

Interview with Philipp Schaerer

by Tami Mnoian for The New York Photo Festival 2009 , May 2009

Tami Mnoian :

„Describe your photographic approach.“

Phillip Schaerer:

„First of all, I don't know if I am allowed to say that I am a photographer. Although my work appears photographic or lens-based, my works are not photographs. My images are designed and constructed from scratch by means of image synthesis and digital image editing. I am interested in the creation of images that are based on a photographic language, but which can be abstract, model-like, and exaggerated, and thus try to reformulate the question of the differentiation between reality and image.

I think my work likes to explore the question of how conceptual images can be developed with means of rendering, photography and digital image editing. These images should not only try to simulate real scenery, but should also be able to maintain their conceptual and abstract nature despite of their photographic effect, therefore questioning the reality of images resembling a photograph.

Today, it's a fact that digital image processing allows the design of images that can hardly be distinguished visually from a photograph and one can nevertheless assume that the increasingly powerful hardware and software components will lead to the production of completely photorealistic images in the future—no matter how complex they will be. Is this good? I don't know, but it's interesting to ask how do we as professional image creators or photographers react to this development and finding new image strategies or languages which are able to re-describing the relation between appearance and reality, truth and arrangement.“

Tami Mnoian:

„What do you like to photograph? Do you find yourself returning to the same subjects?“

Phillip Schaerer:

„I'm particularly interested in textures, patterns and shapes—natural or architectural components like meadows, rocks or windows, doors—that serve later as a basis for my composite photographs. So I'm more interested in image components rather than getting that particular shot.“

Tami Mnoian:

„Is there any one thing that always catches your eye?“

Phillip Schaerer:

„Yes, plain surfaces and forms that have a strong sculptural presence.“

Tami Mnoian:

„What do you hope to achieve with your images?“

Phillip Schaerer:

„My work is supposed to show one possible aesthetic of digital image techniques. I try to develop a formal and schematic-representation language of reality and like to question the border between the medium “photograph,” as a documentary piece of evidence depicting reality, and “painting” in general. And of course, last but not least, through my images, I hope to inspire the viewer, to make him happy and to make him think something “new.“