Daido Moriyama

1938–present · Japanese

Grainy, blurry, out of focus — the radical rejection of technical perfection



Stray Dog, Misawa · 1971

"Photography never reaches a state of completion. That is what makes it interesting — amazing."

— Daido Moriyama, Aperture, 2011

KEY WORKS

- Stray Dog, Misawa, 1971 — the definitive self-portrait as animal
- Are, Bure, Boke (Grainy, Blurry, Out of Focus) — the aesthetic manifesto
- Shinjuku photographs — Tokyo's pleasure district as labyrinth
- Provoke magazine, 1968–69 — the radical photography journal

CONTEXT

Moriyama and a group of photographers created Provoke magazine in 1968 — subtitled 'provocative materials for thought.' They rejected technical perfection in favor of what they called are, bure, boke: grainy, blurry, out of focus. The result was a photography that felt like raw experience, like the city photographed from inside a fever. Stray Dog — a close-up of a stray dog in the street — is considered by many to be the definitive anti-portrait, a self-portrait by association.

WHY THIS PHOTOGRAPHER

Moriyama is the radical corrective to the technical refinement of Penn and Karsh. He demonstrates that running through the street with a camera at hip height can produce images as intentional as a carefully composed studio shot. He also introduces the photobook as an art form in its own right.

MORE KEY WORKS



Lettre à St-Loup, 1990 (are, bure, boke)



Self-portrait, Shinjuku

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Moriyama's photographs are deliberately grainy, blurry, badly exposed by conventional standards. Is that a style or is it the only honest way to photograph the world he was photographing?
2. He is still working at 86. What does a 60-year daily photography practice produce?

MORE IMAGES



Farewell Photography series



Shinjuku (alley)



Stray cat, Tokyo



Stray cats, Tokyo