

Christian paul-kunsch critical thinking samples

[Design](#), [Photography](#)



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The artist

Christian Paul Kunsch was born in Hagen in the North German state of Westphalia. He is primarily a husband and father but is also a photographer and Taoist for good measure, also describing himself as ‘European’ on his website. His work which is chiefly in black and white is basically inspired by the work of Bernard Plossu, Françoise Nunez, Henri Cartier Bresson and Lucien Herve. However he claims other influences such as the music of Radiohead, Thom Yorke and Max Richter. Another source of inspiration is Wim Wenders, the film director whose movie, ‘Wings of Desire’ is an important part of the artist’s makeup while the books and novels of Paul Auster are also important for Kunsch. He is currently based in Andalya in the

Andalusia region of Spain although his Berlin roots remain particularly important to him.

Why Kunsch?

I chose this particular photographer since I really love his work. In ways it reminds me of Geary Winograd, Henri Cartier Bresson and Leo Rubinfien. The mobility and access of cellphone cameras has transformed street photography which is definitely not special as it once was. With each day of our lives becoming a daily grind of photographic images, street photography cannot really have its own style. However Kunsch still does street photography in a traditional and old fashioned manner and it is still interesting and intriguing to observe a fine art photographer who can still be called a street photographer. That is what this artist is all about.

Today we go to a movie and not an art gallery to experience a common act although a gallery is an elitist experience. Photography can be described as documentation but is also a personal reflection and view of the photographer and his perception through his eyes. People tend to be interested in modern art which focuses on the minimalistic or grand idea and concept although they occasionally forget what the medium is supposed to actually be doing. This art can be found in the photography of Paul Kunsch.

Interviewing Paul Kunsch was an intriguing and highly emotive experience. I began by asking him about his early life.

“ I grew up in a working class district on the state of North Rhine Westphalia in Western Germany. My immediate environment was characterized by hard work, struggle for survival and soccer. Education and culture were outside of my field of perception. My career aspiration as a child was to become a

soccer star or to be Spiderman. Spiderman, aka Peter Parker made his money as a photo reporter and he was very clever and educated. This was for me a completely unknown, unattainable, but attractive world. In my childhood these comics were my only source of information and I'm sure because they filled up my entire subconscious mind they were the trigger for the 2 big changes in my life in 1996 and 2004”.

What were these changes?

“ With an average high-school diploma in 1985, I started (at the insistence of my parents) a vocational training as a hairdresser. I hated this job. After three endless years, I was called up for military and served for 4 years in a medical battalion. I got married and became a father of a daughter. After my military service, I had to take over the company of my family, fashion shops and kiosks. In all these professions I constantly felt as if I was the visitor on an alien planet. I was unfulfilled, depressed, overweight, sad, uninspired. In short, I felt that this was not my life In the above-mentioned year 1996, I reached my lowest point and I begged the universe (god) for help. And it (he) answered I found a book by the American author Robert Anton Wilson: Prometheus Rising. I had never read a book in my life up to this point and the book caught my attention not because of its content, but because of its cover. A man who frees himself from his chains and rising into the sky. I started reading this book, but I did not understand a single word . So I began to clarify all terms and bought me the books mentioned in this book. A journey began and my self-study which lasted 8 years. At the end, there were about 800 books that were on my shelf and I had read them all: psychology, physics, medicine, anthropology, philosophy, occultism, religion.

In the last three years (between 2001 and 2004), I had only dedicated myself to my studies, because in 2001 I sold the company, and I moved together with my wife and daughter to another city in North Germany and lived on my savings. It was a great time: I felt free, I felt clear, I lost 25 kilogram of weight, i felt inspired”

My next question was how did you get into photography?

“ I discovered my love for photography in August of the year 2004 (by accident) while I was watching a television documentary about the life and the work of the swiss photographer René Burri. I wanted to go out this afternoon with my daughter for swimming, but the weather turned and it started to rain and a thunderstorm started. We decided to watch TV and I turned on the German documentary channel Phoenix. A slide show set to music flickered across the screen and they showed black and white photos from the '50s and '60s, as I supposed. Until this moment I was never interested in photography, but watching this slideshow changed my life in a fraction of a second: I had the feeling of losing the ground under my feet, I felt a deep, ancient remembrance, I had the feeling for the first time in my life to be awake, I felt I found my " missing link" The next day I bought my first camera, an Olympus Camedia 8080 and started shooting on the streets of my hometown. One month later I sold my car, furniture and moved to Berlin. Why Berlin? Well, Berlin was the only place where I had travelled many times in my childhood. All my relatives lived in the east of the city, the German Democratic Republic and I loved this place. As a child, I also prefer to explore my surroundings, I always loved it to discover new things and to tell the others about it and East Berlin was a wonderful place for a curious

little boy like me. At the age of 14 I went on a school trip to West Berlin and I fell in love with this place too. The youth hostel was located about 100 meters away from that apartment in which I moved in October 2004 (which I found out much later)".

Analysis of photos

CHRISTIAN PAUL KUSCH 2013 ©

POTSDAMER PLATZ

BERLIN MITTE

This photo is typical of Kusch's work where he depicts the figure of a man walking up from the exit of the train station at Potsdamer Platz in the heart of Berlin. The way the clouds are situated also makes for a suggestive experience as amply described by Kusch himself. He has described photography as being in a channel, a TV channel at that where he is the message. Here the vastness of the scene demonstrates Kusch's experience at creating anonymity yet at the same time a personal and intimate touch. Kusch also quotes Ernst Haas on street photography where the latter says that;

" There is only you and your camera. The limitations in your photography are in yourself, for what we see is only what we are".

Kusch's use of black and white photography is based on his growing up in the Ruhr region of North Rhine Westphalia which was formerly the largest industrial site in Europe. This photograph is perhaps representative of the exhilaration one feels when escaping from the clogged pollution of these areas and finding oneself in the open once again. However it is not just the industrial feel which inspires Kusch but also the existentialist literature,

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Taoism and electronic music which adds the colour to his works. The photograph is shot with an intriguing angle that focuses mainly on the vast open space with man also as an afterthought. It is also taken from underneath the ground implying that the only way is up.

The second image portrayed here also signifies Kusch's work with the human figure and the detail that goes with it. Here this young man seems to be arriving for a concert and he holds two heavy bags in his hands while looking forward with a seemingly determined gaze. This seems to imply that he is shortly to begin placing his equipment on the site and commencing work. In a sense, Kusch seems to cloak the man in anonymity as we cannot see his face - this is one of his most popular characteristics, taking a photograph from behind the subject.

It would be good to quote Kusch himself here at this point:

“ I think the role of photography in the world has not changed since its invention: Photography shows us, regardless of the era and the genre the world. And the world is changing every second and this fact will never change too, so there's a lot to do”.

This photograph seems to be doing just that.

This third image is also set in a train station but this time it is in complete inversion to the first one. This time Kusch is photographing the persons going down into the bowels of the earth although he stands in the same position as before. The stairs and escalators almost seem to be enveloping the figures and the clouds are now moving away as the urban conglomeration swallows up everything. It is indeed a powerful photograph

showing the anonymity and soullessness of these stations which although important to turn the wheels of society has nothing much to offer otherwise. Kusch finds humanity in this place also.

Theories of photography

Foster, Kraus and Benjamin (2011) speak at length about the application of certain theories which are also up to a point used by Kusch. Their opinion on black and white photography is important since it demonstrates that a lack of colour adds intensity to the light and shade of the subject matter.

Kunsch states that he is comfortable both with colour as well as black and white with regard to photography although most of his work seems to be in black and white. He is also of the opinion that digital photography will eventually replace analogue photography and if this is a good thing or not is obviously open and subject to debate. It is intriguing to note that Kunsch has never worked with camera film so no real comparisons can be made with this type of photography in his case.

While Barthes and Sonntag are chiefly concerned with the death of the subject in their seminal photographic essays, other writers on photography such as Ashley le Grange and Liz Wells have also focused on the importance and immediacy of the subject in question. Although Kunsch has not really entered the realm of photographing the dying, this would certainly be an area in which I feel he would excel.

The art of photographing the dying has certainly been perfected by artists such as Luc Delahaye and Sally Mann who have taken this photography image to another level. What is definite is that photography and its ability to freeze a moment in time will be forever debated.

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