

Dark Days - Prague

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1 Description of the artwork

1.1 Topic

These photographs are a small excerpt of about 70 works which emerged from journeys to several 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 being 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.

The selected images show scenes of streets in Prague, Czech Republic. They have been taken from a large distance at night. The humans shown in the photographs are not visible in the negatives with the naked eye. Only an extreme enlargement makes them visible.

1.2 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, artificial 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.

1.3 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 have been the Swiss sculptor Alberto Giacometti and the Russian filmmaker Andrej Tarkowskij. Giacometti has reduced the human body to its basic shapes and thus appeals perfectly to the human visual (and thus aesthetic) system [1]. Tarkowskij 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.

2 The Artist

Gabriele Peters lives in Bochum, Germany. She has studied Mathematics and Psychology at Ruhr-University Bochum. For her research on the perception of three-dimensional objects at the Institute for Neural Computation in Bochum she received her PhD from the Faculty of Technology of the University Bielefeld in 2002. She worked on image processing, computer graphics, information visualization, and machine learning for vision applications at the Graphical Systems Department of the University Dortmund. During stays as a guest professor in the Vision group at the California Institute of Technology she took part in the development of new techniques for the generation of photo panoramas.

Since 10 years she is active as an artistic photographer, as well. Her photographic and artistic education she received at the Center of Art and Music at Ruhr-University Bochum from 1996 to 2000. She had the chance to present her works and projects in several group and single exhibitions, for example in the Museum Bochum, the museum of arts of the city of Bochum. Since 2007 she is a professor for Visual Computing at the University of Applied Sciences and Arts in Dortmund.

Homepages: Science: ls7-www.cs.uni-dortmund.de/~peters/

Arts: www.eyeszeit.net

References

- [1] Sartre, J.-P.: The Search for the Absolute. in: Exhibition of Sculptures, Paintings, Drawings [by Alberto Giacometti], New York: Pierre Matisse Gallery, 1948.
- [2] Tarkowskij, A.: Die versiegelte Zeit. Gedanken zur Kunst, zur Ästhetik und Poesie des Films Ullstein Taschenbuchverlag, 2000.