

PHOTOESPAÑA 2016
ENCUENTROS PHE

**An Unexpected Mosaic
Unique Aspects
of European Photography**



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STŘEDOEURÓPSKÝ DOM
FOTOGRAFIE

CENTRAL EUROPEAN HOUSE
OF PHOTOGRAPHY

An Unexpected Mosaic Unique Aspects of European Photography

**Un mosaico inesperado
Singularidades de la fotografía europea**

PHOTOESPAÑA 2016
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Maria García Yelo

María García Yelo (Madrid, Spain, 1977) is the Director of PHotoEspaña, International festival of photography and visual arts. With a degree in Art History from the Universidad Complutense in Madrid, García Yelo was the Director of the Post-War and Contemporary Art department at the British auction house Christie's, in Spain, from 2008 until 2013. She was previously the General Deputy Director of Conservation and Research at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (2005 – 2008) and Assistant Director of the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo Esteban Vicente in Segovia (2002 – 2004). She has also served as an independent curator and as an art critic for ABC Cultural. She is the author of various publications.

PHotoEspaña and the European house of Photography, with the collaboration of CaixaForum, organized in Madrid, between the 8th and the 10th of June 2016, several days of reflection on determined aspects of European photography, with the aim of approaching a series of subjects that have to do with its common history. For three days European photography of the twentieth century until today was analyzed in depth through its most important authors. Equally, concrete issues that have been at the center of photography debates over the last century were dealt with, such as the discussions between documentary and fictional photography, staged photography, subjective photography, post-photography, the role of photography in the Second World War and the influence of memory in contemporary photography.

The conclusions of these days of presentations, discussions and conversations have now become a publication from which, hopefully, researchers and photography lovers will learn to better understand the most surprising and unexpected aspects of European photography, understanding that we aim would give birth to new ideas and visions.

Vaclav Macek

Prof. Václav Macek, Ph.D. (1952), is a professor at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava. He graduated film and theater science at Charles University in Prague (1982), in the second half of the 80 years he was head of the science team process different aspects of the development of Slovak films (anthologies *The Slovak Movie 1946 – 1969* and *The Slovak Movie 1970 – 1990*). He is the author of books *Elo Havetta* (1990), *The history of Slovak documentary film* (1992), *Dušan Hanák* (1996), *History of Slovak Cinematography* (1997, co-author Jelena Paštéková) and *Štefan Uher 1930 – 1993* (2002). Since 1993, the head of katedry Film Studies and Multimedia at the Film and Television Faculty of Academy of Performing Arts. One of his important publications is a monograph dedicated to the life and work of the important Slovak film director – Ján Kádár (2008). He also applies himself to a reflection of photographic creation, in addition to monographs on the work of Generation 1960 (Tono Stano, Miro Švolík, Peter Župník, Joseph Farmer, Kamil Varga) Václav Macek also published books about the development of the photographic medium: *Slovak Imaginative Picture 1925 – 1997* (1998), *Slovak Photography 1925 – 200* (2001, co-author Aurel Hrabušický) and was editor of a publication *Bratislava's Back Door* (2005). He was editor-in-chief of *Imago* it published the only magazine in English in Slovakia dedicated to the creation of the Central photographic image.

100 years in 100 minutes

In 2006, when we began to work on the first book about the history of European photography in the 20th century, we approached a French historian of photography for cooperation. He refused, but for a clear reason, not for the lack of time or the small fee, but because the history of European photography had already been written. The only thing that could be created is simply a reproduction of what has already been said. Despite his reservations, we did not give up and began to work on the history.

In principle, we perceived some deficits in previously published histories which we wanted to rectify. The very first deficit, which was also related to the fact that in the years 1995–2010 we were publishing biannual *IMAGO*, which was exclusively dedicated to Central and Eastern European photography, referred to the absence of many personalities and whole photographic cultures in the previously published texts. We have responded to the fact that the operation of „Western“ photographic art, who's memory is narcissistic, and with the incestuous obsession of a self-contained entity. It is really hard to convince curators, theoreticians, critics and gallerists, that even beyond their distinctive territory, or border of influence, sometimes something unexpected and of good quality can emerge. (Jiří David, *LN*, 10.05.2016, p.9) Instead of requiring their historical texts to include great photographs from Lithuania, Greece or Portugal, we knew it would be much wiser to write a history which avoids this deficiency and encompass the work of „the

smaller“ cultures in this history.

Our belief also corresponds with this aspect; that photography does not arise in a vacuum, that photography emerges from the society from which it is ingrown and it is a part of visual culture; it is not „just“ an art form. If we wanted the reader to understand the varying pace, problems and topics, with which the photographic cultures in different parts of Europe were simultaneously dealing, the first reason became especially fundamental. Perhaps the best proof of this approach may be the fact that in the case of German photography, with its long common history, we included specific texts on photography in the German Democratic Republic, in our second and third volume. The main reason for this was the fact that a diametrically different society, although German, led to a different dynamic of development. In doing so, we have strove to preserve the primacy of the history of photography over the presentation of history through photography.

Photographs are part of popular culture and news and they are functional not only in galleries and art magazines, but their „anonymous“ products constitute historical form, they give a message, and they are beyond the operation of contemporary art galleries. All of these factors led us to include such images by authors who are not crucial, but the force of the recorded reality determines the permanency of their work.

Our goal in the (re)writing of the history of photography is consistent with the shift in interest in the history of art from the most important art centres of different periods to the other regions and modifications of major historical

art trends. In the books we pay as much attention to the „periphery“ as to the major European countries in photographic history, but we also decentralise power relationships by giving a voice to the „insiders“ of each region and the local history of photography. Thus power relationships in the writing of the history of photography become decentralised.

It holds true for memory that if serious differences are highlighted, then we quickly progress to the division between us and them; those who determined the course of history and those who were given a tow, those whom we have to remember and those who can fall into oblivion. In our book, we try to avoid simplification so that we can hold the belief that diversity is characterised by subtle differences. In this way nothing is lost in the identity of European photography, it creates the space for us to be ourselves, so that we can be European photography, which consists of a number of particulars, and we have lost nothing in being open to other cultures. (Miroslav Volf, *Croatian theologian*, *Týždeň* (The week) 1/2016, p.42 – 43).

Our book represents the more nuanced and down-to-earth image of European photography, not overwhelmed by the big names of long-established photographers and artistic centres of the period.

I can give two examples, one from Dutch photography, the second from Slovak photography. In the first case I will cite from a review by Matt Damsker who writes, „the sheer documentary and compositional power of such unfamiliar gems as Dutch photographer Emmy Andriessé's 1938



Emmy Andriess (1914 – 1953), *Negro Students in the Quartier Latin, Paris*, 1938, Print Room University library Leiden.

street view of two „Negro Students in the Quartier Latin, Paris“ sweeps away any misguided sense we might have that only the likes of Atget, Brassai or Lartigue were doing great work in the City of Lights at that time. Andriess was clearly drawn to an image of liberté-égalité-fraternité that outclasses the prevailing-class iconography of her French peers. Indeed, the two well-dressed students are viewed with a slant framing that suggests their exoticism on the Boulevard

Saint-Michell while at the same time enhancing their noble bearing. It is an unforgettable photo.”

Metaphorically speaking, we can witness the „Surrealism of Spiš“ for example in the image *Easy Rider* (1984-1986) by Peter Župník. In this photograph a force field of tension is created between the report on things and its poetisation. With a slight shift, an imperceptible deviation from normal sight and a light colour intervention,

the photography abandons its believability and gives us an insight into the mysterious and unconscious field of imagination. Only a small step aside, only a small deflection is enough for the transition from reality to dream, to bridge the description towards fantasy. (Anna Fárová)

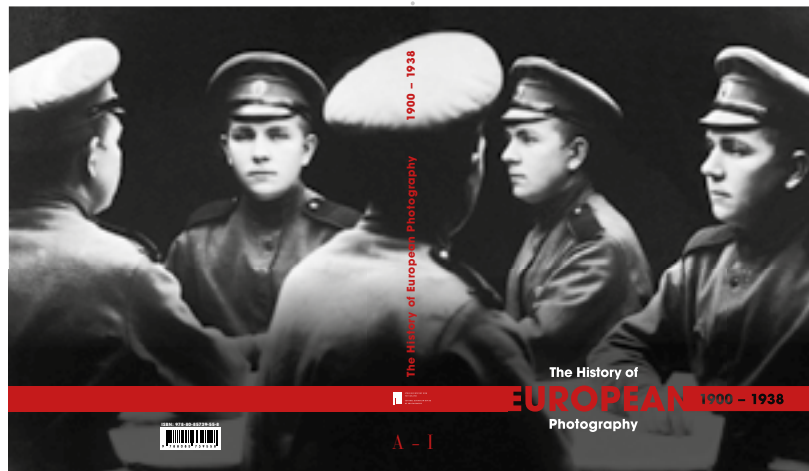
As we have rebelled against the idea that it is no longer necessary to write history, we have also gone against the currents of time, which think that it is possible to present a picture of photographic developments throughout the last hundred years in 100 minutes. Naturally, such an idea could be useful and meaningful for those who want a crash course on how to be successful and to get rich or how to make people like you and maybe even how to say something about the history of photography. But, in such a case when one wants to truly understand a problem or topic,

it is not possible. If we meet with such attitudes in the general public, maybe it is not so surprising, but it is sad when we encounter this attitude at universities, which are only interested in prefabricated knowledge, maybe because they are under pressure for rapid, cost effective education. This project proves that you can not gain an authentic idea of the hundred year development of photography in 100 minutes.

At first contact with this book, it is already clear that it is not a photo album, that the texts are an integral part, and without their attentive and careful reading one can not understand the meaning of this publication. In a good way, our goal was also didactics, to lead the reader, who has a deep interest in photography, to ponder upon the meaning of the text so that he could discover the values of photography which would without



Peter Župník: *Easy Rider*, 1984 – 1986

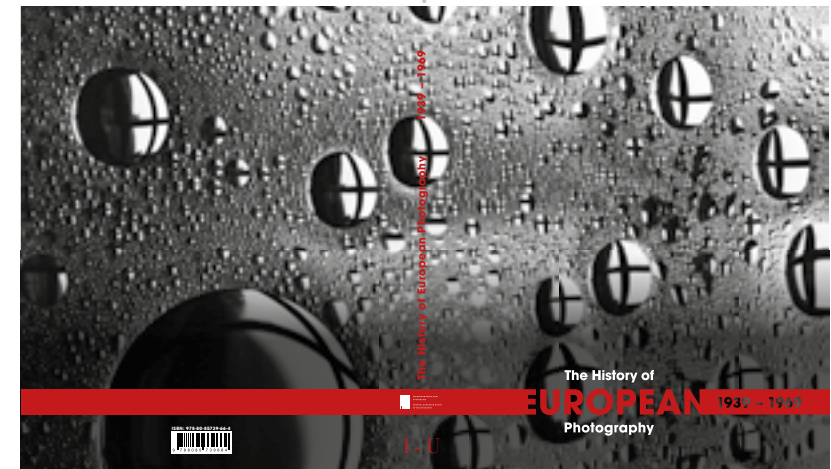
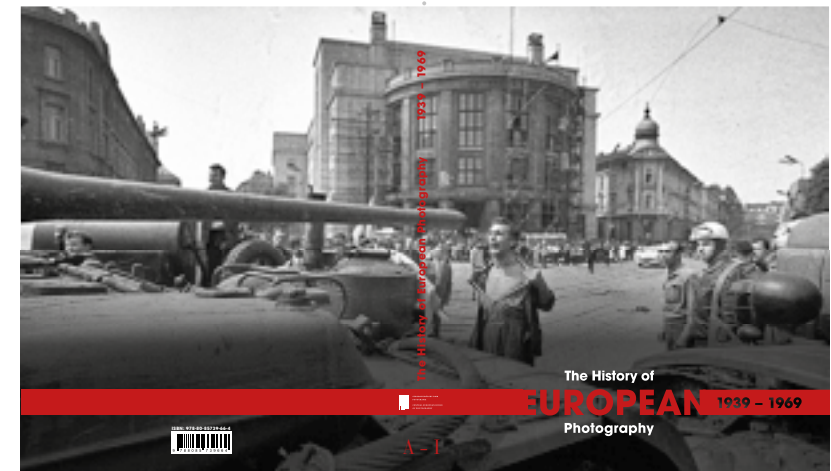


the historian of photography remained hidden.

During the work on the project, from its very beginnings to the present day, we meet with an objection that we chose a slightly anachronistic concept of the „national matrix“. At a time when boundaries are blurring and one can travel without a passport from one end of Europe to the other, when multiculturalism and globalization relegate the importance of ethnicity to the background, to some readers it does not seem eligible to use a concept that undoubtedly dominated the history of art in the mid 20th

century, but nowadays it is not so pervasive.

In deciding on the ethnic key, we preferred a solution that was our only viable option. As soon as we chose the path of state classification, we would have to deal with the subject of Austrian-Hungarian, Soviet, Yugoslav or Czechoslovak photography. In doing so, it might be to some extent useful because these countries are already non-existent states; photography was subject to the same legislation, it had to meet the same censorship requirements, and the world of magazines, galleries and books was



shaped by state regulations. The rules were no different for the Slovak than for the Czech part of Czechoslovakia, the case of the Austro-Hungarian Empire is similar. But the fact that these state entities only persisted for some time, although not a short time, in the case of Czechoslovakia it was 75 years; this led us to prefer the national key which lasted longer than each political unit during the selected time frame, 1900 – 2000.

When we chose the ethnic key in 2006, in addition to all the problems which it brought, we did not realize a significant benefit. Thanks to

this choice, a history of national photography was created, which no one had done before; for example, Albanian and Moldavian or Ukrainian. The fact that the photographic life of these communities has its own dynamics, personalities, and not only national, but in some cases also a transnational significance, proved that our decision was meaningful.

If we compare these chapters to the texts of cultures that were often processed, such as German or French, it is clear that these chapters may seem trivial, repeating only the known facts. This may be true on one side.

In French photography, our book does not represent a radical turnover. But on the other hand, the contours of French photography are changing significantly, if we consider in what circumstances it found itself, that it is not the centre that radiates waves into the environment, but it is only one of several places where at this or that time photographic transformation happened. It shows that history is not a teacher-pupil relationship, but it is rather under the influence of „something hanging in the air.“ And so, in this way, there will be an explosion of social photography, and later, also a simultaneous post-modern revolution in several cultures but not in terms of traditional deterministic notions of cause and effect.

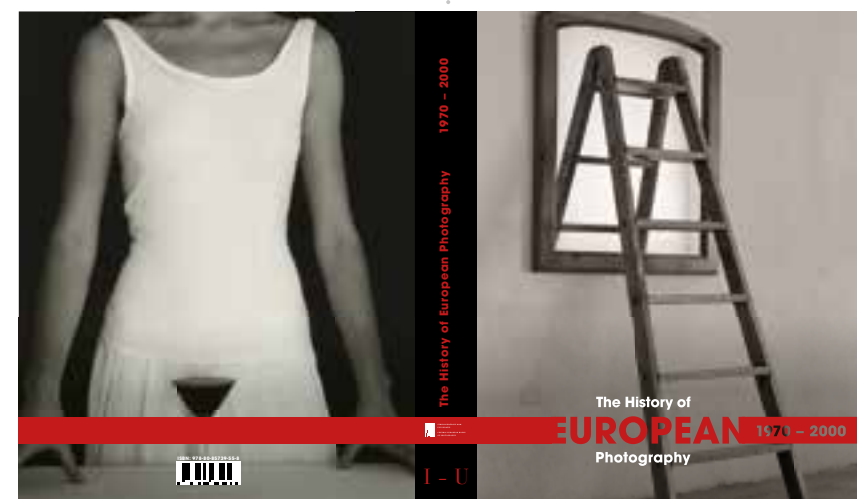
With the choice of the ethnic key, naturally a question arose as to how to cover the fact that, for some photographers a national principle does not match their identity; i.e. an originally Polish photographer can be included in Ukrainian photography, a photographer of Hungarian origin in French photography and a Jewish photographer in Moldavian or Polish photography, etc. In this case, we are based on the principle that national photography is superior to the ethnicity of the authors. We can take an example from the history of art, where František Kupka is naturally included in the French tradition, although for many years he worked in the Czech Republic, and only later moved to Paris, this still does not preclude that we read about his work as part of the history of French art.

As a toll for this global historic project we must accept the fact that individual personalities are only suggested; their individual careers,

the unpredictability of fate, are not analysed in depth, and one may lack the generality of these authors' lives and their artistic projects. Which is undoubtedly true, but it has to do with the chosen strategy; to write the history of a greater whole instead of only personal destinies.

Maybe it is useful to mention the methodology which was binding for each of the authors involved in the project. Probably the most important objective was to write the history of their cultures as a story, as something that does not become overloaded by a factual account of events, but which constructs an interpretation on the principle of the conflict between multiple models in a particular culture. It is clear from this, that although we have cooperated with historians for each chapter, and these historians represent renowned personalities in their country, that does not mean that their interpretation is the only possible one. One has to be aware of a subjective point of view in this case as well. Therefore, in some cases, where it was possible, we cooperated with different personalities, so that, in a kind of complementarity, we would be able to outline a more accurate picture of the development of a particular photographic culture.

Sometimes the problem may be that for one of the authors the predominant emphasis is on photography in magazines, for another author it is avant-garde, the next writes mainly about gallery operation, etc. This reflects the initial strategy, which emphasizes the concept of visual culture, not just photography as art, but as a concept, in which not only aesthetic values but also cultural –



anthropological values are reflected. The difference in the extent of their presence reflects the different degrees of their importance for the given culture.

Cooperation with more than fifty historians on the three volumes of this project has shown that even seemingly clear concepts, such as pictorialism or reportage are not always defined in a same way. Surely, in this kind of book, it would be better if such terms were always interpreted without doubt in one single way, but given the fact that

the differences were not radical, we accepted these minimal differences.

Currently we are in the final phase of the whole project, if nothing changes, then in October 2016, our ten-year labour will be concluded. I hope that it will become not only a source of information, but it will be interesting enough so that other historians would find it worthwhile to fix the mistakes that we have made.

Vladimír Birgus

Vladimír Birgus is a Czech photographer, curator, educator and historian of photography. During the years 1978 – 2005 he was a teacher (since 1999 a Professor) in the Department of Photography at FAMU in Prague. Since 1990 he has lead the Institute of Creative Photography at the Silesian University in Opava. He has curated and co-curated many major exhibitions of Czech photography, for example: *Contemporary Czechoslovak Photography* (Museum Ludwig, Cologne 1990, and eight repetitions in Europe and the USA), *Modern Beauty, Czech avant-garde photography 1918 – 1948* (National Art Museum of Catalonia, Barcelona, repetitions: Paris, Lausanne, Prague and Munich, 1998-2000), *Czech Photography of the 20th Century* (Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague and the Prague City Gallery, 2005, Art and Exhibition Hall of the Federal Republic of Germany, Bonn 2009, with Jan Mlčoch), *Once upon a Time in the East, and Czechs through the eyes of photographers 1948 – 1989* (City Gallery Prague 2009, with Tomáš Pospěch). He is the author and co-author of 35 books, including: *Czech avant-garde photography 1918 – 1948* (Kant, Prague 1999, Arnoldsche, Stuttgart 1999, The MIT Press, Cambridge and London, 2002), *Frantisek Drtikol* (Kant, Prague 2000), *Jaroslav Rössler – Czech Avant-Garde Photographer* (The MIT Press, Cambridge and London, 2003), *Czech Photography of the 20th century*, (Kant, Prague 2010) and *View: Czech Republic* (Landskrona Museum, Landskrona 2015). He has had over sixty solo exhibitions of his own photographs. A large monography with a text by Štěpánka Bielešová was published in 2014 by the publishing house KANT in Prague.

www.birgus.com

Eugen Wiškovský (1888 – 1964) is the author of very original and radical works. During the late 20s and early 30s he had already created remarkable still lifes from metal rods, concrete pipes, turbines, electrical insulators, gramophone records and other common objects, arranged in well-thought-out compositions. Due to his exquisite sense of detail, his ability to break free from context and to transform colour reality into black and white photography as well as his use of rhythmic repetitions of particular motifs, not only did he manage to change the traditional perception of objects, but he also managed to discover surprising symbolic meanings in these objects. To show an object so as to illustrate something completely different can be considered the main feature of Wiškovský's creation. This is similar to and concurrent with what Edward Weston was doing. His photographs, in the style of New Objectivity, are rigorously rational and at the same time full of fantasy and imagination. In these photographs, the objectivity of the perfectly depicted details in the surrounding world intersects with the subjectivity of the author's point of view, his distinctive vision, thinking and feeling, and his intellect and inner world. They differ significantly from the reality which they depict; reality is made exceptional through artistic means, they are distinctive works of art with a clearly recognizable authorial signature. Wiškovský's most famous photograph, *Moonscape* (originally *Collars*), from 1929, is a composition of stiff shirt collars transformed into an imaginative picture of the cratered lunar surface. This image was created by; suppressing



Josef Ehm, Portrait of Eugen Wiškovský –
Portrét Eugena Wiškovského

the scale, isolating the repetitive details, sophisticated positioning of a light bulb between the collars and adding the contour of a coin, which was added to a later variant of this image to depict the Earth. Concurrently with his images in the style of New Objectivity, his constructivist images emerged, for example, the construction of the ESSO plant in Cologne or the café and swimming pool on the outskirts of Prague, Barrandov. Wiškovský was not only a depicter of modern architecture, but also its interpreter, the actual constructions were often just a starting point and the inspiration for free creation. If people appeared in his photographs, their role was mostly just as an entourage; to the landscape, to the urban environment

or to his constructivist compositions. During the second half of the 30s, Wiškovský's interest shifted to the landscape of the outskirts of Prague, where he focused primarily on unusual structures and metaphorically acting shape analogues. Eugen Wiškovský's artistic creation is accompanied by his progressive theoretical works. His body of work doesn't excel in quantity, but it does excel in originality and depth of content.

1 Anna Fárová, Eugen Wiškovský, Prague: SNKLHU 1964 – Vladimír Birgus, Eugen Wiškovský 1888 – 1964, Prague: Prague House of Photography, 1992. Vladimír Birgus, Eugen Wiškovský, Prague: Torst, 2005.



Eugen Wiškovský: Conoe – Kánoe, 1930s – 30. léta

Eugen Wiškovský in the context of Czech avant-garde photography

While the works by the inter-war period Czech photographers, František Drtikol, Josef Sudek, Jaromír Funke and Jaroslav Rössler enjoy international fame, the work of their contemporary, Eugen Wiškovský, is still not very well known outside the Czech Republic. Although today his work is exhibited in such prestigious institutions as; the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, the Pompidou Centre in Paris and the IVAM in Valencia, there are never more than just a few of his images presented, with the exception of a larger series of his self-produced enlarged prints in the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague and the Moravian gallery in Brno. In 1985, Wiškovský's first solo exhibition was held in Turin, and his first authorial exposition was held almost thirty years after his death, in Prague, in 1993. Regardless, his photographs are among the most original and most progressive of Czech contributors to the development of contemporary photography.

In many ways Wiškovský's theoretical works from the 1920s to the 1940s anticipated trends which began to be promoted more extensively in the coming decades within the theory of photography. His photographic work is not large in scale nor thematic breadth, but it's intellectual depth and innovation is extremely extensive.⁽¹⁾ Eugen Wiškovský was born on 20th September 1888 in Dvůr Králové nad Labem in a respected middle-

class family. He graduated in French, German and Psychology at the Philosophical Faculty of the Czech Charles-Ferdinand University in Prague. After graduation, he spent many years teaching at various secondary schools. His longest tenure was at the state gymnasium in Cologne, where he taught until 1937. In 1917, Wiškovský married twenty-three year old Anna Streit; in 1918 they had a daughter, Eva (1918 – 1997), and a year later a second daughter Hana (1919 – 1985). Although Wiškovský was intensively engaged in photography for many years, he never became a professional photographer.

Progressive trends in Czech photography were not only established by professional photographers but also by amateur photographers, which, besides Wiškovský, also included Drahomír Josef Růžička, Jan Lauschmann, and Jaromír Funke, prior to the start of Funke's teaching career at the School of Arts and Crafts in Bratislava in 1931. Wiškovský was an educated man with many talents and interests: he had a deep interest in literature and fine art, he co-authored a Czech-German dictionary, he was active in psychology, he translated the symbolist works by Maurice Maeterlinck and the psychological writings by Freud and Jung, and he competed in tennis tournaments. He inherited his interest in photography from his father. Even as a little boy, he used his father's camera, of 13×18 cm format, for a variety of family pictures. Starting in the late 1920s, he began to be more involved in photography, which began when he befriended his former Gymnasium student, Jaromír Funke. At this time Jaromír Funke was already one of the

most important figures in Czech avant-garde photography.

Together they photographed functionalist buildings, such as the power plant in Cologne, and various details of industrial sites; they then produced enlargements in Funke's bathroom. They often discussed photography, and they took part in photographic exhibitions. Wiškovský knew another famous photographer from Cologne, Josef Sudek, who was the same age as Funke. While he was intellectually and socially close to Funke, Sudek's deliberately accentuated rustic mannerisms created a certain barrier between them, especially at the beginning.

In his early works from the late 1920s and early 1930s, Wiškovský had already proved to be an original creator, who quickly passed from romantically tuned pictorial photography to works in the style of new factuality and constructivism. By May 1930, he had already participated in the exhibition of *New Czech Photography* in the Palace Aventin exhibition hall in Prague. The young photographer and film-maker, Alexander Hackenschmied, and his friends, organized this exhibition along the same lines as the famous exhibition of modern photography, *Film and Photo* (Stuttgart, 1929). A year later, Wiškovský had a similar exhibition in the same place. In 1933, he was represented at the *International Exhibition of Social Photography* in Prague, which was organized by the group, *Film-Photo*, which in turn was part of the *Left Front*. Three years later, five of his photographs were admitted to the *International Exhibition of Photography* at Mánes in Prague, where they found

themselves alongside works by Man Ray, Alexander Rodchenko, Moholy-Nagy, Raoul Hausmann, and other leading representatives of avant-garde photography. Despite the fact that Wiškovský's work was exhibited in major exhibitions of avant-garde photography, he never became a member of any avant-garde group. His introverted nature helped to foster this as well. He was not a human being that enjoyed impassioned artistic debates in cafés and pubs.

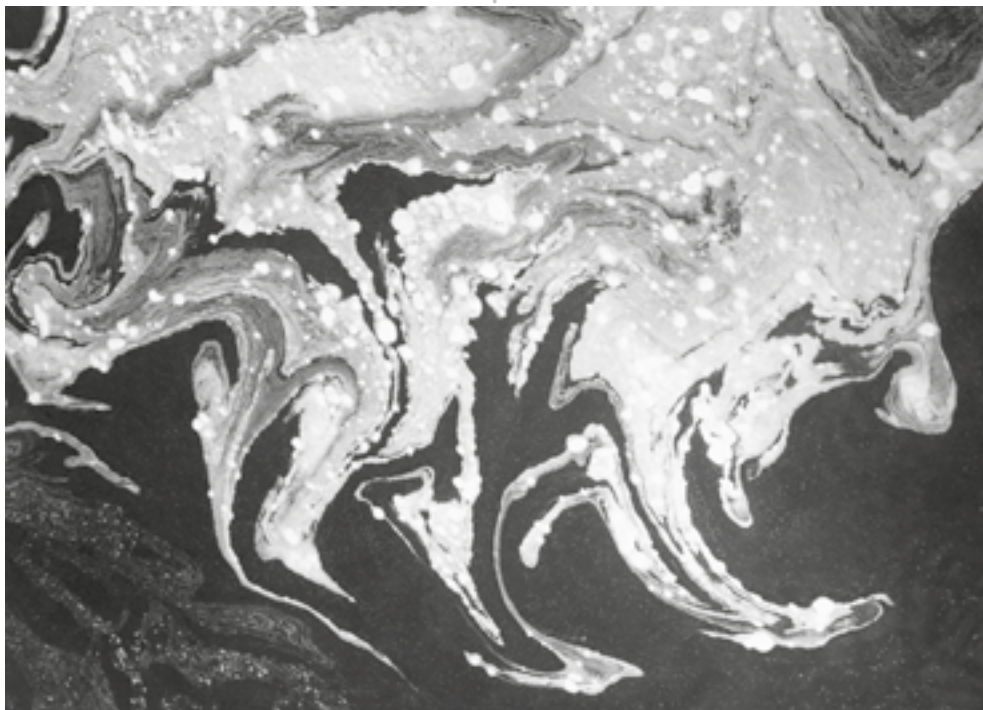
In his first major article about art photography, published in the magazine *Foto* in 1929, he had already strictly rejected attempts at imitating painting designs while emphasizing the particularity of photography. Consistent with the views of Russian constructivists and German functionalists, he emphasized the need to find new aesthetic values in the seemingly unphotogenic objects of modern technical civilization.

"Whether it's machines or buildings, furniture or clothes, they always have the character of purposeful simplicity deprived of all ornamentation. The closer their pure forms come to basic geometric shapes, the dearer they become to us." 26th, November to 11th, December, 2016; preview 11th, November, 2016.

Through the late 1920s and early 1930s Wiškovský was able to directly connect to Funke's images of gear fragments and metal drums and even connect to the general enthusiasm that many avant-garde artists had for modern technological civilization. In his seemingly simple, but in fact extremely carefully thought out and compositionally polished photographs of pipes, bundles of iron rods, screws,



Eugen Wiškovský: Lunar Landscape – Měsíční krajina, 1929

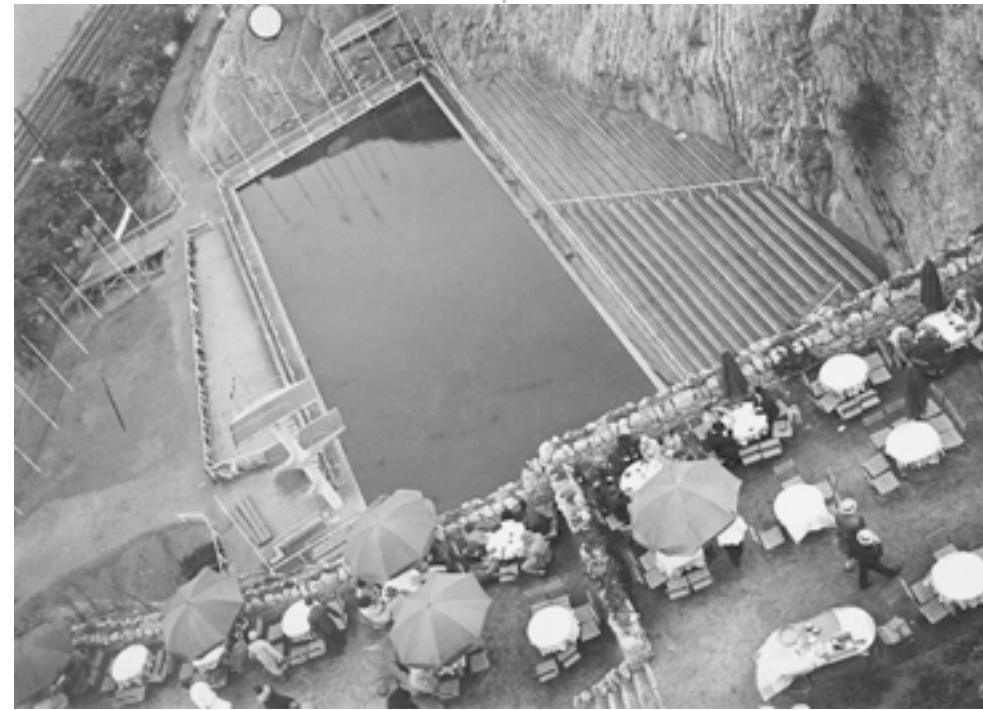


Eugen Wiškovský: Arabesque-Arabeska, 1931

electrical insulators, wire mesh, turbine details, light bulbs, and mortars, he was able to find artistically impressive shapes. He portrayed often seen common objects which he found at home, or at the construction site of the Cologne power plant, in a fresh and new way, surprising viewers and impressing their eyes with the guilt of fatigue and dullness. He used perfectly thought out spacious details which drew the displayed objects out from their usual spatial context, while often changing perspective and scale. He freed the main motif from useless trivia and he let the most important edges and tones stand out through the transformation of the original colour photograph into a black and white photograph. The masterful manipulation of light and constructive

cropping added to the constructed context. He often used multiplication and rhythmic repetition of certain lines or of entire objects, as can be seen in his images of eggs, corrugated metal, ceramic pipes or spindles with wool.

Wiškovský's photographs are in the style of new objectivity; they are rigorously rational and at the same time they are full of imagination. In his photographs, the objectivity of the surrounding world's perfectly depicted details intersect with the subjectivity of the author's point of view; his distinctive vision, his way of thinking and feeling, and his intellect and inner world. They differ significantly from the reality from which they were drawn; reality is made exceptional through artistic means, they are distinctive works of art with a clearly



Eugen Wiškovský: Barrandov Terraces, Terasy Barrandov II, before-před, 1933

recognizable authorial signature. It was not just about an artistically remarkable display of simple and often seemingly unsightly objects; or a solution to issues concerning minimalism and the relationships between the whole and the detail. It was also about the photographic expression of tangible relationships, as well as, of one's own impression of these relationships. Additionally, it was often about finding shape analogues and metaphorical meanings. More than once, Wiškovský managed to overcome the terse and optimal description of reality. A description which was typical for many of the works by Albert Renger-Patzsch, Aenne Biermann, and other prominent representatives of the New Objectivity. Wiškovský managed to create stronger symbolism in his

photographs, whose metaphoric character is in some respects similar to the photographs of seashells or artichokes by Edward Weston. Objects in Wiškovský's photographs are depicted with the intentional loss of their identity. Shape analogues, and metaphors are not to be found in all of Wiškovský's images; but in some of them, they play an important role (for example; a photograph of corrugated sheets which evoke an image of loose long hair or the surface of a shell, a photograph of rhythmically arranged eggs resembles fish scales, a detail from sugar production waste water can suggest a map of South Asia or an arabesque pattern, etc.). These characteristics are most significant in the photograph *Moonscape* ((1929) also called, in an austere way,

Collars), which was created at the very beginning of his serious photographic work. Moonscape is a composition of stiff shirt collars transformed into an imaginative picture of the cratered lunar surface. This image was created by: suppressing the scale, isolating the repetitive details, the sophisticated positioning of a light bulb between the collars and adding the contour of a coin, which was added to a later variant of this image to depict the Earth.

Quality over quantity always prevailed in Wiškovský's work. This was aided by his use of the Ica Ideal camera, with the 6,5 × 9 cm format, despite the onset of lightweight Leica cameras using cine-film 24×36 cm format. Unlike Funke, Wiškovský often returned to the same motifs and photographed them repeatedly, until he was satisfied with the outcome.

In Wiškovský's estate collection we can often find multiple negatives with different variants of the same image; often times these negatives can span a long period of time. According to his daughters and his friend Josef Ehm, he often took hours to prepare one shot and he regularly went out with his camera and did not take a single photograph.

In the early 1930s, in addition to his details of small objects, Wiškovský often photographed the recently built ESSO power plant in Cologne. The modern functionalist architecture of Jaroslav Fagner provided for him a series of unusual motifs. In many instances these motifs were

photographed using distinctive low angle shots and dynamic diagonal compositions in a fashion similar to Alexander Rodchenko, El Lissitzky and Moholy-Nagy. This building was also repeatedly photographed by Josef Sudek and Jindřich Koch, a graduate of the Bauhaus movement; but their images are far more static and more classically composed. The photographs by Jaromír Funke were closer to Wiškovský's constructivist images. For Wiškovský, architecture itself was often the inspiration, but, at the same time, just a starting point for his free creation; it did not matter which concrete structure was captured in the photograph. This creative ideal is also supported by his other images from the power plant area. Images which, shot from above, confront the details of metallic structures, human figures and sharply cast shadows. Some of these photographs remind us of images of the Eiffel Tower by André Kertész. They meld with the contextual interests of a number of avant-garde photographers when considering the motifs of modern metal observation towers and radio transmitters; as exemplified by works from Alexander Rodchenko, László Moholy-Nagy, Germaine Krull and Jaroslav Rössler.

Several of Wiškovský's progressive photographs originated from the Barrandov terraces in Prague. This photogenic place, of coffee tables overlooking a swimming pool, was one of the most popular motifs for inter-war Czech photographers. This eye-catching area was photographed in different ways by Josef Sudek, Drahomír Josef Růžicka, Josef Ehm, Karel Hájek, Jan Lausmann, Jaromír Funke, Arnošt Pikart and others. None



Eugen Wiškovský: Corrugated Metal-Vlnitý plech, 1934

2 Eugen Wiškovský, On pictorial photography, Photo, 1929, No. 12, p.184

of them was able to draw out such radical images from this environment as Wiškovský, who was able to capture the very essence of modern architecture and, more generally, of modern times. Constructivist composition appeared in many of Wiškovský's photographs: for example; the famous picture *Game* (sometimes called *Kids on the Stairs*) from 1929, this photograph depicts his two daughters sitting on a diagonally displayed staircase from the bird's-eye point of view; or, an unpublished photograph of boys flipping coins, also photographed from above; and the unusual composition *Canoe*, in which one can wonder whether its erotic metaphor is a result of Wiškovský's translations of Sigmund Freud's writing.

In 1937 Wiškovský and his family moved to Prague where he continued to teach at secondary schools. In the small-town ambiance of Cologne, Wiškovský photographed mostly; industrial buildings, details of technical objects and modern architecture; somewhat paradoxically, in Prague he began to photograph, for the most part, landscapes. His landscape photography emphasized subjective authorial contribution, where he was mainly concerned with simple baselines, unusual surface structures and surreal images. He did not travel far for his subject matter; he usually sought out the few places he had visited for years and was familiar with. These sites were primarily located in Hlubočepy on the western outskirts of Prague. With its picturesque and monumental rock outcrops, Hlubočepy drew the attention of many photographers, and like many photographers, Wiškovský also photographed these monumental

rocks in the romantic evening light. But, more often than not he depicted their details devoid of real scale, where he discovered natural sculptures, geometric shapes and sometimes even metaphorically looking shape analogues. He was also intrigued by the local terrain irregularities and the bizarre shapes of the fields, which he accentuated with depth inducing lighting in his photographs. In addition to Prague and its surroundings, Wiškovský enjoyed photographing the area of Jinonická Vidoule; where, for example, he found the motif of a dirt road crossing a field, which was reminiscent of a flag fluttering in the breeze. In most of his landscape photography we can see significantly reshaped landscapes, which documents the relationship between humans and nature.

Wiškovský's most original landscapes were created in the area around the Šalamounka farm in Smíchov. He photographed a small stretch of landscape containing a hill and a house in many variations: at times he was attracted to the contoured lines of a mown field, or the geometric shapes of knolls of hay, and at other times his attention was drawn to the stark shadow of a nearby hill that formed an illusionary and symbolic image. A highlight of Wiškovský's landscape work is his metaphorical image of a flattened grain field containing a protruding farmhouse roof; this photograph suggests the image of a sinking ship in a stormy sea. This almost surreal blend of reality and imaginary vision is intensified by its title, *Disaster* (however, it was published under this title only later, the original title was *Grain*).



Eugen Wiškovský: Specters – Přízraky, 1939

The late 1930s and early 1940s was the most important period for Wiškovský's theoretical activities. Through his articles, published primarily in the monthly, *Photographic Horizon* (*Fotografický obzor*), he tried to derive the principles of photographic image composition from the path of perception, which is based on Gestalt psychology. He dealt with questions concerning the meaning of photography, and tried to use the theory of information to build a new system of photographic theory. Due to Wiškovský's depth, originality and precise formulation, these articles were unique for Czech photographic journalism of that time. Because of this, they were not well understood by the general photographic community, and had to wait for many decades to be fully appreciated.³

In the brief period of relative freedom and democracy between the end of World War II and the communist coup in February 1948, Wiškovský continued to photograph landscape images from the area of Hlubočepy, static photographs of Prague's environment, and details of various natural motifs. Shortly after the Communist regime took over in Czechoslovakia in 1948, propaganda and the agitational role of photography in the style of socialist realism became the predominant form of expression. There was no longer any room in the official photographic scene for creative experimentation, nor for deep theoretical treatises

based on Gestalt psychology. Due to this, Wiškovský retreated into private life; he left behind the education system and public photographic life. In his photographic works from the 1950s, he focused primarily on an extensive series of imaginative photographs from the Old Jewish Cemetery in Prague. In this place he sought the confrontation between the crumbling tombstones and the bizarre shapes of the surrounding trees and bushes, where he discovered analogues to and contrasts with man-made and natural light. Many of the scenes from the Old Jewish Cemetery are quite descriptive and some motifs are repeated. Although they still demonstrated the author's intellectual depth and compositional mastery, they also indicate the author's descent from his peak period and the loss of his ability to explore new visual adventures.

At this time he was already ill and had been forgotten by the wider photographic community. He found himself outside the focal point of contemporary photographic life. Art historian, Anna Fárová, rediscovered Eugen Wiškovský's work in the early 1960s. A small monograph of five thousand copies, which she prepared for the 23rd volume of *Artistic Photography*, was published (June 1964, State publishers of literature and art in Prague), but Eugen Wiškovský did not live to witness this. Eugen Wiškovský died on the 15th of January, 1964, at the age of seventy-five.



Eugen Wiškovský: Disaster- Katastrofa, 1939

3 Tomáš Pospěch (ed.), Eugen Wiškovský: *Obrazová fotografie/The Photographic Picture*, Praha: Positif, 2014.

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Photography and Picture, Belgrade 2001

The Impossible, Surrealist Art, Belgrade 2002

Photography and Propaganda 1945 – 1958, Banja Luka 2005 (translated into Japanese and published in Tokyo 2009)

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Nikola Vučo in the land of *An Andalusian Dog*

In the year 1929, the French journal *La révolution surréaliste* published the script for the movie *An Andalusian Dog* (*Un Chien Andalou*) by Salvador Dalí and Louis Buñuel. It shocked the bourgeois ways of representation and observation. The very same year, in Belgrade, Nikola Vučo and thirteen other Serbian surrealists were busy preparing the almanac *Nemoguće-L'impossible*. This unique almanac by Serbian surrealist artists that came out in 1930 did not print any of Vučo's photographs made during his trip to Spain. However, his photographic experience during this voyage was deeply influenced by the movie *An*



Milan Vučo, 1928



Milan Vučo, 1928

Andalusian Dog (1928) as it suggested him to seek the unreal and the bold imagery of dreams.

Nikola Vučo did not embark on his trip to Spain as a modern tourist, but as a traveler seeking to discover the unknown: the mysterious world that gave birth to the imagination of Picasso and Dalí, and to Buñuel's revolutionary optics. This, in many ways decisive voyage was made most probably in 1928, according to Vučo's memories. In any case, at one point, before returning from Paris to Belgrade, Nikola Vučo decided to travel with his half-brother Milan, but not on a mundane summer vacation on the French Riviera, but to the Spanish regions that they had almost never heard of. Prior to that, Milan Vučo had spent some years in the Swiss medical centers, and had given Nikola, his youngest half-brother with whom he was very close, his first photo-camera, which the latter used to make his earliest explorations of the



From Nikola Vučo's Spanish album no. 21, 1928



From Nikola Vučo's Spanish album no. 49, 1928

mechanical picture while wandering through the streets of Paris. The trip to Spain was the last journey Milan made. He died soon after. For Nikola, however, it represented the ending of his carefree student life in Paris, and the beginning of a brief, yet intense career of the leading photographer of the Serbian surrealist movement.

The idea of traveling is one of the fundamental principles of the

surrealist program. "Partez sur les routes" was André Breton's famous cry, but equally well-known was his wandering experience through the picturesque French countryside in the company of two poets: Vitrac and Aragon. Moreover, in the *First Surrealist Manifesto* (1924), Breton urged artists to discover the unknown within their subconsciousness and dreams, but also to physically embark

to the realms of the world which were still not explored. He himself proposed a model of "an inner voyage" in the novel *Nadja* (1928). This consisted of a journey without a premade plan, flexible and open to changes, and based on coincidences and surprises. During the journey the traveler would collect details, souvenirs, banal objects and trinkets, but also experiences of his own self.

The decision to travel to the southern Spanish region of Andalusia was, therefore, not the two young dandies' whim, nor was it formed within the context of the ideology of colonialism. Rather, for Nikola Vučo the idea developed while he was in the artistic circles of Paris. It can be linked to members of Surrealism and to Dalí, whose influence on the French artists grew with the number of scandals tied to his name. Prior to Nikola Vučo, nearly every member of the Surrealist headquarters of Paris had undertaken a journey to Spain: Aragon and Breton, Eliar and Ernst. Great Spanish artists, Cubists (Picasso, Gonzales) and Surrealists (Miró, Dalí, Buñuel, Lorka) made the artistic circles of Paris, which Nikola Vučo was a member of at the time, even more interested in the original and mythical beauty of Spain.

The voyage to Spain is, thus, the type of travel which is not restricted by the tourist industry, but which insists that the travelers, the Vučo brothers, should undertake an individual exploratory roaming through unknown spaces without using a compass. By saying "without a compass" we point to the fact that the trip to Spain was not organized in advance for the brothers Vučo. Nobody sent them there out of any particular reason,



From Nikola Vučo's Spanish album no. 23, 1928

and nobody served as their guide during their stay. They were not part of a "tourist group", nor were they traveling in the time of hypermobility, which distinguishes the end of the 20th century. On the contrary, we can even consider this type of journey an artistic performance, since it entails not only action – traveling, but also specific planning and a detailed textual or photographic documentation. The role of photographs in Nikola Vučo's Spanish album was to register and to shed light (*post festum*) on a physical displacement from one space to another, from a familiar environment, to an unknown one, from one life-style to another, way of life, a temporary one.

Due to the very nature of their

medium, photographs frame and encapsulate isolated moments and different aspects of the adventurous traveling without an aim, of the physical wandering through unidentified and unknown spaces. Thus, photographs legitimize an atypical experience which is specifically psychological and aesthetic, and not only touristic. That is why it is necessary to consider the very act of traveling by the members of the avant-garde as an act of great complexity, especially if we take into consideration the revolutionary ideology of Surrealism, which does not only refer to art, but to a wide array of human activities and the everyday life.

Imagined Spain

During the first couple of years after invention, photography was expected to register that what is notable, such as pyramids, hieroglyphs, distant exotic peoples. Later on, starting in the 1920s, photography became the medium of popular, mass culture and, according to Roland Barthes, it "by a familiar reversal, decreed notable whatever it photographed".¹ In other words, photographic representation makes even everyday situations stop being everyday, as they transform into

pictures. In the eyes of the traveler, all those banal sights become worthy of a renewed perception, even renewed interpretation, when they become encapsulated into a photo-frame. No matter how typical and ordinary for the south of Spain, the façades and cobblestone roads on Vučo's photographs are classified as notable, by the mere fact that they have been photographed.

As we know, photography gave surrealists immense and entirely new possibilities of expression. It allowed them to reach their goal of translating subjective, even hallucinatory experiences into the language of photographic objectivity.² Some authors, most notably Susan Sontag, even found the very doubling of real phenomena in a photographic image to be surrealistic. Of course, not every photograph can be considered a Surrealist work of art, but it can be no doubt that the series of photographs taken in Spain by Nikola Vučo correlate largely to the heterogeneous concept of the Surrealist image. Even more than that, these photographs show the author's readiness to use the photographic documentary language in order to register scenes from reality but which have gained a surreal atmosphere by the contrasts of light and darkness, inner and outer.

It is not the intention of this short article to give an answer to the difficult question whether Nikola Vučo took all seventy-five photographs in the album, or if some can be attributed to his stepbrother Milan. Instead of discussing the problem of authorship, I shall use a working hypothesis that it was only Nikola, the owner of the camera and the photo-album, who



From Nikola Vučo's Spanish album no. 42, 1928

recorded the voyage through Spain. When leafing through the album with small photographs, sized 10x6 cm, one is immediately struck by the fact that the streets, squares and parks in the Spanish cities, and especially the ones in Andalusia, Sevilla, Granada and Cordoba, are nearly empty. Architectural motifs take up the majority of space on the disproportionately small surfaces of the photographs. They consist of numerous

fantastic towers on cathedrals and ancient fortifications, of gates and passageways, buildings and verandas. Only now and then do they feature inhabitants of the Spanish cities. Bathing in the bright sun, the Spanish roads seem to only be used by women carrying baskets on their heads, a man riding a donkey or a group of people idly sitting in the shade. It looks as though everyone had left to watch a bullfight or a game of polo, which the

- 1 R. Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, transl. Richard Howard, New York: Hill and Wang, 1981, 34
- 2 M. Nado, *Istorija nadrealizma*, Beograd 1980; R. Krauss, *L'Amour fou*, New York 1985; M. Todić, *Nikola Vučo. Fotografija i nadrealizam u Srbiji (Nikola Vučo. Fotografie und Surrealismus in Serbien)*, Museum moderner Kunst, Wien, 1990

photographs in the album also depict, as they represent mass spectacles that are specifically Spanish.

The Vučo brothers are accidental passers-by, wandering Romantics, lonely in the hilly regions of the Spanish south, at least according to the preserved photographs of the street-scenes. Photography is the silent witness of their quiet, almost casual automatism of an act – the act of traveling. Although they are physically present in the unknown city squares, they are reluctant to establish a face-to-face contact with the “Other”.³ Vučo’s photographs have Spanish girls stopped at a safe distance, or with their backs turned away. Their faces, as well as the ones of men, are mostly concealed by thick shadows, hats with wide rims. Alternatively, their gaze is turned to the side. The co-presence of the Surrealist traveler-photographer does not entail interaction, nor does it bear signs of communication and mutual exchange of glimpses. Photographs from Nikola Vučo’s Spanish album clearly assert the absence of meeting face-to-face with the unknown, with the gaze of the unfamiliar “Other”. Frozen and isolated, individual street scenes that the photographs represent do not make a logical sequence. This is also the case with some cinematic frames in the movie *An Andalusian Dog* founded on Dalí’s and Buñuel’s dreams. These photographic and cinematic images do not convey a linear course of action.

3 J. Urry, *Mobility and Proximity*, www.its.leeds.ac.uk/projects/mobilenetwork/downloads/urry1stpaper.doc

4 *Ibid.*

They are not grouped according to a governing motif. On the contrary, they insist on that which is fragmentary and the discontinuous. It is the logic of dreams that shapes this detached and disconnected automatism of the eye, not the unwritten rules of the tourist eye.

In the frames of Nikola Vučo’s photographic images, a new “Other” realms or visions keep revealing themselves, distant and unfamiliar. They appear through passageways or extraordinarily shaped gates, and are breathtaking. They are there because the artist had selected, isolated and fixated them during his brief experience of co-presence. Using a method similar to the well-known trick of a picture-within-a-picture, Nikola Vučo juxtaposes dark passageways to landscapes that are lit. The broad view of a cityscape or an ancient castle appears suddenly, right after going through narrow passageways or special gates and parks. That is why we can say that his photographs from Spain are, at their best, the result of the reactions of a surprised wanderer. In other words, his photographs do not stress “the mysterious side of the mystery”.⁴ Rather, they recognize the mysterious in the everyday world.

Nikola Vučo’s photographs collected during his expedition to Spain, the mythical land of the Orientalized South, show clear references to the atmosphere of the “gothic novel” which was typical for Surrealist poetry and painting, but for Surrealist photography, as well. The context of a “gothic novel” is constructed on those photographs representing ancient towers, medieval walls and fortifications, as well as monumental

labyrinths whose deserted space offers unbound possibilities for a rapid flow of free associations in the observer’s consciousness. Surrealists meant that only the miraculous could be beautiful. That is why their gaze, and their camera, is always directed towards those objects and phenomena that could evoke the state of tension and suspense.

Speaking about Vučo’s album of photographs taken in Spain in 1928, one must conclude that the way in which inner impulses became projected to the flow and observation of the real world tells more about the introspection of the author, than about the retrospection of the course of the trip. The real goal of creating this album was, therefore, not to obtain an enviable collection of dozens of visual souvenirs from Spain, but to document a specific experience of the inner dictate of, not so much the thoughts, but the pictures. At first glance, the photographs that have been selected and preserved (undoubtedly, originally there must have been many more right after the trip), might seem uninteresting. They do not show any landmarks that are typically considered attractive, nor is there a clear physical contact between a key tourist destination and the privileged visitor, in the sense of: “That’s me walking down the streets of Granada”. The photographs in Nikola Vučo’s album do not insist on the traveler’s elite status. Neither are they illustrations of an exotic journey, since they were conceived in the spirit of the Surrealist ideology. Like their author, Vučo’s photographs abandon the conventions and aesthetic models of the bourgeoisie which are

tautologically repeating: “the world is beautiful”. Instead, they turn towards an adventurous discovery of the unfamiliar and a bald confrontation of dream and reality.

So, when returning to the time and place of the brief co-presence of the Vučo brothers in Spain, and especially Andalusia in 1928, one must never forget that the Surrealist aesthetic, which was only briefly analyzed here, underlies every photograph taken. It is a well-known fact that pictures never stand by themselves, out of context. That is why the photographs collected in Nikola Vučo’s “Spanish” album should be, among other things, understood as a building material for a different type of cinematic structure proposed by the avant-garde. If the film *An Andalusian Dog* could be said to represent a flow of shocking static images, then the series of photographs taken by Nikola Vučo in Spain shortly after, could be compared to the narration of the silent movie.

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The Other War: The People's War

Visual story of everyday war of partisan and rebellion civilians at Nazi occupied territories of Soviet Union during Great Patriotic War, 1941 – 1945.

The lecture focuses on visual presentation of Soviet partisan troops and life of civilians at Nazi occupied territories of Soviet Union.

My colleagues – Evgeny Berezner, Natalia Tarasova – and me discovered these materials in 2002 – 2005 when we prepared the series of exhibitions based on files of Russian State Archive of Film and Photo Documents. In focus of this series of exhibition was the history of Great Patriotic War. And for us it was time of to study the history of Russian photography from the new angles.

Firstly, I would like to tell few words on history of 1941 – 1945 in Russia (Soviet Union in that period), give the timeline and few comments.

The Second World War started for Soviet people on June 22, 1941 when the Nazi forces invaded the territory of USSR. The period of WWII from June 22, 1941 to May 9, 1945, a Victory Day in Berlin, is named Great Patriotic War in Russian history. Great Patriotic War – is German Nazi war campaign against USSR and the liberation movement of Soviet Red Army and Soviet nation against Nazi troops, firstly at the territory of USSR (Western border of country was crossed by Soviet Army in 1944) and then in Eastern Europe.

World War II casualties of the Soviet Union from all related causes numbered over 26,000,000, both civilians and military. The civilian death in the regions occupied by Germany toll at 13.7 million. Scientists cited sources from Soviet era to support their figures and used the terms “genocide” and “premeditated extermination” when referring to deaths of 7.4 million civilians caused by direct, intentional violence. Civilians killed in reprisals during the Soviet partisan war account for a major portion. Scientists estimated that civilian forced labourer (camps) deaths in Germany totalled 2,164,313.

Russian sources generally include Jewish Holocaust deaths among total civilian dead. Holocaust deaths in the annexed territories (also at occupied Soviet territories) numbered an additional 1.5 million.

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The presented at lecture images had different origin: some of them were done for official reports by Nazi officers, some were done by Soviet photojournalists accompanied Soviet partisan movement at the occupied territories and some – by unknown photographers-partisans themselves.

For our exhibitions and publications we used the images from original film negatives of the Second World War time. To remain the original of the photographs we do not retouch the archival numbers and editorial marks from the images.

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Why in sixty years after the War we returned to review that period? – For foreigners it might look like the result of post-Soviet military doctrine in Russia, and the national idea of Great Russian Victory in the Second World War. But in the reality the meaning of search of WWII history and photography is different in Russia.

In my second part of presentation I would like to tell few words about that.

1948 – National photo exhibition dedicated to the Great Patriotic War (1941 – 1945) opens in Moscow.

The same year, in 1948 the campaign against “cosmopolitanism” is started and launched during the final years of Stalin’s rule. The campaign was largely anti-Semitic, targeting prominent representatives of the Soviet intelligentsia; a number of public figures are executed, including the members of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee of the USSR. The campaign also affects many well-known Soviet photographers of Jewish origin.

Plus, since late 1940s and till 1971 the Victory Day was not a national holiday in USSR – no military parade at Red Square, no celebration of May 9 with special semi-state/semi-social activity; because of different historical reasons, neither veterans alive nor the heroic acts of killed Soviet soldiers were in focus of public attention. At the beginning of 1970s the new ideological directives came and Victory Day was announced as one of the most important date in state calendar, but without any doubts and without any share of knowledge on the war.



Dmitry Chernov
Partisans from village N.
August 1941
Russian State Archive for Film and Photo Documents

The War history was visualized only by dozen images published everywhere, from school textbooks to academicians' research results. Less than ten names of Soviet photographers were repeated from text to text about War and about history of Soviet photography of the period: Dmitry Baltermants, Evgeny Khaldey, Max Alpert, Mark Redkin, Mark Markov-Grinberg, Emmanuil Evzerikhin, Georgy Zelma...

In post-Soviet time all the ideological intentions of previous epoch were not actual and the research of WWII photographic documents was possible but not supported. The work what we started in early 2000s was our own initiative driven by the personal interests of group of historians of Russian

photography. We discovered, by the way, that Russian State Archives and especially the main one, the Russian State Archive of Film and Photo Documents, had the large number of documents of WWII from large variety of resources – from Soviet side: editorial files from official newspapers and images from private archives. The last were the donations of individuals, who made images during the War time. Also there are images, taken from German Nazi, institutions and persons, both, and representatives of countries of Nazi association. Many of the documents in the archives, as Soviet as opposite side origin, were never published before.

The idea of our research was to discover the photographic documents



Mikhail Trakhman
Partisans dislodge German Nazi punitive expedition from the village B.
Leningrad Region, 1942
Russian State Archive for Film and Photo Documents

about "the Inner Way", everyday war, at front line, and at the both sides from the red line of battle.

Based on such conception we realised the exhibition *Inner Space of War. The 900 days of life in Leningrad during the Nazi Blockade of the city, 1941 – 1944*. Few names, which were mentioned in War time, but never repeated since 1940s, were returned to the history thanks to that exhibition.

For us it was interesting to see the combination of all kinds of press photojournalistic photography, staged and not staged, and photography done because of security and reasons of special (closed) reports for the Central Committee of Communist Party in Moscow. It was interesting to discover the images done by Soviet

photographers outside of official order. The specific of photography in WWII in Soviet Union was:

- no photograph shooting without special permission from official representatives (it was mainly in first three years of war)
- shooting only by official photographers, having the official status of war correspondents of any Soviet mass-media
- photographers travelled / went for shooting only "in brigade" – in a group of two/four persons, not alone (it is mainly depicted the situation of first three years of war, but the official directive was suitable during the whole period of war)
- all the cameras for personal use had to be returned to State



Piotr Vershigora
City of Sumy region. Partisans of Sydir Kovpak unit inspect military hardware put out of action
Undated
Russian State Archive for Film and Photo Documents

- the person with camera without official ID of war photo correspondent and without special permission (the temporary permission for the business travel for shooting) was named a spy and had to be arrested and was able to be shot at the stop – especially at the first months of the war

At the end of war, as we realised, it was the different situation: military officers, often the young guys, photo-amateurs themselves before the War time, kept the trophy cameras and start to make pictures even of the everyday life of Soviet forces and around themselves – in the Soviet and later in foreign cities after their liberation.

At the end of the War the work by official photo correspondents became to be more intimate and the authors start to provide more pictures because of personal reasons. People at liberated Soviet territories, who did keep the personal cameras, started to use them again, even in war time, even when all the secure regulations of war time were still legal and operated.

Realised all these special Soviet regulations for the photographers at the Great Patriotic War time, we were very interested to see the pictures of partisan movement:

- It was inside of occupied territory but it was under the Soviet laws.



Mikhail Trakhman
City of Pinsk region. Partisan squad passes through the swamp
Belarus, 1943
Russian State Archive for Film and Photo Documents



Yakov Davidzon
Funerals of partisans killed in the battle with Nazi invaders
Ukraine, 1943
Russian State Archive for Film and Photo Documents

- It was inside of Nazi brown indicated lands but it was with Red spirit, with the language of Soviet photojournalism language.
- And the depiction was even more liberate than it was possible to imagine from representatives of official Soviet photographers.

We were interested to discover collections of images presented the war from opposing positions: from points of invaders, rebels and victims.

We focused on some plots, which had a big gallery of photographs:

acts of defence / battles, liberation of villages and cities, everyday life of partisan camps in forests (help of civilians, cooking, reading, partisan hospitals, schools, communists meetings, editorial and printing work for partisan newspapers and leaflets), live inside of "partisan state" (it was a literal description of the large territories, especially in Belorussia, under the control of Soviet partisans) with agricultural works, travelling, holidays etc., passages at the different landscapes... The portraits of partisans – all kinds of social classes – communist

- ◀ Mikhail Trakhman
Cooking dinner at the kitchen of the partisan unit named after hero Grigory Kotovsky
Belarus, December 1943
Russian State Archive for Film and Photo Documents



Unknown German Photographer
A Nazi officer interrogates a caught Soviet woman-scout
October 1941
Russian State Archive for Film and Photo Documents

leaders and military officers and soldiers, local farmers and former teachers, teenagers and even young children.

Teenagers, awkward and radical by nature, became the overwhelming force in the partisan war. This age is insensitive to death and has no sense of impossible. When everything is possible, the energy of little humans, who are not yet grown-up, becomes deadly. A young girl from a Belarusian

settlement «exterminated over 350 Nazi soldiers and derailed 6 military echelons of the enemy». Another girl of only 18 years old «organized blasting of two bridges, derailed 4 echelons, and captured a prisoner for interrogation». Little boys become reconnaissance and communication agents. They had no choice, since a partisan unit and men in fur earflap hats, who had went through encirclement and captivity, became their family. When the official photo

◀ Mikhail Trakhman
A medical orderly bandaging a wounded partisan at the battlefield
Belarus, December 1943
Russian State Archive for Film and Photo Documents

correspondents did such portraits usually they tried to show the hero, to expose the story of a Man. Many of the stories were kept as captions for the portraits.

We discovered how many official photographers were “in business travels” to partisan territories: the photojournalists jumped with parachute or travelled with aircrafts, connected Partisan Land with Big Land (Soviet territory). It is interesting to see the difference between the photos, printed from film, exposed in laboratories at Big Land (sometimes the photographers continued to stay in partisan camp and sent the films to Moscow to expose) and images exposed and printed in complicated conditions in forest.

Many names of important Soviet photographers connected with a history of partisans: Max Alpert, Vsevolod Tarasevich, Emmanuil Evzerikhin. Also we can named two photographers, Yacov Davidzon (from Kiev) and Mikhail Trakhman (Moscow) who spend months in partisan camps and were the real historians of partisans’ everyday life.

Special mention should be made of the photographs by Petro Vershigora. A professional screen actor and film maker of the 1930s, performer of character roles, in April 1942 he headed the brigade of film and photography reporters of the Political Department of the 40th army. In June 1942, he was commissioned by the Reconnaissance Department of the Bryansk Front and sent to the enemy’s rear. There he rose through the ranks from the commander of the reconnaissance company in the formation of S. A. Kovpak to the commander of the 1st Ukrainian partisan division. After the war, his life was connected with teaching military theory and writing, he never reverted to cinematography. However, Vershigora kept shootig throughout the partisan years. His photographs show a vision of a man who professionally — both as a partisan commander and as a film director — caught the essence and emotion in every situation. His camera works in motion-picture mode: it shows us a general view of the chronicle — a vehicle with fascists was knocked out; then it comes closer and captures a partisan get-together, it dances to and fro following a partisan commander on November 7. Vershigora treats camera as if it is an extension of his eye, an eye of a person living a common life and death with the reality.

Some names of the partisan movement photographers were lost; some of these names are pseudonyms hiding the reality. The war required to wear masks: a village was designated as N, a photographer — as Druzhelyubov. Although we well never know the real reason of this necessity, these designations became integral parts of the photographs which have been kept in archives for many years. The number of photographs made by unknown representatives of photographic community are existed in archives. They seem to be more personal, less staged, truly lifelike, and we understand that they were made by those who lived together with the partisans in forests, who were a part of their world, their everyday life, their marches, and preparations for operations. These photographs are diaries of partisan life, no matter that we don’t know the names of authors or cannot imagine their lives and lives of the people portrayed.

The photographs of the partisan movement in the Great Patriotic War are insisting on the postulate: there were no nameless or anonymous heroes in the war, the names of many people were lost, like the names of those who portrayed them, but each of them was an individual with a unique fate. The flywheel of the Great history was moved by the personal contribution of each of them. The resistance of the people and the Victory itself would be impossible without their personal choices.

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Frontier Images – Portuguese Photography 1940 – 1970's

The history of Portuguese photography offers us an important territory for reflecting upon the cultural forms of the frontier as defined by the Portuguese sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos – “a zone of interferences where the possibilities of hybridisation are enormous and are ordered in micro-sequences that are little given to globalisation.”

In this context of hybridisation, we also find a critical reading of Modernism that remained somewhat on the fringes of the programmatic lines of the main axes of historical power, since, as the theoretician and curator Pedro Lapa says, “For this reason, Portugal and its modern artists never established a positive cultural identity for themselves, as happened with other European cultures, nor did they establish a difference that was susceptible to exclusion, as happened with the non-European cultures. They were just simply ignored because of their intermediate, semi-peripheral position.”

Given this particular set of historical circumstances, Portuguese photography was caught in an intermittent paradox of influences and reflections, which not only conveyed but also transgressed the canons of Modernism. In this sense, examples such as that of the history of Portuguese photography and its own special brand of artistic modernity may be divisive for the hegemonic readings and interpretations of western Modernism, instigating a dialectic that is essential for understanding Europe's artistic, aesthetic and cultural complexity.



Adelino Lyon de Castro – Descarregador [Doc-ker]1950. National Museum of Contemporary Art – Museu do Chiado, Lisbon. ©ADF/DGPC

Frontier histories are essential as a response to a power of cultural territorialisation that is based on the concept of relevance, in this way claiming for themselves the constructive importance of critical understanding and demonstrating their capacity for making the structures of knowledge and history more democratic.

Seen from this perspective, the paper that is now being presented seeks to establish the basic premises of a frontier photographic culture, as was the Portuguese case, within the framework of the specificities of its Modernism and its Neo-Vanguard movements. It is through a prism of hybridism and the rotation of aesthetic models that Portuguese photography can be analysed, establishing within the general considerations of modernism photographic events that, at one and

the same time, both comply with and scoff at the modernist aesthetic canons.

One aspect in particular also seems to have contributed to this possibility of simultaneously welcoming and going beyond modernist models: the fact that the outbreak of avant-garde practices in Portuguese art in the 1920s did not include photography in their genesis, remaining aloof to the contribution of a new culture of the image. In this way, the photographic practice, in its various facets, remained faithful to its own *praxis*, without having followed a model of orientation that was either concerted or constant within the aesthetics of modernism, preferring instead to wander amid the many contaminations that existed between a lineage of photographic purism



Maria Lamas – From the book *Women of my Country* 1940 – 1948. Collection Maria Lamas Family



Alves Redol – Untitled [mining children] 1943. collection António Redol

and heterogeneous approaches that displayed enormous artistic ingenuity.

This hybridism was particularly evident in the 1940s and 1950s when it became integrated into the Surrealist and Neo-Realist movements, or even into the practices of “salonist” photographers and the groups that opposed them. This context was to change radically in the 1960s when photography was integrated into the discourse and artistic practice of the neo-vanguard movement, fostering new creative and theoretical readings and interpretations.

As contemporary movements, Portuguese Surrealism aligned with the postwar surrealist wave, which was similarly more committed in political terms, while Neo-Realism was the artistic movement whose fusion with the political movements that were opposed to the dictatorship of the *Estado Novo* manifested itself in a much more intense and active way during these decades.

From 1933 onwards, Portugal was subjected to the impositions of a dictatorial fascist regime known as the *Estado Novo* (New State), whose leader, Oliveira Salazar, had submitted the country to a position of neutrality during the Second World War, isolating the country and constructing one of Europe's longest lasting postwar dictatorships, which only came to an end with the Revolution of 25 April, 1974, and the establishment of Democracy.

After the Second World War, the collapse of the Nazi and fascist regimes had the effect of bringing hope to the opposition groups fighting against the regime of the *Estado Novo*, leading to a period of intense resistance and protest movements, all of which were violently repressed.

The creation, during this period, of two surrealist movements in Portugal, one of which was more politicised than the other, would become one of the paths for challenging the



Victor Palla e Costa Martins – Photobook Lisboa, cidade triste e alegre, 1956 – 1959

regime through its open criticism of the bourgeoisie and their fascist and academic tastes.

Fernando Lemos (1926) was the only artist in the movement to use photography, as well as painting, between 1949 and 1952. This period of intense production was followed by his exile in Brazil and his subsequent abandonment of photography.

Included in exhibitions alongside the works of other artists from the movement, Fernando Lemos' images and the “occultations” of Fernando de Azevedo (1923 – 2002) represented a subversion of all the carefully regulated modernist codes that the political system promoted, making it possible to reveal new aesthetic universes whose social repercussions caused a scandal among the art critics and audiences of that time. Remaining faithful to an idea of social criticism and

a deconstruction of academic artistic values, the surrealist artists also briefly served as mouthpieces for images that disagreed with and challenged the aesthetic impositions of the dictatorship.

Fernando Lemos' images followed the various photographic approaches to the surreal, not only through his use of laboratory techniques of manipulation, such as solarisation or superimposition, but also through his use of themes that directed the viewer's attention to the psychoanalytic unconscious, distancing his work from all the naturalist aesthetic subjects and experimenting with approaches to subjective photography of an abstract nature.

However, it was the neo-realist movement that was to play a more



Varela Pécuro – Widow from Nazaré, 1958. National Museum of Contemporary Art – Museu do Chiado, Lisbon. ©ADF/DGPC



Image 4 – Carlos Afonso Dias – Nazaré 1958. National Museum of Contemporary Art – Museu do Chiado, Lisbon. ©ADF/DGPC

continuous part in this alliance between politics and aesthetics, by taking a leading role for roughly ten years, between 1945 and 1955, in the holding of ten General Exhibitions of Visual Arts, bringing together various artistic expressions, ranging from painting to sculpture, drawing, engraving, photography, tapestry and architecture. These exhibitions were organised by artists who were linked to the Movement for Democratic Unity (Movimento de Unidade Democrática – MUD), which was to become one of the fundamental axes of opposition to the regime during this period.

Even so, over the course of these ten years, photography was only included in three editions of the General Exhibitions of Visual Arts, in 1946, 1950 and 1955, revealing the obstacles that continued to exist at the heart of the

movement to the full integration of photographic proposals.

These fleeting appearances of photography in the artistic production of the two movements reveal the general incapacity to assimilate the image to an aesthetic and artistic universe, just as they also show the isolation that I have already mentioned and to which the different photographic practices were condemned.

It was within this highly specific context that the first disruptions began to appear. Photography had a problem in being fully understood within the neo-realist movement, as could be seen by the photographic expressions that were included in it. We can see that the neo-realist exhibitions included the presence of photographers linked to “salonism”, such as Adelino Lyon de Castro (1910 – 1953) and Frederico



Image7 – Ernesto de Sousa – Slide from the mixed media *Almada, um nome de Guerra*, 1969, private collection

Pinheiro Chagas (1919 – 2006), together with architects, designers and professional photographers, such as Victor Palla (1922 – 2006), Francisco Keil do Amaral (1910 – 1975), Mário Novais (1910 – 1988) and Augusto Cabrita (1923 – 1995).

“Salonist” photographers, such as Adelino Lyon de Castro, for example, provide a concise illustration of this dichotomy between content and form at the heart of neo-realism. His work was divided between an interest in the themes of hard work and human effort, together with an aesthetics that was governed by the poetry of atmospheric values.

In a similar fashion, the “salonist” photographers whose work centred around the three most important photographic societies of that period, Grupo Câmara (1949), Foto Clube 6x6

(1950) and the Associação Fotográfica do Porto (1951), made their own contributions towards a humanist interpretation of realism, together with various sorties into abstractionism and the naturalistic or subjective aspects of reality. This was the case, for example, with Eduardo Harrington Sena (1923 – 2007), Varela Pécurto (1925), Jorge Silva Araújo (1906 – 1995) and Fernando Taborda (1920 – 1991).

There were other photographic events taking place on the fringes of neo-realism that were also of social and political interest and which have more recently been rescued from oblivion. This was the case, for example, with the writer and researcher Maria Lamas (1893-1983), who produced one of the most important illustrations of the social and economic condition of Portuguese women, with her work

Mulheres do meu País (Women in My Country, 1948), in which she included portraits of women that she herself had taken, together with those taken by other photographers.

The concept of an art that was legible for the common people was to be met, in the case of photography, with divided opinions among the critics of the neo-realist movement itself, some of whom believed in the transformative power of photography as the producer of an expanded field for the understanding of reality, while others, who were more sceptical and radical, saw in photographic images the same ideological and formal aridness that they found in abstract painting, completely rejecting it as part of the artistic set of ideas of neo-realism.

Ruth Berlau, one of the artists from the circle of Bertolt Brecht, stated that it was "necessary to learn how to read images", so that their dialectical nature and ideological purpose could be successfully achieved. This was a task that the Portuguese neo-realist movement seems to have failed to perform, since it involved competing with a set of visual ideas that was heavily social in nature and had been constructed within the confines of the propaganda for the regime of the *Estado Novo*. In isolated cases, photographic images were regarded simply as documents and were used in field research, as, for example, in the singular case of one of the greatest names in Portuguese neo-realist literature, Alves Redol (1911 – 1969).

The battle that was being fought over the contents of neo-realist images found itself confronted with the visual vocabulary of the regime, which similarly focused on the nature of work,

placing great stress upon rural life and the formation of typified stereotypes of the common people, which it became difficult to reply to and counteract from a different ideological premise.

At the same time, a group of photographers that included such figures as Gérard Castello-Lopes (1925 – 2011) and Carlos Afonso Dias (1930 – 2010), who had distanced themselves from and were critical of the "salonist" circles, built up a body of work that was aligned with the great international movements, searching for a subjective reality and already heavily influenced by the humanistic possibilities of photography and the North American legacies of street photography.

It fell to one of the mentors of the General Exhibitions of Visual Arts, the architect Victor Palla, working in partnership with his colleague from the same architectural studio, Costa Martins, to synthesise and reformulate these affinities and contradictions of the neo-realist image, in the project *Lisboa, cidade triste e alegre* (1956 – 1959). Before it became a book, this project consisted of a long and painstaking photographic look at the city itself, where the freedom of references and their transversal nature could arise in anything ranging from film to literature, architecture or even design. *Lisboa, cidade triste e alegre* was a promise of dialectical power, offering a foretaste of the future ruptures with the past, which were to take place in the 1970s.

Once the contrary forces of the neo-realist movement had become exhausted, it fell to the neo-vanguard movement, in its conceptual formulations, to develop

a photographic practice that, quite abruptly, adopted the criticism of the image as a creative process.

Both from a documentary point of view and through its complete integration into artistic discourse and practice, photography succeeded in playing a leading role in the shifts introduced into all the aesthetic paradigms of the past as a result of the Revolution of 25 April 1974, with the fall of the dictatorial regime and the establishment of democracy.

A generation of artists who, under the auspices of the scholarships awarded by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, had enjoyed the possibility of leaving the country to study and to further their artistic development brought to the Portuguese art of this period the use of images from photography and cinema as a contribution towards the critical questioning of modernist typologies.

Artists such as Helena Almeida, Alberto Carneiro, Julião Sarmento, Victor Pomar, Ângelo de Sousa, Fernando Calhau and Ernesto de Sousa were fundamental in the process of taking hold of the image and using it as a vehicle for experimentation and for working more widely upon its semiotic nature.

On this very subject, Ernesto de Sousa, one of the most important critics, curators and artists of this period, produced some of the most fundamental theoretical texts about the ontological nature of the image and its role as an instrument for changing the relationship between communication, art and life.

In one of these texts, *A Nova Fotografia*, the image is shifted from the representational idea

of the photographic object to its structuralist sphere and to the world of psychoanalytic interpretation. Ernesto de Sousa sees photography as belonging to the spheres of memory and desire, stating that: "as a more general approach, the new photography has to do with memory, the (non-) death of memory and the suspension of desire. [...] Photography does not imitate the gaze, it suspends it."

On the other hand, photography, together with the graphic arts, was a fundamental instrument in the construction of an ethical and collective art, doing away with questions relating to the isolated work of art, authorship and the separation of the arts from all of the modernist sacralisation, and thereby contributing to a fusion between art and life and consequently to the political and social transformation of society.

Ernesto de Sousa was to be the author of some of the most singular and important mixed media projects in Portugal, such as *Almada, um nome de guerra* (1969), *O meu Corpo é o teu Corpo* (1971) and *Luiz Vaz/73* (1975). These were based on multiple projections of slides, using images specially created for this purpose, along with others taken from the archives and/or manipulated by him, with experimental music composed for each of the projects, performances and literary texts.

This was his response, in a revolutionary climate of total freedom, to the hesitant and timid images proposed in the context of neo-realism some decades earlier.

The only thing separating these images and these authors was the hope for freedom and its actual conquest.

Jan-Erik Lundström

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Gigliola Foschi

She is teacher of History of Photography at the Istituto Italiano di Fotografia in Milan and she writes for the magazine *Gente di Fotografia*. As an independent curator she has organized several exhibitions and she collaborates for the Modern Art Gallery Collection Lercaro (Bologna); the Gallery San Fedele (Milano); Festival Fotografia Europea (Reggio Emilia) She has also written texts for several books and albums. The latest books: *America '70 tra sogno e realtà (70s America. Photography between dream and reality)*, Paci Contemporary, Brescia, 2014; *Fotografie del silenzio. Forme inquiete del vedere (Pictures of Silence. Restless ways of seeing)*, Mimesis, Milano, 2015. In 2002 she has won the Italian award "Premio per la critica fotografica Città di Benevento". She is member of the MIA (Milan Image Art Fair) Advisory Committee.

Abstract

Gigliola Foschi *Explorations along Via Emilia: Together with Luigi Ghirri, photographer as well as critic and curator*

After masterminding and curating the famous exhibition *Viaggio in Italia (Travel throughout Italy)* in 1984, Luigi Ghirri curates another paramount exhibition: *Explorations along Via Emilia. Views in the Landscape* (1986). In the latter, unlike *Travel throughout Italy*, all the involved authors are invited to carry out researches conceived just for that event. The invited photographers are: Olivo Barbieri, Gabriele Basilico, Vincenzo Castella, Giovanni Chiaramonte, Vittore Fossati, Luigi Ghirri, Guido Guidi, Mimmo Jodice, Klaus Kinold, Claude Nori, Cuchi White, Manfred Willmann; video di Nino Criscenti). An exhibition that will turn out to be a milestone as well as an innovation in many ways, which I am going to analyse. In fact the exhibition is a project involving the photographers as free authors but it is at the very same time a collective experience and work. In short it is a joint and an interdisciplinary work that comprises photographs, paintings and a collection of short stories, poems and different texts. The whole project springs from an idea both of photography and knowledge, as well as of the visual process. This concept is clearly shown through the introduction by Luigi Ghirri. In it we can notice how he managed to assimilate and revise philosophical thoughts – spanning from Walter Benjamin to Giorgio Agamben – as well as literally poetics. It is not a chance that the collection of short stories is co-ordinated by his friend, the writer Gianni Celati.



Hergiswill 1973

Luigi Ghirri and his "Esplorazioni sulla via Emilia" (Explorations about via Emilia) from Gigliola Foschi

Luigi Ghirri (born in Scandiano, in 1943 and died at Reggio Emilia in 1992) is considered, by many, as one of the most important Italian writers in the second half of the XX century. Photographer and artist, he also wrote numerous critical texts about his works, the work of other authors and his projects as commissioner. Also, he was a promoter of numerous exhibitions of great relevance. They were collective showings that had, as research topic, the Italian landscape; let's think for example, in *Viaggio in Italia (Trip to Italy)* in 1984.¹ Also, thanks to the perspectives opened by the exhibitions of Ghirri there will later

be a development in Italy – throughout the nineties – of numerous researches about the territory (fostered by Entities, Regions and Provinces) for example: *Venezia-Marghera (Venecia-Marghera)* in 1997, in charge of Paolo Constantini; or *l'Archivio dello spazio (The Space Archive)* in charge of Roberta Valtorta and Achille Sacconi T. In this last project, which lasted from 1987 until 1997, 58 photographers participated in the research about the artistic and environmental properties of the Providence of Milan.

During my intervention I concentrated on the project of Luigi Ghirri *Esplorazioni sulla via Emilia (Explorations about via Emilia)*

¹ L. Ghirri, G. Leone, E. Velati (in charge of) *Viaggio in Italia*, Il Quadrante, Alessandria, 1984.



Luigi Ghirri Parma 1983

(1986)²; an essential project to help understand the exceptional cultural and photographic situation that existed in those years in Italy. In that time, our country was living an innovative cultural ferment that Ghirri was able to capture fully and consciously, to the point of becoming one of its main and most active protagonists. But, I would like to emphasize, during my intervention, that his proposals and work has been partially distorted. After his premature death, Ghirri often has been considered as the main representative of the new Italian landscape photography. But it is not exactly so. His works as well as his reflections about photography place him in a position of diversity

2 Giulio Bizzarri e Eleonora Bronzoni (in charge of) *Esplorazioni sulla via Emilia. Vedute nel paesaggio*. Giulio Bizzarri (in charge of), *Esplorazioni sulla via Emilia. Scritture nel paesaggio*, both Feltrinelli, Milano, 1986

and exceptionality (as the historian Arturo Carlo Quintavalle also affirms). In reality, we must consider him not as the main representative of a school, in continuity with the later period, but as an author, with his own, unique, exceptional way, definitely as a separate case.

Also, thanks to the success of the exhibition *Viaggio in Italia (Trip in Italy)* (1984), in the mid eighties, Ghirri knew he could count on the support of a group of photographers willing to leave touristic stereotypes and traditional iconography. They were authors that related to the contemporary landscape not through apologetic or critical forms, but were more prone to start processes of knowledge and listening. For the exhibition *Esplorazioni sulla via Emilia (Explorations about via Emilia)* Ghirri will have the collaboration of several authors (many of them his friends) that



Cittanova 1985

had already been part of the exhibition *Viaggio in Italia (Trip in Italy)*. Some stood out as: Olivo Barbieri, Gabriele Basilico, Vincenzo Castella, Giovanni Chiaromonte, Vittore Fossati, Guido Guidi, Mimmo Jodice, Cuchi White or Claude Nori; and some who were not Italian as Klaus Kinold and Manfred Willmann. Ghirri suggested to these authors that they work fully respecting their autonomy of research, their personality and their culture.

After an approach to conceptual art and of having relations, for a very long time, with artists such as Claudio Parmiggiani, Franco Vaccari and Franco Guerzoni, in the beginning of the eighties, Ghirri will become a great friend of the writer Gianni Celati who, in turn, was an important promoter of the Italian literary renewal (an example can be the histories *Narratori delle reserve (Narrators of the reserves)* published in 1992, but

which had previously appeared in the newspaper "Il Manifesto"). It was an important union, the one established between Celati and Ghirri. One that would produce, through a long period of time, numerous significant results and that would materialize since the beginning in Celati's narration dedicated to Ghirri: *Verso la foce. Reportage per un amico fotografo (Towards the Sickle, Article for a friend photographer)* published in the volume *Viaggio in Italia (Trip in Italy)*, along with the critical text from A.C. Quintavalle.

So, Ghirri entrusts his friend writer the creation – in parallel to the exhibition and the book/catalogue with the images of *Esplorazioni sulla via Emilia (Explorations about via Emilia)* a volume of narrations, poetry and reflections. For the exhibition, along with the catalogue (with an introduction made by Luigi Ghirri) a book will be published and in it Gianni Celati will



Ghirri – Formigine 1985

have an important role. The book is called *Esplorazioni sulla via Emilia. Scritture nel paesaggio (Explorations of the via Emilia. Writings on the landscape)* with texts from Ermanno Cavazzoni, Gianni Celati, Corrado Costa, Daniele Del Giudice, Antonio Faeti, Tonino Guerra, Giorgio Messori, Giulia Niccolai, Bebbe Sebaste and Antonio Tabucchi. The prologue of the book is written by Italo Calvino, who had published recently (1984) – it is worth remembering – the essay collection: *Collezione di sabbia (Sand Collection)*, and on its cover there was a phrase as a very meaningful presentation: *Emblemi bizzarri e inquietanti del nostro passato e del nostro futuro gli oggetti raccontano il mondo (Bizarre and disturbing emblems of our past and our future,*

3 Italo Calvino *Collezione di sabbia*, Garzanti, Milano, 1984.

the objects narrate the world).³ I want to stress this because this book by Calvino, starting from the main title and all the way to the titles of the chapters seems to remit us to the works of Ghirri. Proof of this is the index: *Il viandante della mappa. (The pedestrian of the map)*. *Il museo dei mostri di cera (The museum of the wax monsters)*. *La città pensata: la misura degli spazi (The devised city: the dimension of the spaces)*... They are, as you can see, titles that could belong to Ghirri.

In Italy during that historical moment a special assonance and harmony of artistic and reflexive intentions had been created (and will not occur again) that united writers (Calvino, Celati) with photographers (Ghirri, but also Chiaramonte, Guidi and many others) and philosophers as Giorgio Agamben. For example, this last one will collaborate in the anthology of writings in relation to the exhibition *Tra-*



Via Emilia 1985

versate nel deserto (Travels through the desert) (1986), under the responsibility of Ghirri and Gianni Celati. It was in those years that the famous collective volume *Il pensiero debole (The week thinking)* began to be published (the philosophers Gianni Vattimo and Pier Aldo Rovatti were in charge). The first edition was published in November 1983, and by 1995 the tenth edition had come out. It is about philosophers – those called “of weak thinking” – that invite us to look for a fresh and more benevolent view towards the world of appearances, “of the discursive procedures and the symbolic forms”, looking at them as the place of a possible experience of the being.⁴ Vattimo writes for example: “The world develops in horizons that have been built by a series of echos, of resonances of the language, of messages that come from the past”.⁵ It is as if Vattimo was precisely speaking of Ghirri’s images. At the

same time, the closeness of Ghirri with Vattimo is patent when he writes: “The places and the objects that I have photographed are real and authentic “zones of the memory”, that is to say, places that demonstrate more than others that the reality has transformed into a great history”.⁶

The theme of the research *Esplorazioni sulla via Emilia (Explorations about via Emilia)* is, precisely, the via Emilia which is a Roman road built by the consul

4 Gianni Vattimo e Pier Aldo Rovatti (in charge of): *Il pensiero debole. Testi di Amoroso, Carchia, Comolli, Costa, Crespi, Dal Lago, Eco, Ferraris, Marconi, Rovatti, Vattimo, Feltrinelli*, Milano, 1983, p.9

5 Gianni Vattimo e Pier Aldo Rovatti (in charge of), *op. cit.*, p. 19

6 Luigi Ghirri, *Niente di antico sotto il sole*, Paolo Costantini e Giovanni Chiaramonte (a cargo de), SEI, Torino, 1997, p. 48.

Marco Emilio between the year 189 B.C. and 187 B.C. to join Rimini with Plasencia. Therefore, a road that crosses all of the padana emiliana plain; full of historical symbols it also moves through a densely populated and industrialized area.

The title of the volumes and the exhibition – *Esplorazioni sulla via Emilia* (*Explorations about via Emilia*) on its own reveals to us some innovative intentions; it indicates a new photographic and literary vision. The most obvious title should and could have been: *Esplorazioni lungo la via Emilia* “Explorations along via Emilia”. But in this last case, the via Emilia would have been considered as an exact place, like a road on which you can travel, like a traffic path, that the photography should have investigated during its travel along the via Emilia. But it is this “about” that changes everything; that is, the via turns into a field of the experience of enquiry. A place of interactions between the road and the photographer author, a theme open to interpretations, to possible definitions or questions. The double subtitle of the project is equally significant: *Vedute nel paesaggio e Scritture nel paesaggio*. (*Views in the landscape and Writings in the landscape*). Also, in this case it would have been more “logical”, more obvious to write: “Views of the landscape” and “Writings about the landscape”. What then does “in the landscape” mean?

According to Maurice Merleau-Ponty's point of view, Ghirri – just as other authors who participated in the project (Guidi and Celati also read Merleau-Ponty for a long time) – knows that the perception does not reduce only to a pro-spiciere, that is, “place

oneself in front of what can be seen”. In the moment of perception the objects we see do not let themselves be simply seen, but rather become present before us. The objects come towards us and our presence, at the same time, materializes before them. Therefore, a relation of mutual implication, where we are involved, is created in the perception. The individual that observes is not in an external, frontal, objective position; it is more as if he were inside the folds of a “two-faced” cloth. The vision of the photographer is no longer understood as a look towards what is *outside*, in a purely “physical-optical” relation with the exterior reality. The world no longer presents before him so he can represent it, capture it. The perception is revealed more as an empathic opening towards the dimension of the other, of the visible.

In the essay “La conoscenza della luce” (The knowledge about the light), which is part of *Esplorazioni sulla via Emilia. Scritture nel paesaggio* (*Explorations about the via Emilia. Writings in the landscape*), writer Daniele Del Giudice clarifies more this concept: “I have to look even further; the objects and at the same time my glance, along with the rest of the possibilities of a glance and of a representation between the objects and myself, including the possibility that the “objects” as well as “my person” are not considered as established issues”.⁷ Therefore, the duality between subject and object is something arguable, in motion. There is nothing certain, but the attention, knowing how to narrate and see, using words and images calmly, in a low voice as walking slowly along the road.



Luigi Ghirri – Marina di Ravenna 1986

In reference to the title we are talking about, Daniele Del Giudice precisely writes: “I try to work not over an idea of the spirit of the place, but over an idea of the spirit *in* the place”.⁸

For Ghirri himself it is not about seeing something that is there, in front of us, but of being “in the visible”, because everything that is outside ourselves observes us, while we, at the same time, see it, form part of it. This is how we understand that Ghirri consciously built his images as devices in which the photograph sees us and interrogates us at the same time, refers us back to it and to the theme of looking. Let's think for example, in the numerous “little men” that, in Ghirri's photographs, we see them with their backs towards us while they observe geographical maps, paintings or landscapes; or, let's also think in the frequent boxes that appear in his

images as if he wanted to create a new frame, a kind of theatrical stretcher...

Thus, it seems evident that for Ghirri the project “*Esplorazioni sulla via Emilia* (*Explorations about via Emilia*)” would not be a trivial multidisciplinary research. This collective work, on the contrary, was born and emerged to activate numerous narrations that led to discover a visible substratum of the imperialism of ideas. Ghirri's intention was to go deep into a world, more and more incomprehensible and complex, with a clean vision capable of being surprised, of renouncing to capture reality, but without giving up knowledge. Let's listen to his own words: “The final result is not the classification of a territory, the objective verification of reality, the romantic

⁷ Giulio Bizzarri (in charge of), *op. cit.* p. 75

⁸ Giulio Bizzarri (in charge of), *op. cit.* p. 73



Valli Grandi Veronesi 1989

languor of the trip nor the formally impeccable fresco, but more so the wish to enter in a global relation with the exterior world. To look for adequate ways of representing it, of obtaining images, data, figures or evidence, so to photograph the world is also a way of understanding it".⁹

The field experience of Ghirri and the other authors of the project pays attention to the borders as well as the centre, to the minimum encounters; it is about interrogating the appearances, all of the appearances, the signs that time leaves on the body of a landscape

⁹ Luigi Ghirri, *op. cit.* p. 64

¹⁰ Interview of Matteo Bellizzi to Gianni Celati, in *DOPPIOZERO* (www.doppiozero.com), 6 aprile 2011

in mutation. And – attention – Ghirri as well as Celati intentionally uses the word "world" rejecting the term "reality". "Reality – as Gianni Celati says – is so abstract that we do not even know what it refers to, it is like a wall (...) The word world is different. It makes reference to our relation with the others, to the exchange of perceptions".¹⁰ In turn, Ghirri never expresses a "desire for reality", but for an experience/comprehension of the world. For him, the world is made up of simulations, by "cardboard figures" and "miniature landscapes", by mock-ups, but also by "true" landscapes that unfold before us and that he interrogates without trivially going against the true and the false. On the contrary, Ghirri goes further



Ghirri – Comacchio 1989

when he writes that maybe it is precisely in the total fiction where "what is *true* hides".¹¹

The fact that he photographs mock-ups, banal or kitsch objects is clearly not because of a matter of nostalgia for a world past and lost, but because – and here we find the influence of Walter Benjamin's thoughts – in these "you can read the deviation and difference between a copy and the original, between the past and the desire of its present image".¹² What he is interested in is to open a separation, a difference capable of surpassing the false opposition between past and present, between reality and appearance. Photography, for him, becomes the "superposition of a pre-existing image over the present moment, to achieve a final image that then

turns into *other* image".¹³ A restless, dialectic image "that opens before us infinite perceptive possibilities",¹⁴ in one "ignited conjunction" where – with Benjamin's words – "what was is united instantaneously with the now of a constellation"¹⁵. His glance is transforming, not at all nostalgic, but suspended between irony and melancholy, capable of creating metaphorical images full of plenitude and absolutism. Images that, just as the beloved Benjamin's quotes, he forms and mends in always new assemblies in order to create new

¹¹ Luigi Ghirri, *op. cit.* p. 37.

¹² Luigi Ghirri, *op. cit.* p. 32.

¹³ Luigi Ghirri, *op. cit.* p. 41.

¹⁴ Luigi Ghirri, *op. cit.* p. 41.

¹⁵ Walter Benjamin, *I "passages" di Parigi*, Einaudi, Torino, 2010 p.515.

constellations of sense. His main work, as Hanna Arendt writes speaking about Benjamin: "consisted in tearing fragments out of its context and replace them following an order that allowed them to illuminate reciprocally and demonstrate their own *raison d'être* in a state, to call it somehow, free of suspension".¹⁶

Frontal, but delicate and subtle, Luigi Ghirri's images are often silent, intentionally modest and suspended, light but concentrated as a microcosm, with framings that delicately surround the objects and know how to adapt to their measures without stylistic embellishments (for years he has printed his images in different laboratories and almost always he has used a 24 x 36 reflex camera). All of it with a vision that, overall, in the case of landscapes, may seem of the documentary type, although in reality it is not.

Ghirri's mode – as Celati says – is a "non documental but empathic way of making us imagine the places, that is, of giving an imaginative thickness to the theatre of living".¹⁷ This word "empathic" does not have to lead us to think about an adhesion, to

a fusion between author, image and photographed object. Ghirri captured the places as apparitions in his synthesis of distance and proximity, that is, as theatres of life, as suspended thresholds, paradoxically on tenterhooks between apparition and disappearance, between past and present. Far from "proustian misunderstandings"¹⁸, this past emerges in the existing framework between the photographed object and the author, between the collective memory and the personal memory, between the moment of the clic when you take the picture (often evidenced by the shadows that emerge in the images) and the past settled in the objects and the landscape.

Ghirri never exalts the interpretative eloquence of the author/photographer. He has written several times that for him, to photograph means to capture the language of the world, take care of it and extract himself from narcissism. At the same time he is not interested in denying himself as author for the sake of a project coldly defined a priori. What he truly wants is to be present as someone capable of being surprised. He wants to resemble a boy that sees things for the first time; he moves as a humble messenger of the history of the images that have been deposited in his memory, in his way of feeling and seeing. So, – remembers Arturo Carlo Quintavalle¹⁹ – he feels the need to declare who are the artists that have interested him more: Beato Angelico, Piero della Francesca, Vermeer and the Flemish Friedrich, Bellotto, Monet, Van Gogh and Brueghel, Hopper and Morandi; later photographers like Walker Evans, Robert Frank or Lee Friedlander.



Nogara '89

His images, therefore, we can consider them unstable. They introduce an imaginary separation; they open towards a non-lineal, oscillating and festive dimension (his photographic camera is a kind of a "toy to see"). In these images two lines-movements cross over where the objects emerge and disappear, they see us and are seen by us, they offer themselves as presences and then they distance.

His commitment consists in "living the visible" and for this he creates "open images" similar to thresholds towards another place which paradoxically appears, makes itself present and at the same time disappears. Ghirri – says Celati – takes all of these appearances to the limit where the openness becomes the world. He achieves this through the

atmospheric vision, that is, through the affective flavour of the colors and tones. And this allows him to present all of the appearances of the world as suspended phenomena and not as "facts that you have to document"²⁰.

To conclude, we can say that it would be inappropriate to consider Ghirri as the main representative of an Italian school of landscape photograph. A school that, in most cases has obtained important results, "not ghirrianic", but more like the documentary or interpretative type. Although it is true that these results have sometimes been diluted by an attitude of pietas and by the desire of capture "the emotional nature of a place" – as Gabriele Basilico affirms²¹. And it is here where we can hear the echo from Ghirri.

16 Hannah Arendt, *Walter Benjamin*, SE, Milano, 2004, p.74.

17 Roberta Valtorta (in charge of), *Racconti dal paesaggio. 1984 – 2004. A Vent'anni da Viaggio in Italia*, Lupetti, Milano, 2004, p. 76.

18 Luigi Ghirri, *op. cit.* p. 39

19 Roberta Valtorta (in charge of), *op. cit.* p. 63

20 Gianni Celati, *Commenti su un teatro naturale delle immagini*, in Luigi Ghirri, *Il profilo delle nuvole*, Feltrinelli, Milano, 1989, p. 8

21 In: Roberta Valtorta (a cura di) *Luogo e identità nella fotografia italiana contemporanea*, Einaudi, Torino, 2013, p. 58.

Boris von Brauchitsch

Born in 1963 in Aachen (Germany) Boris von Brauchitsch works as a photographer since 1983. After studying history of art and archeology in Frankfurt, Bonn and Berlin, he started working as a curator of exhibitions in galleries and museums. Today he focuses on writing and photography. Boris von Brauchitsch lives and works in Berlin and Carrizal (Gran Canaria)

Publications in German (selection)

S- Schwarz, Berlin 2016 | *Im tiefen Tal der Todeskralle* (theaterplay, performed at the Staatstheater Kassel) 2014-16 | *Berlin – Der Friedhofsführer*, Berlin 2015 | *Lesser Ury – Leichte Fieberanfälle. Dauerregen*, Berlin 2013 | *Leonardo da Vinci*, Berlin 2010 | *Klassiker der Architektur*, Stuttgart 2009 | *Michelangelo*, Frankfurt 2009 | *alles wahr* (novel), Hamburg 2008 | *Caravaggio*, Frankfurt 2007 | *Göttinnen der Moderne*. Zu den Modelfotografien von Georges Hoyningen Huene, in: *The Heartbeat of Fashion*, Hamburg 2006 | *Traurige Trabanten*, in: Sergio Belinchon, Berlin 2004 | *Galerie des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Köln 2003 | *Kleine Geschichte der Fotografie*, Stuttgart 2002

Visualism

In 1980, Andreas Müller-Pohle formulated a position, which, according to him, at that time represented the final development stage of photography. After the question 'what' should be photographed, which was under review in the 19th century, and after the question 'how', which was dealt with after the 1920s, according to this photographer, a reflection of the medium itself was reached through conceptual photography. Thus, in his opinion, the terrain of photographic opportunities was completely explored. Other discoveries were excluded as at that time, they were unimaginable for him.

Only from the digital photography, which appeared to be the distant future at that time, he expected a radical change that would declare "all present photographic procedures applying silver to be exclusive anachronism".¹

Around 1980, when according to Müller-Pohle it was not possible to come with new ideas and means of expression, it was only establishing an individual position in a known field. Despite this, he leaves the back door open: "The final point in which everything what can be said has been said certainly does not exist."

However, when he describes the history of photography as linear up to this moment, as a series of perspectives, and not as their coexistence, it is not fully accurate.

¹ Andreas Müller-Pohle: *European Photography*, Göttingen, p. 3, 1980



Felix Beato: After the Capture of the Taku Forts, 1860

As a result of photographic technology, which initially required a long exposure time, and until 1871, it was reliant on boards which were difficult to handle, during the first decades, the perspective inevitably focused on staticity. This notwithstanding, there was a need to depict events. In 1858, **Felice Beato** documented uprisings in India in quite drastic images, and, in 1860, the Opium War in China. A group of photographers was present also in the American Civil War, and they brought very emotional photographs from these battlefields, in the next years. At the same time, for instance, the photographer Oscar Rejlander staged pathetic allegories in his photo studio.

In twenty years, Jacob August Riis as a police reporter focused the lens of his camera on poverty in the USA, and, at the same time, the so-called pictorial photography reached a major success, which established impressionism in photography.

Diversity also becomes apparent when looking at foreign cultures. The more the interest of travellers moved from cultural ruins to the way of life of a country, the more Rome, for instance, was seen as a dead pile of stones, and Naples as a vibrant city. Moreover, an interest in the population awakened, which was depicted in vital street scenes, and also in the projections of fairy-tale innocence,



Oscar Rejlander: Two Ways of Life, 1857



Vincent van Gogh: The Potato Eaters, 1885

seduction and naturalness, which were transformed into images. The boundaries between documentation and fiction become blurred. **Giorgio Sommer's** Neapolitan *The Spaghetti Eaters* seem to be right a funny southern message for gloomy northern *The Potato Eaters* by van Gogh.

Even though in the 19th century, many positions already existed, in the 1920s, this trend became more marked: in addition to "new materiality", there was a "new vision", in addition to



Giorgio Sommer: The Spaghetti Eaters, Rome, 1865

social documents, photograms without a camera existed. The differentiation became even more widespread. Therefore, although the presentation of a one-dimensional development of the history of photography does not correspond to historical facts, despite this, Andreas Müller-Pohle concisely stated that in the 1980s, there



Jacob A. Riis: Keep of the Grass, 1888 – 1898

had been an unprecedented huge diversity of photographic directions. An austere material photograph, a staged fashion photograph, a documentary photograph, a subjective photograph, and a conceptual photograph existed in developed forms side by side, and it has not changed since then.

At the beginning, Müller-Pohle's aim was to depict the continuity of certain styles: specific perspectives that may found as early as in pictorialism in around 1900, then in the „new vision“ of **Moholy-Nagy**, in the direction of *Fotografia Metaphisica* by **Herbert List**, and in **Otto Steinert's** subjective photograph after the Second World War.

A large pair of contrasts was perceived by Andreas Müller-Pohle in **documentation**, on the one hand, and **visualism** on the other hand. This concept was developed for a photographic tradition formed by himself. Examples include *A Record of the Outside World*, and *The Exploration of the Visions of this World*.

Herbert List who belongs to the tradition of visualists for Müller-Pohle, talks "about the magic in the movement", about a hyperreal or metaphysical alteration of the reality through the perception which is open to an unaffected astonishment. Moreover, Müller-Pohle also considers a technical alteration as visualism, which cannot be perceived with the



Nikolai Svishchev-Paola: Dance, 1925

eye, but which is created, for instance, from the unsharpness or flash-light in a camera or by the camera. It is essential that the fixation of objects in traditional meanings is released, and that they acquire a new and surprising, irritating, worrying meaning.

In the visualisation of the world, visualism relies on the camera and the eye, and not on corrections, which, affected by the experience and the culture, is offered by the brain immediately as the filter.

Müller-Pohle thus avoids a problematic pair of the contrasts

“objective – subjective” and replaces it by an expanded pair of “documentary – visualistic”, whereas documentarism attempting to reach the objectivity is perceived by him as established in visual customs, while visualism attempts to allow the eye and the camera lens an unbiased perception in order to doubt traditions. Müller-Pohle perceives the diversity of visualistic positions *on a large scale*, but the spectrum of documentation is *narrow* in his eyes. Yet this vision contains an evaluation, which contrasts freedom and limitation, as well as plurality



Alexander Rodchenko: The Stairs, 1930



El Lissitzky: Photogram, around 1925

and dogmatism, and, while doing so, as such acquires dogmatic features.

According to Vilém Flusser², all photographers are sitting behind a wall: behind a wall of a prison, which represents the culture. Documentarists are looking through existing holes, for instance, through keyholes, at the outside world, thus accepting already established perspectives; visualists drill new holes into the wall. Documentarists adopt intimate positions, which are comprehensible by everyone; visualists try to assert individualism at all cost.

Flusser, however, is rightly asking: “If visualists drill holes into the walls

² Vilém Flusser: Standpunkte. Texte zur Fotografie [Attitudes. Texts for a photograph]. Göttingen: European Photography, 1998. Written in January 1982 for the magazine “Camera Austria”; not published in it.



Herbert List: Vierwaldstädter See, 1936

of a prison, do not the holes become right the same as keyholes? Only in a different place of the wall?"

It is comfortable to make use of the holes established by the culture, by the prisoner. The results are culturally conditioned perspectives, which may expect that at least the members of the same culture will understand them. Thus documentarists apply the conventions of perception to achieve the best understanding, while visualists search for new visual experience and see this step as an act of emancipation.

Thus, visualists are in fact individualists, or – as expressed by Flusser – "intellectualists". They follow, that is to say, the quote of Paul Klee: "Art does not reproduce the visible; it makes visible." This quote, formulated by a representative abstract art, should in fact provoke each photographer

into a disagreement because the photograph, naturally, reproduces the visible.

I am therefore in favour of the quote – relying on Klee, and, at the same time, opposing him: A photograph reproduces (usually) the visible, and allows us to perceive it.

Visualists are interested in depicting through photographs something what has not been seen yet in that way. By contrast, documentary photography relies on intimate objects. It is a conscious confirmation of traditional perspectives to be able to attract as many viewers as possible.

However, theoretically, this contrast is only a conditional contrast as visualism may be understood as a stage preliminary to documentary photography, too. When new perspectives are so



René Magritte: Le condition humaine, 1933

successful that they are integrated into the mainstream, they are finally available for documentary photography as visual means. After all, the so-called "new vision" has long been the "old vision", and its denotation has a certain validity only as a concept for the style. The same applies to "new materiality" – and, in fact, everything that is referred to as young or new or innovative, will inevitably get older at a certain moment.

While this perspective is initially "not worn-out", by its repeated use it will become intimate or, if we formulate it in a negative way, worn-out. "Visualism", says Müller-Pohle, "is the realism of deviation", which as

a "syntactical alteration" is not formed in front of a camera, but in a camera. Here I do not want to discuss the concept of realism on which it is based, but I want to state that every deviation from the existing order is irritating as an alteration only so long as it becomes established as such.

These deviations are understood by us as subjective, while the photograph of orthodox documentarists attempts to be as much objective as possible. It is in this place that old concepts come in to play again.

Visualism took over the unusual and new, which is understood as unconventional, and thus subjective. It

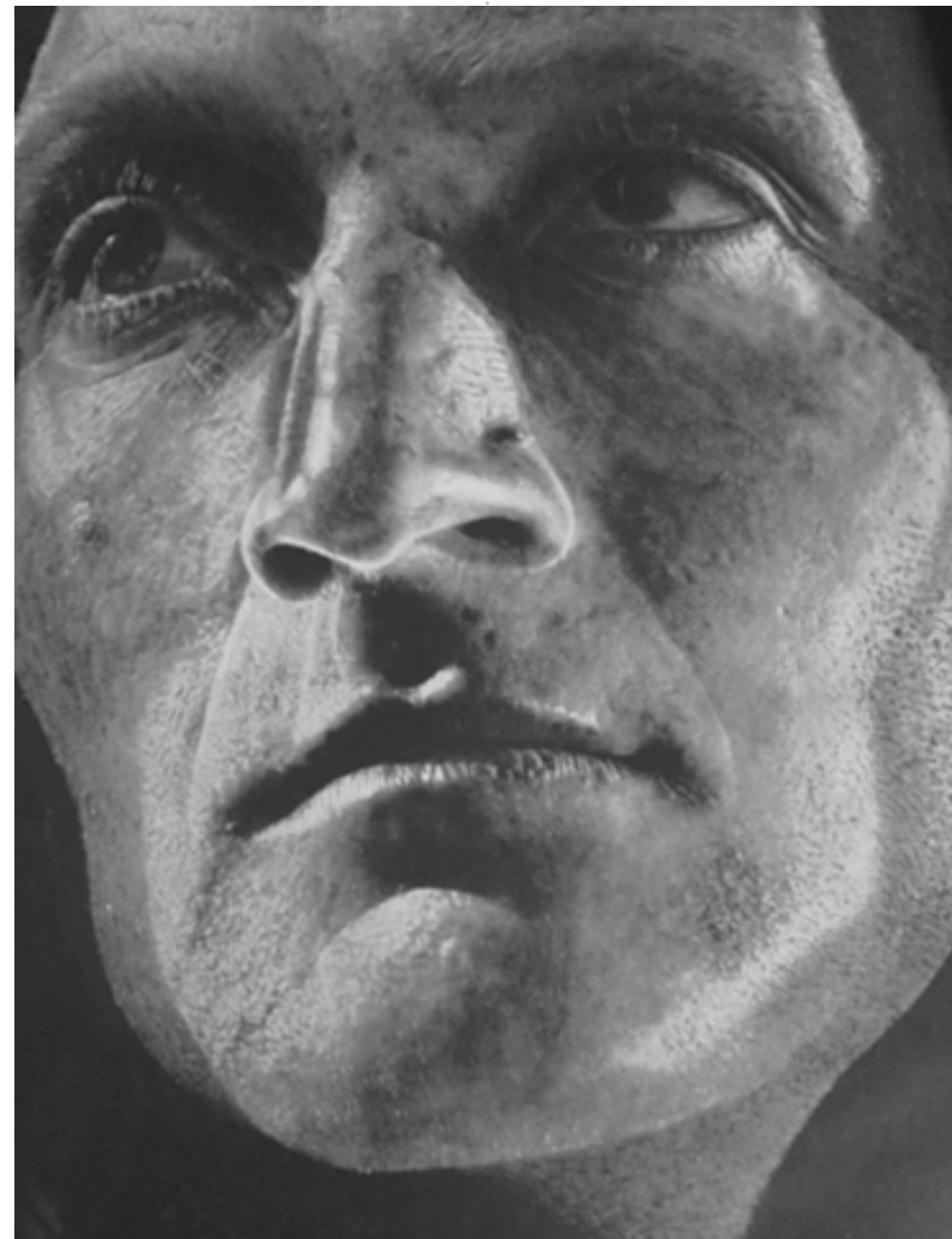
lives on unusual perspectives because only these are able to irritate. However, there is a danger that it will run out of its visual effects that work only as long as an observer discovers them. Moreover, it is an illusion to believe that new optical perceptions are necessarily associated with a new quality of reflection of being and consciousness. And, as a result of the requirement of constant new perspectives, the position of visualism itself becomes part of a creative mainstream and the art market, which also constantly calls for innovations, and then presents those in a circus arena like on a chain.

The development of a contrast between the question 'what' and the question 'how', as Müller-Pohle does, was executed by Wassily Kandinsky in the book "On the Spiritual In Art" as

early as in 1912, but with an opposite result. However, for him the question 'what' did not mean a pure object but a spiritual content, the spirit of art. Although the question 'how' could be the expression of a personal view, and therefore, still better than purely a naturalistic presentation, but finally it was nevertheless fruitless hunting of a new manner. Kandinsky writes: "Art continues further on this path of the question 'how'. It specialises, and is only understood by artists who start to lament the unconcern of viewers about their works. As an artist generally need not say much at such times, and they will notice the artist yet thanks to a minor difference [...], a large number of outwardly talented clever people will plunge into art which may be seemingly simply conquered."³



Steinert



Helmar Lerski: Metamorphoses, 1936

³ Wassily Kandinsky, *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* [On the Spiritual In Art], Munich 1912, p. 15

Visualistic positions may also cite the history of art, while resulting in more or less intelligent and surprising images. As an example, let's mention here only the view through a photograph in the past which is presented by **Sungseok Ahn** and refigured by **René Magritte**, and also a series of portrait photographs by **Andrés Þór Sæmundsson**, which appears to relate to **Helmar Lerski** *Metamorphoses* from 1936. While Ahn features a time aspect through the contrast of black and white and colour presentation, thus going further than Magritte, the question is whether Sæmundsson offers something new.

You can see that within visualism there is a large qualitative arc from the point of view of visualistic criteria.

An unconventional view and smart reflexion may not consist in an image

medium or in a style, but only in the artistic and the viewer. Therefore, visualism is not stylistically limited. For Vilém Flusser it is a certain type of phenomenology, an attempt to free oneself from the cultural conditionality of thinking and viewing, and to observe phenomena, event, as impartially as possible.

This seems to be in contradiction to a usual idea of a camera as a device for the production of documents. Therefore, it is necessary to see a camera in a new way: as an expansion of the brain, as a medium of perception a priori.

However, just as a wide spectrum of visualists exists, also a corresponding wide spectrum of documentarists does. As an example, let's mention a series of the portraits of soldiers who returned from Afghanistan. Its author is Suzanne



Michael Schmidt, o.T. 1980



Suzanne Opton: Soldier Claxton,
Soldier Michelson, Soldier Birkholz, 2004



Andrés Þór Sæmundsson: It's o.k., I got this, 2009



Gerco de Ruijter: Tree Nursery, 2008 – 2010

Opton who creates vulnerability and intimacy with simply lying heads, oscillating between the idea of a "killed" soldier and an intimate partner.

A differentiated perception may also be reached with conventional aesthetics, if the "tyranny of reproductive imitative requirements" is avoided, as it was formulated by the curator of graphic arts at the Metropolitan Museum in New York, William M. Ivins as early as in 1928.⁴

Therefore, documentarism dealing with less new perspectives and anchoring its message more in the content than in the form is more supertemporal, while visualism being perceived as an

aesthetic avant-garde, therefore quickly obtains patina.

If this new irritating attitude applies, which is, however, new only at this moment, the positions of the past may not develop their visualistic influence on the present time but may only be perceived in the tradition of innovative perspectives. Thus, for the present, the visualistic positions of the past have long been intimate, and therefore, they are not visualistic anymore. What can be seen as visualism is not immanent

⁴ Wolfgang Kemp: *Theorie der Photographie* [The Theory of Photograph], volume 2, p. 194



Andreas Müller-Pohle, from the cycle:
Hong Kong Waters, 2009

to an image or dependent on the observer, but on its timeliness.

On the other hand, also documentarism is fighting for its existence. As virtuality has become standard practice, today a special proof is necessary, if something unusual is claimed not to be part of the standard practice. A photograph may not present such a proof from its essence. Therefore, a credible source is necessary more than ever that guarantees the "authenticity" of a photograph. However, where a guarantor is necessary, which carries more weight than a presentation, each press photograph will be outlived. Then photographs are just illustrative reports, and not a proof of facts. This would mean in fact the end of documentarism.

Seemingly incompatible attitudes in photography also result from that in a conversation, people do not listen to one another, or that knowingly or unknowingly, they are misunderstood. If visualism and documentarism stood against each other as hostile attitudes, and the conflict stemmed from a misunderstanding, because at second glance, the attitude of a documentarist such as the one of Michael Schmidt, differs very little from the attitude of Müller-Pohle. Both are trying to get closer to things, while not interpreting them, both are trying for a phenomenological perception; both negate the idea of the camera as a machine for fabrication, both are dealing with the question 'how' in the presentation, and not the question 'what', because also for Schmidt the perspective is crucial, and not things at which we look. And neither of them is chained by conventions. In terms of aesthetic criteria, Schmidt's pictures are even much more untraditional because they lack the smooth elegance that characterizes the work of Müller-Pohle. Therefore, to some extent, the criticism of Müller-Pohle's documentarism also hits Michael Schmidt, but nevertheless bypasses his works.

Schmidt describes his attitude – certainly a little bit unfortunately – as the "subordination to reality", visualism calls its attitude an "unlimited interest in reality". This illimitability, however, should also include Schmidt's attitude. It is only a footnote that Schmidt presented himself in a dogmatic way, and rejected the positions of visualists.

If we wanted to keep the boundaries between documentarism and visualism, on both sides there is a wide spectrum. Documentarism is used by many for the acquisition of personal knowledge.



Michael Rohde, Kitchen, from the series: From Below, 2010



Sungseok Ahn, Historic Present (Suwon Gate, Paldalmun), 2009

And even if visualism with the constant need for innovations lost its breath at any time, or if documentarism

survived at the time of photographic processing, the photograph will carry on living.

Johan Swinnen

Johan Swinnen is Professor Emeritus in the History and Philosophy of Photography, Media and Communication Studies at *Vrije Universiteit Brussel* (VUB). Also working as an art critic, editor, photographer and writer. At this moment he is a regular guest-professor at the '*Máster en Uso y Gestión del Patrimonio Cultural*' at the Universidad de La Laguna (ULL, Canaries, Spain) and at the '*Postgraduate in Connoisseurship: Mastering Aesthetics, Legal-Economic Expertise and Valuation in Fine Arts*' (VUB). He has written extensively for numerous books, catalogues and magazines on the central role of historical theory in contemporary photography, and did also curatorial projects. His domains of competence include the ethics of photography in the context of political theory in the Globalisation and the North-South Relationship. He takes part in several (inter-) national expert evaluation commissions.

Essay based on the lecture in Madrid:

Chers camarades!

European Photography enhanced by our diversity, focused by our humanity.

Professor Em. Dr. Johan Swinnen
(Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Brussels)

Statement: Building a dialogue, collecting an archive

There is a need for a new paradigm – a *New Photography Thinking* – based on the actual reality in Europe of *identity* and *difference*, at that at the same time. I will focus on my own personal research as photographer and academic researcher (period 1980 till now) with some thoughts about inequality and culture.

My vision is not neutral. It is first and foremost that of someone who is academic engaged. In my vision we see a deep desire for communion and gives the best of myself, the fighter in me is concerned about giving voice to those who are deprived of it. The most interesting photographers does not reproduce the visible world, they creates a visible world, they stands as signs of the time – they mirror or reflect the time.

I am not a politician, a social activist nor an economist, but I am a photographer and a photo historian. I was – beside research projects in Europe – involved in several research projects with the **PALIC-method** (Photography-Anthology- Learning-Method & (post-)International Conflicts) in countries like Bangladesh, Suriname, Rwanda, Palestine, South Africa, China and Nepal. The PALIC-method was developed as a new scientific



Hilde Braet, self-portrait

research and educational tool in which the arts and social inquiry merge. This method is aimed at building a dialogue between culturally diverse groups and at examining individuals' perceptions of their own social reality. It is, as it is based on the principles of participatory scientific photographic research, the counterpart of the '*Western eye visits the Third World*'. With the PALIC-Method, the visual history and communication will serve as a reference for further development of visual culture and its concrete

uses. Implementation of methods for learning, teaching and doing research will lead to a major improvement of the academic level of visual culture studies. It's all about the principles of participatory artistic research in perspective of the triangle artist-artwork-spectator. Much work remains to be done to write a *New History of the World Photography*, anno 2016. All this makes a contribution to the fundamental philosophical question: '*What is photography (in Europe) today?*' A number of critical signs are



Hilde Braet, Mandela in University, Brussels (1993)

also apparent in our ideas concerning the importance of art education: to a certain extent they mirror those in art. The aim is to be an essential participant in the artistic debate and to set up a broad discourse: **HAFACA, A New Educational Concept**.

In this lecture I'll give space and visibility to the work of **photographer and thinker Hilde Braet** (°Belgium, 1957) I met her as an academic scholar at my University in the European capital Brussels. Leafing through her creative works, you will discover a universe in diversity through the magic of her photography. We will use her oeuvre as an example of a European contemporary photographer as a frame, better as the context.

In this Madrid-lecture, I want to ask the audience some questions as:

Do photographers have the same relevance across cultures? Is all photography created in Europe equal? How the social minorities could be introduced? How to present a political correct history of photography? What's about peace and reconciliation through Photography? Can European photography create equality? What's the participation of the New Europeans concerning Visual Culture in Europe?

I hope these initial thoughts will inspire us in our common days of reflection during the Conference of PhotoEspana. Today positive change does not only come from politics, religion or the economy. There is Thomas Piketty: a worldwide consensus that inequality is rising. And there is Michelangelo Pistelletto about culture of the rich, culture of the poor, culture of the young and the culture of the old. And the critical thinkers

as Rüdiger Safranski, Botho Strauss and Peter Sloterdijk about 'Rethinking Immigration' are relevant today Let's make a difference in Madrid. Are you involved yet?

I. A New Photographic Thinking

1. A Mind Among the Clouds

The history of photography is now well established as a respectable scientific wing in art history and has become highly productive with much scholarly work on the lives and works of photographers as well as the impact of photography on art and society. The preservation of photographs has become a matter of concern for a civilized society that appreciates and is fascinated by them. Over the past few decades, scientific research has advanced considerably in its efforts to understand the deterioration of 19th photographs and to find more effective methods of preserving them. Our research work on the critical history and the heritage of photography was guided by the idea of translation. The project of this critical and endless adventure may be named as an attempt to conceive photography as an allegory of an unattainable, but constantly 'present' presence, the photographic image being the resonance of a volume it is touching like a tangent. To move towards such a criticism implies to avoid any canonisation of the photographic image and consequently, any historicist and formalist approaches. But photography is to be approached by literature, music, sculpture and numeric cryptology.

The aim is clearly to integrate the heritage of photography in public education on all

levels. The technological impact of the medium photography for the society is a conceptual impact and the conceptual impact of the medium photography for the society is clearly intended to understand the importance of the technological for any conception of communication and social integrity. In the European education system neither in Art Academies nor in Universities photography is considered enough of any high level importance. If we conceive for the future an aesthetic education as being the basis as well for the critical understanding of the 'infospheres' and the information age as for the political responsibility of community, photography as the eldest of the New Media has to be on the top of any educational purposes bringing together by means of the medium photography advanced technology and cultural heritage.

This is why a philosophy of the heritage photography comes down to asking the classic question: searching for a historical infrastructure.

2. At The Edge of The Light

The relationship between photography, heritage and the influence of schools of Photography is the purpose of my research. A lot of initiatives that we've looked into illustrate the existence of this relationship. There are as many possible applications of this interactive relationship as there are applications of photography (art photos, snapshots, photojournalism, photo documentaries, commercial photography); the utilization of photography is spread out



Hilde Braet, Photo Therapy Project (1989 – 2016)



nemá popisku ?????????????????????



Hilde Braet, Advertising erotic photogrpahy (1989 – 2016)

over several social and cultural fields. Its vision, mission and target group is characteristics of this relationship. It is typical of photography and the schools that both fulfil an intermediary roll between the world, the individual and their thinking and actions. Therefore, it's meaningful to place the photography in an interdisciplinary perspective before implementing it in a learning process. This interdisciplinary approach consists of placing the photograph in a wider perspective: the society in which the images are

found; critically reflect on the use of photography as a means in the learning process and knowing the people who want to learn about photography, the audiences which will receive and perceive the images.

This intern disciplinary disposition and the fact that both disciplines are relatively young bring along the openness and poly-interpretation, and implicate also the multiplicity of combinations between both. This could possible explain the fact that the work field is so unstructured in practice. There's a lot work that has to be done in this matter: gathering together the data about the existing projects that use the photography as a medium will not be an easy job because of the ambivalent character of this work field.

Historical photographic collections are an essential part of our cultural heritage. The growing interest in photography, as a form of artistic expression as well as a visual record of past times, has raised questions about how to treat photographic materials in a responsible way. These questions are not only relevant to collection keepers in archives, museums and libraries but also to anyone with old family albums at home. Photography is a combination of two scientific processes: an optical and a chemical one. The development of the modern camera took place over hundreds of years, starting with a pinhole, progressing to a simple lens projecting on a wall, to our modern cameras today.

Whatever the individual concept of photography is, it has become not only our most common resource, but since its birth photography has shaped our world and our perception of it.

It has also mirrored every aspect of man's development, spiritual, social and scientific. It has become not only one of our most valuable of resources but also one most vulnerable to social and environmental pressures and the ravages of time. To appreciate something of the unique sensitivity and vulnerability of the medium it is important to grasp something of the essence of the medium.

Our starting point was thinking though images, to stand still a photographic image that suggest coming to a standstill. We live in a visual world in which we see a shift from words tot images. This evolution means there are new possibilities in the photo history field implying new art critical needs.

3. The Academy: Fall in Movement

First and foremost, art education will have to choose between technique and idea, between craft an artistry, and between skill and creativity.

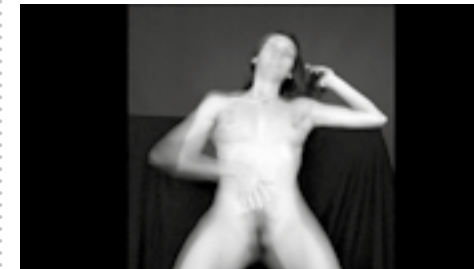
One should read up on Thierry de Duve (Faire l'école), who studied the difference between the Academic model and the Bauhaus model. It is this choice which creates such a strong divide between the different forms of art education.

I would like to argue for a broader art education, with an emphasis on the artistic craft, and a preliminary selection based on motivation, openness and the desire to enter the world of art.

The highly romantic demand for passion is not only unrealistic, but also inhuman towards future graduates. The task of art education is to dedicate itself to equipping well-educated and eager young people with cultural



Hilde Braet, Feminist portrait (1989 – 2016)



Hilde Braet, Orgasm project (1989 – 2016)



Hilde Braet, Photo Therapy 2 (1989 – 2016)



Hilde Braet, bondage (1989 – 2016)

knowledge and artistic skills which enable them to practise their artistry to everyone's satisfaction, including their own.

Not only does the garden of art education need plenty of sun and water, but if it is to flower it will need to be pruned, and this applies to content, artistic level and policy.

4. The values of HAFACA. A new educational concept of photography education

The aim is to be an essential participant in the artistic debate and to set up a broad discourse: HAFACA.

Heritage. A photograph is many things to many people an aide-mémoire, an object of beauty, an irreplaceable historical document, a portrait of a loved one, a scientific tool or an ere conveyer of information, to name but a few. Historical photographic collections are an essential part of our cultural heritage.

Authenticity. The Academy sees itself as a peninsula in the education world; it is more than just an academy and does not work according to classical educational methods.

Focus. The Academy is situated and operates in a local city, but is also linked to the world. The Academy has a network extending in all directions, and operates on local, regional, national and international levels. world (art). A number of critical signs are also apparent in our ideas concerning the importance of art education: to a certain extent they mirror those in art.

Artistic liberalization, innovation. The Academy creates time and space for deepening and broadening talent. The Academy teaches its

future graduates to live with artistic freedom and in intellectual solitude, which can be liberating but implies motivation, personal involvement and perseverance.

Confrontation. The Academy mirrors talent. Self-reflection, concentration and discussion occupy a central place here. The Academy offers guidance to its future graduates by way of expert stimulation and advice, which is also theoretically substantiated, critical and confrontational.

Anarchy of openness. The Academy does not acknowledge any ideology and refuses the embraces of any organ of power.

The Academy provides room for openness, humanism and freethinking; only the future graduate can transform chaos into order. More than ever before, art education has to do which self-expression, self-awareness and self-respect. All these skills are a prerequisite for what could ethically be termed 'responsible humanity' or 'responsible citizenship'. I would even go so far to say that which an eye to art education, this cultural policy forms the essence and driving force for a broader social policy.

Indeed, I see this policy mainly as a tool for creating and securing 'conditions'.

However, I feel that, more than anything else, art education should stimulate the discussion on fundamental standards. After all, it is the right to self-development, self-expression and education for all that is at stake. It is what is known as: lifelong learning!

As far as our ideas on art education are concerned, we find ourselves



Hilde Braet, Femist Barby (1989 – 2016)

in a period of confusion. However, this confusion is not only true of art education; for some time now it has also influenced the hope and expectation that govern our ideas about art and education individually. A new perspective is needed. This confusion is evident in other areas of society, and there is a reorientation. When we talk of art education and the two fields the term refers to, namely art and education, we are struck by a number of symptoms:

What is the role of the art student

in photography in a globalized art world? What are the conditions of art education within the capitalist commercialized media? Let's outline a kind of nomadic practice, favoured by our practice and other critics, that is characterized by a pleasure in dialectical transformation, mobility, cross-fertilization, transcultural. Let's finish with statements and questions because it's not easy to see the power structures of photography and heritage. Who are the pictures editors? Who get commissioned? Today the

photographers of the Majority World fights against the EURO-US centric nature of photography in the field of writing the history of photography, the teaching of photography and the demography of conferences. Do photographers have the same relevance across cultures?

5. Hilde Braet behind the visual superficial reality

Hilde Braet (°1957, Belgium) own a Master in Visual Culture and is Qualified European Photographer with a career in photography since 1989. Her artistic and documentary topics since 1989 as a free thinker with humanistic roots in the 1968-mouvement: *'Volunteer in Cuba, Documenting Brussels University, Erotic, Boudoir de Photos, Ballet, Photo Therapy, Alternative methods, Barbie (Feminism) and Unbarred-Paroxysm*. We will use later this last project *Unbarred-Paroxysm* as an relevant example, as a frame, better as the context to explain paroxysm in contemporary photography.

Hilde Braet produced rich bodies of work. She was always challenging, motivating and inspiring the viewers and the younger generation with diverse approaches and different work practices. Can the photo-aesthetics be instrumental in explaining these characteristics? With her often eroticising photographs, in which Hilde Braet gives free scope to his associations based on a humanistic vision. Hilde Braet expresses her own world. Her series of photographs is built up like a dream, where black and white shades, nuances of colours, and compositional forms refreshing

go together and where one image spontaneously evokes another. Hilde Braet shows refreshing new images, photos with a motivated expressiveness, in which emotion and experience lay the foundation for a new visual dialogue. Braet's work goes back into history, to the time of the Old Flemish Masters, who were able to reproduce, in an enigmatic way, space, light and depth in their paintings, but she also refers to contemporary masters in photography. Hilde Braet is interested in romantic, aesthetic compositions in which rich sensual or sexual symbols are evoked. The development Hilde Braet went through is the path of so-called visualistic photography; which changed the aesthetic sensibility by discovering unknown features of the universe. This type of photography shows the creation of images, which, because of their unusual character, receive an aesthetic value. Some photographers consider the art of photography as an embellishing art, which makes everything nicer, others consider it an accusation, which depicts reality. But for Hilde Braet photography is the ultimate means to show his provocative, peculiar truth. For her experiences are memories, signs, symbols, levels and geometric forms. As such, she cannot 'do' much with it. It is 'nothing'. Only after the experiences become solidified can he start to change and modify them into a usable code system. She uses semiotic codification – spontaneously and impulsively – to make the chaos recognisable. She tries to convert the chaos into an elementary order. Then the exciting moment arrives, when she has to select the signs he will use. On the hand, she has to codify the

signs to reach certain reconcilability; on the other hand, he likes to keep that inner chaos within reach. In fact, she demands more effort from the observers of his work, and at the same time remains susceptible and open for diverging interpretations: the scope between elementary order, timeless ordering, and between order and chaos.

Quote of Hilde Braet: *'Photos influence our vision on society and show the humanistic dimension of them, the humanistic dimension as counter part against superficiality. Working with and around photographic images stimulates reflections and results in images that can be translated into actions. That is why instrumental photography always deals with ethical questions. Ethical questions that are important in our humanistic philosophy and our humanistic way of live.'*

As example of Paroxysm (in the spirit of Philosopher Jean Baudrillard) we can show the work *'Unbarred'* of Hilde Braet. The concept paroxysm was introduced by philosophy of culture to denote certain extreme individual experiences but also to categorize social phenomena. Paroxysm denotes the questioning of the border between happening and mishap, adventure and misadventure, belief and misbelieve, communication and miscommunication but also between love and hate, lust and pain, peace and war, scientific and myth, medicine and witchcraft, in short all terms which we could categorize under the antipodes 'normal' and 'abnormal'. Photography visualized this problem. It's principle of paradox, viz. photography being fictitious but

seeming real turns it into an excellent medium to visualize different instances of paroxysm. However, one can only name something truly a paroxysm when it can no longer immediately be classified within the norms of the social or the individual, bearing in mind that the anti-social actually also belongs to the social and that deviant behaviour of an individual is very individual. One can speak of paroxysm when a border is being looked for and is being found by crossing it by means of shifting it or by shifting it by means of crossing it. This implies that one never ends up in a different category. Examples in the social context can be found in the phenomenon of celebration whereas examples in the individual context are ample in the field of erotic's. Also a physical anomaly such as obesity, mutilation, combination animal-human or androgyny could be an instance of paroxysm.

Hilde Braet tells us concerning her project: *'Unbarred'*:

"... And this brings me to my project "Ontbloot" (Dutch language), which can be translated in English as "Unbarred". One of my friends is a collector of vintage erotically photographs. Each weekend he is roaming the flea markets in Brussels and he is always excited when he finds such treasures. I was surprised that, in his collection, there were quite a lot of portraits and self-portraits. The author of these photographs isn't known. The photographs belong to the category of vernacular photography. What does it mean exactly? The vernacular photography is made by common people or professional photographers without

the aim to publish with the name of the maker. Vernacular photography can be photographs of a wedding ceremony, school photography, holiday snapshots, etc. In this way, almost every photograph is vernacular. Photographs in museums and in the art-scene, for example in galleries, are not vernacular. The word itself comes from the Latin “vernaculus” and means “indigenous”, “native”. Linked to the photography, we can translate it as something as “domestic photography”. And erotically photographs belong also to the domestic photography. Mostly, they are hidden in shoeboxes or secret drawers. This project was an opportunity for me to choose for the niche of erotically vernacular photography. I have juxtaposed the anonymous pictures, those that are found on the markets, with photos that I’ve taken in my studio (on the right of the slide) and others photos taken when I was working for Flemish porn magazines like *Flirt* and the *Erotic Guide*. My personal goal was to show that porn and eroticism were always present in history and, were and are always an important item for people. And also, that not much has changed in erotically life. Photos are all little fragments of reality and with them we can reconstruct a jigsaw puzzle of the everyday life. Showing an aspect of life, like I did with these pictures, is making it important to be looked at and discussed. For some people these pictures are taboo however in our humanistic way of thinking we can’t exclude this aspect of human being.’

But also all the photographic work of Bart Michielsen is an example of paroxysm. Other photographers working in this field are ex. Duane

Michals, Masao Yamamoto, Dirk Braeckman, Araki, Andreas Müller-Pohle and Jürgen Klauke.

II. Observations on the perils (and rewards) of Majority World Photography

*“Earlier much futile thought had been devoted to the question of whether photography is an art. The primary question – whether the very invention of photography had not transformed the entire nature of art – was not raised.”*Walter Benjamin (1936)

1. Photo history and Context

The PALIC-method is a set of tools for the study of photography on an academic level and consists of learning, teaching, and conducting research about identity and diversity with theoretical bases for documentary photography, manipulating photography, and analyses of images. Developed especially for the Majority World, the method for photography study contains tools to develop culture-based methodologies of an academic level that are completely different from the classical Western methodologies that do only contain Western views towards and from the Majority World. Forty years of photo history-research learned me always: Male, White and the Western point of view. Now it’s time for transgresses borders: men and women, Europe and Africa, local and global and new view’s on (post-)Colonisation through the understanding of the historical context.

In the PALIC- method, the indigenous cultural point of view is at the centre as

well for looking at the past of images of the indigenous cultural heritage as for looking at the past of images of different cultures. Photography will be uniting scholars with different backgrounds and experiences.

The following topics will be researched:

1. The role of new technologies and technological convergence for depicting conflict.
2. The visual economies that translate and regulate the value of images of conflict and suffering.
3. The role of news organizations and NGO’s in the global distribution of images.
4. The effects of imagery on government policy and NGO activity.
5. The visual construction of humanism & The tenuous relationship between image and Islam.
6. The histories and genres of photographic depictions of conflict.
7. The ethical and legal function of images as evidentiary representations of human suffering.
8. Writing a new photo history of world photography.
9. The role of humanitarian and cosmopolitan frameworks in “Western” genres of documentary photography.

Methodology

Before the survey can begin, we needed to develop a descriptive survey form. Based upon the repository questionnaire results and further study, the project staff decided to gather nine major categories of data: *collections title, dates of the photographs, collection origins and provenance, physical description of the collection,*

subject matter of the photographs, collection arrangement, image captions, finding aids to the collection and collection restrictions.

The PALIC-method & photographic collection management in three steps:

A. Photographic History, Processes and Applications, Training Program. Photography from Interview to Photo Archive: Scope of the Training Manual

- » Curating Visual and Oral Histories: Self-Study & Interpreting the answers; Organization (Type, Structure); Resources (Human, Technical, Financial, Physical); Visual and Oral History Collection (Legal papers, acquisition, inventory, extent, recording media, transcript, cataloguing, backlog)
- » Fundamentals. Setting the Stage, Archives Administration, Legal & Ethical Issues, recording technology, transcribing, cataloguing, preservation, oral histories on the Internet and challenges in the South Asia.

B. Photograph Preservation and Conservation Research Training Program. Photograph Conservation: Scope of the Training Manual

- » The study of the history of photography and photographic process, to gain an understanding of the photograph’s nature, the relative historical and artistic value of the pictures made by various processes, and the physical properties of the many and various processed photographic materials commonly found in collections.
- » The application of conventional

prints and drawings conservation techniques to photographs: cleaning, removal of tapes and adhesives, relaxing, flattening, and encapsulation of photographs; dismounting images from acidic and brittle backings; laying down weakened images on new supports; repairing torn and/or otherwise damaged images; mounting and matting images for display and storage.

- » The application of selected aspects of photographic technology and sensitometer.
- » The application of selected aspects of photographic science, such as knowledge related to the making of photographic plates, films, and papers, to perform the various methods of testing support materials, binding media and image-forming substances, for accurate identification, to determine their long-term stability and to access their condition before undertaking certain treatments.
- » Photographic chemistry, as it applies to the restoration in chemical solutions of discoloured and stained photographic negatives and prints.
- » Clarify the relationship between the unique physical and chemical characteristics of this diverse material and the need for specific environmental and material controls. (cf. Extreme weather conditions in Bangladesh)

C. Photograph Social History Training Program History and Criticism: Scope of the Training Manual

Art Historians engage in various activities as historical significance,

aesthetic merit or inherent worth, especially: visual analysis (formal analysis); examination of written documents, study of the social context, especially the conditions of production (not only conditions in the workshop but also the market for which the work was designed), scientific examination, for instance the analysis of paper or of pigments in order to determine the date of production. Photo Analysis models will be used from Jean-Claude Lemagny (BN, Paris), Andreas Müller-Pohle (European Photography and New Media, Berlin) and Terry Barrett (The University of North Texas at Denton (US)). The PALIC-method will look at evaluations based on the following criteria: truth, instrumental value (or Utility), ideology, intrinsic aesthetic merit, expressiveness, sincerity, technique, originality, and historical importance.

III. Conclusion, Where the Stress Falls

**Photography is a language:
a photographer is a storyteller**

It becomes clear that, if a photograph is multifaceted, its possible different approaches are also multifaceted: hence the simple historical knowledge (a chronological inventory of photographers and styles) has been replaced by very different, theoretically inspired phases. Except for the aesthetic approach aimed at studying forms and their evolution through various visual traditions, a sociology of photography relies on a systematic study of the different contexts of this practice. As far as semiology is concerned, it has made possible and

approach of the photographic image as a message, by its communication process and in particular by showing the different types of codes. But like every form of art or literature, like every text, the photographic image will only be made complete by the reader, who interprets it, and who in this sense actively participates in a kind of rewriting, recreating. This added value also depends on the context in which photography is viewed and read. A change in context often implies a change in the interpretation, in the reading. That's the reason why some hold the opinion that the best image is the image with the most possible ways of approach.

Perhaps we must review *'The Family of Man'* in the spirit of Times Are A-Changin because The Photo World is not a paradise. The Family of Man comprises 503 photographs by 273 artists from 68 countries and was created by Edward Steichen for the New York Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). Presented for the first time in 1955, the exhibition was conceived as a manifesto for peace and the fundamental equality of mankind, expressed through the humanist photography of the post-war years. Images by artists such as Robert Capa, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Dorothea Lange, Robert Doisneau, August Sander and Ansel Adams were staged in a modernist and spectacular manner.

Having toured the globe and been displayed in over 150 museums worldwide, the final, complete version of the exhibition was permanently installed in Clervaux Castle in 1994. Since its creation, The Family of Man has attracted over 10 million visitors

and entered the history of photography as a legendary exhibition. In 2003, the collection was listed on the UNESCO Memory of the World register.

It's time to get inspired by Bob Dylan. He wrote the song in 1963:

"Come writers and critics
Who prophesize with your pen
And keep your eyes wide
The chance won't come again
And don't speak too soon
For the wheel's still in spin
And there's no tellin' who
That it's namin'
For the loser now
Will be later to win
For the times they are a-changin'."

Photographers must become aware of their ethical responsibility. Their personal initiatives have strong educational and social impact.

Photographers must cast as pell on the people who resist positive change. They must get involved. Let's make a difference in Madrid. Are you involved yet?

Brussels, July 11 2016

José María Parreño

José María Parreño (Madrid, 1958) es profesor de Historia del Arte en la Facultad de Bellas Artes de la Universidad Complutense. Ha sido director del Museo de Arte Contemporáneo Esteban Vicente. Asimismo, ha comisariado numerosas exposiciones y ha ejercido la crítica de arte en diversos medios. Ha publicado ensayos y libros de creación. Los últimos son, respectivamente, *Arte y Ecología* (2015) y *Pornografía para insectos* (2014).

Against the memory of evil and the oblivion of the good

When I received the invitation to participate in a round table about memory and photography I knew right away what was I going to talk about: of the enormous difference there is between knowing the past and visualizing it; of how the mere knowledge of the horrors committed by the human beings is not enough to stop them from happening again; of how the photographic image, with its capacity of transporting us in time (or bringing time closer) turns us into witnesses of past events and in this way transmutes the knowledge – the theory – into experience. A fundamental change, because only the experience transforms us. I insist: knowing is not enough for acting. No doubt, one of the problems that communication has is the difficulty of making the data transmitted be perceived in a sensitive way¹. Data hardly ever moves us; we need an impulse that comes from the emotional field. As Jeremy Rifkin has said: “The way things are told is key to provoke change in humanity”². I know, naturally, that action has a necessary component of calculus and judgement, essential to be effective. But definitely, impulse is emotional (the etymology of the word emotion relates it with the verb to move). And the proofs of the images ability to move us are already registered since the first treatise of Italian paintings of the XVI century. In one of them we read that a painting “will make the spectator desire a young woman for his wife when he sees her painted naked; feel solidarity when he sees affliction... get thrilled and infuriated when he contemplates

a battle vividly described and get agitated full of hatred and rage when he sees shameful and dishonest actions”³. Now we know this happens thanks to a complex process, in which empathy, as a biological mechanism, is triggered once the mirror neurons and the development of the so-called Theory of the Mind come into action. With the first we identify with the emotions that we contemplate in others and through the second we are capable of deducing the thoughts and suppositions of other people⁴. It is true that the effectiveness of both mechanisms is infinitely bigger the narrower the bond between spectators and actors is; something that varies according to the case.

With this starting point I began a search of significant images of some of the tragedies in recent history. The Spanish Civil War, the Holocaust, and The Balkan War ... the material was not scarce. I looked for sufficiently horrible photographs as though to provoke in the spectator a strong rejection due to the identification with the victims. And based on that feeling lay the foundation for the decision that these events would not repeat ever. However, this approach instantly raised questionings. Can the commitment to work in favour of a human gender, of which to be proud of, emerge from the shame of knowing one is fellow of the murderers? Most probably not. Maybe it could lead us to some interesting reflections, but I do not think that it would make us behave better. I think that the criminals are as human beings as us, because the impulse towards evil – as towards the good – is a feature of our specie. And also we know that

meanness is neither the only nor the greatest cause for the atrocities of the XX century. These verses by Yeats have always disturbed me: “The best people always lack conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intentions”. Or as Luther King said: “What is terrible of the XX century is not so much the action of some evildoers, rather that many thousands preferred to look the other way”. The wills, not those of the wrongdoers, but of the indifferent are the ones I think are plausible to move. But maybe it is more efficient to stimulate the good side we all possess rather than continue reminding ourselves how powerful our mean side is. It is a fact that we have this side more present than the other. For example, the names of the Nazism top brass are of general knowledge: Hitler, Himmler, Eichmann ... but who knows who were those that stirred up to rebellion in the Warsaw Ghetto; who were the leaders of the French Resistance; who gave their lives in order to save their fellow men in the jails and concentration camps? There is an extensive memory of the evil and a scarce memory of the good. There are studies and reflections of all kind

1 Un libro de reciente aparición, *Numbers and Nerves: Information, Emotion, and Meaning in a World of Data*, de Scott Slovic, Paul Slovic, Robert Michael Pyle (OSU Press, 2015), trata extensamente esta cuestión.

2 El País, 25.01.2008

3 Freedberg, D.: *El poder de las imágenes. Estudios sobre la historia y la teoría de la respuesta*. Cátedra, Madrid, 1992. p 19.

4 Sariñana, J. *Photography and the Feelings of Others*. Consultado el 10/8/2016. www.joshuasarinana.com/feelings-of-others

and from different points of view of how Humanity was capable of such terrible actions as those committed in Auschwitz, Srebrenica or Rwanda. And very little has been written about the amazing acts of generosity and altruism that also took place in those scenarios. Referring to the courts that have been in charge of punishing a posteriori those who were guilty, Sveltana Broz writes: "They educate for democratic justice but not for coexistence ... The memory of the penal justice sets aside the fibres of peace". Doctor Broz, cardiologist, after working as a volunteer in several fronts of the Balkan War decided to abandon her professional practice and dedicate her time to compile the threads of the good, convinced that it was an essential task in order to rebuild

5 Broz, S. Buenas gentes en tiempos del mal. Kailas, Madrid, 2006. Y además, Nissim, G. La bondad insensata, Siruela, Madrid, 2013; Ruiz-Manjón, O. Algunos hombres buenos. Espasa. Madrid, 2016; Press, E. Beautiful Souls: Saying No, Breaking Ranks, and Heeding the Voice of Conscience in Dark Times and Absolute Convictions. Ferrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2012. Además, resulta del mayor interés el proyecto de "Hebras de Paz", creado por el Laboratorio Memoria y Procomún en MediaLab, Madrid.

6 Me refiero a la tetralogía de Javier Gomá: Imitación y experiencia (2003), Aquiles en el gineceo, o aprender a ser mortal (2007), Ejemplaridad pública (2009) y Necesario pero imposible, o ¿qué podemos esperar? (2013). Todos ellos están publicados por Taurus. Más allá de la lectura concreta de los libros, la amplia recepción y los ecos de su aparición son prueba de la necesidad social de un planteamiento de estas características.

the coexistence when the conflict was over. "I believe that each one of them will answer for their crimes even if the process takes time. The question is if those that deserve it will obtain some satisfaction for their generosity and courage? How to reward those who suffered for not accepting the brutality and insanity by protecting people from other religions? This type of kindness is heroism, but heroes are anonymous. No army or government paid homage to them. There will not be a street or plaza that carries their name. They will live in the memory of the persons they saved and maybe in their children's. Future generations must be aware that there was and there are people like this." It was after reading Broz's book that I began to realize that nowadays the theme of the good and kindness arouses an incredible interest⁵. Besides, in our country this research runs parallel to the review of a behaviour that has acquired a renewed interest: exemplariness, the imitation of the best⁶.

But it is necessary to take a step back and tie some loose ends. Which acts deserve the category of being heroic? Who determines this? Based on what proofs? Among the institutions that have tried, with more determination, to document the acts of kindness is Yad Vashem, best known as Garden of the Righteous Among the Nations. This project, created by the Israeli Parliament in 1953 began compiling episodes where non-Jews had risked their lives to save Jews (afterwards this criteria has become wider). I will not stop to explain the magnitude or the accomplishments of Yad Vashem, but I want to point out two aspects that seem relevant



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for my approach. One of them is that Yad Vashem has as a starting point the famous phrase of the *Talmud*: "He who saves a life saves the whole universe" (by the way, the phrase also appears in the Koran 5:32). From it a whole philosophy is deducted: let's pay attention to life and the specific needs of the people. Let's do it regardless of the projects that hope to change society and ignore the individuals. It is this "imprudent kindness" that Vassily Grossman so poignantly profiles in the unforgettable book *Life and Destiny* and that Todorov comments: "Grossman develops a praise to kindness opposing it to the doctrines of good. These all have in common an insurmountable defect: they place in the highest point of their values an abstraction and not the individual human beings". It is excluded that it is actions of another type the ones that transform the world, while these are only mere anecdotes. Yes, but they have a direct efficacy in the relief of pain and, on the contrary, the hardships produced by social engineering projects should make us reconsider the value of ones and the others. The

issue that I want to propose comes from the debates that Moshe Bejski, the promoter judge of Yad Vashem, has kept regarding the behaviour of the Righteous. Bejski has opposed to the need to risk one's life as a condition for being considered Righteous. He says: "In order to fight extreme evil it is not enough to have only heroes. One has to also be able to count on normal people. It is indispensable to ask men of good will for the possible but not for the impossible."⁷ I think that this concept of normality is the key. It echoes in my ears when I read a letter from Anton Schmidt to his wife: "I only act as a human being that does not want to harm anybody". Schmidt (1900 – 1942), born Austrian, was mobilised and destined to Vain, Lithuania as corporal of the German army. The mistreatment that the population was subjected to became



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unbearable for him. In a letter to his wife, Stefi, Schmidt described his horror about the crimes and the "children beaten to death on the roads". And continues: "You know what this means for my soft heart. I cannot stand this, I must help them" (images 1 and 2). In effect, he helped more than two hundred people escape extermination, by hiding them and providing them with false identifications so they could escape. Finally he was detained, judged for high treason and condemned to death. Yes I know: this end is heroic. But not always it was necessarily so. What is true is that speaking about normal behaviours in these situations is what is really strange. Who synthesized it better than anyone was the also Austrian Viktor Frankl, psychiatrist and survivor of an extermination camp: "Under exceptional circumstances, only exceptional behaviour restores us back to normality".

7 Creo que una cita más amplia aclara la profundidad de este pensamiento: "Si prevalece una visión elitista en la memoria del bien, con un espacio exclusivamente reservado a los casos extremos (...) lo que damos a entender es que el nazismo sólo se podía combatir con el sacrificio supremo de la vida y con un comportamiento más allá de las cualidades normales de los hombres. De esa manera lo único que hacemos es crear coartadas para aquellos que prefirieron mirar para otro lado frente al drama de los judíos (...) si un significativo número de individuos hubiera sido capaz de dar un pequeño paso de solidaridad, el número de los supervivientes habría sido mucho mayor". Nissim, G. La bondad insensata. p 70.

I mentioned that the matter of normality was important. But not only from the conceptual point of view, in the paradoxical sense that Frankl suggested. But also in what concerns us here. Because, focusing on the selection of the photographs, if the purpose is to show how normal people establish normality in the abnormality, what type of images could depict this? Without any doubt, images that would be overwhelmingly common, normal, indistinguishable from others that reflect normal acts in situations that are also normal. And the same goes for the protagonists, deliberately common, without any distinctive feature of any type. While I write this I think in the solution that the Catholic iconography gave to this problem: each saint was accompanied by attributes that characterised him, pointing out the cause of death, if they were martyrs, or the merit for their work, if they were benefactors. So, we can find Saint Lucy holding a tray with a pair of eyes, because her eyes were pulled out when she refused to make sacrifices for the idols; or the boy who accompanies Saint Christopher in order to remember his help to those that wanted to cross a dangerous river. It does not seem an applicable solution to our case and therefore, I invite the reader to come up with one of his or her own. I believe the best way to preserve and transmit their actions is the image together with a narration. A photographic narration, for example.

And to finish, which really is to go back to the beginning of this article, these are the persons whose memory must not be lost and that maybe we can remember best through their portraits.

The first one is Melchor Rodríguez (Seville, 1893 – Madrid, 1972). He tried to become a bullfighter in his youth, but instead he became a tinsmith and activist anarchist of the CNT (Workers National Confederation). During the Spanish Civil war he was named special delegate for prisons (November 1936 to March 1937). From this position he stopped the removal of prisoners and shootings in the Madrid's rear-guard. In December of that year he managed to stop an enraged mob from assaulting the Alcala de Henares prison to revenge the bombings made by the rebel aviation and suffered by the population. Among the 1532 inmates saved, there were important personalities of the future Francoist regime. He was a key figure to return to the Republic the public order control and the prisons. The life conditions and judicial guarantees improved to a point where the inmates began to call him "The Red Angel". Due to a string of events, he was the last mayor of the Madrid of the Republic, since on February 28, 1939 he received, from the Council of National Defence, the mission of handing over the town council to the victorious troops. After the end of the battle he was detained and submitted to two Court –Martial. In the second one he was condemned to 20 years of prison of which he only purged 5. He lived modestly during the dictatorship. To his burial, in 1972, personalities of the Regime and fellow anarchosindicalists assisted to pay tribute. As he declared several times, "You can die for your ideas, never kill for them". (Images 3,4,5)

Irena Sendler o Sendlerowa (Warsaw, 1910 – Warsaw, 2008). When Germany invaded Poland in 1939, Irena was



Melchor Rodríguez



Irena Sendler

a nurse in the Warsaw Social Welfare, which tended the community meal centres of the city. In 1942 the Nazis created a ghetto in Warsaw and Irena, horrified by the living conditions, joined the Jew Council for Help, Żegota. She obtained permits for the sanitary office for her and some colleagues in order to enter the premises. Through the most diverse means she managed to take out of that place more than 2,500 children to whom she provided with false identities. When she was discovered she was captured and tortured so she would reveal the whereabouts of those evacuated. Sentenced to death, she managed to escape and continued her activities under a false name. When the war ended she recovered the lists

of the children's identities in order to return them to their families. Under the communist regime of the post-war the socialist party harassed her and her story was silenced. When she became a candidate to the Nobel Prize, her comment was: "Those acts were the reason of my existence in the Earth and not a title to receive the glory". (Images 6, 7 and 8)

This leads me to a final matter, the importance of the face. Emmanuel Levinas has defended the idea that the face of another man makes us remember our responsibility. Remember "from eternity, a man answers about another... Whether he sees me or not, "he has to do with me"; I have to respond about him"⁸. Well then, the same way that the face of the sufferer makes it impossible to deny our debt of solidarity with the other, the face of the righteous becomes a mirror where we can see just how noble we could become.



Irena Sendler



Irena Sendler

8 Levinas, E. Entre nosotros. Ensayos para pensar en otro. Pretextos, Valencia, 1993. p. 275.

Daniel Rubinstein

Daniel Rubinstein is a social theorist, writer and philosopher. Rubinstein's research spans the fields of art, photography, new media, cultural studies and contemporary philosophy. He is the editor of the *Journal Philosophy of Photography* and the course leader of MA Photography at Central Saint Martins, London.

What is 21st Century Photography?

Fifty years before photography was officially unleashed onto the world, in answering the question 'What is Enlightenment?' (1784) Immanuel Kant wrote: 'Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity'. Kant was writing this at a time when thousand years of Feudalism were ending, and he strived to define the emerging world order based on scientific method rather than religion, representational democracy rather than autocracy and market economy rather than bartering.

Enlightenment meant a clean break from the dark ages and a resounding turn towards reason, logic, and rationality. This rupture with the past and the launch of a new era of science, capitalism and democracy, was summarised by Kant in the motto 'Sapere Aude!' – 'have courage to use your own understanding!' The invention of photography that flowed from this scientific revolution cemented the final break with the medieval iconography of saints and cherubs.

The photo-graphic image combined some of the key attributes of the Enlightenment: rational method capable of producing identical results under controlled conditions, industrial processes that replace physical labour with mechanised production, and the delirium of mass-replication that mimics the infinite circulation of commodities in a capitalist market. In other words, the technical image captured the key scientific, political and ethical tendencies of industrial capitalism and presented them to the eye as an image, inaugurating along the way the age of aesthetic modernism.



Lena Heubusch

The reason photography was the most suitable visual form to reflect on the changing face of society, as it was reshaped by industrialisation, is that it is itself the product of the same industrial process that replaced human and animal muscles with motors and pistons, accelerated movement to ultrasonic speeds and exchanged craftsmanship with mass-production. Photography emerged out of this melting pot of bodies, energies and machines as the visual figuration of a social order that made representation and subjectivity the cornerstone of its scientific, political and economic activities. A photograph of a cat represents a real cat according to the same logic that maintains that paper money represents gold bullion (gold standard), a member of parliament represents her constituents and H₂O represents water.

However, in the 21st Century this representational world order inaugurated by Newton's laws of motion, Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, parliamentary (representational) democracy and the photographic camera has already come to an end, and even if some parts of it are still visible, they are in a state of advanced decay, maintaining a holding pattern while they are being transformed by a new set of forces.

The 'Age of Information' is characterised by the emergence of another kind of machine, one that replicates the activities and the processes not of the human body, but of the brain.

Just as during the previous 'Industrial Age', machines replaced physical labour not by copying animal locomotion (airplanes don't flap



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their wings like birds) but by utilising different sources of energy (petroleum) and different processes (internal combustion), the new machines that we refer to as 'computers' do not operate within the categories of human reason, such as dialectics, subjectivity, and representation.

Quantum physics did not obliterate Newton's laws, but showed that these laws apply only to a narrow segment of reality. Quantitative easing did not obliterate paper money, but annulled any possibility of money representing gold bullion or any real assets. The Arab Spring did not obliterate representational democracy, but exposed a connection between the democratic vote and fundamentalism, and computers did not obliterate reason and representation but augmented them with fuzzy logic, undecidability, artificial intelligence and the paradoxes of Turing machines.

In this new age of thinking machines,

algorithmic processing, and vast computational speeds, a dramatic change is happening to the visual field. The industrial age was an age of universal visibility, as Foucault demonstrated by offering the examples of the school, the factory, the hospital and the barracks, which operated in the same visual order of perspectival hierarchy. Photography had a clear-cut role in this optical regime, as Susan Sontag noticed: 'cameras define reality in the two ways essential to the working of an advanced industrial society: as a spectacle (for masses) and as an object of surveillance (for rulers)'.

The only thing that remained unrepresentable under the Western eye was, in Marx's phrase 'the hidden abode of production': the secret of profit making remained classified. Even photography was unable to shine the disinfecting power of sunlight onto this secret, because the process that produces capital is also the very



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process by which photography itself is produced, for as we have seen, photography and capital operate by means of technology, mass delirium, reproduction and infinite exchange.

The demise of the industrial age is at the same time curtains for the spectacle of representation: visual surveillance is replaced with predictive policing, industrial processes replaced with trading algorithms, armies replaced with remote controlled killer robots and perspectival geometry replaced with the flat topology of the computer screen.

These changes do not mean that suddenly what we have in front of our eyes does not matter, but that many more things that matter are outside our human field of view.

The question is, what becomes of photography when the locus of power shifts from the optical nerve to the fibre-optic cable? What becomes of the public space – the

heart of any European city – when it is invisibly but relentlessly morphed by multinational capital into privately owned space with public access, and when sovereignty, citizenship and autonomy find themselves under threat from multinational corporations and when – as Andrea Philips wrote – the changing concept of the public (space) reconfigures how we understand the performance of truth, judgement and rights?

Sadly, the answer has to be 'not much has changed'. As a recent visit to photography graduates exhibition confirmed, photography is still, above all else, the universal face

of representation. To this day photography's carte-de-visite proudly proclaims that it can take any aspect of the world and present it to the eye as an image. Indeed, is there anything that cannot be shown in a photograph? The surface of a comet? Check.

Someone's pale ass reflected in the



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bathroom mirror? Check. A puddle of urine under a hospital bed in a shantytown? Check. Teenagers on the beach looking wistfully into the distance? Triple check!

But this is not all, identical images also pressing upon us from bus stops,

magazines, mobile phones, notice boards, tablets and bags of cat food, to such an extent that it is often hard to know if you are looking at a gallery wall or at the shop window of Primark. The astonishing diversity of subjects, events and situations that photography is able to attend to, suggests at first sight that its scope is unlimited and its reach universal. And yet, these ostensibly Technicolor riches hide their own dark secrets, best summarised by drawing an analogy to Henry Ford's remark that 'you can have the Ford T in any colour as long as it's black'. In the context of photography, this means that you can have any photography you like, on any device, topic and subject, as long as it is a representation of something or other.

The problem is that in a post-Fordist society the locus of political agency and of cultural relevance has shifted from the object – as visually arresting as it might be – to the processes that (re)produce and distribute the object. Processes, however, by their own nature, are less visible and less



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representational than objects. For that reason, it seems to me that if photography mainly concerns itself with representations of objects in space, it is losing its relevance in a world in which speed, acceleration, distribution and self-replication acquire a significance that overshadows the visual appearance of spaces.

In the 20th Century photography existed on a printed page, mimicking in the perspectival organisation of its elements the hierarchical organisation of a centrally governed society with its focal point located in the subjectivity of the observer. In the 21st Century this arrangement is just as quaint as piece-meal production in the age of conveyor belt assembly. The photographic print disappeared everywhere apart from some galleries and nostalgic photography departments. In its place there is now a luminous screen that has its one

side facing the human, bathing her in blue light and screening from the immediate surroundings, and its other side remotely plugged into an unimaginable stream of data that is constantly worked and reworked by algorithms that keep being written and re-written by invisible and unknown puppet masters – our real rulers.

From time to time these algorithms pluck a few data packages out of this interminable stream and give them a visual form that resembles what we used to call 'a photograph'. But this resemblance is superficial to say the least. The four horsemen of the photographic apocalypse: Index, Punctum, Document, and Representation can no more account for this process than a printed page can explain the operation of a computer screen. This is not to suggest that the algorithmic image is somehow



Maria de la O Garrido

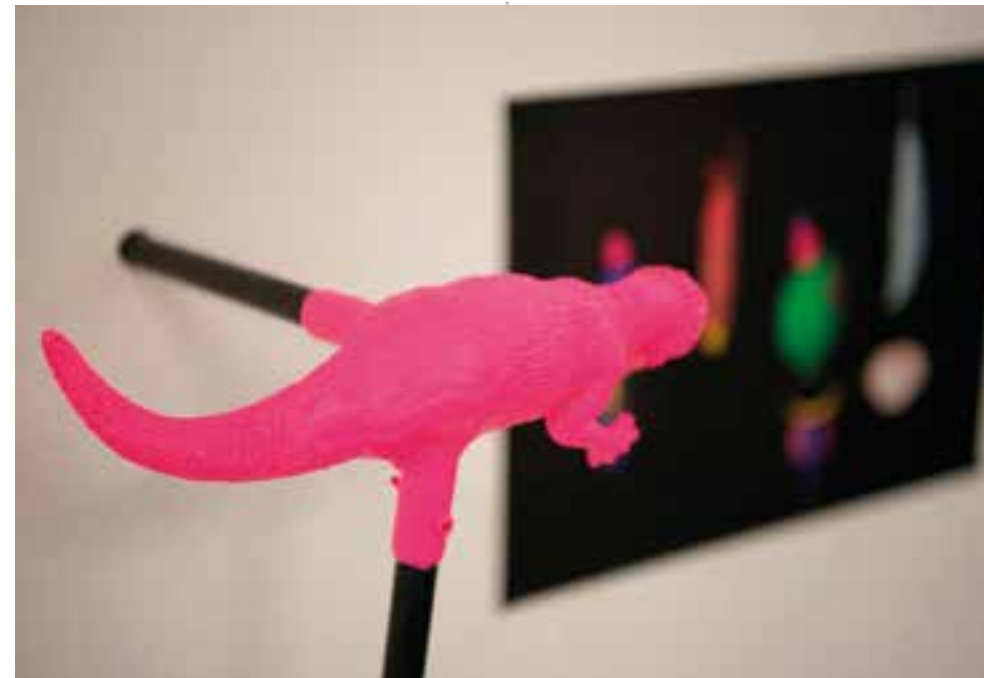
immaterial or inhuman, but rather to propose that both materiality and humanity must be re-evaluated in the light of these bio-techno-political developments.

And yet, there is still an image, and the image can be of something or other, for example a cat, a politician or a beheading, and this image can still be fascinating as we know many images to be. But in a meta-critical sense – a sense beyond the manner in which we normally consider and criticise images – this fascination appears to be the defining quality of photography, precisely because the word ‘photography’ today names not another visual form of representation, but an immersive economy that offers an entirely new way to inhabit materiality and its relation to bodies, machines and brains. Johnny Golding christened this new materiality ‘Ana-

materialism’ and we can simply call it ‘The Now’.

Within this absorbing ‘always-on’ and ‘everywhere at the same time’ animateriality, the world does not come before the image, nor is it produced by the image. Rather, photography is the visual figuration of a new layer of consciousness – in which new relationships to space and time, and therefore new categories of thought, play, art, and agency are emerging.

It would be hasty therefore to dismiss photography as a heritage practice from the industrial age. Above all else, photography, as the visual incarnation of the algorithm, is shaping our world everywhere, and from time to time we can even glimpse the workings of this process in the images that it throws up. But just like the pebbles scattered by an ocean wave, these images are simply the by-products of



David Klinkert

a crushing force that acts according to a logic of its own. There is, however, no need to read too much into the shapes created by these pebbles, but instead consider that the urgent task is to learn how to surf this wave. As Gilles Deleuze said: ‘There is no need for fear or hope, only to look for new weapons’.

21st Century photography is this wave, characterised as a continuous process of reshaping visual forms out of data. It has little in common with prints in black frames, these coffins of photography. It will not be found in the ‘60 inches from the floor to the center of the image’ rule that still passes for curating in some quarters, nor in the ‘eye level’ arrangement on the walls, that reinforces the rhetorical tropes of perspectival painting inherited from the Renaissance. And it has nothing in common with the hypocritical moralism of the post-colonial document

that relies on the same representational paradigm that made colonialism possible. In short, 21st Century Photography is not the representation of the world, but the exploration of the labor practices that shape this world through mass-production, computation, self-replication and pattern recognition. Through it we come to understand that the ‘real world’ is nothing more than so much information plucked out of chaos: the randomized and chaotic conflation of bits of matter, strands of DNA, sub-atomic particles and computer code. In photography one can glimpse how the accidental meetings of these forces are capable of producing temporary meaningful assemblages that we call ‘images’. In the 21st Century photography is not a stale sight for sore eyes, but the inquiry into what makes something an image. As such, photography is the most essential task of art.

Bohunka Koklesová

Bohunka Koklesová is a Slovak art historian and curator. In her research and work she has analysed visual propaganda of totalitarian system in Slovakia. Furthermore, Bohunka Koklesová is the author of *In the Shadow of Third Reich* (2009), the very first book ever published in Slovakia that dealt with official photographs of the Slovak State. Thanks to her historical and theoretical expertise in photography, she was invited to be the curator of numerous local and international exhibitions both in Slovakia and abroad. She coordinates and works for Month of Photography in Bratislava. She is a teacher at Department of Theory and History of Art in Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava. She lectures *History of Fine Arts in 19. – 20. century*, *History of Photography*, *Art and Politics*.

Turn to the Past

In contemporary visual art one can notice a fairly strong tendency built on the relationship between history and memory. In the 20th century, history was dominant in relation to memory. History was characterized as an objective, verifiable, stable and unchanging science¹. However, the new millennium has offered a reappraisal of this dominance. Increasingly, this issue involving memory, the so-called study of memory, is becoming a part of the humanities and social sciences. In the 20th century, memory was seen as a vague and unstable quantity, as something that was not based on an objective interpretation of the world. Memory is associated with remembrance and recollection and in this aspect it is very volatile. Memory is subject to forgetfulness, and will eventually be flawed. Nowadays, the reason why we observe the growing importance of memory in the social sciences and arts is related to the fact that there is an emphasis on how people lived at a particular time in the past. Many of us are not able to remember the significant historical changes during the 20th century, but we remember very well how political decisions had impacted our individual lives. In this regard, memory becomes more fundamental than history itself². Therefore, it is studied and mapped, not only through visual and cultural studies, but also through art itself. The second important reason, which is mentioned "while we are looking back", is our inability to articulate our vision of the future. The world is too complicated to be embraced. Faith in the future and progress



Alexandra Bors-kov- _Road of No Return. Sobibor, 2010

which was typical of the 20th century, disappears as the spring snow in the 21st century. Cultural historians argue that this is a fundamental crisis concerning our vision of an alternative future which is based on history itself and its promises. Many 20th century political concepts did not reach their ideological fulfilment, such as the vision of totalitarianism for a better and happier tomorrow or the constant consumerist paradise of capitalism. They became utopian; in the case of totalitarianism, for their prematurely formulated ideas about the future and in the case of capitalism, for their absolutely unrealistic ideas about the future. Because of this, the force of memory grows and becomes crucial to interpreting the world today as well. We define our present in relation to the disturbing past through looking back and through the so-called "Retro-utopia or reverse utopia".³

Thirdly, I can mention one more reason for the growing number of themes dealing with memory. The significant accumulation of mass catastrophes, war, population migration and terrorist attacks at the turn of the century has generated an emotional



From Establishing of the Fascist Slovak State, 1939

response to these situations. This emotional reflection on the present status quo mirrors, but in a much more intense and sensitive way, the dramatic and traumatic events of the 20th century. I think that if we want to argue that this situation is a stage in dealing with our troubled past, it would not be enough. The reason why we observe the growth of historical themes within contemporary art and observe an emotional reflection on the process of remembering is because they are related to today's situation. This is not related to an ongoing psychological reconciliation with the traumatic events in the nation's history. Without linking past and present, it would simply not work.

We are constantly reminded of the past. Advanced reproducible media, such as photography, film

1 HUYSEN, A.: *Present Pasts. Urban Palimpsest and the Politics of Memory*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003, s. 4.

2 Ibidem: HUYSEN, 2003, s. 4.

3 BUDEN, B.: *Konec postkomunizmu*. [The End of Postcommunism]. Praha, 2013, s. 181.



G.R.A.M.: „I“, 2005

and the Internet have considerable responsibility for this phenomenon.⁴ Through these media, the past becomes part of the present and participates in the creation of an image of today's world. Photographs which were brought to light after many years have become traces of the past, but at the same time they are proof of current cultural trends. Examples of this include the continuing digitization of archival sources and materials which are accessible to the general public via the Internet. We witness an increasing interest by artists and cultural workers in the work process that focuses on archival methods. Simply put, the large increase in historical material in today's world opens up questions of memory. History as a scientific discipline has a canonical form, but the growing passion for archives and their treasures, portraying human achievement and suffering, has never been greater. This turn to history is linked to the desire for narratives of the past. In the environment of visual art we are witnessing the re-creation, re-writing and re-production of topics about the past.

In a broader cultural context, one can name the different types of memory: collective memory, location memory, communicative memory, individual memory and the like. The relationship between memory and photography can be fundamental. Especially if we understand photography as a trace of the past then we can acquire a certain vision of the past through photography. In this context, we belong to the generation of post-memory, thus we adopt the experience of an historical situation directly from a photograph.

This experience is not authentically historical, but it is mediated, adapted and subsequently embodied. In this case, it may also include family photographs, which are burdened with a traumatic past. In the case of collective memory, the situation is slightly different. In order for society to accept the remembrance of a certain historical event, it must be articulated to become a collective memory. In a liberal environment, collective memory is created quite spontaneously. The production of popular culture, art and the institutional activities in the area of high art all participate in collective memory. In politically closed societies, this type of visual production is significantly limited by censorship and therefore we can talk about memory loss. If for whatever reason the past is not articulated there is a loss of memory. After some time, each memory becomes flawed if it is not purposefully reflected, called to mind and visually transcribed.

In contemporary art we see a relatively strong tendency which thematically turns towards the past. These initiations can be observed not only in the work of individual artists but also the galleries themselves present a reflection of historical themes in contemporary art. It must also be said that this tendency is not limited to a particular part of Europe. On the contrary, it seems universal. Europe has gained a variety of events and experiences during the 20th century. The reflection of memory in the contemporary cultural and artistic environment has different historical backgrounds. The important thing is that the current debate, on memory and reflection on the past in the



Milan Vaga: Untitled, 2013 copy

present, is given by the nature of our era, for both Eastern and Western Europe.

The artists, whom I chose for today's lecture, will be divided into 3 blocks. I am interested in the works of authors of historical photography and its reinterpretation in contemporary art. I will dedicate the second topic to location memory. This topic will concern landscape photography, which does not refer to specific historical photographs, but to specific locations connected to a troubled history. The third topic which I consider to be important, is the reflection of history through staged photography, but through the strong language of contemporary media culture. I will not only discuss Slovak authors, I have chosen artists from several countries in Central Europe with whom I have had the opportunity to cooperate. Furthermore, I will cross the border of photography, and together we will have a look at authors whose work proceeds from photography, but whose statement is carried out in painting, performances or installations.

4 Ibidem: HUYSEN, 2003, s. 1.



Noro Knap: 20 April 2011, videostill

Historical photography and its reflection in contemporary art

Photography which records the troubled history of the 20th century is capable of leaving a very strong impression through its content. On the one hand it is connected to the fact that we are confronted with the depiction of a troubled history, and on the other hand such images also touch us. A certain detail may trigger memories of the distant past. Thus, an image can talk about history and at the same time stimulate our memory; we recall memories of how we have experienced a given period of time. Therefore, exhibitions offering historical photographs are highly visited in our environment. People are confronted with their own past and the past of their ancestors.

In Slovakia, we have observed an increase of such works in the last few years. In particular, this happened after the publication of historical photographs, which brought to the public's eye the Second World War and the so-called Stalinist era of the 50s in the former Czechoslovakia. In this way the photographs reminded us of the problematic past which was suddenly reflected in the work of many artists.



Kassa Boys Kunstuniformen, 2011

Several theoretical studies have been devoted to the question, what do these historical photographs mean to us today. It is a territory on the border between cultural memory and the theory of photography. This is disciplinary oriented thinking. In this context, we can say that through the photograph we can not only "see and touch that past, but also try to reanimate by undoing the finality of the photographic 'take'..." (Marianne Hirsh). Furthermore, the theory of photography points out that the updating of historic photography can be seen in the re-creation of context for its new existence (John Berger). Or we can use the term "Surviving image" which elevates the past due to a current connection (Didi-Huberman). These three theses are the basis for authors whose works reflect historical photographs, who know them, reinterpret them and update them for today's context.

The painter Milan Vagač belongs to the younger generation of authors. His work is based on official photographs from the fascist or socialist Slovak past. His monumental paintings are a specific analysis of photography. His paintings analyse two languages – firstly, the gestural painting, which is

a transcription of photography, which he considers an authentic surface of the entire image; the second layer is rather synthetic – it is a citation of technical images. In this way two opposites: emotional, gestural painting and the synthetic form of the technical image meet in the painting. The image *Oddiel (Troop)* (250 x 340 cm, acrylic on canvas, 2009) reinterprets the official photographs from a youth organization, which was only possible during socialism. His work *Untitled* (2013) has a more descriptive character. This work is based on a specific photograph from the period of the fascist Slovak state. The photograph on the left records a gathering of Slovaks at the time of the birth of the Slovak state, which collaborated with Nazi Germany. In this painting the author removes official symbols and signs from the figures and places the figures in an uncertain situation where people's emotions are taken over by nationalism and xenophobia. An increase in this mind set can be observed in today's Slovak society.

The photographer Norbert Knap belongs to the middle generation of Slovak authors. He created a video that connects historical photography with modern urban sprawl. In the work *20 April* (2011) there is a gradual overlap between the past and the present. During World War II, the birthday of Adolf Hitler was celebrated in Slovakia on April 20th. On the same day and from the same location as the photograph of this celebration in the central square of Bratislava, Knap photographed today's central square. The method of blending, blurring and emergence is a metaphor for memory. It is a work that refers to



Sandra Vitalji: Infertile Grounds Donja Gradina, 2013 – 2014

the troubled history of the Slovaks, but through the visual language of memory, it talks about the impact the past has had on our lives. The work has a somewhat pathetic character, but what is important, is that in this way it indicates the presence of past attitudes in contemporary Slovak society. The nationalist past is catching up to us at this time.

Olja Triaška Stefanovic is a significant representative from the middle generation of Slovak photographers. She was born in the former Yugoslavia; after it's collapse she became a citizen of Serbia. She came to Slovakia to study, where she now lives and works. The 20th century is especially extraordinary due to the fact that people experienced several state and political systems during their lives without having to leave their yards. Perhaps that is why they gradually became more courageous, because they could not resist the Nomadic way of life. I suppose this is the reason why they frequently asked questions about where they come from, where they belong, and where their loved ones are headed. In her latest project *The Relay of Youth, the story of a big state and its end* (2014) she focused on a relay race, which, starting in 1945,



Olja Tria-ka Stefanovi: The Relay of Youth, 2014

was organized in the former Yugoslavia in honour of the prime minister and later president of Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito. At that time, the relay of youth was supposed to represent the cohesion of all the ethnic groups living in the country, additionally it served to strengthen Tito's cult of personality. The Run for Peace, Run for Friendship and The Relay of Fellowship were mass events organized by the state in socialist countries. The author took photographs of sculptural or architectural monuments within this historical context. At the same time she extended her installation with artefacts from this period: badges, maps, publications and historical photographs. The museum aspect of this installation can be characterized as a "historiographical turnabout" in art. The Eastern block countries have been hit by a strong wave of nostalgia for the socialist era, which is only a reaction to the instability of our time.

Memory of Place

Most of the projects linked to the issue of location memory are connected to traumatic events that occurred at that location. In these individual

works one does not hear a critical nor pathetic voice. Rather, it is the emotional aspect, the atmosphere of the country, that is part of each image. We could call it an emotional turn in contemporary art. Although the specific location is interconnected with specific traumatic events, none of these facts are in the photograph. However, what is noticeable is the emotionality of the photographed scene itself. The landscape leaves an alarming impression, while its character is close to that of a romantic painting from the 19th century. These are two opposites – an objective history, which gives the photographer a reason to photograph exactly this part of the landscape and an emotional reflection on the present condition. It is a landscape with a vague yet pressing atmosphere.

One such example is the work by the Croatian photographer Sandra Vitaljič. In the series of photographs entitled *Infertile Grounds*, the author reflects on trauma, historic events and the human experience. She photographs forests, fields and rivers, which are interwoven with legends and myths, but at the same time, they are a part of an objective history and ideology.



Sandra Vitaljič: Infertile Grounds, 2014

Such places as Sisak, Jasenovac, Bučje are in the Balkan countries known as places marked by traumatic events during the Second World War and during the Balkan wars of the 1990s. Through such projects, these places have become a part of the collective memory. Despite this, they do not even bear a monument. The photographs by Sandra Vitaljič are an example of how it is possible to articulate memory and thus strengthen, in particular, collective memory. Without this articulation we would have forgotten many events, because memory is very volatile and unstable. The author accompanies each photograph with a text which describes the story of the site. Although, landscape photography does not show a lot of this, its atmosphere is very unsettling.



Olja Tria-ka Stefanovi: The Relay of Youth, 2014

This can also be seen in the work of Tatiana Lecomte, a French photographer living in Austria. She deals with issues related to Austria's troubled history, in particular, the Second World War.

Slovak photography does not have too many examples, which would join in themselves traumatic history and landscape photography. One of the few is Alexandra Borsíková who belongs to the younger generation of contemporary Slovak photography. A few years ago, she created a project called *1942*. In Slovak history, this was the year in which the first massive deportation of the Jewish population was organised. The creative impulse for this project were photographs of the deportation which remained in existence. Through archival research

Alexandra Borsíková: 1942, 2014

and the testimony of living witnesses, the author sequentially mapped all the railway stations that were used in the deportation of the Jewish population to concentration camps in 1942. In this case the urban landscape is photographed in an objective and factual way. When I spoke with historians about how I should write about the troubled history of the Slovaks, they recommended that I write objectively, not pathetically, otherwise the text would lose credibility. And that's how it is with Alexandra Borsíková's photography.

Photography, memory and media culture

The previous chapter worked with the traumatic events that were visualized through the atmosphere of the landscape. The landscape took over the role of the witness of this matter. All previous projects have been implemented with all seriousness and piety by the authors towards these events. However, historical photographs, which are the basis for staged photography, connect the past with the media culture of today as in advertising and fashion. In these works our troubled history is somehow less troublesome. The authors do not avoid humour, sarcasm and absurdity. According to the Dadaists these are all the light weapons of thinking. They are precisely directed to the question of how is it possible that the many traumas of the 20th century could ever have happened at all. From today's point of view they appear unbelievable and absurd.

Art Group G.R.A.M. from Austria operates in a fairly wide range of media – photography, video, film,

performance, painting. They are interested in what is offered by mass media, popular culture and artistic performances which provoked resistance of contemporary Austrian society. The authors take possession of the images through reconstructing then as if experiencing again specific historical facts and situations. They use the type of performative photography. Notoriously known images are retold, rewritten as many critics mentioned, these newly constructed scenes are more comprehensive than the original itself. In the project "Exclamation mark" GRAM is interested by the work of Heinrich Hoffmann, personal photographer to Adolf Hitler, who photographed Hitler in striking gestures and poses for an edition postcards. Dynamic determination, over-dramatic pathos or smug grinning: Gram repeats the stills of a fictitious appearance before a mass audience, thus portraying them as a classical stereotype in the lexicon of propaganda.

The Slovakian art group, Kassa Boys, created a series of uniforms and military ranks intended for artists, indicating their position within the art scene. The ranks depend on the number of exhibitions and prestige of the gallery where these artists exhibited. These ranks visibly sort them into categories of importance. First of all, the uniforms are suitable for exhibition openings but also for everyday use. They help viewers orient themselves in the complicated hierarchy of figures in the art world. Dividing the artists into equal and more equal is also beneficial to the art scene itself. „We avoid the tiring discussions about; who was exhibiting, with whom the artist was exhibiting

and where the exhibition took place,” say Kassa Boys. In the photographs within this installation we can see the relevant Slovak artists dressed in their uniforms. On the other hand, the project Kunstuniformen reflects on problematic Slovakian history. The design of these uniforms mirrors the form of radical military guard uniform which were used during the Second World War (Radovan Čerevka, *1980, Tomáš Makara, *1982 and Peter Vrábel' *1982). This group was established in 2006, in Košice, and has made several group shows: „We work with terms like local patriotism and centralism, democracy and nationalism and the legendary archetype of the artist from the periphery of art “.

Adam Mazur

Adam Mazur Phd - art critic, art historian, curator, editor-in-chief of "Szum" magazine. His main interests are contemporary art and documentary photography. Assistant professor at the Artistic University in Poznan. In years 2002 – 2013 worked at the Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle in Warsaw and curated several exhibitions such as "New Documentary" (2006), "Red-Eye Effect" (2008), "Missing Documents. Photographs of Polish Transformation After 1989" (2012) to list only major group shows. Edited exhibition, collection catalogues and books like "New Phenomena in Polish Art after 2000" (2007). Published books "Histories of Photography in Poland 1839 – 2009" (2010), "New Phenomena in Polish Photography after 2000" (2012), "Depth of Field. Essays on Polish Photography After 1945" (2014). Curated several solo shows at different venues in Poland (Lodz, Cracow, Poznan) and abroad (Madrid, Bratislava, Berlin, Istanbul). Among most recent exhibitions are Martha Rosler's solo show at CCA Ujazdowski Castle (2014), Artur Zmijewski at Contemporary Museum in Wrocław MWW (2015) and new works of Aneta Grzeszykowska on view at PGS Sopot (2017). In 2013 established with Lukasz Gorczyca a research platform focusing on Polish photobooks (polishphotobook.tumblr.com).

Modalities of Modern Architecture

The Photographic Atlases of Nicolas Groszpiere and Wojciech Wilczyk

Both artists – Nicolas Groszpiere (b. 1975) and Wojciech Wilczyk (b. 1961) – belong to a generation whose work is significant for a period of Poland's post-communist transformation. Both artists shaped a "new documentary" approach to a rapidly changing social, economic, and cultural reality, as well as using photography and lens-based techniques to grasp a specific *Zeitgeist*. Additionally, both like to work on long-term documentary projects underlining their interest in topography, architecture and landscape, which later take the form of a book. I would like to present two atlases by Nicolas Groszpiere (*Modern Forms. A Subjective Atlas of 20th-Century Architecture*¹), and Wojciech Wilczyk (*There's No Such Thing as an Innocent Eye*²).

Nicolas Groszpiere is an artist deeply engaged in Modernism. He has been photographing architecture since the beginning of the twenty-first century, steadily building an extensive archive that currently includes almost a thousand images of buildings scattered across the world. A great number of these constructions have since been destroyed and can now only be seen in photographs. The artist has

always been particularly interested in the Modernism of the former Soviet Bloc, an interest enabled by the fact that Groszpiere, a Frenchman born in Switzerland, resides in Warsaw.

Groszpiere's photographs, used in a purely functional way, or occasionally presented as part of larger exhibitions, became a collection that was increasingly extensive, but which still lacked its own distinguishable shape. While working on his picture album *Open-Ended* in 2012 and 2013, he made his first step towards isolating a collection of photographs that documented twentieth century Modernism³. These architectural photographs were eventually presented as a part of *A Personal Archive of Modern Architecture*, a project that laid the grounds for his *Atlas*. In 2013, the artist decided to gradually share his collection of around 800 photographs of buildings online, including many images from the former USSR (Georgia, Lithuania, Ukraine, Russia), but also from Lebanon, Israel, the United States, Brazil and, of course, Central Europe and Poland.

When Groszpiere began thinking about how to turn this collection into a book, he noticed an important problem – his images of buildings, which were constantly being reblogged on the internet, were very different from one another. They presented different countries, styles, periods and functions, not to mention the fact that the buildings were the creations of very different architects. In addition to this, the photographs had been taken in different seasons, with different lighting conditions and, of course, they were in different formats (some square, some vertical, some horizontal).



Nicolas Groszpiere, *Space Museum and Heliport*, International Fairgrounds, Tripoli, Lebanon, 2010

"At that point I decided", Groszpiere says, "that the key should be strictly formal, it should come from the form of the building, and a sequence of photographs should look like a formal gradation. We start from one building and slowly, picture by picture, find subsequent forms"⁴. This interest in gradations, clearly visible in the *Atlas*, recalls other explorations of a single idea, typology or taxonomy. This string of images also brings to mind the internet and Tumblr, whilst simultaneously giving the impression of going through a flip-book. When leafing through the book we progress through a sort of formal circle – the last picture in the sequence is the same as the first one. In this sense, the crazy atlas of forms is like a globe that spins indefinitely.

1 N. Groszpiere, *Modern Forms. A Subjective Atlas of 20th-Century Architecture*, Prestel Verlag, Munich-London-New York 2016.

2 W. Wilczyk, *There's No Such Thing as an Innocent Eye*, Atlas Sztuki, Łódź 2009.

3 N. Groszpiere, *Open-Ended. Works 2004-2012*, Jovis Verlag, Berlin 2013.

4 Ł. Gorczyca, *Architecture Porn*, in "SZUM" 3(14)/2016, pp. 100 – 107.



Nicolas Groszpiere, *Institute of Scientific Research and Development*, Kiev, Ukraine, 2012

Nicolas Groszpiere's *Atlas* can be seen in relation to a number of topographical and artistic projects, from Bernd and Hilla Becher to Luis Jacob⁵. But what seems more interesting is reading Groszpiere's proposition in the context of the ideas of Aby Warburg, well known to art historians as the author of the *Mnemosyne Atlas*⁶. If Warburg was interested in the ways that antiquity's art forms seeped into Renaissance and contemporary times, Groszpiere has a similar approach to modernity. The artist doesn't use the architecture itself – that would require an absolute decontextualisation of those objects

5 B. Becher, H. Becher, *Anonyme Skulpturen. Eine Typologie technischer Bauten*, Art Press, Düsseldorf 1970; L. Jacob, *Album III*, Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, Kn 2007.

6 A. M. Warburg, *Der Bilderatlas: Mnemosyne, Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. II, ed. M. Warnke, C. Brink, Akademie, Berlin 2008.

7 S. Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament. Weimar Essays*, trans. T. Y. Levin, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass.-London 1995, pp. 50 – 51.

– but images of it and associated ideas. The buildings, once reduced to photographs printed in the form of *figures* on the pages of a book and scaled so as to match each other, not only show the movements of a photographer who travels across continents and countries, but can also function as an illustration of the universalist aspirations and untamed imaginations of Modernist architects. However, Groszpiere's *Atlas* is more than a travel guide focused on interesting architectural objects. The artist's archive, presented in the archaic form of a printed book, is more like a whirl than a spiral movement heading towards some undefined synthesis. The concrete forms, spinning with each approach to the book, momentarily break away from topography and allow for the establishment of a new relationship between objects – simultaneously stronger and looser, and all the more intriguing for its purely formal nature. Groszpiere also manages to break the monotony of Becher typologies, while escaping the complete arbitrary character of Jacob's collections.

Looking at them today, Groszpiere's collection of photographs is a cohesive whole, even though the pictures were taken intuitively, and not following a preconceived plan. Though surprising, this can be understood in the context of Sigrid Kracauer's ideas – he saw photography as a "monogram of history"⁷. If, as he said, photography does not imitate nature but instead changes it, a photograph is more than a fragment of reality. "The last image of a person is that person's actual history", said the author of *Theory of Film*. "That history is like

a monogram that condenses the name into a single graphic figure which is meaningful as an ornament"⁸. In other words, when looking at any given photograph from Groszpiere's *Atlas*, we can see a condensed form of the history of twentieth century Modernist architecture, but also – as Groszpiere himself noticed at some point – all of the forms that came before and after that one particular image.

The *Atlas* also functions as a flip-book that can be enjoyed like a film carefully cut together from various shots or stills. Groszpiere's montage of attractions makes the distance between buildings located hundreds, or even thousands of kilometres apart, created by different architects and for different purposes, disappear. Putting the spotlight on form brings to mind the "madness" of the Warburgian collections of Giotto and Ghirlandaio, which didn't take into account the influence one artist had on the other and eliminated the chronological order of the history of art. In Groszpiere's *Atlas*, instead of the airy, ethereal movements of Boticelli's nymphs, or the Bacchic motifs of fifteenth and sixteenth century Florentine art, we see the movement of architectural forms, typical of the twentieth century, easily recognised in today's concrete, glass and synthetic fiber-dominated world.

It can be argued that the photographs of Wojciech Wilczyk, which first appeared at the end of the nineteen-nineties, illustrate a departure from the deadlock inherent in artistic photography, and a return to a documentary approach, in this case orientated towards capturing images of the changes taking place in



Nicolas Groszpiere, "Arena" Sports Hall, Poznań, Poland, 2006

Poland at the turn of the 21st century. Wilczyk assembles large-scale series supplemented by commentary that is frequently poetic. Wilczyk also actively works as a curator, critic and art theoretician. It is no accident that Wilczyk's projects are also united by frugal formal means: simple square frames, central compositions, and a lack of staging and manipulation. In his photographs of deteriorating Silesian factories, abandoned workers' cottages and wrecked cars, one can easily perceive a fascination with the aesthetics of ruins, as ubiquitously contemplated by romantics. This focus is more obvious in one of his most widely discussed projects of recent years entitled *There's No Such Thing as an Innocent Eye* (2007 – 2009), which documents the Jewish architecture that can still be found all over Poland. In comparison with the projects of other artists dealing with the subject of memory and the Holocaust, his photographs of former synagogues are an analytic attempt at detecting

8 Ibid.

a legacy which, in a more or less ruined form, adapted or left unchanged, has survived to the present day, often constituting the only remaining trace of entire communities that created such architecture and culture.

Wilczyk takes pictures of Jewish temples, Midrashim and private prayer houses, of which there are presently no more than 350 within Poland. This architectural landscape from various periods of Jewish history in Poland (mostly 19th and early 20th century modern era buildings), is combined with the various uses of remaining buildings which now serve as public libraries, fire stations, warehouses and depots, supermarkets, or are the abandoned and crumbling storerooms of communist-era co-operative farming units. This unusual atlas is "rounded off" by something that has thus far been left out of Poland's tradition of "fatherland photography" landscapes, the creators of which ultimately based their work on pre-war German "Heimatfotografie"⁹. Departing from pathos and the motif of a postcard souvenir from a journey through Poland, Wilczyk creates a record of sights from the past which have seemingly grown into the contemporary landscape, yet still stick out of it, evoking memories of a tangled past. Photography becomes a time machine; the eye of the photographer perceives what is generally hidden, what is invisible in our daily lives. On the other hand, these buildings passed on to

communities and onetime owners have been adapted for new and disarming ends, thus becoming not just "used" but also revived. The sensitive gaze of the artist captures the fleeting current of architectural and social forms in which history lives on.

Was there a synagogue here? The question posed to the artist by inhabitants, and by the artist to inhabitants – is ultimately posed to the public, who rub their eyes with wonder upon seeing a window wholesaler's, a local pub, a funeral house or a Dutch furniture depot. This question asked by anonymous passers-by, yanked from their daily routines by the appearance of the photographer, is simultaneously a confirmation and a negation of historical knowledge; of what everyone has heard, but has seemingly forgotten – or more accurately – doesn't want to recall. But if someone does recall it, emotions immediately erupt.

Yes, there was a synagogue here. If we don't believe our own eyes, we have to believe the camera pointed at those aptly "modernized" or "redecorated" buildings by the photographer. A photographer who might paradoxically be called a landscape artist, or rather a revisionist landscape artist, given that in his project Wilczyk puts forward an entirely different vision of the Polish – and also Central European – landscape than the one pre- and post-war propagandists consequently promoted. This landscape turns out to be much more diverse than we could suspect from the unprecedented ethnic uniformity of today's Poland and the region at large. The incompatibility of the image of these remnants of a multicultural society with our

imagination of how Poland should look today is troublesome. Particularly since it doesn't concern just what is Polish and Jewish, but also what is German, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Lithuanian, etc. This concerns not just the shifting of borders following the Yalta Pact, by which one in ten buildings from Wilczyk's typology is found in so-called "Recovered Lands", i.e. post-German territories in the West, and by which as many buildings are left out in the so-called "Lost Lands", that is the former-Polish territories in the East. History gets more and more tangled in this part of Europe. It would seem as though, if we look at things from a distance, Wilczyk's series of photographs speak of matters more universal than the tragic unfolding of the history of this or that nation. Exile and war, material traces of bygone cultures, whether exterminated or expelled – these are the main themes of this work. Wilczyk's position as a photographer reminds one of the famous 9th passage of Walther Benjamin's *Theses on the Philosophy of History*: "A Klee painting named 'Angelus Novus' shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence



Nicolas Groszpiere, *Third Church of Christ, Scientist*, Washington, DC, USA, 2012

that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress"¹⁰.

This particular perspective, shared by Wilczyk, is different from Groszpiere's fascination with progress as such. Yet Wilczyk is also far from being nostalgic about the past. He does not try to perform a symbolic reconstruction of the mysterious world of Eastern European Jewry, which exerts such fascination with its spirituality and philosophy. What makes both atlases even more precise in touching issues inscribed into modern architecture and Central European landscape is their successful escape from pathos,

9 M. Szymanowicz, *Zaburzona epoka. Polska fotografia artystyczna w latach 1945 – 1955*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, Poznań 2016.

10 W. Benjamin, *On the Concept of History*, in *Collected Writings Vol. 4, 1938 – 1940*, transl. E. Jephcott et. al., ed. by H. Eiland and M. W. Jennings, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass.-London 2003.

moralism and nostalgia. The formulas of Pathos, expressed in emotional gestures and poses, so important to Aby Warburg, are nowhere to be found in the architectural objects photographed by Grosz and Wilczyk. While one could point out the "poetry of the concrete", the "distinct shapes" or the "symbolism of details", it doesn't change the fact that the modern architecture in Grosz's and Wilczyk's *atlases* is firmly detached from clear emotion and readable expression. Even the most bizarre forms, captured by artists in locations faraway as well as nearby, don't speak as clearly as the theorists of *architecture parlante*, Claude-Nicolas Ledoux or Étienne-Louis Boulée, would have wanted them to at the dawn of modernity. These photographic atlases constitute particular collections that allow for iconological and historical studies, but their meaning is still waiting to be explained. Meanwhile, the artists arrange their pictorial archive in an intuitive manner, creating surreal landscapes. The architectural forms collected by Grosz and Wilczyk and arranged as a *dynamogram* in the shape of a book, resemble Warburg's mnemonic waves (*mnemische Wellen*) in that they are a flow of visual energy that might be difficult to decode.

Many pictures from Nicolas Grosz's and Wojciech Wilczyk's series show buildings – and therefore modernity – in ruins. These images of decaying structures overgrown with grass and shrubbery, sometimes decorated with people who function merely as staffage, resemble eighteenth century etchings of Roman ruins. They are one of the artists' recurring motifs. The modernity documented in these books is for Grosz and Wilczyk what antiquity was for Renaissance and Enlightenment artists. The curators of *documenta 12*, Roger M. Buergel and Ruth Noack, posed the question: "Is modernity our antiquity?", Grosz's and Wilczyk's *Atlases* give a clear, affirmative answer¹¹.

¹¹ R. M. Buergel, R. Noack (eds.), *Documenta 12 Catalogue*, Taschen, Kn 2007.

Iva Prosoli

Born in 1980 in Zagreb, Croatia. She graduated in art history and German language and literature from the Faculty of Humanities and Social sciences in Zagreb, where she is currently completing her PhD in art history, field of photography.

From 2003 to 2006, she worked in the Museum of Arts and Crafts, first as a guide, then as an assistant in the Collection of Old Photography. The following year she worked in the Tošo Dabac Archive, Museum of Contemporary Art as a curator.

Since 2008 she has been working in the Zagreb City Museum as a curator and Head of the Collection of Zagreb photographers and as an assistant on the course the History of Photography the Academy of Dramatic Arts in Zagreb – Department of Cinematography. Since 2010, she has been teaching the the course entitled: *Photography and art practice from the 1960s to the present* at MA level of photography on the same Academy.

She has published articles in magazines and has authored a number of exhibitions in the field of photography.

Exhibiting Trauma

"The process of manipulating information – called 'communication' – is divided into two phases: In the first, information is created; in the second, it is distributed to memories in order to be stored there. The first phase is called 'dialogue', the second 'discourse'. In dialogue, available information is synthesized into a new phase in which the information to be synthesized can be located in a single memory (as in 'inner dialogue'); in discourse, the information produced in dialogue is distributed."¹

Intellectual approach to war crimes like torture, killing civilians, or genocide is in advance convicted to failure. Any kind of theorisation of those events makes them inevitably a part of a political system or an ideology. Being aware of that fact and consciously avoiding any interpretation leaves us with possibility to focus on the methods to communicate the trauma and question the creation of collective memory. On the examples of two artists Sandra Vitaljić and Tarik Samarah, I am trying to examine the role of photography as a medium and the institutional environment – museums, galleries and memorial centres in context of the aforementioned 'dialogue', and 'discourse'.

Sandra Vitaljić's photography series *Infertile grounds* presents landscapes marked by executions, which took place during Croatian history, but mostly during the Second World War and in the 1990s. In his photography

¹ Vilém Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, Reaktion books, London, 2005, 49 – 50.



Sandra Vitaljić, Stubica
(from the series *Unfertile Grounds*), 2009



Sandra Vitaljić, Adolfovac
(from the series *Unfertile Grounds*), 2009

series *Srebrenica - genocide in the heart of the Europe* Tarik Samarah documents the aftermath of Srebrenica genocide. Both of these series were exhibited in numerous galleries and museums, and both of them exist as books as well.

The question that must be asked is what exactly are the quests with which the artists were faced?



Sandra Vitaljić, *Unfertile Grounds*, Hanikah Gazi Husrev Beg, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2010



Sandra Vitaljić, *Unfertile Grounds*, Karas Gallery, Zagreb, Croatia, 2009



Tarik Samarah, Karaula near Tuzla, November 2003



Tarik Samarah, Blagovac, November, 2002



Tarik Samarah, Potočari, 11. July 2002



Tarik Samarah, *Abandoned at Srebrenica*
Chicago, Illinois – Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center, March 2015 – January 2016

In their work we can detect two attempts of rationalisation. The first one is their own attempt of rationalising the traumatic events, which began at the very moment they decided to make the photographic series. The second one was made by the gallerist trying to exhibit the works. However, what interests me the most is what happens on the other side of this communication canal, what happens when the exhibition visitor is standing face to face with the interpretation of the massacres, losses, and all different types of crimes. And in which way the two first 'rationalisations' - dialogue and discourse phase - affect the final recipient.

Tarik Samarah's photographs seem more intense, because they aim directly

to pain. Pain is a natural and one of the primary human feelings, it is not related to origin, nation, race or experience, it is immanent to human species, it is not learned, but embedded in a human. That kind of approach brings one to identify himself with a victim. Sandra Vitaljić' photographs on the other hand call upon the conscience and the responsibility of an individual who automatically takes over the responsibility of the whole society. Not to forget that the conscience is the learned emotion, it is conditioned by culture, gained through upbringing and education and as such it does not exist permanently in a human.

The strategy of both authors is similar; they try to communicate the crime



Gallery 11/07/95, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

in almost identical way, although the photographs are very different in their nature. We can say that Sandra and Tarik have the same discourse-strategy, but different dialogue-strategy to start with.

They both present their series in a book accompanied by informative factual texts without conclusions. They do not judge, but stress the importance of the visibility of victims.

Sandra Vitaljić writes in her artist statement that her series is "an alternative memento that is not created by ideology, rather by the need to open up the space of remembrance for victims who are never going to acquire their own space in the official culture of memory."

"The general aim of this museum is to be a strong and decisive voice

against all forms of violence in the world" is written on the website of the Srebrenica Memorial center.

However, what is, or what will be the actual, perceivable result of this archiving of a trauma?

Maybe there is not going to be any. Maybe it is enough to highlight the tragic moment without any expectations? Because, an archive is not a question of the past, "It is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow".²

² Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*, The University of Chicago Press, 1995, 36.

Michal Koleček

Born 1966; curator of contemporary art, art historian, lives and works in Ústí nad Labem, Czech Republic. He graduated from the Department of History and Czech Literature at Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem (1986 – 1992, Master's degree) and the Department of Theory of Art Socialization at Masaryk University in Brno (1995 – 2002, Ph.D. degree). In 2010 he was elected an associate professor at Masaryk University in Brno. From 1994 to 2007 he worked as a head of the Department of History and Theory of Art at the Faculty of Art and Design at Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem. From 2007 to 2016 he was the Dean of the Faculty of Art and Design at Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem. Since 2016 he has been the Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Art and Design at Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem. Between 1994 and 2001 he worked in the position of a chief curator of the Emil Filla Gallery in Ústí nad Labem. During the years 2002 – 2003 he worked as a curator of the Collection of Modern and Contemporary Art of the National Gallery in Prague. In 2003 he curated the SUPERSTART project of the Czech-Slovak Pavilion at the 50th Venice Biennial. In 2007 he edited publication *Framing of Art* – an anthology reflecting the institutional context of Central European contemporary art in post-totalitarian period of social and political transformation (authors: Barnabás Bencsik; Vladimír Beskid; Michal Koleček; Margarethe Makovec & Anton Lederer; Darko Šimičić; Barbara Steiner).

Being in the Image

Appropriation and interpretation of totalitarian visual codes and the search for a democratic identity in the Central European social context

Michal Koleček

“‘Haven’t we had enough of Central Europe?’ Yes and no. ‘Yes,’ if we mean the political and cultural division and strategies of marginalization, ethnicization, exclusion, and (controlled) inclusion. But one cannot resolve such divisions by pretending that they do not exist and that they are simply an external circumstance that does not touch the ‘essence’. It is only through repetition, through returning to and reworking the trauma, that it can perhaps be slowly resolved, and not by repressing, ignoring, and forgetting it. ‘No,’ if we mean a re-evaluation of the social and cultural potentials of Eastern Europe and their ability to transform themselves and thereby transform European identity.”¹

Igor Zabel – Haven’t We Had Enough?, 2004

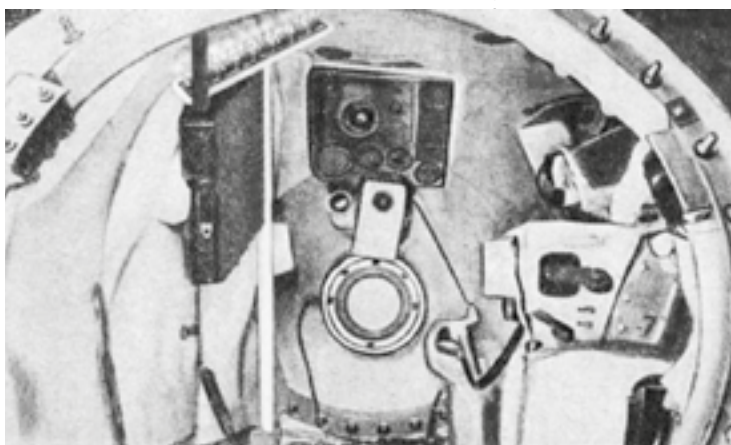
¹ ZABEL, I. Haven’t We Had Enough? In: ZABEL, I. Contemporary Art Theory. Zurich: JRP/Ringier, 2012, s. 121.

As early as in 2004, the Slovenian art theoretician Igor Zabel in his essay *Haven’t We Had Enough?* called for rethinking and also cultural reinterpretation of the trauma connected with the totalitarian past of Central Europe, which could not only return this territory into the all-European space once for all, but also significantly contribute to looking for its new identity in face of the dramatic social and political challenges of the current globalized world. It is yet obvious that the situation in Central Europe has long been heading towards a deep crisis, which threatens to return of undemocratic social trends and political practices infamously known from the period of totalitarianism. From a long line of symptomatic features representing these tendencies towards neo-totalitarianism just remember the Dresden anti-Islamic movement Pegida, Czech President Miloš Zeman uncritically supporting Putin's aggressive foreign doctrine, democracy limiting steps of the new Polish government controlled by the Law and Justice Party, to the Slovak Parliament recently voted ultra-right and xenophobic People's Party Our Slovakia with its leader Marian Kotleba, and of course the Hungarian authoritarian regime under the leadership of Viktor Orbán's Fidesz.

The reasons for the increasing number of residues of antidemocratic manifestations and movements are certainly numerous, and undoubtedly they are often anchored in the local political specifics. Nevertheless, it can certainly be said that one of the common denominators of this ongoing destruction is a kind of freezing processes dealing with the totalitarian

past of the region. As though without the painful historical reflection, it was impossible to cope with the current challenges and encourage European values and structures in the face of the economic crisis, and especially to solve the problems associated with the massive migration.

To follow this socio-cultural discourse of the current artistic production, we can focus on strategies using the principles of appropriation of significant visual signs of totalitarian systems often represented by photographic images or their current imitation. Motivation for the use of such historicist references, however, is not primarily anchored in relation to the past, but is open toward critical and often even painful reconnaissance of present. After all, situations, events, processes and the constant pressure, gradually deforming and ultimately destructing basic ethical standards of both the community and each individual that grew out of an ideological and instrumental framework of totalitarianism, in the new context form stealthily amid our everydayness. Their visualization and artistic interpretations are paradoxically very limited by the glut of media images which, through countless information channels reduce our ability to understand current events and adequate conscious personal and societal responses. Uncovering of historical layers of visual icons representing basal societal consensus and its updates through artistic intervention and shift of content towards the current context constitute activating strategies which open up space for denominating the connections between defective mechanisms of the totalitarian past



Jiří Černický (CZ) – Gagarin's Thing, long-term project since 1999

and the presence determined by increasingly limited democracy.

The Central European artists I have included into my presentation, to mention the archao-medial surveys, are representatives of the middle generation with the experience of how the dying totalitarian structures and the bipolar world of the 1980's functioned, as well as of the subsequent euphoric, though often contradictory and in many ways still unfinished social transformation.

Relativization of symbols

Thus Jiří Černický relativizes one of the key Communist myths of success and power, when on the background of life of a historical celebrity, the first cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin, weaves the story of a mysterious object called Gagarin's Thing (since 1999), which is placed into archival materials in the form of subversive manipulation. Visually, Černický builds upon the aesthetics and ideological pathos of official photographs and newspaper clipping. However, he combines them with amateur shots, often not directly connected with the interpreted historical matter, and also with fictitious documents or objects. When dealing with the contemporary realia, the author often uses references to modernistic expressional media characteristic especially for the Russian Avant-Garde, and later abused by the machinery of the totalitarian communist propaganda. Eventually, he completes the work with his own pseudorealistic comments in the form of legend, glossary or footnotes, and especially using a specific form of a traditional museum exposition having a standard-setting character and makes the myth



of the *Gagarin's Thing* a part of history "once for all".

Černický's play is yet so perfect that the border between reality and fiction is hardly detectable, and the only indistinct guide for the viewer is the absurdity connected with the mysterious object itself remaining in the spotlight all the time. The author confronts the "existence" of the thing with significant personalities of that time when exposes the political leaders Nikita Khrushchev, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, Richard Nixon or Henry Kissinger next to the first cosmonaut, or with well-known institutions, such as the Russian Baikonur or American NASA. However, he does not even mention the real function of the thing, and as it was typical for the totalitarian ideology, he just reports on its existence, importance, and non-specified benefit for the Soviet cosmonautics. On the background of a factual historical event, Jiří Černický deals with limits of social cognition, determination of an individual to face the manipulation of power, and its capacity to be at each and every moment – in the past as well as right now – ready for a critical reconnaissance of our existence.

Self-projection into historical images

In his ongoing project *When Germans Are Having Fun* (since 2005), Joachim Seinfeld opens new perspectives for reading symptomatic events of German history in the 20th century, when by means of a sophisticated assembly he projects his own figure into appropriated historical images in a sarcastic hyperbole.

The author himself identifies his strategy as docufiction, for the essence of his work is patient research

of archival pictorial sources, latently interconnected with the search for an individual approach to crucial historical milestones, which he expresses by means of manipulation with visual material. In a constantly widening view, he depicts the destructive history of Germany – from the horrors of World War I, through a protracted economic depression, the rise of Nazism, the occupation of Sudetenland, and the post-war division, up to the Honeckerian regime.

Seinfeld, however, does not opt for notoriously known photographs – on the contrary, he chooses images, which rather subconsciously represent the essence of the observed situation, but simultaneously offer its extended reading. The interpretative openness of such socio-cultural aspects is further supported by means of self-projection, as these aspects are visualized through the use of perfect technical methods, which place the author into the centre of these stories. The author's role in the compositional scheme of each shot constantly changes – he oscillates between an exalted sarcastic hyperbole, a seemingly indifferent presence, or active participation in the depicted event. Nevertheless, he always concerns the problematic of the destruction of natural social relations, which are replaced by collective manipulation or even fascination leading to the suppression of independent individuality and the rise of totalitarian principles.

In such bleak perspective, Joachim Seinfeld actually asks himself, and in a certain sense also each one of us, how we would act in situations presented in individual images, and we become aware not only of the severity



Joachim Seinfeld (DE) – *When Germans Are Having Fun*, long-term project

and power of these images, but also of our own insecurity and fear of failure in a heavy stream of societal processes without a chance to distance ourselves and predict the future impact of our present decisions.

Exposition of personal documents

In his artwork *Patriot* (2007), Slaven Tolj exposes faces of men who died while defending Dubrovnik besieged by Serbian army in 1991. The artist combines enlarged portraits obtained from identity cards in a multimedia installation with reflections of light rays flashing from a slowly rotating disco ball, to focus the fatal war disillusionment felt by the generation grown in schizophrenic paradise of Tito's Yugoslavia during 1970's and 1980's.

The basis of Tolj's visual language always latently depends on the emphasis placed upon performativity. As though only the physical presence of the author in his artwork enabled and anchored his very existence and social status. Intimate as well as public events, or rather situations, then serve as materials documented through the use of deliberately anti-aesthetical reportage video recordings or photographs, which become a part of installation environments. In his artistic process, Tolj furthermore relativizes the aura of artefacts, frequently using images or objects which were found, unauthorised, or provided by his colleagues, as a part of his own realisations.

The appropriated portraits of killed inhabitants and defenders of Dubrovnik, retrieved from card files and presented with reverence in a darkened, weakly light-reflecting

installation, are accompanied by a short video. The video portrays the author paying tribute to these heroes, nowadays actually needless, to the sound of the national anthem of former Yugoslavia, by means of military salutes representing significant ideological and political movements, which determined the development of the local society throughout the 20th century (Communism, Ustashian fascism, Serbian nationalism etc.). In a provoking manner, Slaven Tolj thus points out the pointlessness of such casualties, manipulated into a futile armed conflict, and also the inability of societal reflection aimed primarily at critical interpretation of Croatian national myth, since only then their death could be given a purpose.

Interpretation of subjective memories

The couple Jasanský & Polák focuses on exploring the narrative possibilities of the photographic medium; by means of a minimalist and non-spectacular form using civilian black and white photographs describing the story of their close friend Jan Merta – a painter and son of an evangelical priest – who, due to his father's position, experienced the pressure of the totalitarian persecution when he was young, including hidden forms of social exclusion, resulting from an omnipresent atmosphere of fear and distrust.

The principle of the specific expressional strategy of Jasanský & Polák is a depersonalized process of a seemingly anti-aesthetic documentation. Almost 150 shots with brief comments that mainly localize individual sceneries were made without the main character's knowledge. The



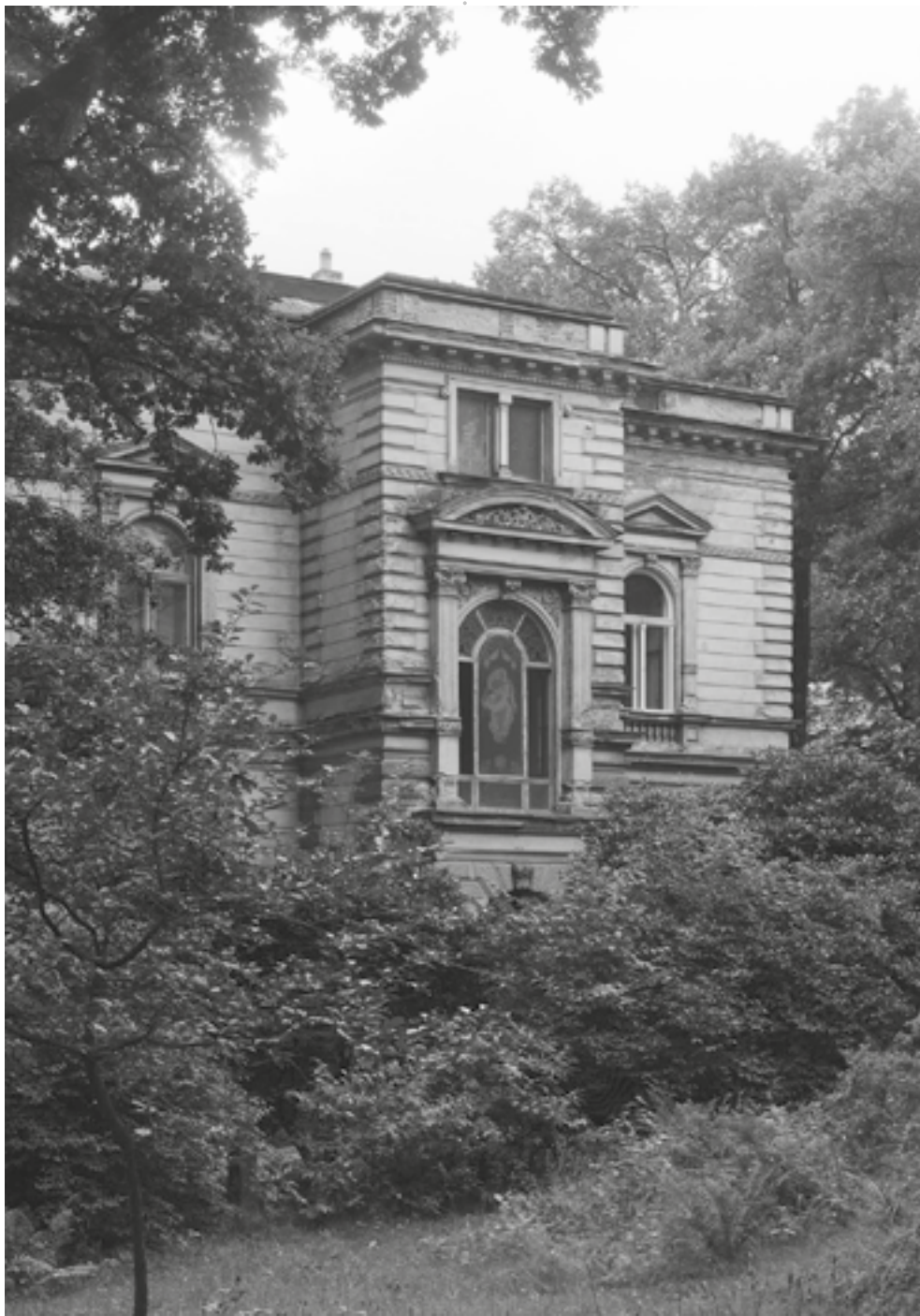
Slaven Tolj (CRO) – *Patriot*, 2007



Lukáš Jasanský & Martin Polák (CZ) – Jan Merta, 2009



Lukáš Jasanský & Martin Polák (CZ) – Jan Merta, 2009



Lukáš Jasanský & Martin Polák (CZ) – Jan Merta, 2009

authors “questioned” him unnoticed in repeated casual meetings and based on introspective and non-structured information, they made up the course of his life focused on specific places – namely buildings or interiors – that occurred in the narration and that the narrator put a certain emotional emphasis on.

Individual pictures from the cycle *Jan Merta* (2009) are yet immersed in a motionless atmosphere evoking the stiffness of Czechoslovakian real socialism of the 1970's and 1980's, in spite of the fact that they reflect sequences leading from the character's early childhood up to the events just preceding the origination of the artwork itself. Deprived of real life, exposed without the human element, and identical by an unemotional austerity, they evoke filing cabinets of the State Security Service, documenting tracking people hostile to the regime. At the same time, their space hides the authors' desire to rip the soul of the displayed localities out of the current of time – to record it today, but with respect to the subjective history of someone who will forever perceive them as past present.

Thematization of architecture as a socio-cultural sign

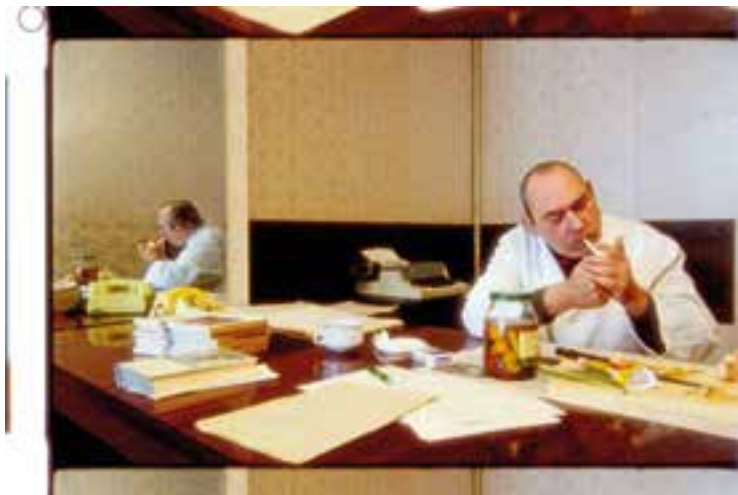
The convolute of the presented works is completed by a stylized video entitled *Hypercrisis* (2011) and shot by Josef Dabernig in the environment of slowly decaying holiday complex in the South Caucasus, which in the period of communism served to Soviet artists. The film composed in a semi-documentary introspective mode symbolizes the atmosphere of totalitarianism and its destruction, and

also refers to the vulnerability of every social construct under the pressure of loss of authenticity and basic moral criteria of the political system and especially their own society.

A significant part of the author's model of expression composes of photographic documentation, which accompanies the filming and thus not only supports the thorough reconnaissance of the monitored area, but also plays a role of a certain continuous script, which lays the basis for a staged story's structure. The individual images then focus primarily on recording the environment – thus on the reconstruction of the meaning of concrete architecture in specific historical context as well as on a report of its decay.

Nevertheless, Dabernig observes the ideological function of different kinds of public buildings in a long-term perspective, since he is aware not only of their representative influence in period anchoring, but also reveals the subconscious radiance of these ongoing meta-signs into our present age. He mainly focuses on the changes of state and usage of such complexes, which frequently reflect complicated transformational societal processes. Their development is naturally characterised by an effort to search for new socio-cultural representations and, conversely, the indifference or downright destruction of the symbols of the “old era”. An essential process of coping with the history – in this particular case a totalitarian past of the Soviet empire – is hereby displaced from the common discourse and replaced by counter-productive iconoclasm.

Dabernig's fictional writer – the



Josef Dabernig (AT) – Hypercrisis, 2011

main figure of the image – is on a creative scholarship. However, struck by a deep writer's crisis, he wanders about the ruins of former land of official Soviet culture, and thus primarily symbolizes an inability to build up his own purposeful identity through hard criticism of the past.

In his essay *The Power of Powerless* (1978) reacting to the agonizing social situation after publishing the key anti-regime programme Charter 77, the significant Czech playwright, political activist – dissident –, and later also president Václav Havel emphasized learning from history and searching for general and shared responsibility when he wrote: "Historical experience teaches us that any genuinely meaningful point of departure in an individual's life usually has an element of *universality* about it. In other words, it is not something partial, accessible only to a restricted community, and not transferable to any other. On the contrary, it must be potentially accessible to *everyone*; it must foreshadow a *general solution* and, thus, it is not just the expression of an introverted, self-contained responsibility that individuals have to and for themselves alone, but responsibility *to and for the world*."²

In the current turbulent environment, this Havel's idea is extremely topical, as it encourages us to view beyond our horizons limited by often purposeful political manipulations and media simplifications. It seems we live in a "better world" than that surrounding Václav Havel in the late 1970's that was fatally determined by the non-freedom of the so-called real socialism. Nevertheless, in the social discourse, we can ever more often observe

a tendency to simplified and purposeful solutions preferring a short-term and limited benefit. Such thinking however, inevitably leads to polarization of a community and increases the risk of the onset and success of totalitarian ideologies despite the fact that in the historical perspective, such ideologies are interpreted negatively in the contemporary society.

The artistic strategies referring to topics and visual representation of the Central-European version of totality, confronting them with the growing negative manifestations endangering the ethical integrity and democratic potential of the society, can be in this context understood as a cathartic socio-cultural ritual. A slight smile or a bitter chill on the nape caused by the associations emerging from pictures of the past in the works by Jiří Černický, Joachim Seinfeld, Slaven Tolj, Lukáš Jasanský & Martin Polák or Josef Dabernig encounter motivations of our decisions. And we are surprised to notice that in a specific situation, we are willing to participate in defect solutions we – in accordance with the conventional wisdom – historically condemn.

² HAVEL, V. Moc bezmocných. In: HAVEL, V. O lidskou identitu. Praha: Rozmluvy, 1990, s. 115 (http://vaclavhavel.cz/showtrans.php?cat=clanky&val=72_aj_clanky.html&typ=HTML).

PHOTOESPAÑA2016 ENCUENTROS PHE

Un mosaico inesperado Singularidades de la fotografía europea

PHotoEspaña y la Central European House of Photography, con la colaboración de CaixaForum, organiza unas jornadas de reflexión sobre la fotografía europea con el fin de abordar una serie de temas que tienen que ver con su historia común. A lo largo de tres días se desglosará la fotografía europea en el siglo xx hasta la actualidad a través de sus más importantes autores. Asimismo, se abordarán temáticas concretas que han centrado el debate de la fotografía a lo largo del siglo, como las discusiones entre fotografía documental y de ficción, la fotografía escenificada, la fotografía subjetiva, la postfotografía, el papel de la fotografía en la Segunda Guerra Mundial y la influencia de la memoria en la fotografía contemporánea.

Miércoles 8 de junio

18.00 – 20.00 h

Cuestionamientos.

Fotografía europea desde 1980 a 2015

Modera: Oliva María Rubio

Jueves 9 de junio

16.00 – 18.00 h

100 años y 100 minutos.

Fotografía europea en el siglo XX

Modera: Vaclav Macek

Viernes 10 de junio

18.00 – 20.00 h

Historia, memoria y fotografía.

La influencia de la memoria y la historia en la fotografía contemporánea

Modera: Bohunka Koklesová





An Unexpected Mosaic Unique Aspects of European Photography

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