

Reviewer Portfolio Feedback

Submission, review – LensCulture Project Review: Fine Art by Caroline GASCH

I have taken some time to study your portfolio while looking for visual clues that point to what you are trying to accomplish with your photography practice. You are obviously a highly skilled photographer who has a clear creative style. You include an insightful, descriptive statement that says, “My visual approach has always been to use a camera to best express what I am feeling inside. It is all heart energy. Buildings, urban architecture have a life of their own. As an artist, I just want to share my feeling to merge outside and inside worlds. I would like viewers to feel it too.”

Based on what I see, I think you composed your images to create artistic, expressive experiences for the viewer. Looking through the portfolio I feel like this is a conceptually cohesive series. It is a study of geometric abstraction from architecture and other environmental subjects, like the luminous colors. Your photos communicate your emotional experiences of these atmospheric scenes while you were exploring with your camera. In this series you turn toward a more abstract dimension of color, contrast, shapes, and angular vs. gridwork relationships. You go on to say that, “I try, through honest and reliable retouching work, to ensure that my thrill takes shape without distorting the concrete vision of the scene shot. The idea is just to share an interpretation of how the city in front of me seems to me. The rhythm and vibration of it, the energy of the place. I don't want to lose my audience but to show them another reality : dreamlike, abstract, intimate. Digital manipulation tool is like a paintbrush for a painter.”

You isolate the architectural structures, using a sharp, surrealistic, high-color contrast appearances. The images highlight a range of views from wide scenes to architectural details. Geometries, patterns, lines, curves, reflections, and shadows are emphasized in a visionary-abstract presentation without regard to conventional perspectives. The objective of the work is to show the beautiful, unique and sometimes vibrant architectural designs of various skyscrapers, lights, and landscapes that city dwellers walk by and ignore every single day.

In this series you push the boundaries of what photography can be by exploring the nature of color in photographic design, where pure line and form can be manipulated to create compositions that lead the eye throughout the frame! Your photos become the canvases upon which light repaints these geometric forms in a variety of interesting compositions. There is no doubt that your work is graphic but instead of paint on canvas, you capture textures, angles, vibrant colors, tonal reversals, and linear shapes in liquid light. The photos become more than architectural presentations and more like intimate portrait designs of these structures.

What I see in the images is abstract geometric shapes and unexpected vantage points and perspectives. Like looking across complex relationships of visually colliding shapes and patterns, you send the viewer's eye deep into abstract spaces. I think you accomplish your goal by composing and juxtaposing sharp lines and the geometric gridwork, sometimes with dark backgrounds (photos 9, 10, 11, and 12). Forms are layered on top on one another in a way that compresses space and removes all context and sense of scale. The images become an imaginary realm of new kaleidoscopic structures.

These imaginary worlds remove the viewer from their commonly understood vantage points and you take them into more surreal worlds. By compositionally combining, layering, and overlapping forms you create compositions that promote feelings of uncertainty and the practice of finding order within chaos. By removing the larger context of the subjects, the images become very abstract. You put the viewer in a position to speculate what (or where) it is they are seeing. Because of this, the images evoke ideas around vantage point, perception, and imagination.

Somehow the photos communicate ideas about reality and the way it can blend with a dream-like reality. In this way there is a sense of change, curiosity, and a fluid movement into alternate realities. I think your ideas and your observations are fascinating. Your work shows us details of our environment we would otherwise miss in our daily lives. They are visual gems, hidden in plain sight – that only you have the privilege to discover. From another perspective, the images can be seen simply on their own as beautiful compositions, both individually and as a series.

The structures in your images appear to be graphic elements in the composition, prompting the viewer to ask questions about the locations. The photos are interesting because they blur the line between photography, graphic design, and compositional, poetic design. These visual abstractions and high contrast are clearly important characters in your stories. I think you are also asking that the viewer be sensitive enough to look deeply at your images, to see the details you have included in the frame.

There are strong visual threads that clearly run through your portfolio and the first one is “color”. Your photography seeks to capture the magic that magical colors can communicate. I think the way you use vibrancy speaks about the basic elements of highlights and darkness’s structure as it rises out of chaos. You use a custom color palette as a transformational, alchemical tool to transmute what you see into what you would like others to see. Other threads are organic lines, abstract rectangular shapes, grids and patterns.

Another major thread is abstraction. These photos are deeply mysterious because they are so abstract. Because the subjects in these photos are not immediately identifiable, you capture images that go straight to the viewer’s imagination. For example, every single photo is dramatic, rich with possibility and evoke feelings of curiosity. Your juxtaposition of formal elements makes the photos visually poetic. You ask the viewer to reason why certain structures have been composed to form visual relationships with other structures – much in the same way we might see in a dream.

I think the images are very seductive in their contrast and tonality. There is so much visual texture, contrast, and drama in the photos that they seem to me like metaphors for change, transformation, and growth. They also speak about the ever-changing process of life and how nothing is permanent and remains perfectly ordered – chaos eventually enters.

I can imagine these photos printed very large, to inspire feelings of awe by creating a sense of scale for the viewer. Large-scale presentation could prompt the viewer to feel small when confronted by the ideas of standing in front of these colorful and emotionally powerful megaliths. Viewers would feel confronted with the feeling of unexpected perspectives that give rise to emotions.

A second observation/suggestion also has to do with presentation. I suggest that the photos would be compelling in a book. I think your ideas, combined with the photos will make an interesting presentation. Also with a book, the viewer can hold the images, making the interaction more personal. The shape of the book would also reflect the geometry of the photos!

Your images are very dynamic. Your images prove that exploring and discovering the wonders in mundane urban worlds can yield very exciting results and who knows where it will lead. Also, don’t feel like you need to be married to the photography world. My advice is that you enter juried art exhibitions and/or show your work within art communities. I think that your images would do well in an “art” environment. Your photos would be well received in the art world. I suggest you keep an eye on www.callforentry.org for themed calls for artists.

You ask, “My concern is the level of my work. Each image tells a story with its own experience and emotions. I expose them as I feel them. But is this coherent with what the galleries expect. In fact, my concern is this, am I up to the expectations of the galleries likely to exhibit my work ? Does my work deserve it?” Yes, I believe your work is ready for exhibition and I hope was able to support that opinion in this review. The expectation of any gallery is that the work be marketable and sellable. I think you have a good chance of selling work through a gallery, especially if the gallery is in the city you photograph.

As for your bio, a bio is a very important, specific kind of document. It is always written in the third person, as though someone else wrote the information about you. And, the person that wrote it thinks you and your work are amazing! Imagine that an art critic wrote your bio, one that really loves your work! It's important because your viewers/followers want to learn more about you. It's your job to provide them with the information they need so that connection can grow. Write a half a page (around 250 words) and show the world how your learning experiences caused you to evolve and how it brought you to where you are now with this body of work.

For example, your bio should begin, "Caroline Gervais-Gasch has found success with her photography for over X years. During that time, she has seen her creative work as the thread that runs through her life.....etcetera.

Your images and your project are very thought provoking, creative and beautiful. They are full of stories waiting to be told! I would strongly encourage you to keep pursuing your ideas and perceptions about geometric/architectural abstraction. But, look at lots of portfolios that will serve as inspiration to make more photos. You may even be inspired by abstract painters like Wassily Kandinsky, Mark Rothko, or the old master of architectural photography, Berenice Abbott. Also take a look at the work of photographers Man Ray and Barbara Kasten. I very much enjoyed looking at your photos and I appreciate the way your images are masterfully considered and carefully designed. I hope I sufficiently addressed your questions in the review and I hope the suggestions are helpful. I look forward to seeing what you will do next!

Artist Bio

"I discovered photography at the age of 14. It has been the thread of my life. I still remember the feeling at the moment that something special had just been accomplished. I knew that, one day, it would be my professional activity. I started travelling at a very young age in various places. I discovered countries, cultures and cities. I was very quickly hooked and fascinated by urban environment that led me to observed and compared living architecture specific to each place. Then I focused my feelings on photographing vernacular architecture. I was looking for motifs that capture the spirit of big cities. My images show architectural decorations as reflected in my own eyes. I could be considered as a photographer at the service of architecture, as her interpreter and relay. Furthermore, my work consists in capturing the color of the mineral surface to reveal all its aesthetics and beauty.

Project Statement

"I am a French artist-photographer.

My visual approach has always been to use a camera to best express what I am feeling inside. It is all heart energy. Buildings, urban architecture have a life of their own. As an artist, I just want to share my feeling to merge outside and inside worlds. I would like viewers to feel it too.

I try, through honest and reliable retouching work, to ensure than my thrill takes shape without distorting the concrete vision of the scene shooted. The idea is just to share an interpretation of how the city in front of me seems to me. The rhythm and vibration of it, the energy of the place. I don't want to lose my audience but to show them another reality : dreamlike, abstract, intimate. Digital manipulation tool is like a paintbrush for a painter

