

Masafumi Sanai “Shizuokashi”

Dates: Sep 22 – Oct 28, 2023

Location: amanaTIGP

Opening reception: Friday, Sep 22, 18:00 – 20:00

amanaTIGP is pleased to present Masafumi Sanai’s solo exhibition “Shizuoka-shi” from September 22 to October 28. Marking the artist’s first solo show at the gallery, the exhibition features a selection of around 15 works photographed in and around Shizuoka City from the 1990s to 2023. This show is restructured from the eponymous exhibition held at the Shizuoka City Museum of Art from July to August this year.

Sanai, who won the New Cosmos of Photography Excellence Award in 1995 and made his debut in 1997 with the much-acclaimed photo book *Alive*, has garnered attention for his enigmatic photographs that leave viewers to search for their own meaning, and is highly regarded as one of the leading photographers of the 1990s.

Despite clearly capturing scenes commonly observed within everyday life, such as a corner of a room, a roadside guardrail, a car, and a meal, Sanai’s works always harbor feelings of ambiguity and elusiveness. He broke new ground in the realm of snapshot photography by capturing landscapes that were neither lyrical nor epic, and deviated from the mainstream context of snapshots as mental landscapes or as means of social and historical documentation.

There’s a sensation within me to take a photograph, and I hold my camera up to capture that sensation, yet I don’t take the photograph then and there. Instead, it is when I move or they move, and the presence is about to disappear, that I press the shutter.

Masafumi Sanai, August 2023

Sanai has photographed his hometown of Shizuoka City and the surrounding area intermittently in a consistent style for more than 20 years, but to date had never presented any of these images as work. The photographs, which had been stored in their negative form over an extended period, are exhibited on this occasion along with new works in correspondence to the exhibition at Shizuoka City Museum of Art. The artist mentions that the sheer “heaviness” of photographing in his hometown was the very reason why he did not show the works he had shot in Shizuoka over the years until now in 2023.

Why do I not like taking photographs of my hometown? As I approach the Shimizu Interchange on the

highway and pass through several tunnels, this feeling of heaviness seems to progressively increase. As a reaction, or simply as a vital response, I find myself experiencing a sense of hunger when approaching the Shizuoka Interchange. Every part of my mind and body starts lurching into operation in hopes to gradually raise my spirits. I don't know why, but I become unsure as to whether I am a child or an adult. I can take photographs by getting on a stepladder and slightly raising my line of sight. Although, I don't usually take photographs while on a stepladder. My hometown gets in the way of taking photographs. Photography is about capturing the individuality of the photograph, and not my own.

Masafumi Sanai, *Shizuoka-shi*, Taisyō, 2023, n.p.

Always conscious of the “individuality of the photograph itself,” and considering the artist's individuality to be nothing but a constraint, Sanai had been reluctant to photograph landscapes that were closely linked to the memories of his childhood. However, the sense of heaviness he had felt seems to have gradually depreciated the more he continued to photograph his hometown and its surroundings. Scenes that evoke feelings of nostalgia in Sanai are transformed into photographs of universal everyday landscapes, which summon various scenes within each viewer based on their own personal memories.

There is the presence of another photograph between the photograph and the viewer, and when I thought about why that was so, the word “kindness” came to mind. It is not that I am kind, but that photography is kind.

Masafumi Sanai, September 2023

Photography, which is a medium that can instantly record human visual experience, quickly reflects the time and atmosphere felt by the photographer. Fascinated by this quality, many photographers have created narratives mediated by their own intentions. Sanai finds receptiveness in photography by naturally suppressing his own presence as the artist in his work, referring to this as “the kindness of photography.” When confronted with a group of works configured through this approach, viewers, while looking at the image presented before their eyes, also come to observe the emergence of landscapes generated through their own experiences, memories, and emotions.

New book published in conjunction with the exhibition.

【Publication details】

Masafumi Sanai “Shizuokashi”

Published by Taisyō, 2023

Retail price: ¥ 2,500- (tax incl.)

Softcover, total 208 pages, 96 illustrations, H18 x W10.9 cm

Text by Masafumi Sanai (Japanese)

Masafumi Sanai was born in Shizuoka City, Shizuoka Prefecture in 1968. He won the 12th Canon New Cosmos of Photography Excellence Award in 1995 and made his debut in 1997 with his photo book "Alive" (SEIGENSHA Art Publishing). In 2003, he won the 28th Ihei Kimura Photography Award for his photobook "MAP" (Masashi Sanai Photo Office). After then, he established his own photography label "Taisyō" and focus on producing photo books. He was acclaimed for his style of photography, which avoids to give a clear sense of his personal intentions, and had a strong influence on Japanese photographers from the 1990s onward. Besides, his interests range from literature, fashion, music and more. Sanai's major solo exhibitions include "Shizuokashi", Shizuoka City Museum of Art (Shizuoka, 2023), "rarry", NADiff a/p/a/r/t (Tokyo, 2012), "Taisyō Masafumi Sanai's Photographs", Taro Okamoto Museum of Art, Kawasaki (Kanagawa, 2009). He has participated in group exhibitions such as "TOP Collection: Serendipity Wondrous Discoveries in Daily Life", Tokyo Photographic Art Museum (Tokyo, 2023), "2020 Seoul Photo Festival: Unphotographical Moment", The Seoul Museum of Art (Seoul, 2020), "Taro Okamoto Museum of Art 20th Anniversary Exhibition We Show You All the Past Exhibitions! 2nd Part: Art and Society, Contemporary Artists", Taro Okamoto Museum of Art, Kawasaki (Kanagawa, 2019), "In the Here and Now", Tokyo Photographic Art Museum, Tokyo (Tokyo, 2017), "shima shima", Setouchi Triennale (2013). His works are included in the collection of Tokyo Photographic Art Museum.

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



Masafumi Sanai

"Shizuokashi, #1", 2023

C-print

Image size: 45.5 x 57.5 cm

Paper size: 50.8 x 61 cm

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Masafumi Sanai
“Shizuokashi, #8”, 2023
C-print
117.3 x 147.3 cm
© Masafumi Sanai



Masafumi Sanai
“Shizuokashi, #9”, 1998/2023
C-print
117.3 x 147.3 cm
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