

GO TAKAYAMA - PRESS RELEASE and FACTSHEET

Released by:

Angkor Photo Workshops

December 3, 2010

Siem Reap, Cambodia.

Go Takayama, 28, a young student photographer from Japan who came to Siem Reap to participate in the annual Angkor Photo Workshops, had been working on his photography project for a few days when he was arrested by the local police after a photo shoot.

Takayama was taken into police custody at around 7.30pm on November 23, 2010, in Siem Reap, Cambodia. His camera was confiscated, and 78 of his photographs found in the memory card in the camera have been admitted as evidence. Based on those 78 images, he has been accused by local authorities of producing pornographic content. The 78 photographs, which depicts a couple hugging and holding each other, shows absolutely no nudity or explicit sexual activity.

We are very concerned that press articles and reports released till date about Takayama's arrest have given grossly inaccurate information which contradict with the actual events, as well as minutes and reports made by the police.

We would like to clarify all information regarding Takayama and the circumstances of his arrest.

We believe Takayama has been mistakenly accused, and strongly urge the authorities to acquit Takayama of all charges made against him. Various media organisations, the Angkor Photo Festival, Angkor Photo Workshop organisers and its participants all strongly support Takayama.

ABOUT GO TAKAYAMA

Go Takayama arrived in Siem Reap on November 17, 2010, one day before the Angkor Photo Workshops began on November 18, 2010, and was intending to leave right after the festival.

A visual communications and political science graduate from Ohio University (2008), Takayama is a young talented photographer who has participated in a series of renown photography workshops, including the Missouri Photo Workshop (2009), American Diversity Project (2008), The Truth With a Camera Workshop (2008), Atlanta Photojournalism Seminar (2007), the National Press Photographers Association (NPPA) 50th Flying Short Course (2007), and the VII Photo Seminar (2006).

In 2009, he was an award recipient at the Missouri Photo Workshop, and has won several awards from the NPPA photo competitions. He has worked as a photography intern at Patuxent Publishing Company and Evansville Courier & Press. His work has been published in various publications such as the Vision, City Pictorial, Pen, Southeast Ohio Magazine, Soul of Athens and The Post.

We have letters of vouching for Takayama from the National Press Photographers Association, Ohio University College of Communication and the Evansville Courier & Press. We also have tearsheets of his previously published work, and samples from his photography portfolio.

ABOUT ANGKOR PHOTO WORKSHOPS

The Angkor Photo Workshops are an annual free workshop organised for young Asian photographers. The aim of the workshop is to allow the students to further develop their professional skills in photography, so as to help them in their professional careers. It is held every year alongside with the Angkor Photo Festival.

As part of the workshop, each participant has to develop and work on a photography project, comprising of a photo essay - a series of photographs that tell a story. Participants meet to discuss their ideas and get feedback on their work during the workshop.

Takayama was one of 31 participants from 14 Asian countries at this year's workshop. The winner of the best photo project from the workshop this year was Sovan Philong, a young Cambodian photographer.

ABOUT GO TAKAYAMA'S PHOTO PROJECT

For his photo project for the Workshops, Takayama had researched and decided to base his work on a Cambodian folktale titled the 'Seven Color Princess'. In order to illustrate various aspects of the folktale, he had previously gone to photograph several other topics and subjects.

In the four days in Siem Reap before he was arrested, Takayama had taken almost 1,400 photographs of subjects such as a crocodile farm, the floating market, Tonle Sap lake, a boxing match in a Pagoda, Wat Damnak Pagoda, and a traditional Khmer wedding. All these subjects were photographed to illustrate different parts of the 'Seven Color Princess' folklore.

The photographs he had been arrested for were intended to demonstrate one aspect of the folklore – the idea of strong, possessive love. This idea was obtained from the folklore in the story about the crocodile and the princess. In the folklore, when the crocodile had found out the princess was going to leave to marry another man, it ended up eating the princess so that she would remain with it forever.

Takayama had intended to visually express this aspect of the folklore by showing strong, possessive love demonstrated between two people.

CIRCUMSTANCES OF GO TAKAYAMA'S ARREST

On November 23, 2010, at around 7.30pm, Takayama was arrested as he was leaving the house where his photography subjects had taken him. The subjects were a married couple who had agreed and given permission for him to photograph them together.

Takayama had previously explained the idea behind his project, and also explained how he was trying to show the visual of strong, possessive love. He explained to the couple that such strong expressions of love could be shown through holding hands, shoulders or hugging. No sexual activity took place during the shoot, and neither the man nor the woman was naked at any point.

As he was leaving, a plainclothes policeman appeared and pushed Takayama back inside into a room, and set down Takayama's camera on the table. They waited for 10 to 15 minutes before a few other policemen arrived. Takayama and the couple were then asked to follow them to the police station.

Takayama was charged with producing pornography for the purpose of distributing pornographic content. His hearing has been scheduled to be held on December 7, 2010. Takayama is being legally represented by a Cambodian lawyer, Mr. Sourng Sophea.

IMPORTANT FACTS

- Contrary to statements made by the authorities in the media, Takayama never hired a Cambodian man and female sex worker to take him to brothels to photograph women.
- There is absolutely no nudity in any of the 78 photographs taken by Takayama, nor any explicit sexual activity in any of the photographs.
- All 78 photographs show the same couple.
- Before the shoot, Takayama had explained his intention and purpose behind his project, and the couple had consented and gave permission to be photographed.
- Takayama's photographs were produced solely as part of his photo project as required by his participation the Angkor Photo Workshops. He does not have, and never had, any intention to distribute or publish the images as pornographic content.
- These photographs of the couple were just a part of a series of 15 to 20 images, intended to show his view on Seven Color Princess Cambodian folktale. The other photographs include scenes from weddings, Siem Reap street scene, boxing matches, pagodas, religion, culture, crocodile farms etc.
- Takayama has never photographed sexual acts in his photography career.

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DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE

We have on hand the following materials. Please contact us if you should wish to have a copy of these:

- Tearsheets of Takayama's previously published photographs in magazines
- Photographs from Takayama's photography portfolio
- Other photographs from Cambodia taken by Takayama for his photo project
- Takayama's biography, CV and resume

CONTACT

Jessica Lim
Angkor Photo Festival
Mobile: +855 9786 097 69 (from outside Cambodia)

Mobile: 09786 097 69 (from within Cambodia)
Email: jessicalim@angkor-photo.com