

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Thrift, Julia, "Jean-Luc Mylayne", *Time Out Magazine*, Jan. 18-26, 2000.

photo gallery

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REGION
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18 - 26 JAN 2000

ROMEIKE & CURTICE

ART EXHIBITIONS



Jean-Luc Mylayne
Photographers' Gallery
(Photography)

Since 1976, Jean-Luc Mylayne has been leading a nomadic life searching for birds to star in his photographs. Like a film director, he controls every aspect of his shots - from lighting to art direction - and waits until the bird acts in the appropriate way to create the image he desires. The wait can be extraordinarily long. Many of the photographs are given titles such as 'May June July', the implication being that a single shot took three months to achieve and, since 1976, Mylayne has produced only 150 images.

Are they worth the wait? One large photograph - 180cm square and called 'No 86, Mai Juin Juillet 1981' - is a blur of greens, reds and browns. Some of the colours

resolve into twigs, but it is difficult to see any birds. Gradually, it becomes clear that the brownish blur on the left is a bird taking off. 'No 26, Juin Juillet 1981' is a mass of green bushes and fields with a farm building beyond. With brightly coloured flashes of yellow and red, in this environment the bird is perfectly camouflaged. Mylayne does not focus on the bird or guide our eye to it; it is simply there - part of a larger entity. Look long enough, and a bunch of red berries on a bush turns out to be the open mouths of babies huddled in a nest. As wildlife photography, this is fascinating. Mylayne strips away preconceptions to make us see the natural world in terms of colours and shapes; his ambitions, however, are much greater. Paradoxically, it might be my antipathy to birds that makes me unable to see the deeper meaning of his project.

Julia Thrift