

MAYUMI SUZUKI  
**THE RESTORATION WILL**

MARCH 9 - MAY 3 2018

### **Homecoming**

What if one day everything that you always took for granted in your life disappears? One morning apparently like any other you wake up, get prepared for the day, get out of your apartment, without knowing that you will be a different person by the time of your return. Unavoidably changed in the course of a few hours, actually, in a few minutes. The difference being that now, at your return, some of the pieces completing the puzzle of your life are missing, and they cannot be restored.

Mayumi Suzuki's book *The Restoration Will* (ceiba editions, 2017), starts by instilling into the reader a certain feeling of familiarity and certainty: it does so through a series of family photographs, snapshots that capture people of different generations together, sitting around a full table or smiling on the street. Images where the connection with a dear place is recognizable, like in the picture where we see a child giving her back to the camera's eye because her gaze is pointed towards the horizon, to the port of the village where she most probably lives: beyond a green promontory we glimpse the sea, a reassuring landscape.

But something changes abruptly when we flip the page and the color of the family album images is replaced by a deep black and white, the blue of the sea vanishing to become a grey fog. The first words of the book introduce us to that instant that changed everything:

«I was worried by the M5.9 earthquake in Myiagi. I called my parents in the afternoon».

A telephone rings at about 400 km of distance but nobody picks up. In little time, the magnitude of that earthquake will reach the grade 9, making it the most powerful ever recorded in Japan. On March 11, 2011, a huge change hit the life of thousands of Japanese people and of the artist Mayumi Suzuki, among them. Mayumi's hometown, Onagawa, is devastated by the terrible tsunami generated by the violent earthquake. Mayumi is far away, in Tokyo, the town where she is living her adult life, and she manages to reach the location of the disaster only several days afterwards.

In the meanwhile, no trace of her parents.

The home, the family, that intricate network of objects that make tangible the existence of our memories and stop their fading in the running of time, they do not exist anymore.

There is only one recovery in this story of grief and tragedy: the photo camera of Mayumi's father, a professional photographer who was continuing the home studio started by the artist's grandfather decades before. Miraculously still working, the optic device becomes the mean between Mayumi and the familiar universe that she has just lost.

The first photographs realized with the lens still covered in sea salt result dark and blurry and they evoke the world of the missing. These are the black and white images which constitute the big part of *The Restoration Will*, the mental link with what has been lost. In some way, Mayumi feels she can find a connection between the present and what has become past too soon, between the survivors and the dead, between herself and the last thoughts of her parents.

A long period of photographs among rubbles and ruins begins, where a documentary approach is mixed with a more evocative one: while the father's camera is used to create images through which those who cannot speak anymore can find a voice, Mayumi desperately tries to put together the family photographs she finds, almost completely faded and seriously compromised by the water.

Page after page, the extra-terrain landscapes of the black and white photographs are entwined with the new geographies created by the family images recovered from the oblivion. *The Restoration Will*, therefore, becomes a tentative to preserve the story of the family, the personal memories of the author: the reconstruction of a family narration and memory. With this project, Mayumi Suzuki wants to recover the memory of those who suddenly disappeared after a disaster of incalculable proportions, she wants to give life back to the voices and faces of those inexplicably departed. But starting with the need to confront herself with her personal loss, Mayumi manages to realize a body of work that speaks to a more vast, universal public.

By reconstructing a new sentimental cartography that mixes places, people, feelings and also sounds - the one of the sea is constant throughout the whole book - *The Restoration Will* becomes a work not only realized to share the memory of a tragic event but something more. With a delicate, almost whispered approach, as in a melody where there are no intense crescendos and the listener is led to the end on tiptoe, the book becomes a way to reflect on the operations of "mental restore" created by anyone who has experienced similar painful events during his life.

Is there a remedy to loss?

Is it possible to fulfill our need to reconstruct what has been destroyed?

Mayumi Suzuki's work does not give us a certain answer, but it does give us a possible key to interpretation, if not an hope.

An artistic work about death that is transformed into a hymn to life, to those who remain, transforming their physical presence into something else.

Because following the light of a star, or a glare into the sea waves at night, we can always find the way back home, wherever it is.

Laura De Marco

**Opening hours from March 12, 2018:**

Monday-Friday: 3-7 pm

*free admittance*

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