

THINGS EDITORS LIKE | June 7, 2019

T Suggests: English Roses, a Lost Film by Claire Denis and More

A roundup of things our editors --- and a few contributors --- are excited about in a given week.

A Master of After-Dark Photography

In the 1970s, the Japanese photographer Kohei Yoshiyuki roamed Tokyo's most famous parks by night, turning his Canon 7 and modified infrared flash on couples (and triples) attempting to clandestinely have sex, but often surrounded by a cluster of onlookers. The subjects tended to be fully or semi-clothed, making the photographs of groping hands and averted faces, and the grainy, exposed gazes of strangers, all the more surreal and illicit. When Yoshiyuki published the series in the Japanese photo book "Document Kouen" (in English, Document Park) in 1980, it immediately sold out of its 100,000-issue run. Now, 40 years later, "The Park" will be reissued in a new edition, out this summer from Radius Books/Yossi Milo, along with several previously unpublished works.



Yoshiyuki's cultishly popular work sits somewhere between Brassai's Parisians by night, Weegee's infrared pictures of amorous moviegoers and Sophie Calle's photographic explorations of surveillance. While seeming to cast a light on secret behavior, they reveal the yearning that exists in voyeurism, the melancholy in desire. They are also, as the photographer Vince Aletti writes with admiration in one of the book's essays, "among the strangest photographs ever made." Sometimes Yoshiyuki's frame widens, revealing the layers of spectacle and spectators and calling into question their true subject. You are aware first, of course, of bodies upon bodies, but then also of eyes upon eyes: the watchers, the would-be joiners, the lurkers in the shadows, the photographer's gaze, your own. "I think I'm completely ordinary," Yoshiyuki tells the Japanese photographer Nobuyoshi Araki in a conversation published in the book, "but there's a little lecher in everyone."

When Yoshiyuki exhibited the series at Komei Gallery in Tokyo in 1979, he printed the pictures so that their subjects were life-size, turned off all the lights in the gallery and handed out flashlights. At one point in their interview, Araki reminds Yoshiyuki of his own initial response to "The Park." "My critique consisted of exactly one line," he says. "These are what I call photographs."

— REBECCA BENGAL