

IZIMA KAORU

"Landscapes with a corpse"

"The death of a beautiful woman is unquestionably the most poetical topic in the world," wrote Edgar Allan Poe. Izima Kaoru encourages his female models to develop their own ideas about their transience and their death and translates these ideas into photographs. This eventually led to a series that was totally focused on the requests of his models and the scenario of death. Based on classic depictions of landscapes and interiors, each of his highly aesthetic photographs gradually zooms in on the victim who died in perfect beauty, even down to a detailed close-up of her face.

What is so remarkable about these photographic series is his method of depiction. Apart from the victim, all his scenarios are completely without humans, whether they are secluded streets, landscapes or rooms. They are devoid of any form of life, and nothing else exists. The viewer first experiences this state of desertion through a photograph taken from a distance. We are under the impression that the dead woman is looking at her own body, which is no more than a shell. Death is celebrated by Izima Kaoru in style, as a special event. In doing so he refers to three classic genres: Japanese landscape photographs with the traditional aesthetic element of transience, scene-of-crime photos with their documentary quality - an influence that cannot be denied in Kaoru's scenes - and fashion photography "with its demonstratively erotic and situational artificiality"¹.

Izima Kaoru himself puts it like this: "Death is inevitable for everyone. Even the fear of death can hardly be avoided by anyone. Nevertheless, it is possible to come to terms with death or with the idea of dying, to work through it in a lengthy process and ultimately to accept it."²

In Buddhism the practice of meditating on death is seen as a means of detaching oneself from the diversions of life. Izima Kaoru's models hardly present themselves as renouncing life, yet Izima does ask us to consider that feigning death will help them towards accepting it. Whether this is correct or not, it is certainly true that death is seen differently in traditional Japanese culture than in the West.

To understand the context of these photographic series, we need to grasp the artist's method of depiction: he certainly does not see himself as a reporter or photographer who wishes to illustrate reports on unusual deaths or human relationship dramas through the presentation of shocking imagery. Rather, he wants to stage death in the context of enticement and temptation and to do so with attention to the most minute detail. He has well and truly mastered the art of depiction. Obviously, his scenes of death in these "Landscapes with a Corpse" are imaginary. Yet they refer to a long tradition of romantic themes, tragic ends and "beautiful deaths".

ONE SUN

In 2009 Kaoru has finished a new photo series "ONE SUN". In his new work Kaoru takes pictures with fish-eye lens and long term exposure of the rising and declining sun at the different places in the world. The result is a purist landscape-photo, mounted behind plexi. He transforms his idea of photographing the sun from different places on the earth from sunrise to sunset into a formal spiritual statement - "one sun" which we are sharing with everybody on earth. The "one sun" photonegatives are cut round and framed in a round frame, thus he consequently intensified the sun as a metaphysical circle.