Dark Days - Venice
Hybrid Photographic Techniques

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1 Topic

These photographs (see Fig. 1 and 2) are a small excerpt of about 70 works which emerged from journeys to serveral cities, among them New York, Prague, and Venice. The whole cycle is called Dark Days - Venice, Prague, New York. Its topic is the isolation of the modern human beeing in today's big cities. The reality of the city inhabitants undergoes an estrangement by stylistic devices such as coarse grain, blur, camera shake, and multiple exposures. An overview of such techniques is summarized in [1].

The selected images show scenes of a street in Venice, Italy. They have been taken from a large distance at night. The humans which can be suggested in the photographs are not visible in the negatives with the naked eye. Only an extreme enlargement makes their shapes visible.

2 Technique

The technical process to generate these images is a hybrid one. The photographs have been taken on panchromatic film. The relevant sections of the negatives have been scanned with high resolution (4000 ppi). After applying the usual image enhancement techniques, artifical grain is added to the images to further exaggerate the effect of the film grain. Only after this the images are scaled up to their final size. It is important that the grain is added before the enlargement, because otherwise the pointilist effect, especially interesting from different viewing distances, is missed. Finally, a triplex filter with yellowish and purple tones is applied to the black and white image for atmospheric reasons.

3 Artistic Background

Digital art first of all has to be art. A work of art, either digital or not, has to express an artistic statement. Shining examples for artistic statements and a source of inspiration for Dark Days has been the Russian filmmaker Andrej Tarkowskij. He takes the view that a work of art should suggest something inexpressible. It can evoke a memory of a personal emotional incident and has the intention to arouse an own spiritual state in the observer. By giving an account of a hopeless world an artist can arouse the feeling of the opposite ideal [2]. Dark Days tries its hand at this.

References

[1] Peters, G.: Aesthetic Primitives of Images for Visualization. Symposium on Design and Aesthetics in Visualisation (DAViz 2007), 2007.

[2] Tarkowskij, A.: Die versiegelte Zeit. Gedanken zur Kunst, zur Ästhetik und Poesie des Films. Ullstein Taschenbuchverlag, 2000.
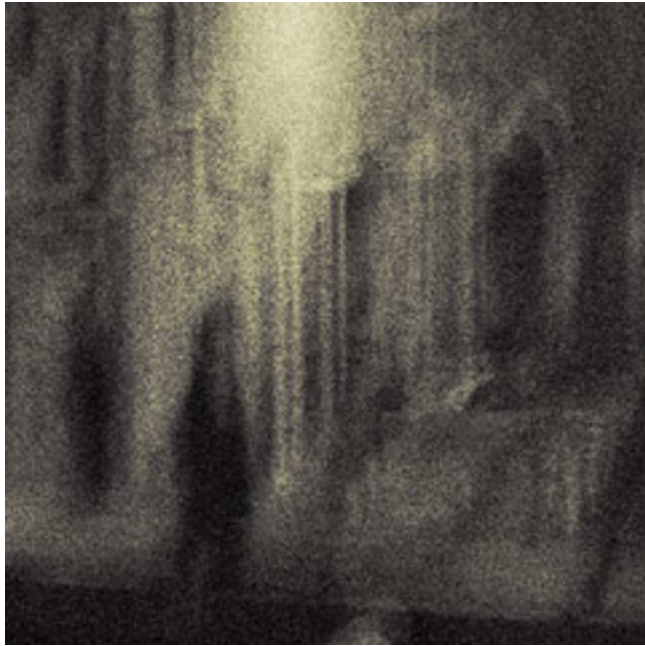
Figure 1: *Dark Days - Venice I*

Figure 2: *Dark Days - Venice II*