"What we can see out in the sunlight is always less interesting than what we can perceive taking place behind a pane of window-glass. In that pit, in that blackness or brightness, life is being lived, life is suffering, life is dreaming...." - Baudelaire, Windows

Out My Window, Social Networking Face to Face

Ten years ago, when I traded L.A. sprawl for Manhattan Island, I braced myself for feelings of isolation in a congested city. Awakened by my hungry baby, I would spend nights staring out my window. I knew few people but even in the middle of the night, I didn't feel lonely. At two in the morning the club crowd revelled below; in the predawn the flower shops would open to begin the day with bouquets of color. At times, in those most intimate of moments with my daughter, I caught people returning my gaze. What were they looking at, or looking for? What was I looking for?

The title of this photographic project, "*Out My Window*", refers to what neighbors see through their neighbors' windows in the cities of the world. The windows are fragile borders between the familiar and the unknown, between the rushing noises of the city and the timeless quiet of private lives. Set within the context of rising city populations and a global construction boom, the photographs present a portrait of how strangers live amongst strangers and the challenges of creating communities, relationships, and areas of privacy. The urban experience became the focus of my work, a way to share my realization that even alone, we need never be lonely. The process of making the photographs connects neighbor to neighbor, creating community against the loneliness and overpowering scale of the city. With the evolution of imaging and communications technology, the project has a renewed energy as I expand from my New York home to the cities of the world.

A PROJECT RENEWED

For more than a decade, I have been producing a body of work, including solo shows and two monographs, with its origins in those late night feeding sessions. In extending the theme, I have taken on other cities, most fully Paris. I had only the vaguest notion about what I was after in "going global." By now, I have a clear sense of the questions this new work explores.

The photographs are from one residence into the window of another with the consent of both parties using a normal focal length lens. Both sides of the view, meet and talk through the making of the photograph. Though the photographs initially seem voyeuristic in approach, above all this project is about my desire to connect with my subjects and their desire to connect with their neighbors.

The window is both a boundary and a gateway, connecting viewer and viewed. Significantly, I work not from the street or the air but from the window across the way: when you look at my pictures, you stand in the neighbor's shoes. Connecting those neighbors, strengthening that local community lies at the heart of all of my work. Deeply seated in the artistic layers, beneath the play of light and form, lies human connectivity.

Digital technology and the internet have taken my work to a new level. Until a few years ago, I produced the work on 4x5 film with a view camera. In 2012, I was fortunate enough to begin to use an incredibly high resolution medium format digital camera. This camera's accompanying software, Capture One, allows remote operation through a wireless connection.   Even if I can not go somewhere, my camera can. Now I ship my camera to people all over the world, have them set it up out their window and I operate it from New York City. Even if the camera is far away from me - across an ocean - I can operate it from my laptop.

This technical shift created a perceptual shift. This collaboration with people far away has greatly multiplied the number and diversity of neighbors I can meet. Meeting them through the familiar frame of my laptop, in the comfort of my home, makes them seem like close by neighbors. I have been able to shoot from one window to another with the collaboration of residents in Bangkok, Berlin, Los Angeles and Amsterdam. This process adds an intriguing and almost futuristic twist to the images as it produces another layer, another window, through which I view my subjects.

Since human connectivity lies at the heart of the project, I have had to consider how meetings made through email and relationships developed via Skype differ from the old-fashioned kind.

My inspiration, began with New York, and I have already drawn on my connections to photograph in Amsterdam, Bangkok, Berlin, Los Angeles, and Paris.

When I first left New York for Paris, I was unsure where the pictures would lead. Looking at the finished work, I see many of my assumptions were wrong but the connections and contrasts between New York and Paris were even more interesting that I thought. I can only begin to imagine how looking through windows will go over in Tokyo. I hope also to photograph in Mumbai, where the collision of tradition, colonialism, and globalism creates sharp contrasts from one window to the next. Closer to home, I want to explore Buenos Aires and Mexico City, expanding my experience of the New World.

It may be that the expanded series shows how special each city is, how its people and its architecture interact uniquely. A more likely outcome, I suspect, is that the pictures will show not the differences that separate us but the lives we share.