

Gyroscope in Her

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The strong impact of my first encounter with Rika Noguchi's "A Prime" series remains a vivid impression.

In December 1997, "The 6th New Cosmos of Photography" competition, sponsored by Canon Inc., was exhibited in the main gallery of the P3, Tochoji Auditorium. It included Noguchi's solo exhibition, "A Prime" in P3 sub gallery as a grand prix winner from the previous year.

In this series, Noguchi explored images of the sunrise as viewed from the top of Mt. Fuji. The first thing I saw in the exhibition space was its "light." It appeared to me as if each work was a window filled with light. With a closer look, I saw each unique light of a specific moment in a certain space. Of course, all photography manipulates light, but her work revealed a kind of light that I had never seen before. It was probably the glow of the world that Noguchi's genius had extracted.

Her distinct light and sense of "here and now," in other words, sense of absolute time and space, are the creative bases of Rika Noguchi's work, including that in the "A Prime" series.

In "Records of Creation" (1993–1996) and "Seeing Birds" (1997), a small still human figure is captured against a broad sky. The photographs are actually full of movement. Rather, I should say they feature a momentary stillness in the midst of motions. The world is constantly moving and Rika Noguchi freezes the fluid world in one moment. Of course the moment is special and irreplaceable "right now." She is an extraordinary hunter of such instances.

"To Dive" (1995) was photographed in a scuba training pool. Because they were taken under the water without any implication of a particular site, her sense of time and space are all the more defined. Underwater, we easily lose our senses of direction and position. I saw a universal humanity in the figures diving into such a world of confusion. Rika Noguchi herself is represented in those divers. Her incredible sense of direction searches out and captures the solid "here and now" in this fluid world.

A gyroscope would be a good metaphor for Noguchi's talent. When its wheel

is spinning at a high speed, its axis maintains the same orientation regardless of any movement of the base. She finds the axis under any circumstances. Her almost primitive instinct never loses sight of the pivot of time and space, which only exists at one moment in space.

Her absolute senses of direction and time appear rather distinctive in this contemporary world where everything is made relative. Her photographs redefine hidden yet solid centers, poles, and directions in our ordinary lives. These may well be records of the most provocative process of continuous transaction between mind and landscape—extraordinary expressions of the sense of living here and now.

After all, I would love to be a part of her creative process rather than just discussing it. I would like to encourage her to shoot a film. The site of the production would be the Tibetan highlands in the barren high dessert. The South and North Pole would be good as well. Or if possible, outer space would be an excellent location. I would have Noguchi shoot the “*To Dive*” series in space and make a film on the surface of the moon. It is thrilling to imagine what kind of view Rika Noguchi would see out there.