British Journal of Photography

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ARCHITECTURE, COMPETITIONS, FILM

Published on 29 March 2018

DJI Drone Photography Award: Sand Castles (part II)

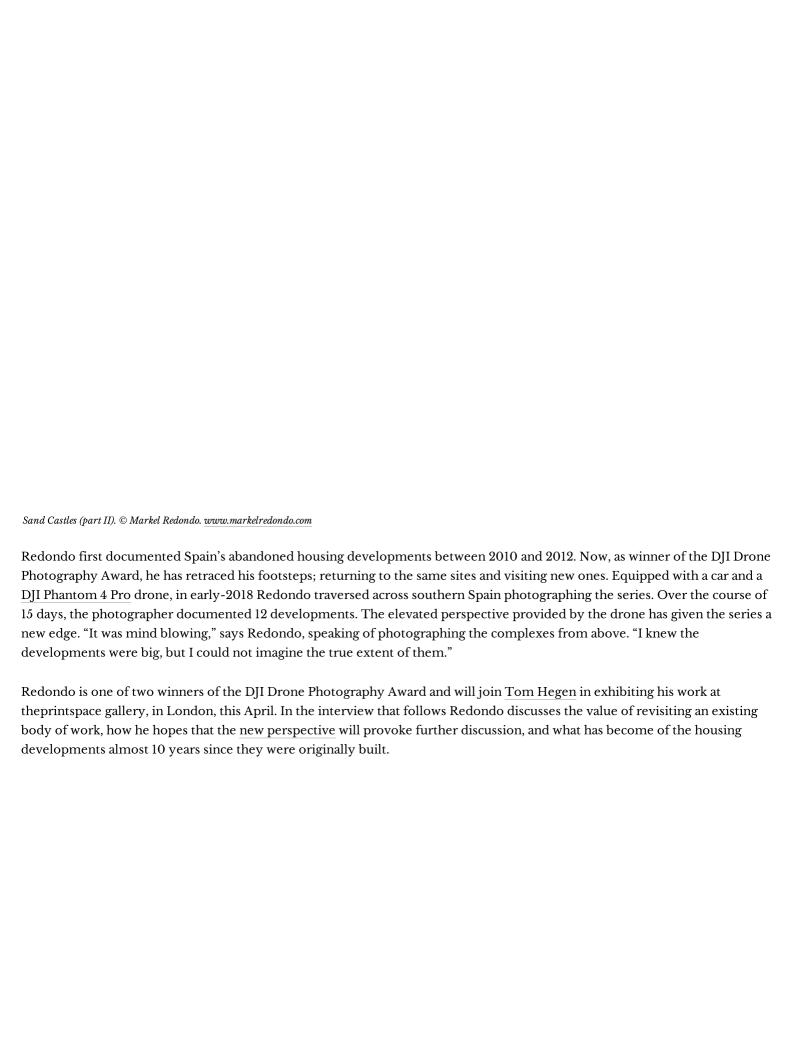
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Markel Redondo first photographed Spain's abundance of abandoned housing developments in 2010. Now, eight years later, he has retraced his footsteps

Between 6 April and 18 April 2018, the printspace gallery in east London will showcase two new bodies of work by DJI Drone Photography Award winners Tom Hegen and Markel Redondo. Two films, one of each project, offer a glimpse behind the scenes.

The European economic crisis of the late 2000s hit Spain hard. "Due to a toxic combination of billions of euros worth of bad loans held by Spanish banks, and a real estate bubble that burst in spectacular style in 2007, Spain's economy now faces multiple challenges," says photographer Markel Redondo.

One of the many fallouts of the crisis forms the basis of Redondo's latest body of work. *Sand Castles (part II)* documents a handful of the estimated 3.4 million houses that now stand empty and deserted throughout Spain. The developments – built in bucolic, and now largely deserted, surrounds to avoid the tourist traps of the country – were, according to Redondo, constructed by developers in "a dizzying rush to make the most of cheap loans and favourable government regulation." They now litter the landscape.



Sand Castles (part II). © Markel Redondo.

How did Sand Castles initially come about?

Sand Castles started accidentally. In 2009, I was working on an assignment in southern Spain when I saw a group of abandoned houses in Andalucia. It stuck with me and as the economic crisis in Spain was unfolding, I started researching similar developments. I spent a few years photographing abandoned and failed urban projects around Spain. I'd always had the idea of revisiting these places after a length of time to see what had changed.

Why is the topic of interest to you?

I am interested in the environment so when I saw these developments and how the environment, often beautiful mountains or coastline, was being treated, it made me angry. I am also intrigued by the absurdity of the situation and how Spanish authorities allowed for these places to exist.

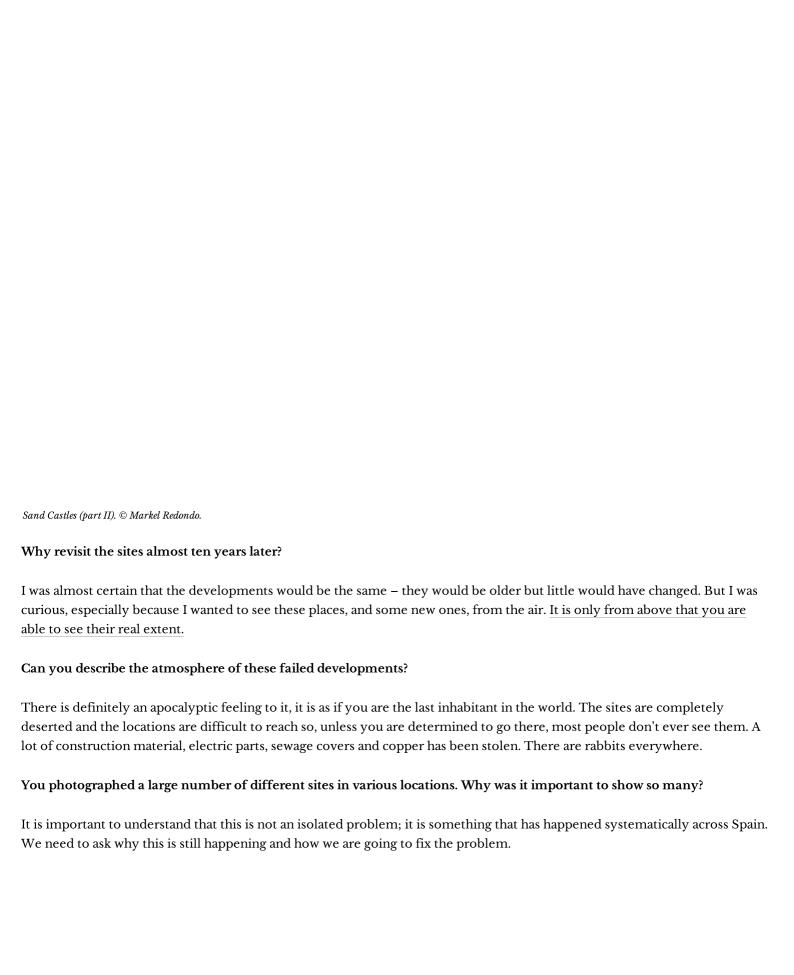
Talk me through your process of photographing the developments using a drone. Did you plot your route in advance? What sort of backdrops work best when shooting with the drone?

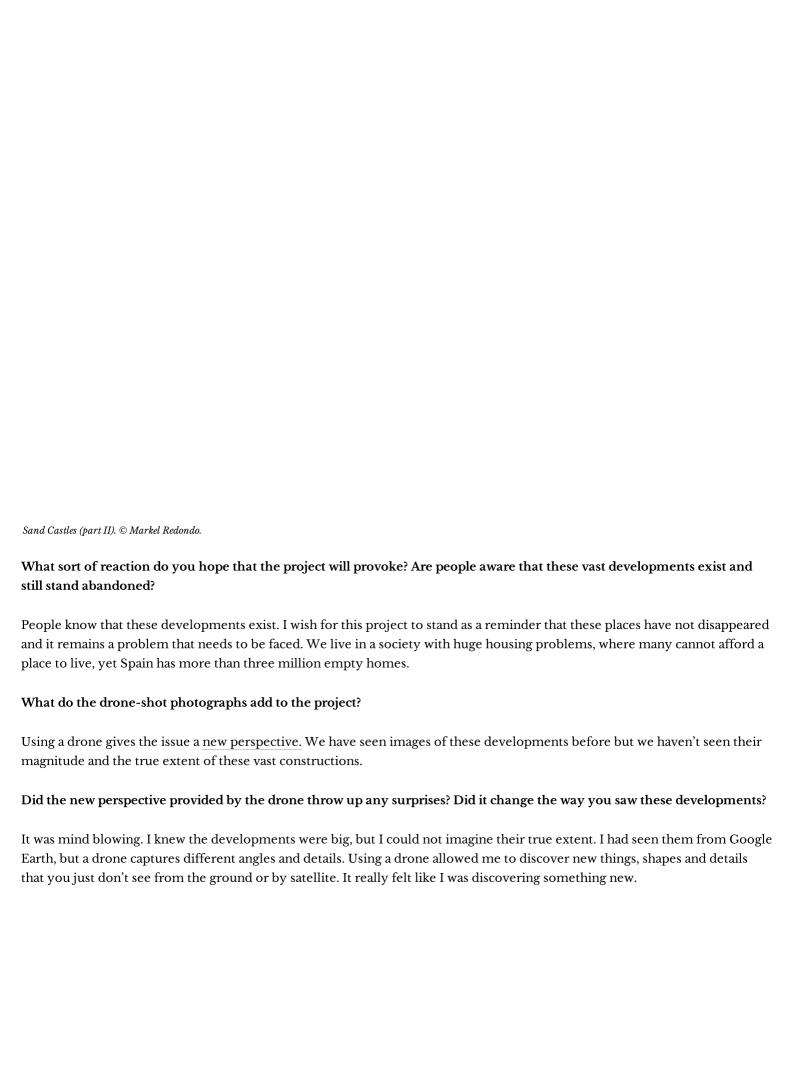
The first thing was to identify locations that I missed the first time. I read news stories and searched for updates, and also referenced architecture and photography books exploring similar issues. Next I used Google Earth to get an idea of how these developments might look from the air. At the beginning I wanted to photograph each location in the same way: from above and focused on shapes and details. I soon realised that panoramic shots, which put the housing developments in the context of the surrounding landscape, were powerful, so I combined the two.

For the panoramic shots, I always photographed with the same light – early in the morning and late in the evening – using the same angle. I wanted to present the developments like postcards, in the way that the developers and constructors would have imagined them, with nice light, but obviously with the feeling that something is wrong. For the detail shots – houses, roundabouts, roads – I always photographed at the same altitude.

Having a clear plan for each location helped a lot as I knew what I was looking for. When places are vast and you only have a







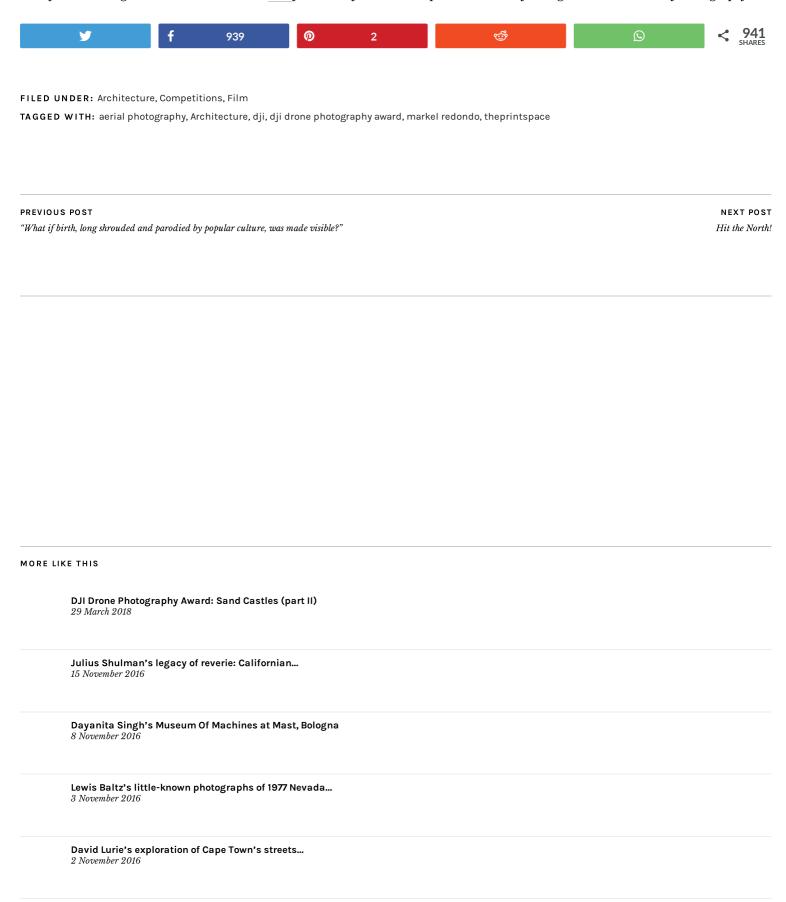


Sand Castles (part II). © Markel Redondo.

Sand Castles (part II) is being exhibited at the DJI Drone Photography Award exhibition at the printspace gallery throughout April. The exhibition is open to the public between 06 April and 18 April, between 9:00 am and 7:00 pm Monday to Friday.

Join us on Thursday 05 April at the private view. Tickets are free but limited, so book now to avoid disappointment!

The DJI Drone Photography Award is a DJI competition supported by British Journal of Photography. <u>DJI</u> is the world's leading manufacturer in high-end drones. Please click here for more information on sponsored content funding at British Journal of Photography.



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