

Interview on Fisheye Magazine (FR)

<https://www.fisheyemagazine.fr/decouvertes/interview/the-aisle-seat-pourquoi-ne-peut-on-pas-voir-lhorizon/>

Could you present yourself?

I like making photographs, creating visual narratives and talking about the images I perceive. These three aspects led me to become a photographer and recently to take my first steps as a curator and educator.

How did you become interested in photography and why?

I have to say that I wasn't one of those children that their parents gave them a camera or even if they did, it wasn't remarkable and it wasn't what introduced me to the photographic medium. And I say this because just a few months ago I found a picture of me at 3 years old holding a camera and it was quite a surprise! In my last two years of high school I joined a theater group. There, I was introduced to the artistic world, I met - literally or by studying work of various playwrights, musicians, people who were creating art through some kind of medium. I found myself familiar in that environment. I began to try different mediums within or without the team. What I felt the most immediate attachment to was photography. While having a little knowledge about this medium, as you can imagine at that age, I instinctively enrolled in the Department of Photography & Audiovisual Arts at the University of West Attica. I felt at home from the first classes.

Could you present the series Aisle seat?

This series takes the impossibility of viewing the horizon as its starting point. But this state extends beyond simply being seated away from the windows of an aeroplane; it is also familiar for those who live in the building-strewn landscape of a big, bustling metropolis. When trying to get a vantage point on the horizon, or see the vast open spaces of sea and land, it is futile in the midst of a busy city as it is high above the earth in an aisle seat. The impossibility of viewing the horizon and only being able to reach near distances in the urban environment relates to many modern age issues such as nearsightedness (myopia) and disorientation.

What brought you to study the view of the horizon?

A few years ago, I was studying Fine Arts in Venice, a city that resembles a labyrinth. Most people I guess have visited it for a short period of time on hol-

iday or for business and have probably realised how easily one can get lost in its narrow streets. Despite staying there for a longer period and got to know it better, the town planning makes it difficult to navigate. The sea, the horizon and some of its landmarks proved to be very useful for my daily commute around the city. After finishing my studies I returned to Greece, had a short holiday near the Aegean Sea and as soon as I returned to Athens I conceived the idea of the series.

Is this a result of living in a city?

Beyond the phenomenon of disorientation in metropolises, I am interested in the way urban planning has a crucial influence on how people live and communicate in the city. The French Revolution of 1789 was a benchmark in changing the perception of urban space. The city emerged as a field of resistance and rebellion and took on a new meaning in the eyes of the dominant powers, who were keen to assert their power through urban planning policies aimed at better control of the city. During the 19th and 20th centuries, urban interventions were carried out in the contemporary cities of the West, which we see through the examples of Haussmann's Paris, the The City Beautiful Movement in the USA and later in the colonies of the British Empire and Moses in New York. A typical example is the boulevards, a new form of publicity in their time in which the world is presented as unified and all social classes coexist harmonically. In fact, they attempt to turn the street into a tool for guiding public life, at the same time as social inequalities remain pronounced, hidden in the margins. The control of the individual, the restriction of ones freedom through urban planning has led to a new kind of insecurity that did not exist before their birth. Since then several such practices have been added, expressing the gradual privatisation of public space and even applied to parks and squares.

How would you describe your photographic approach? Can you talk about the different elements you incorporate into this project?

The Aisle Seat, as most of my works, involves symbols and parallels. The title itself is an allegory. It incorporates images that do not reveal a specific place or time. The significance of each photograph is reinforced by the sequencing of the series. The portrait of the seagull, which seems anxious because it is far from its natural setting, comes just before a huge Mall billboard, which, in the few seconds between the presentation of sponsored products, is suggested as the only bright "exit". I love bringing together contradictory elements and creating oxymoronic relationships. Like the meeting of ten people who have been invited

to a house without knowing exactly the reason, yet have things in common with each other. The difficult part is to gradually present these commonalities to the viewer and have a strong chance of them being perceived.

How do your images question modern living?

If this is happening, I hope they do it in an original and non-obvious way. Otherwise I would present the view from the tiny cramped apartments of buildings, but that's what the eye is used to. Just like the bad news in the media, there's so much of it that it's no longer shocking. I want Aisle Seat to be that good movie we watched at an independent film festival and left thinking about it the day after the screening because we put ourselves in the shoes of the protagonist. Then we will discuss it with friends and re-watch some of its scenes to get in depth.

Any influences or thinkers you would like to mention and why?

One thing that I have recently noticed is that I cannot clearly define which thinker or event has influenced me and to what extent. And many times the people or situations that inspire me may have nothing to do with the art or the type of photography I make. Thinkers such as G. Debord, C. Baudelaire, Z. Bauman, W. Benjamin have certainly confirmed my thoughts about various socio-political phenomena of the city or my perplexity towards related experiences and helped me to develop them to a great extent. D.Lynch and the non-serial narratives. F.Truffaut and his constantly on the move city lovers. Natassa Markidou, my professor at the University, who advised and encouraged me to develop Aisle Seat and present it to a wider audience.

What are your next steps?

To develop the Aisle Seat which continues to be in progress and to expand my new work 'The hand placed on the chest' which I am thinking of presenting as a photobook. I am delighted that my first photobook was selected by Fotofestival Lenzburg '21, Re:sources which has its opening on 4 September. The solo exhibition Little Lies by Io Paschou, which I curate, is also opening in the same month, as part of the Athens Photo Festival '22. Finally, I have the great honor of beginning a new collaboration with the Hellenic Centre of Photography by teaching in its new educational program.