



Integral Lens, vol. 1
by Pygmalion Karatzas

A visual journey of contemporary architecture and cityscapes from the United States awarded by Fulbright Foundation Greece.

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Book can be ordered here: <http://www.blurb.com/b/7103787-integral-lens-vol-1>

Foreword [by Prof. Mark DeKay]

Pygmalion Karatzas has been on a journey. My wife, Susanne, and I have had the pleasure of both watching from afar as his visual reports arrived daily, and for some weeks sharing

and celebrating with Pygmalion in Knoxville. These images are the journal of an exploration of the American continent and of an inner journey of man, architect and photographer.

Pygmalion moves fast and shoots slowly. He is constantly in motion, a blur of planning and execution, shooting more images and visiting more buildings than most architects do in a lifetime. But each image is not snapped in infinitesimal automated digital time. Each is carefully composed and shot in long-exposures of minutes' duration using a 10X neutral density filter to reduce the incoming light.

Integral Lens, volume 1, in its 150 selected images, shows both impeccable accomplishment and a continual spirit of beginning. Pygmalion and I share an interest in Integral Theory and his journey through this Fulbright experience has in part been driven by the question, "What is Integral Architectural Photography?" Writing now six weeks after his return to Greece, I am still living into that question. A fuller exploration of the ideas and perspectives embedded in the question of Integral Photography follows in later essays and papers. For now, consider that an integrally-informed photography is multi-perspectival and views the phenomena of both architecture and photography from the standpoint of Self, Culture and Nature. The integral photographer can inhabit all of these, shifting from an aesthetic perspective, to a symbolic interpretation, to an empirical and calculated view of its subjects.

By the perspective of Self, we mean the subjective sense of one's perception and intentions. Our most basic relationship to a photograph is visual. These images manifest a photographic "aesthetic eye" that is immediately discernable. When people see these images, they often respond with visceral sounds or gasps from the visual impact. The origin, one might speculate, of the power that *Integral Lens* manifests begins with that choice of subject, perspective and framing that has always characterized photography and any two-dimensional representational media.

By the perspective of Culture, we mean the cultural context of interpretation and our shared meanings. In both his "editorial" and "artistic" approaches, Pygmalion is aware of the history of his craft. Both kinds of work carry meanings, whether a commentary on the contemporary American city in an urban waterscape or the impact of a recent building in an editorial image. While he is reluctant to limit the viewer's right to interpretation, his methods consciously generate new contexts that facilitate sustained inquiry into interpreting the built and natural environments.

By the perspective of Nature, we mean the objective world in both its mechanics and its complexity. Here we find a master of mobile, professional, long-exposure photographic technique and of contemporary digital post-processing in Photoshop and Light Room. The end results are an integration of inspired artistic vision and carefully studied craft with skills born of countless hours. In terms of the complexity of exteriors, his is a work embedded in the social and economic contexts of our time, from online and digital

publication to various forms of social media, magazines and journals. The *Integral Lens* has behind the images a network of associations with other photographers, architects, galleries, critics, friends, family and thinkers. One can only stand amazed at the socio-economic ecosystems that have supported such vast productivity.

Another dimension to an integral understanding of photography can be revealed by considering the photographer, the photograph and its subject, and the viewing of the photograph. The photographs themselves take a range of subjects, both city and nature, buildings and contexts, interiors and exteriors, wholes and parts, full of people and empty of habitation, frozen structures and dynamic skies—cityscapes, urban waterscapes and wild landscapes. The wide-angle Karatzas lens ranges widely. In his framing, you will find the conventional perspective, and the unconventional, such as the fully vertical view and the vertical panorama shot—along with an unapologetic embrace of the modern and post-modern taboo on symmetry. And how such symmetry still touches us deeply! Pygmalion’s combination of wide-angle lens, detailed full-frame digital SLR camera, long exposure and high-resolution RAW format post-processing combine to have the effect of capturing a larger perspective, both geometrically and in time than we are used to seeing. The image takes a view that would require one in person to pivot one’s head, to “zoom” one’s focus from detail to a whole scene, and to simply stay put and observe what changes and what does not. The collapsing of time and space like this within a two-dimensional image is for me a source of contemplation and a lesson about the limits of what we think we see.

The photographer holds intentions in producing the work, along with a personal interpretation of the building or landscape. In making the photograph, the artist creates from a state and stage of consciousness. I suggest that the reader consider that part of what is conveyed when viewing the photographs of *Integral Lens*, is the potential to enter into or at least glimpse the awareness that created it. If integral consciousness is “aperspectival” (meaning beyond individual perspectives), as Jean Gebser put it, then something of this lens is available to viewers of this work. Although filled with page-turning anticipation about what comes next, this is not work to be glanced over as a coffee-table fashion book. I encourage you to take a long-exposure view of each image. Let the *Integral Lens* take you somewhere.

Prof. Mark DeKay
author, *Integral Sustainable Design: transformative perspectives*
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