

Morris, Jim, "PDN's 30, 2008: Domingo Milella," *Photo District News*, March 2008, pg. 53.



MARCH 2008

PDN's 30: New and Emerging Photographers to Watch

By Jim Morris

Domingo Milella

Domingo Milella's fine-art landscapes explore what he calls "the geography of the edge." "I generally photograph places that are on the border of things," he explains. For example, "I've photographed Albania," he says, "which, in a way, is the symbolic border between Europe and the old Communist bloc. I've photographed Turkey, which is the border between Muslim culture and the West."

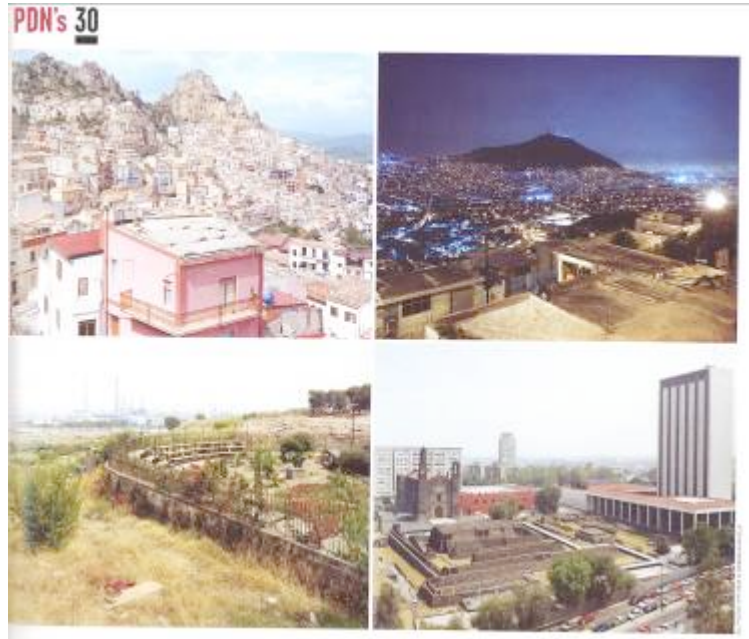
Sometimes the idea behind a photo is geography, as in his images of Tunisia, a part of Africa that is close to Europe. Sometimes, it's religious, cultural or historical, as in his shots of Mexico. "I think I am interested in places that are symptomatic of historical and identity struggles, or where there is a collision of elements."

Milella emphasizes this tension in the way he composes his images, which he shoots in an 8 x 10 film camera and prints more than 70 inches wide. His images usually depict a very deep or wide swathe of land, but you're torn between embracing the atmosphere of the place and getting lost in the intricate, abstract patterns of rooftops or gravestones, ruins or rubbish. He also photographs them from above, by standing on a ladder, a balcony or hillside. It's a point of view that both figuratively and literally distances you from the scene, and generates a sense of dislocation as well.

Many of these arresting images were included in his recent gallery show in New York City. Finding his way in the fine-art world is "all about personal relationships," he says. "In the art world, you expose yourself as a person. Not just an artist."

It has helped Milella, he notes, that early in his career he assisted Massimo Vitali, a fellow Italian who also shoots landscapes. Milella credits his compatriot with being his "technical mentor" and his relationship with Vitali has helped him secure some work for *The New York Times Magazine*.

What's next for Milella? "I'm spending a lot of time in Sicily, near the Etna volcano," he says. The images will reflect "the relationship between this little town and this active volcano. The city



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phenomenon." So, it appears Milella will be using his photography to explore a new edge—this
time between existence and extinction.