



Jean-René Leblanc, *Greekopolis (No. 1)*, 2015

Digital infrared photography, 22 in. x 66 in. (55.8 cm x 167.64 cm). Personal collection of the artist.



Jean-René Leblanc, *Greekopolis (No. 2)*, 2015

Digital infrared photography, 22 in. x 66 in. (55.8 cm x 167.64 cm). Personal collection of the artist.



Jean-René Leblanc, *Greekopolis (No. 3)*, 2015

Digital infrared photography, 22 in. x 66 in. (55.8 cm x 167.64 cm). Personal collection of the artist.

Artist Statement

As a visual artist engaged with digital media, cultural issues and critical theory, I use a variety of media to express the concepts with which I work. My artistic research uses photographic imagery, video, interactivity, sound and visualization to discover and explore new ways of making the invisible visible.

Since 2012, I have been using digital infrared photography to investigate spaces and places with strong historical and cultural significance. *Greekopolis* is a body of work that uses this format to develop new ways of looking at the world we live in. Shot in Greece between June 15 and July 15, 2015, the project proposes a series of diptychs juxtaposing images of ancient and modern ruins to generate a dialogue between—and about—contemporary and historical landscapes and economic practices.

As an artist, I generally use the camera as a means to connect with my social and cultural environment, in order to express something personal. *Greekopolis* contrasts the overwhelming sense of connection that I experienced while immersed amidst the ruins of ancient Greece, with the feelings evoked by the many skeletal and abandoned cement housing developments that currently populate the Greek landscape. These “new ruins” (a byproduct of modern financial turbulence) are now a permanent part of the Greek landscape, left behind as indexical signs of the country’s current economic and cultural reality. By juxtaposing photographs of both types of ruin, I intend to equalize their importance in a place filled with postcard expectations of beauty.

In her book *On Photography*, Susan Sontag describes the tourist’s compulsion to place the camera between themselves and the remarkable things they encounter. However, as an artist-researcher, I am not a tourist; rather, I use photography to investigate the phenomena intrinsic to a given place. The goal of *Greekopolis* is to take viewers on a symbolic journey that shows them the splendors and contradictions of contemporary Greece as they may not have been experienced before—a journey facilitated by the transposition of modern and historical landscapes translated via infrared photography. Another goal is to engage viewers in a dialog about the global economic structures that currently embrace capitalism as the “normal” and “desired” paradigm of living. Greece’s entry into the Eurozone introduced a sort of Trojan horse filled with promises of a “better” life that have not necessarily come to be. Yet, the Greeks have a long history of enduring wars and invasions; they are extremely resilient as a people, and their way of life is both humbling and an inspiration for this series of images.