

JAMES ROBERT DURANT

ARTIST STATEMENT / BIO

For over a decade James Robert Durant has explored the perception of the purchase-able paradise. His stressed photographs of tropical destinations challenge the overflow of what pervasive propaganda advertising campaigns commonly sell as the proverbial paradise. The works confront the 'language of consumerism' and offer a new dialect of tropical dreamscapes impervious to the protocols of advertising. The imagery invokes a query as to the over-influence of commercial advertising and digitally enhanced propaganda on public perception. Durant touches on the ethics of photography, and the powerful ability it possesses to manipulate the boundaries of reality, perception, and desire.

Using stressed photography and composite techniques with acrylic, Durant assembles photographic scenes and landscapes that blur the line between reality and fantasy and the passing of time. His timeless images refreshingly remind us that paradise is not a consumable, despite as advertised, but rather, an energy shaped by our experiences and choices. A single tropical scene may be assembled from photographs taken in several different exotic countries and locations. Using multiple image references Durant creates dream-like landscapes and tropical scenes of idyllic fantasy. The contrast of stressed vintage colours and brilliant exotic locations form a series of illusions dancing playfully with the conventional description of photographs as "dreams only money can buy".

"Human behaviour is shackled to the sun. At the equator, the sun is closest to the earth's surface, beckoning visitors to its warmer tropical climate. Stripped of heavy baggage, both emotional and material, tourists travel light. Tickets are booked, hotels are erected, pools are filled, and drinks are served. It has become my vice to understand this movement of behaviour beyond simple geography. The sun's close proximity at the equator also spawns daylight that is more yellow than anywhere else in the world. I always try to use photography beyond its traditional definition of recording light reflecting off objects. Coupled with reflected light, I capture the image through the daylight that is yellow-bent. As a result, no "true blacks" are generated in the images and a nostalgic look reveals itself. A 'travel light' is born."

Durant studied Applied Photography at Sheridan College in Oakville, Ontario. He graduated as Top Scholar in photography in 2003. Later that year, he boarded the Dawn Princess as a cruise line photographer for Princess Cruises. He returned to Toronto in 2004 with an extended portfolio and inspiration from the fascinating fantasy of vacationers, resorts and cruise life. This inspiration led to new bodies of work dealing with his interpretation of the concept of "all-inclusive".