To Hidetaka Suzuki Solo Exhibition "Bird and Mirror"

This exhibition starts from two stories. One is a rakugo story about a mirror named Matsuyama Kagami, and another is a story about fictional bird created by generative AI.

Through these stories, I thought about the fictionalization of reality, or the actualization of fiction. It could be said it is to eliminate the boundary between reality and fiction.

I have been approaching the question of what exactly I am seeing between the different mediums of painting and images, and now I would like to try it from a new perspective.

A Village Without Mirrors[1]

Matsuyama refers to the area around present-day Tokamachi City, Niigata Prefecture. The original story[2] is said to be a Buddhist scripture compiled from ancient Indian folk tales.

The synopsis is as follows. A man is rewarded for his filial piety by the authorities, who offer to grant him whatever he wishes. The man asks to see his father, who died 18 years ago. This was impossible, even for a government official. However, hearing that his father and the man are identical, the official shows the man a mirror. The man, who had never seen a mirror before, thought that his father's face was really there and was very happy.

The man brings the mirror back to his village, but his wife discovers the mirror. This is a funny story in which all the villagers have never seen a mirror, leading to a big misunderstanding.

The story is simple enough. A man who has never looked in a mirror is unable to recognize his own reflection in the mirror. However, the story is a bit more complex.

The protagonist recognizes the man in the mirror not as himself but as his father. At the same time, however, he understands that his father is no longer in this world. He understands that the man in the mirror is not of this world, but confronts him as a real image with whom he can communicate.

In other words, in this story, the mirror functions as a tool blurring the boundary between the imaginary and the real.

The man exposes his feelings to a figure in which the falsehood and reality are blurred. He can no longer see his father in reality. Therefore, the mirror reflecting the ambiguous image would show him what he wanted to see.

Fictional Bird[3]

A photo of a bird on Twitter became the topic of conversation. The reason why was because it showed a bird not existing in the world. The photographer claimed he took the photo himself, but bird-watching experts could only assume the photo was obviously manipulated in some way.

As it turns out, this photo was an AI-generated image, but the reason for the uproar is interesting.

The photographer used an AI-based image quality improvement application to improve the blurriness, out-of-focus, and image quality of the photo. However, this service re-generated the image itself to improve image quality, creating a completely different image in the first place. The photographer was not an expert on birds, nor did he understand how the app worked. He created a fictional bird that did not exist without any malicious intent.

However, bird lovers who discovered the photo claimed that it was a fabricated photograph and a controversy erupted.

They have left primary information behind. They have argued each other with fictional legitimacy from beginning to end.

As discussed on Togetter, this is not limited to AI-generated programs. The smartphone cameras we use in our daily lives also automatically process images, and the photographic medium is not a tool for capturing the truth.

Given this, we may be looking at a large number of imagery that is made up and does not exist every day.

What can be captured in a photograph, what can be depicted in a painting

When I was in junior high school, cell phones were equipped with cameras for the first time, back when softbank was still J-PHONE.

Sunsets were beautiful in my hometown, and on a clear day, I could literally see the blazing sunset. I was given a cell phone with a camera and wanted to capture the sunset somehow.

However, the color of the sunset in the photograph was completely different from the color I saw with my own eyes. Of course, this was not surprising considering the camera's performance, but at the time I could not understand why.

On the other hand, I had seen Monet's sunset painting around the same time. There I felt the sunset I saw with my own eyes was reproduced. I still remember feeling the light, temperature, and humidity there.

Looking back, I realize my interest in painting was, in the first place, in relation to images. Sometimes I feel a sense of reality from a painting as a collection of touches, and at other times a photograph capturing reality looks completely fictitious.

I remember this experience when I think about what painting means to me.

I want to address this ambiguity, this lack of boundaries. It is the identity of what I could not photograph, and it is also my motive for painting.

Hidetaka Suzuki

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1. Matsuyama Mirror Overview - Rakugo stroll 164
   (http://sakamitisanpo.g.dgdg.jp/matuyamakagami.html)
   ◦ Katsura Bunraku / Matsuyama Kagami - Youtube
     (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B5nhSyH_w1g)
2. The Hyakyu-kyo Sutra, Book 35, "The Parable of the Mirror of Hokyo"
3. A tragedy that occurred when AI's image correction technology was too advanced, creating a creature that did not exist there - Togetter
   (https://togetter.com/li/2138195)

Please read the QR code to see the links to the above reference URLs.