



## Visionscapes by Mehmet Ozgur



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### Commentary

Search though you might for this location, you won't find it on planet Earth. Parts of this image can be found here and there, but this scene exists in its entirety only in this photograph, sprung from the imagination of Mehmet Ozgur. It is a recombinant image that uses parts of landscapes from different locations that have been skillfully blended in software to make it seem as though it is a real location. In the parlance of the day, it is "fake."

But is it really? How is this image any more "fake" than Michelangelo's representations in the Sistine Chapel? We don't call them "fake," but clearly the images he painted came from his imagination. What about Picasso's *Guernica*, or Monet's water lilies? Isn't all art fake in some way or another? How could it be real? Magritte got it right when he proclaimed "This is not a pipe."

Speaking of Picasso, here is one of my favorite stories. A soldier on leave was visiting Picasso's studio one day and said, "Excuse me Mr. Picasso, but I simply do not understand your paintings. Why do you paint a portrait with both eyes on the same side of the woman's nose?" Picasso replied, "Do you have a girlfriend?" The soldier said that he did. "Do you have photo of her?" The soldier pulled a photo out of his wallet and handed it to Picasso. After looking at it for a minute, Picasso turned to the soldier and asked, "Is she so small?" It is not recorded whether or not the soldier understood Picasso's point, but it is significant that this story uses a photograph.

If someone were to deride Ozgur's photograph for being a fake, I would agree. After all, the real world is neither monochromatic nor two-dimensional. Protest all you want, but *all* photographs are fakes in that they are all *representations of something*, not the thing itself. Does it really make a difference if a photograph is a representation of the physical world or a representation of the photographer's fertile imagination?

I can hear you now: *Yes, but it looks like it could be an actual location, and in that regard it is a lie!* Perhaps that statement says something more about photography's ability to capture detail similar to what our eye can see, rather than a statement about *truth* in representation. Said another way, we can use *our* imagination to extract from this monochromatic, two-dimensional photograph an imaginary vision *in our mind's eye* about how such a real place might look. *That* says something about the power of our imagination, not something about Ozgur's photograph.

Of course, if Ozgur tried to convince us that this is an actual location, he would be lying. But he titled this work *Visionscapes* which points directly to the vision in our mind's eye. That they look "real" is a testament to his software skills.