

Born 1988 in Kanagawa Prefecture. Graduated from Chuo University in 2011. Received the Grand Prize in the *8th I_WALL Photography Competition* in 2013. Her major exhibitions include, *Hidden Indications*, Guardian Garden (Tokyo, 2014); *The person who grabs my arm*, Nikon Salon (Tokyo/Osaka, 2017); and *Photos (taken by friends)*, Gallery OGU MAG (Tokyo, 2018). Since 2016, she has participated in the annual media art exhibition *HIKARU-ZOO* at Yokohama Municipal Kanazawa Zoo. In 2019 she organized a group exhibition of photography and video works, *The Eyes of the Zoo*, Yokohama Municipal Kanazawa Zoo (Kanagawa Prefecture).

Halfway Happy

Natsuki Kuroda

13:00–20:00

Entrance Free

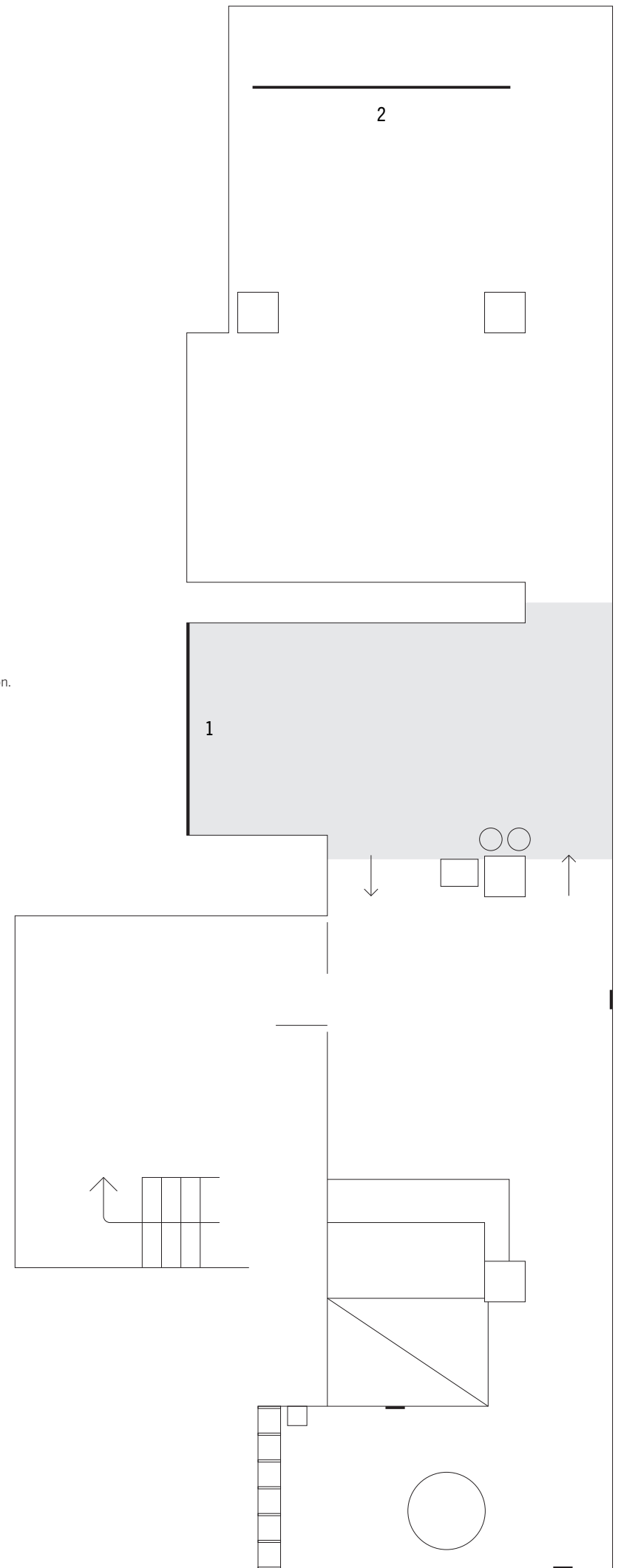
2018 (2021)

Photos (rooms)

2021



You can take photos in the waiting room (outside the screening area).



The third installment of *aM Project 2020–2021: Halfway Happy* is Natsuki Kuroda’s solo exhibition *The Photograph Begins*. Presented on this occasion are screenings of two video works, *Photos (taken by friends)* and *Photos (rooms)*.

Since admission to view *Photos (rooms)* will be on a per screening basis, visitors are invited to perceive and engage with the venue as if it were a waiting room. The duration of each video work is approximately 30 minutes.

Natsuki Kuroda is a photographer¹, and each of her works include the word “Photo” in their title. Although several photographs are framed and installed in the venue, rather than as subjects of exhibition, they more so present themselves as implicitly being a part of the scenery that is likened to a waiting room². The main focus of the exhibition are the two video works. Herein lies a certain twist whereby video works are named “photographs.”

This twist however will soon come to unravel once viewing the work. In both *Photos (taken by friends)* and *Photos (rooms)* photographs are set to serve as in important tool. In *Photos (taken by friends)*, children are divided into two teams while on a visit to the zoo and are instructed to take photographs and write letters, yet the members of each team never meet or come into direct contact with one another. In *Photos (rooms)* the caregivers talk about their own thoughts, memories, and experiences while looking at photographs taken by Kuroda, yet as listeners, we never in fact see the actual inhabitants of the rooms. There are some people whom we are only able to turn a contemplative gaze towards through photographs, or to be more precise, by retracing the words that have been spoken about them. In Kuroda’s video works, photographs neither function as a mirror nor window, but exist as something like a wall of sorts.

As Simone Weil had once written, “the wall is the thing which separates them but is also their means of communication³.” Photographs, like exposed concrete, do not communicate anything in themselves and are highly impassive. Yet this does not signify the coercion of silence, nor does it only allow narratives of the most sophisticated and magnanimous to be conveyed. Words, no matter how inaccurate, exaggerated, faltering, or far too scrupulous, have the ability to convulsively shake the wall.

In the practice of photography there is a constant relationship between “photographing/being photographed” and “seeing/being seen,” and its asymmetrical structure inevitably gives rise to problems of power and violence. It goes without saying that true sincerity means confronting this fact. Furthermore, it should not be overlooked that there are specific people whose emotions may be hurt. With this in mind, Kuroda employs her techniques in a direction that is different to displaying awareness towards the potential harm that photography could inflict. Kuroda does not withhold her attitude in the face of this violence, and neither does she insist upon us to share these concerns. The message that she communicates is clear through and through. That is, the vivid suggestion that photography can indeed be a part of our lives —the idea that it is fun to look at and talk about photographs.

It is no doubt wonderful to turn to photography as source of inspiration from which to develop one’s ideas, like the American writer Richard Powers, who wrote a long and complex novel from an actual black-and-white photograph. Having said that, what unfolds in this exhibition is more like a practice of repeatedly engaging in minimal acts of translation, from photographs to words, and from words back to photographs again. In addition, Kuroda started working on *Photos (rooms)* around 2017, before she commenced work on *Photos (taken by friends)*. Rather, the two works were developed in parallel to one another, both in terms of their time period and Kuroda’s thoughts and mindset. One would like to refer to this passage of time, which by no means can be described as linear, and is interdispersed with small rifts and pauses, as “the exposure time.” Both video works were true eye-openers that enabled one to realize the sheer potential that photographs yet continue to harbor. Their experience truly instilled one with the sense that “photography has begun,” not only for myself, but even for those who I most likely will never meet at all.

1 Kuroda’s website is as follows.
<https://www.kurodanatsuki.com/>



2 The photographs displayed on the walls will be periodically replaced by Kuroda.
3 Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, Japanese translation: Mayumi Tomihara, Iwanami Bunko, 2017, p. 250.

Films



Photos (taken by friends) 2018 (2021), 25'

In May 2018, Kuroda held a workshop for children at Yokohama Municipal Kanazawa Zoo. The children walked around the zoo in two groups: a “question team” that used photographs to create questions, and a “solving team” that worked to solve those questions. The workshop attempted to explore the kind of interactions that would take place through photographs in the absence of face-to-face contact between the two groups.

This is a partially re-edited version of a work that was screened for a limited period of three days at Gallery OGU MAG in December 2018.



Photos (rooms) 2021, 28'

Since around 2017, Kuroda has intermittently engaged in filming and interviewing various people working in the field of long-term care. The photographs handed to the caregivers are those that capture the rooms of the people they had once nursed and cared for. What do they discover and remember through these photographs, and how do they personally relate, respond, and talk about their thoughts and experiences?

Kuroda accompanies these people as they view, reminisce, and each tell their stories about the photographs.

Screening Schedule

13	00	Photos (taken by friends)	
	30		Photos (rooms)
14	00	Photos (taken by friends)	
	30		Photos (rooms)
15	00	Photos (taken by friends)	
	30		Photos (rooms)
16	00	Photos (taken by friends)	
	30		Photos (rooms)
17	00	Photos (taken by friends)	
	30		Photos (rooms)
18	00	Photos (taken by friends)	
	30		Photos (rooms)
19	00	Photos (taken by friends)	
	30		Photos (rooms)

Please do not enter during the screening of *Photos (rooms)*.