



In Their Landscape

by Michael Reichmann



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Commentary

As far back as I can remember, I've been fascinated with the *idea* of binoculars. In truth, I almost never use them because I almost never have them with me. Binoculars — at least *good* binoculars — can be heavy, a little bulky, and cumbersome. More often than not, this means they stay in the car. Whenever I wish I had them, I lament my decision to leave them behind, in spite of the fact that my shoulders and neck are always happy that I do. The same can be said of cameras.

The most spectacular camera in the world won't make great photographs if it's left in the car, or in the pack, or in some other way inaccessible when the moment strikes. Michael Reichmann told me how he had packed his camera away for the short boat ride across the water. But when he saw this boatman working the rigging, he knew, with patience, there was a great photograph to be made. He prepared himself by pulling out the camera pre-metering and even pre-focusing. When the fellow leaned over to adjust the rigging, Michael was prepared and made this image. He did confess to me that the position of the boatman's hands, the parallel lines between his arms and the folds of cloth, and the little circle of rope in the lower right corner were all the result of serendipitous compositional luck. But, of course, as we all remember, luck favors the prepared.

This business about hauling photographic gear has come to mind recently in several conversations I've had with photographers. I mentioned to

a friend of mine I was thinking of another trip to Japan to continue my photographic work there. Interestingly enough (and perhaps because he is a very astute photographer), he didn't ask me what I wanted to photograph in Japan, but rather what I had experienced in my previous trips. I listed a number of cultural curiosities, including the local train system known in Japan as the *donko*. He asked if I had photographed it or my experiences riding these local conveyances; I hadn't. He asked why, to which I responded that my camera was stowed away during transportation. He knowingly smiled at me, which prompted me to confess that, in truth, I had never *thought* about making photographs during my numerous train rides. This image by Michael Reichmann immediately came to mind.

Travel photography is often what happens *after* we've arrived. So-called "destination location" photography may be uppermost in our minds, but the process of just getting there might be equally fraught with photographic potential and interesting people. Perhaps this points to some gear choices we should consider that make these potential images more likely. Planes, trains, and automobiles — to say nothing of boats, bikes, and rubber baby buggy bumpers — can be as productive as our final destination, if we are alert and prepared. .