

Issue 87: April 27, 2007

Portfolio

Mike Osborne

A month into **Mike Osborne's** year-long fellowship in Taiwan, he sent an update over email that described how he had been spending his time:

I've generally promised myself not to get sidetracked with things beyond my work here, but the last few days have been more or less swallowed up preparing for a talk (given yesterday)... My talk was an odd experience. It was through the American Institute in Taiwan, which is the non-embassy that the US has here since we don't recognize Taiwan as fully independent. I wasn't really told who would be in the audience, except that they would all be "interested in America" and that they would "love me" no matter what. Anyway, since I couldn't assume any prior knowledge on their part, I spent the first ten minutes or so explaining that I don't just go around taking pictures of all the things in the world that we all know are beautiful—mountains, flowers, birds, etc. I think a couple of people in the audience wished they had gotten up and left at that point. (The talk was 2 hours long.) Then I talked about some of the work on my website. People seemed interested for the most part. I got a lot of questions, most of them from this 16 year-old whiz kid who afterwards came up to me and told me about the connections between her interest in theoretical physics and my motivations as a photographer. She also told me that, before my talk, she was pretty sure that photography was very boring, "a pastime for aristocratic assholes," but now she was having to reconsider. All in all, reassuring feedback.

The eight images collected in this portfolio, most of which happen to have been made in Beijing, are our latest proof that: 1) Mike Osborne does not just take pictures of flowers and birds, and 2) photography might not be "a pastime for aristocratic assholes" after all. These new works extend Osborne's related explorations of distortions of scale in urban settings and the ways that humans interact with environments under construction. The images also demonstrate a sustained consideration on the role of the wall as a photographic device, both as a divider of space and as a surface that holds text and reflects light. How the works relate to theoretical physics, I can't say.

— Caitlin Haskell





Mike Osborne will show new photographs at Holly Johnson Gallery in Dallas in the fall.