

Blind Sight

A photographic installation by Shane Bunnag

On good days, and at a very specific time, only for two weeks in the autumn, the sun cuts down golden through the streets. A moment of grace, like the cherry blossom season in Japan.

Shane Bunnag

At a certain time of the day during a brief period of the year, the sun hits Paris at a precise angle, flooding its inhabitants with an intense direct light that transforms the city into a temporary diorama of burnt skies and shadowed streets. Intrigued by this blinding light, artist Shane Bunnag went out with his camera in an attempt to capture the fleeting phenomenon.

The resulting images, shot during such expeditions into the piercing sunrays and streets shrouded by shadow, portray a transformed city—familiar cityscapes are reduced to monochromatic murals of spot-lit skies and an almost apocalyptic darkness, as if the entire city is suspended in an eclipse.

The photographs, which are shot deliberately “against the light”, transform mundane reality into shadow. City streets fade into shade and its inhabitants are reduced to mere contours— floating silhouettes in a sea of burning light.

Perception is suddenly altered. This act of seeing into light perverts our vision, the light blinds us and what we see is reduced to vague flashes of urban geography. As if just for a brief interval, perception and distortion collide in an eclipse of reality.

This is a world of uncertainty, of doubt, of subjective truths and crumbling assumptions.

Each printed canvas not only captures this haunting transformation but also references the larger shifts we have seen in recent history.

Printed on loose canvas and hung on the gallery’s narrow wall spaces straddled by open doorways, the photographs’ dimension and positioning intentionally mirror those of the doorways. The canvases become tromp-l’oeil portals, inviting the viewer to enter into the projected scenes of blinding light and spectral shadows.

The viewer is posited in an in-between space. Just as the portrayed cityscapes are engulfed in a destabilizing shroud of darkness, the viewer here is also momentarily suspended in an ambiguous realm between the gallery space and the projected scenes of the canvases. Here, as in the depicted scenes, nothing is certain. Reality has shifted in an unsettling moment of flux—an instant of ephemeral blindness where life as we knew has come to a pause.

That these canvases are hung—veil-like between the doors, alludes to the apocalyptic connotations of the photographs. The eerily dim city, the ghostly silhouettes and the burning sun all imply that the world we had known has come to an end, or at least profoundly transformed.

The word “apocalypse” may also be translated as “to unveil” or to uncover a hidden truth and these photographs challenge the viewer to reexamine our preconceptions and face the ambiguities of a suddenly altered reality.

As in any eclipse, this period of darkness is ephemeral. This transient rupture, this temporal “crack” in reality—forces us to confront our inherent illusions and face the world’s disrupting changes, however blinding.

It is both a moment of darkness and light, of blindness and reflection, of uncertainty and poetry, of revelation and grace.

Pring Bunnag
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