



World Photography
Organisation



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RINKO KAWAUCHI

OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO PHOTOGRAPHY AWARD 2023

EXHIBITION: 14 APRIL – 1 MAY 2023 | SOMERSET HOUSE, LONDON



The World Photography Organisation is delighted to announce the acclaimed Japanese photographer **Rinko Kawauchi** as the *Outstanding Contribution to Photography* recipient of the Sony World Photography Awards 2023. One of the most important Japanese photographers working today, Kawauchi has achieved international renown for her intimate and luminous images, capturing ephemeral moments of everyday life.

More than twenty images by the photographer will be shown at the Sony World Photography Awards 2023 exhibition, which returns to Somerset House, London from **14 April – 1 May 2023**. The selection, made by the artist, spans over twenty years of her career and highlights significant milestones and themes across some of her most iconic series: *Illuminance* (2011), *AiLA* (2004), *Utatane* (2001), and *Ametsuchi* (2013).

Kawauchi was born in 1972 in Shiga Prefecture, Japan and first began taking photographs at the age of 19. In the early 1990s she worked as a photographer for an advertising agency, before moving to a Tokyo studio to focus on making her own work. She first gained international attention in 2001

after the publication of three photobooks, *Utatane*, *Hanabi*, and *Hanako*. Two of the series went on to win Japan's most prestigious award for emerging photography, the Kimura Ihei Award.

Kawauchi is influenced by Shinto, which holds that everything has a spirit or energy, called 'kami'. Accordingly, Kawauchi's lens is patient and empathetic towards its quotidian subjects: shimmering lights reflected in a mirror, a pair of hands braiding thread together, sunbeams flooding through the canopy of a forest. Her photographs have been compared to haikus, a style of short-form poetry originating from Japan which through its lines often reflects upon a wider meaning or truth. So too, Kawauchi's spare visual language gives these seemingly small moments a sense of great weight and significance.

The body of work she presents in the Sony World Photography Awards 2023 exhibition charts pivotal series from across her career. Her series *Utatane* (2001), *AILA* (2004) and *Illuminance* (2009) exemplify her idiosyncratic style, with glimpses of everyday scenes which reflect upon the cycle of life, and its fragility – the fraying of a net, a mouth opened to reveal a row of fillings, a blade of grass with droplets of morning dew. The exhibition also features work from *Ametsuchi* (2013), a series which marks a departure both in terms of technique and style. Following a dream, Kawauchi became fascinated by 'noyaki (burning field)', the controlled burning of crops before replanting. She has made numerous trips to southern Japan, where, using a large format camera mounted on a tripod she has captured these fires, contemplating the idea of the ritual cleansing of the earth, and her own rebirth.

Commenting on her acceptance of the award, Rinko Kawauchi says: *'This award is recognition of my work, and will encourage me in my future activities. The exhibition brings a body of work that not only characterises my practice, but also presents an ambitious series created with a different method and approach. Through my photography, I seek to create works of art that act as a signpost for me to examine more closely the experiences I am living and what I am looking at.'*

The *Outstanding Contribution to Photography* honours a person or group of people that have made a significant impact on the photographic medium. As its 16th recipient, Rinko Kawauchi joins a distinguished list of iconic names including William Eggleston (2013), Mary Ellen Mark (2014), Martin Parr (2017), Candida Höfer (2018), Nadav Kander (2019), Gerhard Steidl (2020), Graciela Iturbide (2021), and Edward Burtynsky (2022) to name a few.

The overall winners in the Student, Youth, Open and Professional competitions of the Sony World Photography Awards 2023 will be announced on 13 April 2023. For more information about upcoming announcements and winners please visit www.worldphoto.org

IMAGES AVAILABLE AT WORLDPHOTO.ORG/PRESS

PRESS CONTACTS

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NOTES TO EDITORS

RINKO KAWAUCHI

Born in 1972 in Shiga Prefecture, Japan, Kawauchi lives and works in Chiba. Kawauchi simultaneously released a series of three photographic books in 2001 – *UTATANE*, *HANABI*, and *HANAKO*, and was awarded the prestigious 27th Kimura Ihei Award the following year. She received the eminent Infinity Award in 2009 in the Arts Category by the International Center of Photography, and in 2012 the 63rd Ministry of Cultural Affairs Newcomer of the Year Award, and the 29th Shashin no Machi Higashigawa Native Japanese Artist Award. Kawauchi's work has been the focus of several solo exhibitions both in Japan and internationally, including *AILA + Cui Cui + the eyes, the ears* at the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain in 2005 and at The Photographers' Gallery in 2006, *Illuminance* at Gallery at Hermès, New York, in 2011, *Illuminance, Ametsuchi, Seeing Shadow* at Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography in 2012, and *Kawauchi: The river embraced me* at Contemporary Art Museum, Kumamoto in 2016. She has also hosted and participated in a multitude of group exhibitions, including the Rencontres d'Arles in 2004, *New Documents* at the Brighton Photo Biennial in 2010, and the Prix Pictet at the Victoria & Albert Museum in 2017. Her solo exhibition *M/E: On this sphere Endlessly interlinking* is currently open at Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery. www.rinkokawauchi.com

ABOUT SONY WORLD PHOTOGRAPHY AWARDS

Produced by the World Photography Organisation, the internationally acclaimed Sony World Photography Awards is one of the most important fixtures in the global photographic calendar. Now in its 16th year, the free-to-enter Awards are a global voice for photography and provide a vital insight into contemporary photography today. For both established and emerging artists, the Awards offer world-class opportunities for exposure of their work. The Awards additionally recognise the world's most influential artists working in the medium through the Outstanding Contribution to Photography Awards; previous recipients include Martin Parr, William Eggleston, Candida Hofer, Nadav Kander, Gerhard Steidl, Edward Burtynsky and Graciela Iturbide. The Awards showcase the works of winning and shortlisted photographers at a prestigious annual exhibition at Somerset House, London. worldphoto.org/sony-world-photography-awards-exhibition

ABOUT WORLD PHOTOGRAPHY ORGANISATION

World Photography Organisation is a leading global platform dedicated to the development and advancement of photographic culture. Its programming and competition initiatives provide valuable opportunities for artists working in photography and help broaden the conversation around their work. The Sony World Photography Awards is World Photography Organisation's principal programme. Established in 2007, it is one of the world's biggest and most prestigious photography competitions; celebrating the work of leading and emerging practitioners and attracting tens of thousands of visitors annually to its exhibitions worldwide. World Photography Organisation is the photography strand of Creo, responsible for delivering initiatives and programming across three sectors: photography, film and contemporary art. Follow the World Photography Organisation on Instagram ([@worldphotoorg](https://www.instagram.com/worldphotoorg)), Twitter ([@WorldPhotoOrg](https://twitter.com/WorldPhotoOrg)) and LinkedIn/Facebook ([World Photography Organisation](https://www.facebook.com/WorldPhotographyOrganisation)). Our hashtags to follow are #sonyworldphotographyawards #swpa #swpanews.

CREO

Creo initiates and organises events and programming across three key strands: photography, film and contemporary art. Established in 2007 as World Photography Organisation, Creo has since grown in scope, furthering its mission of developing meaningful opportunities for creatives and expanding the reach of its cultural activities. Today, its flagship projects include the Sony World Photography Awards, Sony Future Filmmaker Awards, PHOTOFAIRS Shanghai, Photo London and the forthcoming PHOTOFAIRS New York (Sep 2023). Working in partnership with Angus Montgomery Arts, Creo helps deliver the group's ventures, comprising some of the world's leading art fairs. Taking its name from the Latin for 'I create', it is in this spirit that Creo sets out to empower and give agency to creative voices. www.creoarts.com

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All images © Rinko Kawauchi: *Untitled*, from the series “Illuminance”, 2011; *Untitled*, from the series “Illuminance”, 2009; *Untitled*, from the series “Illuminance”, 2011; *Untitled*, from the series “Illuminance”, 2009