

The Transparent City



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© geoff manaugh, from the essay "transparent city."

When Michael Wolf and I first sat down to discuss the images contained in this book, Wolf pointed out one shot in particular. Like the photographer in Michelangelo

Antonioni's classic film *Blow Up*, Wolf had found himself working late in the studio one night, going over a batch of recent photos from Chicago. The photos were of buildings, of course—very large buildings, with lots of windows, like J. G. Ballard's high-rise. At some point in the evening, Wolf zoomed in randomly on one of the windows while scanning the image for flaws. But he noticed something: there was a man in the photograph—and he was giving Wolf the finger.

Inspired by the find, Wolf went back through every photo he'd taken in the city thus far, methodically scanning, passing from one window to the next, row by row, as if deciphering a hidden text. In that newly committed act of visual interpretation, a key aspect to the project was born: when you look into the lives of others, the lives of others might be looking at you.

I asked Wolf about this, about zooming in through 112 megapixels onto a window that might have filled a mere two or three percent of the original photograph, only to see, through a haze of pixellation, a face or a hand or a group of people at a conference table, talking. It's as if the photograph contains its own universe, I suggested, a blurred microcosm of grain and circumstance, and if you have a powerful enough camera you can actually climb inside. Between voyeurism and photography, then, what is to be discovered when you're out there watching windows? Wolf, perhaps unsurprisingly, replied:

"What I found, actually, is how boring everyday life is. When I thought about it, one of the fantasies that I had was that I would get up onto these rooftops every night—for four or five or six hours—and I would look into hundreds of windows, and I would see all these thrilling things going on. But, ultimately, all I saw was either people sitting and reading or people sitting in front of a computer. In the condominiums, it was people sitting in front of big flat-screen TVs eating dinner—and there were a lot of people alone.

It was like an Edward Hopper painting. In fact, I was greatly influenced by Hopper, taking these photographs—even walking along the streets at night and looking into restaurants. It was almost a cliché. You'd see these Nighthawks-like scenes at eleven at night—two people sitting at a table discussing things or a waiter wiping a table—and so Hopper's paintings were in my mind while taking these. But it was a little sad to see, night after night, in all these buildings, that it was really just single people between the ages of twenty-five and forty, tired after work, sitting on the sofa watching TV. I was a bit disillusioned. I thought it would be more exciting than that."

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标签

摄影

建筑

Photography

城市

Michael_Wolf

攝影集

画册

摄影录

评论

连体的城市在Michael Wolf的镜头下碎片化为玻璃幕墙。这透明的玻璃隐喻着深层本原的欲望——窥视。你看
着窗后的每一个动作与人，这是外星人才会用的视角。

101813 Michael Wolf. 一瞬间就被击中了。032915 I must have read this before last Christmas

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书评

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