

Aesthetica

SUBJECTIVE ENVIRONMENTS



André Lichtenberg is a Brazilian-German award-winning artist based in the UK. His practice explores contemporary landscape photography by combining childhood memories, time fragmentation and digital collage to create distinctive and seamless large-scale studies of the environment.

A: Your background is originally within the sciences. Why did you move into the arts and how do you think that these two sectors connect in terms of concepts / perspectives on contemporary practices?

AL: As a young man finishing college in Brazil in the mid 1980s, art didn't seem to be the best university choice for a stable career, so I decided to study Civil Engineering back then. A few years later, when I moved to Europe and settled in London, my vision of the world began to change, and art and photography suddenly felt as a natural way to progress my studies. I do believe that science and art can be connected and even overlap sometimes: both are a means of investigation, involve exploring ideas and theories. One however requires precision whilst the other allows room for emotions. I use the precision that comes with the medium of photography and methodology in the capture and construction of the images, but my artworks should never be understood as scientific, as something precise and objective. My representations of cities, architecture and the landscape are personal and subjective.

A: Your works combine an interest in childhood, memories and environmental studies. How do you think that these concepts interlink and what are you trying to achieve by creating these connections?

AL: Everything is interlinked. I've always been curious about architecture and the environment. I remember being a sensitive kid with a sharp mathematical brain, and also with some kind of philosophical curiosity about things. My childhood drawings were very architectural, often depicting aerial views of imaginary cities and buildings with incredibly realistic use of perspective. As an adult, I became curious about the complex and fragile relationship between man and nature. The way I see it, everything happens in cycles, and environmental studies can be a great subject to try to understand and illustrate that – through moon cycles, sea tides, seasons, day & night, our own emotional states and moods and even with politics, as we observe governing powers changing hands between right and left throughout history.

In my work, I try to open myself to all those complex connections whilst creating simplified and beautiful studies of the environment and by trying to channel an aesthetic that is inspired by the memories of my early drawings and emotions. What am I trying to achieve? I'm hoping to develop my own visual language and create aesthetic experiences. On one level, I'm trying to keep learning about the environment and how things are connected, by how architecture and urban spaces function, evolve and may affect us, or how tidal patterns and moon cycles may influence us. On another level, I'm trying to learn about myself, my own emotions and my position and role in our complex, fast evolving world and society.

A: How do the pieces contain a structural element, and why do you think that this is important?

AL: The structural element in the artworks is more noticeable and important in the architectural representations. For example, although the large scale cityscapes from the Within Series play with elements of drawing and collage and are not documentary in nature, I felt it was important to keep the structure realistic in relationship to the actual cities. However, that structural element is less important and formal in my landscapes, where I believe it is more important to develop an emotional layer in the artwork than to create an objective representation.

A: What is the process behind each image?

AL: The process is both meditational and mathematical. I like to create images slowly. Most of my artworks take several weeks to be finished. It all starts with researching a project, choosing locations, capturing the scene in many photographic exposures, as a sort of a puzzle, and then spending weeks in the studio putting this puzzle together. The meditation aspect happens both in the photographic and studio stages – in the location I try to connect emotionally with the landscape, as I'm capturing it in several long exposure photographs, and in the studio, as I allow myself to slow down and reconnect with the new landscape while collating the images. The mathematical precision comes with the piecing of images together and creating a representation which is somehow faithful to the original landscape. This precision is less important when exploring landscapes, which can be more fluid, but it's quite relevant to the cityscapes, where each building should align seamlessly with the next.

A: How have you developed your techniques, and who or what have they been influenced by?

AL: I've been experimenting with photography and digital collage since my London university days in the early nineties, while studying for a degree in Photographic and Electronic Imaging Science at University of Westminster. We were testing the first digital cameras and experimenting with Photoshop. Those were the earlier days of digital photography and the image quality was still very pixelated. However, by the end of the course I could already observe tremendous progress in the digital technology, as well as its future potential. In terms of being influenced by, I can't think of a single important figure. To give you a few names, I would say painters like Mark Rothko, for his massive scale abstract meditative works, David Hockney, for his colourful compositions and use of light. Talking specifically about photography, I remember feeling very curious and

inspired by artists exhibiting large scale work, such as Jeff Wall, Hiroshi Sugimoto and Andreas Gursky during my university days.

A: What has been your biggest work / exhibition to date?

AL: My biggest exhibition to date has been my solo show in Brazil in 2015. That exhibition was very important to me as it was held in Porto Alegre, the city where I was born and grew up, and where I have family and many childhood friends. The exhibition was called Within Series / André Lichtenberg and held at the stunning Galeria Bolsa de Arte, one of the biggest and oldest private galleries in the city with about 800 square meters of exhibiting space. I had been working solidly on that show for about two years in order to create all the artworks. We exhibited fourteen large scale cityscapes of New York, London, Paris and Sao Paulo. The show was very successful, getting great exposure from the press and several pieces ended up acquired by private and corporate collectors.

A: What are your future plans in terms of projects / shows?

AL: I am always creating new work and often working in more than one project simultaneously. Currently, I'm developing new cityscapes from NY and London for the Within Series, whilst also working on a new seascapes project – the current working title is Brexit, impossible utopia. In a short and simplistic introduction, they are night seascapes illuminated by the full moon light. They depict the sea, the south border that separates the UK from Europe, under the romantic moonlight and the same stars used by our ancestors to guide them in their long voyages in the olden days. In terms of shows, I have a small solo show in a gallery in Brighton happening at the end of 2017 and have a solo show planned for Sao Paulo in 2018. I'm sending new artworks to my galleries in Palm Beach and Brazil for new group exhibitions and art fairs, and am also hoping to start new relationships and collaborations with galleries and exhibiting spaces in Europe and Asia.

For more information: www.photoandre.com

1. Untitled 2 from Dream Series. Courtesy of the artist.

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