

making images

making sense of images

Here is an image I find interesting. Initially, it looks like a young couple putting rubbish into a wheelie bin. The couple are a little blurred and only the bars of what I assume to be a metal gate are in proper focus. The angle of view makes me think the photo was taken quickly and surreptitiously, the camera held at waist level to avoid detection. There's mystery to the image, partly due to a composition that hints at the hurried and the clandestine, suggesting it's more than just a simple domestic scene of rubbish disposal.

The image doesn't stand alone; rather, it's embedded in a page surrounded by text. For example, above the picture is the title 'Paris!' specifying both the geographical location of the subject but also locating the image in the context of other representations of the city. It's also filed in a Flickr 'set' (a kind of sub-folder) called 'vie quotidienne/A day' which, again, places the image in the context of a tradition of images of everyday life.

However, the text that functions to contain/restrain the meanings we make as viewers is the photographer's own description: "Hard to shoot. I felt like a voyeur. These people are trying to find treasure found in the trashes ...".



http://www.flickr.com/photos/gilles_itzkovitchklein/

Comments



[gillesklein](#) pro says:

La population est en train de changer dans le 19ème arrondissement de Paris. Longtemps quartier ouvrier et d'accueil, aujourd'hui la spéculation immobilière permet de faire fortune. Pour autant, l'écart se creuse entre les classes sociales.

Posted 48 months ago. ([permalink](#))

Gilles, the photographer, reveals that the couple are, in fact, searching the contents of a wheelie bin, looking for objects of value to resell or use themselves. Gilles is doing the same thing; finding in everyday scenes that might be otherwise forgotten or unvalued something personally meaningful. His own comment - about north-east Paris undergoing gentrification and the growing disparity between rich and poor - articulates the meaning of the image for him - taken shortly before the election of Sarkozy - and seeks to anchor its interpretation as political or social commentary.

I came across the image when looking for a photograph that represented the figure of the ragpicker for a small project I'd started, but abandoned, on the poet Charles Baudelaire. The ragpicker is one of Baudelaire's preferred self-images, finding, by chance, objects of strange beauty in the city: "One sees a rag-picker go by, shaking his head,/ Stumbling, bumping against the walls like a poet". It struck me that Gilles was 'doing a Baudelaire' in his 'croquis parisiens' (Parisian sketches).

Gilles' image links the worlds of 19th poetry (early modernism) and 21st cyberspace (post-modern). I like to think of the resources of the internet as forming a strange new city through which we can stroll as virtual flâneurs and find objects - some captured like Gilles' from the real cities of 'meatspace' - that we can re-use for our own creations. It's an unashamedly utopian position that ignores questions of copyright and IPR I know. But it's a vision that excites me.