

We are pleased to announce the solo exhibition of Shintaro Sato, “Boundaries” at Communication Gallery Fugensha from October 5 to October 29, 2023.

Shintaro Sato is a photographer born in Tokyo in 1969. With the theme of the unique atmosphere - “soul” - of the land, he captures through his photographs the multiple layers of history and human activities that have continued uninterrupted, mainly in the field of Tokyo. One of his best-known works is the “Tokyo Twilight Zone” series, in which he photographed Tokyo at dusk with the intermediate eye of a fire escape, which is neither a bird's-eye nor a dog's-eye view of the city, and won the 2009 Newcomer's Award of the Photographic Society of Japan. He also won the 2012 Tadahiko Hayashi Award for “Risen in the East”, a multi-point observation of the construction of the Tokyo Sky Tree.

This work, “Boundaries”, was first shown at “CHIBA FOTO” in 2021, and the first solo exhibition of this series was held at PGI in March 2023. This exhibition will feature approximately 16 works in different presentations of the same series, including the latest work, which has not yet been exhibited.

The impetus for this work, “Boundaries”, came from his interest in the fact that the Imperial Palace once faced the sea and that the city (Edo/Tokyo) developed from its boundaries when he was photographing his previous work, “The Origin of Tokyo”.

In the area where Sato lives, there is a cliff that once faced Tokyo Bay and stretched for several kilometers, which was the boundary between the sea and land. He photographed the cliffs, which are thickly overgrown with vegetation, for several years, and used multiple photos taken at different seasons to create a single photograph. Sato says that the process of creating an image by repeatedly combining and recombining multiple images cut out along the shape of the plants and trees in the photograph is a process that eliminates arbitrariness as much as possible, and that sometimes the artist suddenly arrives at an unexpected overall image.

The photographs, which organically intertwine different times and different places, are dense and massive, beautifully representing the multilayered nature of boundaries.

The endless recombination process also accidentally creates glitches (bugs) when integrating data from multiple overlapping photographs. Using these glitches, the work is being further developed, and this exhibition will also showcase some of them.

During the exhibition, a gallery talk will be held with Osamu Ueno, a photography critic and long-time viewer of Sato's work, as a guest speaker.

In addition, a large-format calendar for 2024, “Luminous City” (designed by Seri Tanaka), produced by Fugensha and featuring 13 works from Shintaro Sato's urban nightscape series, “Night Lights”, “Tokyo Twilight Zone”, and “Risen in the East”, will be released on the opening day of the solo exhibition.

In 2016, when I photographed the vicinity of the Imperial Palace, I grew interested in the fact that this was where the city of Edo/Tokyo originated, in this quasi-liminal area that once faced the sea, and I began to think deeper about boundaries in urban spaces. The area where I live is riddled with geographical undulations, some of them steep like a cliff. It once directly bordered Tokyo Bay, and its kilometer-long precipices acted as a border between land and sea. This area is mainly the subject of this series. The cliffs are now overgrown with trees and grass and other greenery to the extent they appear like a forest. But this is a forest that is completely flat, lacks any depth, and rises up vertically. I sense a unique ambience here, one that belongs to boundaries and fringes. And as if to lend substance to this feeling, the area happens to be dotted with shrines, torii gates, graves and small worshipping sites—places that symbolize the divide between life and death, between this world and the next.

In the beginning I took photographs and made prints for each separate location, as if trying to shoot portraits. But then, when I was throwing around prints with the white border cut off, I noticed a new kind of space created from the overlapping images. Though they had been taken at different times and places, they corresponded in such a way as to form a new, beautiful space and time. I found myself fascinated by this accidental beauty that emerged in the periphery of carefully created photographs. The series came into existence when I experimented with the computer to reproduce the time-space created by the interactions of the prints. In the beginning I arranged and overlaid fragments cut straight from multiple images, but later decided to layer and combine elements such as leaves, branches, trees, flowers and so on as ready-made shapes. This approach may fall under the umbrella of the collage, but I think a more fitting word would be 'recombine.' In collages, image parts are added and arranged to gradually complete the whole. Recombining, however, involves the rearrangement of a limited set of image data, and the whole continues to change unexpectedly and in unforeseen ways.

Places and seasons interact and influence one another in the two-dimensional plane of these images, allowing the emergence of a complex, fluctuating space-time with no clear differentiation between up and down. This real, multi-layered and multi-temporal space-time differs from the easily-perceived perspectives of conventional photographs. The resulting images defy empathy, and they bring out the inherent materiality of photography.

SATO Shintaro

English translation by Robert Zetzsche

## SATO Shintaro

Born in Tokyo in 1969. He graduated from the Tokyo College of Photography in 1992. He joined Kyodo News as a staff photographer after graduating from Waseda University, School of Letter, Arts and Sciences in 1995, and has worked as a freelance photographer since 2002. His work is themed around the distinctive atmosphere – or the “soul” – of the land itself. Sato received the Newcomer’s Award from the Photographic Society of Japan in 2009 and the Tadahiko Hayashi Award in 2012.

His major exhibitions include Night Lights (PGI, 2014), The Spirit of the Place (Canon Gallery S, 2014), Tokyo Tokyo and TOKYO – Contemporary Japanese Photography vol.13 (Tokyo Photographic Art Museum, 2016), Civilization: The Way We Live Now (National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea, 2018, world touring exhibitions) and The Origin of Tokyo (PGI, 2019).

His publications include Night Lights (2014), Risen in the East (2011), Tokyo Twilight Zone (2008) (all published with Seigensha Art Publishing, Inc.) and Geography (Fugensha, 2019).