



Haze

Description

I can search the photographs on my smartphone based on key words. I've activated automatic upload of all photos to iCloud. So, if I search on "haze," I get all pictures that I've taken over the past 15 years that have a haze component.

Unknown to me, some algorithm has been at work tagging my pictures that have easily recognised characteristics. A search for "ruins" gives an equally impressive result. (For some reason, "mist" is less fruitful than "haze" as a search term.)

Earth and sky

At least in our imaginations, ruins combined with haze provide interesting moods. In his essay on the subject of ruins philosopher Georg Simmel (1858-1918) decided that there's a "peace whose mood surrounds the ruin" (383).

It's where buildings return to earth, architecture melds with stone, and the earth struggles to reach back into the sky, only to be eroded by the pneumatic forces of time and nature, an equilibrium, or a struggle, he describes as "the striving upward and the sinking downward" (383), and "the struggle between above and below" (384).

Since researching such moody settings in literature and philosophy I've found it difficult to actually encounter such a scene: a ruin in the mist.

But last winter I did encounter a misty ruin undergoing restoration. It was the small Dunkeld Cathedral, constructed within the larger ruins of a 7th century monastery. Here it is with some image adjustment.



Digital haze

The algorithmic haze in 3D immersive computer games and simulations such as SecondLife reduces the computational cost of rendering distant objects. As well as an enhanced sense of depth, the virtual scene recedes from full colour to complete whiteout over several hundred metres.

The incompleteness of ruins, the recollections they invoke of what might have been, and their frequent depictions through haze and mist also present the familiar in an alien light.

Pictorial haze effects are most compelling when they involve contrast, i.e. foreground objects appear sharp and dark. Distant objects fade to white, blue or grey.

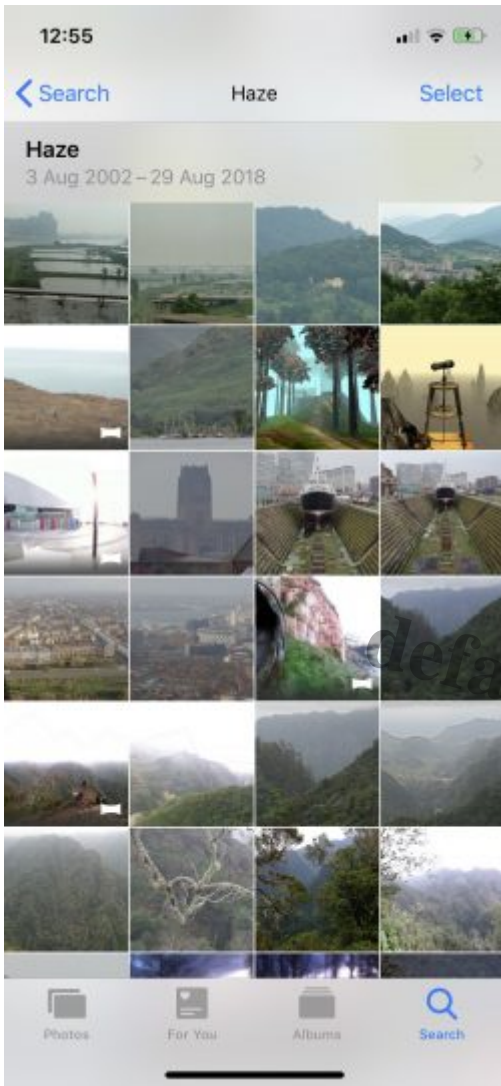
References

- Coyne, Richard. 2016. *Mood and Mobility: Navigating the Emotional Spaces of Digital Social Networks*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Simmel, Georg. 1958. Two Essays: The handle and the ruin. *The Hudson Review*, (11) 3, 371-385.



Note

- A search on “haze” in the online urban dictionary provides some interesting definitions, though not unrelated. Whether by natural or artificial means, self-inflicted or induced by bad agents, haze implies a clouding of judgement and the ability to discriminate. As well as occluding, haze brings certain perceptions/experiences into sharp relief.



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Category

1. Architecture

Tags

1. haze
2. mist
3. photography
4. ruins

Date Created

October 6, 2018

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