

Gazing Into the World

I think Hisaji Hara and Natsumi Hayashi's photographs ask some seemingly playful but difficult questions: where does innocence begin and end? Where does that look in these young girls' eyes come from; does it emanate unknowingly from the libido as a form of Play Doh or is it planted there by the photographers to challenge the male gaze, to invert it, to let the viewer know that the Subject is watching the viewer just as intently as the viewer is watching the Subject or us? Who is watching whom in this mirror world? What can we get away with in the dark? Is there any part of ourselves that is hidden or in the shadows that is waiting to be uncovered, that is worthy, or perhaps unworthy, of being unearthed? How are we connected; to what extent are the games we play cruel or innocent, self-conscious or disparaging? What role does the tongue play in our lives, especially as adults as opposed to children, and apart from speech and the abstraction of literature, how can it be used as an instrument? To what extent will a child go to get what it wants, and does that give us any insight into what extent an adult would go? Is the person who is capable of being noble also capable of being slovenly at any given moment, and vice versa, and who are we to judge in this age of unruly informality? What is the true nature of our expectations; are they reckless or unreasonable or do we short-circuit them in the name of some hidden or built-in censoring mechanism? Do we dare to dream in public; do our dreams have the courage of their convictions; and conversely, are we capable of letting go, of letting ourselves go? Do our levels of tolerance have a threshold? And, almost coming full circle: where do the traits of bitterness and sweetness begin and end; are they two sides of the same coin, and is it true that death is the bitter-sweet end of disillusionment? For how long or to what degree are we truly unbound before we become fully conscious of who we are or think we are? Can we walk on air programmatically; I mean, can we reinvent that feeling after we have abandoned it or it has abandoned us? Is it possible to just sidestep reality, go about our business without paying any attention to the laws of nature? Can we jump for joy in the same way a child skips rope; can we bypass reality without crashing and burning? Can we rush in where angels fear to tread, and can we do so wearing a plaid dress or shirt? Can we be innocent together; can we double our pleasure, walk and chew gum at the same time? Is innocence possible in the presence of others, or is it only something we can play at? Let me repeat myself: can we rush in where angels fear to go, and can we do so without wings?

Richard Milazzo

Hisaji Hara and Natsumi Hayashi is a Japanese photography duo. Before start working together, they worked individually in Tokyo as photographers since 2009 on the series such as "After Balthus (A Photographic Portrayal of the Paintings of Balthus)" and "Today's Levitation" respectively. After experiencing the Great East Japan Earthquake and the subsequent nuclear disaster in 2011, they had moved out from Tokyo to Southern part of Japan and started working together as a duo. Since then, they have been working on the series called "Gazing Into the World" which mainly focuses on collaborating with local children in "Kyushu Island" where the duo currently is based in. Their work is collected by several museums around the world.

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Poster - Playing Twins, 2017, Ed. 1/5, Inkjet print on Hahnemühle Photo Rag® Satin paper (archival pigment print), 41 x 51 cm mounted
Reverse - Playing Levitation, 2017, Ed. 1/5, Inkjet print on Hahnemühle Photo Rag® Satin paper (archival pigment print), 41 x 51 cm mounted

HISAJI HARA AND NATSUMI HAYASHI

Gazing Into the World

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