

Sharing the Joy of Photography



Nishimoto Kimiko uses photo editing software to process her own photographs.



Nishimoto Kimiko began taking pictures at the age of 72. She is still an active photographer, and has more than 230,000 Instagram followers. Her humorous selfies are especially popular.

FUJITA MAO

NISHIMOTO Kimiko (92), a photographer living in Kumamoto City, Kumamoto Prefecture, publishes selfies that would make anyone instantly burst into laughter. Nishimoto began taking photos when she was 72 years old. Having started out as a beautician at the age of 18, switching to become a professional cycle racer at 22, she gave up her career when she married five years later, and went on to raise three children. Nishimoto first picked up a single-lens reflex camera when she was asked by a friend to attend a photography class taught by Nishimoto's photographer son, Kazutami.

“At first, I didn’t know anything about photography—I only joined the class to make new friends. But I came to see the merit in the fact that photos can be preserved, and as I continued to attend the weekly classes, I started to enjoy taking photographs,” says Nishimoto.

All photos: Courtesy of Nishimoto Kimiko

The photography classes are held in seven locations across Japan, including Kumamoto, Tokyo and Osaka, so she has made friends of all ages from all over the country as she had hoped. Sometimes Nishimoto goes out with her friends to take pictures, while other times her friends stay over at her house, where she lives alone, to enjoy photo sessions.

Nishimoto's photographs are all the product of her own ideas in terms of composition, clothing and props. Using things found in everyday life that inspire her, she continues to create a new view of the world that generates laughter in those who look at her photographs. Sometimes, for example, she includes her own reflection in photographs after setting up her tripod the appropriate distance from her subject. Her selfies are humorous and striking.

"I became interested in taking selfies when I was given a homework assignment in a photography class to take a picture of myself. I knew it would be difficult to take good pictures like the professionals, so I decided to take pictures that the viewer would find amusing."

Having learned to edit digital photos in the photography class, she purchased a computer for the first time in her life at the age of 74 and began to use editing software to process her own pictures.

For example, in the photo of Nishimoto with a walking aid overtaking a car, she photographed herself alongside a stationary car and processed the image to make it appear that both she and the car were moving at speed. The photo in which Nishimoto appears to be floating in the background was created using photo editing software to erase the chair she was sitting on.

At the age of 82, ten years after first picking up a single-lens reflex camera, Nishimoto held her first solo exhibition at a branch of the Kumamoto Prefectural Museum of Art. The digital art inspired by Nishimoto's imagination has been awarded numerous prizes in photography contests in Japan, and a collection of her photographs was published in 2016.

Nishimoto says she'll give anything a try. So when she found out about Instagram, she saw it as just another opportunity. She started posting by herself

in 2018 after learning how to use it in her photography class. As of January 2021, Nishimoto had over 230,000 Instagram followers, her work even attracting attention overseas.

"The reaction to my Instagram posts has been huge, but it hasn't changed my desire to take funny pictures. My life changed when I encountered photography in my 70s. I'm so glad I found photography. Even if I become bedridden, I'll just pick up my camera and photograph something on the ceiling."

At the moment, Nishimoto is in rehabilitation for weakness in her legs and lower back, but she still enjoys taking pictures in her small photography studio she has set up at home. Not all Nishimoto's photos are humorous. The richness of her life is also expressed in her still life works. No matter how old she gets, she is driven by the quest to discover what it is that the subject is communicating to her, expressing through her photographs a world of unknown richness. Nishimoto herself derives great pleasure from this. That pleasure is evident in her photographs. 

