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ASATSU-DK INC.

“Photo Letter from Minami Sanriku 2011.3.11~2011.9.11” Won the Kodansha Publication Culture Award for Photography

ASATSU-DK INC. (President & Group CEO: Yoji Shimizu; Head Office: Chuo-ku, Tokyo; hereinafter “ADK”) is pleased to announce that Shinichi Sato has won the 2012 Kodansha Publication Culture Award for Photography for “Photo Letter from Minami Sanriku 2011.3.11~2011.9.11.”, a collection of photographs taken by Shinichi Sato which was produced and published by ADK in collaboration with its subsidiary, Nihon Bungeisha Co., Ltd..

“Photo Letter from Minami Sanriku 2011.3.11~2011.9.11” is a collection of photographs of the town of Minami-Sanriku, Miyagi Prefecture, which suffered enormous devastation in the tsunami of March 11, 2011. Despite suffering directly from the disaster himself, Mr. Sato continued to take photographs of the town from the day of the earthquake onward. For each copy of the photography collection sold, 300 yen have been donated as aid money to the Town of Minami-Sanriku.

Mr. Sato’s photography collection was selected out of a field of over a hundred candidates, including other offerings related to the earthquake as well as fashion, scenery, entertainment, animals and other themes. After being selected for the second round, in which only a dozen or so candidates remained, Mr. Sato won the award in the final selection held March 19, 2012.

The photography collection is part of an ongoing effort by Mr. Sato to convey the true state of the stricken region by documenting its recovery over a 10-year span, taking the view that “the important thing is to continue.” With the cooperation of Mr. Sato and other local citizens, ADK is planning a continuing series. ADK has decided to publish the second edition, “Photo Letter from Minami Sanriku 2011.9.11~2012.3.11” in June 2012 (scheduled).

<How Shinichi Sato Won the Kodansha Publication Culture Award for Photography >

This year's contest saw a great number of entries related to the Great East Japan Earthquake. In awarding the prize to "From Minami Sanriku" the judges, prominently including Kishin Shinoyama and Takeyoshi Tanuma, noted that "only this man could have captured these photos."

Among the other entries on this theme were photography collections by large organizations, such as newspapers and publishing companies, as well as by other recovery charities. Mr. Sato's oeuvre, in contrast, quickly became the talk of the event as the product of one individual photographer.

With comments such as, "You feel the grief in this collection precisely because of the spare, white feel of the cover and the restraint in the photos," and "I like that this collection doesn't make a frontal spectacle of the town's sadness and misery," the judges returned a unanimous verdict awarding the coveted prize to "From Minami Sanriku"

<Shinichi Sato's Remarks>

When ADK first approached me about making a photography collection, I honestly wasn't interested. I had just lost my home in the tsunami. But I continued taking pictures, determined to convey a scene of Minami-Sanriku before the tsunami and now. Now I am really glad I put my best efforts into the project. I hope that through this photography collection I can convey my impressions to as many people as possible. The courage to do photography has risen in me again. My hometown has given me that courage. Thank you very much.

<Comment by Makoto Shiina From the Key Points on the 2012 Kodansha Publication Culture Award for Photography >

The Power of Photographs

An A5-size book in landscape orientation. A white cover with a title and a handwritten message from the author. This volume is a remarkably restrained production. This photographic record with minimal text is a documentary of Minami-Sanriku, a town that was laid waste by the devastating earthquake and tsunami of March 11, 2011, beginning with the tranquil, peaceful scenery the town once enjoyed and proceeding to document the awesome destruction wrought by the tsunami. These images speak only of the wretchedness of the scene in the wake of the disaster. We see the hardship in the faces and figures of the survivors, and the epilogue that is also a prologue, of the slow return of smiles to the faces of the townspeople as they rebuild their lives.

Here and there, in spare, handwritten prose, the author offers his descriptions and impressions.

The violent, ferocious, merciless attack of the tsunami. The grief, anger and lamentation of people at their wits' end. This understated volume crystallizes the experience of Minami-Sanriku without ornamentation.

Of this year's 15 finalists, five adopted the Great East Japan Earthquake as their theme. The overwhelming majority of entries dealt with earthquakes in one way or another. This was only to be expected.

From among such a field, "From Minami Sanriku" received the solid support because the author forced himself to adopt a bland, almost indifferent turn of phrase. The prose of the author, who was himself a victim of the disaster, leaves many things unsaid. Instead, his profound, ineffable sadness, his anger without limit, are mutely bequeathed to us in photos. With this photo collection before my eyes, I am struck dumb by the horrific reality, to think of the words, the feelings that are left unspoken. Shinichi Sato's work leaves me in awe of the power of photographs.

<Overview of Photography Collection>



Photo Letter from Minami Sanriku 2011.3.11 ~ 2011.9.11

Photographer/ Author : Shinichi Sato

Official URL: http://www.minamisanku-kara.com/index_en.html

Format: B5 paper/96 pages

Publication Date: September 27th, 2011

Price: 1,500 yen (tax excluded)

*From each purchase, 300 yen will be donated to
Minami-Sanriku Town.

Publisher: ADK Support Project for Restoration of MINAMI SANRIKU

Released By: NIHONBUNGEISHA Co.,Ltd

“Photo Letter from Minami Sanriku 2011.3.11 ~ 2011.9.11” is full of warm-hearted images which could only be photographed by Mr. Shinichi Sato, a local disaster victim who continues to live in the disaster area even now. The photographs show the true form of townspeople instead of contrived images. More than anything, the photography collection is filled with energy for reconstruction.

Mr. Shinichi Sato gave the following statement regarding the publishing of the photography collection:

“Everything I owned was washed away, including my studio and my home. However, I felt that I must do something as a photographer who has made a living in this town. I decided to show my gratitude to the town through photographs. I feel very strongly about this mission. I want to convey the strength and warmth of an irreplaceable town and its citizens. I hope that the photos which I take now will send a message to the future. I believe in the power of photography.”

<Author Profile>



Shinichi Sato

Born in 1966 in Minami-Sanriku Town, Motoyoshi County, Miyagi Prefecture. Together with his parents, operated a photography studio name “Saryo Studio” in Minami-Sanriku Town. However, he lost both his home and studio to the tsunami occurring after the Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11th, 2011. “I will take photos from the hardest of times. This way, whatever happens in the future, we can all overcome together.” Using a single camera which he took before evacuating, beginning from immediately after the earthquake, he continues to photograph the devastated town’s path to reconstruction.

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<Reference: Contents of Photography Collection>

*Please contact the representative listed in the inquiries section regarding the use of images or photographs contained in this photography collection, or regarding coverage on the author Mr. Shinichi Sato.

