

It took me some time to discover that Hanayo was taking pictures, and I was honestly surprised. She was a model, a singer and a noise system musician, while at the same time working hard to finish her studies and become a geisha. Being engaged in so many things, I confess I did not have very high expectations of the snaps she was taking here and there. But now that I have seen her photographs, I am taken aback by her fine images, published as *Hanayo Photograph Collection: Hanayome*" (February 1996, Shinchosha). What surprised me most about her work was her distinct style which can only be as a result of her individuality and pleasant charm. When she was a geisha apprentice, Hanayo had her tongue pierced and a lady bug tattooed on her skin. During that time, it was difficult to draw a line between herself as an artist and her own artistic work and expression. To accomplish the same style in her photography, she had to find a way of creating herself through the pictures.

She had to pay equal attention to the images of herself and to the images in her photography, which would finally lead to the creation of one single piece of art: "She and the Photographs". Although Hanayo's photography might be considered the outcome of the latest trends in fashion and art (though I have refused to judge her work as such from the very beginning), she goes further and succeeds in creating novelty - though the funny and most fascinating thing about her photography is that she does indeed seem to be totally immersed in these things. I do not want to imply that her photographs are the visible outcome of a trendy personality, but that she as an artist enters into an ambiguous relationship with her own art works. What are the characteristic features of the relationship between a photographer and her/his pictures? If the relationship is about self-expression, then there will be no gap between the person and the photographs. The photographer projects her/his inner world onto the outside, and through this creative process tries to differentiate or even to beautify reality (or the real self). Considering her gentle personality, the profound characteristic of Hanayo's work is that it cannot simply be described as "Her Photography". None of the photographs has a clear expressive meaning in itself, but they all give rise to the idea of how she understands her own existence, and are thus her 'other self', the other side of her existence. Two of her closest friends, Gabin Itoh and Shinichi Nakazawa, would call this the "Baroque of the Forest" principle.

Obviously her photographs are not about documenting woodland ecology. On the contrary, her work is full of plastic and artificial things. It is irrelevant whether the effect is created by using organic or inorganic material, because it emerges from the Baroque logic of overloading images with subtle, built-in information. If we consider the amount of information in Hanayo's photographs and call the excess of information "the forest", then the common element with baroque techniques are clearer. Before modern forestry criminally reduced biodiversity, virgin forest was composed of innumerable species of tree, moss, ferns, fungi - everything from microbes to small animals, living in various complex symbioses. In her photography, Hanayo picks up this idea and shows that it would be enriching and positive if West and East, children and adults, tattoos, piercing and the traditional Japanese arts, the scientific principle of rationality and various elements of superstition, would mingle and co-exist. This is what is shown through her photographic work. I trust people will not judge her photographs by their first rather artificial appearance, but will appreciate that "She and Her Photographs" is about the recuperation and the protection of the last resorts of nature.

*From "Photography as the Other Side of Existence" by Noi Sawaragi, shinchou, translated by Barbara Fuchs and Jules Marshall.
Cities on the Move*