

The Cameraman in a Skirt: Tokiwa Toyoko, the Camera Boom, and the Nude Shooting Session

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Abstract:

In this paper I critically examine the widespread though currently ignored media attention around the so-called birth of the female photographer in postwar Japan. From popularly published books to advice columns on how to succeed as a photographer I re-read the vast archive of photography magazines and weekly newspapers for their representations of women's relationships with photography. Like the "modern girl" of the 1920s and 1930s, I see the female photographer as part media construction that many female photographers such as Tokiwa Toyoko (1930—) pushed back against in interviews and personal accounts of their work. Finally, I examine the nude shooting session (*nūdo satsuekai*) craze, which lasted from the late 1940s through the late 1950s, as an expression of postwar anxieties around women entering the photography profession and the social role of photography. I argue the nude shooting session should be remembered as a consequential genre of postwar Japanese photography for its role in establishing a photographic culture built upon the male gaze and address the ways in which Tokiwa commented upon this dynamic through her own representations of the event. To bring to light the women who photographed, their relationships with optical technologies, and evaluate their distinct contributions in relation to constructions of otherness, this essay looks beyond the canon to consider how materials from this alternative archive expose the values that constructed a narrative about why women were in front of or behind the lens of a camera.