

The Path of Least Resistance

Dealing with resistance

The path of least resistance. This is the path that the natural seeks, says photographer and architect Gabriela Torres Ruiz. "The water, for example. It flows into a space and fills it completely. As soon as it finds an opening, it flows out. It flows its way." **Being in the flow. Being in Flow.**

I became aware of Gabriela's photographs through an article in Emergence Magazine. The images touched me in a way that made me return to them again and again. They speak a mysterious language. Following an impulse, at some point I wrote to the photographer about how her pictures affect me.

And so it happens that I share a zoom room with Gabriela, and she tells me about her work. *The path of least resistance.* This is the name of the series of visual images and the project Gabriela is currently working on. This will result in an exhibition that will be on view at Kunstquartier-Bethanien in Berlin from September 9 to October 2, 2021.

The architecture of the flowing

How can art contribute to the perception of nature in its complexity? And: How can it promote perception, sensitivity and empathy for other forms of life as well as awareness for a harmonious balance between human existence and the natural world? These are the guiding questions Gabriela is grappling with. Inspired by Adrian Bejan's theory *The Constructal Law*, she explored "flow patterns that determine the structure of the entire universe". She found these flow patterns in rivers, neural networks, lightning, the lungs, plant growth, and social dynamics. "Every flow architecture on Earth follows the natural tendency to want to flow more easily. The evolution of its movement always pursues the goal of coming into equilibrium and minimizing resistance."

Dealing (with) resistance

Gabriela's words send me on a journey through time: I see myself as a little girl in school. Taking the path of least resistance was not at all what I and my classmates were supposed to follow. On the contrary, it was rather frowned upon, a sign of laziness and minimalism; qualities that were contrasted in values with diligence and hard work, a virtue that was held in high esteem. It is interesting that most of us students were more inclined to so-called minimalism and could only be seduced to diligence by means of rewards.

Were we trained in such a way that we lost this natural movement over the years? What would have shown up on the now somewhat overgrown path of least resistance?

Playing memory

Gabriela sees the world in associations and connections. She searches for affinities between movements, light, shadows, contours and encounters shapes and patterns of similarity again and again. Shapes that are related to each other. Diptychs or triptychs are called pairs or trilogies of images that are in dialogue with each other. How do these dialogues arise between images, spaces, landscapes that may have been far apart at the moment they were taken?

Gabriela talks about her photo archive, which she has compiled over the years. Collected impressions from different landscapes, captured moods that often show the dark and gloomy, but also the silence. In this collection you can find the images related to each other.

Whether two images speak to each other is often immediately recognizable to her, Gabriela says. The similar patterns show themselves to the viewers immediately. A kind of memory game in which the boundary between searching and finding becomes blurred. And yet this work of searching and finding is essential for the similarity to be revealed to the viewer at all. The lights of a city and the ramifications of a tree. Both are forms that have grown - or perhaps flowed - in a similar movement. Main axes and secondary axes. From thick to thin. From broad to narrow. The scales of a fish and the drawing of the light refracted in the waves. Crescent moons flowing into each other. Scales of light.

Going into connection

It is the way of looking that is oriented towards similarity, affinity of form and movement, that peels out the diptychs and triptychs and brings them into dialogue with each other. This view of what is interconnected seems to me at once unusual and wonderful. To perceive the world in its connectivity, its relatedness, has become rather foreign to us. What separates us is often what we focus on. Our perception is oriented towards what we can differentiate. This is how separations are created. Between thick and thin, young and old, yesterday and today, angular and round, black and white, light and dark, good and bad. Duality instead of dialogue. Eternal dilemma.

The path of least resistance and the kind of perception that opens up to those who walk on it seems promising to me. When I return to the pictures again, a quiet presentiment of the breadth of this horizon, which stretches out over worlds of connections, stirs in me.

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As a researcher and process facilitator, Sabina Fischer is concerned with ethics of attention and is committed to multi-voiced collaborations.

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