

Michael Danner Projects



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Yamagata 2002

These photographs are the result of a commission from the European City of Culture Graz 2003 and EU-Japan Fest Japan Committee, Tokyo. My work investigates the rural landscape of the Japanese prefecture located in the Tohoku region on Honshu island.

A cable-car carries me from the sunlit glow of the Shonai plain, past radiant autumn woods, up into the Zao Mountains. For the last few hundred yards to the Katta top, I stumble along on foot over bleak black rocks, through mists and bitterly cold winds that penetrate my very bones. My hands are red with the cold.

From this lofty height, Yamagata prefecture, the subject of my work, lies before me in all its dazzling splendour. Over the past few weeks, I have explored and befriended this place, teasing out images, discovering the familiar in the unfamiliar. The tension between strangeness and familiarity itself has become part of my work and has shaped my responses to the element of exotic mystique that so often clouds Western views of the Far East.

My images seek to describe Yamagata as a specific locality. I sought out codes and structures in the prefecture's geography that, to me, stood for the specifics of this place. Certain events have become embedded within my images or are obliquely present in them from a distance. The context in which these pictures were taken is of secondary importance. The image as object forms the centre of attention and invites the viewer to enter into a dialogue. My work not least also retraces a journey to my own self and leaves room for questions that the individual viewer can formulate out of the context of his or her own life experience.

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About

Born in Reutlingen (Germany) in 1967, I now live in Berlin. I studied photography at the Fachhochschule Bielefeld (D) and the University of Brighton (UK) and subsequently lived in London from 1997 to 2000.

My artistic and photographic work focuses on the life-world. Here, I develop visual strategies that serve as a means of stepping back from the scene at hand, thus allowing for observation, interpretation and staging.

The distance thus achieved creates space for various levels of meaning, such as social and historical references or medial reflections. My aim is to facilitate a dialogue between image and recipient that reaches beyond the subject itself and links with the observer's life-world.

In addition to numerous publications and exhibitions, my photographic works have been entered into renowned collections and have been awarded many prizes.

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