



Shadows and Light Sides

Metropolises have always been a favorite subject of photography. New York – second to Chicago the cradle of the skyscraper – could paradigmatically stand for the lens's conquering of the city. Cities such as Hong Kong and Shanghai have caught up. The air around the tops of their highest buildings is already so thin that the colors fade.

No megacity is too large for Sabine Wild and no continent is too far away. The vaster a metropolis is the greater her curiosity to submerge herself in it. But a picture of hers would not be hers if there were not always something new and surprising to discover below the surface of the apparently constantly familiar. The optical shimmer of the significant longitudinal and horizontal hatchings that define her metropolitan images is the formally aesthetic intention and more than a distinguishing trait. Her unmistakable style astonishes with variation. One time a dramatic shot of color elements scans the vibrating fields, another time a measure of optical blurring predominates the image. The compositions seek a finely differentiated tension between graphic-abstract and objective-realistic elements. A microcosm of architectural details opens itself across all the levels of transfiguration. Together, the styles result in a significant imagery which steers the observer's look not only to the familiar but also to the hidden interim areas of the real.

Does not every major city possess its own face and unmistakable character? Hong Kong seems to be literally permeated by an extravagant overabundance of soaring color. Chicago, by contrast, appears to have been coated with a silver-grey varnish. The light, bleached peaks of Shanghai's buildings abuzz in a mist differ greatly from the grid-like, chiseled material zones of Manhattan. The optical orchestration of the image clusters is more multilayered than many a digital track might suppose. Colored, icy spaces sit below short, quick vertical sections of façades, while a fluid, metallic-like pavement lies at the feet of rebelling branches. Extremes prevail on many planes.

Pixel smears flow through the image, as if everything were a web of remnants of architectonic dreams and dematerialized ideas. The photographic realism links the digital back into reality. There are shadows and light sides of cities which express themselves in the finely nuanced imagery. Shanghai with its imposing skyline resembles an architectural foreshadowing of the amazing new Chinese powers. Below the halo of aspirations lurk dark moments. A dose of cherry-red color undercuts the picture while the joints and flutes etched otherwise so finely in the optical aluminum of the building facades seem to be filled with viscous tar or a caustic bleaching agent.

Sometimes it is as if the artist pressed the mute button in her pictures – the tone of the urban scenery is dampened. Possibly it is even turned off completely thus amplifying the background noise of the city with an artificial stillness. Sabine Wild's metropolitan pictures are progressive image-storms in which virtual tone and visualized city are alloyed in a colorful-festive misalliance and celebrate a synesthetic marriage of the elements till late at night. The next morning the sun, of course, rises and a new day begins.

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