

Daido Moriyama: Audio Description

Written by Eleanor Margolies

From the series *Letter to St-Loup*, 1990

This black and white photograph shows a slightly-blurred, close-up face, with long slender fingers framing one eye from above and below. The fingernails are darkly polished. The fingers pull the eyebrow upwards and draw down the lower lid, holding the eye open wide. Is this to see better or to examine the eye more easily – or both at once, as when someone looks in a mirror to check their own eyeball? Or is it an experiment with how it looks to change the shape of the eye?

Both eyes look straight out at us, appearing as glossy as the nail polish: in each deep pool of black, there is a crystalline white dot of reflected light in one corner. The velvety black around the eye socket could be a literal shadow or a smoky eye created by make-up.

The position of the lower hand covers the mouth, while the upper hand draws the brow up into wrinkles, giving the whole photograph a mood of curiosity mixed with anxiety.

This photo is from a collection of photographs Daido Moriyama took in and around Tokyo in 1990. He considered the book of this work a visual letter and ode to the French inventor Nicéphore Niépce, who produced the first photograph in Saint-Loup-de-Varenes, France.