



„Singapore“, 2002



„Shanghai“, 2001



„Kuala Lumpur“, 2000

Peter Bialobrzeski

1961 born in Wolfsburg, Germany
 2002 Professor for Photography, Hochschule für Künste, Bremen, Germany. Lives and works in Hamburg, Germany

PREVIEW

L. A. GALERIE, FRANKFURT
 Robert F. Hammerstiel
 "Alles in bester Ordnung"
 July 14 to August 27

L. A. GALLERY BEIJING, China
 Opening on April 9th, 2005:
 "About Women"
 Artists: Li Ji, Qi Zhilong, Song Yonghong, Liu Fei, He Shen

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EXHIBITIONS

Oliver Boberg
 - Cultural Center Banco de Brasil, Rio de Janeiro
 May 26 to July 3
 - Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, USA
 April 16 to July 3
 - Koldo Mixtelena Kulturanea, San Sebastián, Spain
 March 3 to April 30
 - "A la recherche du paysage perdu", Casino Luxembourg
 April 23 to July 3
 - "Re: Modern, Künstlerhaus", Wien, Austria
 May 19 to September 11

Tracey Moffatt
 - "The world is a Stage", Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan
 March 26 to June 19
 - Sharjah International Biennial 7, Dubai, UAE
 April 6 to June 6

Taiji Matsue
 - Museum Schloss Moyland, Germany
 April 23 to August 21
 - Landscafer as Metaphor, Blickle Stiftung, Kraichtal, Germany
 September 11 to October 16

Naoya Hatakeyama
 - St. Annen Museum, Lübeck, Germany
 June 12 to August 15
 - Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, Baden Baden, Germany,
 "Multiple Räume (2): Park"
 April 23 to June 26
 - "Selection of the 26a Bienal de São Paulo", Muse de Arte
 Contemporáneo, Chile
 - Landschaft als Metapher, Blickle Stiftung, Kraichtal, Gerny
 September 11 to October 16

Peter Bialobrzeski

Neon Tigers and new works

April 21 to July 9

You and your friends are cordially invited to the opening on Thursday, April 21, 2005, at 7 p.m.

The artist will be present.

Neon is a natural product. And it is a rare one. Its concentration in the atmosphere is 1.8×10^{-3} by volume percent, or put more simply: 0.002 percent—this is all that exists of the gas, at least on our planet. Synthetic manufacturing? Impossible. That is the wonderful thing about neon light in its classic form: although it represents complete artificiality and cold modernity (very different from the twinkling gas lanterns in Julius Rodenberg's Paris), the raw material for neon tubes cannot be artificially manufactured.

The same applies to Peter Bialobrzeski's magical photographs in *Neon Tigers*. They too are—so to speak—from a natural source. Although they appear to be digital fiction, they are analogue. No mouse click has ever interfered with them, no picture editing has calculated them. Like neon lights, Bialobrzeski's images only give a hint of the chaos beneath their surface. The crowds that make their way through these megacities are often as invisible as the streams of electrons in the lamps that begin to glow on collision with the gas atoms. Because people are rare in these photographs, the spectator's gaze is drawn to the artificial light. Sometimes the neon lights of Asia radiate from Bialobrzeski's pictures as if the concentration of 1.8×10^{-3} by volume percent were glowing all at once.

Not How It Really Is There, But How It Could Be

"My intention is not to show how it is there," says Peter Bialobrzeski. "When I photograph it, I want to show how it *could* be." When talking about *Neon Tigers*, he often uses terms such as "dream" and "fiction". He frequently refers to films, books, computer games: *Blade Runner* and *Star Wars*, William Gibson's novels *Neuromancer* and *Mona Lisa Overdrive*, or the computer game *Sim City*. For Bialobrzeski, all of these images, myths, and fantasies are linked to one another, and he wants the person looking at the image to have the same experience. He wants the facts to disappear at some point, creating the illusion that all of these cities are one city. A new city. A city that cannot be found on the map, but only in the atlas created by *Neon Tigers*.

"The picture should have the power to enchant. This is what I always aim to do," explains the photographer. What is clear is

that he is the first to be enchanted by the project, by an imaginary Asia, that for him symbolizes a hypermodern fantasy world. Yet he photographs this world with the most old-fashioned apparatus imaginable: the analogue box camera. "If I did it on the computer," he says, "it would be boring."

If you lose yourself in the images in *Neon Tigers*, you can imagine the photographer as a kind of flying eye. Childlike fantasies are conjured up: of a man who is floating through canyons of high-rise buildings, defying gravity, without limits—like in a PlayStation universe. Of course, the daily routine is different. Bialobrzeski arrives in a megacity, looks for a hotel downtown, checks in. Then he sets off, always in the morning. Without his camera—it's too heavy—he just carries a notepad with him. He goes through the



„Shenzhen“, 2001

streets of Shanghai, Shenzhen, Kuala Lumpur, walks in concentric circles around the hotel. Makes notes. Tries somehow to get up high—by climbing upwards over the parking levels. Or by convincing receptionists in hotels and skyscrapers to let him climb up into the vertical world of these metropolises. When he has found a couple of good perspectives he goes back to the hotel. Eats. Rests. Sets off again in the afternoon with his camera—always at the same time, always between four and seven p.m.



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„Singapore“, 2002

Squeezes into an elevator with his tripod and glides upwards. Sets up the tripod. Opens the shutter. Sometimes for four minutes, sometimes for eight.

In 1839, Daguerre photographed the busy Boulevard du Temple in Paris. Because the exposure time had to be so long, the hectic crowds of pedestrians and vehicles vanished from the picture. Only one man was recognizable: he had just paused for a moment to have his shoes polished. Although the cities Bialobrzkeski is interested in have little resemblance to the European cities of the nineteenth century, the way of presenting the city is the same. The people blur, disappear altogether. The urban chaos is calmed, banished by a man beneath a black cloth.

Bialobrzkeski likes to present himself as the absurd figure from the nineteenth century who moves through the metropolises of the future. He heaves his tripod through the megacities, because he is interested in the picture itself, not the technicalities. "You simply have to know what medium you can use to express something in particular," he says. "For this project it was the large format camera and nothing else." The unwieldy apparatus also has a big advantage: "People take you much more seriously," explains Bialobrzkeski. "When you turn up in one of these places for the first time to take pictures, you are still just some tourist. However, the camera is your pass for a kind of mission, something that is somehow very official."



„Shanghai“, 2001

Whether with a heavy or a light load: Bialobrzkeski is not a "wild shooter": during his stay in the Asian metropolis, he did not take more than six to eight photos daily, of one or two different places. He also has a rigid selection procedure. One stage of his project, for example, is completely invisible. "I took photos in Jakarta for ten days," says Bialobrzkeski, "but I did not select any of those photos because they were too reminiscent of classic skyline photography."

The photographer distances himself from the obsession with architectural monumentality. That also applies to the anecdotal effects of street and reportage photography. His image selection is complicated, not dramatic. He reduces the contrasts. He soft-

tens the colors to pastel shades. These images are not intended to turn the viewer on like a dumb pickup. They are intended to flirt, with style. To seduce. They should be hypermodern, not hyperprosaic. They should represent everyday life without being crude.

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