Since ten years, the internationally acclaimed film director and photo artist Franziska Stünkel has been travelling through Asia, Africa, Europe, and America in search of natural reflections in shop windows, which, in their concentration, tell of the coexistence of human life. Charged with the utmost complexity, her photographs are the visualization of the similarities and contrasts that exist in our multifaceted, networked world. The artist completely dispenses with the digital post-processing of her photographs. The result is a multi-layered view of the highly topical question of coexistence in our present time, supplemented with texts by well-known authors and scientists from various fields, for instance artificial intelligence, biology, psychology, happiness studies, linguistics, culture, and anxiety research.

Franziska Stünkel examines sociopolitical issues in her movies. The photographic series Coexist depicts her globe-encompassing search for peaceful coexistence. Both as director and screenwriter, Franziska Stünkel is currently realising the movie Nahtschuss, starring Lars Eidinger, Devid Striesow and Luise Heyer. The movie is inspired by the life of Dr. Werner Teske, who was the last person to be executed in the former GDR (German Democratic Republic). The shooting took place in November and December 2019, the movie will be released in cinemas in 2020.

Franziska Stünkel’s reflections in metropolises on all continents are exciting commentaries on coexistence in a globalized world.
Authors and essays in the book COEXIST:

- Karin Rehn-Kaufmann, Art Director & Chief Representative Leica Galeries International (COEXIST I INTRODUCTION I FRANZISKA STÜNKENL)

- Prof. Dr. Jannis Androutsopoulos, Linguist, University of Hamburg, Germany (COEXIST I LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE)

- Prof. Dr. Borwin Bandelow, Psychiatrist and Phobia Researcher, University of Göttingen, Germany (COEXIST I FEAR)

- Prof. Dr. Türker Baş, Organizational Psychologist, Galatasaray University Istanbul, Turkey (COEXIST I OXYTOCIN)

- Bela B Felsenheimer, Musician, Writer and Actor, Germany (COEXIST I CO-EXIST)

- Karen Guggenheim, Founder World Happiness Summit, University of Miami, USA (COEXIST I HAPPINESS)

- Mark Stephen Meadows, Entrepreneur, Author and Inventor, Los Angeles, USA (COEXIST I ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

- Dr. Florian Langenscheidt, Author and Founder of Children for a better World, Berlin, Germany (COEXIST I IDENTITIES)

- Piotr Młodozeniec, Graphic Designer, Warsaw, Poland (COEXIST I SIGN)

- Iris Phan, Lawyer and Philosopher, University of Hanover, Germany (COEXIST I SEX ROBOTS)

- Moritz Rinke, Playwright and Novelist, Berlin, Germany (COEXIST I VISION)

- Anno Saul, Film Director, Berlin, Germany, Germany (COEXIST I PROCESSES)

- Prof. Bernhard Schlink, Writer and Jurist, New York, USA / Berlin, Germany (COEXIST I HEIMAT)

- Dr. Georg Toepfer, Biologist, Berlin, Germany (COEXIST I BIOLOGY)


From the introduction by Karin Rehn-Kaufmann:

Coexist denotes the exuberant diversity of visual impressions from the journeys, the commonalities and similarities, as well as visible contrasts that clash in urban spaces. In Stünkel’s motifs, regional specificities or cultural traditions, along with globalized convergences of urban street scenes, are united with the individual phenomena and self-dramatizations of protagonists who appear in the images entirely by chance. “Mirrorings enable simultaneous life to get noticed. We all live in coexistence, sometimes even without consciously realizing it. I look for the visualization,” the photographer explains in an interview. (…)

Cities are the only suitable places for her series. The streets and squares of metropolises offer the necessary stages for the scenes and ingenious mirror motifs of Coexist. However, unlike the authors of traditional street photography, Stünkel has almost no interest in passers-by themselves or in documenting street life, but elaborates a constant consolidation of different but simultaneous moments. Her street-photography strategy is definitely more complex than merely detecting the crucial moment. Complex image structure is used as a synonym of the multilayered urban space. These are no snapshots, but acutely perceived visual tableaus. In Stünkel’s motifs, reality is shaped into a sensitive form of abstraction. The composition that she saw is irretrievably lost in the next half-second. Her works’ most important creative features are the factors of light, transparency, and colors. Over and over again, it is astonishing how the photographed objects appear to lose their materiality and specific boundedness to the respective location, and take on new forms in an artistically fragile state. (…)

Despite their initial apparent casualness, the artist has created works that make an impact and report very impressively on our present-day globalized world. While her motifs seem to be timeless and not very typical of any locality, their consistency ensures that they are an excellent mirror of our times after all. They depict a cross-section of modernity’s metropolises, an interplay of the many coexisting destinies of people living today and of the architecture and urban landscape that surround them. Employing the universal language of emotions, Franziska Stünkel creates her own, artistically extravagant visual worlds out of the locations’ initial strangeness. The series is therefore right up to date and emblatizes — perhaps more vividly than anything else — the attitude toward life of a globalized, dynamic generation of contemporary creative artists. Stünkel’s studio is the world. It is no surprise that the camera is both her most important and her favorite tool.
Press images

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