



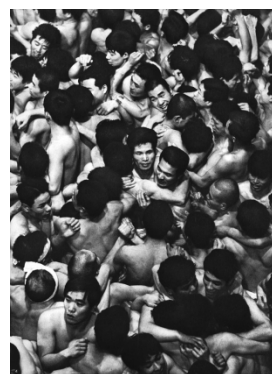
# Yatô Tamotsu, the Japanese Photographic Male Nude, and Future Gay Nostalgia

Jonathan M Hall (Assistant Professor of Media Studies, Pomona College)

18:00-19:30, July 10, 2015 / Room 301, 3F, Building 10, Sophia University

**Abstract:** An obscure figure in the pantheon of 20<sup>th</sup>-century Japanese photography, Yatô Tamotsu (1928-1973) is known for three photo-collections—*Taidô* (1966), *Naked Festival* (1968), and *OTOKO* (1972)—all of which figured male bodies, often erotically and heroically framed within predominantly male or all-male contexts. It's not difficult to understand Yatô as one of Japan's first published gay male photographers, and certainly the first in a Japanese fine arts context. Like many of Japan's twentieth-century fine artists, Yatô adopted a modern, ostensibly Western, artistic form to capture in its gaze something traditional and suggestive of a disappearing Japan. One common way to read Yatô's work is as heavily influenced by friend and mentor and photographic subject Mishima Yukio's postwar nativism. In Mishima's modern nativism, a nostalgia for a vanishing Japanese spirit also meant the yearning for an accordant male beauty, a Japanese hyper-masculinity under modern erasure. Yet, as I argue, Yatô used this nativist gaze in a doubled, sometimes counter-intuitive fashion, and much of Yatô's photographic

style—from framing to selection of his subjects—suggests him as a unique interpreter of the nostalgic, ethnographic gaze. Yatô's passion in his decade-long pursuit and documentation of Japanese naked festivals belonged to a specifically post-colonial and cosmopolitan Japanese gay male sensibility, marked less by the presentation of a purportedly pure and homo-eroticized ethnicity than by the hybrid documentation of men in action and culture in transition. In this sense, the nostalgic trappings of salvage ethnographic photography were precisely the crucible for the formation of a new subjectivity, one that was less concerned with producing an image of an aestheticized, lost past than with the emergent possibilities of sexual present, with what, after José



Muñoz, we might call a future nostalgia, “a nostalgia yet to come.”

**Speaker Bio:** Jonathan M Hall is Assistant Professor of Media Studies at Pomona College in Claremont, California. His research focuses on psychoanalytic theory, avant-garde and experimental film and media, and queer cultural studies. His first book project, “After Revolutionary Time/s” addresses media theory, social histories of perversion, and the mid-century Japanese film underground. Hall is also a co-producer of *Touch of the Other*, a queer performance piece that will premiere in Japan in January 2016, following its 2015 work-in-progress debut at the ONE Archives, the world's largest queer archive, located in Los Angeles, California. *Touch of the Other* examines the legacy of sociologist Laud Humphreys and his investigation of male-male intimacy in mid-century American public restrooms.

Lecture in English / No prior registration necessary