

NY REGION

Population, Power and Social Disarray

Photography of James Whitlow Delano, Boris Mikhailov and the Prix Pictet

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James Whitlow Delano's 'Pony Tails, Piercing Glance and a Cigarette, Shibuya, Tokyo' (1998) *James Whitlow Delano/Sous Les Etoiles Gallery*

James Whitlow Delano: "Mangaland: A Tokyo Retrospective"

Sous Les Etoiles Gallery 560 Broadway Through Jan. 31

James Whitlow Delano has been photographing in Japan since 1993, and the 30 black-and-white pictures here include an image from that date, "Buddhist Monk in Shinjuko Station, Tokyo." The station is the busiest in the world. The monk stands erect and isolated with his back to a wall; he wears a long black robe over a white robe, and white leggings and *tabi*. In the dim light we can make out that his left hand is raised and may hold a begging bowl. In Mr. Delano's characteristic style, there is vignetting around the periphery of the image, and a soft focus in which little is clear, but a light falling on the monk's conical hat makes it look like a lampshade. Is that meant to be comical or emblematic of his spirituality?

Other photographs are equally adept at personalizing isolated individuals in this densely populated city. "Pony Tails, Piercing Glance and a Cigarette, Shibuya, Tokyo" (1998) describes the teenage girl in this fashionable shopping area. All we see of the woman in "Elevator Encounter, Shinjuko, Tokyo" (1996) is her furrowed brow and one eye peering over the shoulder of a man standing before her. It is a woman's buttocks and thong that we see on the screen in "Late Night TV Program, Tokyo" (1995). Because of discoloration and the dim lighting, "Daibutso (Great Buddha) at Night, Kamakura" (2003) is not so much placidly benign as determinedly grim.