

Press Release



2019

The 35th Higashikawa Awards

The Town of Photography
Culture Capital of Photography

Information

Higashikawa International Photography Festival Office

Mayor : Ichiro Matsuoka

HIGASHIKAWA, KAMIKAWA-GUN, HOKKAIDO

<Address>

HIGASHIKAWA PUBLIC OFFICE

Organizers: Toshiyuki Yanome, Hiroko Yoshizato

1-16-1, Higashimachi, Higashikawa, Hokkaido 071-1492 Japan

TEL. +81 166 82 2111 / FAX. +81 166 82 4704

<http://photo-town.jp/> E-mail: photo@town.higashikawa.lg.jp

The 35th Higashikawa Award Winners

◆The Overseas Photographer Award: Rosemary Laing (Australia)

For photographic achievements, including her series, “*Weather*” (2006), “*Leak*” (2010) and “*Buddens*” (2017).

◆The Domestic Photographer Award: Lieko Shiga

For her exhibition “*Blind Date*” (Marugame Genichiro-Inokuma Museum of Contemporary Art, 2017) and photobook “*Blind Date*” (T&M Projects, 2017) and other photographic activities.

◆The New Photographer Award: Mari Katayama

For her exhibition “*Mari Katayama : On the Way Home*” (The Museum of Modern Art, Gunma, 2017) and her works exhibited at “*Photographs of Innocence and of Experience: Contemporary Japanese Photography vol.14*” (Tokyo Photographic Art Museum, 2017-18), and other photographic activities.

◆The Special Photographer Award: Atsushi Okuyama

For his photobook “*Benzo*” (private edition, 2018) and his exhibition “*Gardens and Esquisse*” (Nikon Salon Ginza, Nikon Salon Osaka, 2018).

◆The Hidano Kazuemon Award: Junichi Ota

For long-term achievements in photographing Kansai area, including photobook “*Higata-ki [Record of a Tidal Flat]*” (KAIFUSHA, 2018), “*Mujo no Sugawara Shotengai [Impermanent Sugawara Arcade]*” (BRAIN CENTER, 2015), and “*Gunshu no Machi [Cities of Crowds]*” (BRAIN CENTER, 2007).

Commentary on the Selection of the 35th Higashikawa Photography Awards

Osamu Ueno

Higashikawa Photography Award Jury Committee

Judging of the 35th Higashikawa Photography Awards was held on February 14th, 2019. The nominees this year included 52 for Domestic Photographer Award, 69 for New Photographer Award, 24 for Special Photographer Award, 39 for the Hidano Kazuemon Award, and 18 for the Overseas Photographer Award. Out of a total of 187 artists, we awarded five through the judging process. We were very happy to see an increase in the number of entries through the cooperation of the nominators, and, in the end, eight judges spent the morning carefully examining photobooks and resources. Our anticipation along with sense of responsibility grows with every year.

As if reflecting this tense atmosphere, the judging for the Domestic Photographer Award was particularly difficult. After repeated discussion and voting, the results were even and no clear conclusion was made. We decided to take a break and move on to the judging of the other awards. After another round of discussion and voting, we chose Lieko Shiga for Domestic Photographer Award. Since receiving the New Photographer Award in 2012, she has gained attention for her series of increasingly powerful exhibitions such as *Blind Date*. Although one can say it is extraordinary that she was awarded this before her large-scale solo exhibition at Tokyo Photographic Art Museum, her work is a primordial exploration of the images of life and death, jolting the framework of photography and speaking of a great anticipation of a development that goes beyond it.

The New Photographer Award, a hotly contested award each year, saw a one-on-one battle at the last stage of judging between Ai Iwane and Mari Katayama, with Katayama coming out the winner. Katayama also was awarded for her publishing activities of recent years before her first photobook was published. Her early work made free use of various styles, while her photos that explore the relationship between her own body and the world are provocative and ask questions that re-define the conventional field of photography.

Special Photographer Award was given to Atsushi Okuyama who has documented the self-contained lifestyle of Benzo Inoue for over 20 years in Hokkaido. Inoue has spun a meticulous life raising his garden and drawing pictures. Okuyama's work is full of a tranquil persuasiveness, a polyphony of life and photography born from careful

documentation over time. One can say the photographs also connect the pioneering time in the history of Hokkaido, when Inoue was born, with the present.

The Hidano Kazuemon Award, which was established in 2010, has seen an increase in the number of nominees each year, suggesting increased awareness of the award. This year too judging and discussion took place over the quality of the award, and, after an exchange of various opinions, the award was given to Junichi Ota, who was born in Nara prefecture and has continually been active in the Kansai region. Ota's work captures traces of that which are left behind, as if they are liable to be completely forgotten, and landscapes particular to the region slowly become visible.

For the Overseas Photographer Award, after considering explanations based on the careful research of Aki Kusumoto, Rosemary Laing was chosen from Australia, the country in focus. Based on the theme of landscapes that connote cultural and historical meaning of Australia, Laing's work is based on poetic imagination and combine installation, performance, and photography. These works are fascinating as they provide the viewer a diversity of interpretations.

As noted before, the judging this time was a challenging process. However, looking at how we came to our decisions, it became clear that the four domestic awards were given to photographers that have become known these past years during judging. In particular, the Domestic and New Photographer Awards, were decided distinctively in the Higashikawa Awards where works are eligible within three years after their first presentation. Also, during the judging process, deep discussions were held over the meaning and positioning of each award. One can say that by sitting around a table and making decisions over discussion, even with differences in opinion, is typical of the judging process of the Higashikawa Awards.

But what kind of award should the Higashikawa Awards be? Background to the intense discussion of the judging panel is the "Declaration of Town of Photography" of 1985 and the hard work of many Higashikawa residents and the shared energy with those around the world since then. Repeated discussions take place in Tokyo while imagining Higashikawa, a place that takes pride in its wonderful natural environment and the photography festival that is held there. Looking back, I believe the judging results this time appropriately represent the 35th holding of this award at this juncture. From now on, together with the people of Higashikawa, we would like to take even one more step forward.

The Jury Committee of the 35th Higashikawa Photography Awards

Osamu Ueno <Photo Critic>-----31st—

Ken Kitano <Photographer>-----33rd—

Shino Kuraishi <Photo Critic, Poet>-----35th —

Tomoka Shibasaki <Novelist>-----34th —

Ikuo Nakamura <Photographer> -----33rd —

Harumi Niwa <Curator>-----33rd —

Koichi Hara <Designer>-----34th —

Yuri Mitsuda <Art Critic>-----27th —

The Overseas Photographer Award

Rosemary Laing

Lives in Sydney, Australia



Photo by Anna Cuthill

Born in Brisbane, Australia in 1959. Trained as a painter in the late 1970s and began including photography in mixed media works in the late 1980s.

During the late 1990s she produced photographs exploring “speed” and “flight”. In one of her major series “flight research” (1998-2000) a bride takes flight within a vast sky, representing the optimism of the new millennium. In “bulletproofglass” (2002) the same bride is transformed and bleeding from a bullet wound, and the “weather” series (2006) shows her again, this time tossed around in a turbulent storm of high wind and newspaper shreds.

In “groundspeed” (2001) she installed floral carpet descended from European patterns into the Australian forest, hinting at Australia’s history of colonialism and the tension between settlement and invasion upon Aboriginal homeland. In “leak” (2010) an upside-down domestic house frame has crashed into the ground of a rural landscape – a view familiar in histories of Australian landscape painting.

Grounded through research and poetic imagery, she continues to create large-scale works which combine installation, performance, and photography examining relationships between contemporary Australian culture and its histories.

Her work has been exhibited worldwide. A monograph, written by Abigail Solomon-Godeau, was published in 2012.

<Artist Statements>

I would like to sincerely thank the jury members for the great honour of the Higashikawa Overseas Photographer Award and this very special opportunity to visit Hokkaido. I am additionally honoured by the privilege of exhibiting alongside all of the distinguished photographers of the 35th Higashikawa Awards.

My projects are often created in meaningful places wherein I set up situations for the camera by either making a construction or working with a performer. I am presenting works from the series “weather” and “leak”.

In “weather” my performer is caught within a chaotic space of high wind and swirling shreds of newspaper. She appears to be tossed around by these metaphorical forces of climate and daily news events. For “leak” I built an oversized upside-down domestic timber house frame in a paddock, on a sheep farm in the Cooma-Monaro region of NSW. I wanted to make images about the tension between the idealised history of land occupation for farming by settlers, and the present day pressures of spreading urbanisation. In both bodies of work, I am interested in the elastic gravity between the sky, and the ground, and their connected conditions.

Rosemary Laing

The Domestic Photographer Award

Lieko Shiga

Lives in Miyagi



Born in Okazaki city, Aichi Prefecture in 1980. Graduated from Chelsea College of Arts, University of the Arts London. Stayed and produced her works in Sendai for “*Re:search, Art Collaboration Between Australia and Japan*” held in Sendai Mediatheque in 2006. Won the 33th Kimura Ihei Award for the books “*Lily*” and “*Canary*” (2007) which include photographs she shot in England, Australia and Sendai. Won Young Photographer Award, “ICP Infinity Awards,” in 2009.

Staying in Sendai motivated her to have her atelier in Kitakama, Natori city, Miyagi Prefecture since 2009. She blends into the community as an exclusive cameraman for the village, she listens to the cherished oral histories of each member of the community. Collaborating with them, she puts the experiences into art. She lived through the Great East Japan Earthquake and announced her exhibition “*RASENKAIGAN*” in Sendai Mediatheque 2011-2012). She won Higashikawa New Photographer Award in 2012.

“*Blind Date*” held in Marugame Genichiro-Inokuma Museum of Contemporary Art in 2017, was inspired by photographs of lovers speeding on motorcycles taken in Bangkok, Thailand in 2009 as a visiting artist. With the theme of blindness and invisibility, she looks for the critical aspect beyond visual image. Published a photography book “*Blind Date*” (T & M Projects, 2017) at the same time. Held an exhibition “*Human Spring*” at Tokyo Photographic Art Museum in 2009 and was highly regarded.

The New Photographer Award

Mari Katayama

Lives in Gunma



Born in 1987. Raised in Ota city, Gunma Prefecture. Had both legs amputated at the age of nine due to a congenital disease. She received Gunma Biennale For Young Artists' 05 Encouragement Award while in high school for her works with the prosthetic legs which she decorated herself. Meeting the judge and curator of this award, the late Azumaya Takashi, led to the beginning of her artistic endeavors. Completed a degree in Intermedia Art at the Graduate School of Fine Arts in Tokyo University of the Arts.

Exhibited self-portraits surrounded by hand-sewn objects, three dimensional works symbolizing her body in her own room. Won the Grand Prix for Art Award Tokyo Marunouchi 2012. Exhibited her works at many international exhibitions such as Aichi Triennale 2013 (Nayabashi venue), "*Roppongi Crossing 2016: My Body, Your Voice*" (Mori Art Museum) and Setouchi Triennale 2016 (Naoshima, Miyaura Gallery Rokku). She passionately had solo exhibitions including "*Shadow Puppet*" (3331 gallery, 2016), "*Mari Katayama: On the Way Home*" (the Museum of Modern Art, Gunma), and "*Broken Heart*" (white rainbow gallery, London, 2019).

Starting with shots in her six-mat tatami room, and then expanding into the streets, her hometown, and society through art, she produces her works with the theme of the relationship between herself and others using her original viewpoint stemming from her body.

In 2011, she started a *High Heel Project* so that she could wear high heels which she had given up on because of her prosthetic legs. Wearing these specially ordered high heels, she works in many arenas including singer, model, and public speaker.

The Special Photographer Award

Atsushi Okuyama

Lives in Iwate



Born in Osaka in 1972. Graduated from Kyoto University of Foreign Studies. While working for a publisher in Tokyo, he interviewed people for a magazine in 1998, he met Inoue Benzo (born in 1920) who lived a self-sufficient life as a last generation settler in Shintotsukawa town, Hokkaido. The same year, he moved to Shizukuishi town, Iwate prefecture where he started working as a photographer. He published his works, with the themes of natural features and cultures of Tohoku, in a magazine.

Since 1990, he visited Benzo with the changing of the seasons, kept capturing his continuous painting of esquisse, trying to find the meaning of lives. Selected “*Photo Documentary NIPPON 2006*” (Guardian Garden). He has held many exhibitions such as “*Living in Tomorrow*” pursuing Benzo for ten years, “*His Life, Country Songs*” (Nikon Salon Ginza, Nikon Salon Osaka, 2012) capturing someone who lives a self-sufficient life in a thatched roof in Iwate Prefecture, “*For the Newly Spun Thread*” capturing today’s festivals of Tohoku (Nikon Salon Ginza, 2015, which won the 40th Ina Nobuo Award).

Benzo died in April, 2012, age 92, and Okuyama continues to shoot his cherished and nurtured gardens and esquisse left behind. Received the Photographic Society of Japan Newcomer’s Award in 2018 for “*Benzo*”, his self-published selection of photographs taken over many years and for his exhibition “*Gardens and Esquisse*” (Nikon Salon Ginza, Nikon Salon Osaka). Published “*Gardens and Esquisse*” MISUZU Shobo, Ltd. in April, 2019.

The Hidano Kazuemon Award

Junichi Ota

Lives in Nara



Born in Nara in 1950. Left School of Political Science and Economics, Waseda University. Graduated from Osaka Photography School (now known as Visual Arts Collage, Osaka). Became a freelance photographer after working as a cameraman for a newspaper.

Since 1983, he has photographed Koreans living in Ikaino, Ikuno ward and Okinawans who populate Taisho ward, Osaka city. From 1998, he visited sanatoriums for leprosy shooting patients, landscapes and details of the rooms. Around this time, he started shooting photos of unassuming flowers blooming in the industrial area of Osaka bayside and published first color photography book “*Kegai no Hana [Flowers in a Forgotten Land]*” (BRAIN CENTER) and won the 1st Lifetime Achievement Award of the Photographic Society of Japan. From this time, he started displaying photographs which show not people but things with the traces of daily lives of humans and nature.

Walking all 24 wards in Osaka shooting streets without people, he published a book “*Cities of Crowds*” (BRAIN CENTER) in 2007. He received the 34th Ina Nobuo Award for the exhibition “*My Father’s Diary*” (Nikon Salon Ginza, Nikon Salon Osaka, 2009) which consists exclusively of the photographs of his late father’s diary which he wrote in every day for twenty years even when suffering from dementia. From this, we can see clearly how he aged and changed through his words and his handwriting.

In the aftermath of the Great Hanshin Earthquake, he took photos of the burned Sugawara arcade severely affected looking downward as if he was praying. In 2015, he published “*Mujo no Sugawara Shotengai [Impermanent Sugawara Arcade]*” (BRAIN CENTER, 2015) featuring them and the landscape of Yamato district which had its highs and lows in its history. In “*Higata-ki [Record of a Tidal Flat]*” (KAIFUSHA, 2018), he captured the recurring effects of the world at the artificial tidal flat off Kishiwada which was an experiment in environmental restoration of Osaka bay. Recently he is trying to capture the never-ending eternal faces of life in his photographs.

Higashikawa International Photography Festival Photo Fiesta 2019

Award Winners' Exhibition

Date: 3 August (Sat.) – 28 August (Wed.), 2019

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:

Rosemary Laing (The Overseas Photographer Award)

Lieko Shiga (The Domestic Photographer Award)

Mari Katayama (The New Photographer Award)

Atsushi Okuyama (The Special Photographer Award)

Junichi Ota (The Hidano Kazuemon Award)

Event Schedule:

3 August (Sat.) 14:00-14:30 Award Ceremony

15:30-17:00 Opening Reception

4 August (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 Prize, the Special 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 Town of Photography

Culture Capital 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.

Since the declaration of the Town of Photography, Higashikawa has been a platform of meeting people, photography culture and nature over the last 30 years. Celebrating 120 years of resource development of the land, we declared the Culture Capital of Photography in May 2014, keeping in mind our motto “Take a picture, Save the picture, Share it with others” and with the determination to link photography and people across the world.