“Sight From The Heart” / “Vision From Within” captures light
By Bruce Hall, a blind photographer (severely amblyopic)

A boy is expressing joy with his entire body. The splashes of water which cover the entire image seem to represent the aura of happiness the boy exudes.

The boy is one of the twin sons of Bruce Hall, a blind photographer who lives in Irvine, California. The twins are autistic from birth.

Hall has been photographing his sons as a life-long project. He is amblyopic - legally blind. His vision is only about 5% of normal but when he found that he is able to see twinkling stars by using an astronomical telescope, he sought the aid of cameras and other optical instruments to increase his severely-impaired vision. These devices became indispensable in connecting him to the world. Then photography became a part of his life.

Many of Hall’s photographs make those who see them sense the “light”, which is pure and clear as of the morning light. The “light” increases its brilliance and transparency through the use of a motif of water, appearing frequently in the series “Autism” in which his sons are captured. It is said that autistic people like water. Many scenes depict showers, playing with water, pools and underwater images. They emphasize the lively existence of “light”.

It seems as if Hall is photographing in search of “light”. If there is such a thing as “sight from the heart”, he may be creating his images by using his “vision from within”. He uses his very limited vision, camera, equipment and computer monitor for confirmation of his images at the final stage, but his most reliable tool may be his “vision from within”.

We realize from Hall’s work that regardless of being blind or sighted, the most important thing is whether one’s “vision from within” is functioning. It determines the effectiveness of the snapshots. Hall’s “sight from the heart” captures not only particles of light coming from splashes of water but also the brightness of the light emitted by his children.

Yoshiko Suzuki
Curator, Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography

Bruce Hall: born in New York, USA in 1953

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