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## Photographer captures New York as it sleeps

By DAMASO REYES

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What is it about New York that attracts photographers? Our cityscape is always shifting, changing even our relationship to our monuments. Perhaps it is this lack of permanence that compels photographers to try to freeze the city through their cameras?

German photographer Christopher Thomas has done just that in his new book "New York Sleeps" (Prestel USA). His images are also the subject of an exhibition at Steven Kasher Gallery.

Thomas captures New York through his large format camera. This produces an exceptionally large and sharp negative. Additionally, the photographer used Polaroid type 55 instant film, one that also produces a

very unique negative. Thomas combines these two elements to create haunting images of New York devoid of its inhabitants. Dark and almost surreal, Thomas takes this perspective as far as he can and, while doing so, creates some lovely images.

This reporter has a philosophical problem with "empty room" photography. Seemingly the style du jour, this type of photography divorces rooms, buildings and, in this case, an entire city from the very people they were built to serve. Capturing the city as it is, full of people, is a lot harder than photographing it empty. Sure, this approach transforms how we think of our surroundings, but at the cost of stripping it of much of its value. It is an interesting artistic exercise that can produce amazing results, as we



see in Thomas' photographs of Coney Island or of the Rockaways or one particularly haunting image of an abandoned pier as seen from Riverside Park. But there is a danger in approaching any subject, especially one as monumental as New York, from a monolithic perspective. What works in Rockaway is far less interesting in Times Square or Chinatown. His images of the Brooklyn Bridge do little to help us see this icon in a new way; rather, these images simply reinforce what we already know.

Thomas excels when he gets away from the tourist traps and the famous buildings. His images of New York's shoreline are vastly more interesting, not to mention more artistically exciting, than his photographs of our famous buildings. The book itself is a sumptuous expression of what is possible in the world of fine art book publishing and is a pleasure to touch as well as look through. The high quality

printing truly captures the look that this type of photography can produce and helps bring the images to life. "New York Sleeps" is an interesting project worthy of our attention if for no other reason than it captures a great city at rest.

"New York Sleeps" (Prestel USA) is available in stores now. An exhibition of photographs found in the book is on display at Steven Kasher Gallery, located at 521 West 23rd Street. For more information, call (212) 966-3978 or visit [www.stevenkasher.com](http://www.stevenkasher.com).