

Night Games

What happens in the amusement parks by night, when the light is switched off?

A mournful stillness invades the space where in the day sunlight the children play and the adults relax.

Some answers to these questions – or at least an appealing witness – will be proposed by Stefano Cerio's photos in the *Night Games* exhibition, opening to the public on May 5th at the Galleria del Cembalo.

With the work *Night Games* the author pursues his apparently objective research on the amusement parks or leisure places, started with *Aqua Park* (2010) and further developed in *Night Ski* (2012) and *Chinese Fun* (2015).

In the book *Night Games* edited by Hatje Cantz and just published, Gabriel Bauret writes in the introduction text: "Objectivity does not, however, imply that Cerio merely documents.

He is not creating an inventory of amusement parks and nor does he seek to offer shots of some of their themes. *Night Games* includes many different places and spaces. The worlds created by the park decor are very varied: cinematic, urban, military. Every age group is in some way hinted at in the diversity of the parks he photographs. Children are included since one of Cerio's subjects is public gardens in the center of cities like Paris, with their roundabouts and slides for little children. The composition of the photographs is highly restrained. The subject is generally placed in the center and Cerio does not indulge in imaginative camera angles: he almost always chooses a front view. At the same time, he is always careful to include in the edges of the composition items that give some indication of scale. The dimensions of the Parachute Jump, a gigantic flower-shaped ride at Coney Island, and the little horse mounted on a spring in a Parisian playground are widely different, but the way in which they are treated does not vary - it is this approach that constitutes the unity of Cerio's work".

And furthermore Bauret adds: "Artifice versus authenticity. Stefano Cerio's project can be seen as part of this dialectic: his images expressing the artificiality that has taken over our modern world. We may also infer some views on the future of America, particularly in *Night Games* and the design at Mirabilandia in Ravenna, the latter showing the iconic monuments of Manhattan collapsed and ruined, suggesting an urban landscape fallen into decay. But, above all, it is the creation of an atmosphere that is void, empty of all human presence, silence overtaking the sites with the coming of night that seems at first to guide the photographer.

Galleria del Cembalo

Already apparent in the *Night Ski* series, this atmosphere is linked to the same visual notion: the management of a very intense blackness, distributed equally around the image; and in the middle of this blackness the appearance - the sudden emergence - of an object or a decoration on which is focused a powerful beam of light penetrating the night. The balance of the composition is thus derived from the quality of this light pointed onto the subject by the operator, but which always leaves a portion of shadow”.

Angela Madesani, focusing Cerio's work (always from Hatje Cantz edition): “In the late 1970s, Luigi Ghirri created his series of photographs *In scala* (1977-78), taken at the Rimini amusement park called *Italy in miniature*. The effect is completely different from that created by Cerio. While for Ghirri the tension lies in an investigation of the space between reality and pretense, Cerio seeks - successfully - to depict situations: buildings, fantastical animals, characters, the Statue of Liberty overturned on the ground. I see his way of seeing as being in the same vein as Hiroshi Sugimoto's *Dioramas* or Maurizio Cattelan's *La nona ora* (1999), where a meteorite crushes the pope. This viewpoint is very much bound up with our times, as it is for the American photographer Gregory Crewdson. There are similarities between the works of the two artists: the same moods, a similar poetic inspiration.”

Stefano Cerio (born in 1962) lives and works between Rome and Paris. He started his career when he was 18 years old, collaborating with the magazine *L'Espresso*. Since 2001 his interest moved to research photography and video. His works are in many public as well as private collections.

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May 5th / July 8th

Galleria del Cembalo
Largo della Fontanella di Borghese, 19 - Roma
Tel. 06 83796619

OPENING HOURS

Thursday and Friday: 4 pm - 7 pm
Saturday: 10:30 am - 1 pm and 4 pm - 7 pm
or upon appointment

Press Office

Davide Macchia | ufficiostampa@galleriadelcembalo.it | tel. 340 4906881

www.galleriadelcembalo.it

Largo della Fontanella di Borghese, 19
00186 - Roma