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## MONT-SAINT-MICHEL

VASTITUDES

*Olivier Mériel*

The photographer's eye offers a unique view of this great monument, placed on UNESCO's World Heritage list in 1979, which stands on a rocky islet on the bay of the same name at the mouth of the river Couesnon in Normandy. Once known as Mont Tombe, it was consecrated to the worship of the archangel Michael in 708 with the construction of a small oratory. In 966, Richard I, Duke of Normandy, founded the Benedictine monastery. A few years later, in 1017, abbot Hildebert II began the great construction project, but because of economic difficulties, it was not completed until 1502, five centuries later. A ring wall surrounds the town, traversed by a single road lined with dwellings, most of which date back to the 15th and 16th centuries. The monastery stands on the top of the rock with the abbey in the middle.

**Olivier Mériel** was born in 1955 in Saint-Aubin-sur-Mer, in the French region of Calvados. For thirty years he has dedicated himself to photography as both a means of expression and an artistic discipline. He uses a large camera with extreme lengthy exposure times, and develops 30 x 40 contact prints without retouching. The power of his work, with a view that is both rigorous and sensitive, has gained him important assignments from various public institutions and numerous publications, in particular *Lumières d'ombre*, *Hauteville House*, *Secrets du pays d'Ouche*, and *Juno Beach*.