

DARK TOURISM

DARK TOURISM / Ambroise Tezenas

Dark Tourism

Le tourisme « macabre » est une des nouvelles tendances de l'industrie touristique. Chaque année, le nombre de visiteurs augmente. Théâtres de catastrophes naturelles ou de guerres, scènes de crimes, quartiers dangereux ou sinistrés, la liste de ces lieux de désolation accessibles aux touristes ne cesse de s'étoffer. Leur point commun : la mort, le danger, les stigmates visibles et surtout une proximité dans le temps qui rend le drame tangible.

Mais face à une logique commerciale implacable, les sites ne sont pas tous égaux. Et pour attirer les visiteurs, certains Tours Operator font preuve d'une imagination parfois douteuse.

Selon Lonely Planet, le tourisme macabre devrait connaître dans les années à venir une très nette progression. La liste de ces nouveaux lieux touristiques ne cesse de s'allonger : les « killing fields » au Cambodge, le « Katrina Tour » à La Nouvelle Orléans ou encore le « visit Chernobyl Tour » en Ukraine. Cette offre d'un genre nouveau s'inscrit souvent dans la recherche de nouvelles niches marketing sous fond de voyeurisme d'une industrie en constante progression. Aujourd'hui il est devenu « acceptable » de visiter les sites attachés à la mort notamment en signe de respect pour les victimes. Une série d'événements dramatiques sont ainsi ancrés dans la conscience des gens à travers la culture populaire et les médias. Ils font désormais partie des expériences touristiques et culturelles.



Abandoned strip mall. New Orleans .USA. 2009 / C-print , aluminium / 64 x 80 cm

"Macabre" tourism has become one of the new tendencies of the tourism industry. Each year, there are a growing number of visitors who travel to the scenes of natural disasters or wars, of racial hatred and discrimination, of dangerous and stricken neighbourhoods. The list of places that offer tourist accessible desolation is incessantly getting longer; they have one point in common: death, danger, visible scars, and, in particular, a proximity in time that makes the drama tangible.

But faced with the unrelenting nature of commerce, these sites are not all equal. In order to attract the tourist, some Tour Operators often display dubious imagination. "Dark tourism" is an overview of the situation; it isn't extensive but shed light on a direction that the modern world has taken and that has never been photographed as a whole. There are some signs that cannot be mistaken. Among the latest "trendy" destinations offered by the well-known Lonely Planet, this year's new entries are Oman, Madagascar and...Chernobyl, under the title: « Worlds most infamous nuclear accident ». This bizarre tour proposes a close-up visit of the reactor and a stroll through Pripyat, the ghost town that was abandoned by its residents in the wake of the disaster. According to the Lonely Planet, macabre tourism is on the verge of a huge increase in popularity over the next few years. The list of new tourist destinations is getting longer by the day: the Cambodian "killing fields", the "Katrina Tour" in New-Orleans, or the "favela tours" in Brazil. This offer of a new kind comes as part of the search for new marketing niches on a background of voyeurism inherent to an industry in constant evolution. It has now become "acceptable" to visit sites associated with death, in sign notably of respect for the victims. A series of dramatic events is rooted in the collective consciousness through popular culture and the media. These events are now part of accepted cultural and tourist experiences.

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Exhibition Galerie melanieRio, France - march 29th to may 12th 2012

"I WAS HERE"

This project finds its origins in the Tsunami of the 26th of December 2004. I was on holiday in Sri Lanka and making my way towards the southern coast, when my car fatefully broke down, with the effect of slowing me down, and maybe saving my life. I then spent a week in Telwatta where the train from Galle to Columbo was swept away by the tidal wave, causing 2000 deaths. As a photographer, I "covered" this tragic event, smelt the smell of death and felt the pain of the survivors. In 2008, I read that the train was still lying on its side in the jungle, a destination for tourists to go to and have their picture taken, for others to remember.

One could feel inclined to rejoice over this growing interest for the tragedies that make up our contemporary history. However, it is interesting to delve into the importance given to one destination rather than another, and into the motivations of some of the visitors. For example, although it is true that the wars of the beginning of the 20th century continue to stir some interest, they no longer manage to achieve the same degree of fervour. Without the memory of the survivors to validate them, these long-gone events no longer represent our modernity and its consequences. They have lost their power to convey doubt and anxiety. Never before has the modern man hidden so well the idea of his own demise. He is now constantly trying to avoid this distress by indulging in hyperactivity, hyper-distraction, compulsive behaviours, the search for power... Paradoxically, while the modern man denies the reality of his own death, he enjoys the virtual confrontation to it. «We strive for danger by proxy», is the analysis offered by David Le Breton, professor in Sociology and author of *Passion du risque* (Métailié, 1991). «The location is a pretext, a scene where danger is felt, although it is unreal». In reality, the «spectators» are above all seeking for some form of reassurance. «There is a will to ward off the misery and precariousness of things by remaining in a favourable position» continues David Le Breton.



Prypiat, Ukraine. 2008

Furthermore, the destinations that didn't justify the interest of the movies or of the press do not give rise to the same emotions among the audience, despite the fact that they are of equal importance. The global communication technologies and political interpretation play a major role in the creation of the initial interest by «selecting» the destinations that are worthy of memory. A nation rarely celebrates the crimes that it carried out.

NB: All captions are copied from touristic brochures or websites with no re-writing.

Dark Tourism refers to visitation to sites associated with death, assassination, incarceration, mass killing and tragedy. This is not a new phenomena and such sites have attracted human interest for many years. From ancient Rome and gladiatorial combat, to attendance at public executions in London of the 1600s, death has held an appeal. These sites exert a dark fascination for visitors and their appeal shows no signs of abatement. Recently, this has been reinforced in New York, with the Ground Zero site; in Paris, with the Princess Diana death site; in Africa in a wide range of locations in Angola, South Africa, Sierra Leon, Rwanda and beyond. The identity and content varies greatly from concentration camps to sites of nuclear accident and evacuation, from crash location to museums of torture and death. For these sites, issues of management and conservation, interpretation and marketing create challenges in terms of; ethics, behaviour, site management and promotion. Such dark interest will continue to grow as a function of media interest and filmic and electronic reproduction. Awareness is now a function of the all pervasive visual media we now live with; the real time reportage and the massive expansion of visual records in electronic form. It is here that the work of Ambroise Tezenas has resonance. These haunting and stark images reflect this phenomena perfectly.

Professor J John Lennon PhD MPhil BSc (Hons) author of Dark Tourism; the attraction of death and disaster, Continuum.

Le "Dark Tourism" se réfère à la visite de lieux en lien à la mort, l'assassinat, l'incarcération, le génocide et la catastrophe. Ce phénomène n'est pas nouveau, de tels sites provoquent l'intérêt depuis toujours. Des combats de gladiateurs de la Rome antique, aux exécutions publiques dans le Londres du 17^e siècle, la mort fascine. Cette fascination morbide ne faiblit pas. Récemment, cet intérêt s'est confirmé avec le site de Ground Zero à New York, à Paris au pont de l'Alma où la Princesse Diana a trouvé la mort; et dans de nombreux pays d'Afrique tels que l'Angola, l'Afrique du Sud, le Sierra Léone ou encore le Rwanda. Le tourisme "macabre" se décline sous de multiples formes : des camps de concentration aux sites de catastrophes nucléaires, de lieux d'accident aux musées de torture. De tels sites soulèvent des question d'éthique d'un point de vue de leur gestion, de leur conservation, de leur communication et de leur interprétation historique. L'attrance pour le macabre grandit proportionnellement à l'intérêt croissant que lui portent les médias et les productions cinématographiques. L'envahissement actuel des médias implique de fait une sensibilisation à la mort, par le biais de reportages en temps réel, d'archives accessibles à tous sur le web. C'est ici que le travail d'Ambroise Tezenas prend tout son sens. Ses images sobres et obsédantes reflètent parfaitement ce phénomène.

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Xiaoyudong bridge – Sichuan, China . 2009 / C-Print, aluminium / 64 x 80 cm



Choeung Ek Memorial — Cambodia. 2010 / C-Print, aluminium / 64 x 80 cm



Karostas Cietums, Liepja, Lettonie. 2009 / C-Print, aluminium / 64 x 80 cm



Maroun Al-Ras, Liban. 2011 / C-Print, aluminium / 64 x 80 cm



Dealey Plaza, Dallas, USA. 2009 / C-Print, aluminium / 64 x 80 cm

AMBROISE TEZENAS

www.ambroisetezenas.com

EDUCATION

1994

Graduated from the Applied Arts School of Vevey, Switzerland.

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2012

«Dark Tourism», Galerie melanieRio, Nantes, France

2010

« Pékin, théâtre du peuple », Arkéa , Brest, France

2009

« Pékin, théâtre du peuple », Galerie Philippe Chaume, Paris, France
« Pékin, théâtre du peuple », Photoaumnales de Beauvais, France
« Night Visions », Young Gallery, Bruxelles, Belgique
« Beijing, theatre of the people », Galerie Shubert, Bangkok, Thaïlande
« Pékin, théâtre du peuple », Galerie Fnac, Nîmes, France
« Pékin, théâtre du peuple », Galerie Fnac, Lille, France

2008

« Le jour est brutal et bruyant », Le Méjan, Arles, France
« Beijing, theatre of the people », Kunsthal Museum, Rotterdam, Pays-Bas
« Pékin, théâtre du peuple », Galerie Fnac, Paris, France
« Pékin, théâtre du peuple », Galerie Fnac, Lyon, France
« Pékin, théâtre du peuple », Galerie Fnac, Toulon, France

2007

« Pékin, théâtre du peuple », Galerie Leica, Solms, Allemagne
« Pékin, théâtre du peuple », Rencontres Internationales de la Photographie d'Arles, France
« Beijing, theatre of the people », Paris-Beijing photo Gallery, Pékin, Chine
« Photographies ». Galerie Chambre avec vue, Paris, France

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2011

Itinéraire des photographes voyageurs, Bordeaux, France
Paris Photo avec la galerie MélanieRio

2010

Biennale de « Photographie et Architecture », La Cambre, Bruxelles, Belgique
Prix Photographique PHPA 2010, Théâtre de L'Odéon, Paris, France
« Destination Europe », Rencontres Internationales de la Photographie d'Arles, France
« Correspondances photographiques avec Frédéric Delangle », Musée des moulages, Lyon, France

2009

« Beijing, theatre of the people », Rangoon Photography Festival, Myanmar
Art Paris, galerie Philippe Chaume, France
« Beijing, theatre of the people », Phnom Penh Photo Festival Off, Cambodge

2008

Biennale de « Photographie et Architecture », Bruxelles, Belgique
Art Paris, galerie Philippe Chaume, France.
« Projet Europe Echelle 27 », Maison des Arts, Paris, France
Paris-Beijing photo Gallery, Pékin, Chine

2007

« Beijing, theatre of the people », Angkor Photography Festival, Cambodge

PUBLICATIONS

«Dark Tourism», Dewi Lewis, UK
publication prévue septembre 2012

2008

« Europe, Echelle 27 ». TransPhotographic Press, France.

2007

« Nuit Pékinoise ». Fondation Agglomérat, Suisse.

2006

« Pékin, théâtre du peuple ». 120 p. Actes Sud, France.
« Beijing : theatre of the People ». 120 p. Dewi Lewis Publishing, UK.
« Peking, teatro del pueblo ». 120 p. Lunwerg Editores, Espagne.
« Pechino, teatro del popolo ». 120p. Peliti Associati, Italie.
« De hutongs van Peking ». 120p. Mets & Schilt, Pays-Bas.
« Pékin, théâtre du peuple ». 120 p. Edition Braus, Allemagne.
« Beijing, theatre of the People ». 120p. Apeiron Photos, Grèce.

AWARDS

2012

Nominé pour le Prix Pictet 2012

2010

PDN Photo Annual, USA
Prix Virginie Clément, PHPA 2010, France

2009

Prix de l'Académie des Beaux Arts Finalist
Nikon Story Teller Award, PDN Photo Annual, USA
SPD Medal Finalist for « Beyond the Glitz », Newsweek, USA

2006

Leica European Publishers Award for Photography
Lauréat Mission Jeunes Artistes, France

EDITORIAL (SELECTION)

Articles

IMAGES (France), Photos Nouvelles (France) Exporama (France), E18HT (UK), PHOTO (France), Foto Magazine (Allemagne), Vogue (France), Le Point (France), Coté Est (France), Réponses Photo (France), Marianne (France), Photographer's Companion (Chine), Beijing Weekend (Chine), Foto-Video (Chine), iLook (Chine), Oriental Art-Finance (Chine), Lime (Corée), UPSTREET (UK).

CONTRIBUTIONS PRESSE

The New York Times Magazine (USA), The International Herald Tribune (USA), The Independent Magazine (UK)
Geo (France), The Telegraph Magazine (UK), Le Monde 2 (France), The Times (UK), Paris Match (France), Le Figaro Magazine (France), Libération (France), Business week (USA), L'Express (France), WAD (France), Emphasis Media (Hong Kong), (France), Les Inrocks (France), El Pais (Espagne), Newsweek (USA), TIME (USA).