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Cities unknown

Photographs and commentary by Hans-Georg Esch



Hans-Georg Esch, "Tianjin 01", 2010

Tianjin was one of the first cities we visited for our Cities Unknown project in early 2010. What first struck us was the fact that Tianjin looked so familiar with its highways and city centre; everything seemed to have just come up out of the ground. For the photograph, we had to find a high point to get this particular sight. We checked into a local hotel with a rooftop which promised us the right view. After having moved into our room, we explained our plan to the staff and they gave us access to the roof. The view was stunning, and we tried to capture as many light conditions as possible. This particular shot was done in the early hours: the highway lights had just come on and lit up the streets, and hardly any cars were around that early in the morning.

The proof of China's rise to world power lies not so much in the prosperity of her famous cities—but in the quiet, massive growth of mega-urbs that have no need for fame



Hans-Georg Esch, "Chongqing 02", 2010

It was a big challenge to photograph Chongqing: we not only experienced one of the biggest cities worldwide (it has over 32 million inhabitants), but we also had to deal with the local weather conditions—which in Chongqing means fog. During certain periods of the year the visibility in the area is very poor. The perspective in the photograph, which shows the prominent location where the Yangtze River and the Jialing River come together, was only possible when the haze allowed us to see the buildings on the other side of the river. For this shot we went up to the location several times to get the lighting situation and visibility which suited us. Sometimes photography has a lot to do with waiting, patience, and the intuition to press the release at the right moment.

— HANS-GEORG ESCH

Photographs selected from the exhibition *Chinas Millionenstädte* (Cities Unknown) by HG Esch, September 2010 to January 2011 in Köln, Germany. For more, see <http://www.citiesunknown.de/>