# PATRICIA MORIBE - THE ROAD

## WHO AM I

I was born in Brazil on February 24, 1967, the granddaughter of Japanese immigrants. My fascination with photography began at an early age, using my father’s camera.

I later studied journalism and cinema at the University of São Paulo, where I wrote my thesis on cinemas built for the Japanese community in São Paulo. These venues were vital cultural hubs for Japanese immigrants during the golden age of Japanese cinema, from the 1950s to the 1970s.

In 1996, I completed a postgraduate filmmaking course at New York University. Shortly after, I directed a short film about an elderly Japanese projectionist who traveled through Brazil’s coffee plantation regions, screening Japanese films for immigrant communities. Alongside my work in film, I have worked as a journalist for several years, currently with Radio France Internationale in Paris.

In recent years, I have embraced photography as my primary medium of expression. I received formal training in photojournalism in Paris and have participated in group exhibitions. In November 2023, I took part in an artist residency in Fukuoka, Japan, where I showcased my photographic research exploring the cultural connections between Brazil, Japan, and Europe.

# CREATIVE INSPIRATION

Over the past few years, I've focused on themes related to my family history. My grandparents emigrated from Japan to Brazil in the early 20th century, where my parents, and later my siblings and I, were born. Thirty years ago, I became an immigrant myself, moving to Europe in the 1990s.

Japanese immigration to Brazil began in 1908, driven by Japan's overpopulation and Brazil's need for labor in its coffee plantations. By 1973, nearly 200,000 Japanese had settled in Brazil, and today, there are about 1.5 million Japanese descendants there.

In the 1980s, economic struggles in Brazil led many Japanese descendants to migrate back to Japan. Today, the flow of Nikkei to Japan faces challenges due to limited job opportunities and lower wages for foreigners.

I still consider Brazil my "home," as it connects me to my native language and cultural roots. Most of my family still lives there. We lost most of our ties to Japan, and we no longer speak Japanese, except for a few words, mainly related to food.

I inherited many old photos and albums from my parents. My father passed away in 2016, and my mother suffers from Alzheimer's, making it difficult to retrace our family history and identify the faces in the pictures. So I decided to create my own visual narrative, exploring the connections between past, present, and future.

# “THE ROAD”

This new series builds on my previous works, compiled into handmade photobooks. The first, “Onkoto Dondjiso”, explores places in Brazil that I call home and that are deeply shaped by Japanese influences.

In 2023, I traveled to Japan to retrace my roots, despite having little concrete information about remaining family members or places. This journey led to two series: one capturing snapshots of Fukuoka, and another exploring themes of transmission, displacement, and cultural exchange.

In September 2024, I embarked on a road trip along Via Dutra, an iconic highway built in the 1950s to connect São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

This road has been a constant presence in my life, from childhood to adulthood. As I traveled its decaying stretches, I encountered both its hidden charms and signs of neglect, drawing parallels between the road’s decline and the deterioration of the human body—specifically, my mother’s.

At 93, my mother suffers from Alzheimer’s. She lives in a retirement home for Japanese descendants, set in a green landscape. Once a vibrant and dynamic person, her age and illness have made her increasingly dependent.

This work is a meditation on time, memory, and loss, using the decaying road and my mother’s transformation as metaphors for the passage of time. It is a reflection on the inevitable fading of both places and identities.


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