

Photography, Reality and Digital Expression

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Photography is a superficial representation of the human experience and it is shocking and surreal compared to reality. Since photography is a dramatic abstraction, going further is not a diversion from its nature. I have been using the digital media for full creativity and ways of integrating into the image further aspects of human experience of the moment, while the image is still a photograph with strong ties with reality.



Fig 1. Untitled, from the Renkarnasyon series, 1993, (c) Orhan Cem Çetin

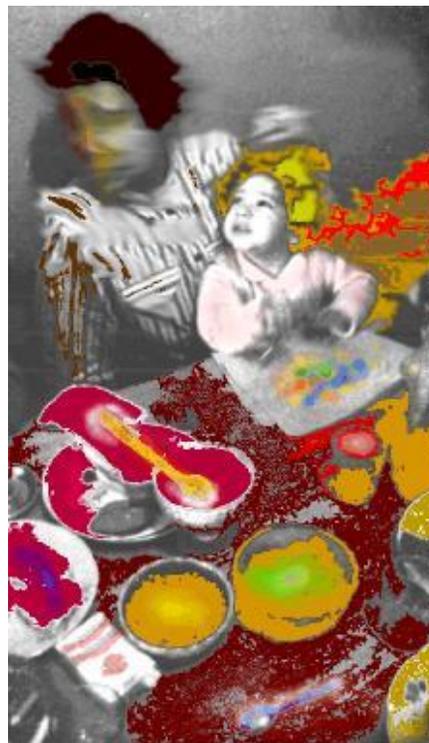


Fig 2. Untitled, from the Renkarnasyon series, 1993, (c) Orhan Cem Çetin



Fig 3. Untitled, from the Renkarnasyon series, 1993, (c) Orhan Cem Çetin

Coexistence of a variety of art disciplines implies that each discipline is very powerful in unique ways while lacking or extremely weak in others. Hence, there is no omnipotent art form. However, artists from different disciplines tend to believe that their own areas of practice have greater potential of expression over others.

Photographers are no exception.

The powers of the photographic image are probably obvious to a photographer. What is not so obvious are its shortcomings and limitations.

How well can a photographic image represent human visual experience? Can the strong ties with reality in certain cases work against the photographer?

The photographic image is an extremely subjective, in fact a shocking and distant representation of reality. It is impossible to avoid the subjectivity and vagueness inherent in the photographic process.

Breaking the assumed link between reality and photography will provide the photographer with further freedom, creativity and self-expression. Use of experimental techniques enables the photographer to highlight his/her personal touch. Traditional photography yields images with extreme visual resemblance since similar cameras, lenses, printing processes etc. are used.

I made two critical decisions about my artistic work in photography:

- The overall technical quality of a photograph must be only as much as required. No more, no less.
- I do not strive to represent reality. I strive to represent how reality appears to me.

Experimenting with early digital imaging techniques made me realize the potential of:

- Unlimited trial and error.
- Instant feedback.
- Huge room for serendipity.
- Total responsibility over the result, as I could have altered it but did not.
- More options for developing a personal style.
- Being able to drift further away from the sense of reality while keeping the photographic characteristics in the image.
- Working on an image turns into a performance as one can improvise on the go.

Presentation includes examples from my following series:

Earliest digital work: **Renkarnasyon** / 1993, Hand scanned prints, digitally altered, colored and exposed back on photographic film.

Stolen Dreams / 1995, Flatbed scanned prints, digitally combined, colored and exposed on color negative film to produce c-prints.

Ticket / 2001, Scanned negatives / transparencies, digitally colored and pigment printed.

And recent work, back to gross experimentation: **Press** / 2011, Digital camera images manipulated in image processing software, Pigment or Lambda c-prints.