

Reading the space as an Entity (Panoramic Photography)

By: Murat Germen (www.MuratGermen.com)

Abstract: No matter how wide of a lens you use, the perception area in a regular one-shot single photo is limited with the particular instance of the spatial sphere around you. On the contrary, when you photograph multiple images and stitch them together in order to widen the perception area, you obtain an entity that brings multiple instances of a particular sphere / world together in one image: A world that cannot be seen to the naked eye at one instance of time, an augmented perception...

Introduction: Usually photographs become visual entities by what is left out beyond the frame; the scene you picture is an isolated individual presence of what you happen to see at a particular fraction of time. Yet, what you see is usually dependent (partially or thoroughly) on some other components on the periphery of what you photograph. Therefore; the moment, character, theme, event or concept that you visualize should not always be abstracted from its setting that constitutes the whole. Panoramic photography as a medium of expression, gives you the opportunity to capture the whole, while still focusing on what you need to express.

Exposition: Regular panoramic photographs, frequently taken outdoors, catch the horizon line as a spinal element that aligns all parts in the image on one static baseline. Alignment, as we all know, is one of the most important Gestalt principles that make people perceive things as a group, and the horizon line is one of the most daily instances of this precept due to the fact that it secures all objects on earth on one line: Horizon line can be considered as the base point of gravity, the physical rationale of our existence on earth, the foundation... If you make the hypothetically linear horizon line fade and get distorted as a curvilinear unit, the perception of space changes quite drastically, since you happen to alter the regular order and sequence of things in the resulting image. Horizon line in this instance ceases to be the core of the scene; rather, it becomes a subliminal object, as a comparable element to others in the scene. The resulting visual conglomerate depicts the richness of space around us in a more detailed manner and yields an unintentional "collage" esthetics that in turn, leads to a "real" illusion.

By stitching multiple photos together and showing multiple aspects of a place / life all at once, the photographer has the opportunity to convey the "spirit" of the theme in a more comprehensive and furthermore "correct" way. In addition, this transmission process offers the beholder the possibility of generating self-associations beyond what the photographer suggests through his/her work. Another dimension of this practice is the presence of light within the panoramic photos. While you can depict one or two characters of light at most (sunny, cloudy, direct, diffused, overexposed, underexposed, highlights, shadows) in a regular one-frame photograph, it is possible to portray light with a richer variety in a panoramic photo that offers the possibility of recording many different states of luminosity on a single image.

Another advantageous aspect of stitched panoramic photography is the fact that the recording process is spread to different time phases and the result is an idiosyncratic synchronization of asynchronous moments. If there is a moving object / subject in the scene and if your panning motion follows this object, it is possible to have multiple versions of the same thing on one panoramic image. This perceptual asynchrony offers a lot of potential in creating peculiar readings of places and life in general. Semir Zeki, in his two different papers, asserts that "recent evidence has shown that the processing systems are also perceptual systems in that activity in each can result in a percept without reference to the other systems; each processing-perceptual system terminates its perceptual task and reaches its perceptual endpoint at a slightly different time than the others, thus leading to a perceptual asynchrony in vision - color is seen before form, which is seen before motion, with the advantage of color