



# RIN KO

**Artist: Rinko Kawauchi**

**Writer: Pedro Vicente**

## *Aila*

### **Details of Nature**

The human eye is an optical system that reflects and records all that exists and happens in front of it. However, the human being does not perceive everything that is registered by his eyes. The brain opts to notice whatever is of interest or arouses our curiosity. Some of our selection criteria are imposed by the environment to which we belong – and help us get our bearings in life and do our daily tasks. But depending on our own individual and personal situation, circumstances and attitude towards life, we choose to see or not to see what happens around us. Some persons watch and observe thoroughly the environment that surrounds them. Others look without seeing.

Japanese photographer Rinko Kawauchi watches and observes in great detail what occurs around her. And she photographs it. In her work, she shows us things that are around us but most of the time we do not notice them even though everyone recognises them. Kawauchi confronts her way of photographing how we look at things. She uses photography to reveal, to make visible what was, before, invisible. Her novel images enrich our vision of the world and expose details of unnoticed nature, renovated by the rediscovery of everyday objects and situations, transforming the known into unknown. Kawauchi, by fragmenting the reality of natural moments, turns her photographs into postcards and still images of daily life with an unusual beauty.



Kawauchi's work was shown in PHotoEspaña 2006 in its ninth edition and with the generic title of 'Naturaleza:', based on the relation between nature and culture and the new interpretations and representations of the concept 'landscape'. Kawauchi's photographs were part of the exhibition 'Madre Tierra', curated by Horacio Fernández, which also displayed the work of John Davies and Edward Burtynsky. The exhibition collected three different approaches to the earth, with the common factor of proposing visual reflections on landscape and the environment. Whereas Davies' work, 'The British Landscape', reflects on the survival of the traditional British landscape in the post-industrial era, Burtynsky's focus on the alteration of landscape caused due economic exploitation in developing countries. The work exhibited by Kawauchi was her series 'Aila', a work based on the fragility and fertility of the Earth, an emotional view of nature found on the enhancing of the detail.

Kawauchi shows in her series 'Aila' that she has a peculiar and distinctive vision of nature. Her work is a poetic exaltation of nature focused on its fragile and ephemeral essence; but also, it draws a strong influence from pictorial Japanese tradition to mythologize love to nature, admire its fleetingness and depict the detail. Even though she photographs nature, in her work there are no landscapes, but portraits of nature. She does this with a predilection for the detail; she doesn't achieve a vision of a whole but as small portions of nature, adding in her photographs an ample and global vision of the complexity of nature. Although the subject matters in 'Aila' are small, even minuscule – an ice cube melting, a drop of milk, a reflection on the water, a wave crashing into the coast or a flower covered in dew. They reveal exquisite fragments of the significance and beauty of nature and the fleeting character of life.

But 'Aila' also gazes at nature as the origin of life and its regenerative essence; nature understood as life and represented as instantaneous existence. She portrays daily life as a place where everything begins and ends, and through that process, nature regenerates itself, constituting a cycle – the life cycle. Photographs of a chick opening an egg, the light of a sunrise or the appearance of an animal's head at birth illustrate Kawauchi's lyrical and colourful view of nature, revealing the presence in her work of the celebration of life and, therefore, death.

Kawauchi's work not only exposes delicious and attractive images of nature, but a philosophy of life. The importance of the intimate and







the careful attention to small details are reflected in the presentation of her work. She considers very carefully how and in which context her images will be seen, having predilection for small and personal spaces. But above all – for her – the intimacy of the book is the perfect format to display her photographs. To show her photographs in the form of a book is even more important than exhibiting the prints themselves. For her, an exhibition is a reward but not an aim itself; she only considers a series finished when she publishes a book, even if she has to publish it herself. Her exhibitions are often in confined spaces where her photographs can be appreciated at a more intimate level and her work is brought closer to the viewer as it would happen in a book.

Certainly, photography constitutes a vital element for our psychical assimilation and comprehension of the world. And this is not because of the representation of life or even the symbolisation of death, but because of the exaltation of life even in the representation of death. Rinko Kawauchi's images formulate an exaltation of not only life and death, but also of nature and its life cycle. They provide us with a precious instrument to understand and appreciate nature and, therefore, our own daily lives. Her images glorify with their formal perfection a world not always perfect, imposing on us an immediate response – to value more the beauty around us and, maybe, learn to see.