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# More Real Than Real: Church Architecture In The Digital Art Of Markus Brunetti

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I recently came across reviews of an interesting summer art show out in Hong Kong, for those of my readers who find themselves there over the next few days. Through the end of this week, the Axel Vervoordt Gallery is showing “[FACADES](#)”, an exhibition of the work of German photographer and digital artist Markus Brunetti. At first glance, you’d be forgiven for thinking that this is simply a photography show, featuring images of various famous churches – but looks can be very deceiving.

For more than a decade, Brunetti and partner Betty Schöner have traveled around Europe taking high-resolution photographs of every element of carefully selected churches in a wide variety of architectural styles. The structures are chosen for their overall interest and level of detail, and range from Romanesque to Gothic to Baroque and beyond. But instead of just standing back far enough to try to take in the entire building, they photograph no more than a few square feet at more of every part of the building’s façade at a time. They then digitally stitch together these images, photoshopping out things like power lines or street lamps, digitally adjusting light levels and colors, and so on, in order to create a single, unified whole. The process can take months or even years to complete.

The end result is an image of an existing building which in a sense does not exist – or at least, does not exist in a way that we can perceive with the naked eye. It’s almost like looking at a very exact blueprint of a façade from an architect’s portfolio, except one with a far greater sense of color, decoration, and spatial depth than what even the most detailed line drawing could hope to achieve. And unlike a photograph, where light, the camera lens, and the human eye bring certain elements into focus and cause other elements to recede, every detail of these buildings is clearly delineated, in a way that was previously impossible for us to see before the advent of highly sophisticated imaging technology.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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As the Gallery explains, “[n]ever before have these buildings been rendered in such a way. The fine mosaics, intricate carving, filigree metal work and stained glass are there for us to see, along with the cracks, deformations and decay. These are not simply photographs of façades; they are reconstructions of them, attending to every last idiosyncrasy.”

For those of us who are mere observers and appreciators of art, we can appreciate the enormous amount of work, skill, and careful attention to detail that went into the creation of these images, which in a sense are more real than real. At the same time, I can imagine artists and historians pouring over these pictures with great pleasure, seeing things all at once which they could never hope to capture from even the best single photograph of one of these buildings, while architects and designers would surely love to be able to study these elements knowing that they are not hampered by this column detail being slightly out of focus or that bit of statuary being hidden by something else. In a way, Brunetti’s work reminds me of 2nd Period Roman wall painting, in which we are forced into experiencing a single perspective, even though we are given the illusion of everything existing in three dimensions at once.

The philosophy or message behind Brunetti’s images is one that I will leave to those who need to find esoteric meanings in things which, of themselves, are extremely interesting works of art. If you love architecture and appreciate technology, the technique used by Brunetti et al. is absolutely fascinating. I would love to see some of these images up close, for clearly these are pictures to get lost in.

FACADES is at the Axel Vervoordt Gallery in Hong Kong through August 26th.



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