

atives of financial calculation. Space is drained of its long-standing qualitative features and its meanings and uses are determined by the wealth which can be extracted from it. The dynamism of urban culture over the last 150 years has been due to the persistence of alternative ways of constructing social spaces and networks. But in Dubai we see an extreme form of what the political thinker Guy Debord called "the suppression of the street" and all its potential unruliness and spontaneity. Sternfeld reveals a "city" from which history has been excluded except as spectacle (a mural of Renaissance Venice, a replica of a Chinese sailing ship). This dislocation of space from historical time implies a place where nothing unforeseen or unplanned can happen. Of course this is a fantasy, as the numerous incidents of strikes and protests in Dubai by imported laborers and workers attest. Perhaps also the impact of global recession has left visible traces in its sleek surfaces, more "for sale" signs on its lavish condominiums, but its essential topography and operation no doubt remain unchanged.

To reiterate, what interests Sternfeld most is the actuality of people within this simulation of public space. We see image after image of individuals who manifest in various ways that particularly modern condition of displacement, in which one's physical presence in a specific location is blurred and dispersed. What once would have been a contradictory state of being scattered among two or more places simultaneously becomes normalized. Not only is it a question of proliferating communication technologies but it is equally a result of a built environment, which despite its myriad attractions and seductions is incapable of engaging its inhabitants in any authentic or holistic connections. Sternfeld reveals this fundamental incongruity, where people are like drops of water gliding aimlessly on an utterly impermeable material. He pinpoints in his pictures a loose association of psychological states that are beyond boredom or indifference, beyond anticipation of something novel or unexpected.

Rarely has the pursuit of shopping in an affluent ambiance been presented as such a cheerless and somnambulant activity. We are far removed from the nineteenth-century arcades of Paris and other cities, the remote architectural ancestors of today's megamalls. It was within these expansive and well-lit interiors that the mobility and sensory stimulation associated with the intertwining of strolling, shopping and looking produced part of the template for a modern-