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An Urban Investigation

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AN URBAN INVESTIGATION

What is the series of pictures about?
Is there a theme or a structure unifying
the work?

This series is an investigation of a new urban area in the port of Aarhus, Denmark. A former container terminal has been moved to a new site some years ago and the cleared area is slowly being built up. I have followed this process for a few years, starting in 2010 when no buildings were yet constructed.

I am an architect and this background probably plays a role in my interest in the area. Yet at the same time I try to disregard my professional knowledge of architecture and urban planning when I photograph there. The photographs do not aim for the wide-angle glorification of buildings that often characterizes architectural photography. Neither are they critical examinations of urbanization processes and their consequences. The photographs are rather driven by a fascination of the ever-changing character of the site: The building structures in their various unfinished states, piles of gravel constantly being moved around, the gradually disappearing residues of the previous activities, colorful building materials momentarily exposed during the construction processes and traces of various temporary

activities taking place as a consequence of the in-between state of the area.

The work is documentary in the sense that it portrays the characteristics of a specific site during a particular period. And does so without altering the situations that are photographed.

However it is not the intention to create a coherent narrative and even less to capture the 'essence' of the site. Chronology does play a role as the building processes creates continuously new situations to be photographed, but it is an underlying theme rather than a structuring device that orders the series. I strive to give each photograph a sense of autonomy and create a big diversity among the images of the series. I try to emphasize this aspect by taking photos during all seasons, in all kinds of weather from sun to snow storm and during day and night.

The series is eclectic in the sense that it is the location that ties it together but no scene or no detail is too small or too big to be included. Almost none of the photographs include human figures, but they all contain traces of human activities. The photographs document post-events rather than events. Something has already taken place before

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the photograph and the viewer is left with the more or less meaningful traces of this event. On the one hand the lack of an event to be portrayed opens the photographs towards an exploration of colors, textures and configurations of elements. On the other the traces give the photographs something inexplicable, perhaps occasionally even absurd, as the viewer tries to make sense of the scene.

What influences your work?

Probably a lot of things but to narrow it down I think three books in different ways has been an inspiration to the work. Joachim Brohm's 'Areal' shares a similar theme to my series. Brohm photographed the urbanization of an industrial district of a German town over a decade, and explored the visual and textural complexity of the changes. This richness is an inspiration to me even though my photographs are more formal than Brohm's. Gerry Johansson's 'Pontiac' documents the decaying North American town Pontiac. What I really appreciate about this work is Johansson's ability to frame and compose the desolate urban situations in strong formally precise compositions without aestheticizing and abstracting the content. Robin Maddock's 'God forgotten face' is a por-

trait of the English town Plymouth. I enjoy the eclectic and idiosyncratic photographs with a strong sense of the absurd, and how the hugely different photographs comes together as a complex whole.

Where can people find out more about your work?

I do not have a website (yet) but I am present on flickr: www.flickr.com/photos/clus_peder/

I recently published a small book. It is part of a series of artistic projects published by the Aarhus School of Architecture, The Jutland Art Academy, and the independent publisher Antipyrene. More info about it here: <http://bit.ly/1rC4utu> (in Danish).

What are your plans for future projects?

The project of Aarhus will probably go on for a while, as the area is still developing. It is getting increasingly difficult to find new motives but I believe the increasing amount of people living there will create new situations and opportunities. I am working on other projects which are still in their very early stages and I have started taking on small commissions, mostly relating to architectural photography.











