

FY2021 Mécénat Associate Report

The Role of Corporate Mécénat in the Promotion of Postwar  
Japanese Photography  
-From the cases of Nikon Corporation and FUJIFILM Corporation

FY2021 Mécénat Associate  
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## 0. Introduction (Research summary)

Although the origins of the history of photography can be traced back to the invention of the camera obscura, in terms of modern photographic technology, its origins can be traced back to 1824 with the invention of heliography, the world's first photographic process, by the French inventor Nicéphore Niépce, who conducted extensive research into the process of making and fixing copied images, 1839 with the invention of the daguerreotype by the French artist and photographer Louis Daguerre, which became popular among the general public, and 1841, when the negative-positive process (calotype) was invented (and patented) by the British inventor William Henry Fox Talbot. Also, it was in 1888 that the Eastman Company, an American company, developed and launched the first roll-film hand camera, the "Kodak." From that point to today, the role and impact that photography has played in the lives of people, society, and the transmission of information is immeasurable. Following several major mainstream turning points, from the birth of the 35 mm compact camera to the development of digital technology, and from monochrome to color in terms of color tones up to the present day, the definition and meaning of "photography" is too broad to be expressed in one word, and its technologies and concepts have undergone major changes with the passage of time. The definition of a photographer varies considerably from professional to amateur, ranging from news coverage as a medium of social documentation to advertising, artistic expression, and the recording of personal memories. In addition to professional users, mainly in the fields of news reporting and advertising, a major characteristic of the camera and photography market in Japan is the existence of a market for a wide range of amateur users. Among this group, heavy users who research the latest equipment on a daily basis and pursue artistic expression formed the core users of high-quality and high-priced SLR cameras, and were the target demographic of many camera magazines. It can be said that these amateur users and the camera and film manufacturers that have continued to provide services for them are closely intertwined, and have contributed to the development of Japan's unique culture of photography.

The major turning point was around the year 2000, marked by the emergence of digital technology. The age range of heavy users of SLR cameras in the past was mostly men in their 20s to 40s, and the age of customers began to increase further without the market being able to capture a significant new customer base. The market for compact cameras developed a new customer base composed of young users and women, but the emergence of smartphones significantly shook up the camera market. In particular, the launch of the iPhone in 2007 shocked the world and completely redefined the conventional concept of photography and the camera as a medium of communication. It completely changed the style of presentation, which was centered on exhibitions and paper media (photo collections, camera magazines, etc.), along with the wave of digitalization, and magazines quickly began to suspend or discontinue publication one after another. The newly developed market for compact cameras slowly began to lose a large share of the market to smartphones.

In the period of less than 200 years since the birth of photographic technology, photography has undergone dramatic evolution and change. And today, almost everyone carries around a smartphone (i.e., a camera), and the act of taking and viewing photos has become a completely normal part of everyday life. What accelerated this trend was unquestionably the transition from analog to digital that took place around the year 2000. People's concept of photography itself has changed significantly, and the business trends that have accompanied this change have also undergone drastic transformations, forcing related companies to undergo major reforms. In other words, the way photography has been used in each era serves as an indicator of the time, reflecting social conditions, and capturing the needs and sentiments of the people. How has "photography" been treated and changed over time in Japan, what role have companies played in its promotion and transition, and how will this change in the future? During the global pandemic of the novel coronavirus, the way visuals are treated and the value of their existence are undergoing rapid evolution and change on a daily basis. In this report, I would like to look back on these changes and examine how the position and possibilities of photography will change in the future from the perspective of corporate mécénat, which has played a major role

in the promotion and transformation of photography. I believe that this act could provide a hint for thinking about the future at a time when we are experiencing a paradigm shift at the global level.

In Chapter 1, I will be reflecting on the activities of camera and film manufacturers in postwar Japan, particularly their activities for the promoting culture of photography with a focus on mécénat. In Chapter 2, I will focus on Nikon Corporation, one of Japan's leading camera manufacturers that has pioneered mécénat activities in the Japanese photography world, and FUJIFILM Corporation, which is attracting attention for its transformation of its business structure while leading the world as a film manufacturer, as specific examples of corporate mécénat activities. Through various interviews, I will be reflecting on the impact of the mécénat activities of these two companies on the culture of photography in Japan, and consider the nature and possibilities of photography and corporations in the new era.

The interviews with each company were conducted according to the following schedule.

- October 26, 2021 (Tue): Interview and tour of the Nikon Museum  
Nikon Imaging Japan Inc. (Shinagawa-ku, Tokyo)  
Shinji Mori, Deputy General Manager, Customer Relations Division  
Mai Asami, General Manager, Photo Culture Promotion Department

- October 27, 2021 (Wed): Interview and tour of FUJIFILM SQUARE  
FUJIFILM Corporation (Minato-ku, Tokyo)  
Corporate Communications Division  
Kimiko Mase, Manager, Advertising Group  
Shigeto Omae, Manager  
Mai Sunayashiki, Senior Expert  
Tomoaki Shimada  
Erika Yoshimura  
Hirotake Terashima

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to each of the persons in charge.

## 1. Promotion of postwar Japanese photography

A large part of the development of Japan's camera culture, which is unique in the world, is due to the contribution of camera and film manufacturers. Germany and the United States used to be the leading countries in the film and photography industry, but since the 1960s, Japan has completely led the world in the manufacture of cameras. Companies that manufactured high-quality cameras, lenses, and films, such as Nikon, Fujifilm, Canon, Olympus, PENTAX, and Sony, helped to increase the quality and demand for products made in Japan worldwide. One of the characteristics of Japan's camera culture is the large number and diverse pool of amateur cameramen, and it can be said that it was the system in which manufacturers competed with each other to mass-produce high-quality products at affordable prices that led to the camera boom of the mid-1950s after World War II (known as the second camera boom). By the turn of the 60's, the structure of the photography world was clearly formed in a manner different from that of the prewar period.<sup>1</sup>

What supported the passion for photography among amateurs (photo enthusiasts) were photo magazines, photo contests, and the many camera clubs that were established throughout Japan. The passion of amateurs intensified through the exchange of information on technical acquisitions and products in preparation for contests, and through exchanges at photo sessions and study groups, and camera magazines and corporate-sponsored galleries also served as the main venues for the activities and presentation of works by postwar photographers. The "monthly prize photographs," also known as "*getsurei*," set up by camera magazines, were a source of creative inspiration for amateurs, and served as a gateway to becoming a professional photographer for many years. In the postwar period, "realism photography," which was popularized by Ken Domon and Ihei Kimura, reached its peak, but in 1957, the photo exhibition "Eyes of Ten,"<sup>2</sup> which was organized by the photography critic Tatsuo Fukushima, was held at the Konishiroku Photo Gallery in Ginza, Tokyo.<sup>3</sup> That exhibition was held on three occasions at the same Konishiroku Photo Gallery in 1958 and 1959, and after its completion, the self-owned agency "VIVO" was formed by Eikoh Hosoe, Ikko Narahara, Shomei Tomatsu, Kikuji Kawada, Akira Tanno, and Akira Sato. They aimed to express "personal documents" based on a completely new sensibility and methodology that transcended the realism of conventional photojournalism, and left a powerful impact on the next generation of photographers. An important aspect to note is that the pivotal exhibitions in the history of postwar Japanese photography were hosted by private corporations, not by public institutions like art museums. These corporate-sponsored galleries played a pioneering role in shaping the Japanese photography world at the time.

The achievements of the various companies in training professional photographers and providing them with a venue to present their work are significant. In Japan, the concept of a "photography museum" did not yet exist in contrast to the hierarchical structure in various Western countries, where professional institutions such as museums and universities were at the top of the hierarchy, and in an environment where there were few photography specialists even in museums, the main venues for professional photographers to present and critique their work were photography magazines, photo collections, and corporate galleries. Companies were also heavily involved in the establishment of important photography awards.

The contents of the main activities conducted by companies to promote the culture of photography in the postwar period are described in (1) through (5) below.

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<sup>1</sup> "History of the Nikkor Photo Contest" Naomi Yanagimoto, 'Looking Back at Amateur Photography' p. 176, pp. 13-18; In a conversation with Tadahiko Hayashi and Kaichi Nagai titled "Talking about the World of Photography from Postwar to Today" in the "May 1964 issue of Photo Art," Tsutomu Watanabe said, "During this period, the presence of a middle ground between professionals and amateurs disappeared, those who committed themselves to business did so, those who loved photography continued down the path of amateurs, and professionals became aware of their status."

<sup>2</sup> Yasuhiro Ishimoto, Kikuji Kawada, Shun Kawahara, Akira Sato, Akira Tanno, Shomei Tomatsu, Toyoko Tokiwa, Masaya Nakamura, Ikko Narahara, and Eikoh Hosoe

<sup>3</sup> One of the events that led to this exhibition was Ikko Narahara's debut exhibition, "HUMAN LAND," which was held at the Matsushima Gallery in Ginza a year earlier, in 1956. The completely new approach to documentation by Narahara, who was an unknown photographer at the time, deviated from the existing framework, and was the target of criticism by many of the leading figures and critics in the photography world who did not accept this new style.

### **(1) Camera magazines**

In 1949, "Photography Journal Asahicamera" was republished (first published in 1926, temporarily discontinued in 1942), and in 1954, the first issues of "Sankei Camera" and "Camera Mainichi" were published. In addition to newspaper-affiliated camera magazines, "CAMERA" was republished in 1946 (the first issue of "Camera" was published in 1921, followed by an absorption-type merger of "Geijutsu Shashin Kenkyu" and "Cameraman," merger of "Camera Club" and "Shashin Salon," and then renamed to "Shashin Bunka" in 1941 and "Shashin Kagaku" in 1943. Temporarily discontinued publication in 1945), the first issue of "Nihon Camera" was published in 1951, and "Photo Art" was published in 1951. At a time when there was no Internet, these magazines were a valuable source of information, including photogravures introducing the works of professional photographers, trends in the photography world in Japan and abroad, photography critiques, product introductions, and monthly contests. In addition, monthly photo contests held by camera magazines served not only as a place for amateurs to hone their skills, but also as a gateway to becoming a professional photographer.

### **(2) Camera clubs/groups (national newspapers, newspaper companies, etc.)**

The "Japan Professional Photographers Society," which was established in 1950, is an organization formed by professional photographers, but there are also organizations that have expanded their targets to include amateur photographers and other related businesses. The "Photographic Society of Japan," which was established in 1952, was founded with the approval of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan with the aim of promoting the overseas expansion of the camera industry and international goodwill, and is now mainly a group that contributes to the development of the culture of photography. The All-Japan Association of Photographic Societies (AJAPS), which was founded in 1926, is a group supported by the Asahi Shimbun newspaper and has local chapters throughout Japan. Other groups related to the Yomiuri Shimbun and the Mainichi Shimbun also exist. Regardless of size, a vast number of clubs and groups, ranging from those sponsored by local camera stores and club-sized groups to national-scale camera clubs, were active.

### **(3) Camera clubs/groups (camera/print/visuals related manufacturers)**

Many camera clubs were established for enthusiasts sponsored by various manufacturers, and a membership newsletter was published for members to announce new products and provide information on contests, etc., creating a sense of loyalty through various services.

1950: "Minolta Family" and "Minolta News" sponsored by Chiyoda Kogaku (Minolta); 1950:

"Mamiya Camera Club" and "Mamiya CIRCLE" sponsored by Mamiya Koki (Mamiya OP)

1952: The "NIKKOR Club" established, membership newsletter "NIKKOR" (now the "NIKKOR CLUB") published from 1953

1954: "Canon Club" established, "Canon Circle" published from 1959

1956: "Koni Photo Club" formed, "Koni Photo News" → 1961: "Sakura Family Club," "SAKURA FAMILY" → 1987: Company name changed to "Konica Photo Club," "PHOTO KONICA"

1956: Takachiho Optical Industries (Olympus) "Olympus Camera Club," "OLYMPUS Photography"

1967: Komura "Komura Photo Club," "Komura's eye" published

1968: Asahi Optical Co. "PENTAX FAMILY"

Bronica Camera "BRONICA CLUB" published

### **(4) Photo salons, galleries (camera/print/visuals related manufacturers)**

The following are some of the main salons and galleries operated by manufacturers.

1954: "Konishiroku Photo Gallery" (Ginza, Tokyo) opened; 1988: Renamed and relocated as "Konica Plaza" (Shinjuku); 2003: Renamed as "Konica Minolta Plaza"; 2017: Closed.

1957: "Fuji Photo Salon" (Ginza, Tokyo) opened; 2007: "FUJIFILM SQUARE" (Roppongi) opened. In addition to the "Fujifilm Photo Salon," which was renamed from "Fuji Photo Salon," it also houses the "Photo History Museum" and other facilities. \*"Fujifilm Photo Salon" in Osaka, Sapporo, and Nagoya.

1967: "Pentax Gallery" (Roppongi, Tokyo) opened; 1981: "Pentax Forum" (Shinjuku, Tokyo) opened; "Ricoh Imaging Square" (Ginza, Tokyo) opened, relocated to Shinjuku; 2021: "RICOH ART GALLERY" (Ginza) opened.

1968: "Nikon Salon" (Ginza, Tokyo) opened; 1971: "Shinjuku Nikon Salon" opened; 1974: "Osaka Nikon Salon" opened; 2017: "Shinjuku Nikon Salon" closed, two locations in Ginza and Osaka; 2020: "Osaka/Ginza Nikon Salon" closed, "Nikon Salon" re-opened in Shinjuku.

1973: "Canon Salon" (Ginza, Tokyo) opened; 2003: "Canon Salon S" (Shinagawa) opened; 2005: Renamed as "Canon Gallery S" \*There are also "Canon Gallery" in Osaka.

1975: "Minolta Photo Space" (Shinjuku, Tokyo), Currently closed.

1979: "Nagase Photo Salon" (Ginza, Tokyo), renamed as "Kodak Salon."

1979: "Olympus Gallery"; 1997: "Olympus Plaza" (Kanda, Tokyo) opened; 2022: Renamed as "OM SYSTEM PLAZA" and relocated to Shinjuku. \*"OM SYSTEM GALLERY" (Osaka)

1983: "Contax Salon" (Ginza, Tokyo); 2005: Relocated (Yurakucho); 2009: Closed in 2009

2014: "Sony Imaging Gallery" (Ginza, Tokyo) opened; 2016: Relocated from the Sony Building to the "GINZA PLACE" Building

## **(5) Photography awards**

The "Kimura Ihei Award" (Asahi Shimbun, 1975), "Domon Ken Award" (Mainichi Shimbun, 1981~), "Tadahiko Hayashi Award" (currently the Shunan Foundation for the Promotion of Culture, 1991~), "the Sun Award" (Heibonsha) from 1964 to 1999, "Photographic Society of Japan Awards" (Photographic Society of Japan, 1952~), "Higashikawa Award" (hosted by Higashikawa Town in Kamikawa-gun, Hokkaido, 1985~), etc. are among the photography awards given mainly to professional photographers, but several awards established by companies as part of their mécénat activities occupy a very important position in the photography world. Looking at past recipients, such as Nikon's "Ina Nobuo Award" (1976~) and "Miki Jun Award" (1999~), Canon's "New Cosmos of Photography" (1991-2021), and Fujifilm's "Fuji Photo Salon Newcomer Award" (1999-2009), it is evident that many photographers who lead or will lead the Japanese photography world and the next generation of Japanese photography have received such awards.

Canon's "New Cosmos of Photography" ended in FY2021, but during the 2000s, when digital technology brought about radical changes in photographic expression and the environment surrounding it, the award left its mark in fostering photographers who were unique to that era.

The list of past jury members and award winners

(<https://global.canon/en/newcosmos/gallery/winners/>) strongly reflects the times, including changes in trends, and it is positioned as one of the historical awards in the transition stage to the digital age. What could be said to be a turning point is that the original definition of "photography" in the awards has shifted toward a selection of people who have an affinity with the art market and commercial world rather than the original "serious photography" (photography as a work of art), and that there has been a movement to include "films (videos)" within the scope of "photography" in a semi-ideological way, in line with the trends of the times. With the dramatic changes in the media environment and people's awareness of visuals, it seems that it has become difficult to place the main focus on "photography" as an award any longer. However, as the state of photography itself, including visuals, has diversified, and the limits of what can be captured by the conventional concept of photography awards have begun to reveal themselves, although there are pros and cons to the decision to complete past trends

and seek a new form of awards, it can be seen as a bold decision with high expectations for the future, depending on how the future unfolds.

## 2. Nikon Corporation and FUJIFILM Corporation (Examination of corporate case studies)

It can be said that the spread and transition of the culture of photography have always been accompanied by the evolution and changes in camera technology. Among other things, the developmental and technological capabilities of Japanese camera and film manufacturers have played an important role in the development of the culture of photography, even when viewed from a global perspective. When looking back at the history of activities of camera and film manufacturers, it is essential to examine the trends in photography in Japan. In this context, long before the concept of "mécénat" was still established in Japan, activities to support the culture of photography as companies have been ongoing for a long period of time, and in this report, I will be focusing on the activities of two companies whose activities have had a significant impact on postwar Japanese photographic culture, Nikon Corporation, a camera manufacturer, and FUJIFILM Corporation, a film manufacturer. In order to examine the future vision of photography, which is at a major turning point with the advent of the digital society, I would like to look back on the transition of the two companies' activities that have contributed to the development of the culture of photography from the immediate postwar period to the present.

### 2-1. Nikon Corporation

- (1) The NIKKOR Club (1952~)
- (2) Nikkor Photo Contest (1952~)
- (3) "Nikkor" newsletter (1953~)
- (4) Nikon Salon (1968~)
- (5) "Ina Nobuo Award" (1976~)/"Miki Jun Award" (1999~)
- (6) Nikon Museum (2015~)

Nikon Corporation was established in Tokyo in 1917 as Nippon Kogaku Kogyo (Japan Optical Industries) through a merger of Tokyo Keiki Manufacturing, Iwaki Glass Manufacturing, and Fuji Lens Seizo-sho, with investment from Mitsubishi Goshi Kaisha led by Koyata Iwasaki. During the war, the company was mainly engaged in the manufacture of military supplies as Japan's largest optical equipment manufacturer, but after the war ended, it shifted its focus from military supplies to the private sector. After the war, a huge boom in cameras and photography was generated by the occupation forces that landed in Japan, and the company began developing and manufacturing camera bodies. The cornerstone of the company was the introduction of the "Nikkor lens" in 1932. Although business conditions continued to be severe due to the postwar recession, Masao Nagaoka, the founder and president, was also an engineer, and it was Nagaoka himself who developed the optical glass that was used as the material for the Nikkor lenses. He had a strong sense of pride in the performance of his company's lenses and steadily managed the company's operations while incorporating new ideas. A major turning point for the company came in 1950. In late April, David Douglas Duncan, a photographer for "Life," visited Japan, and Jun Miki of Life's Tokyo office served as his assistant. During his visit, Duncan was surprised by the sharpness of the prints of his portraits, which Miki had photographed with a Nikkor lens as a test shot, and he and Miki paid a visit to Nagaoka, the president of the company. At that time, even professional photographers in Japan used Leica and Contax lenses, and lenses not made in Germany were not considered to be lenses at all, while Japanese lenses were regarded as completely irrelevant. In June of that year, the Korean War broke out, and Duncan brought with him to the front lines Nikkor lenses (50 mm F1.5, 135 mm F4) mounted on two Leica IIIF lenses. The photographs taken by Duncan were sent to Life's New York headquarters, and after developing the film, they were stunned by the sharpness of the images, which were hard to believe were 35 mm, and even went so far as to purchase 150 Nikon cameras. An article praising the lens was also published in the New York Times, and it quickly gained worldwide acclaim.



## **(1) The NIKKOR Club (1952~)**

As Nikkor lenses received high acclaim and the company's business became more stable, the "NIKKOR Club" was established in 1952 based on an idea by President Nagaoka and Miki as a form of social contribution to reward users of the lenses and, by extension, society. This club, which remains a cornerstone of Nikon's mécénat activities to this day, was founded only seven years after the end of the war, when the concept of "mécénat" had not even been conceived yet. The club serves as a group aimed at promoting mutual goodwill among Nikon camera and lens enthusiasts, as well as exchanges with international photographic groups, and its activities have continued over a long period of time and in a wide range of areas, including publishing membership newsletters, holding photo contests, photo seminars, photo shoots and seminars, as well as chapter activities with approximately 100 local chapters throughout Japan. The most important feature is that the governing organization has been made up of members from outside the company for many years (see "Nikkor Stories Revealed in the Newsletter" p. 59) and the important policy that the company should not use the club's existence to improve sales, but should separate it from business and not intervene in its operation, and sustain it as an independent entity, has been a long standing policy since its establishment. The 54 founders at the time of the club's establishment in 1952 included President Masao Nagaoka and others from Nikon Corporation, affiliated companies, and newspaper companies, Ken Domon, Yusaku Kamekura, and Ihei Kimura, who were recruited through Jun Miki's personal connections, photographers from overseas including Margaret Bourke-White, David Douglas Duncan, and Henri Cartier-Bresson, as well as internationally renowned figures including Isamu Noguchi, actress Hideko Takamine, film director Kenji Mizoguchi, and Nobel Prize laureate Hideki Yukawa.

One of the club's unique features is its photo sessions. A group of professional photographers who are active on the front lines are invited as instructors to provide precise and detailed guidance. Furthermore, the large scale overseas photo sessions are mainly held in the Asia-Pacific region, where more than 100 members participate with Nikon cameras to not only promote friendship and exchange with other countries through photography, but also to promote the image of "Made in Japan" and play the role of goodwill ambassadors in the private sector. The number of members of Japan's leading photography club have grown along with the expansion of Nikon, and as of 2002, which marked the 50th anniversary of its establishment, the club had approximately 210,000 registered members and 96 chapters in Japan and abroad (as of September 2002). From FY2021, the club has been managed internally by Nikon Imaging Japan, and the NIKKOR Club Consultant has become the NIKKOR Club Advisor starting in FY2021. How these changes will work in the future is a matter worth focusing on.

## **(2) Nikkor Photo Contest (1952~)**

Since the first issue of the "NIKKOR" membership newsletter, which I will mention in (3), many pages have been devoted to the contest, where high quality works have been judged and introduced in each era. The "Nikkor Photo Contest," which was started almost simultaneously with the founding of the NIKKOR Club, is one of the club's greatest achievements. As a photo contest open to all, including professionals and amateurs, it has been held 69 times in the past (as of December 2021), and many excellent works have been presented each time. The contest has established its status as the pinnacle for amateur photographers. Also, in addition to the Nikkor Photo Contest, which is held once a year, the "Salon de Nikkor" (1964~) has been held as a place for club members to learn. The selected works are published four times a year along with an announcement of the call for entries in conjunction with the publication of the membership newsletter. All works that pass the screening process are then published in the magazine with a commentary, and the top entries are also eligible to be judged in the Nikkor Photo Contest. Unlike the annual contest, which is aimed at winning prizes, this contest attracts many works that emphasize authorship and themes, and provides a place to improve one's photographic techniques, as well as to practice and study photography. As to why these contests have been able to maintain their high level and authority over the

years despite having multiple focuses is that many serious, top-level Japanese photographers, such as Ihei Kimura and Ken Domon, have been involved in the screening process and have judged the competitions through a high level of scrutiny. It was this attitude that ensured that they were a step ahead of other manufacturers. Furthermore, since the club has been run by photographers who had been pursuing "serious photography" from the start, they take a serious and dedicated approach to the screening process, with the intention of finding photographs that are taken by amateurs, yet are as good as or even superior to those taken by professionals. Although it may seem difficult to understand at first glance, the solid evaluation of such serious works that have a solid concept, as well as the tradition of snapshots that has been perpetuated, have been an unwavering cornerstone of the history of the Nikkor Photo Contest. Each of the local chapters are revitalized through the desire to compete at a high level, and new chapters are created as mentors continue to learn and broaden their range of skills. These developments concurrently overlapped with the process of the expansion of Nikon's camera sales. As the historical backdrop surrounding photography underwent changes over the years, there has been a dramatic increase in "nature (nature/animal)" and "landscape" themed photographs, as well as an increase in highly conceptual works in recent years, and various contest categories have also been added to keep up with the times.

### **(3) Membership newsletter "NIKKOR" (now the "NIKKOR CLUB") (1953-)**

In 1953, a membership newsletter was published to serve as a link between the members and the secretariat. After the publication of "NIKKOR" No. 1 in 1953 to No. 6 in 1956, the name was changed to "NIKKOR CLUB" and continues to be published to this day. The content from the first issue remains basically the same as the current membership newsletter. The basic policy of using contests as a focal point to develop amateur photographers at a high level has been established since the beginning, while professional works, texts, product information, etc. are also presented in a well-balanced manner. The inaugural issue<sup>4</sup> featured the works of Margaret Bourke-White, and the editorial board of the membership newsletter included such names as Ihei Kimura, Ken Domon, Kiyoshi Nishiyama, Yusaku Kamekura, Sankichi Ozaki, and Jun Miki, indicating that the first issue was published at a high level of global standards. Yusaku Kamekura, one of Japan's leading designers, was involved in the planning and editing process from the inaugural issue, and the high degree of perfection of the cover design and composition contributed greatly to the high standard of vision that the "NIKKOR Club" aimed for. In 1964, when management had stabilized and the club's management was also beginning to get on track, a new logotype designed by Kamekura was adopted. The simple and innovative design using only lowercase letters, which was unheard of at a time when decorative letters were the norm, has been continued to be utilized to this day. In addition to the membership newsletter, Kamekura was also involved in the production of brochures and other printed materials related to Nikon products, but his design of the "Nikon F" body, with its many straight lines and prestigious presence, is considered a masterpiece that will live in history.

### **(4) Nikon Salon (1968-)**

To commemorate the 50th anniversary of Nippon Kogaku's founding, the "Nikon Salon" was opened in Ginza in January 1968 (now combined with the Shinjuku location). This was followed by the opening of the "Shinjuku Nikon Salon" in June 1971 and the "Osaka Nikon Salon" in March 1974, and countless professional and amateur photo exhibitions have been held with the aim of "contributing to the improvement of the culture of photography." Over 4,000 photo exhibitions have been held, with their influence and presence recognized at the top level in the world of photography, and their achievements have been highly acclaimed both domestically and abroad. The Nikon Salon is managed by the Nikon Salon Steering Committee, which consists of photographers and critics from outside the company commissioned by Nikon

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<sup>4</sup> There are two definitions of "inaugural issue," and although "NIKKOR" which continued from the first issue to the sixth issue is sometimes treated as a separate volume, here we define "NIKKOR No. 1" as the "inaugural issue." ("Nikkor Stories Revealed in the Newsletter" p. 11)

Corporation from its inception. Six times a year, members of the steering committee select works that have been submitted through open entries, and these works are then displayed in an exhibition format.

The key point here is that, as with the management of the NIKKOR Club, the screening committee is entrusted to third parties, and the management of the gallery is completely separate from the company's orientation and interests. Also, like the contests, an emphasis was placed on "serious photography," and it is important to note that along with the discovery and showcasing of works by young photographers, exhibitions by important artists in the history of Japanese photography with high historical value were frequently held during the 1970s. The efforts of Ihei Kimura, who was elected as the second chairman of the NIKKOR Club and was also a member of the Nikon Salon Steering Committee, and others played a significant role, but at the same time, from a global perspective, an exhibition of original prints by Alfred Stieglitz was also held in 1972.<sup>5</sup> In the 1970 issue of "Nikkor Club," Nobuo Ina remarked that Japan was "very far behind when it came to cultural facilities," and that there was no place to systematically collect, preserve, and exhibit original prints of important works from the history of photography.<sup>6</sup> These various activities during the same time period led to the movement of the "conception of photographic art museum"<sup>7</sup>.

Since its establishment half a century ago, the environment surrounding photography has changed drastically. In 2017, "THE GALLERY" was launched at Nikon Plaza Shinjuku (along with the closing of the Shinjuku Nikon), and in 2020, the Ginza Nikon Salon was closed and the Nikon Salon was restored at the Nikon Plaza Shinjuku (THE GALLERY was split in half). Various attempts are being made to protect the high standards and establish a new position while carrying on its history. Furthermore, Nikon Salon's activities received the Mécénat Award in 2010.

In addition to photo collections, "Nikon Salon Books" also offers an extensive lineup of books on photography, including important critiques such as Nobuo Ina's "Shashin ni Kaere," (Published in 2005. The title refers to an article published in the magazine "Koga" in 1932, and is said to be the origin of modern Japanese photography critique) which features valuable photographic materials in book form that are distinctly different from those published commercially.

#### **(5) "Ina Nobuo Award" (1976~)/"Miki Jun Award" (1999~)**

Since 1976, this award has been presented as the Nikon Salon's annual awards. The award is given to the most outstanding exhibition held at the Nikon Salon from October of the previous year to September of the following year. The exhibitions are judged on whether they genuinely present the possibilities and standards of "serious photography," as well as their contemporary nature, regardless of whether they are taken by professional or amateur photographers. In 1976, the Nikon Salon Steering Committee decided not to limit the Nikon Salon as just a place to present works, but to select the most outstanding work of the year from among all the works presented at the Nikon Salon and present it with the Ina Nobuo Award, with the aim of contributing to the further improvement and development of the culture of photography. (List of past winners: <https://www.nikon-image.com/activity/exhibition/salon/awards/ina/winners/>) The award, which was named in honor of Nobuo Ina (1898-1978), a photography critic who made significant contributions to the culture of photography in Japan, is defined by some as one of the three major photography awards in Japan, and plays a major role not only in maintaining the high standards of the Nikon Salon but also in promoting photography culture and establishing a reputation for professional photographers. In addition, the "Ina Nobuo Special Award," an award

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<sup>5</sup> In 1972, the "Exhibition of Works by Alfred Stieglitz, the Father of Modern Photography" (Ginza) was held, featuring 26 original prints donated to the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo (1956). ("A Half-Century of Photography Exhibition Postcards" Manabu Torihara "Half Century of the Nikon Salon" p. 11 pp. 25-28)

<sup>6</sup> Preface 5 pp. 42-45 Furthermore, "the original prints from the Stieglitz exhibition were still only available at the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo as reference materials."

<sup>7</sup> It was between the late 1980s and early 1990s that the movement to establish art museums specializing in the collection, study, preservation, and exhibition of photography in Japan began to materialize. After holding the "One Hundred Years of Photography: A History of Japanese Photographic Expression" exhibition in 1968, the "Committee to Promote the Establishment of a Museum of Photography in Japan" was formed in 1979, led by the Japan Professional Photographers Society. Referring to precedent cases such as MoMA's photography department, the Kawasaki City Museum and the Yokohama Museum of Art established their own photography departments in 1988 and 1989, respectively. In 1990, Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography was opened as an art museum specializing in photography (the museum was fully opened in 1995).

system introduced in 1986, was established to honor the achievements of photographers who have held ten exhibitions at the Nikon Salon in the past.

Furthermore, in 1999, the "Miki Jun Award" was established to support the activities of promising photographers, and is awarded to young photographers under the age of 35 (list of past winners: <https://www.nikon-image.com/activity/exhibition/salon/awards/miki/winners/>). In 2017, "Be a Photographer," which developed from "Juna21" as a program to develop young photographers, was launched, and new initiatives are underway to support the discovery of promising young photographers.

## **(6) Nikon Museum (2015~)**

This museum was opened in Shinagawa Intercity, where Nikon's headquarters is located, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the company's founding. A collection of Nikon's past products and technology-related materials are on display here. Nikon's history is, in other words, the history of "lens optics" itself. The history of the development of lenses is also the history of the development of cameras, and the history of technological capabilities that researchers have steadily and uncompromisingly improved over the years are evident in the many achievements of the company's products, which have been used in frontline news reporting and in photography in harsh environments such as space and polar regions, and have been recognized by NASA and other specialized organizations around the world. These technologies have been applied in the medical and scientific fields, and the semiconductor lithography device (NSR-1505G2A) on display was developed in 1984 and is a valuable actual device registered as an "Essential Historical Material for Science and Technology" by the National Museum of Nature and Science.

## **2-2. FUJIFILM Corporation**

- (1) FUJIFILM PHOTO CONTEST (1950~)
- (2) Fujifilm Photo Salon (1957~)
- (3) Fujifilm Square (2007~)
- (4) Photo exhibition "PHOTO IS" (2006~)
- (5) Photo History Museum (2007~)
- (6) Photo Rescue Project (2011~)
- (7) Fujifilm Photo Collection (2014~)

In 1934, based on a domestic industrialization plan for photographic film production, the entire photographic film division of Dainippon Celluloid Co., Ltd. was split off to create Fuji Photo Film Co., Ltd. Operations commenced at Ashigara Plant and production of photosensitive materials such as photographic film, photographic paper, and dry plates was started. In 2000, sales of color film and other photosensitive materials, which were Fujifilm's primary business, peaked, and the following year, sales surpassed those of Eastman Kodak Company, which in the early 1960s recorded sales more than a dozen times greater than those of Fujifilm. However, as digital cameras spread at a rapid pace, the photographic film market peaked in 2000 before significantly shrinking, with total global demand falling to less than one-tenth of its peak 10 years later. Photographic photosensitive materials such as color film accounted for two-thirds of Fujifilm's sales profit at that time. In 2007, sales of Fujifilm's photographic business had plummeted to one-fourth of its former figures, but that year Fujifilm recorded its highest sales in its history. This was the result of large-scale management and structural reforms that the company undertook with a broad perspective and long-term vision rather than a shortsighted response to the crisis in the photographic business, mainly the film business. In order to protect its photographic business, which was once its core business, the company took the first step toward becoming a new company by decisively implementing structural reforms, including bold

corporate downsizing and investments in new businesses, rather than sticking solely to its "core business." In 2006, Fujifilm Holdings Corporation was established, and the company shifted to a holding company structure that combined its two major operating companies, FUJIFILM Corporation and FUJIFILM Business Innovation Corp. (formerly Fuji Xerox Co., Ltd.) To mark the second founding of the company, the company name was changed, and while other companies in the industry decided to withdraw from the photographic film business, the company declared its commitment to preserving the culture of photography.<sup>8</sup>

In 2007, the year following this declaration, the company relocated its headquarters to Tokyo Midtown (Minato-ku, Tokyo) and simultaneously opened "FUJIFILM SQUARE," a showroom complex located in the same building where the Fujifilm Photo Salon and the Photo History Museum mentioned above are located. In addition, there are activities that began after the management reform, such as the Photo exhibition "PHOTO IS" in which all entrants participate, and the "Fujifilm Photo Collection," which contributes to preservation and dissemination from the perspective of the history of Japanese photography. The company also makes efforts towards social contribution activities, such as the "Photo Rescue Project," which was part of the recovery efforts after the Great East Japan Earthquake. Despite the downsizing of its film business, the company's commitment to conducting mécénat activities to preserve and nurture the culture of photography is due to the existence of other businesses that support it. The fact that the company did not withdraw from the photographic business despite undergoing bold reforms and directional changes, but continued to preserve the culture of photography, clearly demonstrates that sustaining the opposing forces of reform and preservation is an important element for a company's survival.

Fujifilm's mécénat activities, which are based on the vision of "contributing to the development of the culture of photography, spiritual enrichment, and human connections, as well as conveying the joy of photography," are long-term and diverse. Furthermore, the Photo exhibition "PHOTO IS" and the activities of the "Fujifilm Photo Salon," "Photo History Museum," and the "Fujifilm Photo Collection" were recognized with the Mécénat Award in 2015 and 2018, respectively.

### **(1) Fujifilm Photo Contest (1950~)**

The "FUJIFILM PHOTO CONTEST," which began in 1950, is a photo contest with a long history of producing high quality winners. In later years, some of the photographers who previously held photo exhibitions at the Fuji Photo Salon and the Photo History Museum, or whose works were collected as part of the Fujifilm Photo Collection, also won awards. Today, it is considered a prestigious photo contest targeting amateur photographers in general.

Winners of the "Professional competition" which existed previously, included Ken Domon in 1955 and Ihei Kimura in 1957. It is also confirmed that Eikoh Hosoe, who won the top prize in the "STUDENT PHOTO competition" in 1951, continued to submit entries, winning three times in the "Professional Category" and serving on the jury four times.

The number of entries for the first contest (1950) was 8,118. In the 60th contest in 2021, the total number of entries was 29,564. A "level sticker" is used in the screening process to indicate at what stage of the screening process the entries have progressed, allowing the entrants to measure their own level of improvement even if they do not win an award. These kinds of measures, which are not seen in other photo contests, have been well received by entrants. It is positioned as a large-scale photo contest that is most widely supported among amateur photographers, and many of the entrants have continued to submit their works over the years.

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<sup>8</sup>"The Asahi Shimbun" January 21, 2006, "Tensei Jingo" (abbreviated)... From silver halide (film) to digital, the transition from old to new in the world of photography continues to accelerate dramatically. Konica Minolta Holdings is reportedly withdrawing from the photo and camera business, including its photographic film brand known as "Sakura Color." Nikon has also announced its effective withdrawal from the film camera business. Against this backdrop, Fujifilm's comment that "we will not withdraw" caught the attention. "Photography, which has the power to express all emotions felt by human beings, including joy, sorrow, love, and excitement, is an indispensable part of our lives... Among them, silver halide photographs are superior to digital photography in terms of their outstanding expressive power, and can be said to be the origin of photography."...(abbreviated)

## **(2) Fujifilm Photo Salon (1957~)**

In 1957, Fujifilm opened a gallery called the "Fuji Photo Salon" in Ginza, Tokyo, as a base for disseminating photographic culture. The wide range of exhibition lineups, from themed exhibitions by professional photographers to group exhibitions by amateurs, is one of its strengths and unique features. In the 1960s, graduation exhibitions at universities and technical schools specializing in photography were held across the board, which opened the door to young aspiring photographers, and also greatly contributed to the increased recognition and affinity of the Fuji Photo Salon as a supportive presence. The venue was divided into three sections, and the exhibits were changed every week. Befitting a gallery with an extensive history, the lineup of exhibitions held since the 1950s reflects the times and the state of society, and it is evident that important exhibitions in the history of Japanese photography up to the present day have also been held at this site. As mentioned in Chapter 1, it was at the Fuji Photo Salon where Ikko Narahara, who made his sensational debut with "HUMAN LAND" in 1956, which was one of the starting points of a major turning point in the postwar history of Japanese photography, presented his first exhibition "Domains" in 1958. This series is not only representative of Narahara's work, but is also an extremely important work in the history of Japanese photography, and shows the importance of the role played by galleries run by camera manufacturers of the time.

## **(3) Fujifilm Square (2007~)**

In 2007, at the same time as the relocation of Fujifilm's headquarters to Tokyo Midtown, the name was changed from "Fuji Photo Salon" to "Fujifilm Photo Salon" and reopened as "Fujifilm Square" with an expanded array of exhibits, including the adjoining "Photo History Museum." The exhibition spaces at the Fujifilm Photo Salon are divided according to their content (Space 1, 2, 3, and Mini Gallery), and multiple exhibitions are always held at the same time, including the "Photo History Museum," which will be mentioned later. Admission is free, and the museum is open year-round (except during the year-end and New Year's holidays). "Fujifilm Square," which celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2017, is constantly hosting a wide variety of projects simultaneously, but although the intentions and policies of these projects vary from responding to social and current affairs, one of its unique features is its wide-ranging lineup, which includes those linked to major events and those in line with the needs of the times. In addition, the "Young Photographer Support Project" has been underway since 2013 to develop and support young photographers. At the time of the interview in October 2021, Jay Hirano, who was holding a solo exhibition<sup>9</sup> as the 30th photographer participating in the Young Photographer Support Project, had been based in the UK for many years, but this was the first time for him to show his works in Japan, and he credits Fujifilm for providing full support not only in the selection and printing of works but also in the design and construction of the venue. He also cited "meeting many people at the exhibition venue" as the most impressive experience when holding the solo exhibition, and mentioned that he was able to feel the real benefit of this experience at the venue. The company's vision of providing a place where people can meet and to connect people to people through photography is embodied here as well.

## **(4) Photo exhibition "PHOTO IS" (2006~)**

This participatory photo exhibition started in 2006 under the theme of "Connecting Thoughts through Photography." The basic concept of this exhibition is that the works of all entrants are always exhibited at the venue of their choice. The underlying basis of this exhibition is to allow as many people as possible to experience the true joy of photography, that is, "printing and exhibiting photographs," which the company has been advocating for many years. This concept is unique to the company, which symbolizes the power of photography to capture precious

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<sup>9</sup> Jay Hirano photo exhibition "Lockdown-Recovery, Rebuild, Restart-" October 22-November 4, 2021 FUJIFILM PHOTO SALON Space 2

moments in the form of memories, and to share these feelings by actually viewing the printed photographs, thereby strengthening and broadening the connections between people. Although middle-aged men overwhelmingly account for the majority of participants in general photo contests, participants in the Photo exhibition "PHOTO IS" have ranged from ages 0 to 101 to date, and efforts have been made to encourage a wide range of people, regardless of gender or age, to experience the possibilities of photography. In response to an age in which the ways in which photographs are being taken are becoming increasingly diverse, new initiatives have been introduced to keep up with the times, such as the establishment of an "Instagram competition" in which entries can be submitted simply by uploading an image (the entries are ultimately printed out), and for the exhibition held in 2021 after the outbreak of the novel coronavirus, entries were also made available online for viewing, which could only be done online. A project called the "KIZUNA POST," which allows visitors to send messages to exhibitors, was implemented at the exhibition venue. It is designed for visitors to deliver handwritten messages to the photographers, and the messages are delivered to the photographers themselves by mail after the exhibition is over. This is a very popular project at every event, and it is another example of the company's commitment to connect people to people.

#### **(5) Photo History Museum (2007~)**

This museum was opened in 2007 at the same time as the opening of "FUJIFILM SQUARE," as a place where visitors can enjoy a panoramic view of the historical evolution of photographic culture, film, and cameras. The museum allows visitors to see the changes of the culture of photography over the past 180 years through the history of the camera and its technological development and evolution. Visitors can learn about the changes in the culture of photography through historically valuable antique cameras and a variety of Fujifilm's film and camera products from previous generations. Products such as the world's first memory card-recording type digital camera (Fujix Digital Still Video Camera DS-1P) developed by Fujifilm are also on display. Some of the displayed items, including this model, are certified and registered as "Essential Historical Materials for Science and Technology" by the National Museum of Nature and Science, and as mentioned earlier in the above-mentioned "Nikon Museum," the culture of photography is very important not only in the field of art, but also in the field of science and technology, and it is possible to see the history of each company's contribution to this culture. Also, special exhibitions showcasing photographs of great historical value are regularly held in this space.

Furthermore, concierge tours of the Photo History Museum are held as a unique initiative. Former employees of Fujifilm who were actually involved in photography-related research, technology and product development for many years at Fujifilm provide daily gallery tours as concierges<sup>10</sup>. The main focus of the tours is on explaining the history of photography and special exhibitions, and tour guides answer individual visitors' questions about their areas of expertise, which sometimes sparks conversation. The museum plays an important role as a place where people can meet and interact with each other, as well as a place that connects users with "the art and history of photography" through the mediation of a concierge.

#### **(6) Photo Rescue Project<sup>11</sup> (2011~)**

The "Photo Rescue Project" was launched as part of the recovery efforts and support for the areas affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake that occurred on March 11, 2011. The project was started with the idea that the company, which has long valued the culture of photography, could do something, and immediately after the earthquake, inquiries about how to

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<sup>10</sup> Before COVID-19. Currently, the situation is being handled according to the status of infections. In addition, a "Fujifilm Square: Guide to the Photo History Museum by a Concierge" video is available on the Fujifilm Square website. <https://fujifilmsquare.jp/guide/museum.html>

<sup>11</sup> Reference material: "Recovery Efforts by the Fujifilm Group after the Great East Japan Earthquake" [sustainability\\_activity\\_report\\_2011\\_ff\\_sr\\_2011\\_03.pdf](https://www.fujifilm.com/ir/en/sustainability/activities/recovery_efforts_after_the_great_east_japan_earthquake) (fujifilm.com)

clean photos began to pour in, and the activities expanded as more and more people expressed their desire to somehow restore the mud-stained photos buried under rubble and sand to their original condition. Employees and volunteers who participated in the project visited the affected areas and conducted a wide range of activities, including instructing people on how to clean soiled photos, distributing kits filled with the necessary tools for cleaning, and cleaning and returning as many as 170,000 photos entrusted to them by the local communities. Many people also became aware of the power that photographs have in preserving memories, and the fact that the photographs that could be reproduced in high quality were not those printed by home inkjet printers, where the ink washes off with water, but silver halide photographs that are coated on the surface and printed at photo studios, made them realize the need to communicate the importance of printing photographs in an appropriate manner.

### **(7) Fujifilm Photo Collection (2014~)**

In 2014, on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the founding of FUJIFILM Corporation, the museum collected the works of 101 leading Japanese photographers from the end of the Edo period and the Meiji period to the present day with high recording value as a corporate photo collection based on the basic principle of "preserving the culture of photography." (<https://fujifilmsquare.jp/en/photocollection/>)

The works are organized chronologically from the end of the Edo period to the present day by the year in which they were taken. The main objective of this collection is to provide visitors with the opportunity to view and experience the history of photography in Japan from the end of the Edo period to the present day, as well as the history of technological innovations and changes, and the various studies and challenges undertaken by photographers of each era, all in the highest quality silver halide photographic prints.

In addition, after the collection was exhibited at the Fujifilm Photo Salon (Tokyo) and the Fujifilm Photo Salon Osaka in January 2014, it was exhibited 18 times over the next eight years (as of 2021), including at public art museums and museums nationwide, and attracted approximately 2,000,000 visitors, with the aim of delivering Japanese photographic culture to a wide audience that includes not only those with deep knowledge of photography and specialists but also beginners who are learning about photographic history for the first time. The current situation is that many art museums, other than those specializing in photography, offer few opportunities to view the history of Japanese photography from a panoramic viewpoint, either in their collections or in special exhibitions. As such, the company's photo collection provides many people with the opportunity to view them, and is making a significant contribution to the preservation, dissemination, and development of photography as a cultural asset.



### 3. Summary from the case studies of the two companies

Nikon Corporation has established its position as a global brand while consistently maintaining outstanding technical capabilities, the highest quality products, and the highest level of contests. In addition to improving the quality of its products, the company continues to focus on developing outstanding photographic expressionists, both professionals and amateurs alike, while contributing to the retention of a strong base of photographers by providing full support for high-level cutting-edge expression. It also built its foundation from the ground up with high standards, starting in an era where concepts such as customer service, CSR, and mécénat activities were virtually nonexistent. The achievements that the company has brought not only to the photography world but also to society are immeasurable, including its approach to sustainable social contribution and its attitude of maintaining high brand power by separating its mécénat activities from corporate profits and public relations.

It seems that in this day in age, there is much to learn from this attitude. As many companies are drifting toward the latest trends and the needs of low-end consumers and losing their technological capabilities, the challenge is how to maintain the ability to create versatile products that are supported by the masses with technology that has been pursued to the ultimate level. If it is difficult to achieve both, I would like to see a company that never discards "technology" alone, that thoroughly values technology, and that continues to improve and refine it for the future. In order to achieve this, it is also essential for customers to be able to make sound judgments that are not influenced by short-term values.

FUJIFILM Corporation has continuously provided photography-related products and services to the masses on a national level, regardless of age and gender demographics. Since the 2000s, when the demand for photographic film declined sharply due to advances in digital technology, the company continued its photography business with a mission to pass on the culture of photography to future generations. And today, Fujifilm's photographic division currently accounts for only a few percent of the company's total business. In spite of this, the fact that they are still investing so many resources in their photography-related mécénat activities is an indication that the entire company shares the mission of "preserving the culture of photography" and is continuing to carry on activities to protect and develop the "culture of photography" that the company has been consistently engaged in since its founding. Their activities to convey the significance of printing photographs and the joy of the essence of photography to many people, and to promote communication that "connects people to people" through photography, are wide-ranging and go beyond cultural activities to social contribution activities, such as the case of the Great East Japan Earthquake.

The company's stance of "connecting people with people" is clearly evident in the way it responded to this interview, and despite the short duration of the interview, I was deeply impressed by the direct and detailed explanations of the intentions and mission of each project in the words of each person in charge, and it made me think that mécénat activities, which are inherently independent from profit and public relations, have the potential to benefit companies in the long run, not through direct profit, but as a form of strong public relations that mediates between people and communicates the philosophy of the company.

At the core of Fujifilm's activities is a sense of mission to "protect and develop the culture of photography." Before discussing whether or not mécénat activities are a part of business or public relations, it is important to note that this sense of mission has been instilled throughout the company as a major prerequisite. While the demand for film has sharply declined, Kodak went out of business, and other Japanese companies withdrew from the film business with the arrival of the wave of digitization from the 2000s onward, the declaration by Fujifilm in 2006 to "preserve the culture of photography" was not merely a statement of intent by one company, but had an important significance that transcended the boundaries of the industry. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the year 2006 was a turning point in the fate of Japan's photographic culture, when the industry experienced its most difficult times and a strong appeal was made both domestically and internationally that protecting and developing the culture of photography was a mission that transcended business.

Culture is something that, once lost, is almost impossible to regain. Both Nikon and Fujifilm share the same firm commitment to the "mission of preserving the culture of photography," and the contributions they have made to the culture in their respective ways as manufacturers are directly related to improving the quality and expanding the scope of the Japanese photography world through multifaceted cultural activities, in addition to providing high quality products they have produced, and a sense of pride in continuing mécénat activities from a long-term perspective can be felt.

However, there are challenges. As the Japanese economy continues to decline without the momentum it once had, new paths cannot be paved by relying solely on the prestige and success stories of charismatic figures of the past. In the years to come, when it comes to mécénat activities, it will be essential to think independently, establish new ideas, implement them flexibly, and create an organization that can at times shift directions. The history of the photographers with whom Nikon has built up relationships with and supported throughout its long history can also be seen as part of the history of Japanese photography. The NIKKOR Club has a long history of entrusting its management to photographers, and it has an established track record of being one of the first to capture the needs of photographers as Nikon cameras became more popular and solidifying its market while building relationships with professionals at the forefront of their field. Both Nikon and Fujifilm were pioneers in terms of mécénat activities and in the relationship with photographers in the market, and it can be said that the history of photography in Japan has evolved while each company continued to follow in each other's footsteps. By carefully archiving and overlooking these relationships and achievements in detail, creating an environment in which they can be communicated, and at times listening to their words again today, we may be able to see the current challenges and find paths to solving them.

Furthermore, as the era in which one of the unique characteristics of photography was the ability to widely approach the masses has come to an end, it has become an everyday infrastructure and tool for the communication of information in today's digital society. The "importance of printing out photos" is advocated by Fujifilm, but today, we are living in an era in which most people "don't print out their photos" by an overwhelming margin. By identifying new developments based on the premise that this standard is a prerequisite, it will also further enhance the significance of the existence of "prints," which is the very origin of photography.

Another challenge that arises in the context of "preserving the culture of photography" is the existence of photography as an "archive" on a broad, general level. As photography is undeniably a "recording" medium, the countless photographs taken by people in their daily lives can be said to be historical "cultural resources" that record and preserve the era in which they were taken. Although the works of photographers housed in museums are important records of their respective times, they are only fragments based on the photographer's personal interpretation. The image of records that can be seen from big data, which is an accumulation of ordinary personal records, will undoubtedly reflect a completely different aspect of the 20th century than we have seen in the past. As time goes by, it should become a valuable resource of even greater importance. At the same time, the vast amount of negatives and contact prints related to "photographic works" are also valuable research materials for deciphering the intentions and shooting backgrounds of photographers, but the reality is that most of them are discarded with the passing of generations without being organized or studied. Although efforts are being made at the individual, group, and organizational levels, valuable materials are being scattered and disposed of at a rate far exceeding the speed at which they are being protected. I feel that there is a need to address this situation through public-private partnerships beyond the boundaries of industries and business sectors, and I wonder if corporate mécénat activities can play a role in leading these efforts.

In today's era of big data, the importance of archiving and DX has long been called into question. By preserving and protecting history, opening it up, and using it in a genuinely comprehensive and interactive manner in DX and beyond national borders, it is hoped that the issues and solutions currently faced by modern society, as well as new possibilities, will become apparent. On the contrary, new developments would not be possible without a sense of respect for history and active disclosure of information.

And one of our challenges is not to be easily swayed by immediate information. We must possess reliable knowledge and a discerning eye for things. In the increasingly expanding digital age, it is now possible to create superficial values and inspire consumers in any way one wishes, as long as one secures capital and creates a mechanism to control the media. It can be said that it is no longer a problem at the industry level, but that we are facing a crisis in which the accumulation of culture is being eliminated by capitalism and rationalism. This is also a result of the fact that we consumers (viewers) have been swayed solely by immediate excessive advertising, novelty, cheapness, and convenience. If we do not reward studies that sincerely produce good products from a long-term perspective, companies will eventually neglect their efforts and engage in activities and production to generate easy profits to meet the needs of consumers. By allowing consumers to use sound judgment, corporate ESG or purpose-driven management will become possible in an essential sense, and management based on principles and beliefs that are not limited to short-sighted evaluations will help nurture consumers, build loyalty with customers, and create a positive cycle that will surely return benefits to society over the long term. Because the manufacturing industry is currently facing a difficult situation, it is important that we all see the awareness of supporting the foundation that enables companies to continue their mécénat activities in a manner appropriate to the times without giving up, as well as basic media literacy, as our own problem.

Another issue that I would like to bring up again is the relationship between the photography world and the art world in Japan (in other words, the issue of how photography is handled in art museums). In the past, a unique and solid framework of "the photography world" and "the art world" existed, and various evaluations were concluded within the respective industries. The culture of photography in Japan has developed within the "photography world," which was formed by photographers and critics, as well as photography-related manufacturers and publishing companies. Although this world still has some connections to the "art world," which is mainly comprised of museums and universities at the top of the hierarchy, it can be said that it continues to be both independent and isolated to this day. While the boundary between the two worlds continues to fluctuate with changes in the means of information and expression without a reliable standard of judgment, the acceptance of an evaluation system that ignores history will probably result in significant losses for each industry when viewed over the long term. In the future, it will be essential for both worlds to cooperate with each other beyond the boundaries of their respective industries, learning and respecting each other's background and history, including reconsidering the existing vertical structure of "art museums" and the meaning of their existence.

Whether "photography" can continue to preserve its illustrious history while paving the way as an important entity with new added value is no longer an issue for individual companies, but a major challenge that must be addressed by the industry and society as a whole. I would like to see a new approach by companies not only to react and conform to the changes of the times, but also to take a new role in photography that is one step ahead and has an impact on people, both in terms of historical inheritance and innovation, as well as in terms of mécénat activities and photographic culture, while leading the times by building relationships with people in a sustainable manner.

Constantly keeping a critical eye on the present, examining the relationship between oneself and society from both micro and macro perspectives, and thinking and practicing one step ahead of the times are exactly what many photographers, engineers, and business operators were striving for with conviction during the early days of Japan's postwar photographic history. As for whether the "culture of photography" that was established there can be carried on in the future is dependent not only on the attitude of the company, but also on the determination and actions of each individual who is willing to open up new horizons with a new perspective while learning from the history.

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