

1h

REVIEWED BY DAVID ONDRIK, PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 26, 2011

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Hans-Christian Schink | **1h**
 PHOTOGRAPHS BY HANS-CHRISTIAN
 SCHINK. TEXT BY MICHAEL PIDWIRNY
 Hatje Cantz, , 2010. Hardbound. 96 pp., 24 color
 illustrations, 13x11".



1h Photographs by Hans-Christian Schink. Text by Michael Pidwirny Published by Hatje Cantz, 2010.



Of late I have been more interested in the way that artists are pushing photography beyond straight-forward representation. Hans-Christian Schink has beautifully published a new series of images that do just that in *1h*. In these 24 landscape photographs taken all around the globe, the recurring, defining subject is the black mark slashing through the sky. It causes each image to scramble our conceptions of what a photograph should be. Looking like a graphic mark added to the physical surface of the

image after it was made, this void self-consciously calls attention to the photographic object and confounds the literal-representational qualities of the medium. Schink is also reaching back to the early days of the medium for inspiration; it's as if he studied the history of photography and asked what would happen if photography had gone expressive instead of literal in its development.

Schink has resurrected heliography for this work, literally "sun writing" and an early term for photography, as the black mark is the sun. He captures its movement over the course of one hour as it traverses the sky. In a medium that prides itself on veracity, it is engaging that the sun is a black streak rather than a white circle (or more likely a blown-out blotch). The intense light of the hour long exposure causes the tones of the sun to reverse, a phenomenon called solarization; a fundamental property of black and white film that, although explored over the medium's history, has largely been viewed as a mistake. Minor White and Ansel Adams made noteworthy images with a black sun, but they seemed to regard it as a clever trick to be used sparingly.



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Although the vast majority of photographs we encounter today were taken in a fraction of a second, in the days of "heliography" exposure times were much longer. Many of Daguerre's early street scenes appear to be of abandoned boulevards, but were actually bustling with people; motion blur was so extreme that the people were entirely blurred out of the image. The passage of time, the resulting motion of the sun, its tonal inversion, and the shadows it casts, are essential to the meaning of each image.

There is an analytic, scientific approach to Schink's body of work; it is nearly a scientific experiment. The sun-streak is the same length in each image, since the sun travels 15 degrees across the sky in an hour. This is the controlled condition of the experiment. The variable is determining how the movement appears to change in diverse locations around the world. By recording precise geographic coordinates and using unvarying exposure times, Schink is tapping the historical use of photography as a means to analyze. However, by using under-appreciated aspects of the medium he is creating poetic interpretations of data more than factual documents. Still, we can determine roughly the time of day and where we are by the sun's position and direction of movement.



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Two images taken at different latitudinal extremes, one at the equator and one in the far Northern Hemisphere, are especially compelling. At the equator, the mark of the sun is precisely centered perpendicular to the horizon. The hazy, nearly metallic look of the ground and the sky create an abstract image that could as easily be something made

wholly from the artist's imagination, rather than a camera's literal recording of the world. What is engaging about this abstract photograph is that it is not abstracted by cropping all context out of the image, but is an image of something that is abstract. In the far north latitude the sun is a low bar, running nearly parallel to the horizon. Underneath, what appears to be water reflects the white light of the black sun as a painterly smear. This visual contradiction is captivating.



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1h delightfully plays with photography's limitations. Photography can only capture illusions, and Schink has creatively used the medium to incorporate and make apparent the illusionistic properties of his photographs. There is a formula to the work, but it is not formulaic. It is instead a lyrical study of the daily motion of the sun, the progenitor of scientific inquiry, and the thing that makes all photography possible.

—DAVID ONDRIK

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DAVID ONDRIK has lived in Albuquerque since the late 1970s. He was introduced to photography in high school and quickly appropriated his father's Canon A-1 so that he could pursue this exciting artistic medium. He received his BFA, with an emphasis in photography, from the University of New Mexico and has been involved in the medium ever since. Ondrik is also a National Teaching Board Certified high school art teacher.

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