

Point-flash

For me, photography is here to show us the relation of how things come into existence, where in which everything here-now is seeping into each other and overlapping to be what it is.

When speaking of visual perception, an everyday scenery such as pebbles, flickering stars or TV screen (which is us in a sense) enters and exits constantly through retina, and the overlapping brings objects (which is us in a sense) into shape.

The object (which is us in a sense) is there before seen, but at the same time, it transforms itself into something new when it is seen. Gathering up what had been there may never reflect how the world is seen now.

By nature, there is a *void* embedded at the core of seeing. It is a God given *sign* that we have a blind spot at the centre of our retina.

Photography was invented in the 19th century. As Niépce has referred to the image produced as ‘retina’, photography is what reproduces our retina artificially and is a pleasure machine that let us identify what was unable to be seen by ourselves.

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The reason why photography functions as an existence proof lies in the fact that photography crystallizes our mechanism of perception in front of us.

“My gaze allowed the light to come in. A pattern was reflected on my retina which I perceived as a visual effect towards myself from an object. Another pattern recognized off the paper at my hand seems very similar to part of the first.”

When an object is perceived, the focus is not whether it merely occupied a position or not (whether it actually exists as an object) in an unequivocal and absolute space and time. What counts is that our *gaze* there, an intentionality to perceive objects through their mode and is normally invisible, is a constantly produced flash piercing through the inner and outer of the object (which is us in a sense). This is the function of photography. It is the gaze (which is us in a sense) that is referred to in a context of ‘that-has-been’, not the object.

Thus, “I am looking at eyes that looked at the Emperor.”^{*1}

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A. N. Whitehead, in his book “Process and Reality”, introduced the concept of ‘presented duration’ which is a significant moment for both subject and the world where various objects are felt by the subject as a pattern. This moment is not a mere instantaneous point found in an unequivocal space and time irrelevant to the subject. It is rather, where various objects encounter within the subject and the subject him/herself spin the thread to weave the world together with the objects. It is this very process that gives birth to the subject and brings extensive abstraction to his/her space and time. I have named my work series ‘Point-flash’ after the expression Whitehead employed in

“The Concept of Nature” to describe this moment.

As to photography, it refers to a material with pattern on its surface generated from silver halide particles or pixels accumulated from the effect of light that had reached a film or sensor in a fraction of second. And of course, it differs from an object (that is intentioned) which had been photographed. If the material with pattern (photograph) is a trace promising that ‘that’, an object, ‘has-been’, the only proof we end up in having is our memory of the pattern produced on retina by the object in front of our eyes. But then, who could ever prove that my memory here-now identifying the photograph to be equal to the trace of object is exact to the object that has been?

To put it short, the feeling of ‘there-has-been’ evoked through photography neither means a mere recalling of an object perceived through a visual analogy nor reproducing or re-experiencing of your own or other’s one time gaze fixed in a certain space and time. The pattern from spots on paper and my or your gaze which is an intention towards it are connected over and over again till it transcends our individual gaze from a certain space and time and reaches to be a common *gaze* itself. Feeling through photography is to begin from experiencing this gaze. It is just as understanding the progress of events recalled over a mist in a head, by comparing it to the progress of hands of a clock on a wall. Until you give a glance to the clock, your ambiguous feeling holds possibilities—whether it is long or short, real or unreal—yet to be determined. Through the progress of hand on the clock, the feeling represents or reappears itself with concreteness. Similarly, departing here-now off the pattern on paper, there comes the feeling of my or your gaze about to see what it is seeing, and that ‘that-has-been’. It already does not belong to my gaze here-now. But it has been here, because the photograph is. Every time when this feeling arises, the gaze exists externally and so does the time. This metonymy (substitution) is the very nature of photography.

Photography is not a mere proof solely of object ‘that-has-been’, nor a mere expression of a message or an idea by composing motifs that complies the code shared in a society. It is rather a machine that symbolizes how the world occurs in each moment through the process of individual abstractions, and that there are many aspects never to be abstracted at the same time. In other words, in terms of visual perception, photography is here to let us confirm every now and then that each subject’s *gaze* is something that is bringing here-now to be each moment (and it also implies that not everything is to be perceived) and creating the new world (which is us in a sense).

Y. Marui

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(Translated by Zaza Takada)

*1 R. Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans R.Howard, New York, Hill and Wang, 1982, p. 3.

Dear Mr. Marui,

I have looked at your series of works. If I may state my view, as a non-specialist, I have recognized your photographs as an attempt to understand photography in the theory of perception or ontology rather than through photography theory or semiotics. As A. N. Whitehead implies in his 'philosophy of organism', our perception is not based upon two terms relation between the perceived object and perceiving subject, but it consists of various factors — fluctuations of irradiated light and atmosphere, bodily state of the percipient including his/her glasses or contact lenses and ocular globe to optic nerves — all in its organic relations. Our presentational vision is not simply a representation of realities — whether it may exist — beyond our sensory perception. The elements causing a distortion between the presentational vision and entities is where our perceptual experiences occur and what they envelope. Or perhaps, it might be more precise to say that a variety of elements entangle intricately in a strain-locus, where space and time are structured, and let an event called perceptual experience to occur, and there, the eye of the percipient and the perceived object are merely a part of the elements. Just as how the light of stars interferes with one another, distorted by the gravitational field, and travels through the path extending for millions of light years in millions of years of time to reach the earth to be perceived *here-now*, an occurrence of an event such as perceptual experience may also be described as constituting a node through beings forming a community of existence in a distorted space with multilayer time depth. Whether or not we shall name the stars Virgo or Capricorn, the night sky only displays scattered spots. The meaning of things might be nothing more than our interpretations granted to ontological events after all. Not knowing what that is, having a blurry sight or vision of an illusion is our primeval scenes of perception, and nothing short of *seeing* itself and therefore *an emergence of new existence*. This is what I have found in appreciating the photographs.

Please excuse my wild interpretation as one of *seeing - an emergence of new existence* derived by your works.

Yours sincerely,

K. Yoshida

(Translated by Zaza Takada)