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Abstract

“Temporary Ruins, Recurring Memories: Miyamoto Ryūji’s *Architectural Apocalypse* (1988)”

This essay is a condensed version of the first chapter of my dissertation, “Temporary Ruins: Miyamoto Ryūji’s Architectural Photography in Postmodern Japan.” Chapter One deals with the acclaimed photographer Miyamoto Ryūji’s 1988 photobook *Kenchiku no mokushiroku* (Architectural Apocalypse), a catalogue of demolition both in Japan and abroad in the 1980s. In this essay, I focus on the significance of the demolition site in the context of the rapidly redeveloping Japanese metropolis during the economic “bubble” period of the 1980s. Concomitant with this turbulent period of upheaval in the urban landscape was a confluence of events that engendered a potent moment for the public re-remembering of World War II – the breakdown of the Cold War political paradigm, the death of the Shōwa emperor, and the growing age of many of those old enough to remember. Although no less socially constructed, the individual memories contributed by the wartime generation in the late twentieth century complicate the comparatively tame, decontextualized official narrative of the war articulated in national monuments, memorial museums, and textbooks. Working from Miyamoto’s characterization of his photographs as ruins, I examine the allegorical relationship of *Architectural Apocalypse* to memories of the widespread destruction of the Japanese landscape during World War II.