



NICOLAS RUEL PROJECT 8 SECONDS

BY FELIX RUSSO



Montreal born, Nicolas Ruel was driven to photography by a deep-seated passion. "I was undeniably inhabited by it, and it compelled me to move forward, to discover." Over the past seven years he has been involved in a major project called "8 secondes." The work began in 2007 and will see its completion in 2015. In 2009 Ruel exhibited "Project 8 secondes." at the Galerie Orange in Montreal, the Thompson Landry Gallery, in Toronto, and the Galerie Seine 51, in Paris.

Ruel is fascinated with the fact that photography is both artistic and very technical. The project 8 secondes presented challenges in both areas. He wanted to "revisit the image of the world's greatest cities." His first city was Paris, followed by London. At first he planned on documenting 16 cities. As the project became bigger and bigger it grew to 50 cities. Now, nearing the end of the project he has decided to add 12 more.



“EVERY DAY I AM AMAZED BEHIND THE MAGIC THAT IS PHOTOGRAPHY.”

Ruel had been experimenting with long exposures prior to this project. He asserts in his artist statement, “This long exposure makes it possible to assemble key moments in a single take, analogous to the process of condensation in dreams. Thus, in this dolly shot, I translate the actions and spectacle of the city and its residents as I follow their unceasing movement.” As for the locations he seeks out, he says, “I am fascinated by transitory and transitional sites — places that in their nature and function incarnate motion and metamorphosis, such as ports, terminals, docks, highways, construction sites, churches, and stadiums.”

Although everything in the eight-second exposure is in the scene, the resulting image is not a visual document but rather an artistic interpretation. It is a unique point of view and Ruel tries to imbue it with meaning and vision. The images have a sensuous quality and seem like dreams, moving pictures crystallized and condensed into one scene. Ruel calls these micro-métrages or micro movies. The ebb and flow of time is

felt in each image. Ruel states, “Motion is at the heart of most of the images I create. The subject is constantly in motion. I’m in motion. The camera and the subject are in motion.”

The locations are iconic and revive images and feelings from the past. We have experience with what the world looks like if we could freeze 1/125 of a second. Ruel presents his vision of what the world looks like if we could freeze eight seconds. Although frozen in one frame, the motion and passing of time is clearly felt.

On the technical side Ruel has a strong interest in modern industrial material. He has experimented with the metal-printing process and took the bold move to print the 8 secondes project on large-format stainless steel plates. He refers to this as a flashback to the daguerreotype process where the image was printed on a polished copper plate. The stainless steel gives the image a reflective quality and brings to mind the initial name given to daguerreotypes: “the mirror with a memory.”



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Ruel considers himself very fortunate to be able to travel around the world and use the medium of photography to be creative. He states, "Every day I am amazed behind the magic that is photography. We live in a special time — one of the best times I could be born is right now." His advice is to find a way to express your dreams in a very unique way and go for it. He says, "Shoot and shoot. You never know how far you can go. Be open to different things — even things that are not connected to

your kind of photography. Look for collaborations with artists in other fields, such as painters, sculptors, architects." Ruel has been applying his own advice in the past few years, the most notable example being his collaboration with the French fashion house Maison Jean-Paul Gaultier. For Ruel, the most important part of this collaboration was "sharing a dream or a vision." This is something we can apply to any kind of photography and, by doing so, we will elevate our art to another level.