

Danny LoCascio aka Danny Chicago Prowls Vienna Streets After Dark During the Scariest Lockdown

By Emma Hontebeyrie, July 3, 2021

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A year after Vienna reopened for the first time, photographer Danny LoCascio takes us back to the startling beauty of the early days of the pandemic.



With Vienna [gradually reopening](#) and the city's *Schanigärten* once again filled with contact traced, 3-G compliant patrons, it's easy to forget the sheer shock of the first lockdown in the spring of 2020, when Vienna's lively streets became nearly deserted overnight. An extraordinary time for all, but to some, an inspiration: Local photographer Danny LoCascio spent 34 nights from April to June last year out on the streets of Vienna, documenting the solitude of curfew during the early days of the pandemic. Born and raised in Chicago, LoCascio has been living abroad for the last 30 years, first picking up a camera in the '80's while living in Saudi Arabia to capture the endless dunes of the Rub' al-Khali desert. A retired teacher, he now devotes his time to his twin passions of photography and music, performing as blues and folk artist [Danny Chicago](#). One year after his latest project concluded, *Metropole* met

LoCascio on the terrace of WerkzugH to enjoy a cold drink and look back on his journey.

In the first chapter, *The Beginning – April 11-18*, the Prater Hauptallee is silent and empty, depicted in eerie black-and-white images reminiscent of *The Third Man*'s suspenseful ambiance. LoCascio's monochromatic approach was a deliberate decision that went beyond personal taste, the shades of grey illustrating the mood of an entire city. "I was going with the look which would make people feel like I did," LoCascio explained, "a mix of fear and confusion towards the situation." With an unwavering gaze, he caught the unprecedented nights of loneliness in otherwise lively places. "A friend told me "your book made me feel really sad and depressed," he recalls; "and I said 'thank you,' because that it is what I made it for, to remember the true feelings of those times."

Pandemic Mementos

Far more than a diary of images, *Lockdown, Vienna Nights in the Time of Corona*, paints an evocative picture of everyday life in the early corona era, when curfews and fear of the unknown drove people indoors. Shown in chronological order, the book illustrates how Vienna's general atmosphere developed over time, strongly impacted by breaking news and new restrictions. "Everything was so unusual, like wearing a mask – which was even political back then. Now it is a complete banality," LoCascio points out. "Taking pictures of people at these times was somehow a challenge, but it brought something unique: the amazing power of emotions you could get through people's eyes."

(C) Danny LoCascio

Leafing through the pages, optimism slowly emerges as locals slowly reemerged in public places. The book ends on a tipping point: [the Black Lives Matter demonstration on June 4, 2020](#), where hundreds of Viennese took to the streets. "It was really interesting to understand the mood of people through this times; in the end, it was like an orgy of socialization,"

he reminisces. The large gathering offers a counterpoint to the wistful images of the lockdown, in stark contrast to the onset of the pandemic. “People missed it so much, that it was a real feeling of freedom.”

All in all, LoCascio’s work bears stirring witness to those singular times. “It’s like a souvenir of the first lockdown. Later on, people will look at the book and think that lockdown 1.0 was the good old days,” he said with a laugh. “More seriously, it will keep its value as a historical record, just for people to remember what we have been going through.” He sees his book as a testimony to what living in Vienna was like at that moment in time, a reminder to never to take what we have for granted. “As Joni Mitchell said, you don’t know what you got until it’s gone.”

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