

di/VISION  
NOTION  
series



photographs  
Lloyd Godman



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di/VISION

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# Architectural Sights of Contestation

A new clean white sheet of paper or canvas, the confrontation, contestation, a vacuum of infinite/virginal potential. Austere, the surface awaits the addition of the first tentative mark, the staining of the vestal surface, this stark shimmering veneer resonates the facility of a new beginning. Directions of choice. And it is from the rudimentary mark, from this initial manifestation, from this first digit that the painter continues to add, continues to contemplate, alter and repaint, continually building up the image layer by layer. The process is one of forever building up the image over time eventually into a finished/abandoned work. The ramification of the strategy inextricably links painting to this process of addition: what to add into the canvas from the emotional, aesthetic and intellectual stimuli within the artist. It is an inescapable element of the graphic arts. Commence from the void, the unoccupied, and add in the creative components.

But, by contrast, the process of photographing the found has been described as the medium of subtraction or selection, not addition as with painting or drawing. Roland Barthes in 'Camera Lucida' described the world as 'the vast disorder of objects' and paradoxically, in photography it is this chaos, this web of tangled objects, the arbitrary visual nature of the world that is the 'blank sheet' or raw material. Photography is a problematic medium, it is a divergence from the traditions of painting, the essential strategy is in total discord with the stroke by stroke application of paint; photography's strategy is one of subtraction, one of discrimination, what to leave out; what to select to fill the camera frame from the thousands of possibilities, the 'vast disorder of objects' that confronts the viewer.

The differentiation between painting and photography has historically presented an uncomfortable association, like a childish quarrel over a trivial toy; from the time photography was invented there has always been debate -painting protecting the high ground, photography challenging it. The fatigued old arguments about photography persist mostly because of miss perceptions. Miss perceptions about the act of making photographs and miss perceptions about the process of 'reading' photographs. Often the argument proposed that photography is somehow an inferior means of image-making, that there was mechanical deceit, a conspiracy to imitate 'real' art making, that it lacked a degree of skill, of craft, of well real art; some reasoned that it was an apparently less cumbersome or deliberated means of creating an image compared to the other graphic arts, a bastard child to be unacknowledged.

In a fraction of a second an image can be recorded on the film rather than the duration needed to build up a painting; photography appears to lack the time needed to "craft" the image, to instill aesthetics, intellect, emotion in the image.

It was argued photography cannot incorporate this expanded time element, there is an instant 'death', the subject is visually paralysed, immobilized in one circumstance, fixed on the page for eternity. The creative process it would seem is quite diametrically opposed, and the illogic proposed that because painting is 'Art' and the act of photography is dissimilar, perhaps photography can not be 'Art'. For how can beginning with the occupied and deleting be a creative act, when the purpose for centuries has been to occupy the vacant? Colonize the wilderness with marks, tones and colour. From this position photography occupies not art, but something else. To add weight to the hypotheses the 'Cyclops' would also rear its hideous head.

The analogy with the Greek legend and the one-eyed lens of the photograph-making instrument that seems divorced from the human vision, is an obvious one and was proposed from some commentators. But how many painters use a brush for each finger or for that matter one in each hand?

Regardless, the Cyclopes were a wild race of gigantic growth, similar in their nature to the earth-born Giants, and led a lawless life, possessing neither social manners nor fear of the gods. They were the Titans who forged thunderbolts for Zeus. The growth of photography has certainly been phenomenal, gigantic, and in its time, threatened existing notions about `Art', it has not obeyed the social manners or predetermined laws, it has forged its own visual thunderbolts.

So much for legends, we can read them as we wish.

Even today, there is the insinuation that taking a photograph is a simple act; it can be taken casually, and because it can, it very often is. The consequence of casually taken photographs spewing out in endless monotony is the countless colour processors spread like mushrooms through the cities and suburbs, the mini labs operated by pharmacies and dry cleaners; they reinforce the attitude that photography is an easy art or not art at all.

For many sceptical naive commentators this is their only explicit contact with the medium, it is their only direct experience, it is how they believe it works. Push the shutter, drop in the film and within an hour experience the finished prints in full colour. After all how many years ago did Eastman coin the phrase `you push the button we do the rest'. The song remains the same, but in some seats the chorus is louder.

However, despite this apparent 'truth', there is also another verity that exists more obscurely, a latent truth. The elements of aesthetics, intellect and emotion are no less real in photography than in painting. As in many visual arts, there are creative decisions to be made when making a photograph the results are not invariable, and these decisions are infinite.

While creative decisions in photography can be made in terms of optical, mechanical and chemical, perhaps the most significant is the position selected for the camera, the angle of view, aligning the 'one-eyed beast' to frame the subject.

With the movement of the lens and adjunct camera through space, the photographer is faced with the complexity of a continually changing image instantly formed in shape, tone, texture and perspective of the world as projected through the lens. This 'vast disorder of objects' can be controlled to designate emphasis to items that the photographer chooses to, diminish, exclude or alter. The decision, the act, the consequence is about subject matter, inclusion, deletion, emphasis, insignificance. There is a matter of contestation, of what the image contains and what is excluded.

The decision of the photographer then becomes one of deletion, deletion of the thousands of options within the tangled web of objects; just in a 50 metre radius. It is what to leave out that is of issue as much as what to leave within the boundary of the frame. This camera frame, the confining rectangular perimeter, itself has been the very focus of a whole area of photography, with photographers striving to compose the design of the image within the boundaries of the frame.



For them there is a significant challenge in discriminating and selecting from the 'vast disorder of objects', the barrage of stimuli, beyond the lens and designing a purposeful image within the frame of the camera. While many a novice can relate to the frustration of cutting a head off through inaccurate framing, for some photographers accurate framing is paramount.

Often denoting the importance of the aesthetic problem by the use of a black surrounding border (which is the edge of the film frame around the print), some photographers have endeavoured to position, eliminate and resolve the image within its confines, printing all within the blackborders to show the honesty of their intentions. In the extreme, influenced by the design strategies of painting and minimalist ideologies, the areas of formal concern have been seen as paramount over meaning and content. In these finished works, the world exists only within the context of the frame. It is what the photograph is about and what we are expected to look at, often with no sense of meaning other than the relationship of space, tone or colour.

The viewer is encouraged by devices of mat and frame to give little or no thought to the complexities of design or meaning of the shapes, textures and philosophy that may exist outside the four connecting lines that exact the space of the image. For most idioms of photography, the area within the frame becomes a convention, it contains the visual information of importance. It is the reason for the photograph, the source of dialogue.

Strong vertical or horizontal lines create a division, sky and land make their own natural separations, create the common, most dominant, but obvious divisions, it is an artifice exploited often. Billowing, ethereal masses of suspended vapour oppose dark serrated substantial ground. Lucid, vaulted, cloudlessness oppose burning intricacy of texture and tone. Atmospheric energy discharges when earthed, by visually juxtaposing the two elements. Many cultures through many ages symbolically reference each of these elements; many visual arts utilize this dividing line as a significant design component; many photographers divide the frame with horizon as a device of design.

The bold horizontal cut across the frame at various points has a diversity of effects, it is a presumptuous manifestation where two elements rush against each other. Through the centre, a third above or below, in parallel with the frame, diagonally, the line is an unavoidable key feature of many images. Position is crucial, as the dominant line, it speaks its own language, it is authoritative in many circumstances. The frame and the horizon are central to much landscape photography.

Juxtaposed against the single frame, two frames presents a duality that challenges the singular. The simulacrum advances in another manner. The photographs from the 'DI\VISION' series investigate this strategy, they may be about the frame, but which frame? We are given choices: both as the whole, or each as a part of the whole, or each separately as upper or lower. Capitalizing on our visual constructs, there is subversity in exploiting belief, belief that there is only one whole, there is only one such horizon where the relationship of sky and land/architecture is in normal balance. Survival depends upon acknowledgment of it.

The stability of the line allows us to function without vertigo. It instills a sense of balance, orientates us, holds us erect. Initially this is the case, the image insinuates a solitary line that breaks earth and sky, but the delayed intellect disputes this conventional rendition, questioning its validity, reasoning that the eyes are actually seeing two images, which although similar, are not the same. There are two horizons, the line continually reiterates, ricochets from the bottom image to the top and back. Sky appears below the line and land appears above it and yet it is nearly normal. This visual dispute continues unresolved as the intellect endeavors to create logic from an illogical horizon line, there is constant contestation, there is something discordant in the representation of the axis.

Whereas the image within the frame is about something, it could well have been about something else. While each frame acknowledges the other, each also contests the other, each indicates the denial of the other, like the possibility of twins at a single birth.

But the two images also desire to be read as one. Duality that implies the process of image selection within the camera view-finder presents another visual alternative not typically presented to the viewer. If one image is that selected, then the other is the discarded, part of the tangled web of life rejected.

Michael Kopp writes about the work in Photo Forum Review 1990:

“ Akatore river 1990,’ stacks the firmament above the fundament, the latter being a volcanic beach. Godman seems to say we can see the whole or its parts, and the whole is a sum of its parts in nature as well as in our mind’s eye. These pictures are more affecting than their somewhat deliberately careless scattergun approach and matching would seem to indicate. But do they readily read as statements about the land ----- or how we see it?”

Any two images with comparable visual references presented together suggest a visual narrative of both time and space.

From one image to another, there are reformations, clouds shift, light changes; people move, birds fly, trees and grass sway, there is disparity. However subtle, each composite of space and time is unique. Substantial changes in the line and curve of earth and sky, projected onto the film by a wide angle lens create distorting effects that are different from the upper image to the lower. Perspective changes, there is an erosion or expansion from one space to the next. The reality of a straight line alternates between convex and concave. Conceivably we each have slightly different distortions of vision through each eye and while the image formulated in the brain may be a composite of the two, the difference of each vision may be represented by the deviation in the two images, one above the other as opposed to the more traditional panoramic sequence with one side by side.

There are personal differences to, specific individualities. Your eyes are not mine. And even if we could observe a scene with the same optical vision, we certainly do not perceive the landscape in the same way as another.

There may also be allusion to the way time is divided. We divide it into regular divisions for convenience. The photograph itself alludes to the concept of time in that the film was exposed for an exact period of time. By implication of the two photographs we may assume there was a difference in time between the taking of the two images.

Visual divisions confer symbolic references, advance alternative implications, present numerous interpretations. Possibilities beyond literal representation, levels of explication.

There are means by which we divide and cut the land - create new sky-lines where the ancient line of earth and sky are irreparably changed, where new silhouettes have openings, cavities in their old fabric, where recent monuments, temporary erections, intersect the space above the earth. Divide a primitive space with vertical references, references of technology and sophistication. Structure the silhouette another way.

This cutting, shifting or removing large volumes of material references mining. As at Blackhead, where the activities of the quarry have reduced the massive, dense black basalt deposit.

Effectively, by the decapitation of the headland, the profile has been cut down until it is little more than a 'Black Neck' stretching tenuously out into the ocean rather than a sublime head arising from the submarine. While covered in quarry scree spilling down the rock buttress lie the fabulous column formations, despite an ancient Tapu and a Dept. of Conservation Covenant.

Another excavation cut is the construction of a dam (like the monument at Clyde), where the art of excavation gives new meaning to the words ridiculous and sublime. The compulsion to alter or tamper with the earth is irresistible and is nowhere more visually evident than along a sky line where the 'bites' conflict with the natural line of the land. In both cases a line altered through reduction. These escarpments create orifices in the natural line, openings to interpret as we will.

But when a building or obelisk is erected the line changes by another means. The result of this activity, the original line is blocked, dissected cut by dissimilar function. The horizontal is challenged by a vertical where there once was not.

As a city grows these verticals challenge and eventually dominate the horizon. The rising canyons of culture create distinctive lines. A structure disparate from the original line. We also divide the land for private possession and the denial of access. The division of land by ownership often manifests itself in the form of fences, thin tenuous strands that cut the 'visual' of the land while defining boundaries and prohibiting access. While photographing 'Akotore Creek II' I experienced this directly, my right of access was questioned and an interesting debate developed.

By right of acquisition it is easy to believe that one materially possesses an area of land, and yet there is the question of emotional and spiritual possession of an area, with the reasonable right to entry to all or just the select sensitive few. Divisions develop between those who have much interest in ownership but little interest in their personal identification and access with the area, and those who live in the area, emotionally possess but can not access. People identify with dominant natural or cultural land marks in their locality, and activity to change these prompts a reaction, and when the decision is made from someone who lives in another locality, another country, the reaction is even stronger.

A divide can be a ridge of land thrust upward separating the land on each side by its sheer height and bulk. New Zealand is a land of islands divided by oceans of water; these islands were born from the volcanic rise and fall of the terrain. In some of these works the land is clearly seen as one connected land mass in the lower image while above sits the second image suggesting the existence of several land masses; they become islands isolated visually in the frame yet still connected by implication of the lower image, like a cross-section revealing the submarine perspective the land reaches beneath the ocean but is only divided by the ocean.

New Zealand is divided into two main islands; physically water separates us. In regard to the volcanic nature of our land: the violent up-thrusting and sudden submersion below the ocean that occurred in the millennium before we inhabited these islands; the continual splitting and fracture of the land, the flex of an earth skin on the third stone from the sun. The tenuous pull, push twist; the very building and erosion of the planet itself; recycling of the elements with the potential to exact horrific damage on our state of being or the potential with the spit of fire and brimstone to build a mountain, to build an island, to build our land. Earth, air, water and fire, everything is recycled through plate tectonics, sucked below and squeezed or spat above.

Divided, recycled. The most basic elements recycle; the water we drink today may have been passed on yesterday by the creature we despised the most yesterday.

The magic of gold and the creation of precious objects from its structure has been a human obsession since pre-history with many cultures plundering the wealth and pleasures of another before to gain the raw material to reform their own precious objects from the spoils. We never know the history of the gilded objects that we possess today, recently dug from the earth or reconstituted from a past antiquity.

In reference to light and dark, divisions can also be made. The separation of light and dark is fundamental to the practicalities of photography and is directly related to the areas stimulated by light on the film contrasted by the areas devoid of its penetration. Tonal divisions fabricate the image, create representations of the visual world projected through the lens and recorded by the light sensitive emulsion. Where sharp, these representations delineate objects with the upmost distinction, and tonal specificity enhances the visual facimile.

Graphic contrasts of black and white, or delicate variations of gray, tone is fundamental to the photograph. But tone divides more than areas of the photograph, it is a means to devise other divisions, and as such elicit the many conditioned associations we fabricate from this contrast: divisions of spiritual elements, of physical, and those of the known and the concealed.

New Zealand is a black and white country in terms of landscape, and many artists have explored this connection in their work; but there are other aspects that divide us as a black and white society. For generations, our political system was black and white in that a election candidate either wins or loses, a political party either wins or loses and the party in power must nearly always be rebuffed by the opposition, with either giving no thought to a third point of view. Our much revered sports teams are celebrated as ‘all blacks’ and all ‘whites’, and our people are constitutionally recognised as black and white.

Society can be divided in many ways; by attitude and intellect, wealth, race and gender, however real or imagined they may be. As a society we can be a part or a whole, fused or divided. We act with understanding and tolerance or deliberately drive the wedges deeper by acting in a divisive manner as we experience a variance of opinion. One may be rich in tone and texture, with a secure base, the other starved or robbed, unstable but still in existence, though clearly distanced and divided from the other. Though separate, what keeps us together and stops us dividing and parting completely? Once divided can a part ever become a whole once more? There is the obvious argument of strength in unity and weakness in division. The pressure of a wedge that drives deep and divides causes cracks and splinter as we have in our society today.



Horizontal/vertical blade cuts, sometimes straight, other times jagged, serrated, separate the two images create a visual/intellectual division. The wedging apart of the land and sky by symbols of civilization reflect the nature/culture divide, allude to the concepts of Pan-Bi-Geology and the implications to us as a species.

Perchance these images are about the visual world as a whole, the part we see and acknowledge, the part we see but chose to suppress and ignore. Divisions of acknowledgment and refutation. But which of the two is the photograph taken by selection? Or conceivably one is photographed by the conscious mind suggesting the other is exposed by the unconscious. One is seen the other is felt, one is cerebral the other emotional; together the facilities fuse to produce an intellectual element not present in each. The enigma may be which one we designate as the conscious?

Simply they may just be landscape photographs taken in two nearly matching pieces as an alternative to one photograph that eventuates as a vibrating embrace of land, sky; inescapable of the mythical Papa Nuku, earth mother sky father legend.

Each one different but like people, with an echo of the other. As a line horizon is central, the reference to sky and land is definitive. It references our relationship with the elements.

He kura kainga e hokia; he kura tangata e kore e hokia.

(The treasure of the land will persist, human possessions will not.)

VISION

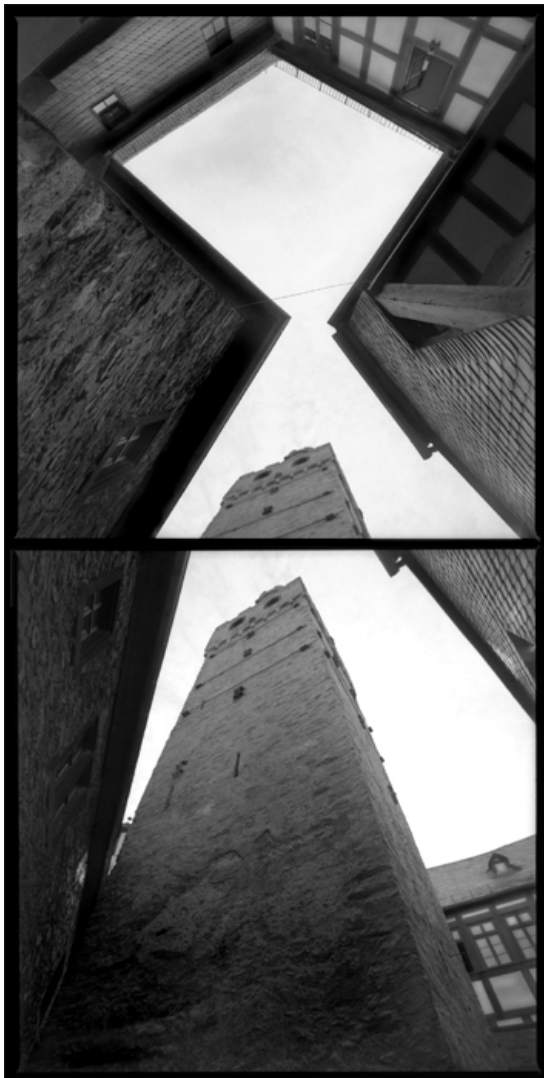
Photographs from film 1984 - 2004



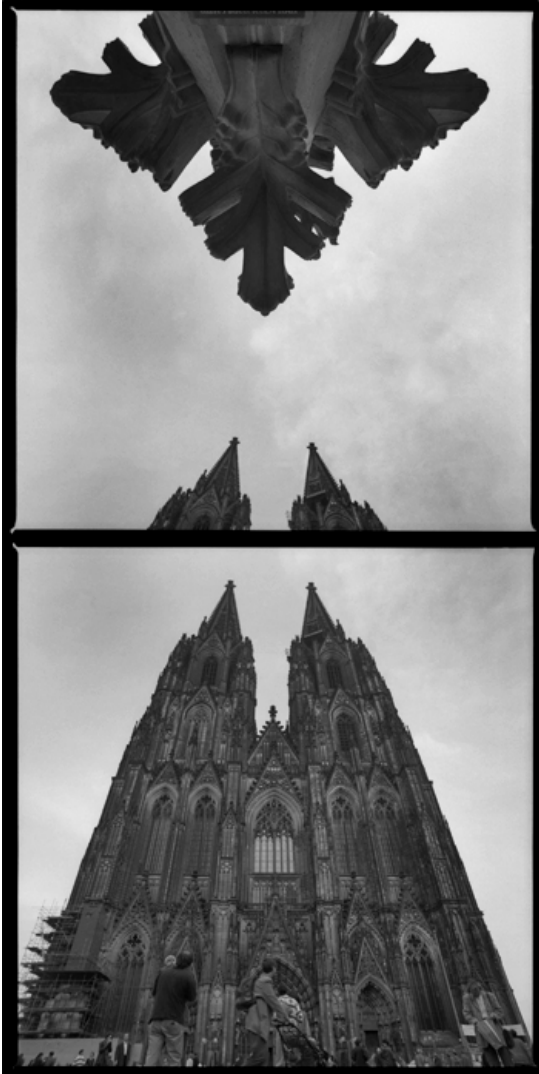
*La Tour Eiffel Paris - 1984*



*Le Louvre, Paris - 1994*



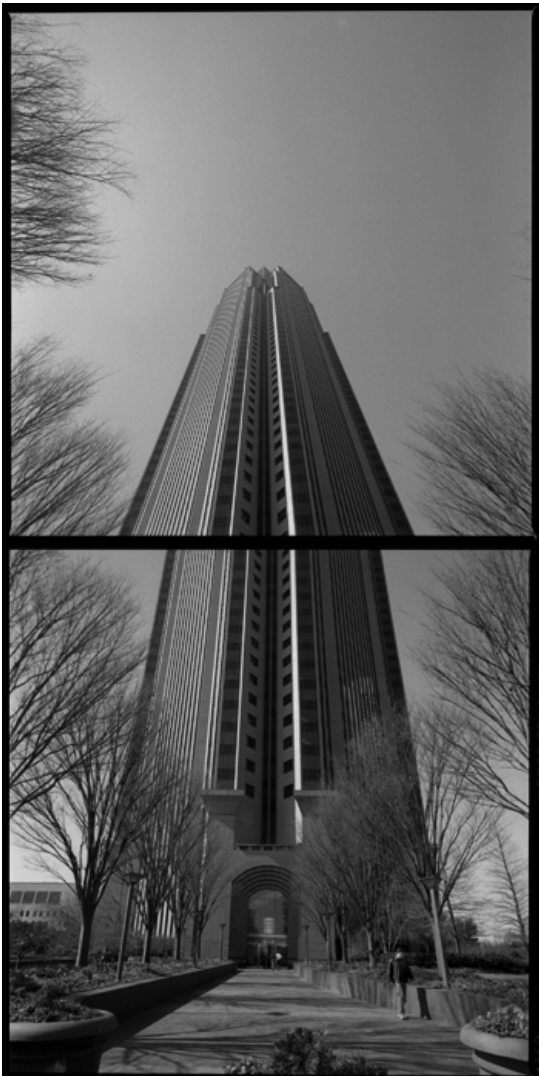
*Marksburg Castle, Braubach, Germany - 1994*



*Kölner Dom, (Cologne Cathedral), Germany - 1994*



*San Francisco I - USA - 2004*



*Atlanta IV - USA - 2005*





*San Francisco V - USA - 2004*



*San Francisco III - USA - 2004*



*Auckland I, New Zealand - 1998*



*Auckland I, New Zealand - 1998*



*Germany - 1994*

**P**hotographs from digital capture 2007 - 2013



*Paris, France - 2010*



*Porte St Martin, Paris, France 2010*





*Porte St Denis, Paris, France 2010*



*Paris, France - 2010*



*Le Louvre Paris, France - 2010*



*Lyon, France - 2010*



*Les Halles, Paris, France 2007*



*Off Finders Lane, Melbourne IV, Australia - 2008*



*Lyon, France - 2010*



*Le Centre Pompidou Paris, France - 2010*





*Finders Lane, Melbourne IV, Australia - 2008*



*Crest, France 2007*



*Paris, France - 2010*



*Paris, France - 2010*



*Crest, France - 2007*



*Lyon, France - 2010*



*Traboules, Lyon, France - 2010*



*Traboule, Lyon, France - 2010*



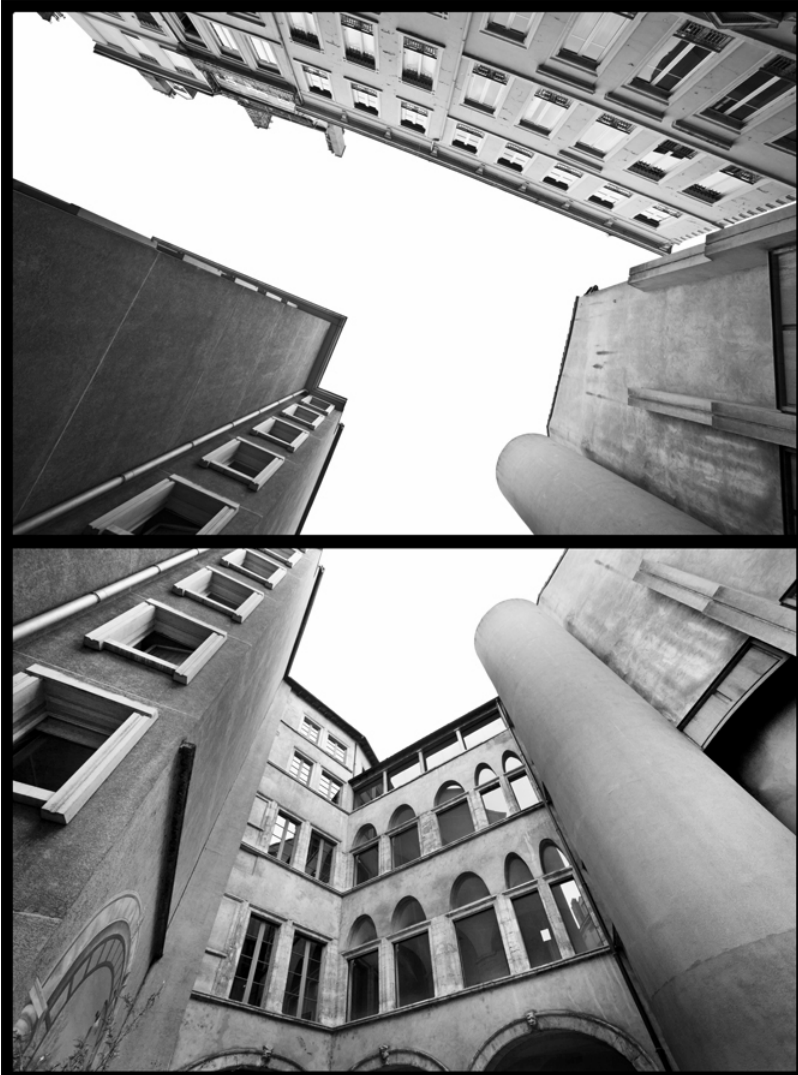




*Paris, France - 2007*



*Napoleon's Tomb, Paris, France - 2010*



*Lyon, France - 2010*



*Traboule ,Lyon, France - 2010*



*Crest, Drome, France - 2007*



*Lyon, France - 2010*



*Paris, France -2010*





*Traboule , Lyon, France - 2010*



*Paris, France - 2010*



*Paris, France - 2010*



*Paris, France - 2010*



*Paris, France - 2010*



*Paris, France - 2010*



*Paris, France - 2010*

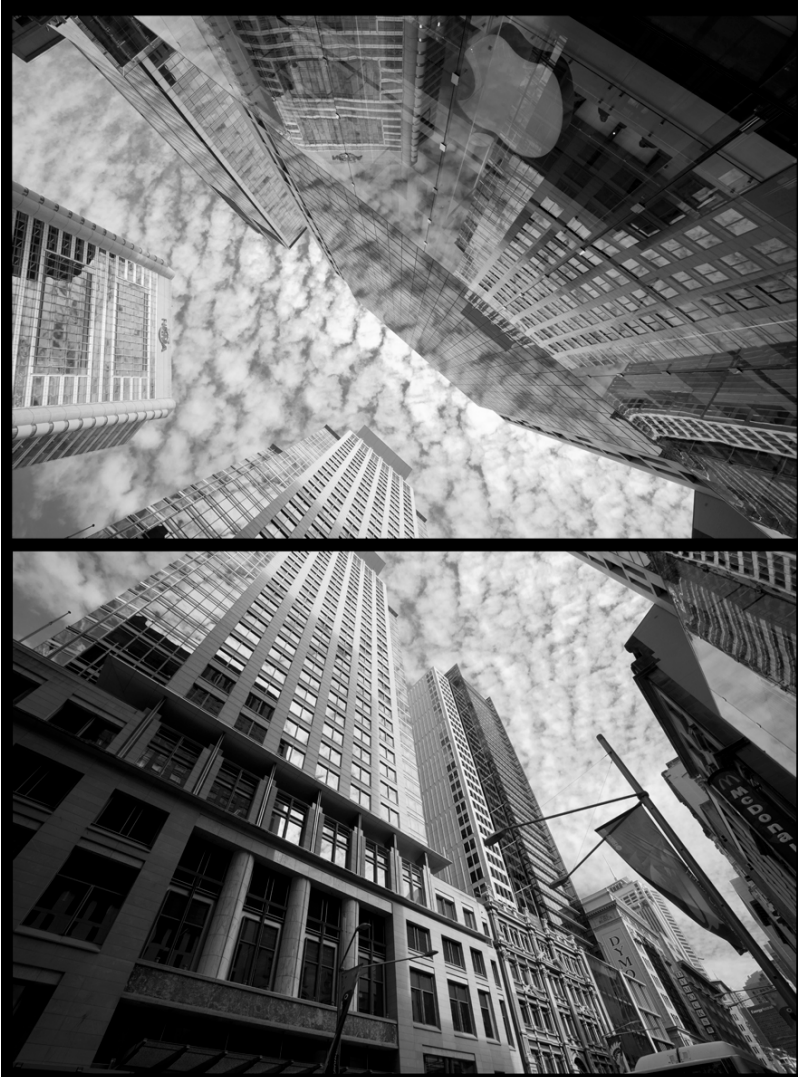


*Perth, Australia - 2012*





*Perth, Australia - 2012*



*Sydney, Australia - 2012*



*Sydney, Australia - 2012*



*Singapore - 2013*



*Singapore - 2013*



*Singapore - 2013*

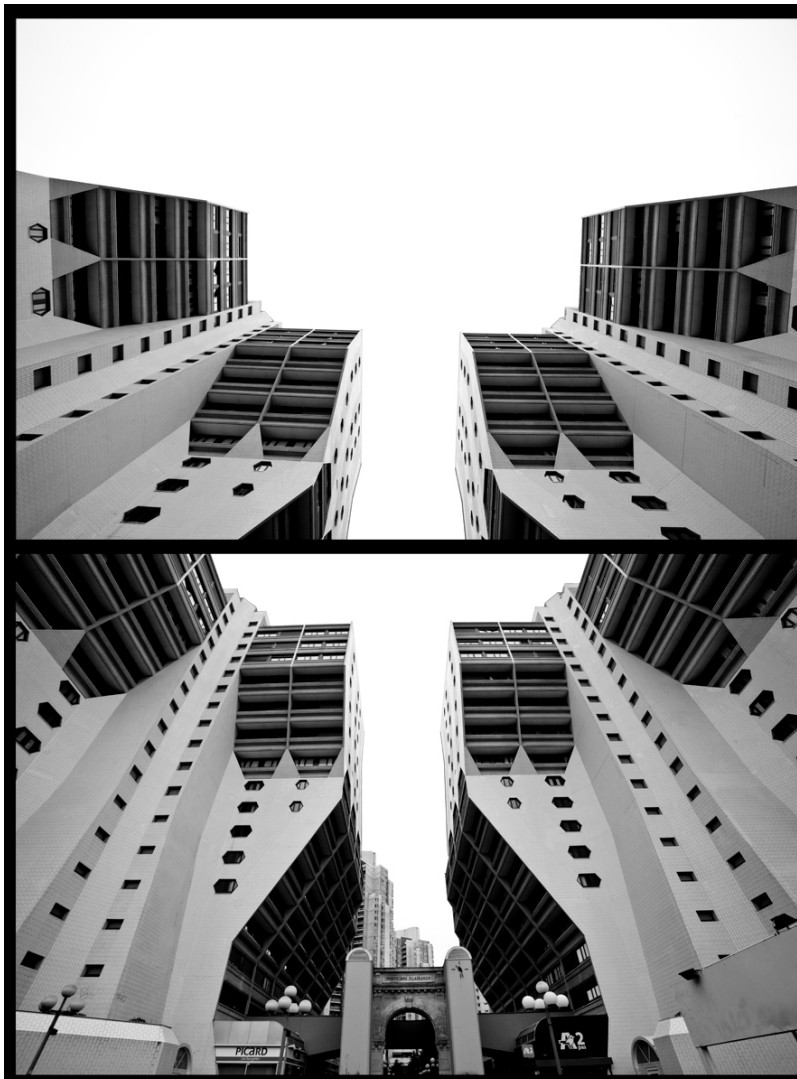


*Singapore - 2013*



*France - 2013*





*France - 2013*



## Lloyd Godman

*“It is doubtful if Australasia has a more protean, visionary and ecologically committed artist than Lloyd Godman. Born in Dunedin, New Zealand in 1952, and now living in Melbourne, Australia, he has been exploring environmental issues through photography (in combination with sculpture, painting and installations) since the early 1980s. He began taking more or less traditional landscape pictures in the late 1960s, but exposure to iconoclastic artists like Man Ray, Kurt Schwitters, and Joseph Beuys inspired him to begin chipping at the edges of photography in the interest of breaking down boundaries.”* **Black and White magazine USA**

*“Lloyd Godman’s twin careers of serious and successful organic gardener and practicing artist of great creative energy converge in new and constantly surprising ways to make art about the ecological concerns that underly his gardening. Over almost three decades his art has widened out from relatively traditional landscape photography to include elements of performance, audience participation art and multimedia installation to explore the tensions between electronic consumer society and the ecosystem.”* **Artlink magazine**

*“The lateral thinker of Australasian photography” -* **Julie Millowick 2007**

*“Expand your consciousness by visiting his inspiring and thought-provoking website: <http://www.lloydgodman.net>.”*  
**Dean Brierly**