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The view from *The New Yorker's* photo department.



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THE SHY, DISCREET ENERGY OF TOKYO

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Under an umbrella in nighttime rain, Hachiko Shibuya, Tokyo, 2002.

Wearing soft-soled shoes and equipped with the quiet shutter of a Leica camera, the photographer James Whitlow Delano strives to remain virtually unseen by his subjects. For an American-born street photographer navigating the busy avenues of Tokyo, a head taller than the crowd, this subtlety is an impressive feat.

Delano first travelled to Japan in 1993. He has spent most of the past two decades in Tokyo, documenting the city. “The megalopolis, jam-packed with shy, discreet people, creates an eccentric energy unlike any city on earth,” Delano wrote to me. He records this energy to create a collection of visual evidence that will offer future generations insight into the daily life of postmodern Japan. His vignette-style framing and use of black-and-white film recalls documentary photography at the turn of the twentieth century, and is a deliberate nod to the original, purely documentary purpose of the medium.

A retrospective of Delano’s career, “Mangaland: A Tokyo Retrospective,” opens today at Sous Les Etoiles Gallery and is on view through January 31, 2014.