

# STEPHEN WIRTZ GALLERY

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## **MICHAEL KENNA**

*Hokkaido, Japan & Ratcliffe Power Station*

Exhibition dates: December 1, 2004-January 15, 2005

Opening reception for the artist Thursday, December 2, 2004, 5:30-7:30 pm

Stephen Wirtz Gallery announces exhibitions of new photographs by Michael Kenna from two acclaimed series: *Ratcliffe Power Station* and *Japan*.

Featured in one exhibition will be imagery of the eight towers of the coal-fired Ratcliffe-on-Soar Power Station that dominates the sky in Nottinghamshire, England, not tremendously far from Michael Kenna's birthplace of Widnes, Lancashire. Kenna first began photographing the power station in the early 1980s, and over the past several years he has visited the site many times, producing a body of work as ominous as it is beautiful. The Ratcliffe photographs take on the tonal quality of a partially lit ecosphere unique to the photographer and his subject. A brilliant manipulator of half-light, Kenna's grainy, spatial topography epitomizes the gray skies of Northern England that were the ubiquitous backdrop to his childhood. Both menacing and seductive, Kenna's Ratcliffe photographs create the impression of an atmospherically foggy day, registering the homeostasis of a mood that is a dominant characteristic of his work.

Concurrent with the presentation of *Ratcliffe Power Station* will be the most recent installment of Kenna's *Japan* series featuring landscape imagery from the island of Hokkaido in winter revealing among other subjects the calligraphic presence of modest remnants of man-made, utilitarian objects in nature, such as fishing posts and greenhouse structures. For the past four years, Kenna has traveled extensively throughout Japan photographing the rural and coastal landscape in his signature style and in the spare and elegant sensibility of traditional Japanese painting.

Kenna's attention to the landscape has consistently concerned remains of past human presence. He has stated, "I am interested in how we interact with our environment and what we leave behind on the planet. I like to photograph traces of our past activities and try to reflect the atmospheres that remain."

Stephen Wirtz Gallery is located at 49 Geary St., 3<sup>rd</sup> Fl., San Francisco, CA 94108, (415) 433-6879. Gallery hours are Tuesday-Friday, 9:30-5:30, Saturday 10:30-5:30.

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