

Recollections of Under-development

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Here is a set of picturesque photographs showing eco-tourist like, rustic Mediterranean scenes (empty beaches, old style houses, un-spoilt natural landscapes etc.). I took the pictures in and around my family's native region in Cyprus, the work references land art's style of photographically documenting 'taking a walk through nature', an act infused with the ideals of Romanticism.

Superimposed upon these images are grades of differing 'exposure times' within the image. This is an imitation of the process of 'test printing', a method used in the chemical process of photography by dividing the picture plane up into different exposure times to calculate the ideal picture exposure.

The images used were taken in the northern part of Cyprus, where extensive ethnic cleansing and depopulation took place in 1974 and mass graves of missing persons lie under the ground, yet to be identified. Also, this region of the island is facing towards/ is the closest in proximity to Syria where a current civil war is taking place.

It can be said that the division of the island in 1974 served two purposes, one political and one military; the political being to suppress left leaning or non-aligned politics during the cold war and after; the military purpose being to create a Nato frontier facing Syria on Europe's eastern flank on the Mediterranean. Both underlying rationales aimed at keeping out and containing non U.S hegemony within this significant geo-strategic region of the Middle East.

When wondering around on foot within this specific territory, one is struck by how *timeless and peaceful* the natural landscape appears. Even when looking out across the water, towards Syria and contemplating the violence and human suffering taking place in *real time* as you look, an unnerving sense of the sublime occurs.

Within the photographs, there is a lo-fi, gritty earthiness to visual perception: empty seaside beaches; a derelict modernist house and a mud building decomposing, etc. What extends outside of visual perception is the conception of militarization within human history and the grand-narrative of history being nothing but a story of wars and battles.

Paul Virilio in the early 90's talked about how contemporary warfare is no longer fought horizontally (like WWII) over territory but is now mostly vertical, through GPS weapons systems using satellites, drones, high altitude aircraft etc. Anything anywhere can be struck almost instantaneously with these guided missile systems, as the whole surface of the earth is mapped out for this purpose. The front for Nato in Cyprus is not the ground but the air, up above and the people have been cleared out so as not to dispute the territorial actuality that facilitates this.

By demarcating the pictures from within (using the analog version of grading) there is a bringing into appearance of what is invisible to the naked eye: the electro-magnetic field has become like the omnipresent oxygen we breath. The grading process makes apparent the different degrees of this visibility.