

Axel Pairon gallery

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Wilfried Vandenhove

The Belgian photographer Wilfried Vandenhove (Gent, °1970) has been living in Mexico since 1998, and is explicitly inspired by this photogenic country. However, this doesn't result in standard images of Mexico, with prevalent full colors, but in images showing panoramas where time seemed to stand still for a short period of time. Landscapes seem to be frozen; objects seem to stall. These are images that respect the environment, but at the same time they demonstrate the surroundings can never be captured completely. The images are neither an analysis nor a judgment, but the objective capture of an existing situation.

The photos by Vandenhove show a great resemblance to the art of painting: the frozen composition, the alternating bold and faded colors, the suggestive plasticity and the eye for detail reflect a particularly pictorial quality. In addition, numerous photos have the same remarkable sizes: 88.2 cm by 270 cm. Sometimes placed vertically, most of the time horizontally, the individual photo looks amazingly cinematographic. When placed serially, a fascinating rhythm of colors and shapes is created.

The series called 'A Beautiful Noise' is one of the most spectacular photo productions made by Vandenhove. In these photos, he portrays the north of Mexico in a poetic, yet piercing way. Because of its dry landscapes, special colors and intrinsic desolation, this region is a particularly rewarding topic for a photographer who is fascinated by unique panoramas.

At first sight the images from this series could appear in a photo album of an artist who travels around and focuses on ordinary things, but at second sight these photos show landscapes with unusual details over and over again, such as a panoramic desert landscape with a blue detail in the distance seemingly originating from an industrial site or an impressive sunset contrasting with cold TL ads. Vandenhove almost never shows the immediate human presence, only the environment where they live in. Because of this, the viewer concentrates on the details the artist observed - an aesthetic play of telephone wires above a street scene, a hidden door behind a scenic wall photo...

"Pool (Ensenada)" is part of this series. The photo shows a typical part of the city of Ensenada, known by the locals as Cinderella of the Pacific. Because of its warm climate and beautiful location by the ocean, the coastal city is known for being a tourist resort, where vacationers and cruise ships are common images of daily life. Yet the city, close to the border with North America, is also a place that has been dominated by violence and drug trafficking for decades. The clear mint green surface of the swimming pool constitutes a diagonal line through the panorama, focusing on the metal hand rails. In the distance, we see empty white patio chairs to the left and right of the diagonal. The plastic quality says a lot about the region where we are located. The stylish green of the swimming pool water contrasts enormously with the white plasticity of the chairs. They are abandoned and are disorderly arranged. The explicit solitude that is so obvious in this photo is reinforced by the contrast between the colors and the materials. The composition is extremely strong and balanced: On the one hand the photo looks like a snapshot from a movie, and on the other hand it looks like a painted composition.

Wilfried Vandenhove obtained his master's degree in Photography at Sint-Lucas College of Fine Arts in Brussels in 1995. He lives and works partly in Belgium and Mexico City. His works can be seen in places such as the *Centro de la Imagen*, Mexico City, Mexico; *Hubei Provincial Museum*, Wuhan, China; *Extra City*, Antwerp, Belgium; *Brandstrup Gallery*, Oslo, Norway and *M HKA* (Museum for Contemporary Art Antwerp), Antwerp, Belgium. The works are included in the permanent collection of *M HKA*, Antwerp.