

REGEN PROJECTS

Egeland, Vetle. "James Welling on his photo '1538'." Document (June 13, 2018) [ill.] [online]

DOCUMENT



"1538" 2016. Photography by James Welling.

Text by
Vetle Egeland
Photography by
James Welling
Posted
June 13, 2018

For Contact Sheet, Document asks a photographer about the unseen story of a frame that defines their work.

Date taken: 2016

Location: New York & San Francisco

1538 is a work from my recent photograph series called *Choreographs*, which is part of a larger body of work called *Multichannel Works*. I have been working on this since 2013 and I place different photographs into each of Photoshop's three color channels—red, green and blue.

The fall of 2014, I lived in New York whilst I taught at Princeton. I hired a group of student dancers from Columbia and they appeared in *1538*. I photographed the dancers outside on the West Side Highway. When I looked at the images a month later, I realized my assistant J.R. Valenzuela had captured the same moment as myself. His picture however, featured me photographing the group of dancers, which I thought would be interesting to combine with my image.

REGEN PROJECTS

In addition to images of dance, I used images of architecture, sculpture or landscape. I was in San Francisco for 1538 and was photographing architecture and sculpture, when I came across this large, concrete sculpture in Embarcadero that celebrates the Quebec Independence movement.

1538 went through about two weeks of trying different things: many versions, painting parts of the picture, eliminating parts of the channels to eventually arrive at the final image. One of the things I'm fascinated by in this picture, is the indication of a process where certain parts of the picture come through, certain parts recede. So, there's a very powerful graphic element. I'm very sensitive to the history of alternative color processes from the sixties.

When I started working with a digital camera I decided to title the works after the four digit camera file. The camera spits out some letters and digits, so I'm taking the easy route just numbering, not titling them. Although most of the images I have, I give common names and the common name for this 1538 is "Self Portrait."

With *Choreographs* the challenge is to create something I haven't seen before. I have no idea how these different channels are going to work together and what happens when I apply transformations to them. It's a way of working with very unexpected results, which is something I'm very interested in.