

New York Times Magazine Withdraws Altered Photo Essay

Written by Daryl Lang

UPDATE, 5:57 p.m. ET: The New York Times has published a new editors' note about the altered photo essay that was published in Sunday's Times Magazine. The newspaper says "most of the images did not wholly reflect the reality they purported to show." The note does not address which photos were altered, or whether the photographer misrepresented them to the editors. PDN has tried to reach Edgar Martins, the photographer, but has not heard from him. Here's the Times' note:

"A picture essay in The Times Magazine on Sunday and an expanded slide show on NYTimes.com entitled 'Ruins of the Second Gilded Age' showed large housing construction projects across the United States that came to a halt, often half-finished, when the housing market collapsed. The introduction said that the photographer, a freelancer based in Bedford, England, 'creates his images with long exposures but without digital manipulation.'

"A reader, however, discovered on close examination that one of the pictures was digitally altered, apparently for aesthetic reasons. Editors later confronted the photographer and determined that most of the images did not wholly reflect the reality they purported to show. Had the editors known that the photographs had been digitally manipulated, they would not have published the picture essay, which has been removed from NYTimes.com."

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UPDATE, 5:03 p.m. ET: The New York Times plans to run an editors' note about the altered photographs in tomorrow's paper, according to Kathy Ryan, photo editor at The New York Times Magazine.

EARLIER POST:

The New York Times Magazine has withdrawn a photo essay by **Edgar Martins** — described in print as having been produced "without digital manipulation" — because several of the photographs show signs of digital manipulation. The photo essay, which ran in the July 5 issue of the magazine, shows abandoned real estate projects.

An editors' note now appears when you try to view the online version of the essay.

In the Sunday print edition, the Times Magazine made a big deal out of the fact that the pictures weren't digitally altered. Here's how the magazine described Martins' essay (emphasis ours):

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"Last fall, The New York Times Magazine commissioned Edgar Martins, a 32-year-old Portuguese photographer based in London, to capture on film the physical evidence of the real estate bust in the United States. Martins, who creates his images with long exposures **but without digital manipulation**, traveled from rural Georgia to suburban California, visiting large construction projects that began during the speculative boom years and then came to a sudden halt, often half-finished, when the housing and securities markets collapsed."

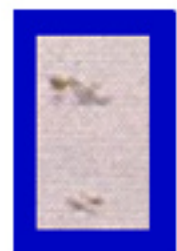
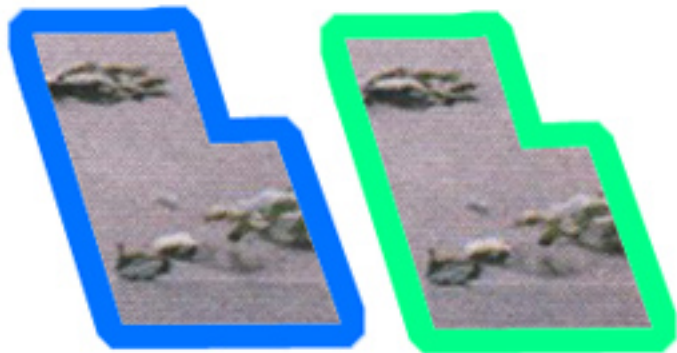
Update: Working from a copy of the Times Magazine, PDN has identified evidence of manipulation in three of Martin's six published photos. A blogger first noticed the project was suspect based on a photo that ran online only.

In all four cases, unlikely repetitions of elements suggest that they are composites or have had some elements covered up.

One picture shows an evenly-lit room in an unsold mansion in Greenwich, Connecticut. The room appears near-perfect in its symmetry, down to have two identical thermostats and light switch plates facing each other on opposite walls. There are also repeating patterns in the leaves on the floor.

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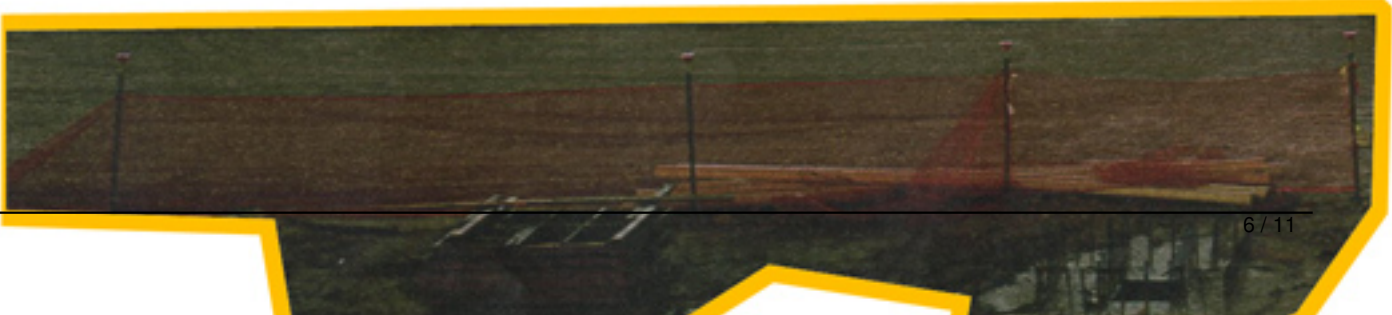
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The picture shows the left Vegas development with construction cranes in the foreground.

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Background, of a home in Dawsonville, Georgia, has a patch of trees repeating in the

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The original photo essay, titled "The Face of the Future," was published in the March 2011 issue of the magazine. It featured a series of black and white portraits of young people, with the caption stating that they were "the faces of the future." The magazine later discovered that some of the photos had been altered to make the subjects appear more attractive, and it promptly withdrew the essay.

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