



UIT IN BRUSSEL • VOS SORTIES À BRUXELLES • OUT AND ABOUT IN BRUSSELS

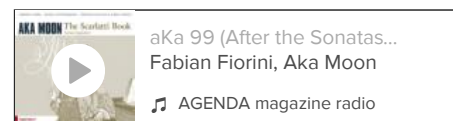
WUNDERKAMMER PEOPLE INTERVIEW EN

Studio visit: John Ryan Brubaker

07/01/15, 11.37 | KURT SNOEKX



AGENDA MAGAZINE RADIO



1	aKa 99 (After the Sonatas of ... Fabian Fiorini, Aka Moon	7:44
2	Dead Bird Eriksson Delcroix	2:39
3	Moe Stoomboot	3:08
4	Sound and Vision - 1999 Rem... David Bowie	3:05
5	Spit on Me Qual	3:19
6	Finally Free Lisa Simone	4:18
7	All Our Thoughts	4:27

Turn right at the broken wine bottle, then take a left at the girl looking out of the window... American photographer John Ryan Brubaker wanders through the city with the unusual soul of a cartographer who is not afraid to get lost. "What I ultimately end up with is always a surprise."



CATEGORIES

ABC	FLASH
NEWS	EXPO
MUSIC	FILM
THEATRE	OUTDOOR
PARTY	COMEDY
CIRCUS	PHOTOGRAPHY
DANCE	FASHION
LITERATURE	COMICS

"If you want to see what a street in Singapore looks like, you can go on Google Street View. I'm not really interested in capturing reality. I think we're a bit stuck in that rational way of looking at the world, in a particular sort of focus and perspective. That's why I like black and white photography: it immediately becomes clear that what you're showing is not reality. I like that reinforcement; I like the fact that you become aware that this is a representation, a simplification, or an abstraction. A colour picture of a certain size that looks too perfect can feel like it's trying to be reality. It's good to shift this all up a little bit, so that we can think of other ways of looking at things." By turning the direction of the tallest building at each intersection, for example, or by following the cracks in the sidewalk, moving against the flow of traffic, trying to cross the city by only turning left, or taking a map of Brussels to Rome and pretending that the Coliseum is the Grand-Place... The veritable pioneer does not recoil from the boundaries that conceal the new and unknown, but in his photographic series *Maps for Getting Lost*, John Ryan Brubaker (1978) actually constantly imposes deliciously absurd constraints on himself to explore the ever expanding, recalcitrant soul of the city – and the self. "These constraints are a bit absurd and funny, but they force me to be where I'm at and not think about where I'm trying to get to. Instead of following known streets, I have to use the city's cues to get around. It's a technique to still be lost in your own city, to break your tendency to follow what you already know."



To really get lost, you have to be fully present. In order to really *be*, you have to be able to lose yourself. In *Maps for Getting Lost*, John Ryan Brubaker surrenders enticingly to the city's pulse, in an attempt to transcend boundaries and open up possibilities. He does so to direct photography away from that one, decisive moment that is supposed to capture a life, in favour of a longer-term view that exposes all the possible lives that you have at your fingertips. "I'm not often interested in this one single image. Making that one epic photograph never really happens, or at least it doesn't happen to me. [Laughs] Catching reality, catching a moment, that's not exactly my style. It is true that in photography, you work with what you see, you're working with reality, but that is the material my work begins from. Going from there, I prefer to think in terms of books, in series, or multiple exposures... But what I ultimately end up with is always a surprise."

PERFORMANCE	OPERA
EAT AND DRINK	SHOP JOY
SLEEPOVER	WUNDERKAMMER
THE RESIDENTS	PEOPLE
KIDS	FESTIVAL
INTERVIEW	REVIEW
NL	EN
FR	THE SOUND OF BRUSSELS

RECENT POSTS

Buiten het kader van het kunstwerk
 Les hymns à l'amour de Bloc Party
 Eefje de Visser: Ik zoek kleur in het leven
 Lubitsch, le maître de la comédie
 Jan Martens gets physical
 See You in Elsene!
 Room
 Louder than Bombs
 Belgica
 Anomalisa

MONTHLY ARCHIVE

JANUARY 2012 (97)
 FEBRUARY 2012 (119)
 MARCH 2012 (140)
 APRIL 2012 (179)
 MAY 2012 (211)
 JUNE 2012 (150)
 JULY 2012 (48)
 AUGUST 2012 (60)
 SEPTEMBER 2012 (161)
 OCTOBER 2012 (154)
 NOVEMBER 2012 (146)
 DECEMBER 2012 (96)
 JANUARY 2013 (132)
 FEBRUARY 2013 (138)
 MARCH 2013 (158)
 APRIL 2013 (140)
 MAY 2013 (149)
 JUNE 2013 (131)
 JULY 2013 (55)
 AUGUST 2013 (59)
 SEPTEMBER 2013 (127)
 OCTOBER 2013 (155)
 NOVEMBER 2013 (149)
 DECEMBER 2013 (93)
 JANUARY 2014 (131)
 FEBRUARY 2014 (135)
 MARCH 2014 (160)
 APRIL 2014 (123)
 MAY 2014 (129)
 JUNE 2014 (107)
 JULY 2014 (40)
 AUGUST 2014 (35)
 SEPTEMBER 2014 (122)
 OCTOBER 2014 (140)
 NOVEMBER 2014 (118)
 DECEMBER 2014 (82)
 JANUARY 2015 (110)
 FEBRUARY 2015 (103)
 MARCH 2015 (112)
 APRIL 2015 (124)
 MAY 2015 (114)
 JUNE 2015 (93)
 JULY 2015 (8)
 AUGUST 2015 (29)
 SEPTEMBER 2015 (75)
 OCTOBER 2015 (89)
 NOVEMBER 2015 (101)
 DECEMBER 2015 (74)
 JANUARY 2016 (99)
 FEBRUARY 2016 (106)

MARCH 2016 (14)

NIEUWS OP BRUSSELNIEUWS.BE

Schaarbeek legt horeca aan banden

Brusselse regering maakt 7,4 miljoen euro vrij voor vluchtelingencrisis

Betere lerarenopleiding moet docent klaarstomen voor diverse grootstad

Ukkel ontdekt betalend parkeren

Regering maakt platform voor data: 'Kan 1.500 jobs en 180 miljoen euro opleveren'

CULTUUR OP BRUSSELNIEUWS.BE

Pianist Yaron Herman treedt op in Flagey: 'Ook voor mensen die niets van jazz kennen'

Expo 'L'image qui vient': buiten beeld

Ook Balthazar en Hooverphonic aangekondigd voor BSF

Opgravingen aan Fontainas leggen brouwerij bloot

Eefje de Visser: 'Ik zoek kleur in het leven'



It is impossible to catch that ever-elusive fire that ignites your curiosity. You approach it carefully, with respect, trust, and full of abandon. Like an intimate dance in which you put yourself on the line. "The *Maps for Getting Lost* are almost choreographies, based on the city itself. The project started years ago, when I didn't have much money and the best free entertainment I could get, was to walk through the city. It was, and still is, a feast to just spend time in the urban space, taking it all in. It started to become almost a ritual for me, and when I started taking my camera along, it came to be this fascinating experience, calming even."



It is like a journey that begins in a city and leads to yourself. "How does this visual environment that we tend to overlook get in our heads? How does it influence us and impact our psychology? People have been asking these questions for sixty, seventy years - they call it 'psychogeography'. It's about the small things, like when they're changing the lights in the city from warm to cold, for instance: how does that change our experience of a place?" Guy Debord and the Situationists aren't the only historical reference points in the work of John Ryan Brubaker. The Surrealist photographers, who did a lot of weird representations with the mundane in the city, are also a leitmotif.



It is thus no surprise that the American photographer – who was recently featured as one of ten young and upcoming Belgian talents in the Antwerp FotoMuseum's *.tiff* magazine – feels great in Brussels, the city that since 2011 he has called home again, after living here for a few years in the early noughties. Every year he spends a long summer in a little 500-person mountain town in West Virginia, where he helps run an art space with some friends. "Well, the surrealists stuck around in Belgium longer than they did anywhere else. And it shows. There really is this surreal influence you can see, not just in art, but also in the sculptures, the squares, the random goings-on in the city... Brussels is fascinating visually, right now especially. I read that there was once a law that copyrighted the facades in Brussels, and so every one of them is unique. It's not like other cities where you might have streets and streets of the same building. It always changes a tiny bit, which gives this additional sort of character. And then of course you have the old and the modern mishmashed all together, so it becomes this chaos. It intrigues me. Brussels is a place that develops as you move through it."



John Ryan Brubaker is currently in his second residency at Greylight Projects, the artist-run residence and project space in the basement of the former Gesù Church. "It is a great space – exactly the kind of inspiring building I love to work in. The Chapel upstairs is crumbling, everything is pretty homemade, the heat has just come in this year. There's nothing fancy about it and it's full of character. There's nice light, no internet access – which is great – and enough room to build." Build? Between his cameras (a 4 by 5 technical Crown Graphic, a cheap, folding 6 by 9 medium format camera, and a Fuji X100) and books by Iain Sinclair, Karen O'Rourke, Paolo Gioli, Joachim Schmid, Douglas Fogle, Roland Barthes, Vilém Flusser, and Italo Calvino, John Ryan Brubaker devotes himself to the long, thoughtful editing and construction of his work. "For me it's a reason to have to use tools and get my hands dirty. You can see where I make little mistakes, but that also means there are bits of me in the production and time. In a way it replicates work in the dark room for me, because I have to sit in here and be very careful and present. As a photographer, these days the image making process can be rather sterile: you print it, you put it in glass, you never even really touch it. But that way you lose a bit of the magic."



And there is more than enough magic going on at John Ryan Brubaker's studio. One wall is decorated with the covers of his *Maps for Getting Lost* book series: behind those strange lines – the tactile line from his GPS track – he pours about 20 pictures into one book, all taken in one day, published in order, and all based on one walk, which generally has one mood or story built into it. "Going out and shooting with a book in the back of your mind is a blessing. You can work a lot more freely. The process is much less stressful and a lot more enjoyable when every picture doesn't have to stand alone perfectly. The essence is in their interaction." There is a very special product of that interaction on the tables. Enormous photos of Singapore and the Nevada desert – with one of Detroit in the making – put together from A4 detail prints, revealing more than just the place. The pictures result from four exposures, shot from a fixed vantage point, and captured on a single frame of film. Considering the different routes available led John Ryan Brubaker to this project. "*Every Path is Viable* evolved out of the *Maps for Getting Lost* series. While working on those books, I spent a good deal of time in intersections, considering what route to take. *Every Path is Viable* is a way of visualising this experience of considering all paths as equally possible." You have all possible lives at your fingertips.



BOROUGH: Sint-Joost-ten-Node/Saint-Josse-ten-Noode

STUDIO: Greylight Projects, greylightprojects.org

GROUP SHOW: "Every Day I'm...", 17/1 > 22/2, Harlan Levey Projects, hl-projects.com

BOOKS: On sale at Tipi Bookshop, Hors Format, Harlan Levey Projects, and FotoMuseum Antwerp

INFO: jrbrubaker.com

jrbrubaker.tumblr.com

Photos © [Heleen Rodiers](#)

