

Jifei Kyoto

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We have been working on the series *Jifei Kyoto* ("Is/Not Kyoto") since 2015 when, inspired by "Kyoto," we embarked on an attempt to break stereotypes and reexamine the essence of photographic expression. This series explores a limitless world, drawing on new perspectives and a global awareness.

Since we took up residence in Kyoto in 2015, we have devotedly taken pictures of the city every day, yet nothing we shot managed to please us both. As seen by "us" through photography, Kyoto was full of so many diverse phenomena. We kept trying out all kinds of methods and techniques, but the more beautiful a picture looked, the more empty it felt, and the more well-defined it was, the further it was from the expression we were after. Until finally we lost sight of what it is we were trying to photograph. Even while frustrated that nothing was coming of the thousands of photos we took, we kept on shooting "unphotographable worlds" and "needless images."

Then one day we read an article about the subterranean water table that lies beneath Kyoto and which is said to hold as much water as is contained in Lake Biwa. Suddenly, everything we thought we knew about the history, cultural landscape, and physical features of Japan's thousand-year ancient capital was overturned by the realisation that deep-rooted watercourses sustain all life cycles here. We realised that all natural and human history, all phenomena that have continued to exist through time and space here, constitute an organic totality that is "Kyoto." All at once, all those "unphotographable worlds" and "needless images" harmonised into a single stream. This was not something that we made up; it had been there from the start. It just took us a long time to arrive at our understanding of it. The relationship among "Kyoto," "water," and "photography" served to deepen our awareness of nature and humanity, and gave us a new appreciation of how water circulation supports all life on earth.

Against the background of the profound time-space represented by stone, we can see, before our eyes, a recurrence of love in the interlay of fallen trees in the natural world. In the repetition of daily life and the never-ending flow of the Kamo River, we can know the joy of regeneration. *Jifei Kyoto*, which "is/not photography," is to us both a process and an inescapable future.

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