

# DANZIGER GALLERY

## Biography

Yuji Obata

Yuji Obata was born in Japan in 1962. He attended the Nihon University College of Art and currently resides in Tokyo. He has won numerous photography prizes in Japan, and his work was first shown outside of Japan in 2010 with Danziger Projects at Pulse Miami.

In 2003, Obata was compelled to photograph winter scenes in Japan as he stood in front of Pieter Bruegel's painting "The Hunters in the Snow" in Vienna's Museum of Art History. Upon returning to Japan, he traveled to the country's northernmost island, Hokkaidō, known for its cold and snowy winters. As he worked there photographing ice skaters at a middle school rink and a local speed skating team, his enchantment with images of winter deepened. Traveling around different regions of the island in winter, he began noticing the varied qualities of the snow itself, and finally became fascinated with the unique challenge of photographing snowflakes.

Obata drew inspiration from the story and works of W.A. Bentley, an American farmer and photographer who adapted a camera and microscope to photograph a single snow crystal for the first time in 1885. Bentley went on to photograph more than 5,000 snowflakes in his lifetime, and his technique was so successful that it continues to be used today.

Like Bentley, Obata was obsessed with the challenge of doing something no one had done before – in his case photographing snowflakes in freefall rather than on a flat surface without digital or any other manipulation. It took Obata five years to achieve but his breakthrough resulted in the capture of pictures that allow the snowflakes to relate to each other in space and size, creating dynamic compositions and scenes. Obata chose the location to shoot the series, in the mountains of Hokkaidō, based on its history as the place where Dr. Ukichiro Nakaya did research that led to his invention of artificial snow.

His most recent book "Wintertale" gathers his photographs of winter, and has garnered interest around the world for its poetic depiction of a fleeting season. While Obata is reverent to those who inspired him in this project, his photographs stand alone as fresh and original works.