

Augmentation

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During the end of August 2014, I went to see an exhibition of Roman Vishniac at the Jewish museum in Amsterdam. The exhibition showed his documentary photographs of polish subculture before the Second World War. But after seeing the whole exhibition, I came across a series of images located in a small room. It stated that Vishniac was a biologist and that these photographs were the result of his microscopic career. The work shown there were mostly about microbial life and I suppose that they were taken to service his work. But the impression I gained was that they were taken purely aesthetical. I became greatly inspired, as I had never considered microphotography as a photographers medium. A month later I purchased my own microscope. In hindsight I believe that it weren't just the microscopic images that spoke to me but rather Vishniac's attitude towards photography. His work was about documenting life in all forms, and what form of life can be more intriguing than that which is unseen. At that time I was certain to use the microscope as my medium. But since I had no idea for what purpose, I had first to unfold what microphotography meant to me. Incidentally this led to the start of my thesis.

When I began using my microscope I understood that as both mediums ultimately produce a photograph the approach is entirely different. The main difference being that the microscope is a solitary tool that requires stillness above all else. This in turn gave me time to think and so I wondered. An image seen through a microscope is considered something that is scientific. Microscopic photographs are taken with a purpose to bring to our view the structure of things or to make visible the creatures that dwell outside our sensory realm. A big part of microphotography is to bring to life beauty, think of a butterfly wing or a mineral. But more often so when we think of a microphotograph we think of cells, and we imagine that the photograph taken is by someone in his or her respectful field. It is that which makes the microphotograph hold its authority of something that is truthful. Besides, who could argue that it isn't? Through my research I found that most microscopic imagery is in a way fabricated. Microscopes do not take

photographs they create them, you can consider the microscope as a podium to which we add a show. For instance most aquatic life has to be illuminated using sophisticated lights or else it remains invisible. Powders and liquids are shot using polarized lenses, if not they are colorless and dull. In my trials I came to the conclusion that the only reliable truth is form.

I began by questioning form in relation to size. We understand that the microphotograph seen is not relative to the actual size but a magnification of something small. I remember having seen a video '1977 The Powers of Ten'. It's a video about magnitudes that zooms outwards by factors of ten till the whole universe is surveyed, then reducing inward until a single atom and its quarks are observed. At one point the image of an atom becomes the same as that of a star and quarks appear the same as a universe would. Any shape or form changes depending of our perspective and can be reduced to a single point consumed by a sea of space. I came to a conclusion, by viewing the microscope not any more as my lens but as a tool more similar to that of a kaleidoscope. I had transformed my perception, not anymore did I consider the microscope as something scientific but rather as a view port to a false reality.

My resolve and my concept began by seeing the microscope's truth as something that opposes reality. I considered the microphotograph as a magnification of something minuscule and so I began to wonder whether I could reverse this process. This led me to elaborate on the relativity of space in relation to us, in a way that it is perceived as greater then, that which is seen through a microscope. By conveying the illusion of space through something scientific as a microscope, my aim is that even the most irrelevant things can be made relevant. Ultimately leading to question our own sensory awareness. I made many trials using whatever I could get my hands on. The main problem I faced was that I couldn't foresee the image unless I placed it on my 2 millimeter squared plateau. Often my subjects wouldn't look like the idea I had in mind. But sometimes my efforts paid off, and so doing I slowly began to overcome those obstacles. For instance acrylic paint on glass appeared as a nebula in space. Whereas dried blood on a blue background resembled an area view of earth and the hairs on a seed became a field. The effort however of making trials became tiresome and not enough results where made towards my elaborate vision. I decided to change my approach and instead of looking for subjects I began to create them. I started to compose object with scene and began experimenting with depth of field. I added figures to my scenes; the field I had shot earlier now had a shadow of

a man. Even though I managed to visualize my thoughts I found the results to abstract and too wide. My process then took me to narrow down my work towards a more urban landscape. Having grown up in a city, I can say that it is the landscape I know best. At that point I began to look for manmade materials opposed to organic ones to illustrate my vision and took as reference architecture as my main source of inspiration. That wasn't an easy choice as I had put a great effort into collecting and labeling all kinds of insects and plants, but it was the right choice for my project. Since research began to take a direction towards photographers like the Becher's, Sugimoto and Blossfeldt. This in way also meant returning to photography as a source of inspiration, opposed to looking only at the content of my microscopic world. And so, what I did then was that I started to dismantle old hardware, browse tool shops scavenge every bit of metal I could find. In search for tiny parts, not just to discover beauty but to imitate and learn from those mentioned before. The images I shot came closer to my idea and I felt one step closer to that final vision I had.

But there was still something missing that could transform my subjects and make them bigger, stronger and heavier in a sense. Till then I had only considered composing the image in ways that it would appear recognizable as something existing from our daily perception, by aligning objects with other things or by placing abstract blurred figures in my scenes through again using my depth of field that I rather avoided to use. Convinced that to find the answer I had to shoot more, but eventually I got blocked since the answer didn't lay with discovering new things. In hindsight the answer laid in my research had I looked with different eyes, but eventually it took some sleepless nights to uncover something quite simplistic. One night while looking through my window, it came to me and I realized that to appreciate form I had to add a sky. Till then I had used colored backgrounds but I hadn't considered manipulating that space into a more vivid panorama, as one would expect from using a microscope my images were mostly shot from top down. But by adding to the illusion of space some reality I managed to transform the position of my camera to whichever perspective I desired. Position my depth of field I managed to create skies and by placing amber stones in front of my flash I created the sun. Suddenly my images became realistic and they achieved the effect I wanted to convey. Reaching my desired result I could begin realizing each single photograph.

What attributed to deciding which final images to take, I had to go a step back to look at everything I had done so far. What was it that would set apart

my photography style opposed to that of artists who might tackle on this concept of relativity of size in relation to us? I found that with most of my trials what interested me most was a subtle sign of geometric shapes and lines. Wondering how I could implement this into my own story, I began to experiment using different geometrical shapes. Starting from a simple line, conveyed as my first work. Each following image became the transformation that ultimately led to the last image of a spiral. By gradually transforming the work my goal is to achieve an underlying message that speaks not only of geometrical shapes, but also of the change that I hope to instill in my audience. The first conceptual layer of my work is that each image evokes a familiar architectural form by no means taken through the use of a microscope. The second layer then becomes of uncovering the truth incidentally questioning our own notion of space. Whereas the third layer, the delicate geometrical coherency remains hidden to form a deeper depth of inner change and transformation. Finally, I do believe that the work also conveys it's own meaning independent of my will one that still has to be uncovered and that changes with each individual.