

## The map

Over the last few years I've had a strong desire to see the world that I live in, to travel this country of Japan and see it through my own eyes. Rather than being presented with an image of Japan that has been created by information supplied to me, I felt the need to see Japan as it appears to me personally.

People gain an understanding of the world that they live in not only through personal experience, but also through a variety of media such as TV, newspapers, and the Internet. Without such media we have no way of finding out, in a short period of time, what is happening in politics and the economy or what incidents and accidents have taken place on the other side of the ocean or on the other side of our planet. Moreover, the world that is depicted by the media is a world that is undergoing rapid change and this change seems to be ever accelerating.

In contrast, our lives mostly consist of a series of unremarkable and random moments that will never be covered by the media. In comparison to the passage of time that is conveyed through TV and newspapers, the passage of time in our immediate environment seems extraordinarily slow.

The information we receive from the media is exciting, and much of it is etched into our memories. However, this information represents only a fraction of the reality that has been selected for coverage by people involved in the media. And, because mass media, in particular, gathers exciting information from not only Japan but the whole world, the image of the world that emerges from this media coverage is arguably a highly manipulated and biased image of the world.

We can't gain an understanding of something by only looking at it from one side. We must hold it, smell it, turn it upside down, and really examine it. And it is only by doing this that we can see the complete picture. Similarly, the information that is provided by the media only highlights one aspect of the truth. And, if we were to examine the extensive dissemination of fabricated, hyperbolic, misinterpreted and biased information that has been repeated time and again in the past, we would realize how ambiguous this information really is.

And yet we are so used to an environment filled with media-based information that we have arguably become completely reliant on this information which even goes so far as to provide us with value judgments.

The act of using a camera to record, on film, an event taking place in front of us or a view that lies before us is a means of gathering information that is directly linked to our senses. Visiting various parts of Japan, camera in hand, and looking at what was taking place before my very own eyes made me reflect on the image of the world that had unconsciously been created in my mind and presented me with the opportunity to reconstruct this image in my own way.

When I attempt to capture the details of everyday life with a large camera, I find myself looking at what lies before me for a much longer time than I normally would. The shape of the roof of a private house, a winding road, the plants growing on a vacant block. None of these are particularly exciting, and yet when we reexamine these sorts of things — the sights and sounds, the smells and even the texture that we recall from some time in our past — we realize how distracted we've been by the exciting information that fills our everyday lives and how our interest in ordinary and subtle moments has somehow been relegated to a corner of our minds.

Although the personal experiences that are accumulated during our lifetime may not be as exciting as the overwhelming quantity of information that surrounds us, I believe that it is these experiences that provide us with the strongest clue in seeing the world that we live in that is directly linked to our senses, a world that is real to us.

I am not suggesting that everyone should use a large camera to capture these scenes. Using a camera is just one method. However, regardless of the method used, unless we make an active attempt to perceive the world from our own, unique viewpoint based on our own personal experiences, and if, for example, we were all to rely on the biased information provided to us by certain sectors of the mass media to gain an image of the world that we live in, then this world that we live in will become a truly distorted world.

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23 June, 2003