



Taka Ishii Gallery

Photography / Film

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Ayaka Yamamoto “Sand, Water and Dust”

Date: Sep 21 – Oct 26, 2024

Location: Taka Ishii Gallery Photography / Film

Opening Reception: Saturday, Sep 21, 17:00 – 19:00

Taka Ishii Gallery Photography / Film is pleased to present “Sand, Water and Dust,” a solo exhibition of a photographer, Ayaka Yamamoto. This will be her fourth solo exhibition at Taka Ishii Gallery, featuring a series of photographs taken in 2023 in Georgia, a country located on the border between Europe and Asia, known for its unique culture and history.

Even as they are tossed about, within the patched vessel that has absorbed voices from many layers, their tightly guarded hearts exist.

“I am made of sand, water and dust,” said a girl.

Just as sand and dust ride the wind, and the sea turns into rain, a sensibility passed down from ancient times seeps into the lands and circulates through the people who are born to inherit it. The profound significance of receiving even a single drop of that legacy.

September 2024. Ayaka Yamamoto

Yamamoto has been photographing young women she encountered in foreign lands, capturing their elusive, almost empty forms that are not typically seen. Recently, she has been observing people who have lived in the same place for a long time, believing that human beings are like mirrors reflecting the land, and she notes that there are moments when they almost look like portraits of the land itself. The hollow figures of the women Yamamoto captures also contain the time, climate, and culture of the land, as if the vast memories of the land itself are vaguely floating around. Yamamoto herself moved to Okinawa two years ago, and the rich natural environment has changed her body and soul, bringing about a gradual transformation in her artistic style. In this exhibition, a previously unexplored approach can be seen through her fresh experiment of presenting portrait works paired with landscape photographs connected to the individuals. Although the two works are independent of each other, their juxtaposition elevates them into pieces that interact with the subject’s deep-seated memories of the land.

During the creation process, Yamamoto visited the remains of settlements surrounded by nature that have existed in Georgia since 2000 B.C. and the 1st century B.C. In these places, she encountered layers of ancient culture and tradition built up over time, such as 8,000 years of winemaking and the grapevine cross and frescoes of the Georgian Orthodox Church, which have continued since the early 4th century. She also experienced the “earthy” vitality of the people and the natural surroundings. The spiral shapes of grapevines, Georgian script, and window lattice designs evoke the spiral structure of human DNA, reminding us of the connection to life. In this series of works, the artist, inspired by Georgia’s rich interaction between people, nature, and culture, also turned her gaze toward the universal human perspective on nature and inherent qualities. Although the connection between nature and humanity has weakened, it remains inseparable. This body of work offers an opportunity to rediscover that bond.

The title of this exhibition, “Sand, Water and Dust”, was given by one girl as a component of herself in

response to various questions Yamamoto asked her subjects, and this was what Yamamoto felt was closest to her own sensibilities when she visited Georgia. Sand is frequently used in religious rituals and serves as a symbol connecting the boundary between the conscious and unconscious, making it a central material in this cyclical physical world. Water is the inorganic substance that nurtures life, while dust evokes the one that dances in the streets of Georgia and the crumbling houses from the Soviet era. Furthermore, dust suggests remains and burial grounds, and in Ancient English is considered to be between inorganic and organic matter as basic human material. This exhibition invites you to see Yamamoto's approach to photography, which attempts to engage more deeply with the land through various questions, and to photograph it from a new angle in which land and people can become equivalent.

Ayaka Yamamoto was born in 1983 in Kobe, Japan and graduated from the Oil Painting Course of the Department of Fine Arts at Kyoto Seika University in 2006. At the university, she initially specialized in painting, but gradually transitioned to creating performance and video works using her own body. In 2004, while studying abroad in San Francisco, she began working with photography. Photographing in situations where verbal communication is difficult brought the artist into various points of contact with others beyond the intrinsic nature of the photographic medium, and since then she has continued to photograph portraits that can be a violent, yet extremely fascinating process of image creation. By traveling to unfamiliar countries and regions and photographing the girls she encounters there, she tries to preserve their memories of the land and the emptiness of the body in her works.

Starting with her photography trips to Finland and Estonia in 2009, Yamamoto has continued her travels, photographing in countries such as Estonia (2010), Latvia (2011, 2012, 2014), France (2012, 2013), Russia (2014), Ukraine (2015), Hokkaido (2015), Bulgaria (2016), Romania (2017), Republic of Belarus (2018), Malawi (2019), Okinawa (2020, 2021), and Georgia (2023). Her recent major solo exhibitions include "We are Made of Grass, Soil, Trees, and Flowers" at Taka Ishii Gallery Photography / Film (Tokyo, 2021) and "organ" at void+ (Tokyo, 2019). Additionally, her work was featured in the group exhibition "Memories Penetrate the Ground and Permeate the Wind, Contemporary Japanese Photography vol. 18" at the Tokyo Photographic Art Museum (2021).

Yamamoto has continued photographing throughout Eastern Europe and Africa and participated in exhibitions and residencies both in Japan and internationally. She received the 19th Sagami-hara Prize for a Newcomer Professional Photographer for her photobook *We are Made of Grass, Soil, and Trees* (T&M Projects, 2018). Her works are part of the permanent collections at the Tokyo Photographic Art Museum, Kiyosato Museum of Photographic Arts (Yamanashi), and Villa Pérochon Centre d'Art Contemporain Photographique (Niort, France).

For further information please contact:

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Gallery hours: 12:00 – 19:00 Closed on Sun, Mon and National holidays



Ayaka Yamamoto
"Untitled #430, Kvemo Kartli, Georgia", 2023
C-Print
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Ayaka Yamamoto
"Untitled #500, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Georgia", 2023
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