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Alain Delorme





MILTON FREIDMAN IN SHANGAI

Architects see in skyscrapers the results of sophisticated research; city planners project within them their daring visions of vertical sociality. To the eye of the economist, the endless stacking of floors is nothing other than the astute multiplication of profit – the ultimate exploitation of that scarcest of resources, real estate. And in Shanghai, this capitalistic mindset starts at the very bottom of society.

The gaudy, towering loads framed by Delorme could easily have inspired another chapter of Milton Friedman's *Capitalism and Freedom*. In these skyscrapers-on-wheels, assembled with perilous ingenuity by industrious Chinese labourers to maximise the “profit” of their deliveries, Friedman might have discerned another glowing proof of the efficiency of the free market.

Alain Delorme has not been honoured with a Nobel Prize in Economics, but his insight has penetrated somewhat deeper. His photographs contest such simplistic analysis with the force of the visual proof. The puzzling and contradictory nature of capitalism is argued with the contrast between the menacing height of the piles that impend on these frail figures and the solidity of the modern buildings in the background, populated, one supposes, by businessmen and bankers proud of their “well deserved” success.

No academic theory could better demonstrate the unbridgeable distances that coexist within the framework of the capitalist paradigm of the pursuit of profit than this unstable, colourful perspective. Is Delorme perhaps a social scientist? Is his work the product of a perceptive analytical mind or the quest of a pure artistic sensibility?

But then, isn't economics in the eye of the beholder?

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