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Umbrage Editions is pleased to announce the June 2002 publication of

# FUJI

An Umbrage Editions Book  
Photographs by Chris Steele-Perkins

Dazzling and idiosyncratic photographs of contemporary Japan, celebrating extremes of beauty with wit and irony, by the noted British photographer Chris Steele-Perkins.

The impetus for this three-year project began when Steele-Perkins was offered a gift from his Japanese wife of the nineteenth-century master printmaker Katsushika Hokusai's famous series of prints, *Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji*. Struck by the verisimilitude of the prints as historical documents of the life of the peoples around the mountain: woodcutters, fishermen, peasants, aristocrats, as well as their beauty and spiritual aspect, Steele-Perkins began to research further. He found that most Japanese photographers preferred classic images of the sacred mountain where the elegiac perfection of the peak was the punctum of the work, in opposition to the approach of Hokusai. Steele-Perkins then set out to record a twenty-first century response through the eyes of a sympathetic *gaijin*. The ensuing work depicts Fuji as a cultural nexus: a dynamic social phenomenon where tourism, farming, industry, religion, urbanization, locomotion, housing and recreation, traditional ceremony and religion all are framed by the potent national symbol of the mountain.



Fuji as seen by Steele-Perkins emerges as a meditation about modern Japan, and Japanese life. The exquisite images offer a fresh and surprising view of Japan's iconic mountain, and an understanding into Japanese worldview as seen by an outsider who has penetrated its diversity with astonishing clarity, metaphysical insight, and profound complicity.

Fuji, an exhibition of Epson digital prints, will tour in the UK, Japan, and the US with venues including the The Midlands Art Gallery, Birmingham, UK and the Grandship Museum, Shizuoka Prefecture, Japan.

## Biography of the Artist:

Chris Steele-Perkins is an award-winning photographer based in London and Tokyo, and a member of the famed cooperative Magnum Photos, founded by Henri Cartier Bresson and Robert Capa. Born British in 1947 in occupied Burma, he moved from Rangoon to London in 1949 and graduated with honors from the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1970. He started working as a freelance photographer immediately, and his first book, *The Teds*, was published in 1979 by Traveling Light, the same year Steele-Perkins became a member of Magnum. He subsequently published a range of publications. His reportages have received the highest awards in photojournalism, including the Tom Hopkinson Prize for British Photojournalism (1988), the Oscar Barnack Prize (1988) from the World Press Association, and the Robert Capa Gold Medal (1989) from ICP, the Cooperative Society and One World Awards for the film *Dying for Publicity* (1994), and a 2000 World Press Award.

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10 x 10" vertical  
132 pages  
110 four-color photographs

\$45 USD/ \$70 CAD / 30£ UK  
June 2002

# FUJI

## An Umbrage Editions Book Photographs by Chris Steele-Perkins

### In interviews regarding FUJI, Chris Steele-Perkins can discuss:

- His unique approach to the iconic Japanese image of Mount Fuji, and his response to its history of representation in Japan
- How this work differs from his past work in war reportage
- The FUJI exhibition of photographs, organized by Magnum Photos, Ltd. and Umbrage Editions, which opens in January, 2002 in the U.K, and subsequently travels through 2003 to six other venues in the UK,

### Review by Ian Buruma, Author of *Bad Elements* and *The Missionary and the Libertine*:

Poignant, witty, lively, earthy, plastic, irreverent, mystical, ugly, beautiful—with his myriad views of Mount Fuji, Chris Steele-Perkins show us not just a famous mountain, but Japan. Hokusai would have welcomed him as a worthy successor.

### Text Excerpt from the foreword to FUJI, by Chris Steele-Perkins:

Like most visitors to Japan, I had seen Fuji before, from the windows of the *shinkansen* (bullet train). She appeared remote and incongruous beyond an expanse of housing and striped chimney stacks belching smoke. The salary men slept as the foreigners pointed, before she slipped from view. "So this is how Fuji looks," I thought. It bore no resemblance to the images on posters, postcards, and tour brochures where she is normally portrayed, in elegiac mode, outside the limits of society and time. That was not the Fuji that I saw, and not the Fuji that I started photographing.

Instead I saw a locus in a complex modern society, a nexus in Japan where history, religion, leisure, industry, agriculture, work, and play came together, where the aesthetic impulses and spiritual sentiments of contemplation, awe, and transience collided with the messy, pungent, greedy, excreting fact of humanity. This is what I wanted to document.

I circled around as if drawn by another thread whose radius was centered on Fuji. I drove and walked, tasting the sour air and the sweet, in a strange act of celebration. I performed my rituals of encirclement over a period of three years, between my time in England and my continued visits to the cauldrons of disquiet.

Fuji was an elusive mistress. Sometimes she hid herself away for days in a wall of mists. Sometimes she shone briefly through the clouds to display an elusive peak or slope or lifted her covering skirt to reveal a modest footing. The human theatre behind which she appeared, and the theatre I wished to photograph were equally elusive. As ever, hours of boredom with moments between defined the days.

Fuji was also surprisingly seductive, tempting me to slip into elegy and simply offer homage to sheer beauty, abandoning my documentary purpose. Sometimes, like a lover, my chest tightened as I set out towards her, wondering when I would catch my first glimpse, make my first photograph, wondering how she would look as she lifted from the clear morning light.

### About Umbrage

Umbrage Editions, based in New York City, is a packager of high-quality visual books, traveling exhibitions, and multimedia projects. Founded in 1991 by Nan Richardson, former editor of *Aperture*, Umbrage Editions works on the creation of content-rich books, exhibitions, websites, theater productions, and CD-ROMs from their conception to development and final production. In the past, published works have varied in subject matter from pop culture to global human rights, from the closets of drag queens to the runways of fashion, from classic photojournalism to cutting-edge art. Umbrage has produced co-editions with numerous publishers, including Random House, Twin Palms, Bulfinch, Abrams, HarperCollins, Abu Michel, TeNues, and many more.

