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RICHARD KOEK



AN UNKNOWN WORLD

There are worlds that exist just outside our conscious awareness. They pass through our vision, yet we fail to take notice. We don't always see what is there. This function, which human beings developed as a survival strategy, seems to be becoming increasingly important in today's world of information overload. At the same time, however, I believe that here in Tokyo, it's more important than ever to take an approach of awareness, if we wish to truly "see" Tokyo.

Tokyo is varied and complex. From the modern architecture that shapes the city's image to the hiking trails surrounded by nature, the contrast is stark. Traditional culture is ever prevalent, but so, too, are the forces that pull the city towards a new era. This duality is what truly defines Tokyo—a quality that has inspired my own works themed "Harmony of Dissonance".

This juxtaposition helps us discover new meaning into the mundane, opening an exciting new world where we can explore the true nature of things.

Richard Koek's beautiful photography captures the multifaceted beauty of Tokyo. Past and present. Fantasy and reality. An unknown world, even to a longtime resident like me. There is the familiar Tokyo everyone knows and there is the Tokyo unknowingly accumulated in my heart. Just as I gained a fresh perspective through Richard's work, I am confident his photographs will open the consciousness not only of those who live in Tokyo, but also those intrigued by this city, and provide an opportunity to see things from a new point of view.

Takahashi Hiroko

THE SOUL OF TOKYO

Standing on the sidewalk in a quiet residential neighborhood I heard grunts, slaps, and the shuffle of bodies from the ground floor of the building where the circular *dohyō* (ring) was located. I was granted rare access to the Kokonoe Sumo stable in Katsushika City, Tokyo. The most winning stable in terms of total *yūshō* (championships) won by its wrestlers. I was granted 40 minutes, and carefully instructed what I could picture and what I should refrain from. I was so grateful for this unique opportunity to capture this ancient sport.

Greater Tokyo has over 40 million citizens (twice as many as New York City). I knew it could not be contained in a typical photography book. When producing this book, I often absorbed my environment by walking around, carefully observing the urban habitat. I trusted my instincts to capture what I encountered by chance and deem beautiful, like my encounter with the construction worker taking a break and enjoying an ice cream cone.

They say language is the soul of a country, so how could I discover the soul of Tokyo if I don't speak the language? Not being able to rely on words to communicate emphasized the distance between me and my subjects. I relied on my vision, a happy place for any photographer. It also gave me the incentive to actively overcome this distance by capturing more intimacy such as my visit to the Kokonoe Sumo stable, a burlesque nightclub, or people in their homes. I started to liken traditional Japan: kimono, *sakura* (cherry blossom), sumo, *shitiken* (tea ceremony) – with the images everyone thinks of when they hear “New York City”: yellow cabs, Statue of Lady Liberty, the neon signs of Times Square. I realized that these traditional scenes were a

collection of cliches. Even though my stereotyped Western gaze is still very much appreciated by the Japanese, and cliches are often rooted in truths, my stories of Tokyo life had to be more than that.

A challenge was to avoid the theme of misunderstanding that can be found in the many ways the beauty of Japan has been described and depicted. The assumption that everything Japanese is strange and exotic. To capture without this judgement, I looked at Tokyo as being part of my own world. Finding my own authentic stories reflected in this urban life. Connecting mythic traditions and misunderstandings with the mundane of everyday life, discovering the beauty of their symmetry. This is the reason why the sumo wrestling scene was balanced with the intimacy of a team hairdresser resetting a young wrestler's *mage* (topknot) after his morning training, and why the ice cream cone the construction worker eats, brings such a significant nuance. Highlighting the familiar within a more tender perspective. Showing our humanity in three dimensions.

Though Tokyo seems to adhere to a tight social contract, in essence it is all chaos and a collection of single commonplace moments that are beyond my control. Maybe the soul of Tokyo is like the soul of any metropolis. The realization that our lives are driven by the same needs. That every city is beautiful because each is filled with hard working people, who commute from A to B, who pay bills and take care of family and loved ones. It turned out that the soul lies where I was able to create pathways to connect me with them.

Richard Koek





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amiami



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チケット 買取

アニメイト
秋葉原店
5F・6F

アニメイト

メイドカジノ

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TOKYO





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Change Machine

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たのこたつじん

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Surges

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410640
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クリア成功
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Anap girl