

Aliki Braine

1000 Blossoms

Essay by Duncan Wooldridge

On flows the river ceaselessly, nor does its water ever stay the same. The bubbles that float upon its pools now disappear, now form anew, but never endure long. And so it is with people in this world, and with their dwellings.
Chomei, Hojoki

Aliki Braine has made a crowd of small cut negative circles. They show parcels of the sky and water, of trees, and cherry blossom leaves, from the viewing season in Japan. Millimetres across, they react to the smallest blow of wind.

On their deep black ground they are punctuations. They have filtered light, so that it is neither absent nor saturated. And it is here that an image seems to begin, in the in-between, in the act of balancing. They remind us that we desire the image to be whole.

Yet images cannot be re-assembled, enclosed fully in the square or rectangle. They have travelled, and possess a continuous sense of movement. From their beginning, she has proposed that the photograph is not static. It changes as do the leaves of different seasons.

She places these little negatives into an enlarger, to be printed. Enlarger and negative are tilted on their side, turned to the wall, so that printed image relates to the body. They describe an almost imperceptible weight, a delicate force of gravity.

The image is a circle. It is the slice of a cone. If the rectangle describes what is captured, the circle points to all the time that falls outside of the photographic event. As circle meets rectangle, we can see both around and through.

Picturing the world, they belong to it. They show that the image and world meets, somewhere delicate, where our sensitivity is heightened, our looking and thinking simplified and made acute. Each force, each actor, is evident.

When we look at the image, if it is pristine, we can forget that it is already an object. And as we see the object, we negate its presence as an image. How can we conceive of these two spaces simultaneously? Is this not what the photograph is?

Animism appears to the Western viewer as a mystical, even mythological faith: An Animist believes in the meaningful connections we have with objects and the landscape. Animism resists dualities: there is no image or object: they are one and the same thing.

A close encounter with the lives of photographs, will draw similar conclusions: objects are in continuous flux. Each image lives a life, and displays marks and wear. If it is worn or folded in places, this is because it has entered new and different spaces.

Chihiro Minato tells us that in Japanese, the words for subject and object do not describe the difference between active and passive, but describe a relationship invoking hospitality: subject is translated into the 'part of the host', and object to 'part of the guest'.

And so Minato can tell us that: "the photographic medium is not simply an act of "taking" or "making" an image. It works in a completely separate dimension as well; that which incorporates the idea of an "invitation.""

Minato writes too that the Japanese word for 'landscape' – fuukei – translates literally into a 'scenery of wind'. "the idea of connection between all things such as the earth and the heavens, existence and absence...are tied to the aether by the wind".

