

Prologue: Distant Cities —from the series *Where Time has Stopped*

Ikko Narahara journeyed to Spain in August 1962, when he was 30 years old.

From several years before his journey, Narahara had been involved in various projects as a young and freshly innovative photographer. Having received invitation to work for a French fashion magazine, he left Japan in hopes to reconsider his way of life. He had planned to reside in Paris for about three months, not for purposes of taking photographs, but instead in order to devote himself to exploring his surroundings. At the time, protests against the United States-Japan Security Treaty that greatly shook public opinion had subsided, and while undergoing a period of great economic growth, Japan pushed on towards the Olympics games that were scheduled to take place two years later.

Narahara eventually called his wife Keiko over from Japan and acquired a car, together setting off on their travels around France, Switzerland, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal and so on. He returned to Japan three years later, in May 1965. One of the series of photographs presented as a result of this extensive journey, was *Where Time has Stopped*.

Narahara described Paris as “a city reminiscent of an old woman,” and ruminated over the idea of people completing their lives through death, as he watched both young and elderly couples walking to and fro along the park boulevard. Unable to become accustomed with the harsh austerity of the stone-built architecture observed not only in Paris but also in the streets of old cities across Europe, he drew from such feelings of unease and began to take photographs once again.

Where Time has Stopped, which permeates with a unique sense of solemnity and distance, was in part featured in the 1965 November issue of *Camera Mainichi* magazine. In 1967 it was published as Narahara’s first photo book, receiving numerous awards and becoming a topic of much discussion. Concurrent to this series, Narahara had compiled another collection of photographs, *España Gran Tarde*, which will be introduced in the following chapter.

Chapter 1: Festivals — “Fiesta” from the series *España Gran Tarde*

Narahara spent the summers of 1963 and 1964, and the spring of 1965 in Spain. His experiences of these five months were presented in the solo exhibition “España Gran Tarde” held upon his return to Japan in October 1965, and was later compiled in the eponymous series of photographs published in 1969. Much enthusiasm had been channeled towards the publication of this book, which was accompanied by a separate volume featuring an extensive essay, titled “The Promised Journey.” While this series proceeds in order of the chapters: “Gran Tarde,” “Fiesta,” and “Vaya con Dios,” in this exhibition we first introduce “Fiesta” in hopes to better understand what Narahara had seen and discovered upon his journeys in Spain.

“Fiesta” begins with photographs of the San Fermín, a festival held in the city of Pamplona in northern Spain, which is most famous for the ‘encierro,’ or the running of the bulls. Narahara attended the festival, having developed an interest upon hearing how it attracted young visitors from around the world, and was not only impressed with the ‘explosive joy’ that permeated these youths, but also with how everyone had been welcome to take part.

“No national or cultural boundaries seemed to exist. There was nothing that separated me from others. All you needed to do was wear a red scarf around your neck.” In the backdrop of this profound stir of emotion was the fact that Narahara had constantly regarded himself to be a stranger living in Japan.

Following the photographs taken in Pamplona are those capturing the spring festival of Seville and the summer festival of Malaga in southern Spain’s Andalusia region. Rather than the tablao (performance venues) that had put on flamenco shows for tourists, Narahara had observed and been fascinated with the youths who sung and danced on the streets.

“When the night sky began to lighten, the youths who had danced away parted reluctantly. Stopping on each street corner for one last dance, and then another, they moved away from the stage, all the while cherishing the moment of dawn that marked the end of their festivities.” Narahara had expressed great sympathy towards the culture that these urbane and contemporary youths embodied.

Chapter 2: From Towns to Villages

—“Vaya con Dios” from the series *España Gran Tarde*

“Vaya con Dios” is an Old Spanish phrase that is used when bidding farewell. Literally translating to “May God be with you,” Narahara had traveled all over Spain, from the caves of Altamira in the north to the back alleys of Andalusia in the south, all the while being greeted with this elegant phrase.

Narahara, who traveled by his own car, had at times deliberately passed through large cities, instead visiting towns and villages where there were very few tourists. From children with dark looks on their faces, to young military police at the bullring, and elderly people full of jovial spirit, he had captured a diverse range of people through his camera lens. While shooting, there were instances when the military police cautioned him to photograph more pleasant looking scenes. The Spanish government at that time had paid great attention to creating a beautiful image of their country.

Francoist Spain, established in the wake of a tragic civil war, was long isolated from the international community, and under its regime had adopted a policy of economic self-sufficiency. However, both domestic and international circumstances changed, and by the first half of the 1960s during which Narahara had visited, Spain was undergoing a period of tremendous economic growth following Japan due to progressions in economic liberalization.

In particular, much emphasis had been placed on the tourism industry. As a result of presenting an appealing package of new modern luxury hotels combined with exotic features like those of the southern region of Andalusia, there was a dramatic increase in tourists from the United States and other European countries seeking to experience the sun, bullfighting, flamenco and comfort. It is a little while after that many Japanese had started to visit.

“The pendulum of history that had stopped in one direction, is today, about to move towards the other.” While capturing Spain through the corner of his eye as it continued to change, Narahara also seemed to have searched for the things that somehow remained unchanged by turning his lens towards the appearance and atmosphere of its people.

Chapter 3: Bullfights —“Gran Tarde” from the series *España Gran Tarde*

“Gran Tarde” is a famous song in the Paso Doble style that is performed during bullfights. Ever since watching his first bullfight at the San Fermín festival in 1963, Narahara had continued to travel throughout Spain as if following the bullfighting industry of various regions, being spectator to over 200 bullfights. This is an extraordinary number.

Narahara had sensed a “momentary vacuum” in the instance in which bullfighter and bull approached one another as if engaging in a dance, describing it as a place where “a communion between life and death is achieved.” For Narahara, who in his twenties started out as a photographer turning his eye to human life in extreme situations, and in his thirties was on a journey to explore and re-question his own existence, there indeed was no theme as inspiring as bullfights that served to present this “communion of life and death.” Moreover, Spanish bullfighting back then, despite being at the mercy of the times, had arrived at its golden age.

Bullfights are local events that are held in conjunction with festivals celebrating the saints of respective towns and villages. It was at this time however, that bullfighting had started to undergo significant change, with foreign tourists accounting for half of the audience seats, and television emerging as a new form of media. While the more traditional and stoic bullfighters remained active, unconventional newcomers with charismatic rock star personas had marked their debut, leading to unprecedented levels of enthusiasm.

“Today, the only place that remains where life and death embrace one another, is within the sandy grounds of the bullring. In fact, it is extraordinary in itself that this manner of aroused and primordial enthusiasm of humankind, still exists today.” Narahara kept releasing the shutter, all the while anticipating that bullfighting would some day disappear from the face of the earth. Now, over half a century later, despite being subject to various discussions, the industry continues to be promoted under the supervision of the nation’s Ministry of Culture and Sports.

España Gran Tarde was a remarkably radiant series, conceived as a result of an interrelation between the pursuit of a richly imaginative photographer who sought to explore his identity, and Spain's social and cultural transition period.

Feature: Ikko Narahara and Mitsuo Katsui

—*España Grand Tarde* and Collaborations in the '60s

Mitsuo Katsui (1931-2019) who designed *España Grand Tarde*, is recognized as one of post-war Japan's leading graphic designers, and was also a longtime friend of Ikko Narahara. This section introduces the various collaborations the two had worked on in the 1960s.

While Kohei Sugiura was responsible for designing Narahara's first published collection of photographs *Where Time has Stopped*, various aspects of its finish including the front cover is Katsui's design work. In *España Grand Tarde*, Katsui had proposed the use of gatefolds throughout numerous parts of the book in order to incorporate methods of expression observed in film such as montage and slow motion. The layout of each individual photograph was decided according to Narahara's thorough and meticulous consideration. The overprint images featured on the book's outer case with its striking design, was conceived as a result of experiments Katsui had engaged in when having rented a photogravure press from a printing company over the course of an entire day. The colors used in the outer case and endpapers are inspired by the vivid tones of a bullfighter's mantle (capote) that Narahara had brought back from his journeys in Spain.

In the late 1960s, Narahara and Katsui had collaborated on the production of printed matter for various corporations as well as on the covers of women's magazines. Then up-and-coming fashion designer Hanae Mori had also worked with the two in producing the Fujibo Calendar. Narahara had become acquainted with Mori when he started engaging in fashion-related work since 1959, publishing his fresh and remarkable photographs in magazines such as *Fujin Gaho*. These calendars were indeed innovative creations produced by Narahara, Mori, and Katsui whom illustrated aesthetic sensitivities at the forefront of their times, and also on certain occasions incorporated the contemporary art of figures like Jiro Takamatsu and Ay-O. The covers for *Fujinkoron* can also be regarded as an adventurous coalescence between Narahara's fashion photography and Katsui's layout design.

In the Asahi Pentax Calendar "Fotofutura," it is possible to observe landscapes and fashion models that Narahara had photographed during his stay in Europe, in addition to photographs of Mt. Fuji with links to the theme of Japanese culture that he had been exploring at the time. Narahara's refined and sophisticated sense of style that is demonstrated in his fashion and advertising photographs is further accentuated through Katsui's clear and pronounced direction.