

Apert
 1985
 1986
 1987
 1988
 1989
 1990
 1991
 1992
 1993
 1994
 1995
 1996
 1997
 1998
 1999
 2000
 2001
 2002
 2003
 2004
 2005
 2006
 2007
 2008
 2009
 2010
 2011
 2012
 2013
 2014
 2015
 2016
 2017
 2018
 2019
 2020
 2021
 2022
 2023
 2024



Interest in Japanese photography, and especially Japanese photography books, grew dramatically in the early 1990s following the publication of Andrew Ross's *The Book of 101 Books: Seminal Photographic Books of the Twentieth Century* (2001) and the first two volumes of Martin Parr and Gerry Badger's *The Photobook: A History* (2004, 2006). These compilations enthusiastically included a number of Japanese photographers – Nobuyoshi Araki, Daido Moriyama, and Masahisa Fukase – who have subsequently become well known in the West. Fukase's beautifully poetic book *Romance* (1981), which mourns the death of his wife, was voted the best photography book of the past twenty five years by the *British Journal of Photography* in 2011. But another, less celebrated body of work by the Japanese photographer Seiichi Furuya has also powerfully addressed the topic of mourning. Through at least half a dozen books, Furuya has poignantly explored the tragic death of his beautiful Austrian wife, Christine Gossler, who developed schizophrenia and committed suicide by throwing herself from their apartment building in East Berlin in 1986.

Christine Furuya Gossler: *Mémoires*, 1978–1986, published by the great, now defunct, Japanese publisher Korinsha, is the third and most comprehensive of Furuya's elegies to his wife. Published in 1997, this chunky, landscape-format book features more than five hundred pages of chronologically sequenced images. Each photograph appears on the right side of a spread and is indexed on its verso with a location and date, along with brief commentary that appears to trigger memories for Furuya rather than insights for the viewer.

Across the project, happy moments transition into a compulsive documentation of his wife's decline into depression, yet Furuya's unflinching gaze remains focused and unemotional. His photographs continue through the weeks before Gossler's suicide. After she was released from a hospital the couple took a night train bound for Venice and spent three days holed up in a hotel and aimlessly wandering the city's streets. His chronicle of their escape to Venice and the grim reality of their lives back in East Germany reveals another aspect of Furuya's unembellished aesthetic.

The emotional register of Furuya's work is only part of what makes it appealing. The photobooks he made from this work very clearly ennobled his intentions – and, through a synthesis of photography and design, still communicate those desires years later. The artist's language may be interpreted somewhat differently, but his vision transcends merely being a product of his time and place.

Seiichi Furuya

David Strettell

David Strettell is the author of *Photobook: A History*, a photography institution and publisher based in New York.



This page: *Portrait from
the right*, 1995
Portrait, 1995, *Class*, 1995
Aperture, 1979

APERTURE 11



52



April
 1942
 May
 1943
 June
 1944
 July
 1945
 August
 1946
 September
 1947
 October
 1948
 November
 1949
 December
 1950



November 1978
 The people of the
 New York City
 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026, 2027, 2028, 2029, 2030, 2031, 2032, 2033, 2034, 2035, 2036, 2037, 2038, 2039, 2040, 2041, 2042, 2043, 2044, 2045, 2046, 2047, 2048, 2049, 2050