

Press Release



2021

The 37th Higashikawa Awards

The Town of Photography
Culture Capital of Photography

Information

Higashikawa International Photography Festival Office

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HIGASHIKAWA, KAMIKAWA-GUN, HOKKAIDO

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The 37th Higashikawa Award Winners

◆The Overseas Photographer Award : Mo Yi (China)

For his works such as *"Im, The Scenery Behind Me"* (1989), *"I am a dog."* (1996) and his accomplishments as a photographer.

◆The Domestic Photographer Award : SETO Masato

For his exhibition, *"Maps of Memory"* (Tokyo Photographic Art Museum, 2020).

◆The New Photographer Award : IWANE Ai

For her photobook, *"KIPUKA"* (Seigensha, 2018), and her works exhibited at *"Twilight Daylight: Contemporary Japanese Photography Vol.17"* (Tokyo Photographic Art Museum, 2020) and her photographic activities.

◆The Special Photographer Award : SHIRAIISHI Chieko

For her photobook, *"SHIKAWATARI (Deer Crossing)"* (Sokyusha, 2020)

◆The Hidano Kazuemon Award : NAKANO Masataka

For his exhibition, *"Tokyo"* (Tokyo Photographic Art Museum, 2019), and his works, *"Tokyo"* (Crevis, 2019), *"Tokyo Windows"* (Kawade Shobo Shinsha, 2004), *"TOKYO NOBODY"* (Little More, 2000) and his long-term achievements in photographing Tokyo.

Commentary on the Selection of the 37th Higashikawa Photography Awards

UENO Osamu

Higashikawa Photography Award Jury Committee

Selection of the 37th Town of Photography Higashikawa Award was carried out on March 3, 2021. Those nominated this year include 73 photographers for the Domestic Photographer Award, 88 for the New Photographer Award, 26 for the Special Photographer Award, 38 for the Hidano Kazuemon Award, and 29 for the Overseas Photographer Award. Although we expected fewer nominees due the COVID-19 crisis, in the end there was an approximate 10% increase from last year.

Like years past, the morning was spent examining photo books and resources. From the afternoon, the selection process began to choose 5 awardees from 205 photographers. Although two jurors were absent this year, they submitted their nominees in advance which was accounted for in the final count.

For the Domestic Photographer Award, it was a battle between three photographers in the final stages with SETO Masato winning after the final vote and discussion. Son of the Japanese father and Vietnamese mother, he has been going back and forth between Japan and Thailand, and his exhibition, *"Maps of Memory"* was a culmination of over 50 years of photographing the daily lives of the people, the regional characteristics, and society of various regions in Asia. His work exposes photography as a medium not only for "recording" but also as "memory". From his debut work, *"Bangkok, Hanoi 1982-1987"* to his most recent work, *"Silent Mode2020"*, each series and their well-planned exhibitions also have received high praise.

For the New Photographer Award, which each year sees a hard and close fight, those remaining in the final stage included IWANE Ai, SAITO Harumichi, TAGAWA Motonari, HAYASHI Noriko, MIZUTANI Yoshinori, and YAMAMOTO Ayaka. After several rounds of voting and discussion, IWANE Ai was selected for her overall activities including her photo book *"KIPUKA"*, publication *"Trip to Kipuka"*, and the exhibition, *"Twilight Daylight: Contemporary Japanese Photography Vol.17"* which includes new work taken in the spring under the declaration of the State of Emergency. While continuing traditional documentary photography methods, she goes beyond

orthodox frameworks with her dynamic style. This is no doubt appropriate for the New Photographer Award.

For the Special Photographer Award, SHIRAISHI Chieko was selected for her photo book, “*Shika Watari (Deer Crossing)*”, which captures Hokkaido’s winter and the scenery of Doto (Eastern Hokkaido) in a unique monochromatic tone. Her photographs capture the uniqueness of the region, the tranquil nature where migratory birds fly by the seaside and herds of Hokkaido sika deer cross frozen lakes. As these work focus on Hokkaido as subject matter, Shiraishi’s work perfectly fits the stipulations for the Special Photographer Award.

For the Hidano Kazuemon Award, NAKANO Masataka was chosen for his consistent photography of Tokyo. Although his retrospective exhibition “*Tokyo*” was held in 2019, the scenes of “*TOKYO NOBODY*” capture Tokyo without people, and with the COVID-19 crisis, the photographs take on new meaning. Reflecting how meaning changes according to the times is one unique quality of photography and awarding the Hidano Kazuemon Award to works that capture a region over a long period of time was a chance to revalidate the meaning of this award.

For the Overseas Photographer Award, after the explanations by juror SUGANUMA Hiroshi based on his careful research, Mo Yi was selected from China. As if overturning traditional photographic practices, Mo’s works embody the transformation from traditional realistic photography to conceptual realistic photography in China. While continuing to use photography as a medium, Mo was selected for his continual work that repeatedly explores visual experimentation.

Normally each year selection takes place around a round table, but this year, with the declaration of the State of Emergency, all the masked jurors assembled in a large room separated by a large table in order to prevent the spread of the virus. That being said, the selection process, with the fervent discussion and debate, did not change. It should be noted that a bento lunch was taken in the jury room, and many jurors enthusiastically examined resources even during that time.

Although 2020 will be remembered for the COVID-19 crisis, there were not a few occurrences with adverse conditions for photography and cameras. Despite this, the

fact that award selection could safely take place as in the past is no doubt a result of long history since the “Declaration of Town of Photography” in 1985 to today. Needless to say, this is due to the cooperation and sympathy of the people of Higashikawa. This year’s selection process will also be remembered for our increasing gratitude to the residents of Higashikawa.

The Jury Committee of the 36th Higashikawa Photography Awards

| | |
|--|--------|
| Anju <Photographer> | 36th – |
| UENO Osamu <Photo Critic>..... | 31st– |
| KAMIYAMA Ryoko <Curator, Japanese postwar art history >..... | 37th– |
| KITANO Ken <Photographer>..... | 33rd– |
| KURAIISHI Shino <Photo Critic, Poet>..... | 35th – |
| SHIBASAKI Tomoka <Novelist>..... | 34th – |
| NIWA Harumi <Curator>..... | 33rd – |
| HARA Koichi <Designer>..... | 34th – |

The Overseas Photographer Award

Mo Yi

Lives in Zhejiang, China



Born in Tibet, China in 1958. Gave up his career as a professional soccer player. In 1982, he encountered a camera and decided to create a world in which he expresses himself freely through photography, like in literature or paintings. Made his debut with his solo exhibition *“Father”* (large-scale salon exhibition at Tianjin museum). He distanced himself from the strength and gentleness of his father's generation, depicted in the art world at the time, and showed a new perspective by expressing the complexity of human nature, including awkwardness and distortion. *“Im, The Scenery Behind Me”* (Tianjin City Central Park Exhibition Hall), presented at the group exhibition in 1989, was born from his performance art where he hung his camera behind his neck and focused it backward, taking pictures every five steps. The depression and isolation of the people before the Tiananmen Square Incident are shown in the pictures. Unfortunately, the pictures were removed from the venue only two days after the beginning of the exhibition. In his *“Dog’s eye”* presented in Popular Photography in 1995, he attached his camera with a mortar to the tripod, carrying it upside down, with a release in his other hand, shooting pictures without using the finder while walking down the streets. His works were misunderstood as “the world from a dog’s point of view”, so he changed the title to *“I am a dog.”* The idea that people who can’t articulate their opinions are the same as animals, so they don’t need to see the world led to the use of this method. In his 1997 work, *“Red flash-Me in my scenery”*; *“Red flash-Takako’s red skirt-Walking in Beijing”* in 2004, and the 2011 solo exhibition *“Landscape mixed with red”* (Zen Foto Gallery, Tokyo), he presented a collection of works which are dyed red, showing the world reached by the illumination of the flash, using a red plastic board. His works consider the psychological relationship between the color red, which has a specific meaning in China, the government, or time period and the connection with the people. In addition to the medium of photography, he continues to create works that question the nature of the individual, society, and the nation as a photographer.

<Artist Statements>

News of me winning this award came very suddenly. In China, it is impossible for me to receive such an award. Recently in China, photography that emphasizes style with a contemporary art-like accent is well-favored.

But I'm not surprised. My work has had an important role by pioneering endeavors in the field of photography. Before 2000, besides me, artists who made photographs that had experimental post-modern art concepts and reflected contemporary China did not exist.

On this occasion, I was very happy in the beginning to be able to meet Mr. Gao Yan, a photographer and researcher born in the 80s. He described the spiritual meaning of my photography as "provoke". To me, he is a true friend that goes beyond age generations. I'm very happy to be nominated by him.

There is more happy news. As the jurors for the Higashikawa Awards do not reside in China, it's not expected that they would know about the current situation in the country, but I hope they can catch a glimpse through my work. I believe my photography can convey ideas that go beyond geographical parameters and narration within the historical context of photography. Documentary photography as a method is not about expressing narration but conveying shared emotions and spirituality of people.

To be recognized by friends different in ethnicity and nationality is the greatest gift and encouragement for me. I am full of gratitude.

Mo Yi, April 11, 2021

The Domestic Photographer Award

SETO Masato

Lives in Tokyo



Born in Udon Thani, Thailand in 1953. Moved to his father's hometown, Fukushima prefecture in 1961. While studying at Tokyo School of Photography (now Tokyo Visual Arts), he met MORIYAMA Daido and was inspired to be a photographer. Worked as an assistant for FUKASE Masahisa and started his own business in 1981. Opened his own gallery Place M in 1987. In 1988, he visited his birthplace Bangkok, Thailand as well as Hanoi, Vietnam where his mother's relatives live, for the first time in 20 years. Published a photography book, "*Bangkok, Hanoi*" (IPC, 1989), a documentary depicting streets and people as well as an exploration of his own roots and won "the Photographic Society of Japan newcomer's award". Moved to Tokyo after some time in Asia and the Middle East. Won "the Higashikawa New Photographer Award" for "*Living Room, Tokyo*" (Place M, '92-'94), which captures a vibrantly international part of Tokyo, where people live in ordinary apartment buildings. Won two awards, "the 21st Kimura Ihei Award" and "the Society of Photography Award" for his portrait photography "*Silent Mode*" (Mole, 1996), a series of close portraits of women taken on the train using the silent mode on his compact camera to show the humanity within their expressionless faces. He displays his various talents by winning "the 12th Shincho Gakugei Literature Award" in 1991 for his essay, "*Tooi and Masato*" (Asahi Shimbun Publications Inc.1998), which documents his trip to explore his own roots through a recounting of his childhood memories, and also provides a first-hand account of a wide variety of complex Asian history.

His solo exhibition "*Maps of Memory*" (Tokyo Photographic Art Museum, 2020) was displays pieces from each period of his life to give a comprehensive overview of his works, from his first works, "*Bangkok, Hanoi 1982-1987*" to the latest "*Silent Mode 2020*". Has documented the people, lives, climate, nature and society of various Asian countries over more than a half a century.

<Artist Statements>

In 1984, the town of Higashikawa declared itself a town of photography, and to me, who had just decided to be a photographer, it was a place I strived for. Now after some 40 years, it is with great pride for me to receive the “Domestic Photographer Award”.

I first visited Higashikawa in 1992 when my teacher, Masahisa Fukase, was awarded the “Special Photographer Award,” but due to a sudden accident just before the award ceremony, so I had to receive the award on his behalf. Some years later I visited Higashikawa again to receive the “New Photographer Award”. It was the height of summer and the fields were vibrant green. White lilies fluttered in gardens by the house, and the unforgettable scent of summer floated here and there. I was surprised at how cold but tasty the tap water was, due to the melting snow of Mt. Taisetsu.

In my speech at the time, I said, “Not doubt I will come back for a third time.” Now that it has been realized, I look forward to visiting yet again in the future.

SETO Masato

The New Photographer Award

IWANE Ai

Lives in Tokyo



Born in 1975. Studied at Petrolia High School in the U.S in an off-grid, self-sufficient lifestyle. After coming back to Japan and working as an assistant, she started working as a photographer in 1996.

In 2006, she visited Hawaii for the first time and encountered Hamakua Judo Mission, the oldest Japanese Buddhist temple in Hawaii and learned about the history of Japanese immigrants. Fascinated by the enthusiasm of the *Bon* dance held in the temple, she commuted to Hawaii and visited *Bon* dances.

In 2011, she learned that the original song of “Fukushima-ondo” played live at the various *bon* dance venues in Hawaii, is the same as “Soma bon dance” played at the evacuation sites of the Great East Japan earthquake. Since then, she has repeatedly visited Fukushima and has an office in Miharumachi, Fukushima prefecture.

She repaired a rotating large-format panoramic camera used to take group photos at funerals in a Japanese photo studio in the 1930s and took a 360 degree photo of the evacuation area in Fukushima and the graveyard of the first generation immigrants. With the theme of the immigrants’ relationships between Hawaii and Fukushima, she published her first photography book, “*KIPUKA*” (Seigensha Art Publishing, Inc) in 2018, mixed with the pictures of a massive lava flow which occurred on Hawaii island in 2018 and showing the beautiful and harsh Hawaii nature. Received “the 44th Kimura Ihei Award” and “the 44th Ina Nobuo Award” for the book. Planned and produced as an associate producer a documentary movie “*A song from home*” in 1919 (Directed by Nakae Yuji, Telecom staff Co., Ltd.) depicting the interaction of the *Bon* dance players of Hawaii and Futaba town. Published “*Journey towards KIPUKA*” (Ohta Publishing.com) with her 12- year work of building bridges between Hawaii and Fukushima connected through bon dance. In her group exhibition, “*Twilight Daylight: Contemporary Japanese Photography Vol.17* (Tokyo Photographic Art Museum, 2020), she exhibited “*A NEW RIVER*”, the pictures of the cherry blossoms in the evacuation area of Fukushima and the night view of cherry blossoms in Miharumi, Kitakami, Tono, Ichinoseki and Hachinohe, deserted because of the corona disaster. Published “*A NEW RIVER*”(bookshop M) at the same time.

<Artist Statements>

“Kipuka” refers to “the place of new life,” in Hawaiian whereby seeds of plants that look like islands after a lava flow become the source of regeneration.

Following the Bon festival song, “Fukushima Ondo,” that came from Fukushima to Hawaii with immigrants, I have continued my journey. Researching over 12 years meant getting to know the endless time of folk songs for the Bon festival Dance being played. Due to the dramatic decrease in farmers due to the Great Famine of the Tenmei and Tempo eras, people came to Soma province from Echigo. I learnt that some brought Soma-yaki pottery techniques learned there back to Echigo, when a great many settled in Soma. I didn’t expect to learn that before long, sake, soy sauce, and shochu were stored in *tokkuri* sake bottles known as Matsugoya-yaki ware and brought to Hokkaido from Echigo by pioneers crossing the sea.

The enthusiasm of the people who have kept these songs alive for over a century, songs that have repeatedly disappeared or have been lost, made me realize that this is where I live with time within a long period of time and that it is a miracle. It is too great of an honor for me to receive the New Photographer Award.

IWANE Ai

The Special Photographer Award

SHIRAIISHI Chieko

Lives in Tokyo



Born in Yokosuka city, Kanagawa prefecture. Started taking pictures while traveling. Traveled various countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, India, Nepal and Pakistan and started photography seriously in the 2000s.

Published her first photo-book, “*Cacti and tails*” (Tosei-sha Publications) with the “buildings quietly taking a deep breath in the corners of the towns and things that are a little blunt”. Later attracted to the classic technique called “Zokingake method (cleaning with a cloth)” mixing oil paints on a layer of oil on the prints, which was popular among amateur photographers in the 20s and the 30s. At the solo exhibition “*Days on Penguin island*” held in 2012, she presented monochrome prints full of poetic sentiment visualizing her childhood funny memories. In 2015, she made them into her second photobook, “*SHIMAKAGE*” (Sokyu-sha). Unrealistic painting-like scenery, although they’re photographs, is presented by using the “Zokingake method”.

Actively works in Japan as well as overseas, for example, a solo exhibition “*SHIKAWATARI (Deer Crossing)*” (mind’s eye gallery Adrian Bondy, 2019) and joining Tbilisi Photo Festival 2016. “*SHIKAWATARI (Deer Crossing)*”, which she presented in Paris, are pictures she took while following herds of deer in eastern Hokkaido and were made into photobook, “*SHIKAWATARI (Deer Crossing)*” (Sokyu-sha) in 2020. In the snow-covered scenery, unique to Hokkaido, her quiet story of the deer enveloped in the soft light is displayed.

<Artist Statements>

I would like to express my deep gratitude for receiving this award.

My photo book “*SHIKAWATARI*” began in 2014 when I visited Hokkaido in the winter. Up to 2020, I visited Doto every winter to take photographs. I discovered the winter landscapes of Doto (Eastern Hokkaido) after feeling entrapped after the earthquake disaster of 2011. In the silent pure whiteness, the dim sight of a row of Hokkaido sika deer crossing a frozen lake was very striking to me. To be able to photograph nature and animal so up-close made me think about the view of nature held by our ancestors as well as the memory that was passed down to living creatures on Hokkaido. A strange sense of unity with nature boils up in me, and I feel I can finally breathe deeply for the first time since the 2011 disaster.

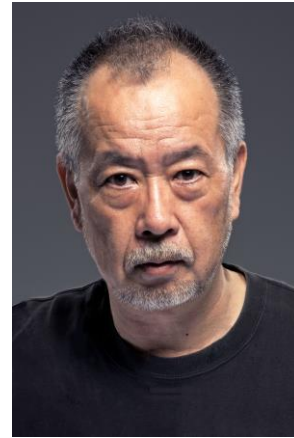
Last year, in the midst of the growing anxiety over COVID-19 crisis, my view of my photographs changed. I thought I really wanted to make this book then, and especially it is because of these difficult circumstances that I strongly felt I wanted to share this scenery with others and decided to publish it. I'm deeply grateful for all of those who have seen my photo book.

SHIRAIISHI Chieko

The Hidano Kazuemon Award

NAKANO Masataka

Lives in Tokyo



Born in Fukuoka prefecture in 1955. Has lived in Tokyo since 1956. Worked under the photographer, Akimoto Shigeru after graduating from the Faculty of Visual Communication Design at Musashino Art University, in 1979. Became independent in 1980 as a freelance photographer mainly submitting his works to magazines and advertising companies.

Presented his photography book, “*TOKYO NOBODY*” (Little More) in 2000 which captures the unseen deserted Tokyo Landscapes. The same book won “Photographic Society of Japan newcomer’s award” in 2001. Received “the 30th Kimura Ihei Award” for the photography book, “*TOKYO WINDOWS*” (Kawade Shobo Shinsha, 2004), capturing surreal elements of Tokyo, which can be observed from the windows of the buildings and houses. In his 20s, he traveled to his beloved New York, L.A and San Francisco in 1980s and captured American scenery using Kodachrome positive films. Published a photography book, “*MY LOST AMERICA*” and won “the 8th Sagamihara Photo Award” in 2008.

His solo exhibition “*TOKYO*” (Tokyo Photographic Art Museum, 2019-2020) was made up of his representative “Tokyo trilogy”, *TOKYO NOBODY* which captures the deserted Tokyo, *TOKYO WINDOWS* which captures the elements of Tokyo taken from buildings windows, and *TOKYO FLOAT* which captures Tokyo floating on the river presenting the ever-changing metropolis, Tokyo, over 30 years. *TOKYO NOBODY* has again gained attention now that the deserted Tokyo landscapes are harboring a new meaning as if predicting the current corona disaster. He continues to take these photographs today with this original viewpoint of an ever-changing metropolis, Tokyo.

<Artist Statements>

It is great news that I received the Hidano Kazuemon Award from the Higashikawa Awards.

In this global COVID-19 menace, our lives are full of a fear we have never experienced before, so this news is a small beacon of light for me.

I have continued to photograph Tokyo for over some 30 years since 1990, and being recognized for this work over such a long time makes me full of gratitude; it is a reward for all the hard work and struggle.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to all of the jurors who selected me, as well as all those connected to the Higashikawa Awards.

Although it is said that it is hard to capture Tokyo's bewildering pace of transformation, I've tried to come to understand this great metropolis by setting a few parameters.

I have observed the city through individual filters: in a moment when Tokyo is seen without people, Tokyo seen through various windows, and Tokyo seen from the river, which is the origin of the city's development.

I am greatly encouraged by receiving this award and hope to plan my next challenge.

NAKANO Masataka

Higashikawa International Photography Festival

Photo Fiesta 2021

Award Winners' Exhibition

Date: 31 July (Sat.) – 1 September (Wed.), 2021

Venue: Higashikawa Bunka Gallery

Time: 10:00 - 17:00

Admission: ¥100

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:

Mo Yi (The Overseas Photographer Award)

SETO Masato (The Domestic Photographer Award)

IWANE Ai (The New Photographer Award)

SHIRAISHI Chieko (The Special Photographer Award)

NAKANO Masataka (The Hidano Kazuemon Award)

Event Schedule:

31 July (Sat.) 13:30-14:30 Award Ceremony

15:30-17:00 Opening Reception

1 August (Sun.) 13:00-17:30 Panel Discussion

Panelists: award winners, judges and guests

※There is a possibility that schedule may be modified related to the current coronavirus situation.

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.