

Yamamoto Keiko Rochaix

PRESS RELEASE

Ryuichi Ishikawa: zkop: a blessing in disguise

12th January – 15th March 2018

Private view and opening reception: 11th January 2018, 6pm

Yamamoto Keiko Rochaix is pleased to present the very first showing in the UK of works of Ryuichi Ishikawa, an emerging talent in photography. 'zkop: a blessing in disguise', curated from 'Okinawan Portraits' and 'A Grand Polyphony', two publications which propelled the young artist into almost instant fame in Japan and won him prestigious Kimura Ihei Award in 2015, showcases the images of life in Okinawa, the southernmost isles of Japan and the artist's home turf.

Universal appeal of Ishikawa's works lies in the power of image; straightforward, no-nonsense capturing of a real, tangible sections of today's society. They serve as an anti-thesis in the recent trend of increasingly sophisticated, conceptual renderings of visuals not only in photography but in any media, and they are a powerful reminder of potential of a single raw image. This in turn is a reflection of artist's words; 'Reality is always excessive' (post script by the artist, 'A Grand Polyphony'). Every image in the show, each of which is a snapshot of a reality, is loaded with emotion, drama, sometimes simply of being, or not being.

Ishikawa photographs nonchalant daily life in Okinawa, the semi-tropical small archipelago far removed from the main islands of Japan, and which was reduced to accept marginal positions the national central power forced upon over centuries. The sense of contained tension, even unbearableness and perpetual rebellious spirit which Ishikawa's Okinawa emits may have roots in such unique history. Even a shot of red flowers in bloom, 'zk.080 Itoman, 2010', lets a scent of something nefast and haunting with its presence in the pitch black background. The blank look of a couple in their deprived flat apparently having nothing to do, 'op.0001420 Naha, 2011' or a woman wearing pathologically comical makeup sitting on her filthy bed surrounded by mountains of waste, 'op.000944 Naha 2011' border insanity and may allude to the suppressed desire to escape the reality. Nonetheless, it is never of an abysmal desperation; Ishikawa's Okinawa is of hope. It may be that the artist's unspoken empathy and tenderness to his fellow islanders and to the islands themselves are reflected and translated in the image as unfathomable affection and hope. The photographer is almost always directly in front of his subjects as if to tell

them he accepts as they are, and the said couple and the lady look into his camera directly, at ease, confident of his trust, maybe feeling a sense of connection.

Ishikawa is no stranger to counterculture and people living in margins of society. Younger, he practiced boxing at a national level, and after quitting the sport he joined a progressive dance company. He treats and shoots LGBT community and physically afflicted persons as they are, from the same perspective where they stand. And that he connects with and accepts them, infuses the images a sense of reassurance and security.

Ishikawa is mostly a self-taught photographer, and his practice is broadly based on following instinct or the chance of the day, or by the hour, on what or who he shoots, without rigid conceptual labelling. With his innate sense of colour and composition, a chance encounter with the most mediocre of daily objects is turned into a still life of unexpected discovery. Some of the artist's images of objects are almost abstract in that it is not recognisable at the first sight, but it is the visual composition that strikes. The artist shoots as he follows his instinct and lets the viewer appreciate the visual, slowly inviting them to inspect it, as he probably had done when he encountered the object. The procedures are the same for the portraits; he follows the instinct and ask people whom he comes across on street, for the permission to shoot portraits.

'zkop: a blessing in disguise' consists uniquely of works taken in the photographer's home ground of Okinawa. Nevertheless, when facing his image, geographical footnote becomes irrelevant as its explosive emotion of 'excessive reality' takes over. And this is the decisive universal appeal of Ishikawa's work.

Ryuichi Ishikawa (Okinawa, 1984)

Lives and works in Okinawa

Education

2006 BA, Department of Social Culture, Okinawa International University

Selected awards

2015 40th Kimura Ihei Memorial Photography Award
Photographic Society of Japan Awards, New Talent Award

2017 Shortlisted for Nissan Art Award

Selected solo exhibitions

2017 Atsuko Barouh (Tokyo), Underthrow (Kyoto)

2016 Wag Gallery (Tokyo), Epson Imaging Gallery epSITE (Tokyo), The Third Gallery Aya (Osaka), Art Gallery Artium (Fukuoka), Have a nice Gallery (Taipei), Yokohama Civic Art Gallery Azamino (Yokohama)

2015 nagune (Tokyo), Galerie Nord (Paris), Osaka Nikon Salon (Osaka)

2014 Ginza Nikon Salon (Tokyo), Place M (Tokyo), Atsuko Barouh (Tokyo), Gallery Lafayette (Okinawa)

Selected group exhibitions

- 2017 BankART Studio NYK, Yokohama
- 2016 Dubai Photo (Dubai), Mori Art Museum (Tokyo)
- 2015 Kawasaki City Museum (Kawasaki), Fuji Film Photo Salon (Tokyo), Konika Minolta Plaza (Tokyo)
- 2014 Okinawa Prefectural Art Museum (Okinawa)

Publications

- 2016 'okinawan portraits 2012-2016' Akaaka Art Publishing
'Camp' Slant
- 2015 'adrenamix' Akaaka Art Publishing
- 2014 'A Grand Polyphony' Akaaka Art Publishing
'okinawan portraits 2010-2012' Akaaka Art Publishing

Please join us for the opening reception for the exhibition on Thursday, 11th of January, from 6 to 9 pm.

For further information, images or to arrange interviews please contact:

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Title: Ryuichi Ishikawa : zkop: a blessing in disguise

Address: 19 Goulston St, London, E1 7TP

Dates: 12th January – 15th March 2018

Private View: Thursday 11th January 2018

Opening Hours: Wednesday to Saturday, 11am – 6pm

Travel: Aldgate East, Aldgate, Liverpool Street

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