

"A collection of universal photographs reflecting Inoue's visual intellect... I wanted to reproduce his world through my vision."

Global acknowledgement of Koji's works demonstrates well the universal quality of his photographs. A French image producer, Brigitte Lemaire, brought to the world "Look at Me, I Look at You, Koji Inoue, a Deaf Photographer" in 1996, and "Koji Inoue, Photographer beyond Signs" in 1998. Lemaire first encountered Koji's photographs in 1993 at the Arles International Photography Conference. We had an opportunity to interview Lemaire during her visit to Japan, to see how Koji's photographs have intrigued her.

Photographs that spoke to me with musical intonation

Q: What was your impression when you saw Inoue Koji's photographs?

A: I felt as if his photographs were talking to me. Although they were the pictures of scenes of Japan that I was not familiar with, I felt as if I had actually been there. I knew that Mr. Inoue was hearing impaired to begin with, and in my first encounter with his photographs I had quite a different impression compared to other people's work. Actually, it was the expressions of the subjects in his photographs. I know that certain intentional gestures are needed when communicating with the hearing impaired, and I think I saw this different intonation in facial and other expressions in his photographs, which can be identified as a stress in music.

Q: Your first feature on Inoue Koji, "Look at Me, I Look at You, Koji Inoue, a Deaf Photographer" consists only of Koji's photographs and sign language. Have you applied such a method of expression before?

A: I had wanted to present sign language beautifully, with hearing impaired actors. Moreover, I wanted to faithfully demonstrate the inspiration which I received from Inoue's photographs.

Unfortunately, sign language is not very familiar to people, say in France, Germany, or in Japan, and I had hoped to introduce its ability as an efficient and creative tool for communication."

Q: Your second feature, "Koji Inoue, Photographer beyond Signs," was presented as a documentary.

A: I wanted to meet his family, and see the actual places of his photographs. And that's why I decided on a documentary.

Besides, I had wanted to see Inoue's other negatives.

Q: The Fukuoka of today must have given you quite a different impression from Koji's photographs of "Omoide-no-Machi."

A: Yes. My first impression was that it was completely different. However, as I have returned to Fukuoka a few times, I've come to feel that people perhaps haven't changed, even given the transition of the city.

Based on the theme "The Visual Intellect," the third feature production is now in progress.

Q: Although you have never met Inoue Koji in person, how do you perceive him?

A: Naturally, I can never put myself in his place, so I can only speak of my interpretation. I think he was a man of high intelligence who had diverse interests, and sought constant communication with others. Inoue particularly excelled in "the visual intellect," and we are shooting another feature on him right now in Okinawa, based on this theme. I think Inoue had a concern for hearing impaired persons, more than being an artist. Perhaps, he was sympathizing with all the hearing impaired people of the world, not just in Japan.

Q: Is "the visual intellect" the theme that you have been pursuing?

A: Yes, I would like to pursue this theme because I myself was raised by hearing impaired grandparents. Presently, the visual intellect of the hearing impaired has been attracting attention in Hong Kong particularly, and in other parts of the world. I believe their intelligence has characteristics in common with the intelligence of, say, architects, chess players, or mathematicians. I would like to produce works in this sphere.

(プロフィール)

フランス生まれ。社会学者。美学博士号を取得。報道雑誌「レクスプレス」誌で編集などの仕事を経た後、88年からドキュメンタリーの映像作家として活躍している。障害者や児童虐待などを扱うドキュメンタリー映画を数多く制作。特に「耳の聞こえない人の文化」「視覚的知性」を伝えることをテーマとしている。ろう者の祖父母に育てられたことから、自らの母語は「手話」だと言う。主な映像作品は…

- 1990. "Les murs ont des oreilles" (聴覚の障害)
- 1994. "Une seule vie, un seul corps"
(たったひとつの生命、たったひとつの肉体)
- 1995. "Deaf to the image" (聴覚障害者の映像)
- 1996. "Look at me, I look at you, Koji Inoue a deaf photographer".
(私を見てください。私もあなたを見ます。聾者の写真家井上孝治)
- 1998/99. "Koji Inoue, Photographer beyond Signs"
(井上孝治 一表象を超えた写真家)

