculptures 1961–1963*, New York 2002, p. 205.
4 Daido Moriyama, Hamiltons Gallery, www.hamiltonsgallery.com/artists/daido-moriyama/overview, accessed May 1, 2021.
5 Ibid.
6 Daido Moriyama, in: *Artist Daido Moriyama – In Pictures* [online video], Tate, 18 October 2012, www.youtube.com/watch?v=IcWAs3V_lkg, accessed 19 April 2021.

7 Sandra S. Phillips, ‘Daido Moriyama: Early and Late’, in: *Daido Moriyama: A Diary* (exhib. cat., Hasselblad Center, Gothenburg), Cologne 2020, p. 225.
8 Simon Baker, ‘Photography from Day to Day’, in: *Ibid.*, p. 240.
9 Email conversation between Hamiltons and the studio of Daido Moriyama, March 2021.
10 Ashley Rawlings, ‘Out of the Darkness: Daido Moriyama’, *ArtAsiaPacific*, no. 70 (September–October 2010), www.artasiapacific.com/Magazine/70/DaidoMoriyamaOutOfTheDarkness, accessed 13 May 2021.
11 Ibid.
12 Noriko Tsutatanani, ‘Hunter of Light – Moriyama Daido 1965–2003’, in: *Daido Moriyama: Hunter of Light, 1965–2003* (exhib. cat., Shimane Art Museum), Shimane 2003, p. 309.
13 Ibid.



Daido Moriyama

Vincent, Black Shadow, 1974
Silkscreen on canvas
168 × 267 cm



Daido Moriyama

Tiles, 1987
Silkscreen on canvas, black on gold
200 × 600 cm



Lip Bar, 2005
45 square metres of vinyl wallpaper pasted
in customized bar instalment
255 × 241 × 483 cm

Daido Moriyama



Lips Lips Lips (red, black and white), 2000
Silkscreen on canvas
300 × 962 cm

Daido Moriyama



Smash-up, 1969
Silkscreen on canvas, black on silver
152.5 × 548.5 cm

Daido Moriyama



Daido Moriyama

Another Country in New York, 1971
 Silkscreen on canvas
 163 × 109 cm



A Japanese Town, 1971
 Silkscreen on canvas
 228 × 152.5 cm