

Smile Art

Merry Project by Koji Mizutani

text Koji Yoshida

What can art do for the Earth? In his pursuit of the answer to that question, Koji Mizutani, a Japanese artist, has come to believe that a "smile is the sole universal means of communication". Based on this belief, he initiated an art project called "Merry" in 1999 and has since photographed the smiling faces of people around the world together with their handwritten messages of what happiness means to them. In his efforts to search for smiling faces, he dared to visit the areas where smiles seem to be disappearing, such as New York after the terrorist attacks, Moscow, and African nations.

At the request of the 2005 World Exposition in Aichi, Japan, he travelled to 23 countries around the world, including America, England, Germany, Italy, Cuba, Kenya, Vietnam, and the Kingdom of Tonga and collected the smiles and messages of over 20,000 people. His particular focus was on children's smiles because he viewed them as the light shining over the future of the Earth. Children's smiles were projected on a large screen installed in the main plaza of the expo with their handwritten messages, which attracted much attention.

When we face a large number of smiling faces, we are awed at the mysterious power of a face = a human's ultimate tool of expression. As we continue staring at it in its entirety, we feel as if electricity were generated in our brains. What Mizutani learned in the process and was deeply moved by was the fact that the severer the environment where children live, the brighter the smiles as they truly relish the happiness of living "now".

Recently, he has been working hard to raise funds to build schools in South Africa and has contributed to the cause all the profits made from publishing Merry Expo, a photo collection of children's smiles, in return for the beaming smiles he received from these children.

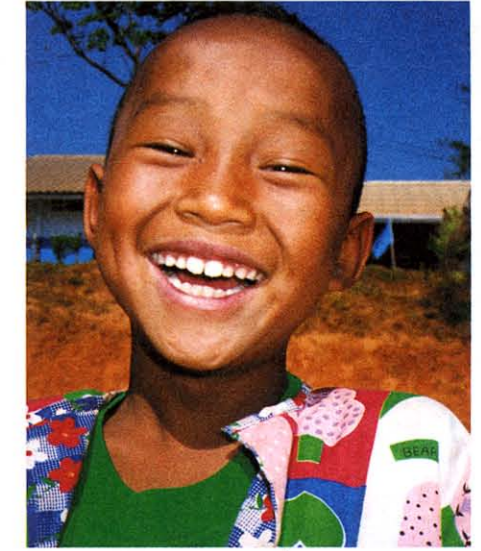
Further information on the "Merry" project: www.21merry.net



いんこがすき



Dalmatians



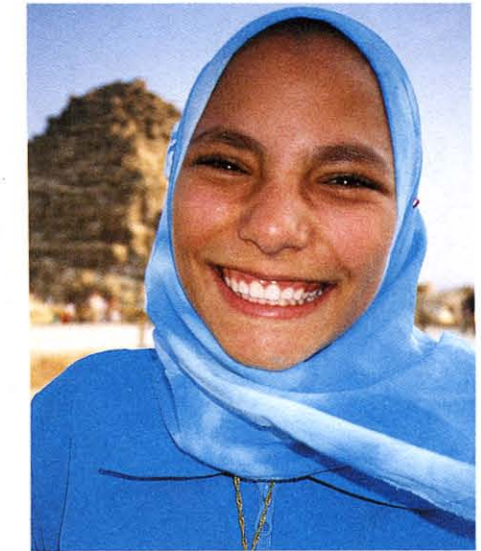
ผมมีความสุขที่สุด



Koga me beco u kopano.



Thích đi du lịch



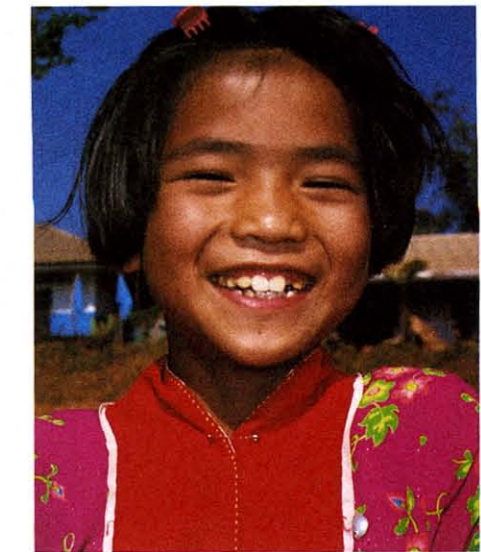
الرحلات



Jugar, acariciar mis gatos, perros, y que mami me haga masajes.



By la esperanza del mundo



ขอบคุณ