All images @ Michael Massaia

AMERICAN CONNECTION

□ susanburnstine.com

While the city sleeps, Michael Massaia walks the streets and takes photographs with his large-format camera. He talks to Susan Burnstine about uncommon experiences and how insomnia has helped shape his work.

ften artists are haunted or challenged by the very thing that drives them to create. New Jersey photographer Michael Massaia has suffered serious bouts of insomnia for years and has turned lemons into lemonade by creating a number of haunting bodies of work while wandering about New York City and New Jersey in the early morning hours.

During the past 15 years Massaia has created several personal series including Deep In A Dream, Afterlife and No Past, No Present, No Future, all of which have been inspired by the world he experienced while walking alone in the dark. 'The isolation can be almost electric, perhaps unsettling, but ultimately it feels like it's where I'm supposed to be, he says. 'Living in such a populated area, there's something very exciting about depicting the area in an uncommon way. After 2am everything changes. Good things happen, bad things happen, but I always felt I was on an adventure?

Isolation, solitude, disconnection and voyeurism permeate every image Massaia creates, making one ask if creating this work assists him through processing ongoing questions

Northwest View, 2014.



Half Moon, 2009.

and issues or if it merely helps fill time during his unrest. 'I think both play a role in why I create a specific body of work, but longing also plays a major role. A good deal of my work is simply what I wish was true. I

by what I create, but that's a nice thought to have, he says. Iconic locations such as Central Park, Grand Central Station and the New Jersey Shore are frequently featured in Massaia's work,

don't think anything is resolved



South View #2, 2012.

engaged in countless fights, but admits he's lost some of his nerve in the past year and is trying to figure out how to regain his former confidence.

yet they're never depicted in a

conventional manner. 'They're

all connected by the feeling of

experiencing a very common

place in an uncommon way, he

says. 'Central Park only makes

There's nothing compelling to

me about that park at 2pm on a

sense to me when it's vacant.

beautiful Sunday afternoon.'

Massaia documented the

amusement piers that line the

series Afterlife in an attempt to

create images that echo how he

experienced these places while

rides, but they captivated me.

Photographing them on those

growing up. 'I never went on the

rickety piers early in the morning

was my way of saying goodbye to

something, but at the same time

finally having my moment with

streets in the dark, which has

and issues. He's been chased,

screamed at and has even

created a fair share of problems

assaia carries a

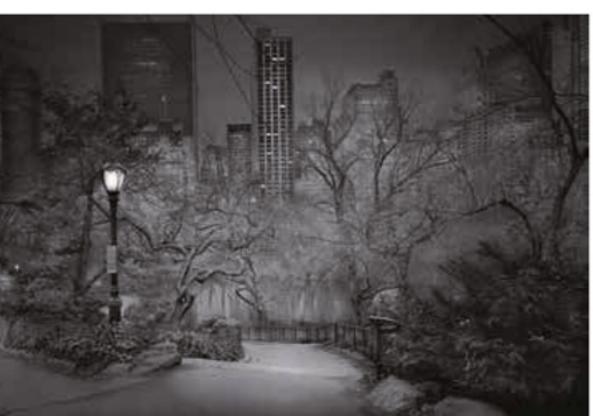
large-format camera

while roaming the

cumbersome

it as well.

New Jersey coastline in his





Clock Installation, 2016.

Currently his favorite cameras are a modified Sinar X, 8x10in /5x7in and a custom 5x7in. He largely uses Ilford FP4 and Kodak Tmax 100 film and develops all his films in a variety of staining developers.

His stunning prints have to be viewed in person to appreciate the craftsmanship. For years he focused on platinum prints, but

now he mostly makes silver gelatin prints that are as large as 44x60in. He first makes a series of coloured inter-negatives from the original in-camera negative by using different output devices, including an image setter and pigment printer. 'Most of my prints are exposed multiple times with different coloured lighting, which allows me to create split

contrast prints. I process all of my prints in large open trays and will selectively tone them using gold, selenium and sepia.'



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Private Gardens, 2013.