

'Background'

When I look at photographs / images showing people or a story my attention is sometimes drawn not to what they are focusing on but to their backgrounds. Even family photographs or those related to personal memories have backgrounds evoking a scent of the time or something particular to the place where they were taken. They contain the context in which they were shot in the first place, or to put it more strongly, their so-called historical background.

For this series of work I am using photographs of me as a child. They only show a part of my personal history (background). All of them are well known to me as I have seen them in family albums many times in the past. However, as my record of the time in which they were taken is dim, the experience of it can almost be boiled down to something I have only 'seen in a photograph'. They made me think of pulling to surface the backgrounds against which I am photographed by deleting the person or the story represented by my photographed self.

The method involves direct application of paint atop of the figure (= deleting) while simultaneously re-constructing the landscape seen in the photograph's background relying on the information it already contains. Naturally, I am not likely to remember what was in the background at the time. Therefore, the strokes of my brush reconfirm the surface of a photograph / image. The image appearing in such a process is only made possible by integration of photography and painting, which allows its temporary dislocation from my personal memory. From time to time, whenever the painted silhouette of myself catches my eye, I have an impression of being able to revisit – or visit anew – the places I am photographed in.

Looking at the deleted silhouette and the background emerging from the photograph, what became clear to me is that photography not only enables a record of my personal history (background) but it also constructs it. This results from materiality of every single photograph.

Keisuke Shirota
Translation by Jelena Stojkovic

BASE GALLERY / MATRIX JAPAN S.A.
Koura Daiichi Bldg.1F, 1-1-6
Nihombashi Kayabacho Chuo-ku
Tokyo 103-0025 JAPAN
tel: 81 3 5623 6655
fax: 81 3 5623 6656
www.basegallery.com