

# Masanao Abe

## The Movement of Clouds around Mt. Fuji



An exhibition by Helmut Völter

Izu Photo Museum, Mishima, Japan

17 January — 5 July 2015

within the exhibition "Fuji Paradigms: Visions of Mt. Fuji"

In the late 1920s, the Japanese physicist Masanao Abe built an observatory with a view of Mount Fuji. From it, over the course of fifteen years, he recorded the clouds that surrounded the mountain. He was interested in the scientific question of how the air currents around Fuji could be visualized by means of film and photography. Albeit unintentionally, Abe's motifs fit into a long iconographic tradition: the mountain and the clouds. For decades his archive was left untouched in a Tokyo garden shed. Helmut Völter, who discovered Abe's legacy while working on his book "Cloud Studies," sifted through the images of the passionate cineaste who saw a combination of individual images, moving pictures and stereo recordings as the ideal form of scientific evidence. The mere contemplation of these dynamic cloud photographs centring on snow-covered Fuji seems to lift the viewer into the air.

Anne König



Cloud Photograph 2/3

Film 50/51

24 November 1928 1:30 p.m.



Cloud Photograph 2/6

Film 50/51

24 November 1928 3:00 p.m.



# 1933

Cloud Photographs 110 – 257

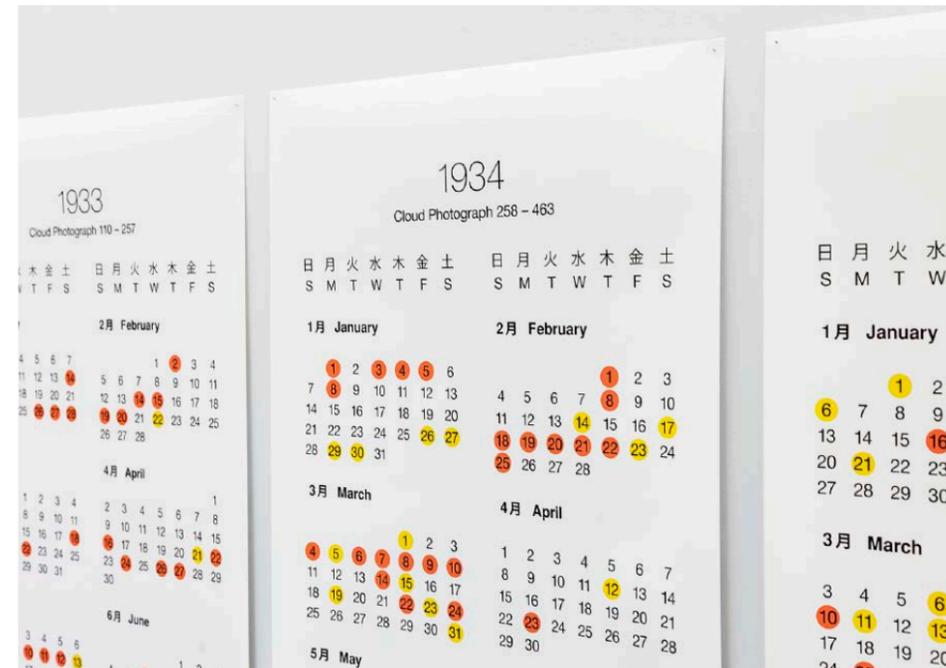
日 月 火 水 木 金 土  
S M T W T F S

1 月 January	2 月 February	3 月 March
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31

4 月 April	5 月 May	6 月 June
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30

7 月 July	8 月 August	9 月 September
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30

10 月 October	11 月 November	12 月 December
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31



Room 1 16 calendar sheets (1926–41) document Abe’s cloud research. A yellow dot indicates that one photograph has been taken on that day; a red dot indicates that more than one photograph has been taken. — *inkjet prints, 2015*

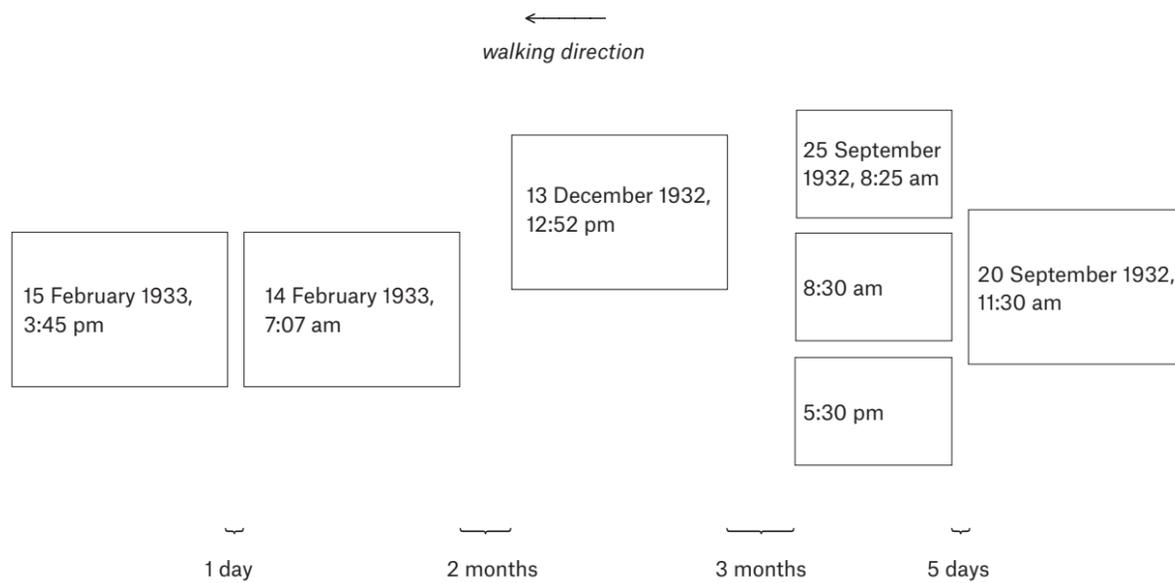




Room 1 Upper left: Masanao Abe's Observatory; lower left: photograph from a wind tunnel; right: Masanao Abe in front of a tent, before the observatory was built — *inkjet prints, 2015 (1920s and 1930s)*







Room 2 Masanao Abe: »Cloud Photographs« — 39 inkjet prints, 2015 (1920s— 1940s)  
 The grid of the images is designed according to date and time of the exposure of the images: The photographs are arranged chronographically. Photographs taken on the same day are placed on top of each other. The horizontal distance varies according to the temporal distance between the photographs.

NO. 195	<b>CLOUD PHOTO</b>	YEAR 2593	P
PLATE NO. 43 (432)	DATE 25	TIME 8 <sup>h</sup> 56	Film NO. 128d

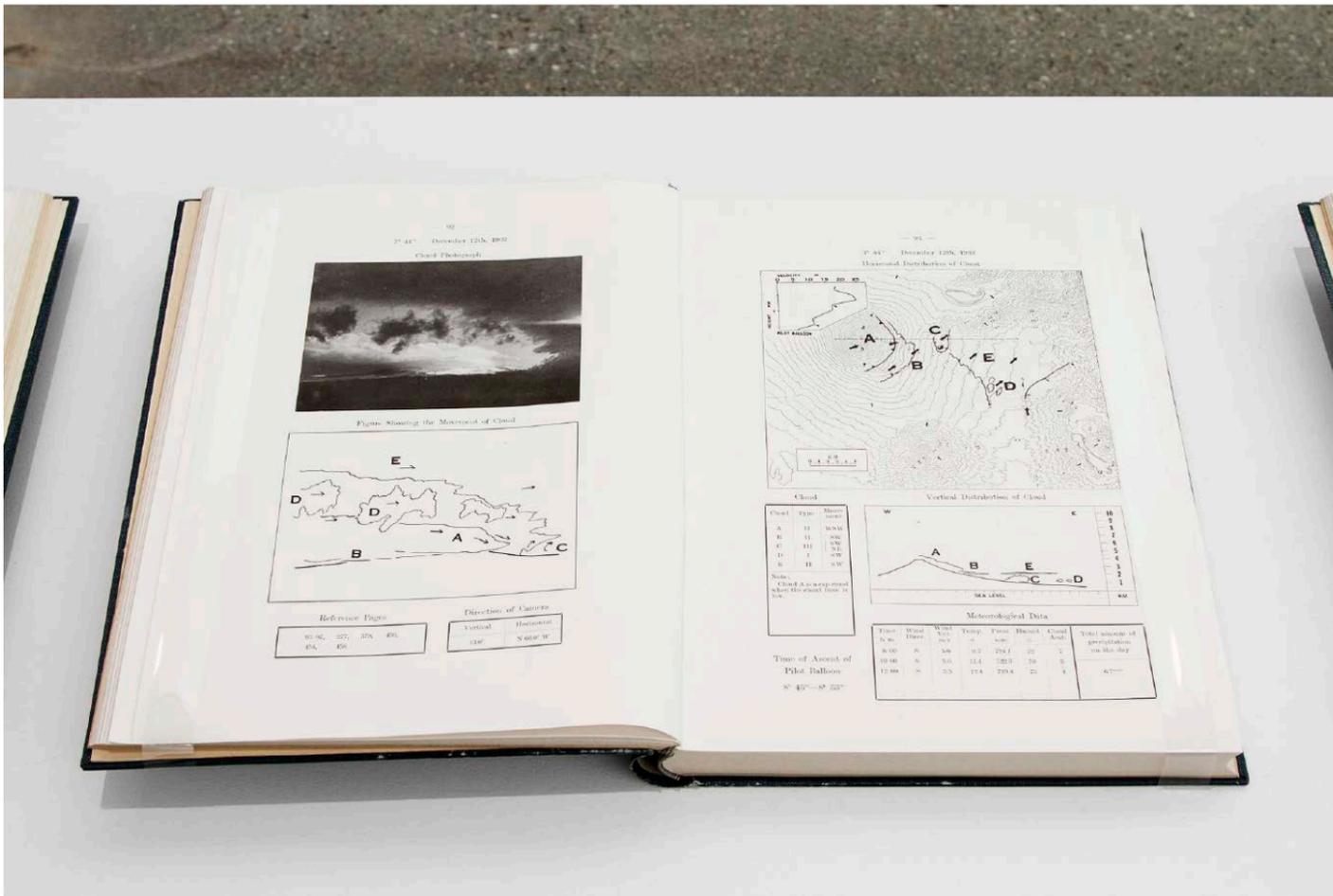
同向是向N寄  
 六米程居此風  
 風下向上雲  
 強風  
 山上雲は風連  
 最大の風時

24 TR  
 8h SSW 0.7  
 9h SSW 1.8  
 2400  
 10h 0.9  
 324V(0.4)  
 313V  
 NE  
 NNE  
 N  
 NNE  
 E  
 SSW  
 7m SW

Weather Conditions					Camera direction		Photo. Exposure		
Pressure	Temperature	Humidity	Wind Direction	Wind Velocity	V.	H.	F/.	Time	Filter
721.8 (8h)	17.7 (8h)	60% (8h)	SSW	0-1	13°	N66W	9	1/45	5
Cloud Conditions							Remarks.		
Form	Height	Direction	Velocity	Amount					
				7 (8h)					

M. ABE

Room 2 Masanao Abe used these field notes to document his »Cloud Photographs«. — sheets with inserted black and white photograph, drawing and handwritten notes, 1920s— 1940s



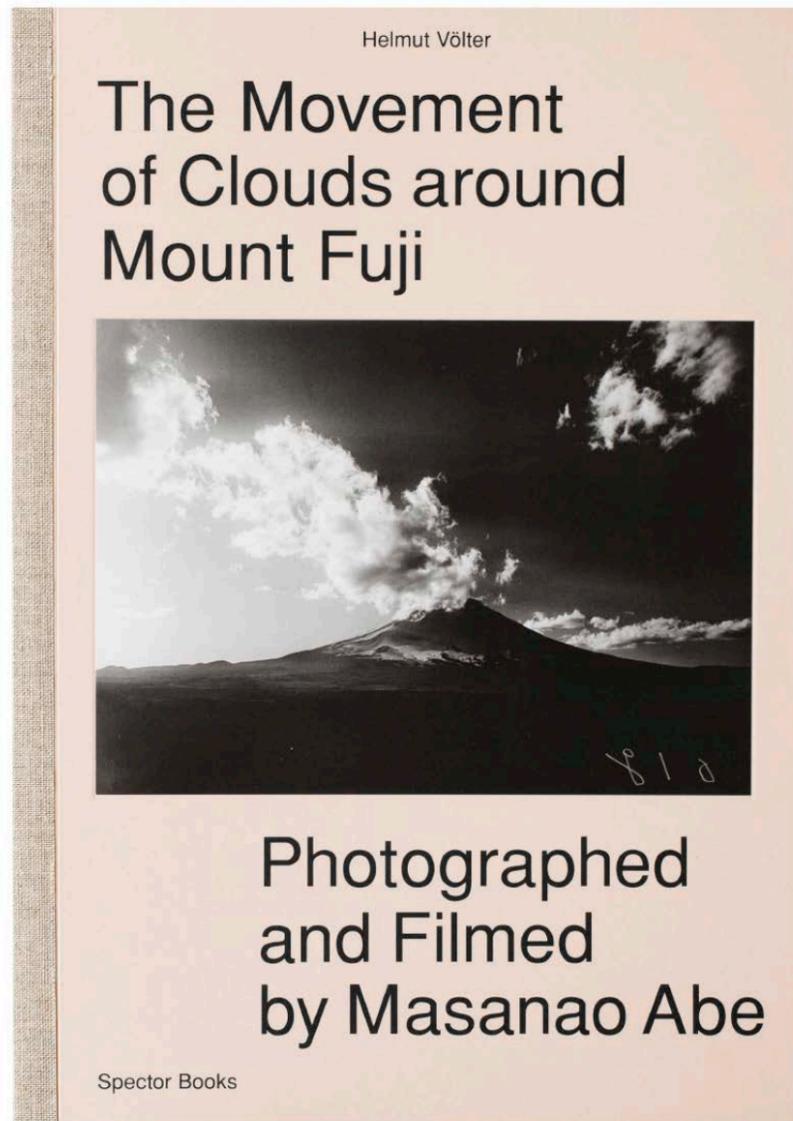
Room 2 Left: In 1937, Masanao Abe published "Distribution and Movement of Cloud around Mt. Fuji Studied through Photographs," an extensive documentation of his research. Right: stereo viewers, 1930s



Room 3 Projection of "Masanao Abe: Cloudgraphy" by Helmut Völter, 5 min, b/w, silent



Left: Marriage photograph of Naoko and Masanao Abe, photo studio K. Kitazawa, Tokyo 1916.  
Right: Naoko and Masanao Abe, photo studio G. L. Manuel frères, Paris 1923.



Helmut Völter: The Movement of Clouds around Mt. Fuji: Photographed and Filmed by Masanao Abe, Spector Books: Leipzig 2016, 376 pp.



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