

Peter Litvai: a slim, almost gaunt man with a friendly face. The 59-year old doesn't like to attract attention; but in his eyes one recognizes the photographer: he has a keen eye for detail and is quicker than others when it comes to recognizing connections and peculiarities, especially in a city's appearance. Landshut has become his town; he loves to wander through its quarters with his camera. He likes to photograph people, but architecture holds an even greater fascination.

Clear lines, symmetries, but also crumbling, faded old houses – especially in places where other photographers intentionally pretty things up. “I like the ‘ugliness’ of my surroundings. Frequently, it's precisely the old walls that reflect the fact that life isn't as wonderful as we sometimes think it is, and that everything is transient,” the artist elucidates.

He is particularly captivated by Landshut's Nikola quarter, “one of the most fascinating places I know!” One can often see him with his camera, bicycling through the quarter's streets; or leaning against old walls taking photographs. Many of his outstanding photographic works of art were created here.

Bringing out the morbidity of the old walls, capturing the crumbling beauty of the centuries-old quarter in a state of transformation has become his special passion, Litvai explains. He is on the scene before the wrecking balls take up their work, documenting what would soon be nothing more than a memory and irretrievably lost if it weren't for such photographs.

His images show beauty and bizarre shapes where others see only rubble and rubbish. He gives what others call ‘ugly’ a different face. The camera ready to shoot, he brings depth to light, evens out surfaces, bringing old walls and lines to life, allowing them to become three-dimensional figures that radiate a graceful elegance.

Industrial buildings are also among his favourite subjects. Litvai's images will show anyone who has seen the green industrial machines that used to be, and still are found in many factories how to look at them with different eyes: powerful, substantial, radiating strength, greenish-grey – machines almost human in appearance. The charm of the aging is captured by an unerring and sharp eye, it is never glamourized, and sometimes astonishingly and powerfully beautiful.

In his photographs, lines and symmetry seem to come together in harmony. The eye of the viewer automatically wanders to the original: does it really look so ‘beautiful’? Recognized by the eye of the photographer, captured for the unseeing.

He is under Landshut's spell, says Litvai, a native of Hungary, who found subjects in the medieval town that automatically make him pull out his camera.

Here, the photographer, who is a certified master craftsman, runs a gallery with his wife Ibolya, where he exhibits work by other art photographers in addition to his own. You show your competitors' work? “They aren't competitors,” he emphasizes, “they are artists like me: the high bar I set myself.” – which spurs him on in the creative process. Of course he needs to be realistic to be able to judge other photographers' work – “to see whether they really are better!” he laughs. As a creative artist one has to be open to new and young work, Litvai firmly believes; this openness is what allows him to grow. He is his own most demanding critic: he studies every one of his photographs closely to see whether they can be improved in any way. The interplay of light and dark are characteristic of his images, as is the contrast between black and white – even in his colour photographs. Generally, he prefers to tone down colours. “When I approach art, I find limits – my own. But I believe that God has given us talents we cannot ignore. We have to take a closer look and see what we have been given! Conceit is a great danger – sometimes what one needs in order to progress is humility. If I notice that others are better, I have to make sure I myself become even better!”