

Wakasugi's 'Fusuma' Photography – Synthesis –

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Wakasugi combines views of nature he has photographed while traveling the remote regions of the world with *fusuma*, decorated sliding doors. These particular *fusuma* have been taken from a Japanese room with over four hundred years of history, and his photographs have been artfully inserted into them. This represents a synthesis of opposing worlds—of interior and exterior, light and dark, stillness and motion, film and digital, old and new.

*Fusuma* are a form of spatial device employed in traditional Japanese architecture. These sliding doors are comprised simply of wood and paper and although flimsy and have no locks, they represent a spiritual boundary, separating one side from the other, absolutely. Japanese rooms are not divided physically with walls, but spiritually, using *fusuma*; this allows people to interact freely with the space, sometimes removing these *fusuma* to create a large hall or reinserting them to produce a small room. *Fusuma* also respond gently to nature, reflecting the four seasons. The pale brush-and-ink paintings illuminated by mid-day's light reflecting off the *tatami* mats on the floor; the gold and silver leaf in designs that appear to float bewitchingly in the light of the moon; all transmitting the poetic charm of the period. The 16th century artist, Kano Eitoku, sublimated these household fittings into art through his magnificent brushwork and the Japanese people experience a microcosm of nature through these paintings, in which a unique, two-dimensional expression of the world unfolds. This synthesis of art and nature on the doors dividing a space may be said to spring from the Japanese views of life and death.

Wakasugi says that poetic sentiment exists in the space between memories.

Using digital technology to boldly remove the paintings applied to the *fusuma* by the artists of the past, he carefully replaces them with his own photographs, creating a time and space that does not exist in reality, thereby challenging the past.

I think it is no exaggeration to say that Wakasugi Kenji's photographs inherit the traditions of the gorgeous world of *fusuma* painting that were developed by such great artists as Tawaraya Sōtatsu or Ogata Kōrin.