

manga train

Sumo, sushi, surround sound, pictures and sounds seen and heard in Tokyo, Osaka, Hakodate and Kyoto, recorded in trains and gardens, on the street and in the rain. Everyday moments whose piercing beauty can only be discovered by someone (to use the words of Walter Benjamin) with the sharpened sensibilities of the flâneur who looks for pictures 'wherever they are to be found'.

manga train builds on the basis of a musical structure - announcements from loudspeakers, the clacking of pachinko balls, muted voices, music from transistor radios or the never-ending thunder of traffic on a major road. All of these determine the rhythm of the film which consists of thirty takes each of eight seconds duration. They were filmed as steady shots and run at one fifth normal speed. The framing of the shots, the spacing and the movements were, so to say, broken down into their constituent elements so that in the blink of an eye they can intensify to a wealth of new details and associations. This effect is most effective when there is an appearance of crass disparity between picture and sound. Two young men in the park dance obliviously to an Elvis song, in contrast riding an escalator sounds like acoustic excess. Another instance - the camera stares fixedly at a partly weathered reddish mud-brick wall in Rioanji and only the devout murmuring of the visitors allows the viewer to entertain doubts that he is looking at a painting from an impressionist masterpiece.

manga train is a 'personal film album' said Manfred Neuwirth, 'an album to leaf through. My associations with Japan: with wonder in the heart'.
Michael Omasta