

THE EMPTY QUARTER GALLERY

Dubai, UAE

12 December 2018 — 15 February 2019

Photo sensitive

by Muhammad Yusuf

January 10, 2019

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The Empty Quarter gallery, Dubai, is currently hosting the photographic works of John R Pepper (Inhabited Deserts, Dec. 12, 2018 – Feb. 15, 2019). “Pepper’s deserts are not ultimately the result of travel photography”, says Kirill Petrin, Russian entrepreneur and art collector who has written an essay to accompany the exhibition. “His photographs, paradoxically, don’t take you to the actual places where they are shot. They take you elsewhere, to a new place for your mind and imagination to inhabit ... as you stand before them, Pepper’s photographs slowly transform what you believe you are seeing into a totally different thing.

“Not surprisingly, some of the rocks look quite alive, resembling the beasts of fairytales, or divine manifestations (as in the face on a cliff), or succinctly mirroring human interactions, confrontational exchanges (as in the photo of two boulders facing each other), or dance, or a family reunion ... Who said that deserts are uninhabited? Pepper’s work populates them with our thoughts, our dreams”.

“My concept, my goal”, says Pepper, “has been to use the desert as a painter uses a virgin white canvas; and while travelling through different deserts of the world (from Russia to Egypt, Mauritania, Oman to the USA), I sought to discover what imagery was revealed to my eye - sometimes it was figurative, sometimes abstract.

“In the South Sinai in Egypt, there were tall hills of rocks. Climbing those hills, walking through what appeared to be a simple amalgam of stones, I discovered anthropomorphic figures such as faces, fish, elephants, humans etc.

“Suddenly the rocks, these non-living elements were transformed into the opposite: living, expressive, vibrant figures. In the dunes of Oman the lights and shadows transformed a seemingly neutral valley into the body of a young woman trying to emerge from the sands.

“Conceptually I attempt to find the symbiosis between the landscape before me and the imagery buried within me. I do not seek the image: rather the photograph finds me. Through this subliminal search the result is, hopefully, my photograph, my “canvas” is an expression of my inner being, of what I feel as an artist”.

Pepper reveals more details on his affaire de coeur with deserts to Time Out.



*** WHY ARE YOUR DESERT COMPOSITIONS IN BLACK AND WHITE?**

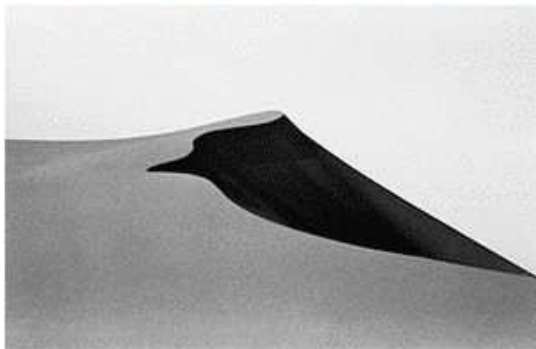
I have been working in B&W since I began taking photographs at age 12. I believe that taking photographs in colour is like giving the 'answers'.

I prefer to have the viewer 'fill in' with his or her imagination. I believe that the use of B & W in general is more interesting as it leaves more mystery - but in particular for deserts, it adds to their sensuality.



*** ARE YOU GIVING A LARGER MEANING TO THE WORD "INHABITED" IN YOUR WORK?**

The best answer to this question is in the curatorial essay by Kirill Petrin who has perfectly analysed my work. "The camera in Pepper's hands", he says, "becomes a brush or chisel with which he blurs the lines between capturing something already made, and creating something which has never existed.



"This transition from "capture" to "create" is even more evident in the abstract or semi-abstract images ... Pepper's hands create abstractions that have all the expressive power of great abstraction coupled with all the spontaneity of nature".

*** DO YOU THINK DESERTS ARE DISAPPEARING FROM THE EARTH?**

I believe that the deserts we know are still present and not disappearing. They are present and will always be present. Unless you are including the Artic Circles as deserts, which they are; in this case, they are disappearing. But the sand deserts, to my knowledge, are not.

However, I believe, sadly, that we are creating new and more desolate deserts. These deserts are due to the leaders of the world ignoring Global Warming, to large corporations ignoring their responsibility in saving the environment and due to, in every country that has real deserts, the young men and women who practice 'Dune Bashing' by going out on motorcycles and cars and ravaging the dunes by using them as skateboarders use skate parks - the difference being that the skate parks are made for that purpose. The dunes are not.

<http://gulftoday.ae/portal/51667464-d815-4a99-a6df-8372a1f9ae35.aspx>

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*** YOU HAVE HINTED AT MAN MADE STRUCTURES MOVING INTO DESERTS. TO YOU, IS THIS A NEGATIVE OR POSITIVE THING?**

Man moving into the desert is both positive and negative. It depends on how it is done. If man moves into the desert without respecting the desert, without being conscious that it is also an integral part of the overall environment by trying to dominate it, then it is negative.

However, sometimes, it can be positive. If a country creates a new city with a new industry that gives work to scores of people and also respects the deserts around it, then it is positive. Look at the incredible developments of Abu Dhabi, Dubai in the UAE, of Argh-e-Jadid in Iran or, years earlier, of Las Vegas in the USA, to mention only a few.

However, man often tries to impose himself on the desert and the desert conquers back its own territory. Often man does not understand the true nature of deserts and aggressively tries to impose his will on it. It will not work.

*** WHAT IMPRESSES YOU MOST ABOUT DESERTS?**

Silence, vastness, the immense passage of time, man's insignificance in relation to the size, scope, time of deserts; the 'life' in them; the passage of history in them; their flexibility, their strength, their sensuality, their danger and how insignificant we are, in a temporal context, to them.

*** ISN'T BRINGING AN EXHIBITION ON DESERTS TO THE UAE AND THE GULF RATHER LIKE BRINGING COALS TO NEWCASTLE?**

That is up to the viewer to decide. But I don't believe it is so. Not only are the deserts different in so far as the sand is different (some is white and light and pure others is dark and rugged, other still is rougher still, other is cold rather than hot, etc) but the topography and geography and temperature are all different.

What I am doing is creating authentic and unique images that are set in different deserts in the world. Finally, you might want to spend a moment on the unique factor here, made possible by the fact that I am a cultural representative of the Republic of Italy through the support of the Embassy of the Republic of Italy in Abu Dhabi and the Consulate of the Republic of Italy to United Arab Emirates, that the deserts of countries from many regions are all exhibited here, because art is not political rather a bridge between the people and cultures of different nations and helps, in its own small and parallel manner, to attempt to promote tolerance and understanding and acceptance.

*** WHAT MESSAGE WOULD YOU LIKE THE VIEWER TO TAKE AWAY FROM THE EXHIBITION?**

In an ideal world, I would like viewers to choose an image and buy it and take it away with themselves, so they can live with it because it brings something to their lives.

But if they are viewing it as though it were in a museum, then I would be happy if their souls were somehow filled a bit by my work; if their eyes were richer because of it, if their hearts were more at peace and if they felt that they had some type of experience which made them, or their day, a little better.

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Melanie Swan

Jan 22, 2019

Inhabited Deserts: Dubai photography exhibition tells the story of the desert

► A collaboration between renowned Italian photographer John R Pepper and UAE-based explorer Max Calderan has captured some of the most dramatic landscapes across the world



Siberian Tree. Courtesy John R Pepper

<https://www.thenational.ae/arts-culture/art/inhabited-deserts-dubai-photography-exhibition-tells-the-story-of-the-desert-1.816299>

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When John R Pepper embarked on his Inhabited Deserts collection, it was never going to be the usual desert landscapes. The Italian photographer began the project with a determination to create a new perception of some of the world's most arid terrains; no Photoshop, just a vintage camera and film, and his eyes.

Inhabited Deserts, at the Empty Quarter gallery in DIFC, is an array of imagery taken across the world in some of its most dramatic landscapes. From Russia to Mauritania, Israel to the US, the exhibition shows the desert in its most raw and beautiful form.



Courtesy John R Pepper

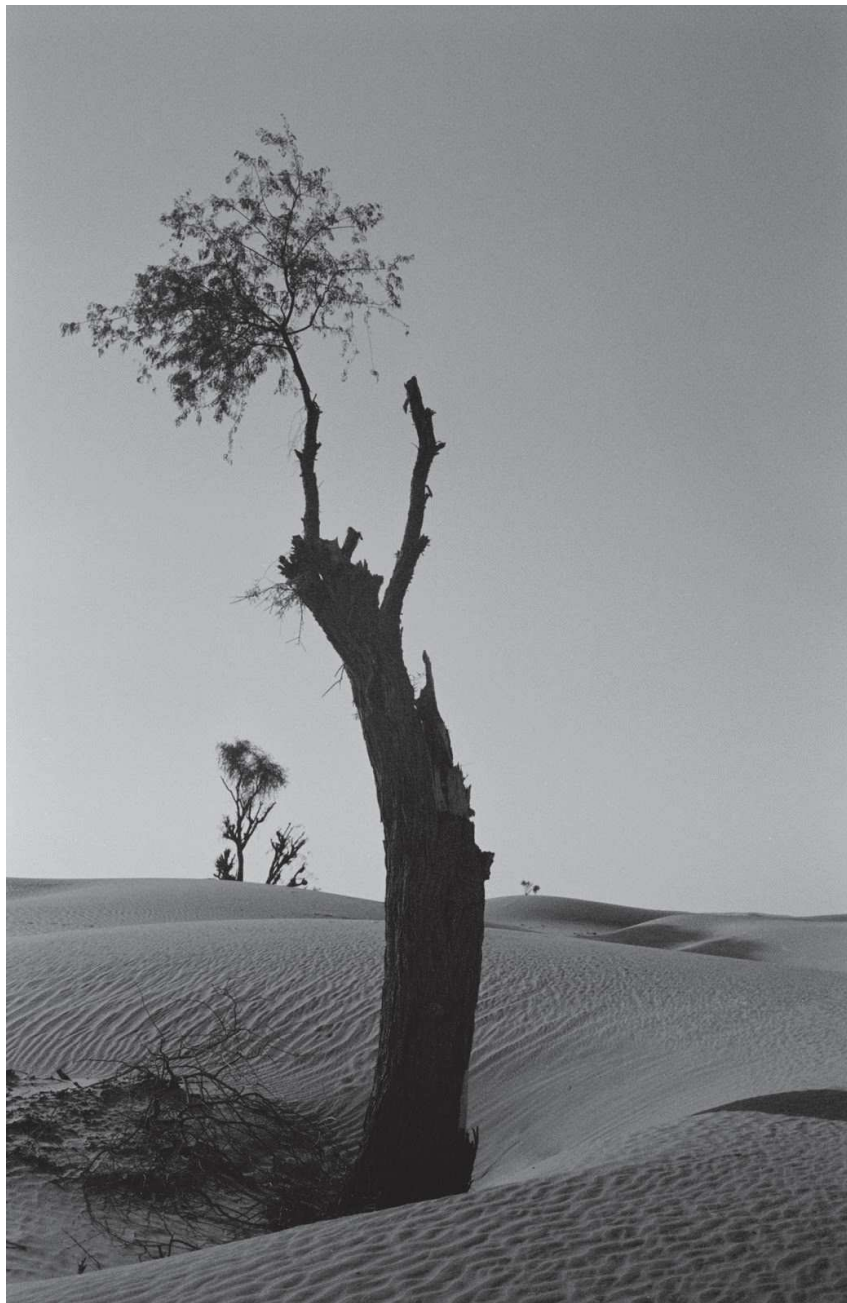
The desert has always fascinated Pepper. "Often a photographer enters deserts to capture the beauty of the landscape with a setting sun or a beautiful cloud formation and that is the final result. As beautiful as that might be, it was not what I was seeking. I wanted to go further," he says.

"My goal has been to use the desert as a painter uses a white canvas; and while travelling through different deserts of the world from Russia to Egypt, Mauritania, Oman to the US, I sought to discover what imagery was revealed to my eye – sometimes it was figurative, sometimes abstract."

<https://www.thenational.ae/arts-culture/art/inhabited-deserts-dubai-photography-exhibition-tells-the-story-of-the-desert-1.816299>

Running wild in the desert

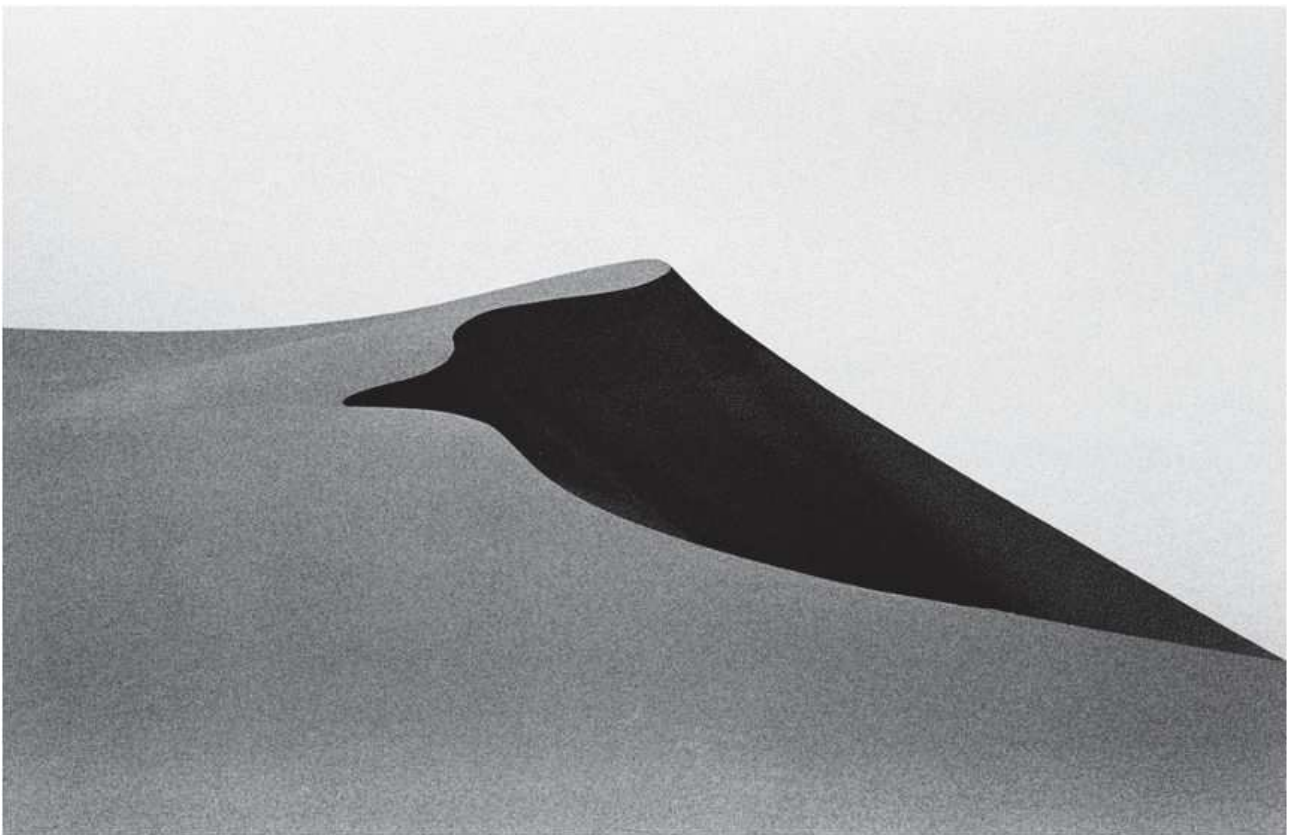
The desert gave Pepper time to let his own imagination and creativity run wild. Speaking of his project in Mauritania, he says: "I would look across the plains and see what seemed like nothing: dead trees or a grouping of cactus plants. After walking through and around them, allowing my eye to wander freely, keeping my mind empty, without pre-conception, these inanimate objects would suddenly become a human being crying to the sky, a couple arguing, a dancer suspended in air. In the dunes of Oman the lights and shadows transformed a seemingly neutral valley into the body of a young woman trying to emerge from the sands."



<https://www.thenational.ae/arts-culture/art/inhabited-deserts-dubai-photography-exhibition-tells-the-story-of-the-desert-1.816299>

The Wilfred Thesiger of our time

The exhibition has already been in Paris and Tehran, and will soon go to Russia, Europe and then the US. It is not only focused on this wonder of nature, however, but also features a man referred to as the Wilfred Thesiger of our time: Max Calderan, the Italian desert explorer, who has broken several world records during his expeditions across uncharted terrains.



Dasht-e Lut. Courtesy John R Pepper

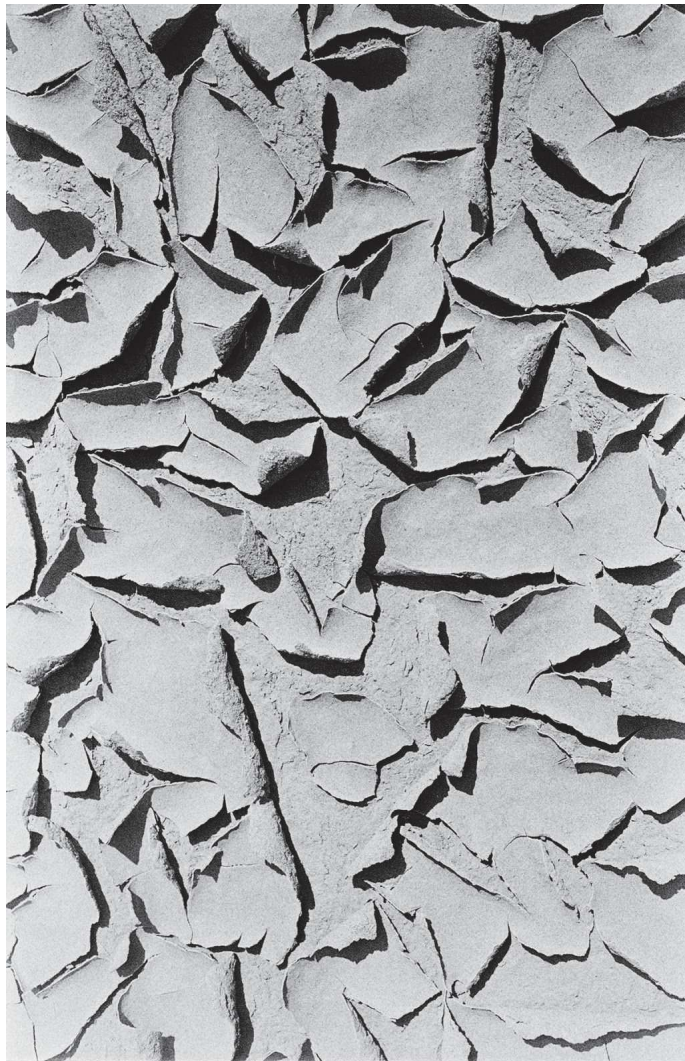
Calderan, who lives in the UAE, spent five days with Pepper, in the UAE and Oman, where they covered 4,000 kilometres and used his many friends around the region to help him get even more deeply connected to the desert and its people. "I opened the doors for different locations directly with Bedouins and local people living in the desert far from Dubai, such as in Mauritania, or the Sinai desert in Egypt or in the Lut Desert in Iran," Calderan says. "Being an extreme desert explorer, when John contacted me explaining this unique project in photographing deserts around the world with his old analogue camera, I understood that it was something like the right way to "talk" about the sands in a different way.

"There is a perfect symbiosis between my extreme free solo explorations and John Pepper's pictures. He works with no digital or Photoshop and what he sees through the camera is often what I see and is not only sand but the hidden life and the hidden people that live in the desert, their souls that are filling the desert, creating an imaginary world. John has been able to show something that the eyes cannot catch but that a different eye, his old vintage camera, can."

<https://www.thenational.ae/arts-culture/art/inhabited-deserts-dubai-photography-exhibition-tells-the-story-of-the-desert-1.816299>

Story of the desert

Calderan has embarked on 13 solo expeditions by foot, including crossing the Tropic of Cancer in Oman; 437km in 90 hours non-stop, and his "crazy" fasting exploration during Ramadan 2014 in the Sinai desert in Egypt, 250km in summer, coast to coast following the rules of Ramadan, in 72 hours, opening new tracks that are now used as shortcuts by some local Bedouins.



Sebastian Ebbinghaus of the Empty Quarter gallery says the exhibition "is art photography, telling another story of the desert" and leaving much to the imagination of the naked eye, not even curating the exhibition with titles of the photos.

"John Pepper shows how the desert should or could be seen, and what he learnt from Max. John's pictures show the desert differently – it is rather abstract, still mentally taking you, the spectator, into this unknown world.

"It's abstract, black and white, and no picture has a title, on purpose. The spectator sees and feels."

Inhabited Deserts is at Empty Quarter, DIFC, until February 15

John R. Pepper: Inhabited Deserts



© John R. Pepper



THE EYE OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Date: 28.01.2019

Country: France

Web

https://oeildelaphotographie.com/en/john-r-pepper-inhabited-deserts-bb/?utm_source=Liste+ODLP+nouvel+version&utm_campaign=1036a37a69-Newsletter+EN+01282019&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_27b3627ade-1036a37a69-%5BLIST_EMAIL_ID%5D&ct=t%28Newsletter+EN+01282019%29

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L'ŒIL DE LA PHOTOGRAPHIE - JANUARY 28, 2019



Deserts have always fascinated photographers.. Often a photographer enters deserts to capture the beauty of the landscape with a setting sun or a beautiful cloud formation and that is the final result. As beautiful as that might be, it was not what I was seeking, I wanted to go further.

My concept, my goal, has been to use the desert as a painter uses a virgin white canvas; and while travelling through different deserts of the world (from Russia to Egypt, Mauritania, Oman to the USA etc) I sought to discover what imagery was revealed to my eye – -sometimes it was figurative, sometimes abstract.

In the South Sinai in Egypt, there were tall hills of rocks. Climbing those hills, walking through what appeared to be a simple amalgam of stones, I discovered anthropomorphic figures such as faces, fish, elephants, humans etc Suddenly the rocks, these non-living elements were transformed into the opposite: living, expressive, vibrant figures. In the Nevada desert, in the United States, or the vast deserts of Mauritania, I would look across the plains and see what seemed like "nothing": dead trees or a grouping of cactus plants. After walking through and around them, allowing my eye to wander freely, keeping my mind empty, without pre-conception, these inanimate objects would suddenly become a human being crying to the sky, a couple arguing, a dancer suspended in air. In the dunes of Oman the lights and shadows transformed a seemingly neutral valley into the body of a young woman trying to emerge from the sands. In one desert the moving sun would gradually transform a small valley into a beautiful bird. In still another desert from inside the small puddle of dried salt lake appears a man staring at us resembling a figure from Dante's Inferno and I, like the painter in front of his canvas, with my small Leica, 35mm lens and Ilford film, attempt to capture this image and the soul buried within.

Conceptually I attempt to find the symbiosis between the landscape before me and the imagery buried within me. I do not seek the image rather the photograph finds me. Through this subliminal search the result is, hopefully, my photograph, my "canvas" is an expression of my inner being, of what I feel as an artist.

Giornale di Sicilia
Giovedì 20 Dicembre 2018

Cultura Spettacoli 55

L'artista del Capo in mostra a Dubai

Pepper, il fotografo a caccia dell'anima nella luce dei deserti

Italo americano, da anni vive a Palermo: mi sento ambasciatore della Sicilia

Antonella Filippi

PALERMO

Le immagini che John Pepper ha scattato nei deserti di mezzo mondo - distese infinite di sabbia, di roccia o di sale arido - sono una radiografia di ciò che non è fotografabile, l'anima. «Dio creò il deserto affinché gli uomini potessero conoscere la loro anima», recita un detto tuareg. Infatti la prima foto da cui partire è proprio la sua, vestito di bianco, cravatta compresa, mentre lavora: è facile intuire come vibri a frequenze inconsuete per saziare l'implacabile esigenza di orizzonti infiniti.

Anima inquieta, tra il 2015 e il 2017, John Pepper ha percorso 18 mila chilometri intorno al mondo, dalla Russia all'Egitto, dalla Mauritania all'Oman, agli Stati Uniti, e le sue foto oggi compongono la mostra «Inhabited Deserts» tra dune roventi, «kalut» e «pan», forme bizzarre, l'armonia delle distese di sabbia e la risorsa di cui abbondano i deserti, ovvero la luce. Tutto ciò che è arido e inanimato si trasforma e assume forme nuove. Come in un caleidoscopio in bianco e nero. Per provare un sentimento di meraviglia davanti a questo mondo devi avere prima il coraggio di perderti, come fa Pepper, fotografo italo-americano - nato a Roma dove il padre Curtis Bill è stato a capo della redazione romana del Newsweek, mentre Beverly, la mamma, è una famosa scultrice-sceneggiatore, attore, regista, che si è formato sotto l'influenza di Henri Cartier-Bresson, Sam Show, John Ross e a soli 14 anni è diventato l'assistente di Ugo Mulas.

«Io sono nato a Roma ma sono siculo d'adozione. Vivo al Capo e questa mostra, anche se lontana da Palermo, è il mio contributo alla città capitale italiana della cultura nel 2018. Mi sento un ambasciatore della Sicilia quando porto le mie foto in giro per il mondo. Non capita a molti di esporre in Israele le immagini del Dasht-e Lut, il deserto iraniano,

superando ogni divisione, grazie al direttore dell'Istituto italiano di cultura Fabio Ruggirello, o quando da Tel Aviv la mostra si sposta a Dubai, negli Emirati Arabi Uniti per merito dell'ambasciatore Liborio Stellino che è di Alcamo. Amo attraversare barriere culturali, sociali, religiose e politiche, la cultura crea ponti».

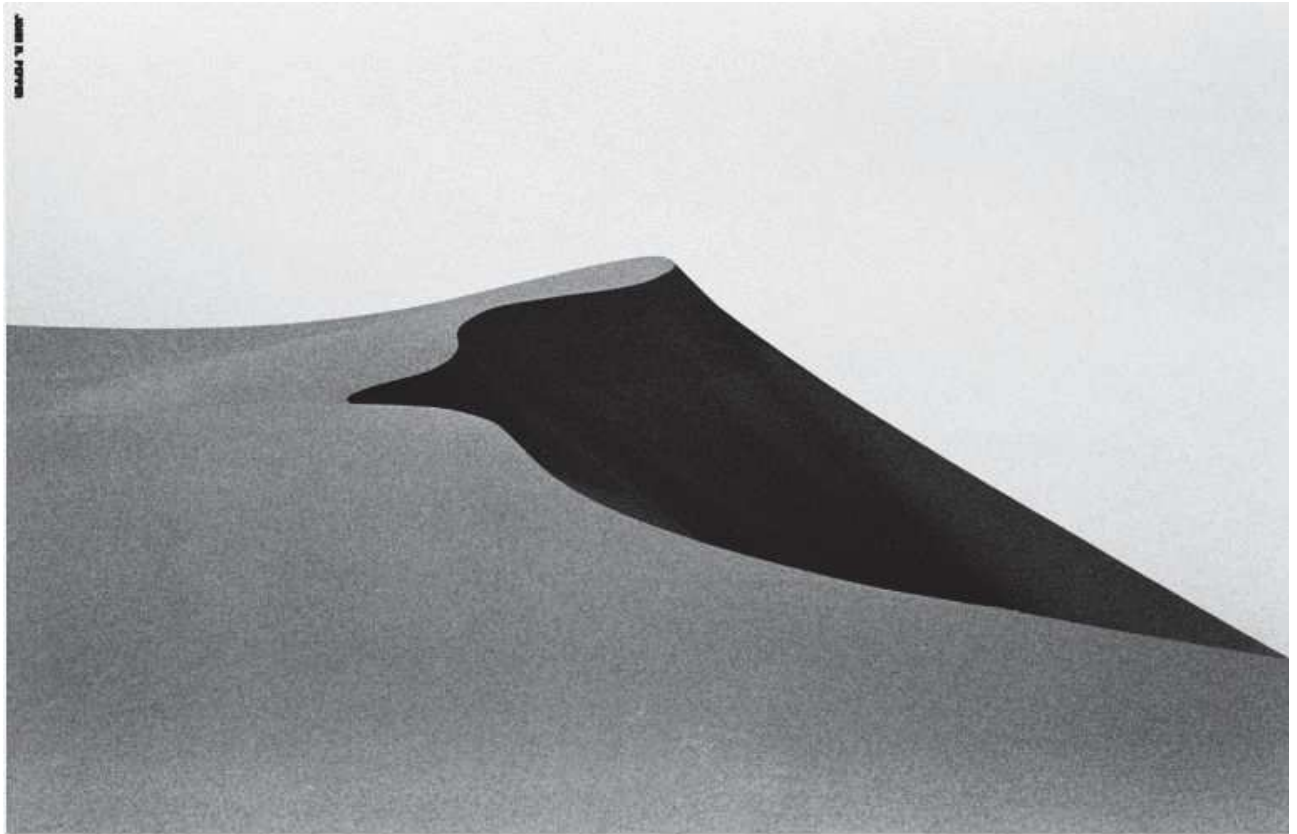
E il viaggio continua: «Inhabited Deserts» dopo Dubai andrà a Venezia, in Russia, fino a raggiungere la Svizzera, il Regno Unito, gli Stati Uniti e poi tornare a Roma nel 2021. Ancora John: «I deserti hanno sempre affascinato i fotografi ma io volevo andare oltre. Il mio obiettivo era quello di usare il deserto come un pittore usa una tela bianca: ho cercato il punto d'incontro tra ciò che era davanti a me e le immagini sepolte dentro di me. Come se fosse la fotografia a trovare me, non il contrario». Sfilano paesaggi surreali che fanno sentire intrappolati in un quadro di Salvador Dalí. Ha ragione Kerill Petrin quando scrive nel suo saggio critico che «nelle mani di Pepper, l'obiettivo diventa il pennello o lo scalpello con cui lui sfuma i confini tra il catturare qualcosa di già fatto e il creare qualcosa che non è mai esistito prima». Che, a pensarci bene, fa una gran bella differenza. (ANFI*)



Anima inquieta. John Pepper durante i suoi viaggi nel deserto

صحاري "مهيبة" في مصر وموريتانيا وعمان تتحول إلى لوحات حية

ستاييل نشر الثلاثاء، 05 فبراير / شباط 2019

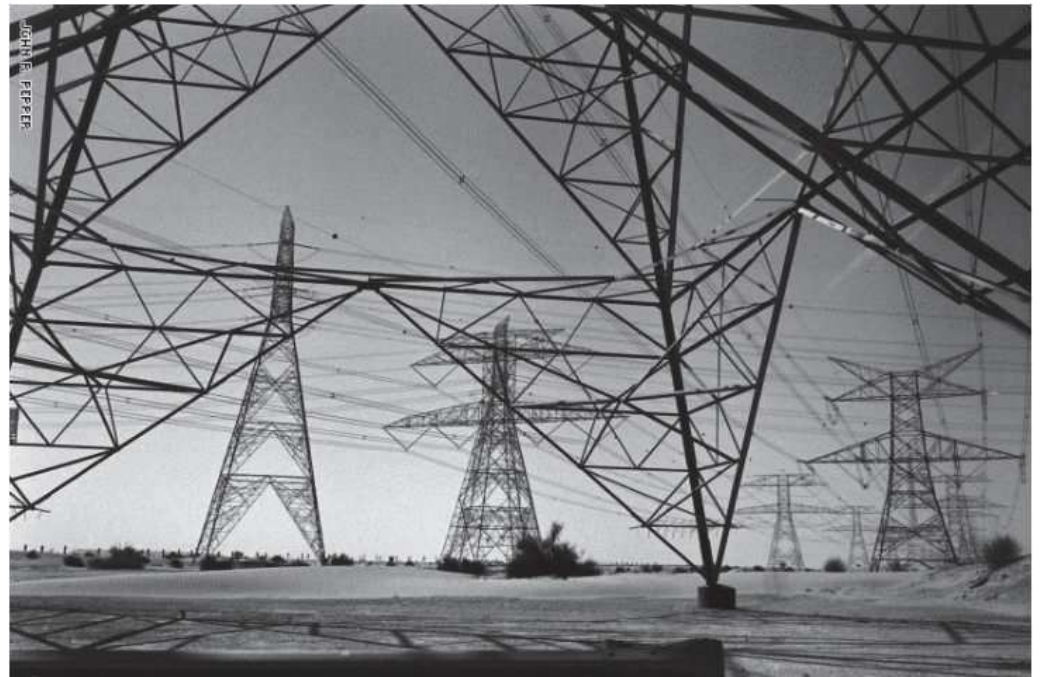


دبي، الإمارات العربية المتحدة (CNN) -- بعيداً عن مناظر غروب الشمس والرمال الذهبية التي تفكر بها عندما تسمع كلمة "صحراء"، يقوم المصور الإيطالي، جون ر. بيبر، بالابتعاد عن هذه المظاهر المألوفة وتوثيق صحاري العالم بطريقة مختلفة.

ولطالما أثارت الصحاري اهتمام العديد من المصورين الذين يذهبون إليها لالتقاط صوراً لغروب الشمس وأشكال الغيوم. ورغم جمال هذه الأشياء، فإنها لم تكن ما كان يبحث عنه بيبر، حيث أنه أراد "الذهاب إلى حد أبعد من ذلك"، وفقاً لما قاله في مقابلة مع موقع CNN بالعربية.



وخلال سفره عبر مختلف صحاري العالم، قال المصور إنه كان يهدف إلى "استخدام الصحراء مثل ما يستخدم الرسام لوحة بيضاء عذراء.. وسعيت إلى اكتشاف الصور التي تم كشفها أمام عيني، والتي كانت مجازية أحياناً، ومجردة في أحيان أخرى".



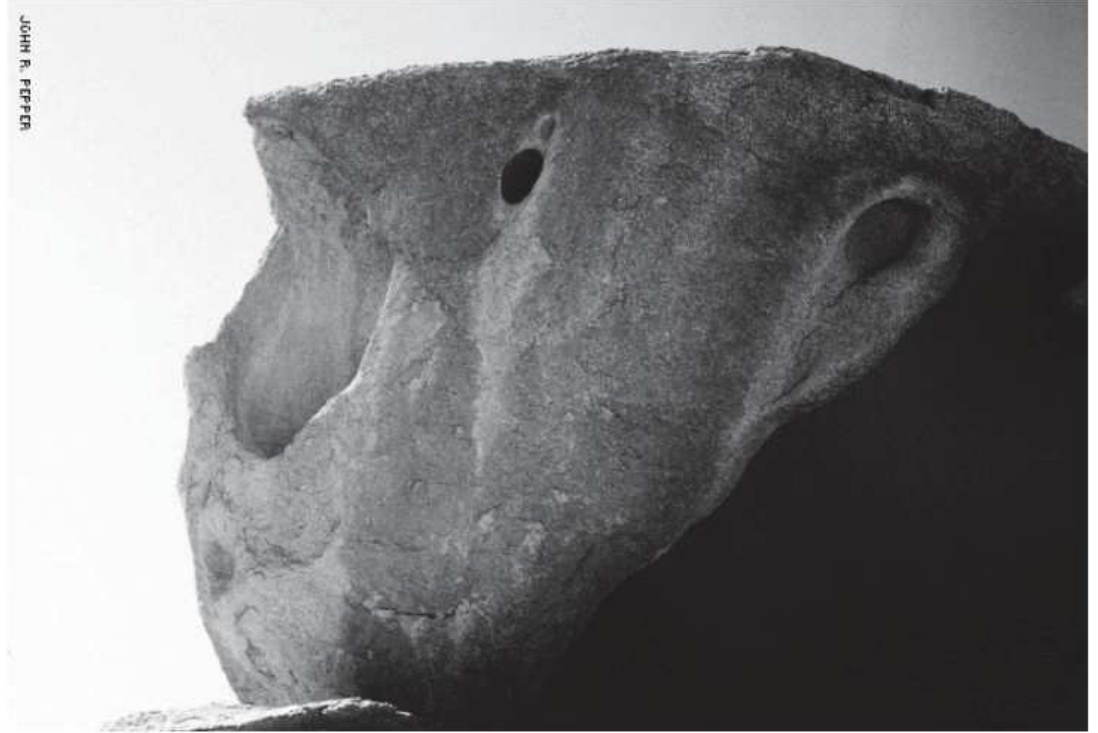
ويعرض المصور مجموعة الصور التي التقطها على مر الأعوام من مختلف صحاري العالم، ومنها في روسيا، ومصر، وموريتانيا، وعمان، وحتى الإمارات العربية المتحدة في معرضه، "Inhabited Deserts"، في "غاليري الربع الخالي" بدبي.



ويتبين عشق المصور للصور السوداء والبيضاء من أعماله، حيث أنه بدأ بالتقاط الصور بهذين اللونين فقط منذ أن كان في الـ 12 من عمره. وشرح الإيطالي أحد أسباب اختياره قائلا: "أنا أوّمن أن التقاط الصور بالألوان هي بمثابة إعطاء الإجابات". ويفضل المصور أن يملأ المشاهدون الفراغات باستخدام خيالهم.



وعبر توظيفه لخياله، قام المصور بتحويل عناصر جامدة إلى أشكال حية ونايضة بالحياة. وعلى سبيل المثال، تحول خليط بسيط من الصخور في صحراء سيناء بمصر إلى وجوه، وأسماك، وفيلة.



وفي صحراء نيفادا بالولايات المتحدة، وصحراء موريتانيا الواسعة، تتحول السهول الفارغة والأشجار الميتة إلى انسان يبكي في السماء، أو راقصة معلقة وسط الهواء.



ويتعلق عنوان المعرض، الذي يُترجم إلى "صحاري مأهولة"، بتصويرات الغربيين عن الصحاري، حيث أنهم يرون الصحاري كأماكن خالية، ومهجورة، ولا يمكن العيش فيها". ويتلاعب العنوان أيضاً بحقيقة أن الصحاري الخاصة بالفنان هي في الواقع مأهولة، إذ تسكنها رؤيته في الصحراء.



ولم يمض المصور كل رحلاته الصحراوية لوحده، حيث أنه استعان في إحداها مثلًا بمستكشف الصحاري الإيطالي، ماكس كالديران، والذي قابله عن طريق الصدفة أثناء تواجده المصور في القنصلية العامة الإيطالية بدبي. وهي صدفة رغب بها المصور، حيث أنه يتشارك مع المستكشف مختلف الصفات مثل العاطفة، والفضول، وحب الحياة. وأمضى المصور 5 أيام مع المستكشف الإيطالي، عبر خلالها أكثر من 4 آلاف كيلومتر في صحاري عُمان والإمارات.



وفي الصحراء، قضى المصور وقته بين التقاط الصور، وتسليق أكوام الصخور التي يبلغ ارتفاعها 300 متر أو أعلى، والهبوط من كثبان رملية يصل ارتفاعها إلى 500 متر.

ويستمر معرض "Inhabited Deserts" إلى 15 فبراير/شباط من هذا العام.



Home / HIGHLIGHTS from “Inhabited Deserts” in Dubai

HIGHLIGHTS from “Inhabited Deserts” in Dubai



“Chara Sands” by John R. Pepper. (Supplied)

Updated 18
December 2018

ARAB NEWS

December 18, 2018
11:35

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DUBAI: John R. Pepper's 'Inhabited Deserts,' is showcasing at The Empty Quarter in Dubai until January 27.

"Chara Sands"

In his artist's statement for this exhibition, the Italian photographer explains that merely capturing the beauty of the desert was not enough. "My goal," he writes, "has been to use the desert as a painter uses a virgin white canvas ... I attempt to find the symbiosis between the landscape before me and the imagery buried within me."

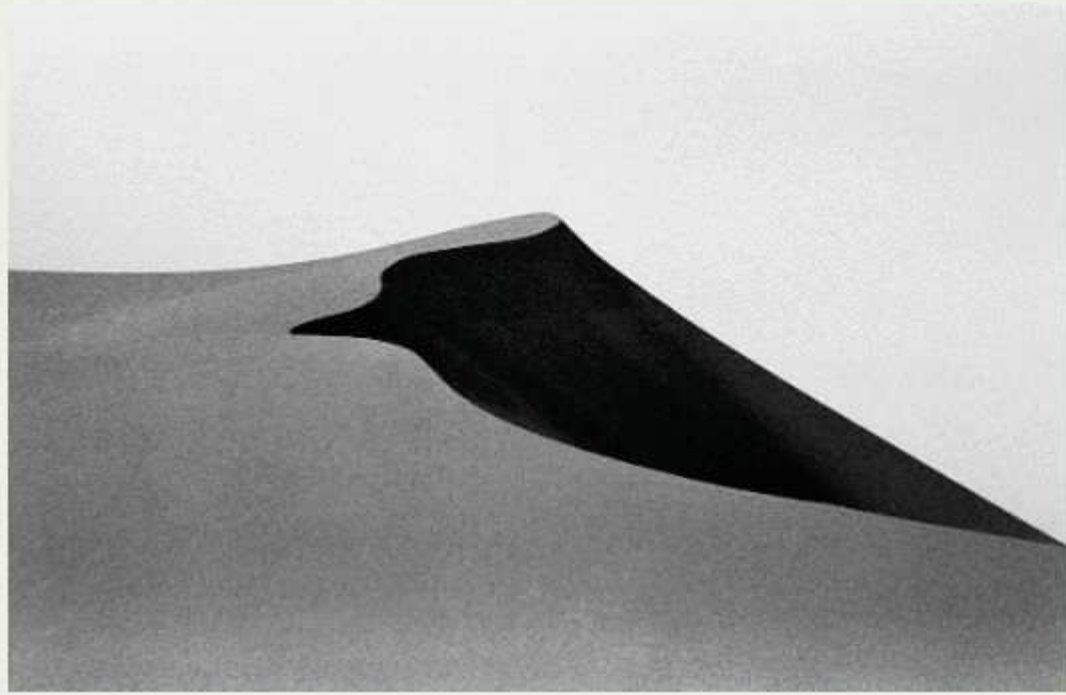
"Sinai"

Here, Pepper captures an anthropomorphic figure in the stones of the South Sinai in Egypt. "Suddenly the rocks, these non-living elements, were transformed into the opposite: living, expressive, vibrant figures," he writes. Pepper's photographs are taken using a "small Leica, 35mm lens and Ilford film."



“Dasht –e Lut”

Many of Pepper’s desert landscapes are so seemingly empty that they approach the abstract. But in his essay on the exhibition, Kirill Petrin writes: “Who said that deserts are uninhabited? Pepper’s work populates them with our thoughts, our dreams. It’s up to you, these photos seem to say. It’s entirely up to you to take the voyage out, and linger, and decide.”



<http://artdaily.com/news/110364/The-Empty-Quarter-Gallery-presents-exhibition-by-the-Italian-photographer-John-R--Pepper#.XEnCT88zbOQ>

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The Empty Quarter Gallery presents exhibition by the Italian photographer John R. Pepper



Nevada Desert, 2015.

DUBAI.- [The Empty Quarter Gallery](#), Dubai is presenting the exhibition 'Inhabited Deserts' of the Italian photographer John R. Pepper.

In his essay on 'INHABITED DESERTS' Kirill Petrin writes:

"Most people in the Western world are indifferent to deserts. Deserts are away. They are elsewhere. They are thousands of miles away and the definition of empty, and their associations rarely go beyond arid, dead, mystic, frightening, mysterious, flat, hot, cold, beautiful, ugly, dangerous".

<http://artdaily.com/news/110364/The-Empty-Quarter-Gallery-presents-exhibition-by-the-Italian-photographer-John-R--Pepper#.XEnCT88zbOQ>

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John R. Pepper's deserts are not ultimately the result of travel photography. His photographs, paradoxically, don't take you to the actual places where they are shot. They take you elsewhere, to a new place for your mind and imagination to inhabit.

Matisse once said his art mission was to provide a mental chair for a working-man. Pepper's photographs, instead of entertaining the viewer, offer a chance to get teleported into these mystical places, to roam the rocky plains, to meditate, to bury in there the stress and burnout of urban life in order to come back with new ideas, newly found calm, or just a fresh outlook on life. These photographs intend to be seductive. Fields of rhyming shades and the rhythm of lines appear so enticing that one may wonder if the images were created by an artist, rather than captured by a camera. It is at this juncture that I started seeing how the camera in Pepper's hands becomes a brush or chisel with which he blurs the lines between capturing something already made, and creating something which has never existed.

Who said that deserts are uninhabited? Pepper's work populates them with our thoughts, our dreams. And any ideas they give birth to, where they entangle, give rise to something new and exciting."

--Kirill Petrin, London 2017

ARTIST STATEMENT

Deserts have always fascinated photographers. Often a photographer enters a desert to capture the beauty of the landscape with a setting sun or a beautiful cloud formation and that is the final result. As beautiful as that might be, it was not what I was seeking. I wanted to go further.

My concept, my goal, has been to use the desert as a painter uses a virgin white canvas; and while traveling through different deserts of the world (from Russia to Egypt, Mauritania, Oman, USA etc) I sought to discover what imagery would be revealed to my eye — sometimes it was figurative, sometimes abstract.

In the South Sinai in Egypt, there were tall hills of rocks. Climbing those hills, walking through what appeared to be a simple amalgam of stones, I discovered anthropomorphic figures such as faces, fish, elephants, humans etc. Suddenly the rocks, these non-living elements, were transformed into the opposite: living, expressive, vibrant figures. Traveling in the Nevada desert (USA), or in the vast deserts of Mauritania or the U.A.E. I would look across the plains and see what seemed like "nothing": dead trees or a grouping of cactus plants. After walking through and around them, allowing my eye to wander freely, keeping my mind empty, without pre-conception, these inanimate objects suddenly became a human being crying to the sky, a couple arguing, a dancer suspended in air. In the dunes of the Empty Quarter in U.A.E, the lights and shadows would transform a seemingly neutral valley into the body of a young woman trying to emerge from the sands. In Oman the moving sun would gradually alter a small valley into a beautiful bird. In still another desert, from inside the small puddle of a dried salt lake, a man appears staring at us, resembling a figure from Dante's Inferno and I, like the painter in front of his canvas, with my small Leica, 35mm lens and Ilford film, attempt to capture this image and the soul buried within.

Conceptually I attempt to find the symbiosis between the landscape before me and the imagery buried within me. I do not seek the image rather the photograph finds me. Through this subliminal search hopefully, my photograph, my “canvas“ becomes an expression of my inner being, of what I feel as an artist.

John Randolph Pepper, Italian, (1958) was born and raised in Rome; he lives in Palermo and works worldwide.

Pepper started his career in black & white analogue photography with an apprenticeship to Ugo Mulas at 14. He published his first photograph at 15 and had his first show at 17.

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John R. Pepper, represented by the ‘Art of Foto Gallery’ (St. Petersburg), and The Empty Quarter Gallery (Dubai), is a ‘Cultural Ambassador’ of numerous Italian Institutes of Culture in many parts of the world. Since 2008 he has exhibited his different projects ‘Rome: 1969 — An Homage to Italian Neo-Realist Cinema’, ‘Sans Papier’, ‘Evaporations’ in the United States, France, Italy, the Middle East and Russia. He has published three books and is represented in several major museums around the world.

Since 2015 Pepper has been working on his project ‘INHABITED DESERTS’, where he explores deserts and their effect on time, history and people. ‘INHABITED DESERTS’ debuted in Paris in November 2017.

In November 2018, the project ‘INHABITED DESERTS’ has participated at Paris Photo with the Galerie Sophie Scheidecker. In December 2018 ‘Inhabited Deserts’ will open at The Empty Quarter Gallery in Dubai (U.A.E.).

2019 will take the show to Saint Petersburg, Russia, and then again for a tour of 6 cities before returning to Moscow in 2020. In 2021 it will be seen in Switzerland, the United Kingdom and will tour the United States and finally return to Rome.



Date: 09.01.2019
Country: Bahrain
Web

<http://artbahrain.org/wp2017/inhabited-deserts-john-r-pepper/>

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'INHABITED DESERTS' by JOHN R. PEPPER

Photography December 9, 2018

The Empty Quarter Gallery

Dubai, UAE

12 December 2018 - 27 January 2019

The Empty Quarter Gallery, Dubai in collaboration with the Embassy of Italy to the United Arab Emirates and the Consulate General of Italy presents 'Inhabited Deserts' by photographer John R. Pepper



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In his essay on 'INHABITED DESERTS' Kirill Petrin writes:

"Most people in the Western world are indifferent to deserts. Deserts are away. They are elsewhere. They are thousands of miles away and the definition of empty, and their associations rarely go beyond arid, dead, mystic, frightening, mysterious, flat, hot, cold, beautiful, ugly, dangerous".

John R. Pepper's deserts are not ultimately the result of travel photography. His photographs, paradoxically, don't take you to the actual places where they are shot. They take you elsewhere, to a new place for your mind and imagination to inhabit.

Matisse once said his art mission was to provide a mental chair for a working- man. Pepper's photographs, instead of entertaining the viewer, offer a chance to get teleported into these mystical places, to roam the rocky plains, to meditate, to bury in there the stress and burnout of urban life in order to come back with new ideas, newly found calm, or just a fresh outlook on life. These photographs intend to be seductive. Fields of rhyming shades and the rhythm of lines appear so enticing that one may wonder if the images were created by an artist, rather than captured by a camera. It is at this juncture that I started seeing how the camera in Pepper's hands becomes a brush or chisel with which he blurs the lines between capturing something already made, and creating something which has never existed.

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Image:

© TheEmptyQuarter, John R. Pepper, "Chara sands"



Điểm tin mỹ thuật nhiếp ảnh thế giới – từ 31/12/2018 đến 06/1/2019

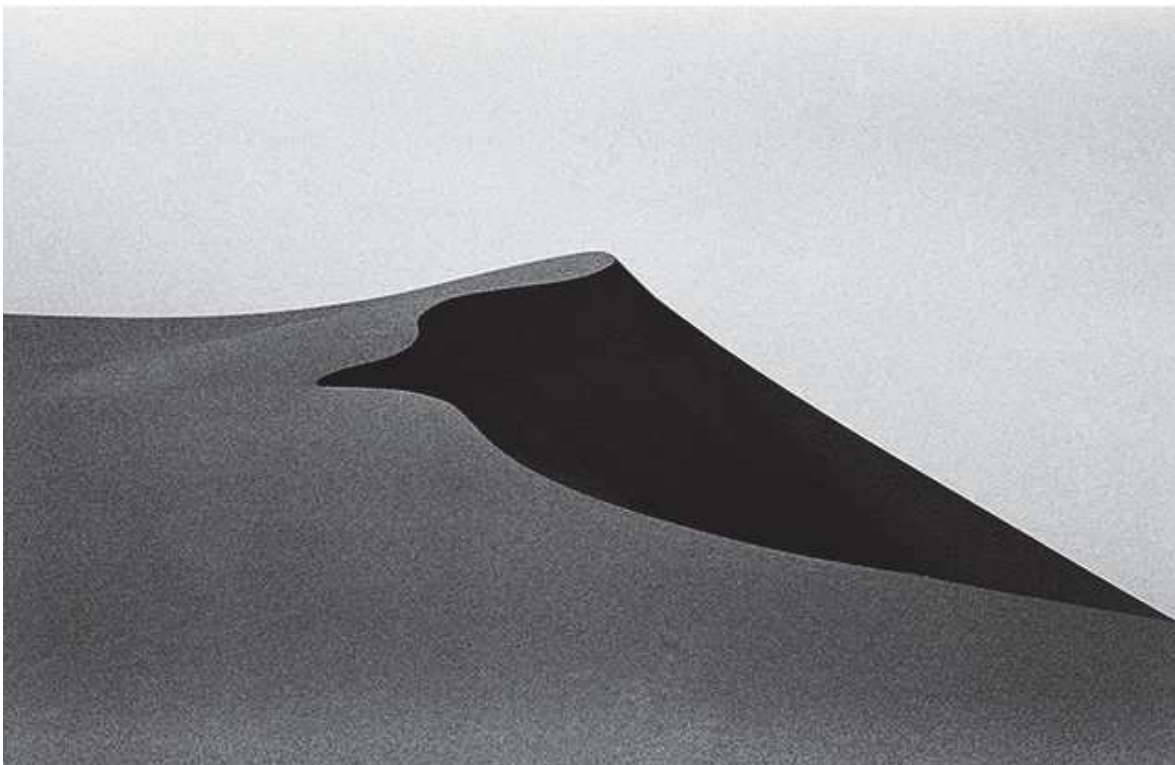
Nguồn:

Andrea Tran (Tổng hợp & Lược dịch) 14/01/2019

Tại DUBAI, Các Tiểu Vương quốc Ả Rập Thống nhất, từ 12/12/2018 đến 15/2/2019, Bảo tàng Empty Quarter giới thiệu triển lãm nhiếp ảnh mang tên "Sa mạc của cố nghệ sĩ nhiếp ảnh nổi tiếng người Ý John R. Pepper. Hầu hết mọi người trong thế giới phương Tây đều thờ ơ với sa mạc bởi vì chúng đại diện cho sự khô cằn, chết, thần bí, đáng sợ, bí ẩn, nóng, lạnh, xấu xí, nguy hiểm. Sa mạc trong ảnh của John R. Pepper không phải là kết quả của loại nhiếp ảnh du lịch. Chúng luôn mê hoặc ông bởi ý niệm 'sử dụng sa mạc như người họa sĩ sử dụng các bức toan trắng;' và trong khi đi qua các sa mạc khác nhau trên thế giới (từ Nga đến Ai Cập, Mauritania, Ô-man, Hoa Kỳ, v.v.), ông đã tìm cách khám phá những gì hình ảnh sẽ được tiết lộ trước mắt - lúc thì có hình tượng, đôi khi lại rất trừu tượng.

(Photoisrael.org)





Một số tác phẩm trong triển lãm. @Empty Quarter Gallery.

BLOG

« ← Pierre-Yves Linot @ School of Visual Arts

Book Review: Taradiddle by Charles H. Traub → »

JOHN R. PEPPER @ The Empty Quarter Gallery

Posted on December 9th, 2018 by [fstop](#)



© TheEmptyQuarter, John R. Pepper, "Chara sands"

JOHN R. PEPPER 'INHABITED DESERTS' December 12th , 2018 – January 27th, 2019

Opening Reception : December 12th, 2018 – 7:00 pm

"John R. Pepper's deserts are not ultimately the result of travel photography. His photographs, paradoxically, don't take you to the actual places where they are shot. They take you elsewhere, to a new place for your mind and imagination to inhabit."

The Empty Quarter Gallery
Gate Village, Bldg 02,
DIFC, Dubai, UAE,


Also published on [Medium](#).

John R. Pepper: Inhabited Deserts

The Empty Quarter Gallery

 DUBAI | UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

DECEMBER 12, 2018-FEBRUARY 15, 2019

 Save to calendar



Artists on show

JOHN PEPPER

The Empty Quarter Gallery, Dubai is delighted to announce the forthcoming exhibition 'Inhabited Deserts' of the Italian photographer John R. Pepper.

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Contact details

 Website +971.4.323.1210 Get in touch

Gate Village, Bldg 02
Dubai, United Arab
Emirates 506697



John R. Pepper: Inhabited Desert

12 December 2018 @ 7.00 pm - 10.00 pm



New photographs – atmospheric monochrome C-Prints – that see Pepper questioning whether man's presence has inexorably altered the landscape. Pepper has combined simultaneous careers as a film and theatre with his photography, concentrating more recently on the latter; *Inhabited Deserts* was first shown in Paris a year ago and is travelling around the world (France, Iran, UAE, Israel, Russia, Italy, USA).

Details

Date:

[12 December 2018](#)

Time:

7.00 pm - 10.00 pm

Event Categories:

Exhibition, Photography

Venue

Empty Quarter Gallery

Gate Village, Bldg 02, DIFC
Dubai, United Arab Emirates + [Google Map](#)

Phone:

+971 4 323 1210

Website:

www.theemptyquarter.com