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New York Art Galleries: What to See Right Now

Mary Beth Edelson's "Great Goddess Cut-Outs"; John McLaughlin's trove of photographs; and Keiji Uematsu's first American solo show.



Keiji Uematsu's 1979 piece "Triangle — Stone/Cloth," leads off the exhibition "Invisible Force" at Simon Lee. Keiji Uematsu and Simon Lee Gallery, New York

Keiji Uematsu

Through April 26. Simon Lee, 26 East 64th Street, Manhattan; 646-824-9249, simonleegallery.com.

Born in Kobe, Japan, in 1947 and currently splitting his time between Minoh, Japan, and a studio in Düsseldorf, Germany, Keiji Uematsu uses photography, performance and installation to draw attention to such ubiquitous but invisible realities as gravity. He's associated with the "Mono-ha" movement, a deliberately plain, materials-focused style of work originating in 1960s Japan. But "Invisible Force," at Simon Lee Gallery, is Mr. Uematsu's own first American solo show. In his 1979 piece "Triangle — Stone/Cloth," which leads off the exhibition, a fist-size rock distends a white banner into a triangular rictus of billows. An eight-foot charcoal circle drawn on the wall nearby highlights the potential energy of another stone, this one dated 2019, that hangs from a string on a nail.

The dry humor that enlivens such deadly serious exercises in conceptualism is more clearly on the surface in "Floating Stone," a recent set of picture postcards to which the artist has added little eraser-fluid-and-ballpoint drawings of yet more little stones. On a postcard of the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles, Mr. Uematsu's absurd doodle brings out all the shabby promiscuity of modern technology and its endless train of secondhand pilgrimages. On a postcard of earthrise as seen from the moon, though it's still sort of funny, the same drawing bears witness to modernity's grandeur. Joining three other rocks on a postcard of the combed-gravel garden at the Ryoanji Temple in Kyoto, Japan, the drawing becomes a diffident little stand-in for the artist himself, offering a brief but unmistakable blip of self-referential satori.

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