

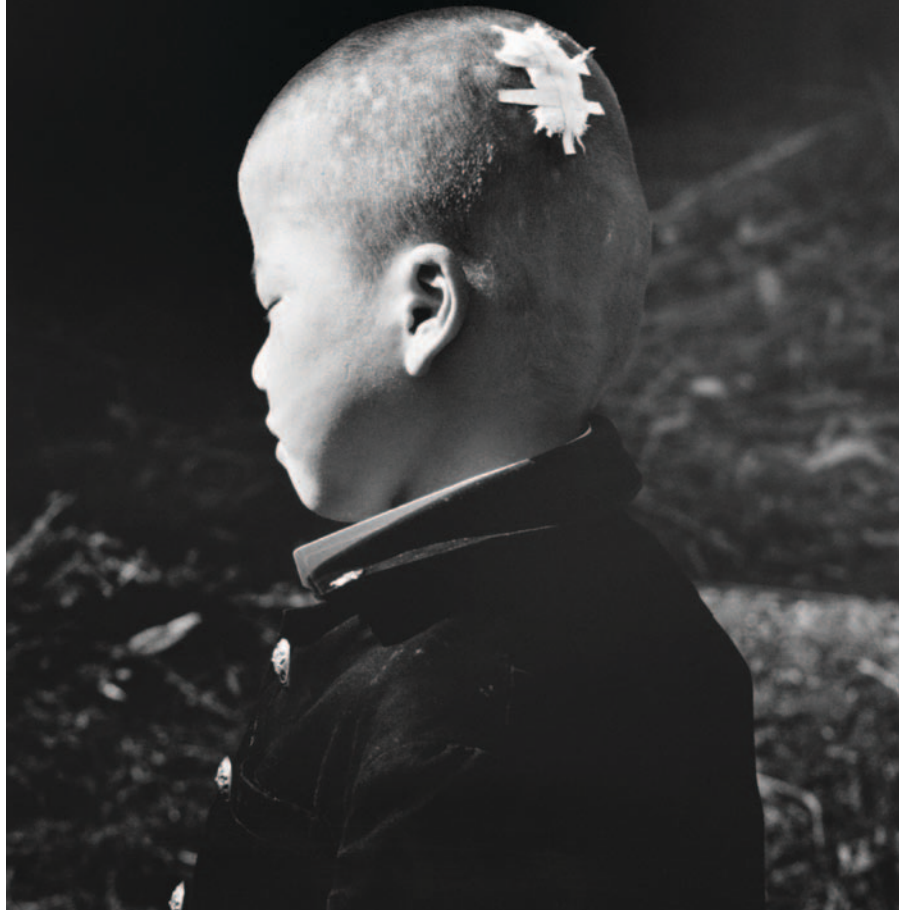


SHOJI UEDA

with a short story by
Toshiyuki Horie;
Chose Commune;
£60 (hardback)

When the publishers of a new monograph of photographs by Japanese photographer Shōji Ueda (1913–2000) visited his archive in Japan, they found boxes upon boxes of negatives, transparencies and vintage prints stacked from floor to ceiling. So began the duo's journey into the surreal world of the master photographer who throughout his decades-long photography career concentrated his lens in and around a stretch of coastline in Tottori Prefecture, Japan, where he lived for much of his life. The book features 90 black and white and colour images from Ueda's archive, many of which have never been published before. The aim is to show the range of Ueda's vast body of work, which takes in the idyllic coastal landscapes of his home in all seasons, and the comings and goings of the folk he encountered there. We see stark snow-covered beaches, but also figures drenched in summer sun. While the majority of his subject matter was daily life, Ueda captured the stranger aspects of life. His images, otherworldly and beguiling, often suggest a sense of the uncanny. But aside from the suggestion of supernatural happenings what we learn about this area of Japan from the 1930s to 1980s is that it is a place where nothing is quite as it seems; we witness the fragility of man against the vast might of nature – tiny figures against bleak skies and bleaker seas – yet in this fragility there is strength and light. Readers interested in learning about Japanese society at this time may be disappointed – this is not a historical documentary-orientated photographic account; the collection is focused more towards the poetry of landscape and nature. But all credit to a photographer who unflinchingly forged his own path, one who, when most of his contemporaries were grappling with Japan's identity in a post-war world, created a body of work that eschewed all of this and sought out and found the lyrical in the everyday. **GEMMA PADLEY**

Ueda's work focussed on everyday Japanese life rather than larger themes



THE GHOSTS OF K2:

by Mick Conefrey;
Oneworld;
£20 (hardback)

Early expeditions to K2 hoped to get close enough to paint it; the first documented assault, whose team included Aleister Crowley – 'a flamboyant bisexual drug fiend with a penchant for the occult... not a typical 20th century mountaineer' – was defeated by storms and life-threatening illness. This mountain was always going to be an irresistible lure and Conefrey admirably captures the fascination it has for the mountaineering community. The centrepiece is the fateful 1939 expedition led by Fritz Wiessner, the build-up to which reads like the opening

chapters of an Agatha Christie, with its supporting cast of refugees, Nazi bankers, and men whose wealth was measured in boats. Four men died on that expedition – among them Dudley Wolfe, 'the hermit of K2', who proved better at going up mountains than he was at coming down – and the recriminations that followed soured into slow-burning hostilities still sparking into life half a century afterwards. More expeditions followed, with controversy dogging even the successful assaults; the mountain claimed more lives, and the cairn memorialising those who have died on its peaks grows ever larger. Conefrey has a thriller-writer's eye, capturing the tension of attempts to light a stove at 24,700 feet with only nine matches to hand, the hallucinations from a lack of oxygen, and the horrors of emergency dental work. A fine study of a deadly obsession. **MICK HERRON**