

Conscientious

Review : *The Japan Series* by Andreas Gefeller

Book Review by Joerg Colberg / April 22, 2011



Untitled (Plant on Wall), 2010

Andreas Gefeller has been well known for meticulously constructed images of the surfaces we walk on. For each of those images, he walks around with a digital camera elevated with some contraption taking the many source images that are then assembled on a computer. The results, visual surveys of small pieces of our world, often are startling and strange (see my review of a book filled with such images). Of course, I've been wondering where he would go from there, hoping he wouldn't turn what has been very successful into something that would merely become a shtick (as the person not producing those images, of course, it's easy for me to say that)

Now we know: instead of looking down, he started to look up. To be more precise, during a visit to Japan, Gefeller noticed the ubiquitous power and telephone lines and he started to produce images of those. There's one thing missing in the final images: The poles that hold those cables and boxes up. The absence of those poles immediately transforms the results into something as alien as Gefeller's earlier images: Something is very familiar yet it looks very strange.

Make no mistake, photographs of power lines have been taken before, by many different photographers (even I have a set of negatives floating around somewhere...) But Gefeller manages to take things to a different level. These new images have now been published as *The Japan Series*.

In images it must have been a huge temptation to produce a very glossy, shiny book of those electrical contraptions. It's technology, after all, and we like our technology shiny and glossy. But the book is the complete opposite, using a thick cardboard for the covers and matte paper for the contents. It's very interesting how this does yet another transformation, because the feel of the book is almost organic. Almost.

But just the fact that it's into a shiny book gives the work such a different, other dimension. At times it even makes you forget a little that you are looking at photography, Of course, that is one of those crucial ingredients in photobook making: Knowing that even seemingly small choices can make a big difference.

The Japan Series, photographs by Andreas Gefeller, essays by Celina Lunsford, Christoph Schaden, 80 pages, Hatje Cantz, 2011