



*Photography for me is a mirror – rather like a magic mirror. The world inside the mirror exists independently. It is not really a true reflection of reality, and photography is like this.*

YASUMASA MORIMURA

**Yasumasa Morimura**

***Self-Portrait (Actress)/After Elizabeth Taylor 2, 1996***

**Ilfachrome photograph mounted on Plexiglas, 3/10**

**47 1/4 x 37 3/8 inches**

**Collection of the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth,**

**Museum purchase made possible by a grant from The Burnett Foundation**

**Acquired in 1998**

When viewing Yasumasa Morimura's photograph *Self-Portrait (Actress)/After Elizabeth Taylor 2*, the viewer is immediately aware that something is amiss. As the title confirms, Morimura is dressed up as Elizabeth Taylor. The photographer's identity easily shows through the costume, and we understand that it is a Japanese man dressed as the actress. Morimura wears the type of costume Taylor would have worn during the filming of the 1956 movie *Giant*, which also starred James Dean and Rock Hudson, and he assumes the pose of a publicity still showing the actress at her most glamorous and sensitive. In posing himself as Taylor, Morimura throws his, and the actress's identity into question, forcing us to ask ourselves what we assume about types of people and the values we attach to these types. Morimura's self-portrait forces us to ask why a man would dress up as a woman and, for that matter, whether it means the same thing when a woman dresses up as a man. His Japanese features ask us to wonder why an Eastern man would dress as a Western woman. Some dichotomies of identity arise – male/female, East/West, common/famous, and original/copy. Do we assume that some of these identities are more powerful, exotic, or normal than the others? The photograph also brings up questions about how other nations, and we ourselves, learn about the United States – namely, through movies, early on through Westerns depicting the Wild West. The picture definitely has its humorous side, too, though it can feel awkwardly humorous. Morimura's photograph contains many contradictions, and it is the power inherent in these contradictions that forces us to question how we view our own identities and those of the people around us.