

Press Release

2012

The 28th Higashikawa Awards

The Town of Photography
Information

Higashikawa International Photography Festival Office

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The 28th Higashikawa Award Winners

<The Overseas Photographer Award>

Arif Aşçi (Turkey)

For his photographs taken in Istanbul

<The Domestic Photographer Award>

Taiji Matsue

For his accomplishments as a photographer

<The New Photographer Award>

Lieko Shiga

For her community-oriented activities in Natori, Miyagi prefecture, beginning in 2009, and her achievements as a photographer

<The Special Photographer Award>

Makiko Ui

For the photography exhibition and book, *Ainu: Portrait of the Wind* (Shinsensha, 2011), and artistic activities related to the Ainu

<The Hidano Kazuemon Award>

Yoshikazu Minami

For long-term achievement in photography in his hometown of Chichibu

Comments on the Selection of the Higashikawa Photography Awards

Tokihiro Sato, member of the Higashikawa Photography Awards Jury

One year has passed since the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake. Recovery is still a long way off for the people and places where the worst damage occurred, and the psychological damage will also take much time to heal. Those of us who were not seriously affected feel almost embarrassed at our inability to imagine the extent of the sadness and pain of the victims. This has been a year when people thought more seriously than ever before about their family and friends, their relationships with other people, and their native country of Japan. What do we want for the future of our society? What do we need to do? Everyone must resolve these questions for themselves as they move forward. If we shift our point of view a little, however, as we look at the world, we can find quite a bit of positive news. In particular, we can be grateful that the Higashikawa Photography Awards will be held again this year, almost as if nothing had happened.

The judging of this year's Higashikawa Photography Awards was quite exciting. A large number of photographers were nominated for awards, and many of them have been nominated year after year. The jury began by confirming the criteria for judging with all members present. Along with talent and ability, we were interested in relevance to the present, something connected with issues that concern us this year. Not all of the works have this quality. Only one of the five awards, the Hidano Kazuemon Award, was determined by a unanimous vote. For all the others, the vote was split, and extensive discussion was required to make a final decision. Even so, once the choices were made, it became clear that this year's exhibition would feature a fantastic group of photographers and be extremely interesting.

The Domestic Photographer Award went to Taiji Matsue. Matsue had already won the New Photographer Award in the Higashikawa Photography Awards of 1996 with photographs that directly reflected his background as a student of geography. His recent work, *cell*, is reminiscent of the film, *Powers of Ten*, by Charles and Ray Eames, which shows the differences in phenomena at different scales. He selects "people who happened to be photographed" from the billions of particles in the galaxy of images he has taken on large-format film. These images do not reflect the artist's ego but are selected from the universe created by an optical system. The people who have become

subjects are completely unaware of the camera, and the images seem to have been blown up from satellite photographs. In a recent solo exhibition, Matsue experimented further with digital moving images. The viewer watching these pictures on a high-resolution video monitor must pay close attention to notice any movement. They are moving images that appear to be still. His recognition this year was due to his unique approach, which might be described as a critical stance toward systems of photographic and moving images.

Next is the New Photographer Award, always a highly contested prize. This year, as usual, there were many candidates for the award. After a lot of debate, the award was given to Lieko Shiga. Shiga received the Kimura Ihei Memorial Photography Award in 2008 and in 2009 established a residence in Natori, Miyagi prefecture, where she had lived while preparing for an exhibition. She became the official photographer of the Kitagama district of Natori, and she was there when the great earthquake struck Miyagi last year. Beginning in June of last year, she gave a series of ten lectures at Sendai Mediatheque as a prologue to an exhibition there, describing her encounters and conflicts with people in the local community in the process of making her work. Reading the record of these lectures, we get a good idea of Shiga's total immersion in these events and how she continued working with tremendous resilience in spite of problems and misunderstandings. Even when she was working in the area hit by the earthquake, she maintained her unique style, providing her own vision of the conditions she found. Shiga is one of the most impressive photographers working today.

The Special Photographer Award is given to a photographer working in Hokkaido. This year it was awarded to Makiko Ui, who has been taking documentary photographs of the Ainu people for many years. She has already won a number of prizes for her book, *Ainu, Sometimes Japanese*, a photo report on the Ainu living around the Tokyo area. Last year, she published *Ainu: Portrait of the Wind*, a book of photographs focusing on an Ainu woman living in Nibutani taken over the last twenty years. The Japanese people are a mixture of peoples who have moved here from many different regions, and it is now understood that we are not a homogenous race. The Ainu are the native people who once inhabited the region from northeastern Japan to Sakhalin. They appear in Japanese history under the name Ezo. Like the Kumaso in the south, they were given by this name by the Yamato court, and they have a long history of discrimination. Because these facts are seldom taught or discussed in official discourse today, this careful photo documentation of a minority in modern Japan is extremely

valuable. These gentle photographs can make a significant contribution to the building of a new society.

Then we have the Hidano Kazuemon Award. This year quite a few photographers who have already passed away were nominated for this prize, and this issue came in for considerable discussion. The award is given for distinguished long-term achievement, spotlighting photographers connected to a particular region, so it is not necessarily limited to living photographers. We agreed, however, that it would be best to give it to a living photographer if possible, and Yoshikazu Minami was chosen by a unanimous decision of all the judges. Minami is from Chichibu. Although he received professional training in photography in Tokyo, he continued to live in his hometown and painstakingly recorded the customs of this mountainous area during the period of rapid economic growth. His work reveals the many changes that have taken place there over the last 50 years. His photographs are exquisitely crafted and stylish, and he has won many awards. The image of the worn and weathered *Hand of a Twenty-year-old Girl* in the photobook, *Chichibu: 30 Years*, silently expresses the harsh conditions of life in a mountain village in 1963. This “girl” is now 71 years old, but the photographs do not age. Minami’s photographs have an expressive power that lets them speak to us as if they had been taken only yesterday.

Finally, there is the Overseas Photographer Award, for which we considered photographers from Turkey this year. Based on the extensive research of one of the judges, Michiko Kasahara, we narrowed down the field of candidates and, after further discussion, chose Arif Aşçi, a photographer rooted in Istanbul. Istanbul is located on the Bosphorus strait, a pivotal point between East and West. Situated at the boundary between Europe and Asia, it has a 2000-year history as the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire and the Osman Turkish Empire. A quiet but dynamic city, it has been buffeted by events in the history of both Christianity and Islam. Arif Aşçi’s panoramic photographs skillfully capture light and darkness, as if in reference to the turbulent history of the city. His photographs usually contain something, such as a cat or a seagull, that suggests the passage of time, but the handling of light and shade in the overall landscape gives it a timeless, lyrical quality that captivates the viewer. Aşçi’s black and white pictures produce a maximum effect as photographs with minimal means. This basic photographic strength, exerted with only a small amount of visual information, was a decisive factor in making up the minds of the judges.

The Overseas Photographer Award

Arif Aşçı

Lives in Istanbul, Turkey



Arif Ascı is born in Adana, the South of Turkey, in 1958. To be a painter he studied at Istanbul Fine Arts Academy from 1975 to 1982. After graduation he went to Italy and stayed 6 months in Rome. In 1984 he started to serve as an instructor in engraving at the same academy. Two years later he resigned and traveled Asian countries. During those years he built up his career as a photographer. In 90's he published a lot of photo stories and produced TV documentaries on culture. In 1996-1997, he organized a team with ten camels and completed 12,000 km expedition from China to Turkey. As a result came out a book "The Last Caravan on the Silk Road". From 2003-2007, he focused on multilayered images of Istanbul in panoramic form.

Arif Ascı's photos were published and widely exhibited in galleries and museums of S.Korea, Germany, Russia, Belgium, France, Italy, USA as well as Turkey. Ascı continues working on various photo series which combine journey into outer and inner worlds.

<Artist Statement>

To start a new photography project, an accidental frame, or newspaper clipping, a poem, a painting or a simply several sleepless nights and following depression can be enough. But once I feel that something new, something exciting appears, after putting a few images side by side I hold firmly the rope of Ariadne. Every new photo leads me to the next one. To reach to the light at the exit of labyrinth, there are times that I disappear in the darkness, but looking for the light itself is an adventure. Isn't it?

To receive prestigious Higashikawa award made me so happy that, Japan, where I visited two years ago may give me another time opportunity to follow the trail of my favorite poet, Basho....

The Domestic Photographer Award

Taiji Matsue

Lives in Tokyo



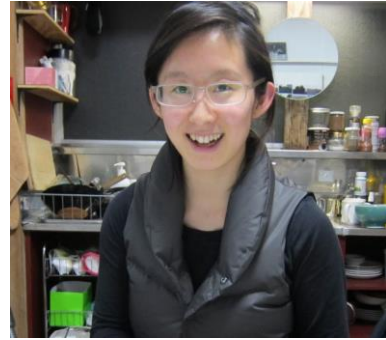
Born in Tokyo in 1963. Graduated in geography from Tokyo University and held his first solo photography show at Zeit Photo Salon in 1987. Received the New Photographer Award of the Higashikawa Photography Awards in 1996 and the Kimura Ihei Memorial Photography Award for *Hysteric: Taiji Matsue* in 2002. Has participated in many solo shows and group shows in Japan and overseas.

Developed his trademark style of photographing the surface of the ground precisely and evenly with front lighting while shooting in Yemen in 1991. Created the *gazeteer* series, in which images of the land from different locations all over the world are juxtaposed. In 2001, began showing the *CC* series, urban scenes shot with the same methods. Matsue has experimented with new possibilities in the medium of photography, creating images with very small and very large scale. *cell*, for example, is composed of very tiny images selected from the *gazeteer* and *CC* photographs. He also began making video works that might be described as “moving photographs” in 2010.

The New Photographer Award

Lieko Shiga

Lives in Miyagi



Born in Aichi prefecture in 1980. Graduated from Chelsea College of Art and Design in London in 2004. Received Mio Photo Award Encouragement Prize in 2005, the 33rd Kimura Ihei Memorial Photography Award for photobooks *Lily* (Art Beat Publishers) and *Canary* (Akaaka-sha) in 2008, and the International Center of Photography Infinity Award (new photographer award) in 2009.

Stayed in Sendai while preparing work for “Re:search – art collaboration between Australia and Japan Art Collaboration,” held at Mediateque Sendai in 2006, and established a studio in the Kitakama district of Natori, Miyagi prefecture. She worked as a village photographer, blending into the community and listening to the oral histories of individuals raised in the area. Her photographic works incorporating these experiences were made in collaboration with the village people. From June 2011 to March 2012, she prepared work for a solo exhibition to be held in November at Mediateque Sendai and gave a total of ten lectures about her work in Kitakama and her activities after the earthquake under the title “Thinking Table.”

Shiga’s striking, highly tactile images overwhelm the viewer with their tremendous strength while posing questions about images and the body.

The Special Photographer Award

Makiko Ui

Lives in Tokyo



Born in Chiba prefecture in 1960. Graduated from Musashino Art University in 1983. Graduated from Nippon Photography Institute in 1985. Studied under photographer Kenji Higuchi. Began doing freelance work, mainly for magazines.

Has been visiting Nibutani, Hokkaido since 1992, usually taking her children with her, to take pictures of an Ainu family who maintain their traditional culture. These photographs focus on Asiri Rera (meaning “new wind” in Ainu, Japanese name: Yasuko Yamamichi). Published *Ainu, Sometimes Japanese* (Shakai Hyoronsha) in 2001, a collection of photographs of Ainu living in the Tokyo area (where more than 5000 Ainu live), and received the Domestic Photo Report Prize of the 7th Shukan Gendai Documentary Photography Awards for this photobook in 2002. Published *Asir Rera: Ainu Spirits* (Shinpusha) and received 4th Sagamihara New Photographer Encouragement Prize in 2010. Published photobook *Ainu: Portrait of the Wind* (Shinsensha) and held a solo exhibition of the same photographs at Nikon Salon, Ginza in 2011.

Usui takes photographs in a natural style with deep empathy for the rich spiritual world of the Ainu. Her images include traditional Ainu houses (*chise*), events of everyday life among the Ainu, rituals and dances, and the protest movement against the Nibutani Dam which threatened to destroy Ainu culture.

The Hidano Kazuemon Award

Yoshikazu Minami

Lives in Chichibu, Saitama



Born in Chichibu, Saitama prefecture in 1935. Graduated from Tokyo College of Photography. Has received many prizes, including the 4th Taiyo Prize in 1967, the Saitama Prefecture Culture Encouragement Prize in 1968, the 28th Photographic Society of Japan Award in 1978, the 13th Ken Domon Prize in 1994, and the 21st Ina Nobuo Prize in 1996.

Highly reputed for photographs of farm life, including images of young brides in farm families and the work done on farms. Minami has made it his life work to photograph customs and festivals peculiar to the region such as *mushi okuri* (insect expulsion), *amazake koboshi* (spilling sweet sake), the lion dance, and exorcisms; the natural landscape during the four seasons; and places of religious significance.

These photographs taken over a long period of time in Chichibu give an understanding to people of later generations of how the people, customs, and land change have changed time as well as natural landscape views that have not change.

Higashikawa International Photography Festival

Photo Fiesta 2012

Award Winners' Exhibition

Date: 28 July (Sat.) – 19 August (Sun.), 2012

Venue: Higashikawa Bunka Gallery

Time: 10:00 - 17:30

Admission: ¥200 (¥100 for residents)

Organize: The Town of Photography: Higashikawa

Address: 1-19-8 Higashi-machi, Higashikawa-cho, Kamikawa-gun, 071-1423 Hokkaido

Tel: (+81)-(0)166-82-4700 Fax: (+81)-(0)166-82-4704

Artists:

Arif Aşçi (The Overseas Photographer Award)

Taiji Matsue (The Domestic Photographer Award)

Lieko Shiga (The New Photographer Award)

Makiko Ui (The Special Photographer Award)

Yoshikazu Minami (The Hidano Kazurmon Award)

Event Schedule:

28 July (Sat.) 14:00-14:30 Award Ceremony

15:30-17:00 Opening Reception

29 July (Sun.) 13:00-17:30 Panel Discussion

Panelists: award winners, judges and guests

Higashikawa Awards

[Purpose]

With the idea of contributing to and fostering photographic culture as well as raising the cultural consciousness of Higashikawa residents, starting this year, 1985, we will annually be awarding prizes accompanied by monetary gifts to the photographer for his / her works.

[Awards]

The Overseas Photographer Award

*1,000,000 yen to a overseas photographer

The Domestic Photographer Award

*1,000,000 yen to a Japanese photographer

The New Photographer Award

*500,000 yen to a Japanese photographer

The Special Photographer Award

*500,000 yen to a photographer from Hokkaido

The Hidano Kazuemon Award

*500,000 yen to a photographer who contributed to society through photography

[Conditions]

The Overseas Photographer Award is presented to a photographer in a specific country or region chosen each year. He / She must be either living or born in that country or region.

The Domestic and the New Photographer Awards are presented to photographers whose work has been taken within the past three years that has significance either in the history of photography or as some unique expression of the art of photography.

The Special Photographer Award is presented to a photographer living or born in Hokkaido or whose theme and / or object concerns this island.

The Hidano Kazuemon Award is presented to a photographer in acknowledgement of his longtime contributions in taking photographs of local people, nature and culture. (The prize is open to both professional and amateur photographers.)

Of all the prizes, no specific restrictions are applied concerning the year it was taken for the Overseas Photographer Prize, the Special Photographer Prize and the Hidano

Kazuemon Prize.

[Selection]

The works selected by nominators charged by the executive committee are judged by the Jury Committee of the Higashikawa Award. The awards ceremony is held each year during the period of the Photo Fiesta in Higashikawa Town and is accompanied by commemorative symposiums and other events.

[Other Stipulations]

The monetary gift presented with the Higashikawa Awards is meant to purchase the original prints of the awarded photographs. Each awardee is requested to voluntarily submit original print(s) of his / her choice from among the awarded works to the residents of Higashikawa town.

The residents of the town shall be responsible for storing the photographs with care and for exhibiting them to visitors to Higashikawa, the Town of Photography.

These awarded photographs are exhibited at the Higashikawa Photography Museum in order to contribute to promoting a friendship and cultural development of the Town of Higashikawa.

We may present other awards to the photographs of outstanding works in order to contribute to photographic culture as well as to development of the Higashikawa Awards. For this reason, awards from other committees and sponsors are negotiable.

The Jury Committee of the 25th Higashikawa Awards

Katsumi ASABA <Graphic Designer>-----24th –
Michiko KASAHARA <Photo Critic>-----23rd –
Aki KUSUMOTO <Critic, Curator>-----25th –
Tokihiro SATO <Photographer>-----14th–
Kazuyoshi NOMACHI <Photographer> -----23rd –
Keiichiro HIRANO <Novelist>-----24th –
Yuri MITSUDA<Art Critic>-----27th –
Hiroshi YAMAZAKI <Photographer>-----25th –

The Town of Photography: Higashikawa

Higashikawa Town is located in central Hokkaido, northernmost of Japan, and is a part of Japan's largest national park "Daisetsuzan National Park" with Higashikawa's eastern part forming a large-scale forest. Blessed with natural beauty, lots of places in Higashikawa have been the subjects of many photographs.

Higashikawa, firstly cultivated by a group of settlers in 1895, has a shorter history compared to that of photography invented in 1839. Higashikawa declared the "Town of Photography" in 1985 aiming to create a town of "being a good subject to be photographed" co-existing with beautiful nature inhabited by many species of animals and plants.

Higashikawa established the Higashikawa Awards in the same year and started the annual summer festival of photography with the idea of contributing to and fostering photographic culture as well as raising the cultural consciousness of Higashikawa residents. With a history of more than a quarter of a century, it has been the nation's prestigious photography awards and the longest-running photography festival.

Higashikawa awards can also be noted in that it has rewarded overseas outstanding photographers such as Joel Sternfeld, Lewis Baltz and Jan Saudek as well as domestic photographers and introduced them to Japan. Through this, we meet people from abroad and exchange with them. By doing so, we believe we can entrust prayer for peace and our dreams to the future generation.