

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

ART

Why These Striking Images of Cathedrals Take Up to a Year to Complete

German photographer Markus Brunetti compiles thousands of detail shots of historic façades into a single, hyper-realistic portrait

Text by Brook Mason | Posted February 2, 2018

Centuries-old cathedrals, churches, cloisters, and synagogues are a bit overlooked in this high-tech, minimalist age. But German photographer Markus Brunetti has taken a somewhat techie approach to capturing detailed images of such historic monuments, the subject of his new show, "Markus Brunetti: FACADES—Grand Tour," at the [Chelsea Yossi Milo Gallery](#).

The Dresden-based photographer throws into light the very complex façades of a range of monuments, from the Notre Dame Cathedral in Amiens to a rustic church in a remote town in Norway, in minute detail. When it comes to finalizing a single image, Brunetti exhaustively photographs each architectural detail close up, from small stone sculptures flanking a stained glass window to richly carved doors. And he can spend up to an entire year taking thousands of high-resolution frames of one subject.



"I then strip out all modern-day elements, from streetlights to cars, and finally select individual images," Brunetti reports. Next he compiles them into his hyper-realistic interpretation of a complete façade.

"The builders and architects that built the churches had to be patient. Most of them never saw the finished result of their endeavors, as it would take decades or hundreds of years to complete the buildings," states Brunetti. "I try to work on this series with the same spirit and patience they must have had when starting to work on those now historic monuments."

Because of the large scale of his images, with some more than four feet in height, there's an experiential nature to his oeuvre. The viewer literally feels as if he or she has stepped back in time and is standing right in front of the building the very day it was completed. "To me, they're akin to photographic drawings on paper similar to the architects' or builders' original plans and the engravings of Old Masters," says Milo.

While Brunetti and his partner, Betty Schoener, maintain a studio in Germany's fourth-largest city, they're constantly traveling in a trailer that Milo dubs "a self-contained computer lab on wheels." The peripatetic duo have just completed documenting the ornate façades of churches, basilicas, and synagogues in Lithuania, Italy, Portugal, England, and France.

Where are they set to travel in the coming months? "Russia and Middle Asia, so we can expand our series and reflect the very diversity of sacred architecture," says Brunetti.