

# MICHAEL WOLF

## TOKYO COMPRESSION: FINAL CUT

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Private View: Thursday 25 May 6-8 pm



*Nowhere do we come closer, involuntarily, to our neighbour than in the underground. The underground is a conspiratorial venue for human excesses: the enforced compression of anxiety, sorrow, pain, madness and fury. In the realm of the soulless underground, the suburban metro represents the ultimate test for today's city-dweller, the place where the crucial focus of his inescapable anxieties, constraints, neuroses, desires and hopes is revealed.* - Christian Schüle<sup>1</sup>

Michael Wolf is known for capturing the hyper-density of the city of Hong Kong in his large-scale photographs of its high-rise architecture. In his series *Tokyo Compression*, Wolf centres on the subsurface crush of the Tokyo subway, in which thousands of commuters make their daily journeys between work and home. Photographing individuals pressed against the windows of the crowded trains during the morning rush hour, Wolf's images are a disquieting metaphor for the conditions of city-dwellers in today's dense urban centres.

The images for *Tokyo Compression* were photographed at Shimo-Kitazawa station in Tokyo over a four-year period. Over time, Wolf has engaged with the evocative potential of abstraction, cropping and reframing his images to hone in more closely on his subjects. With skin pressed against the windows, the faces of the commuters are often partially obscured, blurred from view by condensation on the glass, or shielded intentionally from others by surgical masks. Closed eyes and earphones reflect an internalised retreat from the discomfort and overcrowding, as though suspending time until the journey is over, while some passengers squeeze their eyes tightly shut as a gesture of resistance to being photographed. On other occasions, they meet Wolf's gaze, as in the example of *Tokyo Compression #18* where one closed eye creates the mirror-image of the artist, training his vision through the viewfinder.

On March 25, 2013, the Odakyu subway line was relocated, thus bringing this series to a conclusion. A new book, the fourth and final edition in the *Tokyo Compression* series, *Tokyo Compression Final Cut* co-published by Peperoni Books, Berlin and Asia One Publishing, Hong Kong, is now available to purchase. *Tokyo Compression* will be an important part of the exhibition *Life in Cities* at Les Rencontres d'Arles, in collaboration with The Hague Museum of Photography from 3 July - 27 August.

<https://www.rencontres-arles.com/en/expositions/view/151/michael-wolf>

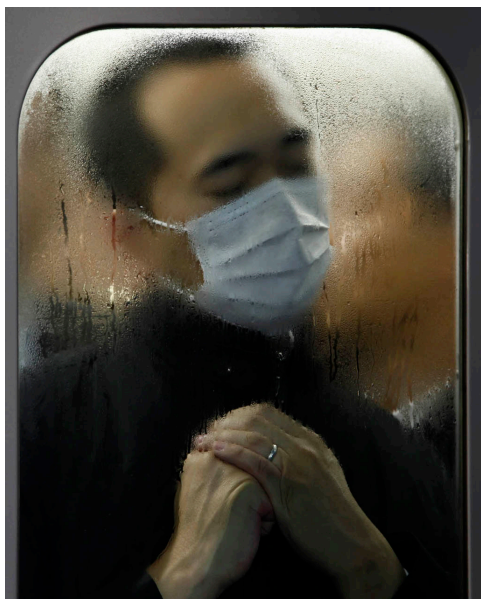
For more information and images please contact hannah@flowersgallery.com / +44 (0)20 7920 7777

## ABOUT MICHAEL WOLF

Michael Wolf was born in Munich, Germany and lives between Hong Kong and Paris. Wolf's work has been exhibited in numerous locations, including the Venice Biennale for Architecture, Italy; Aperture gallery, New York, USA; Museum Centre Vapriikki, Tampere, Finland; Museum of Work, Hamburg, Germany; Hong Kong Dhenzhen Biennial, China; Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago, USA. His work is held in many permanent collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Brooklyn Museum, New York; The San Jose Museum of Art, California; The Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago; Museum Folkwang, Essen; and the German Museum for Architecture, Frankfurt.

He has won first prize in the World Press Photo Award competition on two occasions (2005 & 2010) and an honourable mention (2011.) Wolf has been shortlisted for the Prix Pictet photography prize 2017, for the series *Tokyo Compression*. The accompanying exhibition will take place at the V&A from Saturday, 6 May 2017.

Wolf has published 32 photo books including *Bottrop Ebel 1976* (Peperoni Press 2012); *Architecture of Density* (Peperoni Press/Asia one 2012); *Hong Kong Corner Houses* (Hong Kong university press, 2011); *Portraits* (Superlabo, Japan, 2011); *Real Fake Art* (Peperoni Press/Asia one 2011); *FY* (Peperoni Press, 2010); *A Series of Unfortunate Events* (Peperoni Press, 2010); *Hong Kong Inside Outside* (Asia one/Peperoni Press 2009); *The Transparent City* (Aperture 2008); *Sitting in China* (Steidl 2002); and four editions of *Tokyo Compression* (Peperoni Press/Asia one, 2010-2017).



1. Christian Schüle, *Tokyo Subway Dreams*, *Underground Meditations*, *Essay in Tokyo Compression Final Cut*, Peperoni Books, Berlin and Asia One Publishing, Hong Kong, 2017.

Image captions: Front page left to right: *Tokyo Compression* #73, #156.

Back page clockwise from top left: *Tokyo Compression* #75, #18, #99b, #134.

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