

Christian Voigt - Biography

“I was always looking for a platform that allows me to express myself creatively. There was never any lack of creativity.”

Christian Voigt, Hamburg, November 2008

Nowadays, finding a niche for yourself, a place where you are content with yourself and where you can stand your ground, is difficult enough. However, to successfully find a niche for yourself in the vast world of photography and to move and inspire other people with your art while at the same time being at peace with yourself sounds almost inconceivable.

Christian Voigt managed to do just that. For the Hamburg-based photographer, taking pictures is much more than just a job. To him, photography is art and his way of expressing himself. And also his source of strength. Any maybe even the certainty that, after many years, he has finally found what he was always looking for. The 47-year-old does not claim that his picture are exclusive. “I am not the only one to do what I am doing”, he says. “Every photo has been taken before, but that one centimetre of a difference at the top, bottom, left or right is what makes the picture interesting later on. I try to provide the pictures I take with a personal note.”

The fact that he succeeds in doing so becomes clear to the viewer as soon as he sees the photographer’s work. His pictures characterised by HDR (High Dynamic Range) technology resemble pieces of art, even paintings. They are composed with precision and style – in the eyes of the viewer, colour, light and subject melt into one fantastic composition. A feast for the senses. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Voigt attributes major importance to emotions. Nothing is worse than a shrug of the shoulders – Voigt wants to take the viewer’s emotions on a rollercoaster ride, to trigger an impulse, a feeling. And fascinatingly, he manages to do so time and time again with his carefully processed and artistically arranged subjects. Whether architecture, view of the city, portrait or landscape photographs – it’s the details that count and make the frequently captivating difference.

And yet life originally had something else in store for Christian Voigt. Although the son of a dynasty of publishers was only given his first “proper” camera at the age of 17, photography had always played a role in his life before then. “Animated by my father, I started taking pictures at a very young age”, says

Christian Voigt. "There were always cameras around at home. Photos were being taken all the time. For my father, the publisher, photography was one of his major hobbies, almost a passion. I virtually breathed in photography through my father." In his twenties, he wanted to let his creativity run free. University in Berlin, film studies in Vancouver, Canada. "After completing my film studies, I made, wrote and directed films. All of that was suddenly over when my father passed away."

That was in 1988. That same year also saw the death of Voigt's beloved grandmother Isolde. She, too, had been an enthusiastic photographer who always had her Leica with her and was always taking pictures, even when she was very old. It was these two strokes of fate within one year that changed the life of the prospective artist. A crucial experience for Voigt. "Following the early death of my father, I joined the publishing company – at 28 years of age. That changed my life and therefore also the creativity." And his longing to become a photographer's assistant and later a photographer himself receded into the distance.

For twenty years, Voigt, representing the fourth generation, managed his parents' publishing company. Until it was sold in January of 2007. However, photography never ceased to be an important element of the artist's life. It had become a passion a long time ago, just like it had for his father and also his grandmother. Voigt continued the good family tradition of bringing the camera on his travels. He gradually became more familiar with the world of photography, tried different techniques, refined and developed his skills. Until the desire to turn the passion into a profession became overwhelming and creativity once again took centre stage in Voigt's life. "At some stage, I simply allowed myself to live my dream", says Voigt. "I was the fourth generation of a family of publishers, I was not required to set up my own business, but simply had to take over. I was lucky and it was luxury, but it was not what I had in mind. My motivation was to do my own thing, to develop something, to use my hands to establish something."

His desire was triggered by the pictures his grandmother and his father had taken before him. Genuine treasures which Voigt had always admired. And once again, chance intervened: "After my grandmother Isolde had passed away, I was emptying her house one day, in which I used to play when I was only a child. Everything was gone – except for two large wooden boxes in one corner, which contained almost 200,000 negatives dating back up to one hundred years", recalls Christian Voigt. "I was speechless. It was like a journey through time for me – through history, but also my family. Suddenly, I had access to new dimensions which had never been accessible to me in the past. That was a crucial experience for me, that was how it all started."

Which resulted in Voigt selling the publishing company, which had been a family business for four generations. One hundred years of family history in

the shape of pictures – that was what tipped the scale for Voigt and encouraged him to continue his own history and this tradition.

Very successfully so. Today, the photos of his ancestors form part of the basis of “Christian Voigt Collection & Photography”, which has attracted worldwide attention. So rather than being lost, the works of his father and grandmother are made accessible to the public and appropriately admired within the framework of the collection. Besides his own at this stage groundbreaking achievements as a photographer, this is what motivates Voigt time and time again. “Despite all the progress we have made – my family lived just like I do. That never ceases to amaze me when I look at the pictures taken by my father and my grandmother. Every single day since, I have been happy about what I do.”