



1 / 11 German-born photographer Katrin Korfmann took the photographs that make up this composite image at the dyeing area of an 11th-century Moroccan tannery. © KATRIN KORFMANN

2 / 11 Korfmann took hundreds of photographs at the dyeing area of an 11th-century Moroccan tannery, which she then stitched together to create this composite image. © KATRIN KORFMANN

BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE WORLD'S MOST FASCINATING WORKSHOPS

In 2015, German-born photographer Katrin Korfmann was living in China; her husband, sculptor Jens Pfeifer, was doing a three-month artist's residency there. One day, Pfeifer gave Korfmann a tour of the factory that was fabricating some of his sculptures. As soon as they saw the crowded factory floor and its dozens of artisans performing their various alchemical tasks, the couple¹ knew they had the subject for her next series.

"In Western society, we often have this idea of the solitary artist in his or her studio, getting inspiration," Korfmann explains. "It's a very Romantic ideal of the artist. But there's also a lot of hard work involved, often physical work. Sometimes the artist has an idea, and then the work gets produced in a factory that has nothing to do with the idea." Rather than focus on the finished work of art, she and Pfeifer decided to highlight everything that happens behind the scenes to make that art possible. otherwise used, except with the prior written permission of Condé Nast. Ad Choices. Thus began three years of travel that took them around the world: a marble production company in Carrara, Italy; a ballet rehearsal in Amsterdam; an 11th-century tannery in Morocco; a glass factory Anxi, China. At each location, they mounted a camera on a 20-foot-high tripod and, over the course of several hours, took hundreds of photos of the workspace—a process Korfmann likens to "scanning" the location with her camera.

Back in the studio, Korfmann and Pfeifer then digitally stitched together the photos to create a single, bird's-eye view of the various fabrication processes, a technique that took her and her assistants anywhere from a week to a month. Rather than capturing an exact facsimile of the space, the process allowed the photographer to combine all the various facets of artistic production—time-lapse photography collapsed into a single image.

"What you see in the final image isn't a documentary truth," Korfmann says. "It's more of an interpretation of the spot. It's an assemblage of hundreds of images." (An exhibition of the images, which Korfmann produced with Pfeifer, will open at Los Angeles's Kopeikin Gallery on November 11.)

An alternative way to capture such a wide array of action in a single shot would have been to use a fish-eye lens, Korfmann says, but that would have distorted the edges of the image. Only by painstakingly assembling dozens of discrete high-resolution images could she create a final image with such remarkable clarity. Many of the photographs show dozens of people, each of whom Korfmann shot individually and then combined into a single master shot. But Korfmann rejects the idea that using such digital legerdemain is somehow "cheating."

"Even if you take one picture, you choose the moment of reality," she points out. "From the moment you exclude something from reality, you're giving an interpretation. What I do is really just an extension of that."

Author: Michael Hardy
photo