

Riccardo De Cal Photography: Venice

Description

Yesterday, we reviewed JoAnn Locktov's newest book, Dream of Venice: Architecture. Today we're presenting an interview, conducted this week via email, with the Italian photographer for the book, Riccardo De Cal, along with a slideshow of his work:

How long have you been a photographer?

I've been taking photos since I was in my 17th year, with an old Rolleiflex of the '50s I bought, lying to my parents: instead of going to a school-trip to Rome I buried myself in a local super-cheap hotel for a week and with the money I bought that wonderful Rollei. Then the next year with the same system (a skipped school-trip to Paris...) I bought my Durst Enlarger and all the equipment to develop in my bathroom.

Where has your work appeared?

I'm mostly a film-maker. Photography has been for me only the first step, through architecture studies in Venice, to approach finally to film-making in 2003. My films have been screened to several International Film Festivals, museums around the world (Maxxi in Rome, Foundation Pinault in Venice, Grand Hornu in Belgium, Soane Museum in London and many more), universities like Architecture Academy in Switzerland, IUAV Architecture University in Venice, Politecnico in Milan, etc. Also my films have been shown to Venice Art Biennale and Architecture Biennale on Venice Pavilion.

Anyway I never gave up with photography being the cinema foundation, so this book about Venice was like a return to the origins, and also a relaxing experience compared to cinema, enjoying the lightness and freeness of a simple camera and lens, without all the involved work, people and equipment required to make a documentary film.

How did you prepare for and approach this book project?

I was pretty scared at first. Photographing Venice is maybe the most difficult task a photographer can face: finding something new or different to say in the most photographed city in the world, it is not easy.

Fortunately there were a theme (architecture), and several beautiful texts of important architects, designers, critics, historians: I had to interpret each text shooting a photo illustrate it.

Also I had trying to forget living just a few miles from Venice, having studied there for years and thinking to know the city fairly well. Wintertime, the period I choose to take all the photos, helped, along with the yearned emptiness of tourists.

The intent of your photos in the book?

I visualized a wintry and empty Venice, suspended in time, like an eternal city. I tried to be not so strictly connected to the texts I had to illustrate, but instead being inspired by them. My wish was also not taking strictly correct architectural photos, that in my opinion may be a quite "cold" point of view. So I asked for some freedom from the editor, who happily gave me encouragement going in that direction. I also wanted very few human figures present in my photos: they are mostly shadows. I love

Venice when it is empty during early morning, or when fog rises from the canals and people disappear.

Their inspiration?

The inspiration mainly came from the texts to illustrate, and naturally came from the interior image of the city I have built into my mind. Also I much appreciated photography works on Venice made by Gianni Berengo Gardin, Fulvio Roiter and other great masters of the '50s and '60s, that contributed to form my own vision when I was young, and also their work has been fundamental for me to begin experimenting with photography.

The challenges involved?

The most arduous challenge was trying to avoid postcard-photos. In Venice it is apparently easy to take nice photos. But it is only an illusion, coming from its intrinsic beauty. Instead, as I said, it is one of the most difficult places to photograph. Speaking of architecture photography, also, it is useful reminding that there are no straight lines in Venice: everything is slanted in three axes! Not nice, when you try to take a correct and balanced photo.

How long did the project take?

The photos were taken from October to December, so three months, then another month for post-production. Obviously I was not in Venice each day, as I was looking also for acqua alta, fog, and other specific conditions not very frequently happening.

The type of camera you used?

I used a simple, common Reflex camera, a Canon 5d Mark III. With that it is so apparently easy to take photos! I missed my old film cameras, with all the defects that I love, but in this particular project it was not a viable choice.

To order a copy of *Dream of Venice: Architecture*, go [here](#).

[slideshow id=1618]

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