

Marklin

Sam Vanoverschelde



The Marklin series is a work that has been developing over the last twelve years of my life. Working as a freelancer in the arts, I had the opportunity to fly more than the average person and each time I realised what privilege I had. But travelling is also a boring occupation, so I always carried something with me to amuse myself: the lomo-LCA Minitar1 I have been cherishing ever since it came into my life, some twenty years ago.

With that very limited camera I shot through the window each time the landscape disappeared underneath me. As a child, I had the dream of becoming a pilot, as many boys probably did in those days. My little room had posters of the SR71 Blackbird and the space shuttle mounted on a Boeing. I assembled numerous scale model airplanes that were hanging from the ceiling and if they fell to the ground, I built diorama's for crashed airplanes. Growing up in Dixmude, the countryside where WWI devastated the landscape and where the remnants of that war are ever-present, I also developed a passion for topography, maps and aerial photography. Now it's ever present thanks to google maps, but in those days, only the atlases in the library were available and the 1:25000 scale maps we used as boy scouts. I had to put my pilot-dream to rest, when I got glasses at the age of 10, but the passion for maps and flying stayed. So when I first started taking pictures through that window, that long lost dream came back. The world that turns into a scale model. It is that miniature world of the Märklin trains I never got because it was too expensive. So I just stared at them with my nose pushed against the shop window.





But then I developed that roll and discovered that the dirt road I had captured was like a Giacometti sculpture of a walking man. Sure, it wasn't the Nazca lines but a postmodern alternative to it: some luck and the decisive moment triggered that series that I have now developed over more than a decade.

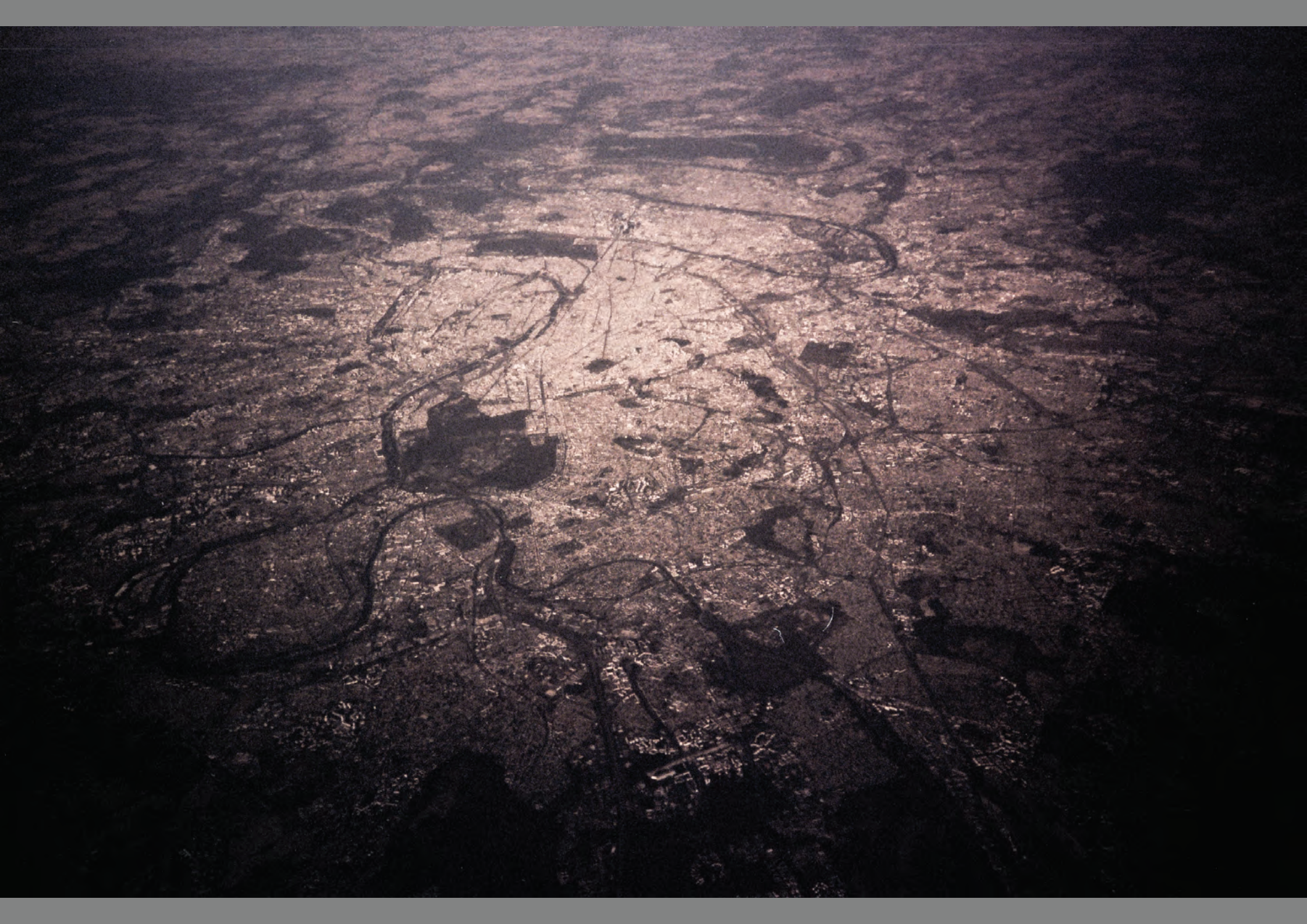
Quickly I started using slide film and cross processed it, to get that bizarre shift in colours, a dream-like atmosphere. Over the years, I had to switch brands because they stopped producing, so there's a lot of different color spectra. The film, the 32mm lens and the process creates a grain that can't depict the detail at such a distance, so it becomes like the impressionist paintings. That's why the prints need a big size to discover the grain, and distance to discover the whole.

I got a knack in finding the right angles to shoot through the window. I wear plain black so I don't reflect too much in the window. I reserve my seats in the back, away from the wing. I try to figure out where the wind is for every airport and hope to choose the right side so I can take an impressive shot when the plane takes a turn and I hover horizontally above the ground. I hate it when it's misty.

There's basically three different kinds of pictures, depending on the altitude they have been taken, resulting in diorama-like images, topographical views or just sheer fantasy cloudscape. They all depict my nostalgic fantasy but also the universal image one has in dreams, as to be flying above the ground without wings, just hovering, or that scare you get when falling from a nightmare. At the same time, these pictures show the impact man has on the earth, how humanity is manipulating it, how we destroy things. It's a project where Utopia and Dystopia are bizarrely married into one.



















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