

THESSALONIKI – PHYSIOGNOMY



Mike Pearson and I have started a new collaboration around theatre/archaeology – *the rearticulation of fragments of the past as real time event* – [Link] to a prospectus.

As part of this revival I am reviewing some of my photography projects from the last three decades, explaining and adding commentary. Many are at archaeographer.com.

I have found **photowork** (and I use the term deliberately) a wonderful way of thinking through issues of the archaeological imagination (Connie Svabo and I have written about such connections recently in a new collection of essays edited by Alfredo Ruibal on contemporary archaeology's broad cultural disposition, and due out next month from Routledge [Link]).

These experiments are as much about the process of making photos, images, documents as they are about the photographs that result – hence *photowork*. The camera and the process of image making is an architecture, an assembly of photographer, instrument, medium (digital sensor or photochemistry), subject/object of interest, location, and event. There is little stylistic or formal unity to my photography; the image *per se* is not my *primary* concern.

So here am I in Thessaloniki in 2006 with Pelagia Astrinidou, architect and conservator, showing me around her city, ancient and modern.

Media matters. I used color transparency film (Fuji Provia) run through a quite discreet Leica camera and a remarkable lens, a 50mm “Noctilux”. This accounts for much of the look of these images – the grain, color balance, the range of contrast in the gloomy interiors of the covered markets. This texture and the selective focus draws attention to the medium – and that’s the point – the glass and the chemistry are evident.

Here are a few details of everyday **quiddity** – the sensory qualities of meat and fish, wet stone floors, the glare of electric light bulbs The narrative is very simple – people at work; these images are more concerned with everyday noise, the background against which lives get lived. In certain places – there’s a strong sense of place evident here too – what I call **haecceity** – hereeness.

The medium intervenes. Catching people’s gaze is a key component of urban photography like this, because, for me, it marks the intervention, the intermediation of the instrument, the camera, both connecting and distancing. The returned gaze is literally arresting – it halts the commotion of the scene.

The slideshow works best at HD resolution – 1080p.

Those with a forensic disposition will notice that a few of the photos cannot be of Thessaloniki in 2006 – they are indeed taken in a harbor front market on Aegina during a visit with Chris Witmore in 2000.