

Rinko Kawauchi

The river embraced me

18 November – 24 December 2016

For her second solo show at Meessen De Clercq, entitled “The river embraced me”, Rinko Kawauchi (b. 1972) reveals a series of forty photographs taken in the vicinity of Kumamoto, a town in southern Japan. The originality of the project lies in the fact that people living in the region were asked to show her a place that was particularly important to them, a place of memory, filled with recollections. Kawauchi then went to those places, waiting for the right moment or even the right season, and photographed what she saw in relation to the story that she had been told. This work based on collaboration, exchanges and trust emphasises the profoundly generous character of Kawauchi's work. The phrases accompanying the photos come from texts given to the artist by the local people. While making the hanging more dynamic, they open the works to interpretation.

Kawauchi's work is rooted in a transversal vision of reality; she captures the banality of everyday life, and transposes it into a poetry of the ordinary, celebrating the beauty of the world. Nature is omnipresent - thus respecting a Shintoist vision of the world - but is sometimes mistreated; the chosen framing, the light intensity or, on the contrary, the deep darkness sometimes disrupt an easy interpretation of the image. Kawauchi endeavours to reveal the delicacy and impermanence of the world, to observe lifecycles, to perceive natural phenomena as metaphors of human emotions, while distrusting clichés and stereotypes of what is a 'good photograph'.

The concept of space is crucial in her work. In this case, a space rich in narrative, but which also conjures up Japanese aesthetics; it is not surprising to find a spring, a waterfall, a river, a lake, a mountain, a tree, undergrowth, a shrine, a cityscape or the sky. Likewise, a concern for detail is preponderant; it produces an ambiguous feeling of intimacy and proximity to the subject of the photograph.

The essence of Kawauchi's work is less to reveal the possibilities of the photographic technique than to create poetic images drawn from intimate subjects. In doing that, her work expresses perfectly *mono no aware*, that Japanese aesthetic and conceptual notion that can be translated as 'the moving intimacy of things'.

Rinko Kawauchi lives and works in Tokyo. She recently exhibited at the Contemporary Art Museum (Kumamoto, Japan, 2016), at the Kunst Haus (Vienna, Austria, 2015), at the Fotomuseum (Antwerp, Belgium, 2014), at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts (Minneapolis, USA, 2014), at the Lesley University College of Art and Design (Cambridge, USA, 2014) and at the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography (Tokyo, Japan, 2012). Her work has also been shown at many group exhibitions including some at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; at the Fondation Cartier, Paris; at the Haus der Kunst (Munich); at the Jeu de Paume (Paris); at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and at the Rencontres d'Arles, among others.