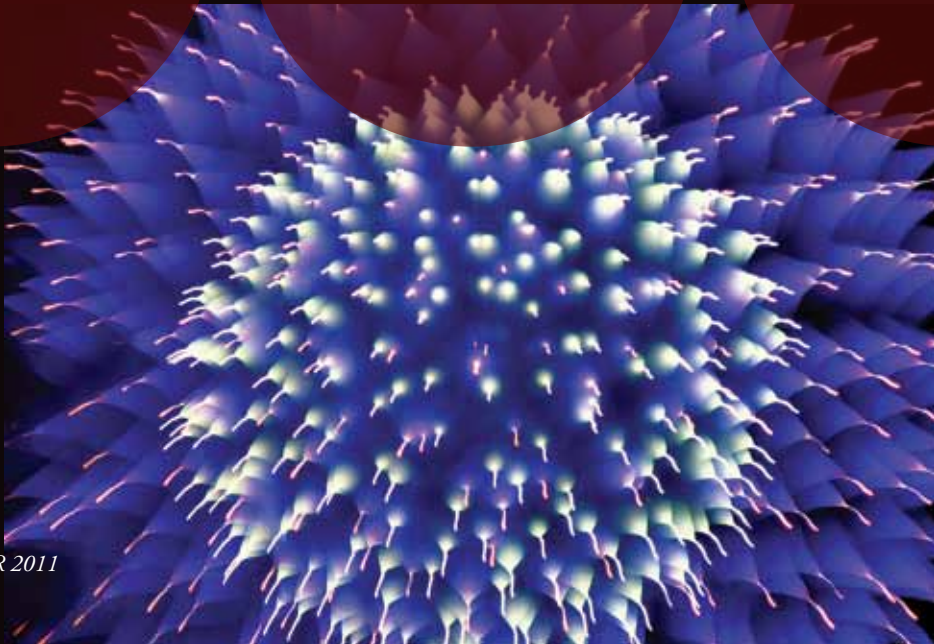




“Fiery flowers • The night sky paints hanabi”





片貝まつり 浅原神社 秋季例大祭奉納大煙火

• *Fireworks blossom now.*”
マイケル

The Katakai Fireworks Festival (片貝花火まつり) is part of the Katakai Festival organized by Ochiya City in Niigata prefecture celebrating the arrival of autumn. The Katakai Festival at Asahara Shrine uses some of the the biggest pyrotechnics in the world (and we're not exaggerating) in dedication to the shrine god during the festival. It is held annually on September 9th and 10th and uses a massive fireworks barrage—this year over 11,000 fireworks were fired—in dedication to the shrine god as part of his/her birthday celebration. The noise of the fireworks are thought to expel evil spirits and help the god's devotees pray for success in business and health for the upcoming year. This tradition has been going on for over 400 years.

Kouji YONEDA



Katakai is the birthplace of the famous Japanese 36-inch shell. The first shell that large ever created and fired was in Katakai back in 1891. Now, they are world famous for their 48-inch shells (called *Yonshakudama* in Japanese) and even made it into the Guinness Book at that size. This year's shell was just shy of that diameter and was only 47.24-inches. Made by KATAGAI FIREWORKS CO., LTD, it weighed a little over 992 lbs. and shot 2,789 feet into the air. The diameter of the bloom was approximately 2,625 feet across.

Kouji Yoneda sent us these photographs from this year's festival. Besides the picture of the huge bloom in the sky and the 47-inch shell itself, Yoneda also sent us several of his other artistic fireworks shots. We've highlighted his work before and thought it was well worth taking another look at some of his beautiful work. Here is an explanation of how he takes these pictures in case you'd like to try these types of photographs for yourself:

"I photographed these fireworks mainly in Kanagawa Japan last year. I think my photographic technique is still quite unique. Here is what I do and how you can do it: I set the aperture of my lens to f2.8 and put my camera in Bulb mode. I take my camera off of auto-focus and don't focus the lens until I press the shutter. This takes about 2 seconds while the firework is going off. I always try to capture the moment of the explosion and to close the shutter as soon as the explosion occurs. By controlling the focus and shutter speed, some very unusual effects are possible. I feel my fireworks photos have become something else when I take them in this way. It is my own personal expression. Try it for yourself. I think you will be amazed at what you come up with."

To see more great fireworks photos from Katagai Fireworks, visit <http://www.katakai-enka.co.jp/syasin.html>. To contact Kouji YONEDA: kouji.yoneda@gmail.com. You can also see more of his beautiful photos at: <http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100001730146112&sk=photos>. 

