

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

What caught my eye ... going beyond the pleasure of seeing places

Maurice Amiel · Wednesday, May 1st, 2019

The pleasure of seeing places

"I did not find these pictures ... It seemed I always saw them when no one was around. Man-made but no man. They are just places that I enjoyed looking at. That is all."

—Steve Hiatt, in his "Pleasure Places"

In a thin book of his photographs Hiatt has visually cut up the world around into small, taut, sharp, brightly colored photo-compositions that provided him the enjoyment of looking at them ... calling them "pleasure places."

His intent was to have us enjoy them in turn. I did for a long time, and still do.

To a certain extent, that type of enjoyment is what the feature image attempts to provide: stringing, under an ambiguous banner, a row of colorful shopping-bag-totting generations.

Hidden, but for slivers of carrots and lemons, is the produce they are inspecting ... shown of the people are only their backs, but for the little girl to the left who, with eyes expressing curiosity, is looking at mine involved in the process of seeing and of awkwardly making an image ... she is the only part of the image pulling me in.

The sense of being with the people in places

In the photo, shown below, I sensed my-self being in a place and/or situation in which I was included with the people I was photographing.

How was I to have the image express that sentiment?



multi layered street scene

I was seated at a coffee place window counter looking around a decal showing a young boy holding a French baguette bread, at a fellow seated at the sidewalk terrace, at another standing by a parking meter post, and at passersby leaving the scene ... the only ones that did not show their faces.

The next row of presence were the cars, one parked and another going by.

Finally, the buildings across the street, with their colorful signs, marquees and umbrellas, became the backdrop of the scene.

It took a couple of shots before all the participants were aligned with the openings on the sides of the decal and before the scene fit within the square frame of the image.

This layering of perceptual levels gave a “situational depth” to the scene and expressed, for me, the sense of being included in it.

It was a revelation!

End word

That “revelation,” besides the consciousness of its photographic characteristics, came with the realization that I may have found a productive “seam” to mine for the development of my current “What caught my eye” series of posts.

I am indebted to Steve Hiett for his straight forward admission of simply feeling enjoyment from the esthetic effect of his images, which I tried to go beyond in mine, thereby approaching the essence of traditional street photography.

Credit all images to Maurice Amiel

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