

March 13-19, 1997

## Sharon Lockhart at Blum & Poe

**Using society's two most seductive** mediums for both telling stories and selling dreams, Sharon Lockhart's photographs and films know how to tease. In her most recent work, a 63-minute film, *Goshogaoka*, which screened in February at MOCA, and the photographic series *Goshogaoka Girls Basketball Team* on view at Blum & Poe, a team of Japanese junior high school girls performs exerciselike movements. Sounds straightforward — teams have skills and games have rules — but Lockhart creates a labyrinth of images that we travel expecting to get to the game.

Upon inspection, the photographs' initial reading as documentary stop-action photography gives way to the impression that the girls, in their frozen classical postures, have descended from Mount Olympus. Posed individually or in twos and threes to look as if they are in motion, the girls emerge from a darkened field like heroic statues. Spotlighting suggests the drama of the game and simultaneously isolates the individuals from the actual ball in play. The girls' self-conscious concentration further makes us aware of the presence of the photographer as orchestrator.

While Lockhart's photographs assume the advertising strategy of looking like film stills, her film takes up the structuralist-film strategy of using the motion picture for its photographic qualities.

**SHARON LOCKHART:**  
*Goshogaoka Girls  
Basketball Team*  
At BLUM & POE  
2042 Broadway,  
Santa Monica  
Through March 26

In contrast to the theatricality of the stills, the film's lighting looks naturalistic, reminiscent of documentary. *Goshogaoka* is as rich in human detail as it is in austere formal beauty. A structure of six 10-minute takes unfolds with a series of warm-up and cool-down exercises accompanied by the girls' call and chant. Order is imposed over the girls' movement by the actual frame of the camera, which never budes from one constant position. Recalling the stillness of a Rothko painting, the image is bifurcated: a red-curtained stage above and a waxed wooden gymnasium floor below. Accompanied by the loud squeal of sneakers, the girls enter and exit in lines or pairs, tracing circles that mirror the geometry of the lines on the floor and often traveling outside the boundaries of the frame. Ordinary practice routines gradually give way to a more and more abstracted choreography, which in turn suggests a model of an atom, a screen test, a religious ritual.

Like airport anthropologists, we observe the *Goshogaoka* girls' basketball team with cool curiosity, viewing the subjects' relationships to each other and the differences between individuals' presence in front of the camera. Never arriving at the game itself, their activity is open to interpretation, but frustrates conclusion. The extreme ordering to which both the girls and the image itself are subjected amplifies the details of physical individuality. Our appetite for this detail, quietly supplied by Lockhart, leads us further from conclusion, but deeper into a state of watching.

—Ingrid Calame



*Goshogaoka Girls Basketball Team, 1997*