



Japanese Photography is very personal

An interview with

A PHOTOGRAPHER WHOSE WORK PERSONIFIES THE SCHIZOPHRENIC NATURE OF POST-WAR JAPAN. BLURRED, DARK AND GRAINY, HIS WORK COMBINES THE JAPANESE AND THE WESTERN IN A MANNER THAT IS OBSESSIVE, IMPULSIVE AND UTTERLY INIMITABLE. DAIDO MORIYAMA.

Daido Moriyama in conversation with Colin Pantall.

— How did working with Eikoh Hosoe influence your work?

— Eikoh's specific series of *Ba-ra-kei: Ordeal by Roses* and *Kamitachi* showed me that a high level of dramatic expression is possible, even with photography. Eikoh taught me that practical camera-work should be flexible, wherever and in any situation. He told me that to make photographs is the life of photographers; it is their need, their desire.

Most of all I will never forget that he told me to love photography.

— Which Western photographers and artists have inspired you? Who has influenced the way you worked and how did they do this?

— William Klein's book *New York* had a really strong impact on me. There are so many ways to express something through photography which can be seen freely in this book. I was so impressed by such violent and changeable images, they are very different from the static and pictorial images I had previously seen. I was so inspired that I started to try high contrast printing with the coarse-grain and punchy impact.

— How has your photography changed with personal circumstances? Is your work autobiographical in some way and is this related to the wider autobiographical stream in Japanese photography? Why is so much Japanese photography so personal (and emotional)?

— I had never thought that my work, or Japanese photography on a whole, tended to be autobiographical. It is true that Japanese photographic expression is more personal than ideological expression overseas. I think such a tendency is caused by the way Japanese people place importance on being intuitive to their surroundings, their field of vision is broader when it comes to the recognition of imagery.

In my case, my approach is in searching for new images of life or recording the changeable environment around me. I do not think my photography has been influenced by my personal situation.

— Your work is very personal, especially when you integrate words and text as in 'Memories of A Dog'. What for you is the relationship between photography and memory?

— The moment that I push a shutter is also a physiological reaction— not only a reflection of my own consciousness and memories. This means that photography establishes photography itself by a communion between consciousness and various memories and situations which are contained in the outside world.

Memories that are linked to expression are not just my own memories; they include memories of other people and the outside world. The inclusion of text is my means of creating an ideal method of my own expression by photography through alternative approach.

— How much is/was your photography influenced by Japanese post-war history? What are the key elements in Japanese post-war history that have affected Japanese identity and your photography?

— When I was seven years old, World War II ended. So, I was influenced by the reality of the post-war situation in Japan. What I saw then left important marks as strong memories within myself. I think that the time and the atmosphere of such experiences created my starting point in photography.