AT
FACE
VALUE

&

BEYOND.

**PHOTOGRAPHIC
CONSTRUCTIONS
OF REALITY**

MONIKA
SCHWÄRZLER

MONIKA
SCHWÄRZLER

**AT FACE VALUE &
BEYOND.**

Image | Volume 75

To Kurt and Adrian

Associate Professor Dr. **Monika Schwärzler** teaches in the Department of Media Communications at Webster Vienna Private University. Her research interests include visual culture, art and media theory, history of photography, documentary film, documentary photography and animation.

AT
FACE
VALUE

&

BEYOND.

**PHOTOGRAPHIC
CONSTRUCTIONS
OF REALITY**

**MONIKA
SCHWÄRZLER**

[transcript]

Acknowledgment

Introductory Remarks

At Face Value &Beyond comprises papers that were delivered at international conferences over a course of about 10 years. Although the particular contributions were all guided by an interest in Visual Culture, the single papers were created in response to particular conference themes. Hence, the contexts in which they were delivered were highly diversified and sometimes widely apart concerning their disciplines. On these grounds, it seemed a difficult if not impossible task to legitimize the co-existence of these texts in one book. Interestingly, though, in hindsight and while revising these conference papers, it turned out that there were a few recurring themes governing this text production. This came as a surprising insight and seemed to sustain the thesis that all our intellectual activities circle around certain themes that are of particular relevance to us as writers and researchers. We are obviously prone to taking up certain challenges time and again. Even if we are not fully aware of this fascination, or able to account for it in a rational way, specific key topics seem to retain their potential to fuel our research interests over years.

In the following, I would like to delineate some of the traits that seem to govern my intellectual inquisitiveness. As the chapter *Conscious and Semi-Conscious States of the Camera. Comments on a History of Photographic Parapraxes* indicates, I am deeply fascinated with photographic lapses, failures, and unintended results of the photographic process. The investigation deals with a kind of early snapshot photography practiced by the Scottish photographer James Craig Annan. At a time when his fellow photographers worked in a Pictorialist manner trying to tame the unruly new medium and subject it to the principles of classical picture making, Craig Annan loosened this tight regime of well calculated photographic output. Instead of measuring the photographic image by perfectly composed paintings, he, at a certain point in his career, freed himself from these constraints and embarked on the recording of fugitive moments, chance constellations, and the unforeseeable. Along with this new direction came an interest in photographic imperfection, non-justifiable details, and technical flaws that resulted from a lack of control and renunciation of classical authorship. It was this sense of risk and curiosity that prompted his investigation into the photo camera´s potential for deviations from the classical pictorial codes. People like Craig Annan understood that the medium´s unique sources of aberration would generate unfamiliar images of reality.

The chapter *Unedited Glamor: The Vienna Opera Ball and Its Rendition by Network Cameras* deals with a type of observation camera aesthetic that radicalizes Craig Annan´s attempt to give free reign to the camera in a much further way. For his 2009 project *Vienna MMIX*, Jules Spinatsch, a Swiss artist, delegated the photographic process of recording the annual Vienna Opera Ball to observation cameras. The interactive digital network cameras installed on the premises of the Vienna opera were programmed to chronicle the entire ball from its start at 8:32 p.m. to its end at 5:10 in the morning. Consequently, the ball reality presented by Spinatsch has very little in common with the carefully staged images of this prestigious societal event. The rotating network cameras delivered a splintered, torn up, and disintegrated version of the ball, which makes it hard to form a cognitive model of the space where the event took place. Due to the logic of the set-up, the cameras recorded everything that got caught in their shifting frames, making no difference between stately columns and a crumpled tissue in a hidden corner. A close reading of Spinatsch´s project will deal with the problematic aspects, but also the anarchic wit of these surveillance camera images. Above all, it will focus on the impact of this automatized recording on the depiction of the ball goers whose unfavorable rendering seems to result from a lack of proper framing and careful staging of their personas.

Jules Spinatsch´s Vienna Opera Ball project has strong media analytical traits. The same holds true for Thomas Struth´s and Maria Hahnenkamp´s works, which are the subjects of analysis in the chapter on *Blocked View and Impeded Vision*. In his early street photography, Struth is much more than a chronicler of urban space scenarios, but rather designs a setting that allows for a meticulous investigation of the nature of the photographic medium. All these photographs from the 1970s and 80s follow a strong perspectival order and play with its inherent promise of a potentially unlimited extension of space. At the same time, the photos are taken in such a way that they block the view and put a clear limit on the invasive gaze. The viewer´s gaze slams into walls, runs up against major obstacles like building blocks, or finds itself in a dead-end situation. In this way, Struth traps the protruding gaze, brings its expansion to a halt and, by doing so, offers the possibility to reflect upon the conditions of photographic production and perception.

Maria Hahnenkamp has a strong feminist agenda and her highly conceptual artistic approach concerns the gendered nature of the gaze. The fragmented female bodies of her "two women" series seem to form an insurmountable barrier in the foreground of the photos and draw the attention to a long tradition of sexualized use of the pictorial space. Her adamant red guards deny entry, reject intrusion, ward off the gaze and, most notably, confront the viewers with their scopic desires that thrive on the idea that even hidden and forbidden things will be revealed to them.

Another recurring fascination that can be identified concerns the use of close-ups of faces in particular forms of visual communication. The chapter *Death Can Wait* deals with the PR campaigns of two Austrian institutions, namely a hospice and a nursing home. The analysis covers a period of about 10 years (2002 – 2012), during which both of these institutions tried to promote their cause in the public and create awareness about new forms of aging and dying in post-industrial societies. The campaign posters displayed on billboards, rolling boards, or in the print media were powerful and disconcerting and made heavy use of close-ups of aged faces. These photos of wrinkled faces, sagging skin and age spots seemed to zoom in on an underrepresented or shunned bodily and social reality. My point will be that in the light of Emmanuel Levinas´ ethics, the visual strategies of these campaigns take on a particular meaning and prove to be especially powerful. The frontal views of aged faces with particular attention to their eyes simulate what Levinas defined as the original encounter with the other and seem to be much more efficient than the common photos of old people being taken care of by nursing personnel. Attention will also be given to those campaigns that emphasized the compatibility of old age and fun, as well as to others trying to picture the heart-rending irreversibility of a lifetime.

Print and online magazines often work with close-ups of prominent faces. By repeatedly promoting and circulating particular versions of prominent faces, they enhance the process of the iconization of these images. One could say that a considerable amount of input is needed to firmly root certain facial features in the public´s mind and to make them easily identifiable. Paradoxically, the energy invested in building up and establishing recognizable traits can morph into its opposite and result in a deconstruction of these familiar images. The chapter *Denigrative Views. On the Deconstruction of Visages in Print Media* offers an explanation of these negative dynamics by referring to Georges Bataille´s understanding of energetic processes. In its unbound state, this potential can turn into waste, loss, and destruction. The investigation itself focuses on two cover pictures of the Austrian news magazine "profil" from 2006/2007. The highly unfavorable close-up of George W. Bush´s face denies any claim to authority and adds a visual dimension to an overall critical article about him. With such denigrative views of well-known people, the forces at play are ruthless and disproportional in their will to dismantle prominence. According to the cultural philosopher Thomas Macho (1999), enlarged faces that are presented as dissected from the rest of the body are automatically prone to assault and deconstruction. On these occasions, media practices seem to turn against their own products. A corresponding cover page of the *Herald Tribune* presenting an image of "dirty" George Clooney shall demonstrate that media professionals like Clooney can occasionally turn the demontage of their glamorous persona into an interesting performance.

Three of the nine chapters of this publication are based on photo books. The contemporary photo book is a fascinating genre and much closer to artists´ books than to the classical coffee table book with its compilation of glossy photographs under a particular heading. Prize-winning books like Jules Spinatsch´s volumes on the Vienna Opera Ball are highly ambitious in terms of their layout, and push the limits of innovative book design. For the last 15 to 20 years, these kinds of publications have become collectibles whose value sometimes increases considerably over relatively short periods of time (Schaden, 2010). Photo books featuring the works of already famous or emerging photographers allow small pocket buyers to own works of their favorite photographers without having to pay the much higher prices for prints on the art market. The chapter *Lost in Pleasure. Mad Joy in Images of Youth Culture* draws its material of investigation from *Be Happy!*, a photo book by a young Russian photographer, and Paul Kwiatkowski´s *And Every Day Was Overcast*, an illustrated novel about his youth in California. Both books feature disconcerting and bewildering images of youth experimenting with alternative life styles. It goes without saying that forms of excess and inflictions of taboos call for a type of aesthetic that also deviates from the norm. Norbert Pfaller´s (2000) psychoanalytical approach to cultural phenomena and, in particular, his concept of "interpassivity" shall provide a key for the analysis of the provocation of the off– limits joys of the young protagonists.

LHC, the photo book on the construction and set-up of the Large Hadron Collider at CERN, the European Organization for Nuclear Research, is a massive, elaborate, and representative publication that bears the closest resemblance to a classical photo book. The photographs by Peter Ginter, which are the output of a documentation that went on for 10 years, give a thorough and multifaceted impression of the world´s largest particle accelerator. Fitting its scientific subject, the book provides a comprehensive and systematic coverage of it topic. Unlike the photo books by Kwiatkowski and Samolet, which follow a rather casual aesthetic, the *LHC* images were all subjected to a careful post-production process and attest to the latest standards in this field. The text *The Beast* will concentrate on the effect of these digital improvements on the representation of the activities at CERN. My point will be that these light-enhanced photographs featuring glowing and shiny technology generate an almost eschatological dimension in which the processes at CERN are perceived. Due to their digital upgrading, scientists mutate into spiritual leaders who pursue their activities in environments bathed in light. The rhetoric promoting this enlightened world of scientific ambition and heroic struggle is hymnal in tone, and the technology discourse featured in *LHC* heavily dependent on overpowering images.

Visual narratives and their construction of realities are definitely one of the threads running through this loose combination of texts. The CERN visuals tell a success story of scientific and technological advancement. It is a story of great ambition,

dedication, and impressive results conveyed in a rhetoric that allows for no doubts, questions, or backtalk. On the other hand, Samolet´s and Kwiatkowski´s stories do not seek viewer approval, and hope to retain their repulsive tone. The chapter *Dressed to Suffer and Redeem* deals with another grand narrative, namely the biblical story of Jesus and its appropriation in contemporary art photography. There is a long tradition of reviving these religious themes in painting, but the corresponding investigation in this volume wants to take a closer look at interesting photographic attempts to re-enact or stage these key narratives of Christian culture. Whereas 19th century photographers like F. Holland Day tried to be as iconographically "true" as possible and stage the sacred events along the lines of famous forerunners in art history, contemporary artists like Serge Bramly & Bettina Rheims, or Adi Nes, tried to actualize and update the core themes of the Bible. Their adaptation of religious narratives transposes them into today´s world and tells them in a contemporary idiom. This act of translation can be a risk-taking endeavor that, for many people, borders on blasphemy. My close reading of their images shall prove that by disclosing the kernels of these stories and giving them a new form, Bramly & Rheims are able to address leading social issues of the present. By using the framework of the old stories and drawing on their unbowed powers, they manage to put today´s notions of, for instance, motherhood, sexuality, suffering, guilt, shame, and fear into a perspective that ties in with our cultural heritage.

But what kind of story should one construct from an anonymous slide collection discovered at a flea market? How to generate a narrative the main parameters of which are missing and have fallen into oblivion? Still, it can be an interesting and worthwhile endeavor to base a story on careful observations and assumptions, relying on the fact that all our records of personal history are culturally mediated and strongly informed by comparable stories. When dealing with these found images, the main challenge was to consider the standardized versions of such documents and at the same time be highly attentive to the individual nuances of these visuals. The chapter *The White Handbag. Photography and Ownership* tries to come to conclusions about the lives of Ms. Elfriede and Mr. Alfred, as they are called in the captions of their slides. They left a slide collection of about 2000 photos to posterity, probably assuming that their effort would matter. Most of the photos are from the 1970s and 80s. They documented their occasional journeys, proudly presented their belongings, and provided insight into their habits and their modest social life. It may well be that the Ms. Elfriede, sitting in their small garden and enjoying the sun, anticipated future viewers who would testify to the significance of the photographic remains of their days.

Postcript
Two of the papers were originally written in German, all the others were conceived in English. Being aware of my limited means of expression as a non-native speaker, I kindly ask the reader to take this into consideration and bear with me.
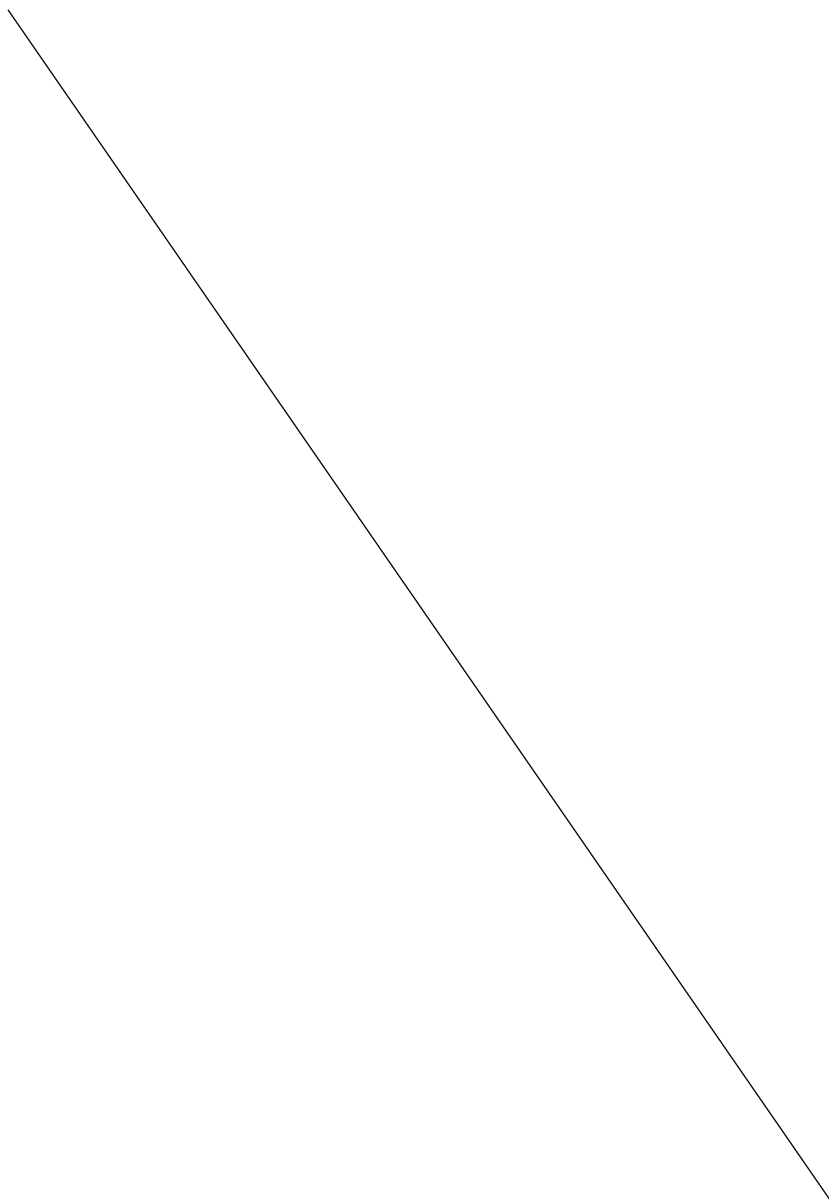
Conscious and Semi-Conscious States of the Camera
Comments on a History of Photographic Parapraxes

In the early days of photography, one of the disappointments in connection with the new medium was that these photos did not necessarily resemble what was commonly regarded as a "picture." Merely framing segments of reality in photographs did not make "pictures" (Jeffrey, 1993). The processing mechanism of this new image-making device did not seem to have any idea of artistic discipline, let alone artistic decisions. On the contrary, it appeared to divert creative intentions and steal visual concepts. For example, when one of these photographers aimed his camera at a cathedral, he did not only capture the sight itself but also a plethora of details in need of explanation and additional information interfering with the main focus.

A Photo is a Photo is a Photo

The camera did not select or edit but rather, as William Henry Fox Talbot deplored, delineated a chimney-pot with the same impartiality as the Apollo of Belvedere. The new device was reluctant to compose and unable to call to order the collected visual elements in good Western tradition, i.e., to join them together to form an overall concept. Instead, it delivered an abundance of details whose status was more that of circumstantial evidence. The viewer, spoiled by nicely resolved visual solutions, could but struggle to decipher the puzzling record. William Henry Fox Talbot's text accompanying "A View of the Boulevards at Paris," from "The Pencil of Nature" (1843), could be taken as one example of this dilemma.

The view was taken from one of the upper windows of the Hotel de Douvres, situated at the corner of the Rue de la Paix. /The spectator is looking to the North-east. The time is the afternoon. […] The weather is hot and dusty, and they have just been watering the road, which has produced two broad bands of shade upon it, which unite in the foreground because, the road being partially under repair (as is seen from the two wheelbarrows, &c. &c), the watering machines have been compelled to cross to the other side. / By the roadside a row of cittadines and cabriolets are waiting, and a single carriage stands at a distance a long way to the right. / A whole forest of chimneys borders the horizon: […] (pp. 17 -18)

When a painter positions a solitary carriage on a street corner, it is either a significant real element, or he has sound compositional reasons for doing so. According to the classical pictorial solutions, "a whole forest of chimneys" would be a few chimneys too many. Carriage tracks on roads are featured in paintings with intent and are not merely due to a watering machine forced by a building site to cross over to the other side of the road. The camera, however, registers without consideration for culturally conveyed criteria such as composition or significance. In its compulsion to document, it proceeds democratically, unperturbed by any selection criteria derived from a long-standing visual tradition.

As we know, however, photographers very soon learned to live with the conditions of the camera and to bring them under control. Looking through the viewfinder took over the monitoring function, and the blindly registering device began to sense its master. In the next stage of development, the photographers began to focus on details of nature in which they saw its beautiful orders prefigured, or they simply went over to editing, that is to say retouching and manipulating their products. The semi-conscious automatism of the camera would be parried by a conscious claim to authorship. The aim of the project was to harness the camera with its susceptibility to aesthetic parapraxes for the purpose of conscious image production and, particularly in the subsequent period of Pictorialism, to reconcile photographic records with traditional pictorial codes.

In this process of appropriation and further development – not to say to higher development – of a medium, the protagonists of the photographic fraternity naturally enough let themselves in for a process of winning and losing, as with all comparable efforts of this kind. While they won authorship and were able to rehabilitate a spiritless registering device for the purpose of art, they lost the bulky, unwieldy, different nature of the camera that assimilates details of reality in a fascinatingly unexpected manner. By eliminating the indigestible part of this photographic digestion process, a source of wilful obstinacy and surprises was lost. The stance of fine-art photographers at the turn of the century towards the technical, chemical nature of their equipment was one of latent repression, being no longer willing to have "pictures" stolen.

The following text focuses on an attempt undertaken by the Scottish photographer James Craig Annan to consciously – that is to say, by no means naively – depict once more that which tends to disrupt and destroy beautiful images.

The Enacted Disruption of the Image

In a photogravure of J. Craig Annan first exhibited in 1904, a white horse is seen crossing the picture space. The photo entitled "Stirling Castle" is of an almost

1

_____

James Craig Annan, *Stirling Castle*
1904, Photogravure

magical strangeness. As the caption suggests, the photograph is about the castle and not the horse, which seems out of place. Its presence in this nicely composed image would appear to have "happened." It is like a stain that has made it into the picture at the last moment. Something that one might call a disruption, a contamination, a slip, has been caught up in the webs of the device, wrongfully taking up pictorial space. Something that one would want to cover up or wipe off has unjustly gotten past the censor and is now roaming through the picture. In fact, this foreign body, which cannot justify its existence within the image, restructures the entire composition, distracting the viewer's attention in such a way as to push what is an imposing castle into the background and the back of the mind. (Fig. 1)

The idea is that, with this kind of photo, J. Craig Annan succeeds in picturing something that had been a matter of failure in the early days of photography. Something unexpected appears and maintains its status as a piece of reality outside the picture's composition. The difference is that, in an early photo, a horse galloping through the picture at the very moment when the photograph was taken, would have been a kind of surprise-outcome accident, whereas J. C. Annan is, of course, miles away from any such naivety and immediacy. His approach is extremely sophisticated; the lapse is the result of a high level of receptivity and is due to a state of alert aesthetic readiness. The element disrupting the standard composition is wished for. In this connection it is interesting to read J. Craig Annan's thoughts on the creation of "A Franciscan, Venice," a photogravure of 1894. In "*The* […] *Franciscan* I had waited for fully half an hour with the whole composition arranged before the old gentleman in brown habit came along, and he is unaware to this day of the great service he did me" (Annan, 1896, p. 277). This felicitous slip in the picture does not conclude the photographic production. It is followed by what J. Craig Annan (1896) refers to as "a long-drawn-out pleasure," that is to say, the complicated process of transferring the negative on to the copperplate. In the course of this process, Annan naturally edited the photo. The size of the clouds on the right above the castle, for instance, varies in different prints. However, to him editing did not imply retouching the white horse out of the picture, which would have been a service to those contemporaries whom this nag must have annoyed intensely.

In "Stirling Castle" J. Craig Annan played off two seemingly incompatible realities against each other. Firstly there is the castle: stately, immobile, solid, built on rock, upright. The horse, in contrast, is in motion, rumbling about somewhere down below, creating a commotion, agitation, fleeing horizontally out of the picture. As a result of this left-to-right movement, it favors the horizontal orientation of the picture over the vertical. Suddenly, the horizontal lines appear more dominant than the upward pull. Not least, it serves to dismantle the monumentality of the castle. The truly interesting thing is happening at the base

of this world of stone. The castle, as mentioned above, is turned into a simple piece of scenery, providing the calm to offset the movement, and assisting at a purely temporary occurrence, a performance that could be no more ephemeral and transient. The arrangements in the photo are laden with conflict in that a castle, the odds-on favorite and prime subject in this race, was bested by a mere beast.

In this connection one is tempted to draw parallels to the structure of parapraxes developed by Sigmund Freud (2000), which he defines as the "product of mutual interference between two different intentions […], of which one may be called the disturbed intention and the other one the disturbing one" (p. 81). Parapraxes "arise from mutual interference between two intentions" (Freud, 2000, p. 80). He also emphasizes the importance of the slip and parapraxis in his "Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis" as an "instrument for producing an imaginative effect" (Freud, 2000, p. 59). Artists work with parapraxes, produce parapraxes, in order to make use of something which eludes rational control and in order to illustrate the mechanisms of the psychic apparatus. Without wishing to overuse this comparison, one might in this case speak of a "disturbed" image code, which was more or less borrowed from painting at the turn of the century. What overturned and averted this pictorial intention would be a genuinely photographic image ingredient, fallen to the photographer and nourished by the "preconscious" of the camera, which knows nothing of decorous orders. An illuminating observation by Ian Jeffrey (1993) on J. Craig Annan's position in the history of photography characterizes him as "[…] the first ironist in photography, the first to make pictures which referred to the difference between personal experience and collective or general meaning […]" (p. 104). J. Craig Annan created beautiful photos that were, in some cases, composed almost in the manner of an Old Master – his inspirations in painting are Holbein, Vandyck, and Velázquez – for which he was internationally celebrated and awarded prizes. In these photos he perfectly accommodates the aesthetic expectations of his age, while at the same time subduing control and visual potency in several others, giving himself over to the singular, insignificant and coincidental aspects which the new image technology was capable of capturing.

Removing the "Stain"

To illustrate the aforesaid and to re-emphasize the peculiarity of "Stirling Castle," I will select two photos as comparative examples: "Harlech Castle" by George Davison and "A Snapshot; Paris (1911)" by Alfred Stieglitz. "Harlech Castle," a photogravure created at roughly the same time, in 1909, and also published by Stieglitz in *Camera Work*, could be seen as the revised version of Annan's rendering

Alfred Stieglitz, *A Snapshot; Paris (1911)*
from: *Camera Work* 41, 1913
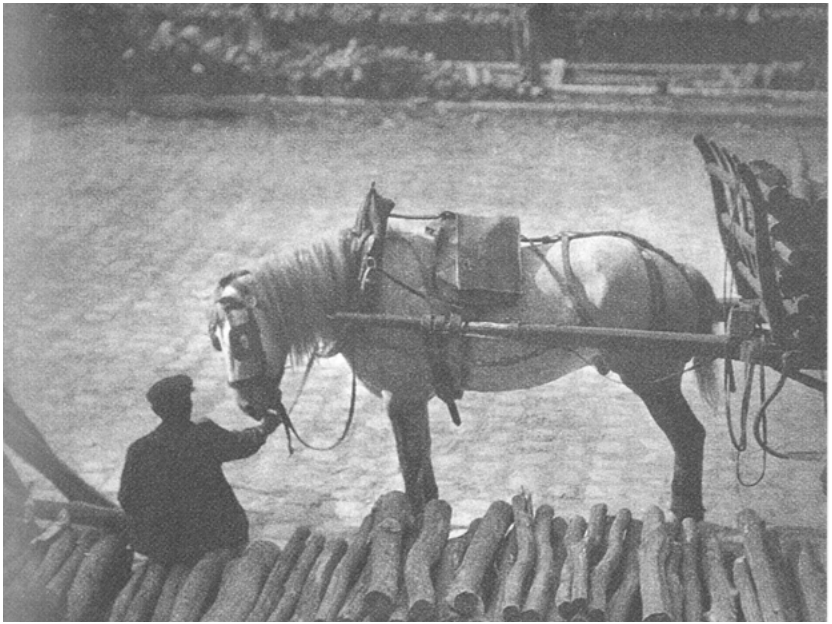
of a castle. In this case, the "stain", the moving ingredient, the disturbing element, has been effaced. "Harlech Castle" is the picture of a castle "alone," clearly staged as the prominent subject of the image. The castle towers atop a hill and is in the light, that is to say it appears against the background of a bright band of clouds. The rest of the environs are blurred in soft focus so as to leave no doubt as to what the viewer is supposed to concentrate on. There is nothing and no one to contest the effect of this specimen of feudal architecture. In these conditions, the castle morphs into a species of prototype, *the Castle*, a Platonic idea of what makes a castle. The viewers, too, find themselves in an ideal receptive situation in that they have no other choice but to focus and maintain their attention, something which is generally a matter of mental decision and effort. Everything is designed for undivided attention. This approach could be characterized as the visual strategy of visual artists. This is how painters treat their viewers, by giving them something to see that they have "seen" before. "Stirling Castle," in contrast, features something of the polyphony of life, where things constantly tug at our receptivity, visual impressions struggle for predominance, and various sensations coexist.

George Davison's picture does not convey a truly photographic experience, but rather endeavors to arrive at a painterly result. In the case of a picture such as "Stirling Castle" a 19th century painter would in all probability have had great trouble justifying why a castle should entail a nag. The horse would in any case have to be semantically upgraded, which would in turn have consequences in terms of its depiction. A simple trot would not be the end of it. It would have to justify its link with the castle, acquiring fields of association, make itself available as a figure for symbolism and identification, or simply maintain a well-ordered formal relationship to the surrounding stalls. To present itself as it does in the photo would give rise to a complete misunderstanding in painting, and imply mimicking the incidental arrangements and amateurish compositions of life.

The second comparative example, as mentioned above, is "A Snapshot; Paris (1911)," by Alfred Stieglitz. At the time when this picture was taken, Stieglitz had already departed some way from the realm of fine-art photography which he had initially propagated so successfully. He began to take photos of street scenes, working with a hand camera. With regard to this new technology, he could draw on J. Craig Annan, who had exhibited the first pictures taken with a hand camera as early as September 1891, thus putting him at least a year, even two, ahead of Stieglitz. J. Craig Annan had stood up for this new technology in an issue of *The Amateur Photographer* from March 1896. As William Buchanan (1994) proves, Stieglitz, who wrote a related article for *The American Annual of Photography* in 1897, not only adopted Annan's form of argumentation, but also, slightly modified, Annan's own words.

Seeing Horse and Forms

Stieglitz's photo is once again about a horse. Compared with Davison's, the photo is "modern" and beholden to a completely different aesthetic. The pictured scene is an everyday one, momentary and unspectacular. The fragmentary view of the horse-drawn carriage can be seen as both a formal statement and as a nod to life and its tendency to incompleteness. The emerging "straight photography" will be all about reality and objectivity. Stieglitz's "Snapshot" and "Stirling Castle" are comparable in that they do not eliminate the particular, but rather focus great attention on the concrete and the detailed. In "Stirling Castle" we see the structure of the stone walls; in "A Snapshot; Paris (1911)" logs of wood, the cobbles, the horse's bridle are made subjects worthy of depiction. To begin with, the Stieglitz photo appears to come close to the strangeness of Annan's, but on closer inspection one discerns a dense mesh of formal references, a stringent grid of corresponding lines. The pieces of wood in the foreground correspond to those in the background. The alignment of the logs is echoed by the rows of cobblestones. The horse's body, the side of the road, the stacks of wood all form parallel lines. The horse's legs, in turn, can be seen as an analogy to the pieces of wood, and so on. The possible forms to be seen appear endless, and even if the viewer's reaction to these preconfigured correlations of the lines is only an unconscious one, he feels the well-composed nature of the picture. At some point, the connotative references to abstract painting, which Stieglitz was exploring in depth at the time, predominate. The Stieglitz photo is "new" and fascinating and revises photographic codes that had hitherto been valid, but it is also the result of sublime artistic control. J. Craig Annan, in contrast, enacts loss of control. (Fig. 2)

Among Annan's famous photos there are, however, as mentioned above, several that appear overdetermined and utterly well-composed. In his compilation of contemporary reviews of Annan, Buchanan (1994), for example, cites an anonymous article in which the reviewer observes of Annan's "Dark Mountains": "the whole picture seems full of grim purpose" (p. 58). The picture is a hair's breadth away from what Robert Demachy, in another review of Annan's work, sees as a misunderstanding in photography, that is, trying to make an allegorical statement (Buchanan, 1994, p. 78). Annan tries his hand at such a message in the photo "The Church or the World." A girl in white, roses in her hair, sitting on a pony, is flanked by two monks. The quintessence or morally intensified message is that she has arrived at a crucial point and must decide between religious vows and staying in the world of frivolity. As Buchanan (1994, p. 6) explains, the reception of this work was rather unfortunate, partly because Annan himself, in his love of printing technique variations, occasionally printed the picture mirror-reversed, thus causing the young lady to appear undecided indeed, tending now in one, now in the other direction.

The Preconscious of the Camera

As far as the technical side of photography goes, Annan is a master of his craft. His first dealings with photography were scientific, attending chemistry lectures at Andersen College in Glasgow in his early twenties. In his father Thomas Annan's workshop he learned the trade from the ground up, becoming familiar with the common printing techniques of the day, carbon and platinum printing. Father and son imported photogravure from Vienna, where Karel Klič introduced them to this technique, subsequently acquiring the rights to this process. Following his father's death, Annan and his elder brother continued to work in their father's firm, turning it into a model enterprise and flourishing company. *T. & R. Annan & Sons, Photographers and Fine Art Publishers* offered photographic services and printing of all kinds of images. Annan's decision to put the camera to an artistic use dates back to 1891. His new departure coincides with the secessionist efforts of the young photographic scene in England. As we know, the *Linked Ring* was established in May 1892.

On the one hand, Annan is a perfectionist. He is a master of his trade, controlling his means of production, his name standing for the highest technical demands on the new photography medium. He grew up surrounded by art – his father, for example, was a close friend of David Octavius Hill – and was highly aware of visual codes. On the other hand, we see the photographer who emphasizes the instinctive aspect of creating photos: "Then art is so subtle a subject […] especially if one works, as I do, more from instinct and the impression of the moment than from any pre-determined theory or principle" (Annan, 1900, p. 83- 84). He relies on the effect of the unconscious in artistic production.

> *It may seem ridiculous to many to suggest that the unconscious sight of a beautiful curve of a chair at breakfast may enable one, later in the day, to produce a photograph of value which he otherwise would not have produced, but I am perfectly convinced that such is the fact (Annan, 1900).*

The confidence that the sight of a beautifully shaped chair at breakfast may enable one, later in the day, to produce a photograph of value is by no means rationally justifiable, but rather expresses precisely this confident stance with regard to processes that occur independently of our rational designs. Likewise, the characterization of David Octavius Hill that Annan (1905) undertook for *Camera Work* may be applied to Annan himself, and it may be taken to infer his own artistic values. This essay speaks of the importance of mustering the courage to venture into unexplored territory and to be guided by one's instincts. To Annan, the criteria

for a good photo are by no means successfully deployed aesthetic codes. Instead, he indicates the sensory pleasure that a picture must bring forth. A good photo, moreover, is one which disguises its artistic value. At a time when most ambitious photographers were endeavouring to emphasize the artistic value of their products, he observes: "You may have noticed the motto on my book plate, 'Art is to conceal art' – that applies to photography – it is not usually the most striking photograph which represents the most genuine work" (Annan, 1896, p. 157).

"A Franciscan, Venice" (Fig. 3), for example, to come back to this photograph, is almost documentary in style. Annan took the negative in Venice in 1894, publishing the hand-printed photogravure in *Camera Work* in 1904. As mentioned above, when taking this picture, Annan waited half an hour for something to appear, something which turned out to be a Franciscan monk. Walking with a slight stoop, the latter is about to turn the corner. His shadow precedes him. The photographer had been avidly awaiting him, or some similar visual surprise. Annan himself did not know who or what would appear in front of the temporary projection screen that was this old, weathered wall. In the end it was a monk who inscribed himself into the wall and into the photographic paper of his camera. Unlike the fishermen and the calm unhurried manner of their gestures, he is walking apace, seeming to shun rather than seek the camera. It was a question of photographic instinct and timing to capture him in the image. The edge of the wall seems like a dividing line in this picture. Whoever crosses this line may well vanish, invisible, lost to the camera, gone for good "around the corner." But the edge of the wall also seems like the dividing line of an ambiguous image. Once the Franciscan has gone, Venice is all there; while the monk is there, Venice is far away. This is the same interference structure manifested in "Stirling Castle." By means of this method, Annan has enabled the photographic preconscious, as it were, to register that which will devalue or indeed deconstruct what is an undisputed view in terms of its pictorial value. The dark figure of the monk puts Venice in the shade. In this case it is the singular which defines the title of the image, with Venice taking second place. In another print of the same negative, Annan added the title of the picture "The Franciscan of II Redentore" like a street name on the wall above the Franciscan, thus giving the friar something of a museum exhibit. It is he who is to be put on display, and not that which is actually worthy of exhibiting, Venice.

Another of Annan's Venice photos lends itself to closer scrutiny in this context: "A Venetian Requiem," likewise a photogravure from 1894. It depicts a street scene, a kind of Catholic procession that is possibly part of a funeral ceremony. The young men in ecclesiastical vestments are carrying large monumental candlesticks and a flag. Certain architectural details point to Venice as the scene. The players in this ceremony are in the light, in a kind of spotlight of the southern

James Craig Annan, *A Franciscan, Venice*
1894, Photogravure

·REQVIEM·ÆTERNAM·DONA·EI·DOMINE·
·ET·LVX·PERPETVA·LVCEAT·EI·
·SVBVENITE·SANCTI·DEI·
·OCCVRITE·ANGELI·DOMINI·
·SVSCIPIAT·TE·CHRISTVS·QVI·VOCAVIT·TE·
·IN·PARADISVM·DEDVCANT·TE·ANGELI·

4

James Craig Annan, *A Venetian Requiem*
1894, Photogravure
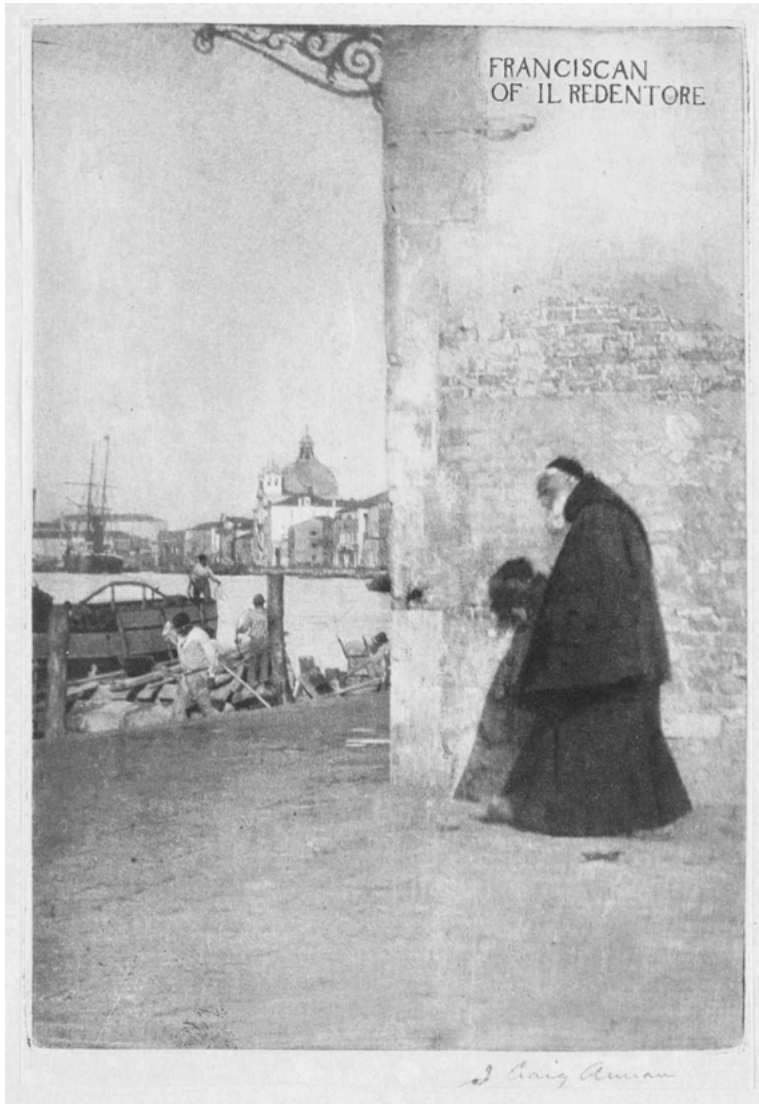
sun. The overall scene is "disturbed" by two underexposed figures in the foreground that could have been easily retouched out of the picture, but which Annan left in. While the shadows of the servants of the Church are cast according to plan and have the prescribed form, these two figures are deformed and lack any real contour. They are shadowy creatures, mere traces of human beings, incompletely detailed, but nevertheless captured on film by the grace of the camera. The camera bestowed fame on them – not for the famous Warholian fifteen minutes, but for a short photographic eternity. Genuine by virtue of being photographic "accidents," and inscribing themselves illicitly – in the course of a funeral – onto the photographic paper, they embody the epiphany of the moment. (Fig. 4)

Fritz Matthies-Masuren, a German advocate of Pictorialism, praises the two figures in the foreground as an original idea, going on to say: "A similarly fortunate solution would rarely be successful. One would not normally get beyond the 'view'" (Matthies-Masuren, 1899, p. 84). What he obviously means is that this artistic solution allowed Annan to depict something like the view. The dark, flanking figures create a kind of space, a place from where the gaze comes, thereby bringing something into the picture that, as Roland Barthes never tires of emphasising, makes up the essence of photography, that is to say, that it depicts what was once the object of a gaze that is always irrevocably past. The immaterial presence of this view stands for the heart-rending aspect of photography. The text that Annan has added to the picture, not as an illustration, but rather in the style of modern-day commercial graphic designers or layout artists, is a requiem text that creates a powerful field of associations. It is about eternal light, being temporarily in the light, as well as the underexposed.

Generally speaking, one might say: in those photos which Ian Jeffrey (1993), for example, would see as early snapshots, Annan captures singular occurrences which, compared with the visual imagery of photography in those days, are tantamount to aesthetic slips. These skilfully effected photographic "parapraxes" bespeak much of the desire for the other that appears in the photograph without my being able to want it to. One might talk about the wish to revive the surprising element in early photography that revealed what had been overlooked, challenging the viewer's position as master of the field of vision.
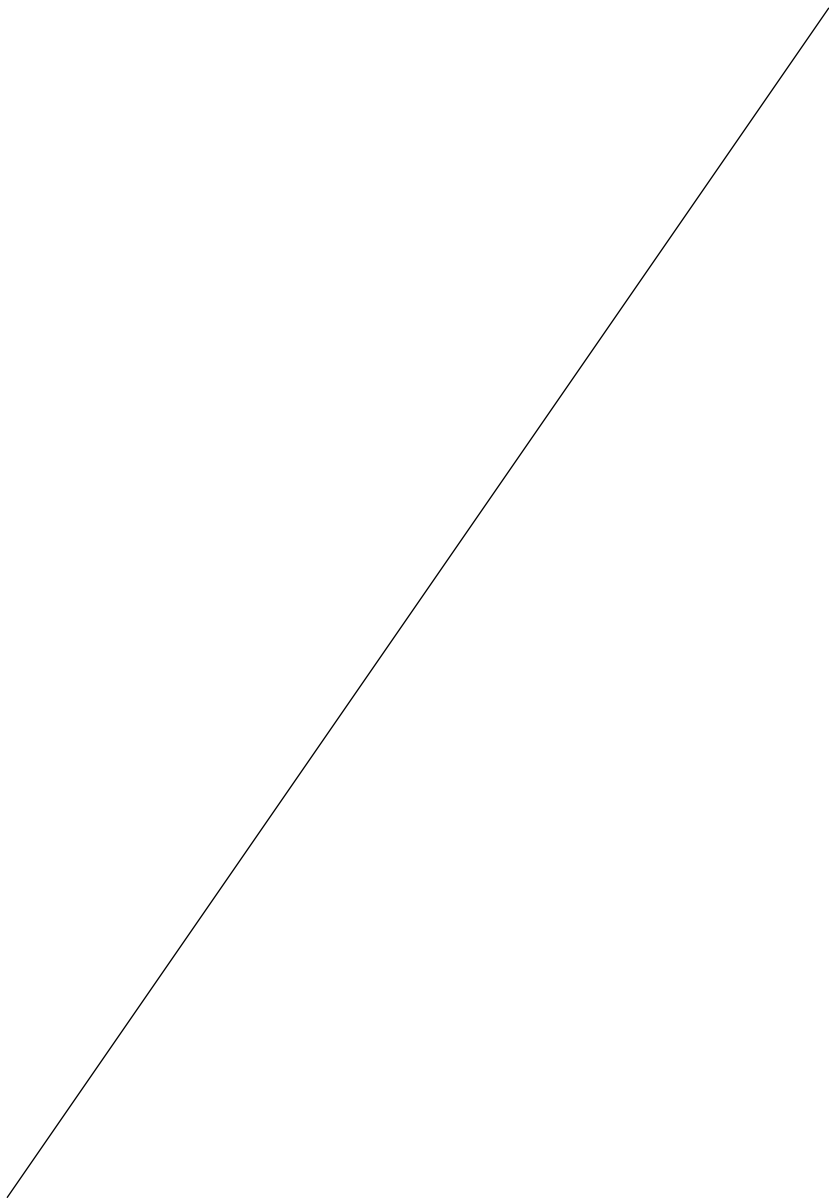
The Digitally Constructed Parapraxis

In 1995, Lev Manovich created his "Digital" or "Constructivist Snapshots." Manovich, born in Moscow in 1960, had studied architecture there, later going to America, where he has pursued his internationally acclaimed academic and artistic career. The catalyst for creating the constructed snapshots was a request by

Natalie Bookchin to show her some snapshots of his former life in the Soviet Union. Manovich could not fulfill this wish, however, as there had been no snapshot culture in the USSR. Hardly anyone owned a camera, nor was there any arrangement stipulating that all events of private life be constantly documented. To take photos, one went to a studio or borrowed a camera from an amateur photographer friend (Bookchin & Manovich, 1996). So because he had nothing from his younger days that Bookchin might have identified as "snapshots", Manovich decided to re-enact some with the aid of digital technologies. (Fig. 5)

This evolved into an art project on which Natalie Bookchin acted as co-author. Her cooperation was required because only she, a representative of a culture of instant photography, could know what a "snapshot" usually looks like, what its purpose was, and what its preferred motifs were. In one of these attempts – the work consists of three parts – to satisfy an American woman's expectations of a snapshot and, at the same time, to create a quasi-authentic document of his youth, Manovich constructed a scene at a Moscow subway station. This retrospective snapshot consists of a photograph of the subway architecture, clear in terms of perspective, but nevertheless tilted, and the blurred, only partially visible head of a young man blended in at the bottom left of the picture.

The question in our context is: what did Bookchin want to see when she put her request to her colleague and friend? She certainly did not want any official, authorized photos, but rather photos that she could scan for evidence of everyday situations and which would reveal something of "real" life, photos that would contain more than those who took them intended. She wanted to see blind spots, overexposed by the camera, relying on the photographic preconscious, indiscriminately receptive within its mechanical and chemical limits. That was her personal wish. The interesting thing is how Bookchin and Manovich proceeded as artists. What they constructed on the computer was the photographic mishap, the rule violation, as it were, of a successful photo. They presented the shaking, blurring and tilting, leaving the picture's structure in terms of perspective as is, like the signifier of a different order. Their digital simulation of a loss of control expresses something of the old hope that things will appear in photos if we let them.

Natalie Bookchin & Lev Manovich, *Constructivist Snapshot*
1995 (from a Three-Part Series), Ektacolor Print

© Bookchin & Manovich

Dressed to Suffer and Redeem
Staged Photography Featuring Biblical Narratives

In the spring of 1898, F. Holland Day set out to work on his "sacred stuff" (Clattenburg, 1975, p. 15) as he called it in a letter to Alfred Stieglitz. The idea was to do a photographic reconstruction of the life of Christ "beginning with the Annunciation and ending with the Ascension" (Diekmann, 2006, p. 115). In the summer of the same year, this major project started to take shape.

> He left Boston with a whole troop of male and female models, accompanied by a wagon load of costumes, a wooden cross and other paraphernalia, for some secluded spot in the vicinity [...] Out there he went at once to work, had a cross erected on top of a hill, built a sepulcher and prepared for a long stay. Then he began the rehearsing of his company and the sacred tragedy was played more than a hundred times on top of that hill while curious farmers with their entire families came from far and near to gaze at the strange spectacle. (Hartmann, 1978, p. 189)

The whole project, which was obviously inspired by Day´s experience of the Oberammergau Passion Play in 1890, resulted in 250 photographs. Day assumed the role of the main protagonist in this biblical drama. His eccentric life style as an aesthete and his conception of himself as an outsider, willing to suffer for his aesthetic ideals, predestined him for this role.

At the same time, Day acted as the stage and art director of this enterprise, a double function that at times caused problems. Closer inspection of the photos of Jesus on the cross would reveal the carefully hidden camera delay timer in the hands of the redeemer. The whole series culminated in "The Seven Last Words of Christ." These images, featuring seven close-ups of Christ´s alias F. Holland Day´s tormented but noble face, were staged in his studio. In order to achieve the most tragic facial expression, Day worked with a mirror attached to his camera. Above the last and final photograph of the series the words "It is done" were mounted, which outraged some of his spectators as blatant blasphemy. (Fig. 1)

What later came to be known as the "Massachusetts Passion" was deeply rooted in a romantic re-enactment of the suffering of Christ. To play his part as well as possible and to really fit the role, Day lost weight and let his hair and beard grow long. Accordingly, the photographs show an emaciated main protagonist who could well pass as a Jesus figure. Speaking overall, the attempt to be as authentic as possible and to achieve utmost veracity extended to all matters. Clothing and footwear like sandals were taken into consideration. The wooden cross was produced by carpenters in Syria. Day insisted that the crown of thorns be made of real thorns to cut into his forehead. The "game of greatest naturalism" (Diekmann, 2006, p. 121), being played out was informed by what Diekmann calls "Genauigkeitsfetischismus" (2006, p. 121) or fetishism of precision. Attention to details and a strong tribute to art historical sources were intended to authenticate and legitimize this endeavor of a photographic reconstruction of biblical narratives.

Paradoxically, F. Holland Day´s adaptation of the Jesus story for the camera was less about an exploration of a photographically generated narrative than entirely about confirming and appropriating the codes of painting. In Day´s photographically enhanced *imitatio* of the life of Christ there was no room for photographic experiments because the medium itself was on trial at that time. In their attempts to establish photography as high art, Pictorialists like Day were trying to prove that the camera was not just a banal recording machine of everyday reality, but also capable of rendering a type of fictitious scenario like the passion of Christ. Speaking of pictorial codes, "The Entombment," one of the first photos of Day´s "Sacred Subjects" series, is strongly indebted to Pedro Sanchez´s version of the subject. Day, alias Jesus, assumed the same outstretched position on a kind of sarcophagus. The protagonist´s head was equally inscribed in a semicircular halo and the stigma was clearly visible and in the same place. In his entombment painting, Sanchez placed objects, mainly vessels, alongside the coffin. Day took up this mode of using objects to refer to what happened earlier. All these objects were placed carelessly on the ground. After the crucifixion of Jesus, they turned into disposable things. At the same time, they remained indispensable signifiers of the story being told. Day´s arrangement was solemn and focused on a few markers that were indisputably connected with the familiar narrative. The sponge, the sign from the cross, the loincloth were all in place and the final clue, namely the stigma, was perfectly accentuated against the dark space of the open tomb in the background. The dark square became a framing device for the open wound and a projection screen for everything else that was left open and defied representation. The platinum print gave the photograph a soft tone and seemed to remove it even more into a painterly realm. Only the grass in the foreground was strangely reminiscent of the camera´s predilection for mundane reality.

Lejaren à Hiller

From the 1900s on, the American illustrator and photographer Lejaren à Hiller (born John Arthur Hiller) turned his attention to dramatically staged photographic scenarios. Twelve years after F. Holland Day´s "Massachusetts Passion," he staged his "Deposition from the Cross" for the camera. (Fig. 2) The photograph depicts a group of people engaged in taking Christ down from the cross. The huge canvas in the background behind the cross evokes the apocalyptic circumstances connected with Christ´s death. The group of figures is well arranged in a triangular composition. The gestures are highly expressive and Hiller´s crew obviously makes an effort to convey the gravity of the situation. All the gazes are directed towards the main protagonist, confirming his central role. Everyone seems to be properly dressed for the occasion and even the stones at the bottom of the cross are clad in some kind of cloth to cover their naked nature. The actor representing Christ is well chosen, but, for some reason, G.B. Shaw´s trenchant commentary on 19th century staged photography comes to mind:

> *Take the case of the ordinary academician. He gets hold of a pretty model, he puts a dress on her, and he paints her as well as he can, and calls her "Juliet", and puts a nice verse from Shakespeare underneath, and puts the picture in a Gallery. It is admired beyond measure. The photographer finds the same pretty girl; he dresses her up and photographs her, and calls her "Juliet", but somehow it is no good – it is still Miss Wilkins, the model. (Shaw, 1909)*

For Hiller, who later on regularly arranged the annual costume balls of the "New York Society of Illustrators," the quite obvious discrepancy between "Jesus" and the acting model was certainly less disquieting than for Shaw. Staging dramatic scenarios for the camera represented a challenging task for him and as the director of such endeavors he took full charge. People should be moved and entertained by these photographs created in the tradition of the tableaux vivantes. With his background in advertising and his position as an eminent photographic illustrator, he approached his subject in a different manner than Holland F. Day. Hiller´s version of an "artful passion play" (Saunders, 2009) was rooted in popular culture, role playing and theatrical conceptions of the grand narrative prevailing at the time.

When Helmut Gernsheim refers to the "Deposition from the Cross" as "an extraordinary aberration of taste" (1962, p. 134), he argues from a modernist perspective and ties his judgment to modernist aesthetic standards and matters of taste. For him, Hiller´s photograph is poor and unconvincing. From a postmodern, decon-
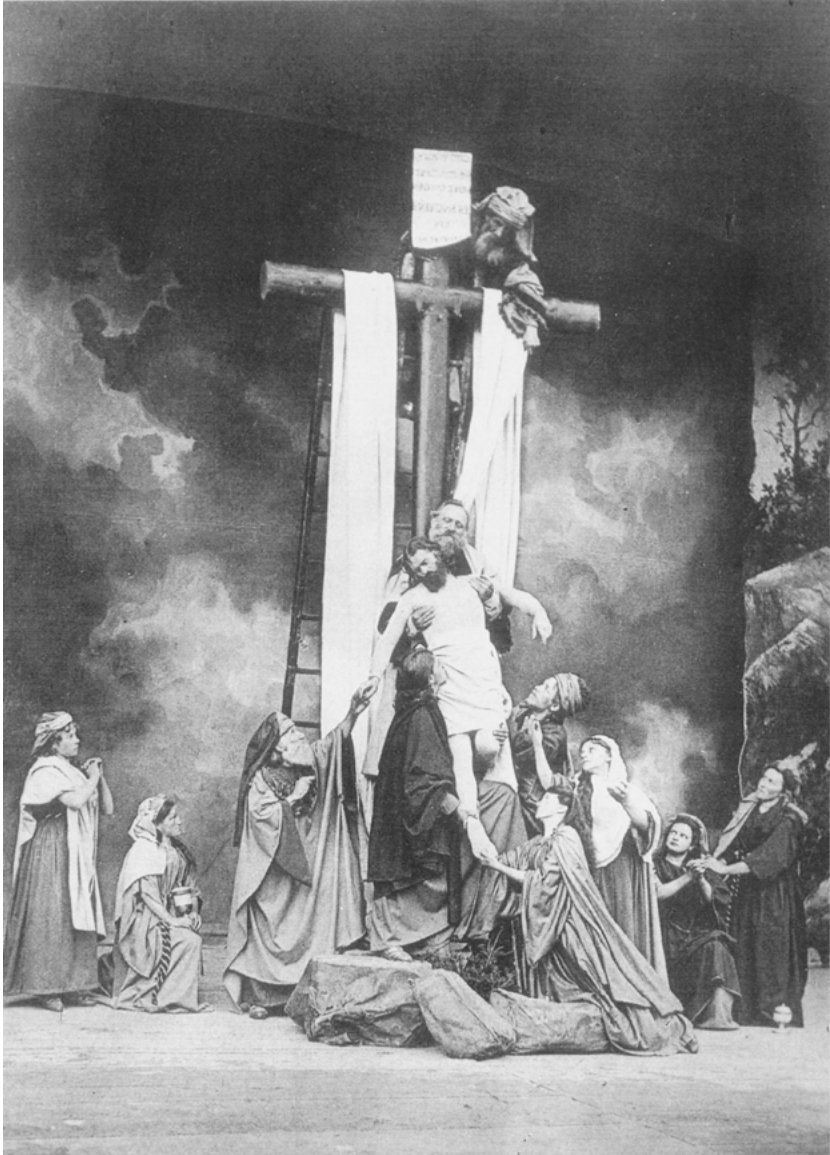
2

Lejaren à Hiller, *Deposition from the Cross*
ca. 1910

Adi Nes, *Untitled*
1995, Chromogenic Print, Dimensions Variable

©Adi Nes. Courtesy of the Artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

structivist point of view, though, Lejaren à Hiller´s staged photograph is a highly intriguing image. All kinds of pictorial slips reveal the constructed nature of the picture. There is a lot of drapery which covers up bodies and various inconsistencies. Some of the seams and sutures are clearly visible. The white drapery that falls down from the cross simultaneously conceals and reveals the structural engineering intended to give stability to the cross and the fabricated biblical narrative alike. In this respect, the most fascinating detail is the delicate white line running down the right edge of the painted canvas backdrop. This line is a borderline in that it signifies the limits of a reality construct and obstructs the credibility of the scene. It puts the scenario in quotation marks and points to the artificiality of the endeavor.

Contemporary Appropriations of Biblical Motifs and Narratives

At the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, deconstructivist traits may have happened unintentionally, as in the case of the `borderline´ in the photo by Hiller. But, this "supplemental" reflective structure was not programmatic yet. For the contemporary Israeli photographer Adi Nes, postmodern appropriation strategies are common practice. In his image "untitled, 1995" from his "Soldiers" series, he arranged a scenario that explicitly refers to Christian themes. There are two young soldiers in a barren type of environment, one of them obviously a victim of the war. The soldier nestling the body of his dead comrade in his arms surprisingly holds a makeup brush in his left hand. An open paint box suggests cosmetic improvements going on and indicates the painted nature of the stigmata. In an intimate scenario, the earnest-looking paramedic in full rig-out seems to be preparing his fallen comrade for a photo opportunity. In the manner of a make-up artist, he is about to add the final polish to a body meant to feature in the media as a victimized soldier. (Fig. 3)

But there are additional layers of a reception of Adi Nes´work. He is an artist known for his clear agenda concerning Israeli male identity and gay identity in particular. "My staged photographs are oversized and often recall well-known scenes from Art History and Western Civilization combined with personal experiences based on my life as a gay youth growing up in a small town on the periphery of Israeli society"(Nes, 2008). In regard to this statement, his image of staged masculinity takes on an additional meaning. As a representation of a tender and caring masculinity, it stands in strong contrast to the belligerent and aggressive pictures of empowered manhood which, according to Nes, frequently appear in the Israeli media. The passivity of the scene is striking, the caring gesture of holding a dead comrade on one´s lap and treating him with utensils tied to femininity is telling. On a less explicit level, the image also refers to the homoeroticism informing many of the religious images.

"Ecce Homo" – Exposing and Framing the Subject

Bramly & Rheims created three versions of the Ecce Homo theme. In the two versions I would like to deal with, the main clues of the religious subject are clearly referenced. Every viewer raised in a Christian tradition can claim expertise of the motif. "Ecce Homo II" shows the characteristic close-up of a half-length portrait of the humiliated Jesus with his crown of thorns and all the traces of violence on his body. In this state, the Roman Proconsul Pontius Pilatus allegedly presented him to the hostile crowd. "Ecce Homo" or "Behold the Man" implies an imperative to look at this man and consider his further destiny. As the title has it, any "Ecce Homo" figure is mercilessly exposed to the gaze of the others. (Fig. 4)

In Bramly & Rheims´ remake of the topic, "Jesus" is rendered fully present with an almost sculptural quality to his body. This particular "Ecce Homo" seems to be perfectly familiar with the mechanisms of ensuring visibility. His professional performance, the way he offers his body for view as well as relies on his visual appeal, makes him arguably a (fashion) model. With his heavy makeup, he is obviously stylized as a dramatic persona. Streams of "blood" run down his face and over his whole upper body. There are signs of maltreatment and his tantalizers obviously left traces of their dirty or blood-stained hands on his body. On closer inspection though, one realizes that the imprints of these hands on this body can also be read as tender explorations of the muscular male body or materializations of the libidinal gazes scanning the body of the male protagonist in this story. Bramly & Rheims´ "Ecce Homo" is reminiscent of the scopic regime of the fashion industry, but also makes one think of the homoerotic appropriation of such religious imagery.

With Bramly & Rheims´ "Ecce Homo I" image, the deviation from the well-introduced version of the motif is even more striking. There is no truth to the "original" as in Holland F. Day´s "Massachusetts Passion." The deliberately different enactment of the theme seems to call for an equally open type of reading. The image, also a close-up of a single figure, depicts a person whose body is smeared with a dark, oily substance. The main signifier, the crown of thorns, consists of metal parts alluding to industrial work. With "Ecce Homo I," Bramly & Rheims do not just pay tribute to a tradition in painting, but also attest to a certain photographic legacy. (Fig. 5)

In my view, the image can be legitimately brought in connection with Richard Avedon´s photo series "In the American West" and specifically with his representation of miners in Colorado. Their bodies are also smeared with coal dust. In Avedon´s photographs they feature as dark and dirty men of sorrow, transfigured by their jobs below ground and shaped by the hardship of their daily life. "In the

Serge Bramly & Bettina Rheims, *I.N.R.I. Series*
(1997 – 98), *Ecce Homo I*

6
———

Raymond Voinquel, *Christ in Cross,
Essay for the Devine Tragedy*, 1949

© Raymond Voinquel, Ministre de la Culture-France

7
———

Andres Serrano,
Early Works (Pietà), 1985

Image Courtesy of the Artist

American West," initiated and commissioned by the Amon Carter Museum in Texas, provides haunting and disconcerting images of an under-represented population of America. Avedon portrayed drifters, oil field workers, waitresses, factory workers etc., none of them resembling the prim frontier families of common depictions. Avedon presented his protagonists as stigmatized by the dirt and coal dust growing on their skins, and monumentalized them by photographing them against a white background. Some of these miners, as for instance James Story or Hansel Nicholas Burum, seem to assume poses known from art historical renditions of biblical figures. Bramly & Rheims´ "Ecce Homo I" turns Jesus into an underdog who willfully exposes his body carrying all the marks of alienating working conditions.

The Piétà Motif

As Nissan N. Perez points out in his dissertation "Picturing Faith. Christian Representation in Photography" (2012), the Piétà theme is the second most frequent motif when it comes to photographic reenactments of biblical themes. From the wide range of Piétà representations, Raymond Voinquel´s photograph from 1949 seems to aim at an iconographically "true" version of the motif. (Fig. 6)

Voinquel started out as a fashion photographer and later became one of the most accomplished film still photographers of the golden age of French film. As such, he collaborated with Jean Cocteau, Max Ophuls, Sacha Guitry and others. His image "Christ in Cross, Essays for the Divine Tragedy" was part of a series of photographic tableaux in preparation for Abel Gance´s film "La Divine Tragedie (1947 – 52)." The film was never realized, but Voinquel´s photographs give an impression of how Gance would have approached his subject. Voinquel´s tentative film still seems to be closely modeled on the Pietà of Villeneuve-lès-Avignon, an oil painting of the mid-15th century attributed to Enguerrand Quarton. The photograph presents the core group of the grieving mother and her dead son. As in Quarton´s painting, the body of Christ assumes an elegantly curved line with his arm falling to the right side. This perfect line of beauty, innocence and grace described by Jesus´ body calls to mind the highly controversial and provocative Piétà appropriation of the contemporary American photo artist Andres Serrano. His "Pieta" from 1985 features a fish, one of the earliest symbols of Christ, in the arms of an unconventionally depicted Virgin Mary. It is the curvy form of the fish that ultimately resonates with a particular art historical tradition and links the image with the Pietà motif. (Fig. 7)

Bramly & Rheims – Negotiating Motherhood

In comparison with Abel Gance´s visualization of the divine tragedy, which should obviously be based on reenactments of art historical images familiar to the French public, Bramly & Rheims followed an entirely different artistic concept. In their "I.N.R.I." (Jesus Nazarenus Rex Judaeorum) series created in 1997/98, they explicitly wanted to provide an update of the stories of the Gospel and translate these narratives into the visual language of the 21st century. In terms of intertextuality, their reception works on both a literary and a pictorial level. The "I.N.R.I." project was grounded in extensive research. "Bettina Rheims and Serge Bramly began by visiting museums and churches, by reading and re-reading the Scriptures and related literature, and by talking to theologians and priests (Bettina RHEIMS & Serge BRAMLY: I.N.R.I, 2000)." After consulting all these sources, they developed a rough storyboard and created a file card for each scene or tableau. On the cards they indicated which symbolic aspects had to be taken into account and which outfits or accessories were indispensable for the staging of the particular scenes. The different protagonists and scenarios should be identifiable and recognizable; at the same time, the actualization of the story should be given priority and artistic innovation take precedence over sanctioned modes of representation. The resulting images caused a considerable scandal in France and spurred a debate about blasphemous religious imagery. In the following, I would like to prove that with some of these photographic reenactments of the holy story, Bramly & Rheims indeed managed to invest enduring stories with a sense of actuality. For this discussion I chose "Piétà" and "The Temptation of Jesus," both from 1997.

Bramly & Rheims´ "Piétà" deviates widely from any common pictorial solution, but still, what is it that makes the motif instantly recognizable? It is the combination of the two figures and the crown of thorns, but even more, it is the limp body of the stuffed doll that signals a "dead Jesus" figure. It is the lifelessness of the body that falls into a familiar position with its right arm hanging down and the particular curved shape that the deceased body assumes, which ring all the bells and resonates with our pictorial archives. By these self-evident features the viewer gets assured of his/her pictorial expertise and can comfortably identify the motif. On the other hand, the Jesus figure is a bigger-than-life-size stuffed doll, a carelessly fabricated artifact, a mannequin radically striped of any beautifying layers. This abstraction of a human figure is dirty, worn out, mere material matter and strongly contradicts the traditional, pleasingly arranged corpse of Christ. In Bramly & Rheims´ interpretation, death and its devastating and disintegrating power is fully acknowledged. (Fig. 8)

The Virgin Mary, the other essential figure in this composition, is represented by a young girl. She seems strangely disconnected from the giant corpse that besieges her and apparently has not come to terms with the maternal attribute of femaleness. She looks directly at the viewer, but her facial expression does not mimic the traditional despair of the suffering mother. It is more the juvenile, lost generation gaze that appears on her face and that turns her into a young girl burdened with something dead, with a huge weight clinging to her. She is not mothering this body and it is quite obvious that she has never enjoyed any maternal pleasures with this carelessly put together doll. Instead, she presents the viewer with an object signifying a potential miss-investment of emotions and hopes. Suffering takes on a new meaning. The rag doll turns into an emanation of societal pressure. It becomes the embodiment of a haunting yet highly ambivalent desire for motherhood, overpowering and alienating at the same time. Bramly & Rheims seem to invert the classical Piétà relationship. In the traditional setting, the Virgin Mary assists in the drama of the death of the redeemer and the scandal of his death clearly exceeds her personal feelings of loss and despair. Bramly & Rheims´ updated version zooms in on the young female. They twist the motif in a way that enables them to broach the issues of motherhood, conflict and grief in a new way.

Stage Sets That Matter

Concerning the background of the "Piétà," Bramly & Rheims chose to depict a very unusual setting with no precedent in classical art history. They placed the two figures in a space reminiscent of a garage, factory hall or attic. The slightly unfocused background with its dramatic play of light and shadow is bathed in blue light with light streaming in through the invisible window openings on the left side of the room. The uniform blue color tone of the space creates the impression of a sad and secluded area and adds to the feeling of the two figures being trapped in there. In this connection, Nissan N. Perez´ remark about background information in photographically appropriated biblical stories is particularly interesting.

One of the characteristics of religious photography in general, and a feature that differentiates it greatly from other arts, especially painting, is the unconditional focus on the person acting as Christ, while the background is generally diffuse. In this respect, photography is closer to the New Testament, wherein the sacred texts `...contain hardly any detailed descriptions of outward appearances, either people or landscape´. (Perez, 2012, p. 202)

Serge Bramly & Bettina Rheims, *I.N.R.I. Series*
(1997 – 98), *Piétà*

In one of his interviews, Serge Bramly (1999) comments on the limitations of photographic storytelling because he believes an equal focus on foreground and background is not possible. Unlike in painting, there is no equal rendering of details and certain areas of the picture will always be given dominance over others. Still, the highly reduced background of Bramly & Rheims´ "Piétà" opens up an interesting range of allusions, associations, and meta-narratives. To me, the dimly lit "Piétà" space with its mysterious blue tones and the strong perspectival order clearly reference Anselm Kiefer´s attic paintings from the early 1970s. In his work "Father, Son and Holy Spirit" (1973), Kiefer gives an unorthodox and also very controversial rendering of the holy trinity. (Fig. 9)

The whole scene happens in an attic comparable to the space in which Bramly & Rheims placed their "Piétà". There is nothing else to be seen other than three chairs with flames which, miraculously, do not consume the wooden surrounding. The stage is set: the attic is filled with the spiritual energy of the invisible protagonists whose existence has to be conjured up by the viewer. Kiefer´s highly charged scenarios of the 1970s refer to religious narratives, but also to the grand stories of German history and culture. In Kiefer´s conception, attics are storage areas, spaces of repressed history or of stories awaiting their revision and reformulation. Here, things can temporarily go undercover in order to one day re-emerge and acquire new importance and form. As already mentioned, Bramly & Rheims did a lot of research for their joint project. Their choice of an attic-like setting for the piétà motif may well indicate a conceptual move. In light of the above-mentioned Kiefer reference, their "Piétà" would already be provided with a meta-commentary on how the reception of collective stories works. Our picture archives are sites of latent meaning. The protagonists, the narratives are all there and just need to be activated by a trigger. That can be flames, ordinary stools, or a carelessly manufactured puppet that assumes the right position.

"Protect Me from What I Want"

"The Temptation of Jesus" by Bramly & Rheims is, without doubt, a most fascinating, but also most puzzling re-writing of a scene from the New Testament. The work is arranged as a triptych with all the action going on in the middle part. Again, the main scene takes place in an attic-like space. The illuminated pink window generates an atmosphere of erotic expectations and desires. Jesus is immediately recognizable. He is shown from behind. The light falls onto his right shoulder and reveals a devil tattoo there. Another tattoo at the end of his back is partly covered by his loose trousers, a fashionable adaptation of a full length loin cloth. The trousers in combination with the muscular body, the particular hair

Serge Bramly & Bettina Rheims, *I.N.R.I. Series*
(1997 – 98), *The Temptation of Jesus*

© Rheims & Bramly

style and a glimpse of the profile make him immediately identifiable as the main protagonist in this temptation plot. The confrontational setting is another important marker that directs the reception of the narrative displayed. According to the Gospel, Jesus´ temptation by the devil went on over a period of 40 days. During this time, the devil appeared several times, made his offers, and was turned down by Jesus. With the classical pictorial solution, the two figures are presented in an exclusive, yet irreconcilable relationship. Bramly & Rheims´ photograph takes up that setting. As the tempted figure, Jesus is shown in a position of defense. To ward off the ladies, he is holding a chair in front of his lower body. The temptresses are two young women, playful and crazy in the middle part, but monumentalized and enigmatic in the two side panels of the photographic triptych. (Fig. 10)

In the side panels they are staged along the lines of the dangerous, castrating femme fatale of the fin-de-siècle. As the images are cropped, the ladies literally outgrow the picture frame and correspondingly, the threat of erotic appeal they pose to the viewer seems overpowering. Gustav Klimt´s "Judith I" painting (1901) comes to mind, or his famous red- haired females that test and challenge the male viewer of the late 19th and early 20th century. In terms of their appearance and outfit, the two women are introduced as opposites that complement each other. In that sense, the two of them together represent the whole specter of femininity and are the perfect equivalent of "all the kingdoms of the world" promised to Jesus by the devil. The differentiation between them happens via sensual data and color codes. The stern and iconic rendering of the two women in the side panels seems to foster a classification by type. The two options are about the dark girl versus the fair-haired one, the Asian or European model, pink versus yellow, or soft and alluring, versus provocative and defiant. The side panels of the triptych represent two temperaments and two female types from the mail-order catalogue of male desire. The painted red dot on the dark haired lady´s chest, though, speaks another language. Since Claude Cahun´s pictorial investigations into a possible third gender beyond the traditional male/female distinction, the painted nipple has been an alarming and disconcerting sign of gender role negotiations. The question is, is the person signed by such a marker in fact a woman or is she just acting as such, presenting the environment with deceiving indicators of femaleness?

In the middle panel and main scene of action everything is different. The two ladies have left their static pose behind and fully engage in the temptation and seduction of the Jesus figure. They turn into wild girls, unrestricted in their desires or by gender roles. For their satisfaction they obviously do not necessarily need the male figure whom they challenge. They have each other and are willing to test new ground. In Bramly & Rheims´ version of the biblical temptation, Jesus seems to be the addressee of an invitation he cannot handle. He dreads it

because the rules of the proposed game are deeply confusing and unclear. As a male figure, modeled on heterosexual norms, he is simply not up to the game played by the two temptresses. Bramly & Rheims´ pictorial strategy forces the viewers to position themselves in this temptation scenario and cope with questions of sexual identity. In the middle panel, the gaze of the beholder is directed towards the two females and their frivolous interaction. As a kind of repoussoir and mediating figure, "Jesus" lures the viewers in and makes them adopt his viewpoint and position. Consequently, they are torn between their fascination with the erotic game of the young women and the resistance residing in the body of the figure of identification. As everything is left undecided, the scenario seems to call for a type of negotiation which extends beyond the picture frame.

Concluding Remarks

All the presented photographic reenactments are informed by a desire for the missing original. Some of the photographers mentioned try to do justice to the motif by fully confirming to preexisting codes; others, like Bramly & Rheims or Serrano, bend and twist the subject, risking controversy and rejection. In order to buy into the biblical story depicted, the viewer has to be hooked by strong, recognizable features. As long as these indispensable and indisputable traits are there, deviations are identifiable and possible. Those features beyond doubt will ultimately authorize the changes to the story. The desire for the "correct" version is based on the wish to reconnect with the missing original. As we all know, in this state of imaginary identification, we go for the whole and want ultimate satisfaction. Bramly & Rheims trade the comfort and appeal of the classical version for sensational images of an unprecedented kind. In the images presented, they provide the viewer with pictorial evidence and still open up a perspective on pressing issues of the present time.

10a

Serge Bramly & Bettina Rheims, *I.N.R.I. Series*
(1997 – 98), *The Temptation of Jesus (detail)*

© Rheims & Bramly
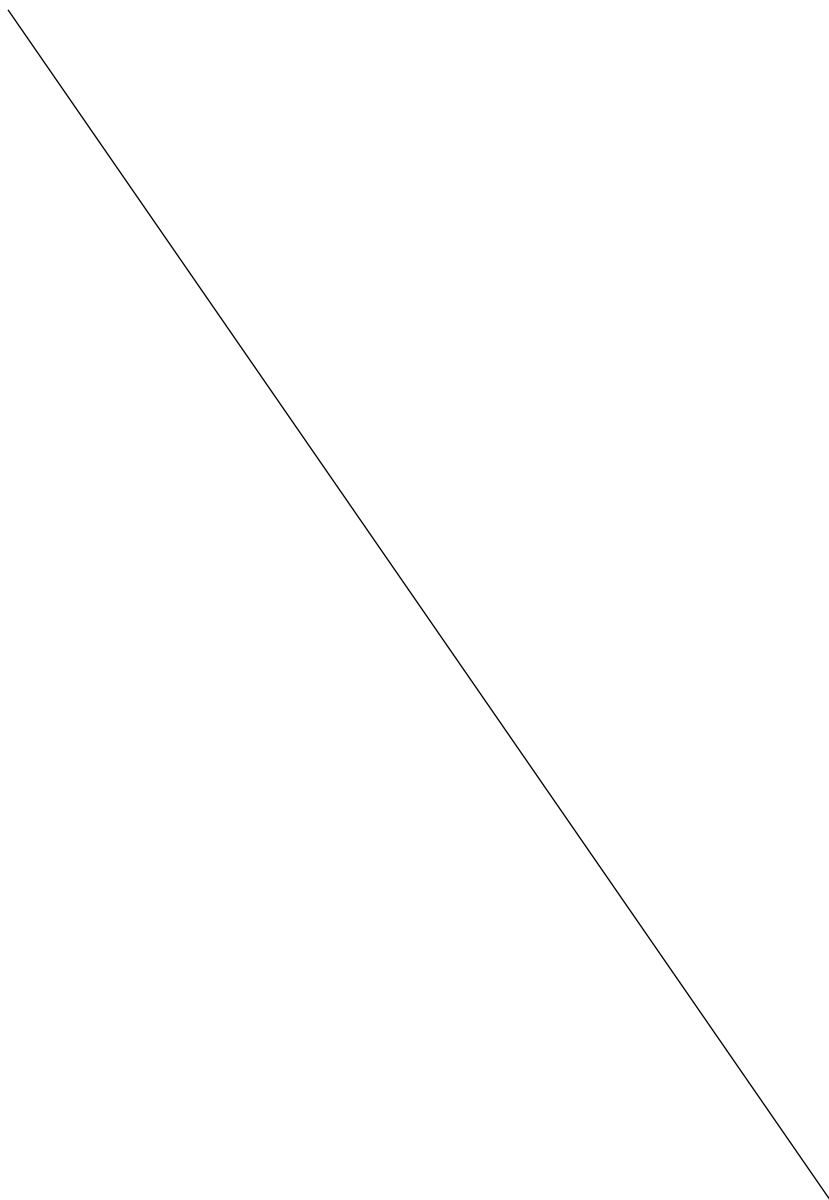
Blocked View and Impeded Vision

**An Affective Response to the Photographs of
Maria Hahnenkamp and Thomas Struth**

Preamble

Once a year, on the last Sunday of the carnival season, my grandmother summoned our whole family to watch the local carnival parade from the tiny garden in her backyard. Grandmother's house bordered Market Street, one of the main streets in town where the procession of music groups, decorated wagons, etc. took place. The garden was fenced off by pointed iron bars and was about half a meter above street level so that one had a wonderful view of what was happening on the street. When grandmother invited the family to watch the parade with her, everyone understood that there was more at stake than just entertainment and fun: The idea was that the whole family should come together to perform.

On that occasion, grandmother's rather neglected backyard turned into our communal family stage. There we presented ourselves to the public and demonstrated the joy of "privileged vision." For one Sunday afternoon, Mrs. Dreher and her descendants turned into an elevated caste, indulging in an unrestricted view and the moral side effect of such a privilege, namely, to look like an intact family. We did not have to mingle with the masses, but were admitted to a kind of private loge from where the happenings on the street took on a special sense. To a child, it was clear that the carnival princes, riding on their various vehicles, reached particularly deep into their buckets filled with sweets when they saw us, and their generosity seemed to signal that we were alike - nobility of the same kind, who deserved a bigger share of everything.

On this one day, everything seemed fine until the regular crisis broke out and destroyed the precarious family equilibrium. It always started with an experience of a blocked view. Someone on the street took a child on his or her shoulders, or even dared to climb the low wall to our garden. In that instant, the photogenically arranged group of family members disintegrated into a desperate crowd of people craving, fighting, and groping for a glimpse of the events happening in the street. When the candies from the wagons no longer landed on our territory, but were confiscated by the spectators in front of us, the intricate link between unrestricted view as a treat and guaranteed candy supplies became obvious. When all these commoners,

these ordinary street spectators, decided to simply ignore our quite obvious right to see, hostility and aggression got a hold on our formerly well contained and behaved group. All we could see was a highly fragmented and distorted version of the carnival procession, transmitted to us via slots left by the space between the spectators´ bodies. We always left this scenario as a defeated crowd, suffering from visual deprivation and the fact that our right to see unimpeded had again been ignored by others.

Maria Hahnenkamp

Maria Hahnenkamp's works do the same thing to me. They evoke the same anger and frustration about not being able to see. They relate the issue of invisibility to pictorial traditions and power-playing in general. During the whole process of investigation of Hahnenkamp's works, I keep telling myself: Keep track of your anger and pinpoint the shame and assault of blocked vision; Stick to your subject, resist the temptation to bury the strongly sensed insult under layers and layers of scholarly findings; be disciplined, remain emotional.

In this respect, Maria Hahnenkamp´s photo series "two women," from 2001 is especially telling. The two female protagonists of these images, both dressed in red, came together to bounce off the viewer´s gaze and to deny vision. They act as red guards. Their mission is radical and non-compromising – namely, to occupy pictorial space in a way that will leave nothing visible. To keep the gaze out and to launch their assault on the viewer, they form a phalanx of bodies, positioned right in the foreground of the pictures. This setting has something highly aggressive and confrontational about it, and the response it creates is frustration. (Fig. 1)

For this series, the artist placed the female bodies behind a glass plate right in front of the camera. Due to this glass barrier, the bodies look flat and compressed. Paradoxically, the denial of vision goes hand in hand with an abundance of visual information. There are folds and curves, patterns and textures the viewer can concentrate on, but still, the overall impression is a lack of visibility. Due to this situation of visual castration, the viewer becomes inventive and counter-balances the deprivation by referring to the in-between spaces. The gaze creeps into folds and behind slightly lifted clothes in search of a dimension beyond the surface of the image. Between the bodies, gaps and slits open up and carry a promise of depth and a full view. These spatial intervals, which, at first sight, look like indeterminable, abstract forms turn out to be suggestive of vaginal forms and ultimately refer the viewer back to his or her scopic desires. (Fig. 2)

1

———

Maria Hahnenkamp, *Body Discourses*
2005, C–Prints, 93cm x 123 cm

© Hahnenkamp

Maria Hahnenkamp, Landesgalerie at the
Oberösterreichisches Landesmuseum, Linz, 2002

© Hahnenkamp

As Linda Hentschel (2001) pointed out, scopic desire is intricately linked with the construction of pictorial space in the early Modern period. Implied in this spatial concept is the promise of pure vision, of a potentially unrestricted view of even concealed and hidden things. Due to this promise, the act of viewing becomes libidinally charged and ultimately informed by gender issues. "Vision cannot be separated from the construction of space, which in turn cannot be separated from the constructions of gender upon which sexuality is mapped, usually violently."(Wiley, 1992, p. 364) As no act of viewing is ever neutral, gender aspects flow into this seemingly mathematical model inherent to Western representation. This leads to what Hentschel calls a "feminization of pictorial space." (2001, p.13) The viewer originally designed as a rational, autonomous, centered and mostly male subject, ideally positions himself in front of this space, ready to penetrate the represented area with his visual acts. The eye as visual agent subjects the space that opens up in front of him to the regime and power of the gaze. In a metonymical shift and process of replacement, the desire for the female body depicted in the picture gets projected onto pictorial space as such. Feminized pictorial space becomes the other of the male gaze, the other that is open to appropriation, conquest, and subordination.

Maria Hahnenkamp´s figures act as a "task force" against this sexualized use of space: It is a tight and crammed space. But, despite their closeness, these females do not get together to snuggle up to each other. Instead, they demonstrate solidarity and pursue a shared strategy of generating a lack of visibility. At the same time, these images hold a promise of vision and allude to a dimension of increased visibility beyond the surface. The bodies themselves do not justify any sexual projections. They have something high-necked, analytic and straight about them. The fully covered female bodies cannot be held accountable for the explicit erotic appeal of these images. The scandal of the intimate resides in the splits and the slits between the bodies, which create a kind of penetrating reflex with the viewer. It seems as if the gaze wants to take up the impulse to enter via these gaps and folds in order to regain the gratification of a full and unrestricted view. One also cannot but sense the fantasies of violence, which seem to be located in these in-between spaces that would have to be stretched, widened, torn open to achieve a better view. The chaste red models play with the desires of the spectator, but the offer that they propose is less immoral than deeply disillusioning. Which viewer, comfortably at home in Western representational systems, would want to find satisfaction in the anteroom of the foreground before his or her scopic desire, which is geared towards the depth of space, could build up its full phallic power? (Fig. 3)

In Hahnenkamp´s series "Body Discourses" from 2005, the bodies are shown in a different position. They are arranged in a horizontal order and seem to be float-

ing through pictorial space. This new orientation of the models has wide reaching consequences for viewers by throwing them off their empowered vertical position. In addition, the foil ribbons with text tied around the bodies can only be read by twisting the head sideways and by rearranging, repositioning oneself. These ribbons carry quotations from Judith Butler's "Psyche der Macht. Das Subjekt der Unterwerfung."[1] Important in our context is that with this particular work by Hahnenkamp, created three years after the series "two women", the bodies still block space, but this time it feels less frustrating and annoying: The viewer seems to be forced into a less confrontational setting. Everything is in motion and, therefore, up for negotiation. Power relations are addressed in the text fragments and are quite outspoken, which makes it possible to relate to them more readily. Here is no longer the same stalemate situation where the desire to see increases in proportion to the denial of a view. Still, Hahnenkamp´s agitated troops are easily recognizable. They again fill the medial space negligently - inconsiderate of the viewer's age-old right to see beyond and across. The reading keeps the viewer in the foreground and the gentle flow of the bodies distracts the viewer from his/her obsession with depth. Instead of depth, there is flatness. Hips and thighs are not spread out, but are depicted in an elegant, aerodynamic form. There is something highly utopian about this renouncement of the drama of depth. Hahnenkamp´s females are testing new grounds and demonstrate the ease and relief of gliding alongside the surface, instead of making their toilsome way into the distance.

Thomas Struth

Similarly, in Struth´s photographs, I recognize an obsession I can relate to. From 1977 on, he focuses on black and white photographs of streets and townscapes, and basically employs the same pictorial scheme over and over again. The photos work with a strong perspectival order, which is subsequently abolished by buildings that come in the way and block the view into the distance. There is a sense of destruction and aggression at work. It is directed against the expectations and perceptual habits of the viewer, but also entails some kind of auto-aggression against himself as the photographer and the photographic craft in general. As it turns out on closer inspection, Struth is a master of a kind of gentle art of aggression, which underpins his photographs and which, so far, has gone almost unnoticed. Practiced over years, his rebuff of the viewer comes in a

---

[1] The artist used quotes from the German edition of : Butler, J. (1997).
     The Psychic Life of Power: Theories of Subjection.

3

Maria Hahnenkamp, O.T. (*from the Series "Two Women"*)
2001, C-Prints, 93cm x 73 cm

© Hahnenkamp

Thomas Struth, *6th Avenue at 50th Street, Midtown, New York 1978*
Silver Gelatin Print, 66cm x 84cm

© Thomas Struth

homeopathic dose. His type of viewer is someone who needs ongoing visual proof of something that is a theoretical given. With Struth, to understand the conditions of "the old prison"[2] of perspectival order means to represent it again and again.

With images like "6th Avenue at 50th Street," taken in New York in 1978, Struth defines a standard scenario of photographic interest. The New York street is depicted as an avenue of escape, dynamically leading into the distance. As Annette Emde (2008) pointed out in her comprehensive study of Thomas Struth´s city and street photographs, the photo displays a high field of focus (p. 75). The horizon in the image is relatively low, so that the objects at the far end are disproportionally small, which increases the perspectival pull into the distance. This orientation towards the horizon is counteracted by minutiae of architectural structures, textures, commercial signs, parked cars etc. (Fig. 5)

"Crosby Street," from 1978, represents another attempt to feed reality into a pre-existing pictorial grid in order to reveal something about the grid itself, but also about our mode of perceiving photographs. As one can see, Crosby Street used to be a street in the poorer environment of Soho. Like all the other street photos by Struth, it is emptied of people. Struth subtly plays with the promises of a central perspective. He simultaneously enforces and denies its principles. The car parked on the right throws the whole composition off balance. At the end of the alley of buildings, a slightly blurred high-rise structure appears like a phantom. Tellingly, the street sign in the image says "stop," hold your gaze, it will be blocked at the end of the street. (Fig. 6)

Struth is testing this same setting over and over again by, for instance, focusing on streets in Germany with their post-war architecture, or on ordinary residential streets in Scotland. In his 1985 photograph of "Prince Regent Street," taken in Edinburgh, the church at the end of the street turns the perspectivally organized space, with its inherent promise of depth, into an enclosed area. As the gaze is kept from roaming into the distance, it basically circulates in the confined space. By creating a trapped view situation, Struth is able to tame the gaze and divert its course. Instead of moving into depth, the viewer scans the facades, glides over the dilapidated pavement, counts the chimneys, and checks the condition of the front yards. (Fig. 7) The street setting turns into a kind of interior, an almost domestic space where the potentially expanding gaze comes to a halt and discovers the sensations of the foreground. Here, it becomes modest and attentive to details. Under the spell of the pull, exercised by depth, viewers tend to overlook and ignore things that would divert their

---

[2] This term refers to a panoramic photograph by Jeff Wall of the same title. The image depicts an old prison building but also reflects upon the principles inherent in photographic imagery.

Thomas Struth, *Crosby Street, Soho, New York 1978*
Silver Gelatin Print, 66cm x 84cm

© Thomas Struth

6

———

Thomas Struth, *Prince Regent Street, Edinburgh 1985*
Silver Gelatin Print, 66cm x 84cm

© Thomas Struth

7

Thomas Struth, *Le Lignon, Geneva 1989*
Silver Gelatin Print, 66cm x 84cm

© Thomas Struth

gaze. In fact, staying home and resisting the alluring distance is rewarded by a mass of interesting visual sensations, even with a site of such banality as an average street. And, Thomas Struth continues to put up obstacles for the viewer. He shifts viewpoints and moves around architecture in a prefigured setting with clear coordinates.

With the photographs taken in Naples, Struth takes his experiments another step further. In "Corso Vittorio Emanuele" from 1989, massive, vertical building blocks ridicule any attempt to view depth. The gaze slams into a wall of solid barriers that unequivocally tell the viewer that there is nothing to see except buildings – buildings that are piled up in front of the viewer, buildings that appear insurmountable and that won't give way to the gaze. With the full authority of the factual, these buildings counteract the gesture of welcome expressed in the foreground of the image. The dynamic curve of the low wall, the foreshortened line of the parked cars, the indicators of "wild nature" behind the wall, everything speaks of a journey into the open. The small balconies in front of the windows act as additional barriers that ward off any attempt to protrude through the openings of the windows. (Fig. 8)

Subsequently, Struth continues with his investigation by introducing a new variation to the game. He depicts building blocks that cut through space like a diagonal. In 1989, he takes a photograph of "Le Lignon," an apartment building in Geneva. The gaze of the viewer glides along the façade, speeding up on its way into the distance, only to find itself trapped again in a dead-end scenario. There, in the deeper reaches, a misty, blurred building block emerges like an insuperable obstacle in a nightmare, phantasmatic and unquestionably real at the same time. All the viewer can do is take the retour path or, since the buildings´s façade resembles a film strip, play the film backwards and assume the pole position again. (Fig. 9)

From 1998 on, Thomas Struth works on a series of photographs which seem to have nothing in common with his early street photographs. The series, which consists of 25 images, deals with forests and jungles in Australia, Japan, China, and California. (Fig.10) All the photographs feature seemingly impenetrable views of "allover" nature (Struth, 2002, para. 1). Some of the images look like heavily overgrown green curtains which conceal whatever may lie behind them. Any sociocultural context is missing; instead the viewer is confronted with a dense thicket of trees, trunks, branches, and foliage. There is no perceivable order in these jungle close-ups and no indication that a human being would be particularly welcome there or capable of surviving in these worlds.

In her interview with Struth, conducted by Annette Emde (2008), she refers to the concept of his catalogue published in connection with the retrospective of his work in the US. In the exhibitions in New York and Chicago, Struth´s photographs were grouped according to themes and motifs, whereas the catalogue breaks up this rig-

id order and juxtaposes works from different periods (p. 284). Emde wonders about the arrangement of a jungle image next to a post-war street photograph. Struth´s terse answer is that catalogues function differently than exhibitions. From the point of view of this paper, such an arrangement makes perfect sense, represents a strong statement and proves that, irrespective of their various topics, Struth´s images are invested with a strong, paradoxically "unconscious" media-analytical interest.

In a talk in "Art Forum," Struth (2002, para.1) explicitly draws a connection between the jungle series and his photographs of street scenarios:

> *[…] I'm just beginning to understand. Intuition is an old word, but many things sprout from inner processes and needs and then take on a form. My approach to the jungle pictures might be said to be new, in that my initial impulses were pictorial and emotional, rather than theoretical. They are `unconscious places´ and thus seem to follow my early city pictures.*

This statement shows that Struth approaches his subject intuitively and embarks on his projects in an almost somnambulant and unconscious manner, obviously spurred on by a challenge he may not be able to name or to ground theoretically. In fact, his labeling of the cityscapes as "unconscious places" was never really compatible with the reception of these street views as architectural or post-war, archival, or documentary photography. As the quote above indicates, the jungle scenarios qualify as "unconscious places" and therefore owe their existence to a blind spot in the artist´s production process. He had to take photos of the jungles, although he could not entirely account for their curious attraction. The same was the case with the cityscapes. My argument is that both series are part of the same investigation about the nature of the photographic medium and its relation to perspectival order.

As Struth (2002, para.2) exemplifies further: "In some of the photographs, the picture stands like a screen in front of another, invisible image, dissolving the vanishing point that photography usually puts into focus." For him (Struth, 2002), the jungle views are "membranes of meditation." (para.1) They keep the viewer out. Membranes are ephemeral boundaries that despite their near immaterial condition, are not meant to be traversed. You hold, tame the gaze, and meditate in front of the empty and silent picture surface that ultimately refers you back to yourself.

All of the 25 jungle and forest images go by the title "Paradise." Struth´s unorthodox rendering of "Paradise" has nothing to do with the idyllic places of Christian mythology. On a surface level, Struth´s chaotic and immersive versions of paradise do not seem compatible with the common understanding of this term,
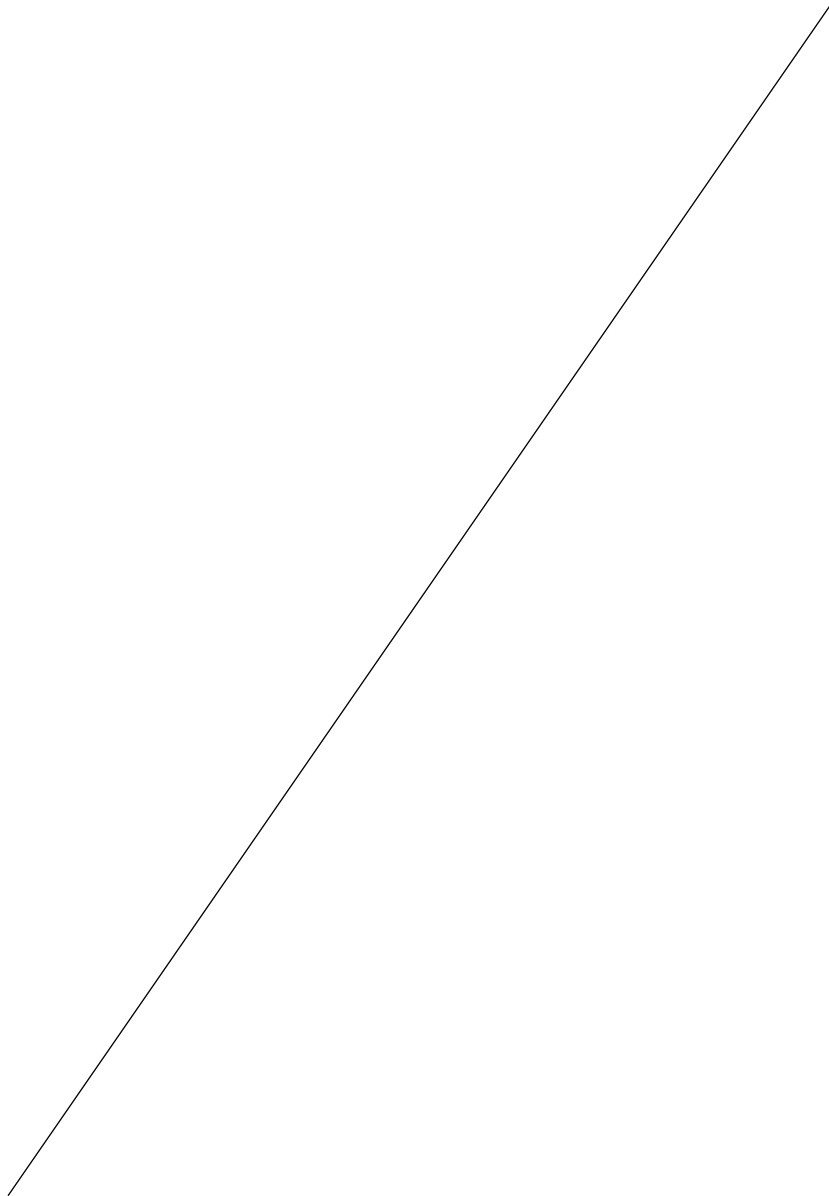
but interestingly enough, they create a particular mind set in the spectator. These images spare the viewers the effort to imagine themselves elsewhere. Whereas in a Christian understanding "paradise" is an experience that lies ahead of us, is projected into the far distance, and is something to be postponed, Struth´s jungle photographs provide an "experience of proximity."(Struth, 2002, para.4) The viewers confronted with these close-ups of untamed nature turn into arrivistes. Their scopic desire is no longer geared towards the far distance, but comes to a halt and concentrates on the here and now of the visual information available. Struth´s paradise has nothing to do with all the imaginary spots put up by a perspectival order. His jungle images deny a particular Western pictorial tradition and its inherent logic based on the hubristic promise of full and pure vision. It may be no coincidence that many of these jungle photos were taken in Asian countries. In the interview mentioned earlier, Struth (2002) explicitly refers to the time he spent in these countries and how the Asian experience informed his artistic work.

Coda

Maybe we, the family in grandmother´s yard, should have taken full pleasure in the split-up version of the carnival event and should have focused on the intimate details available to us –in the form of the hairline of the people in front of us, on the skin tones of their necks, the arrangement of their collars, and texture of their coats.

9

———

Thomas Struth, *Paradise 01, Daintree, Australia 1998*
Silver Gelatin Print, 232,7cm x 185cm

© Thomas Struth

Unedited Glamor

**The Vienna Opera Ball and
Its Rendition by Network Cameras**

The Opera Ball, a glamorous societal event, is Vienna´s most prestigious ball which represents the uncontested highlight of the ball season. In 2009, the Swiss photographer Jules Spinatsch introduced an unconventional way of recording the annual Opera Ball. He installed two interactive digital network cameras on the premises of the Vienna Opera. They were programmed to map the entire space from ceiling to floor. Every three seconds one image was taken. The cameras recorded the entire ball from its start at 8:32 pm to its end at 5:10 in the morning and took 10,008 photographs in total. During the designated time, the rotating cameras completed two full circles so that every spot in the opera house was recorded twice. In 2011, Jules Spinatsch displayed the 10,008 images at Karlsplatz, a public space in the center of Vienna. He set up a 360 degree panorama there and arranged the images as a chronological grid allowing the Viennese public to encircle the installation and have democratic access to what is known as an exclusive event. In this rather monumental undertaking, pursued "with the sobriety of a scientific study" (Campany, 2014, p. E 14), Spinatsch re-integrated the different network camera shots into a perceivable spatial order. In another approach following a "Plan B," he displayed the single, blown-up images in a series of thematic grids in the context of a gallery space. In 2014, Spinatsch published the images in a 3-volume book with the title "Vienna MMIX–10008/7000 Surveillance Panorama Project No. 4 – The Vienna Opera Ball," which will form the basis of the analysis of this paper. *Volume I* consists of the 10,008 images recorded by the cameras. *Volume II* displays 71 images that were singled out by the artist and selected from the pool of the 10,008 images. *Volume III* of the publication provides a theoretical background and material for reading.

Volume I with its 10,008 photographs provides a panoramic view of the space. Each of the 576 pages features one minute of the recorded material. Spinatsch arranged the images in the chronological order in which they were taken and fed them into the disciplinary order of a grid system. The result is an almost cinematic arrangement that follows the 3-second-meter rhythm of the camera**.** Still, despite all the rational parameters at play, the staccato of these images poses a serious challenge to a sense of orientation. Whereas the late 18th and 19th cen-

tury panoramas can be linked to the emergence of a newly empowered bourgeois subject that practices all-seeing (Hick, 1999), the panoramic view provided in Spinatsch´s book allows for very limited visual command. The images offer a splintered, torn, fragmentary version of the ball. In these 3-second units everything falls to bits and pieces and a cognitive model of the space is hard to attain, especially since any predetermined spectator position is automatically abolished. One is confronted with the minutiae of things that one usually tries to eclipse because they form the background noise of any meaningful act of perception. (Fig. 1)

The panoramic project delegated to the network cameras has little in common with the emancipatory project of the rising bourgeoisie and the central position it assigned itself in this extension of the boundaries of vision. Instead, the panoramic view of the digital machinery looks like mere visual overkill. The rotating cameras practice a type of all-seeing which is not based on human parameters of orientation and throws the viewer off balance. In "Philosphie de la disorientation," Suzanne Leblanc (2010) refers to an image used by Ludwig Wittgenstein (1980) to describe this disorientation in space. "I am showing my pupils details of an immense landscape which they cannot possibly know their way around"(p. 56e). Spinatsch´s *Vienna MMIX* project generates such a vast landscape of photographic input of an event that it cannot be totalized in any way. While Wittgenstein still acknowledged a human need for "some firm ground," (Wittgenstein, 1980, p.83e) this seems no longer the case in an era of "post-orientation," (Leblanc, 2010) "in which disorientation is interrelated with the fundamental unpredictability of its many non-linear systems" (Leblanc, 2010, p. 57). (Fig. 2)

In a kind of automatic writing, the network cameras provide unfiltered access to what is visually available and as it turns out, the mass of potential data awaiting their visualization is huge. The impartial cameras record irrespective of any pictorial traditions and codes. They know nothing of compositional rules, good form, or powerful framing. They simply follow their programmed logic and chronicle whatever appears within their reach. They picture cracks in the Historicist decoration, a dusty corner, a crumpled tissue behind a stately column, mended parquet, wires, metal grills, metal chains, ropes, cutting through the space, drapery, ventilation shafts, and many other details that are not necessarily compatible with the perfectly sealed façade of the traditional Opera Ball. (Fig. 3 / Fig 4)

In Spinatsch´s choreography, all these backstage and technical support elements assume the same visual presence as the more glamorous aspects of the spectacle. Most disturbing, though, is the fact that the viewer cannot accurately picture where the shots were taken from. The opera curtain, for instance, sweeps
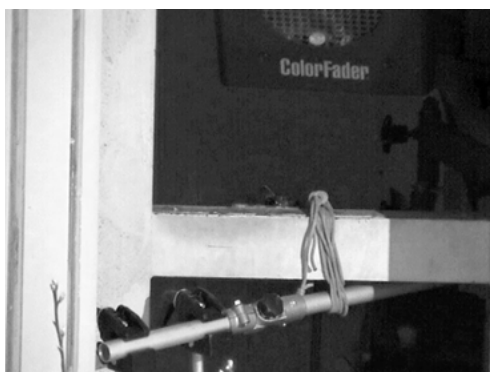
1

Jules Spinatsch, *Single Image from Volume II*

© Spinatsch
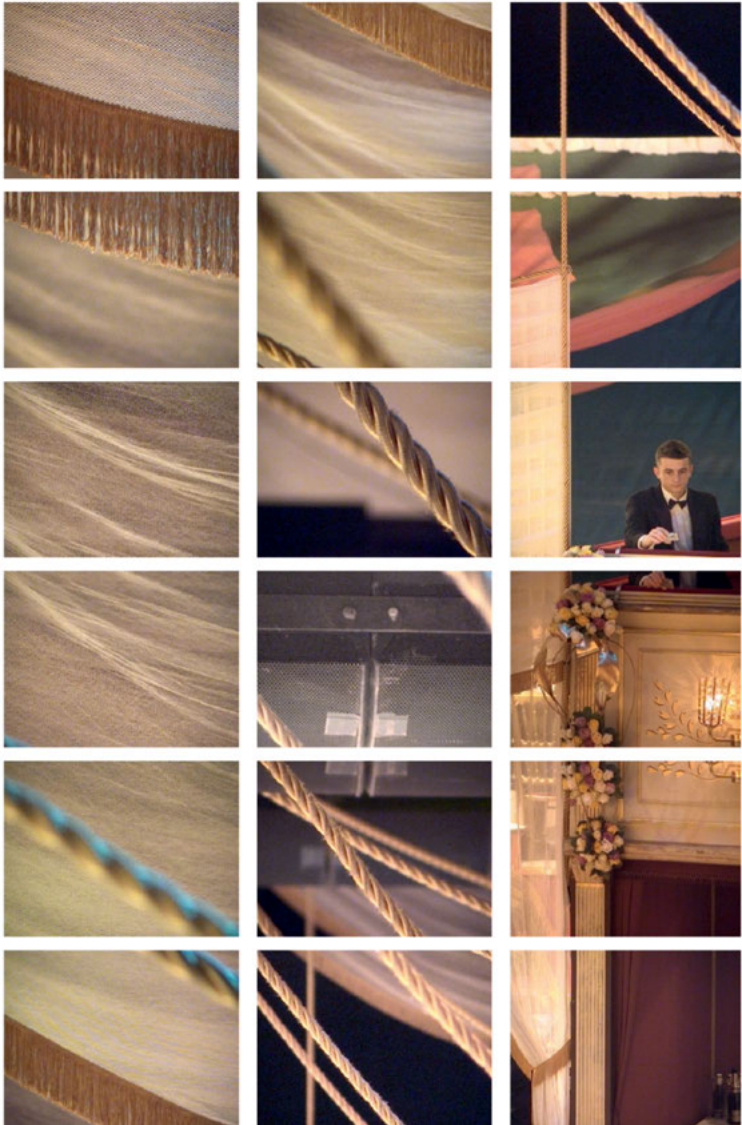
across several pages without giving any clue about its spatial position in regard to the cameras. Most of these disintegrated particles of the ball reality cannot be localized, and with many of the images a mapping of the space is impossible. The rotating cameras seem to have seized the space and twisted and turned it. Ella Chmielewska´s (2010) definition of disorientation as "an immersive condition; an intensely felt blurring of spatial configuration, a breakdown of topo-sensitive semiotic patterns" (p. 246) takes this bodily reaction to disorientation into account and calls to mind the dizziness and vertigo feelings that are mentioned in some of the reports of 19th century visitors on their panoramic experience (Hick, 1999). Spinatsch´s network cameras with their merciless scanning of the space do the same to the viewers. What one "sees" is nauseating. (Fig. 5)

The paradox is that although `Spinatsch´s images´ are hard to verify in terms of their spatial coordinates, they are perceived as unquestionably authentic. This authenticity results from the absence of any human interference. As writers like Dietmar Kammerer (2008) pointed out, surveillance camera photos have this undeniable touch of authenticity because they seem to restore a reference to the real which is increasingly lost in times of digital manipulations. Network camera technology can pass as disinterested in the real sense of the word. The resulting images owe their production to cameras that have no pact with those segments of reality traditionally entitled to visibility. In this respect, the technical and aesthetic imperfection of the photos seems to be a plus and provide additional proof of their veracity. Interestingly and due to this concept of authenticity, a technology generally viewed with suspicion can come to bear the signs of trustworthiness.

Viewing and Being Viewed
The Opera Ball as an Arena of Visual Presence

In Part III of *Vienna MMIX*, David Campany describes the Vienna Opera as a perfect arena of societal visibility.

> *The layout of the Vienna Opera House was modern – not so much for the view of the stage it offered the audience but for the view the audience was offered of itself. The plan optimizes the number of boxes viewable both from each box and from the seats in the stalls. While not the grandest of opera houses, it was the most suited to its social purpose. (Campany, 2014, E 10)*

Jules Spinatsch, *Double Page Spread from Volume I*
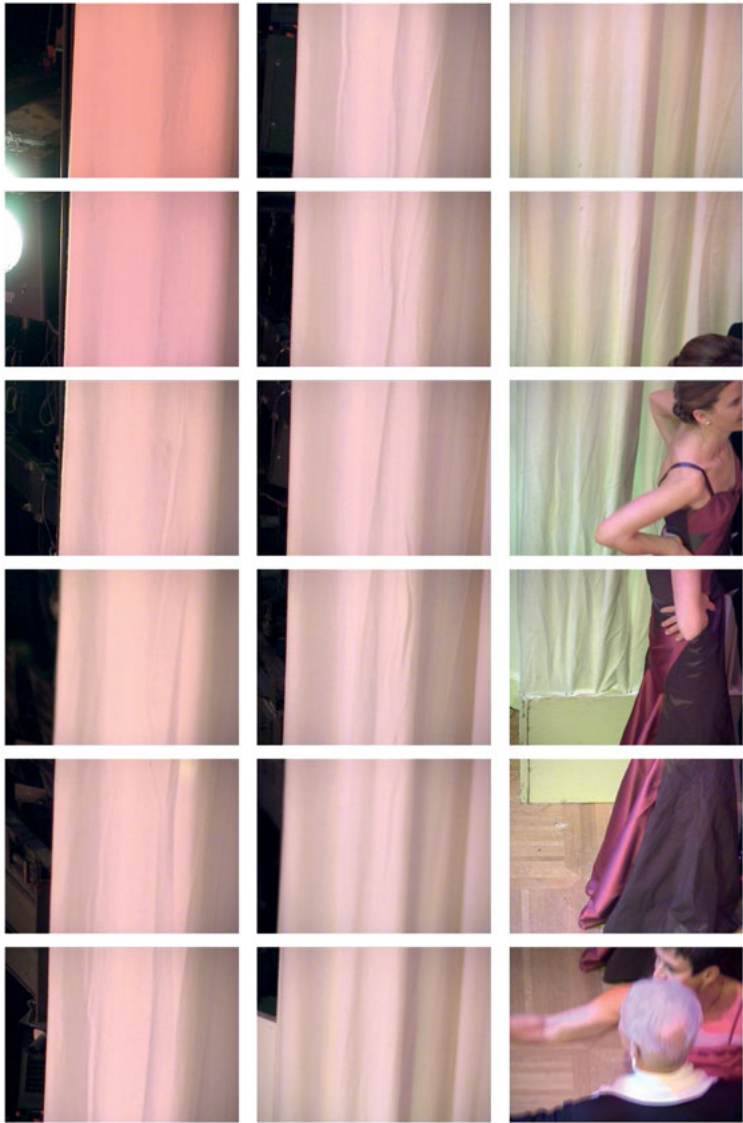
© Spinatsch

For his project, Spinatsch chose a 19th century building that was specifically constructed to guarantee a maximum of sight. The opera goers should not just have a good view of the stage and what was going on there, but should also be able to watch each other perform. As Carl Schorske (1980) pointed out, at places like the "Burgtheater" and the Opera, the late 19th century bourgeoisie could freely mingle with the aristocracy, and demonstrate their cultural standing and sophistication of appearance. To be viewed at such places meant to belong to the cultural elite of the time. In 1889, Gustav Klimt was commissioned to paint the Old Burg theatre before it was torn down to give way to the new building on the Ring. He chose to paint the seating space from the stage and to depict more than a hundred identifiable personalities of the Viennese society. As the story goes, many representatives of the fin-de-siècle establishment were anxious to be included in the painting and assigned a place in this societal group portrait. Klimt received "many offers to sit for him" (Morton, 1979, p. 169). "Letters engraved with crests" and "invitations to tea in the Ringstrasse salons of financial barons" (Morton, 1979, p. 169) made it clear how desirable it was to prove one´s regular presence at the theater as a highly contested battle ground of enhanced societal visibility. Speaking of the presence again, for the annual Opera Ball the whole space is remodeled to guarantee an even larger arena of societal performance. Since on this occasion all the seats in the stalls are covered by a ballroom floor, the whole stage extends to a dimension of 90 meters. (Fig. 6)

As a matter of fact, Spinatsch´s network camera images show the Vienna opera public in observation mode and mood. In many of the pictures, they seem to be watching, observing, and monitoring each other. What actually demands their attention, one mostly cannot tell or see because the corresponding scenes lie outside the picture frames. Network cameras are not versed in the filmic eye line match. Especially the privileged people in their boxes are mostly caught in the act of observing others. Their elevated position seems to predestine them to check out others. At the same time, all of them appear highly alert about being viewed themselves. The space seems to resonate with scopic desire. On closer inspection, one realizes that there are cameras everywhere, TV cameras, professional film cameras, single-lens reflex cameras, countless pocket cameras and mobile phones, which are either standing by or randomly directed towards others. In an interesting side remark, Campany (2014) refers to the mobile phone camera as "the logical extension of opera glasses" (p. E 13). The network cameras, probably holding the highest position in space, seem to condone these modest photographic attempts to turn the ball into a memorable event. By photographing the countless other recording devices, they seem to ridicule the limited reach and capacity of their underprivileged peers. The cameras installed by Spinatsch have the final say in this surveillance narrative and successfully establish a kind of hierarchy between these various types of photographic testimony. (Fig. 7)

In terms of their appearance and outfit, the people at the Vienna Opera Ball are well prepared to meet the eyes of the cameras. They have nothing to fear. Big brother will find them strong and well equipped. Their hair styles are impeccable, the females´ cleavages are impressive, their jewelry is shining, and their dresses perfectly fit the occasion. In fact, they seem to qualify for a type of elegance keyed to the media world and its practices. It is the term "Spycam Chic" (Boal, 1998, p.1) as a type of chic that takes the omnipresence of observation cameras into account which comes to mind. In a surveillance society, people have the obligation to look good because they can get on the radar of a camera at all times. In line with the advertisement of an American fashion label, Boal (1998) aks: "Are you dressed for it?" Eric Howeler (2002) refers to fashion, cigarette, and lipstick ads, pinpointing their underlying message as: "Surveillance is a given, it is everywhere. Surveillance is sexy. Big brother is watching, so you have to look good" (p. 1). In Dietmar Kammerer´s view (2005), observation technology creates "glamorous subjects" (p. 104). The Vienna Opera has always been a place of spectacle and glamour. The question will be what the network cameras make of this event and what the specific "unedited glamour" of their recordings does to the protagonists of this spectacle.

Much has already been said about the changed status of the subject and its configuration in a surveillance society. Winfried Pauleit (2005), for instance, views observation technology as intricately linked with new modes of self-perception. Other than mirrors, this technology allows people to see themselves as others view them. Pauleit diagnoses a technologically enhanced self-referentiality. To confirm their subject status, individuals will increasingly rely on camera recordings that attest to their presence and visibility. Encountering oneself on such monitors will be the ultimate mode of proving one´s existence. As Pauleit (2005) points out, the classical psychological model of establishing one´s subjecthood via the other and in interpersonal exchange with the other will become more and more obsolete. Thomas Y. Levin (2000) proposes a reformulation of René Descates´ formula `Cogito ergo sum.´ The new formula will be: "I am surveilled, therefore I am."(p. 60) Surveillance technology with its automatized recording can provide existential proof beyond doubt. People turn into images and internalize this version of themselves. In Jörg Metelmann´s (2005) understanding, there is a fundamental difference between viewing an image that is separated from oneself and the physical experience of permanently acquiring image status in a media world. What he calls "in-der-Medienwelt-Sein" (p. 179) is a state of being, a new ontological state grounded in vision.

So what about the depiction of the ball goers in Spinatsch´s photo books? How are they rendered by the network cameras? As the human inventory of the event, they are guaranteed equal treatment as the non-animated parts of the Opera Ball setting. They are all photographed from a particular angle from above, which gives the im-

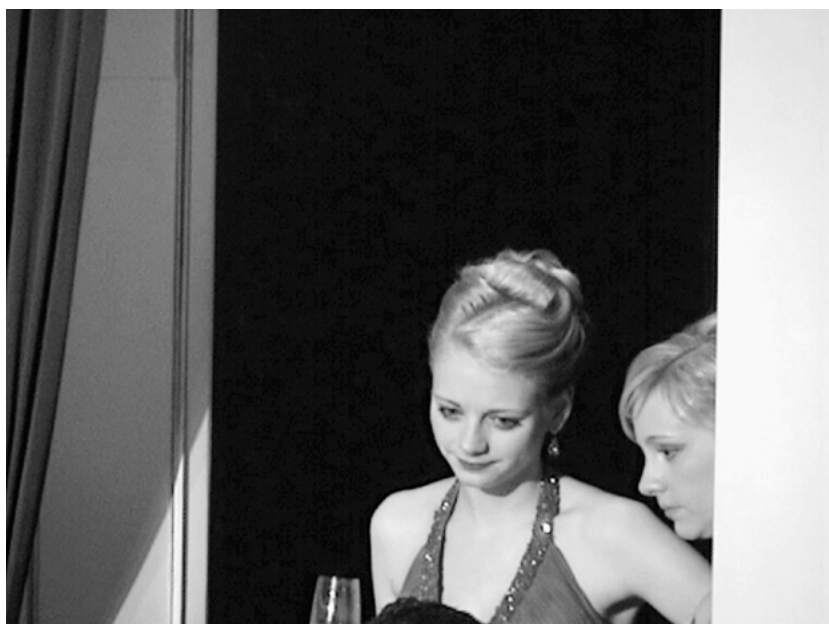Jules Spinatsch, *Single Image from Volume II*

© Spinatsch

pression of them being subjected to some privileged view traditionally associated with a divine perspective. But, as this impersonal recording machinery above them has no clue of the intricate link between subjecthood and proper framing, it cannot confirm their subject status. There are takes which occasionally resemble well composed images, but those can be attributed to lapses of the recording system. (Fig. 8)
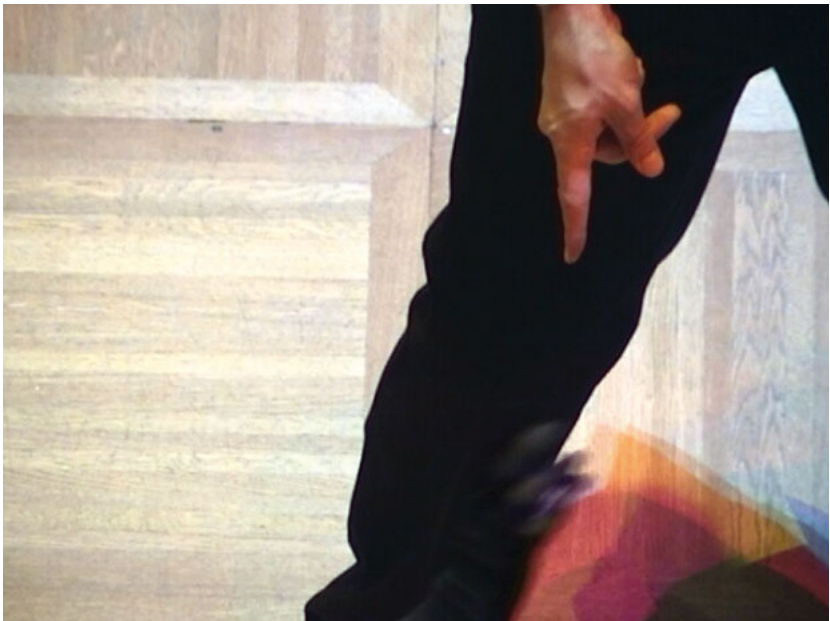
Overall, the fractured picture units present the public as an unredeemed mass. In contrast to the usual conviviality of such an event, the network cameras seem to picture tristesse. The camera recordings turn the ball-goers into a confused and disintegrated crowd looking, glancing, craving an image of themselves. They are registered, but in the careless and inconsiderate manner of a disinterested party that is unable to provide them with the consolation of an acknowledged individual visibility. The visual agent, which could supply them with images of themselves, is hidden from them. No one told them that for the duration of the ball night their existence would be guaranteed by an almighty surveillance technology watching over them. By mischance, the recording system monitoring them lacks the mercy of the conventional all-seeing authority. Many of the people are depicted half way in the process of forming fully integrated and photogenic subjects. There is an abundance of upper bodies, lower bodies, shoulders, legs, etc. No wonder that their half-obliterated and misshaped representations give them a touch of "demi-monde" and that their actions fail to look meaningful. (Fig. 9/10)

In terms of the power structure established by the network cameras, one is tempted to think of the gaze as described by Jacques Lacan (1973). Other than the "look," which can be located in the human eye and which issues from one point, the gaze is independent of human vision. Lacan compares it to an omnipresent observation camera. There is a tremendous amount of authority on the part of the gaze. Spinatsch´s network camera photographs seem to reveal the intricate link between power and vision and the anxiety that resides at the heart of this relation. 10, 008 images of one ball night generate a lot of visibility, but do not necessarily guarantee an empowered version of those depicted. The Vienna Opera Ball recordings display a type of choreography that is most of the time detrimental for those who temporarily appear within their shifting frames.

Photographesomenon

The images assembled in *Volume II* of *Vienna MMIX* clearly show what Eric Howeler (2002) labeled as "the aesthetics of surveillance" The characteristics of this type of representation are, among others, cold colors, graininess, and a slightly distorted optic. For Eric Boal (1998), it is the "pixilated cool" (p. 2) of these images that makes them so attractive as elements in films and advertising.

Jules Spinatsch, *Single Image from Volume II*

© Spinatsch

Jules Spinatsch, *Single Image from Volume II*

© Spinatsch
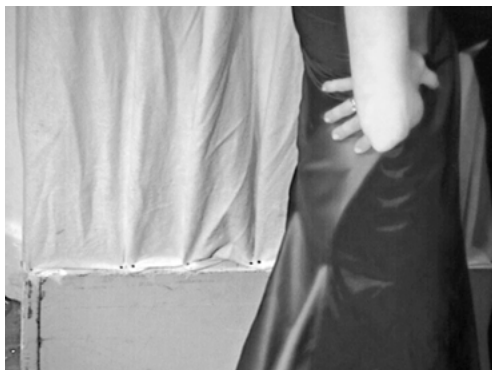
Surveillance has become a look, sexier and more sinister than any documentary. It lends the power and glory of infotech to anything it touches, from sneaker ad to the blockbuster thriller. The most ordinary image becomes charged once it is invested with a time/date stamp, a grainy low-res surface, and the other signatures of spycam style. (Boal, 1998, p. 2)

In the case of the Vienna Opera Ball, the images are not faked but genuine surveillance photographs. At the same time, they seem to fall into the category of a "photographesomenon,"as described by Pauleit (2005, p. 76). Observation cameras are programmed to create a digital duplicate of a particular scenario at a particular time. These data rarely make it into the ranks of single frame images. "Photographesomena" are latent images, submerged in the mass of recorded material to eventually serve as evidence one day. As Pauleit puts it, these pictorial units are recorded in the present in order to be retrieved as images in the future. Various interests, a suspicion, and investigations of all sorts may legitimize their re-emergence as single images and differentiate them from the vast amount of the other stored visuals.

In *Volume II* of his publication, Spinatsch presents 71 such images. As "photographesomena," they all have the potential to demonstrate or prove something, yet, the purpose of their selection remains unclear. Freed from the burden of providing insight in hindsight, they speak of a visual universe uncontaminated by semantics. With their anarchic wit they are capable of subverting a long tradition of purposive picture making. In some cases, they do not even re-present, namely refer to some identifiable reality. They are nonsensical data bits that were, for some reason, given preference over others. In Spinatsch´s arrangement of the photos, identifiable motifs alternate with fully abstract pictures of the ball reality. As a matter of fact, the depicted human protagonists are in a lot of cases quite literally pushed to the margins of the images and have to compete with a mass of details that would never make it into a classical picture frame. There seems to be an arguable alliance between digital recording technology and, so far, visually under-represented parts of reality. (Fig. 11/12)

At the same time – and the text by the neurophysiologist Wolf Singer (2014) in *Volume III* seems to suggest that – the random data bits of *Volume II* could be viewed as a commentary on the activities of our brain. As Singer (2014) points out, in order to come to probable solutions, the brain as a highly complex and self-referential system has to compare all incoming sensory data with already installed and familiar models of reality. In the course of evaluating these variables we construct meaning and "synthesize the new data into a coherent picture of the world" (p. E 43). What we perceive as real is, therefore, always the outcome of an interpretative act. The "photographesomena" of *Vienna MMIX Volume II* seem to draw the attention to the constructivist nature of the perceptual process.

Jules Spinatsch, *Single Image from Volume II*

© Spinatsch

The random visuals presented there appear like raw data with their neurobiological processing still pending. There is also a sense of failure. With these scraps of visual input a successful completion of the process may not be possible, the neurobiological reference system may reach its limit and remain clueless. In any case, the ball "reality" as such cannot be held accountable for this kind of rout.

As Ulrike Hick (1999) pointed out, the traditional panorama was also a place where the boundless gaze and its ambition of all-seeing could be rehearsed. In the medial surrogate of the panorama, the new scopic regime of early industrialization with its political and social implications could be tested, internalized, and trained. Jules Spinatsch´s project may provide the same training for his contemporaries. He familiarizes them with a type of all-seeing that largely happens independently of the human eye. This can be legitimately called a panoramic project of unknown dimensions.

> *We are at the point […] where the majority of the world´s images are made by–machines-for-machines. In this new age, robot-eyes, seeing algorithms and imaging-machines are the rule, and seeing with the meat-eyes of our human bodies is increasingly the exception. (Paglen, 2014)*

Vienna MMIX makes a type of machine-seeing tangible that usually happens behind our backs. It draws the attention to a compelling imagery so distinctly different from the ones we issue. By revealing the visual register of network cameras, Spinatsch provides us with an impression of how these images feel, function, and which impact they may have on the depiction of people and their social realities. On the other hand, Spinatsch makes his viewers aware of a type of aesthetics that has become an indispensable part of the pictorial language of our time. Surveillance camera aesthetic has been widely appropriated by, for instance, advertising, the film industry, and the social media, which work with the appeal and anarchic qualities of these images and try to emulate or fake what defies meaning in the classical sense. A new specter of vision has been introduced and as the constructivist charm of the Opera Ball images suggest, the viewers may get addicted to a kind of visual that looks casual, accidental, and effortless in its production while being immune to connoisseurship and expertise.

There is also a nostalgic aspect to this idea of training network cameras on an event like the Vienna Opera Ball because, as Howeler (2002) puts it, "Surveillance is outmoded. […] Control occurs on different levels: through credit checks, career moves and medical histories. The fashionability of surveillance is nostalgic." In that

sense, surveillance cameras as the ultimate signifiers of the predominance of vision over any other form of evidence and the splendid arena of the Vienna Opera as one of the bastions of a collective, real-time celebration of sight and societal visibility do form a good match.

11

Jules Spinatsch, *Single Image from Volume II*

© Spinatsch
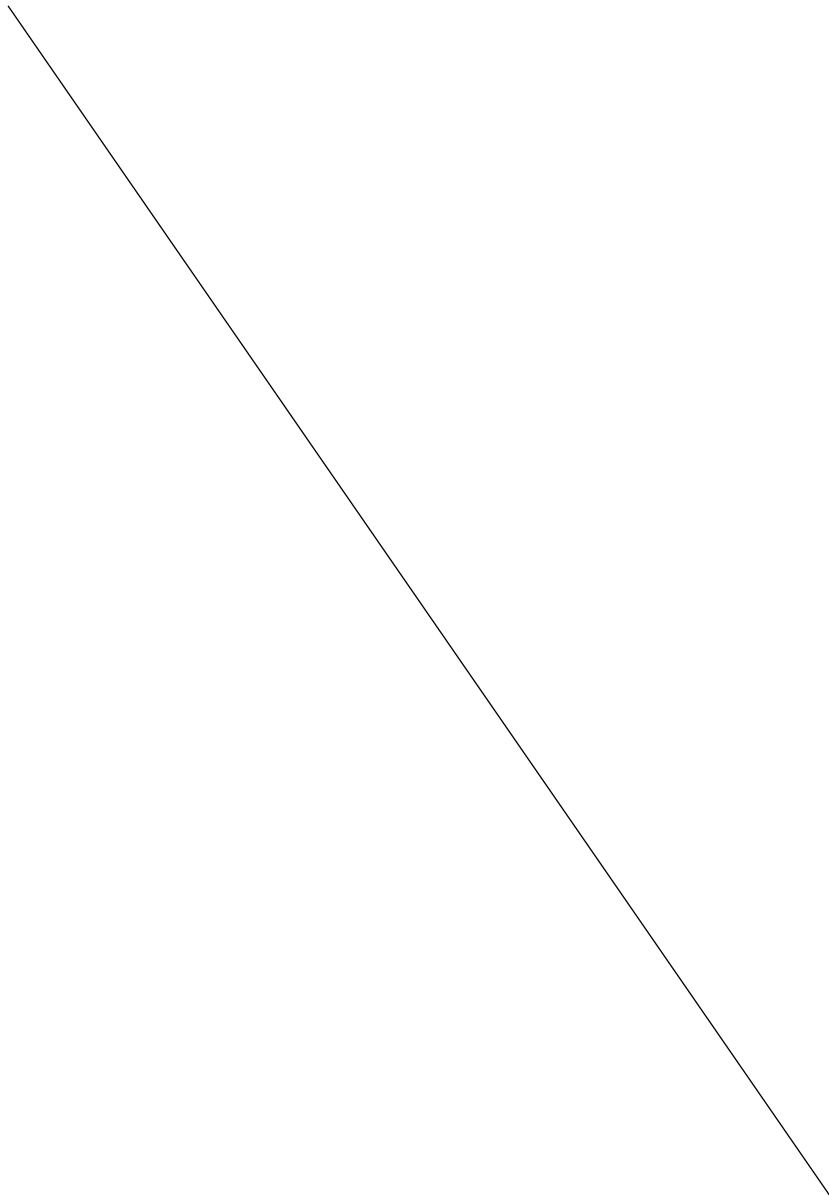
Lost in Pleasure
Mad Joy in Images of Youth Culture

"Be happy!" is the title of Igor Samolet´s photo book. In terms of grammar, the Russian artist expresses an imperative, especially as the phrase is followed by an exclamation mark. Imperatives are appellative by nature and geared towards changes in the conduct of others. In this case, the artist, or rather the protagonists of his visual narrative seem to say, "Be happy! Be as happy as we are! Try or dare to be as happy as we are!" The "happiness" addressed here is definitely not what Oscar Wilde (1981) had in mind when he said, "Pleasure is the only thing one should live for. Nothing ages like happiness" (p.740). Samolet´s crew is young and, in Wilde´s understanding, happiness would make them look old. Instead, they are more likely lost in pleasure and most of their actions seem to be aimed at instant fulfillment.

Paul Kwiatkowski´s "illustrated novel," "And Every Day Was Overcast," providing a visual narrative of his youth in Florida, will feature as the American counterexample. Like Samolet´s book, it was published in 2013. Though each of the two books I will be dealing with was created in a completely different context and cultural environment, one in the US, the other in Russia, they share a comparable spirit and atmosphere and show their youthful protagonists in the pursuit of digressive and at times even repulsive pleasures. For Dick Hebdige (2008), to "exceed consensual definitions of the proper and the permissible" (p. 286) is one possible strategy for youth to become visible, "make their presence felt" (p. 286) and appear on the radar of social or sociological attention.

Methodologically speaking, the question will be how to approach the pleasure sensed in these photographs of young people and their unorthodox life-styles. How to furnish proof that "pleasure" is at play although some of the photographs contradict any conception of what fun looks like in our consumer society? How to bring out the subversive potential of these youthful attempts to get lost in pleasure? How to pinpoint "pleasure" in visual terms? In my reading of the photos, I will not try to falsely locate the phenomenon in the images themselves, but will closely tie it to the reception process. The enjoyment attested to others will not be presented as a pictorially verifiable fact, but as the outcome of a complex transference process in a psychoanalytical sense. Following the ideas developed by Robert Pfaller (2002) in his book "Die Illusionen der anderen. Über das Lustprinzip in der Kultur" (The Illusions of the others. About the pleasure principle in culture), I will try to get beyond the mere surface pleasure of these images.

Imaginary Spaces Lending Themselves to Projections of All Sorts

At the beginning of his photo novel, Kwiatkowski (2013) undertakes a half-hearted mock attempt to provide the viewer of his book with some spatial coordinates of where the whole action takes place. On the second double page, an easily overlooked, seemingly shapeless pink form turns out to depict Florida, "America's phantom limb" (p. 14), as he calls it. The white asterisk in this miniature map locates the narrator's hometown as Loxahatchee in South Florida, the topography of which he describes as follows: "My roots were steeped in shallow earth, easily extracted from amorphous terrain – swamps and beaches, neither land nor water" (p. 14). The corresponding South Florida photographs accompanying the narrative do not help much to create a distinct idea of the setting. The photographer seems to have made an effort not to confirm any preconceived ideas the viewer might have had of Florida. In the photos, there are hardly any spatial markers, no street signs or identifiable views. Instead, the pictures show street scenarios that could be taken at a lot of different places, thickets, abandoned houses, ruins overgrown by nature, close-up views which cannot be easily contextualized. As a result of this strategy, viewers find themselves in a kind of no-man's land, which facilitates projections of all sorts. The protagonists of the novel seem to be placed in a vaguely outlined and almost imaginary spatial setting where they pursue their strange rituals, segregated from the rest of the world, on a planet of their own. (Fig. 1)

The same holds true for Samolet's book. The site of action is simply "City C." in Russia. Although the photos seem to work in a documentary tradition, the photographer refrains from specifying the particular area where the images were taken. Instead, the actions of the young protagonists are transferred to some real-life film set with changing props. In the first photos the tone of the narrative is set. The young people gather in a dilapidated, mysterious building, which seems to be offered as the potential site for the transgressions subsequently shown in the book. With this dark, mysterious building reminiscent of the famous house on the hill in Hitchcock's "Psycho" or the demonized house in Patricia Highsmith's story "The Black House" (2004), a master signifier is introduced which helps to fictionalize the space of action. In both books, the young people seem to have invaded an unknown territory to form an enclave there and establish a temporary realm of "happiness" that is not supposed to appear on the radar of conventional search engines.

1

Paul Kwiatkowski, *And Every Day Was Overcast*
2013, p. 117

© Kwiatkowski

Igor Samolet, *be happy!*, 2013

© Samolet

What Happiness Looks Like

What does the "happiness" of Samolet´s protagonists look like? The young people are engaged in all kinds of pleasurable actions: eating, smoking, drinking, fooling around, having sex. There are obviously no restrictions in terms of sexuality. Sexuality seems to emerge from boredom, instant longing, or as the flip side of violence. There is nothing hidden or rarefied about it and it is not reminiscent of the solitary and charged act practiced in privacy and in designated zones. There are no recognizable social rules in terms of what is forbidden or accepted in the group, but the scope of the acceptable is far reaching. Samolet, the chronicler of the daring behavior of these young people with whom he became friends, bestows everything with equal importance. Violent actions co-exist with endeavors of utmost banality. The camera is present at the most intimate moments, but there is no sense of indignation, guilt, or shame. Their days seem to lack a familiar structure. (In fact, as Samolet told me, most of them were students and had their summer break when he took the photos) The care-free atmosphere conveyed by the photographs is also due to the fact that a sense of property seems to be entirely missing. It is all about sharing and serving oneself. (Fig. 2)

Kwiatkowski´s youth enjoy comparable pleasures, but seem to be more alert to what the camera will make of their performance. In a lot of cases, their transgressive behavior looks experimental and playful. They perform for the camera, rehearse, and seem to consider the effect on the viewer. They play with pre-existing poses and there seems to be an awareness of how easily their own forms of rebellious pleasure can be appropriated by mainstream culture.

Getting Rid of Oneself
"The Loose Footing I Had in this World Paled"

In his book, "Die Illusionen der anderen. Über das Lustprinzip in der Kultur," Robert Pfaller (2002) talks about the relief and pleasure of self-absorption. This often unnoticed mental escape can be one of the most agreeable things and ensure enormous pleasure. According to Pfaller (2002), there is a deep-seated need to recover from the demands any identity construct imposes on us and to be, at least temporarily, relieved from the self. While presenting a numb façade to the others and fooling them with one´s physical presence, one can escape into fantasies or even a state of total mindlessness. Pfaller (2002) compares this type of existence to feigning death. The others believe that you are alive and accessible, but in fact you are gone. In order to exemplify his idea, Pfaller (2002) refers to sport programs on TV. We watch these programs and make the others think that we

Igor Samolet, *be happy!*, 2013

© Samolet

5

Igor Samolet, *be happy!*, 2013

© Samolet

follow what is going on, or even identify with some of the protagonists. In reality, we take time off and hide behind a publicly accepted activity to get rid of ourselves. Interestingly, in this state of self-oblivion, people have no distinct image of themselves while they maintain their visibility for the others who seem to be content with the deceitful image offered to them. Samolet (2013) depicts two young men in a kitchen. There is food in front of them and there are forks to eat the food, but they are strangely disconnected from this scenario. In Pfaller´s (2002) understanding, they would be perfectly legitimized as diners, while, in fact, they left the table unexcused. As Pfaller (2002) points out, one should not disturb or call on people in this state of self-oblivion because they are comparable to sleepwalkers, and every interaction with them may painfully remind them that they are "someone," namely, a certain person with a particular identity. Pfaller (2002) also addresses the socio-political implications of this phenomenon. His point is that this mechanism of self- absorption as a temporary recuperation phase can also restore individuals to their full work power and make them even more compatible with capitalist efficiency . The more escape roads to a world of blankness and fading out a society and its respective leisure industries offer, the higher the guarantee that the members of this society will function smoothly. (Fig. 3/4)

In Kwiatkowski´s (2013) book there is a strong sense of enjoying oneself by taking a leave from the world of normality and its standardized norms. This is conveyed by the images as much as by Kwiatkowski´s narrative, which focuses on this aspect a lot. Right at the beginning of the novel, Florida is characterized as a place where people "come to vanish" (p. 14). In the narrative, escaping and disappearing are presented as highly desirable conditions. "I loved the freedom to disappear" (p. 242), as the narrator says. To disappear means to be elsewhere, to become inaccessible to the others. One of the author´s schoolmates, nick-named Cobain, practices this kind of withdrawal on a regular basis. He escapes via his walkie-talkie. Whenever the bullying and the humiliations of the others become onerous, he escapes to a world of ambience noise and random recordings of sonar waves. There is a way out. He "escaped through the mysterious transmissions" (p. 3) of his radio. "This clusterfuck of noise was Cobain´s safe place" (p. 174). Most of the time, though, the escape road is drugs, like the ones fabricated by a friend of the narrator. "[…] He´d siphon venom out of glands on their backs and mix it with Arizona Iced Tea to make a hallucinogenic mind fuck […]" (p. 70) that allows for a "sporadically going in and out of blackout mode" (p. 108).

In this connection, the motto of Kwiatkowski´s (2013) book is particularly telling: "Don´t cry. If you have become human enough to cry, then all the magic in the world cannot change you back." This quote seems to indicate that human consciousness and the corresponding subject status are no blessings. The process

of becoming human will be irreversible, and your upgrading will be permanent. Several of Samolet´s photographs seem to represent an attempt to "change them back" and to show his friends in a state of almost unanimated passivity. There is this photograph of a young man sitting on the floor, fully absorbed by his smoking, smoke covering and clouding his forehead. The buckets of paint in the background give additional weight and some deep and solid gravity to his body. (Fig 5) In another image, a young woman is comfortably lying on the metal planks of a roof, strangely in line with the train wagons parked in a desolate train station. The juxtaposed close-up of a young man looking, one of his eyes disturbingly red, and subjecting her to the power of his gaze, additionally contributes to turning her into an object. One more example would be the image of a man peacefully outstretched in a puddle of water with an air of unearthly abstraction about him. He seems to have shed his skin in this shallow water while roaming elsewhere. As one of the photos suggests, at times, only a bucket of cold water may force some of these renegades back into humanness. (Fig. 6)

Blurred Versus Hyper-Real Vision

Everyone will agree that a blurred vision may be taken as an indicator of a lack of a straight and focused state of mind. In Kwiatkowski´s (2013) illustrated novel, a lot is said about distorted views, though mostly in the text part of the book. In the author´s written account of his youth, drugs and their influence on perception play a major role. The verbal images that he uses to describe this "cloudy mental slide show" (p. 208) have a vivid immediacy. "When I turned my head, the swamp smeared into a dirty green blur. (p. 71). Or "I hyperventilated for nearly an hour waiting for abstract fumes of colors to turn solid, for shapes to rearrange themselves into something familiar" (p. 71). With a few exceptions, though, the photos in Kwiatkowski´s book are in focus. The camera seems to have adjusted the distortions caused by drugs and narcotics. But the images follow a type of unfocused and negligent aesthetic in the tradition of Nan Goldin, Richard Billingham, or Jürgen Teller, to just name a few. The photos present random views and seem to be taken carelessly, without any consideration of composition and sanctioned form. One can feel the freedom and liberation that come from this care-free aesthetic, which also perfectly reflects the content of the book. The protagonists enjoy their lives outside of social norms; the author takes the freedom to arrange a fascinating conglomerate of images meant to puzzle the viewers and lead them off the track of conveniently composed coffee- table books. In fact, the visual material for "And Every Day Was Overcast" (2013) was assembled from a number of highly diverse sources. There are photos from Kwiatkowski´s family album, interspersed with popular culture collages, original photos from the time period the narrative deals with, found ready-

6
—————

Igor Samolet, *be happy!*, 2013

© Samolet

Paul Kwiatkowski, *And Every Day Was Overcast*
2013, p. 146 / 147

© Kwiatkowski
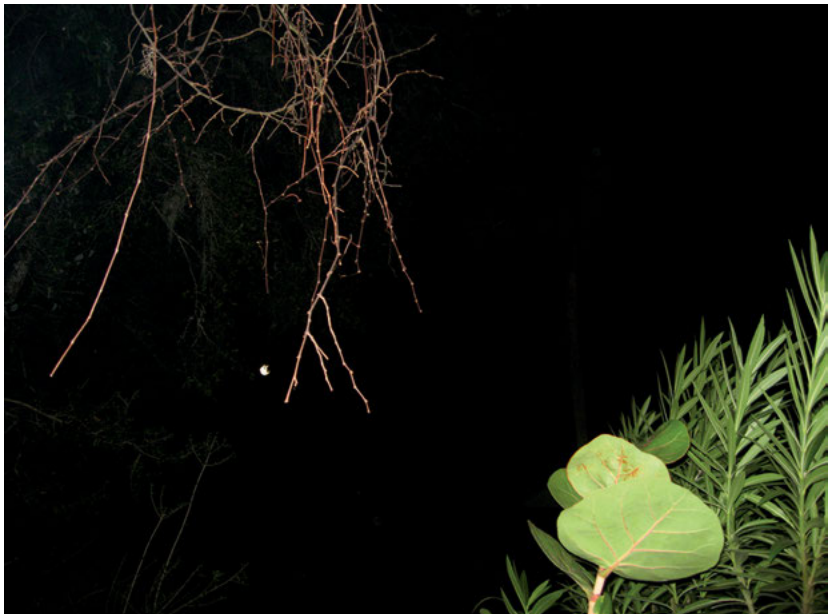
made images, and photos that were staged and taken 10 years later when the photographer was working on the book. In this rich and densely woven network of fact and fiction, the whole project of reviving one´s youth becomes a delirious journey.

In Kwiatkowski´s book, descriptions of blurry mindsets and sets of inconsequential images are balanced by a kind of hyper-vision of segments of reality. (Fig.7) Anything can take on the intensity of such vision: twigs of a tree breaking through the darkness like glowing thunder bolts, or illuminated green leaves revealing their downsides as visual enigmas.

At the beach, Kyle and I were laid out, burying our feet in the sand, taking note of the sky´s now apparent curvature, obscuring infinite blackness. The entire day passed languid as though I was asleep. Behind us were backlit palm trees, their silhouettes matte black and jagged against the hyper-colored setting sun." (Kwiatkowski, 2013, p. 276)

In these images, certain aspects of reality achieve an almost hypnotic hyper-realism and an intensity that bespeaks the perceptual mind set of the Florida kids. Faded consciousness and radical illumination seem to signify the two poles in the lives of these young people. Flashing brightness and heightened awareness, which pose a challenge to normal vision, are followed by states of mind that border on oblivion and total escape. This heightened attention can, for instance, zoom in on an arrangement as banal as toilet paper and tampons scattered on the ground, or concentrate on a car wreck making its appearance in the light.

In Samolet´s (2013) book, the stark contrast between total darkness and illumination is even stronger. The scenes at the beginning of the book all happen at night. The images feature sparsely lit scenarios, forbidden and dangerous actions going on there, mysterious reunions around a camp fire, demonically lit faces that emerge from the dark. In this connection the layout of the book is particularly interesting. The book is arranged in corresponding double spreads. At the beginning and end of the book, all the photo pages are juxtaposed with seemingly black and blank pages. On closer inspection, though, one realizes that the black pages also contain visual data and are apparently totally underexposed photographs. When looking at them from a particular angle, they release some of their submerged information and one recognizes vague structures and forms. This concept gives the whole narrative an additional dimension. The images that are visible or gained visibility in the photographic process are especially poignant and precious because they made it into the light. All the information provided in Samolet´s book is basically prone to some radical kind of censorship. Consequently, the viewer gets the clear feel-

ing that they are only provided with a glimpse of what is going on in this community. In the middle of the book, the corresponding double pages are white and the narrative seems to stabilize. For a while, the pictures are in no danger of being reclaimed by the blackness of photographic misfortune or moralistic disapproval.

"Interpassivity" and Delegated Pleasure

In the two photo-books, we encounter images of youths driven by the pleasure principle. They drift through their lives with apparently no disciplining super-ego structure in place. Their sudden fits of aggression appear as aimless as their phases "in the blackout mode." The photos expose them, and they expose themselves in their pursuit of instant satisfaction, while none of these extremes seem to be a source of shame. As already said at the beginning of this paper, my overall question concerns the reception of these images: Why are these images so appealing and what about the success of these books? To quote from one of the reviews of Kwiatkowski´s novel, "We finish the book in a delirious state, not unlike the kids whose lives it seeks to evoke" (Ulin, 2013) When "Be Happy!" was first presented at the *Vienna Photo Book Festival* 2013, it sold out within one day and people were fighting over the remaining issues. In the following, I would like to offer a possible explanation of this phenomenon by referring to Robert Pfaller´s (2002) concept of "interpassivity."

Pfaller describes what he calls "interpassivity" from a psychoanalytic point of view. According to Lacan´s notion of the decentralized subject, feelings and convictions can be externalized, located outside, and lead to an "objective" existence there. This act of externalization requires an agent who then becomes the carrier of the outsourced feelings. In "interpassivity," the subject delegates pleasure and manages to enjoy via the other. Pfaller (2002) gives the example of the video recorder which spares its owner the tedious job of watching all the movies and programs he/she always wanted to see. The recorder enjoys in my place and frees me from my own desires, or rather the super-ego command to do so. The idea that all these films have already been watched by a substitute creates relief and is pleasurable. This happens by way of self- deception, in a type of magical thinking, as Pfaller calls it. Those who delegate the pleasure of watching films, of course, know that this is nonsense and will not work, but at the same time, there is this undeniable experience of relief which resists any rationalization of the phenomenon.

My point is that, regarding the reception process of these images, the concept of "interpassivity" can be applied to Kwiatkowski´s and Samolet´s photographs. The question is whether these images of young people in precarious conditions and dilapidated environments justify any talk of an outsourcing of imagi-
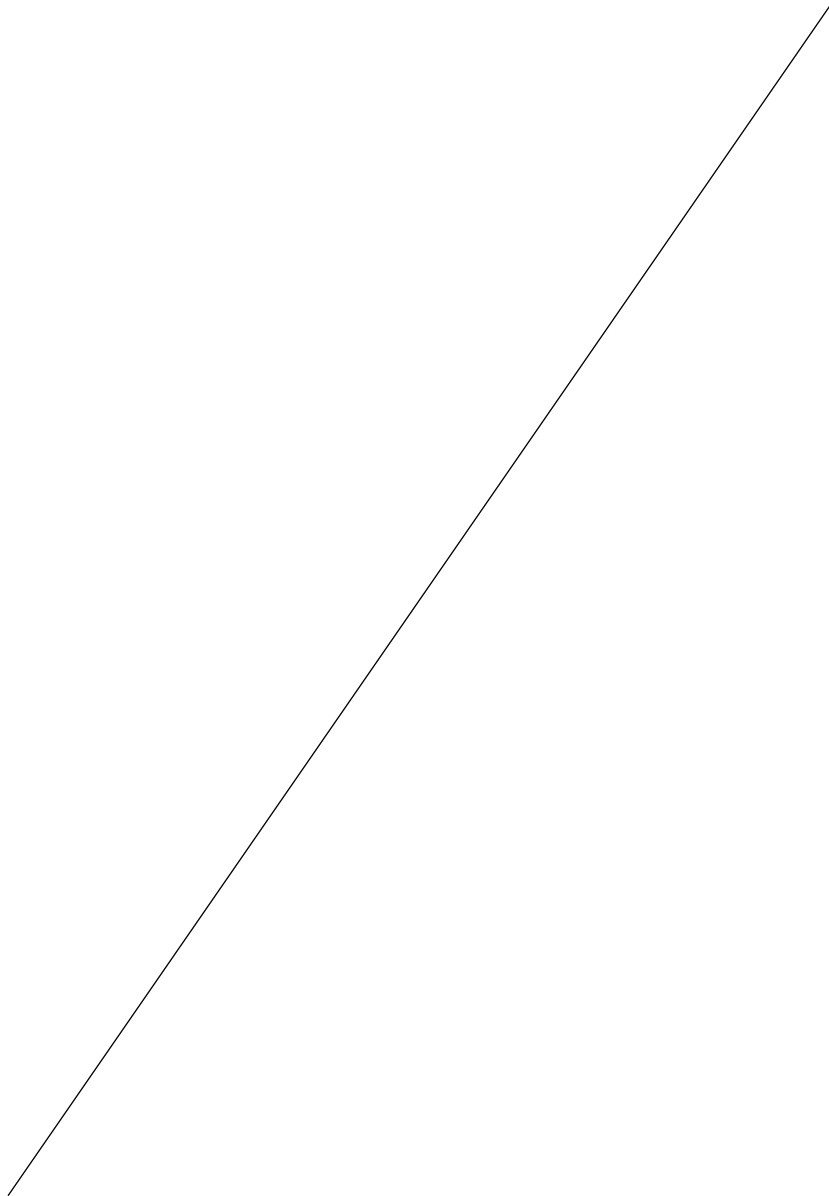
8

Igor Samolet, *be happy!*, 2013

© Samolet

nary pleasure or why these youths should qualify as agents of delegated pleasure? Let me take the example of Samolet´s images of a group of young people in a kitchen. They talk, argue, embrace, kiss, serve themselves from the refrigerator, but most importantly, co-exist in a room that does not seem to be structured to accommodate individual epicenters. They share the available space, the food, and collectively fuel the unrestricted energy prevailing in this room. There is a lot of joy in this unregulated social trafficking in a kitchen space. No one seems to be concerned with distance or control. Moving through this space may lead to unforeseeable libidinal encounters or pleasurable collisions of all sorts. (Fig. 8)

Another telling example would be one of Samolet´s photos of two, probably three adults and one child in what looks like a living room. Despite the considerable chaos in the room, the space resonates with relaxation and enjoyment. The figures almost blend in with their cluttered and messy environment. Piles of clothes, food left-overs, junk, an old, a torn-up sofa, etc., obviously cannot diminish the ease of the situation. The fact that the things around them take up most of the space they inhabit does not seem to bother them and they indulge in this mass of surrounding items. There is no indicator of an attempt to establish order and, by way of doing so, increase their self-esteem and sense of command. Such self-assertive measurements are not needed. If, as Freud (1989) points out in his essay on Narcissism, object libido may thrive at the cost of super-ego structures, then these people in the messy living room signify the ease of a lack of self- control and discipline. (Fig. 9)

I guess we all agree that images we commonly associate with pleasure look slightly different. They work with the promises of the consumer society, and advertising bombards us with such images on a daily basis. In comparison, Kwiatkowski´s and Samolet´s photographs are unappealing and depict scenarios that are sometimes hard to bear. They offer nothing to identify with in a linear way. Still, my point was that the artists´ photographs allow for a kind of delegated pleasure. As the model of "interpassivity" suggested, the workings of desire are slightly more complicated when it comes to psychic transactions that imply liking and disliking at the same time. A brief recourse to Lacan sheds light on the deeper roots of "interpassivity," and exemplifies that what Lacan calls "jouissance" is not necessarily bright and positive, but dark and even painful. For Lacan (1991), "jouissance," the pleasure principle of the subject, is structured by the "sinthom." The symptom is a kind of generative substance at the core of the subject´s existence. It is inaccessible and resists dissolution because it borders the "real" or is a piece of the "real" which can never be integrated into the symbolic order. In the state of "jouissance," the subject enjoys the fundamental, inaccessible passivity at the core of his/her existence that also contains the keys to the specific dysfunctionality and deformation of the subject. In order to function in the symbolic order, we have to defy this experience, but are at the same time drawn to it. The records of the

radical attempts of the young to gravitate towards something that has to do with deep and self-absorbed pleasure and some inert, denied passivity let us partake in something we are well-trained enough to ward off. When Kwiatkowski and his friends in South Florida embarked on an alternative life style in exploration of un-known pleasures, of course "Everyday Was Overcast"; how could the days have been bright, considering the fundamental ambivalence at the heart of this project?

9

Igor Samolet, *be happy!*, 2013

© Samolet

Death Can Wait

Images of Old Age and
Dying in Austrian Hospice Campaigns

It can be highly disconcerting to come across information about death or people close to death while pursuing one´s everyday life. In the case of the campaigns that will be the subject of my analysis, the people in Vienna stumbled on these kinds of messages daily on their way to work, in the newspapers or on billboards viewed from their car. For me, the haunting images of the campaigns created a feeling of the incompatibility and asynchrony of certain aspects of life, and infiltrated the daily routine with a sense of disruption and deep-seated irritation. At the same time, the images caught the viewers off guard because they were not designed along the lines of the classical "memento mori" rhetoric. They were mundane and explicit, and relatable.

For this project, I chose to work with the PR campaigns of two Austrian institutions which are professionally engaged with old age and dying and to concentrate on the period between 2002 and 2012. One of the institutions is a hospice in Vienna, called "CS Hospiz Rennweg;" the other is the so-called „Haus der Barmherzigkeit" (House of Mercy). Both institutions launched powerful campaigns to draw the public´s attention to alternative models of old age and dying. Both wanted to initiate a public discourse on what old age and dying in post-industrial societies could be like. The images appeared not only on billboards, as already mentioned, but on rolling boards and in the print media as well. The two institutions continually compete for money and available resources, and therefore try to efficiently promote their cause. In the case of *CS Hospiz*, 40 percent of the institution´s operating budget comes from private sponsors who, of course, want to be able to identify with the institution´s profile in the public eye.
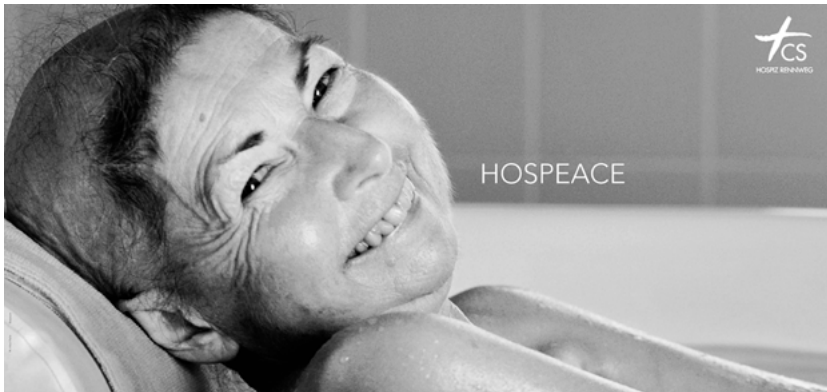
In Austria, the hospice idea emerged from a community of socially engaged citizens, mostly women, who wanted to introduce new ways of dying in "dignity and character." In 1989, the first mobile hospice was created. In the beginning, the movement strongly depended on the work and engagement of volunteers. Today, *CS Hospiz* is fully institutionalized and has its own building which also houses a nursing home and social center. The "warmth of the open fire of the beginnings has been replaced by a centrally steered heating system" (Heller, 2012, p. 147), as one of the founders puts it. Still, to this day, the institution relies heavily on donations and financial support from sponsors and backers. As the represen-
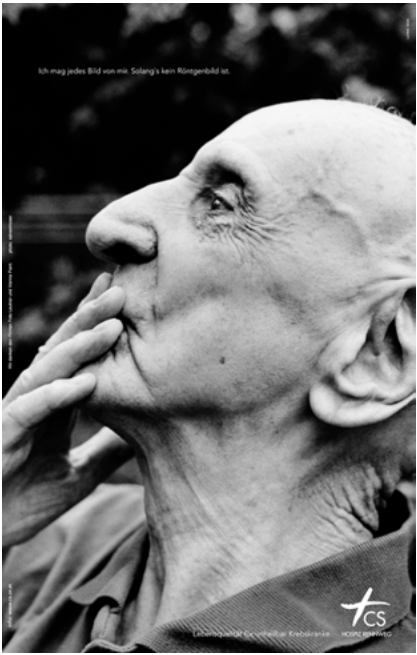
tatives of *CS Hospiz* emphasize, it is their aim to stay true to the original ambition of the founding group and carry on their strong social and societal mission. They want to play an active role in social politics and the decision- making processes involved. Therefore, the campaigns they have been conducting over the past years also represented an attempt to infiltrate public life and society with powerful and controversial images of old age and life close to death. "Haus der Barmherzigkeit" is an institution with a slightly different profile. The wide-spread organization is run by the "Erzdiözese Wien," a Catholic organization that operates homes in various locations throughout Lower Austria. Their residents are patients with long-term, chronic, or terminal diseases, mostly old people but also young coma patients, etc. As a huge organization that is dedicated to high-level care and care-intensive treatment, they too rely on money from sponsors.

Both of these institutions worked mostly with *Lowe GGK*, a nationally and internationally acclaimed Austrian advertising agency, and in particular with Walther Salvenmoser. He developed most of the ideas and designs for the campaigns, but also helped to secure the necessary advertising space, including air time for the short films produced for *CS Hospiz*. Due to the commitment of agencies like *GGK*, *CS Hospiz* receives publicity worth about one million Euro a year. The agreement is that the institution should not interfere with the agency´s creative freedom. As Mag. Dirnberger, the marketing person of *CS Hospiz*, admits, this arrangement is not frictionless and has caused a lot of internal debates. Some relatives of patients who act as models in the campaigns take offense, and sponsors may find the more provocative solutions inappropriate. A lot of ethical issues have to be taken into account. But in general, their trust in Salvenmoser´s creative decisions has paid off. Several of the campaigns earned prizes and considerable public recognition. Walther Salvenmoser was also the mastermind behind most of the *House of Mercy* campaigns addressed in this paper.

The Blunt Language of Social Advertising

In the U.S., a lot of money flows into public-service ads. These are campaigns financed by public or government agencies with the objective of influencing public opinion and behavior in matters of, for instance, drug and alcohol abuse, child abuse, domestic violence, AIDS, etc. By addressing a range of social issues, these ads are meant to stir discussions, create awareness, and eventually change behaviors. There has been a lot of debate whether matters of such grave importance should be left to advertising people and "undertaken by the same people who peddle cornflakes" (Berger, 2001, p. 295) or dog food. But billions of dollars are spent on these public

CS Hospiz Campaign 2011, Lowe GGK

© CS Hospiz Rennweg

CS Hospiz Campaign 2006, Lowe GGK

© CS Hospiz Rennweg

3

———

Nicholas Nixon, *C.C., Boston,* 1983

©Nicholas Nixon, Courtesy of Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco

awareness campaigns created by some of the ad industry´s most innovative minds. The point is that such benevolent advertising, apart from doing a lot of good, can bring considerable public acclaim and is ideally suited for winning creative awards.

Following the analysis of Warren Berger (2001), "these socially conscious ads turned conventional advertising on its head – they dealt in brutal honesty, not upbeat fantasy" (p. 299). From the 80s on, the images became even harsher, and although these ads vary from one cultural context to the next, the more successful social-issue ads around the world have, according to Berger (2001), one thing in common, namely, "a reliance on disturbing and blunt imagery" (p. 302). They work with shock and drama, and, in a lot of cases, confront the viewer with physical matters like bruised and battered faces, dying and emaciated bodies, blood and injuries.

Zooming in on Old Faces and Bodies

The Viennese campaigns were comparable to other public service ads in that they too did not necessarily want to spare the viewer. Certainly, neither *CS Hospiz* nor *House of Mercy,* both run by a Catholic organization, had an official mandate from the socialist city government of Vienna to promote images of old age and terminally ill people in public. But due to their history, the two institutions have a strong social agenda – and both have to raise money. So they work with disturbing images and test the boundaries of what is acceptable in society. Most disconcerting for us are, of course, plain images of bodily decay and the physical aspects of old age. One such image that actually won an award in 2011 is of a woman in the bath tub. At first, one is drawn to her cheerful smile, but then realizes the traces of chemo therapy on her body. This comes as a shock. There seems to be nothing special about a woman enjoying her bath, but then the devastating effect of cancer becomes obvious. The word "Hospeace" added to the image speaks of a world where death is a reality. (Fig. 1)

"Ich mag jedes Bild von mir. Solange es kein Röntgenbild ist" (I like every image of myself as long as it is not an X-ray) (2006), provides another close-up of a terminally ill person. In this case, the viewer is confronted with the old man´s wrinkles, the specks on his skin, his haggard mouth, the loose skin of his neck, and the skull-like outlines of his head. Due to the close-up technique of the photo, all these details are mercilessly brought to the attention of the viewer. It is a type of photo that one will not find in product advertising, but references can be found in photographs by artists. Richard Avedon´s photos of his father Jacob come to mind, or Nicholas Nixon´s renditions of terminally ill patients in hospitals and elderly residents at nursing homes in the U.S. In comparison to these photographs,

the hospice images clearly remain within certain limits of the acceptable. Despite their directness, they are deeply indebted to a humanist tradition in portraiture, meant to promote an empowered and autonomous version of the human being. The aged man in the hospice photo is presented as someone who retained his qualities as a human subject. His smile is intentional and directed. He is fully engaged in blowing someone a kiss, and seems to be conscious and aware of his environment. Nixon´s photographs taken in the nursing homes (1983 – 85) display a radically different approach. As a daring documentarian, he merely recorded what he encountered at these homes. "The photos neither flatter the residents nor disdain them" (press release Zabriskie Gallery, 2003). There is no intent to provide a model of meaningful aging. The resident of the nursing home is depicted as deeply withdrawn in his bodily shell. One cannot tell which degree of consciousness dwells in this body that presents a numb and sealed façade to the environment. The photograph renders the old person as mere physical fact and matter. In comparison, the hospice image provides the viewers with a mitigated version of the decay and the disintegration caused by disease and old age. Although I know from my own experience how disturbing the campaign photos were and how well they functioned in a PR context, they are clearly informed by a particular pictorial tradition and the Christian ideology of the institutions promoting them. (Fig. 2/3)

The humanist roots of the type of portraiture promoted in the hospice photos become even more evident in the close-up of the face of an old woman from a 2003 campaign. The text insert reads: "It is the power of the soul to suffer and to experience happiness." And indeed, the old lady is presented as an empowered and dignified being. She is calmly looking at the viewer with the proverbial eyes that have seen a lot. The crumpled landscape of her face is animated and powered by spirituality. (Fig. 4)

A corresponding image by Nicholas Nixon conveys a totally different impression of old age. The person, probably a woman, seems no longer herself. For lack of a cognitive model of herself, she physically clings to herself with her claw-like fingers. This wide-eyed, hairy being with signs of panic and fear cannot perform any mirroring function. The camera caught her as an alien who has very little in common with the self-contained, mildly smiling old lady of the *CS Hospiz* photo. Her physiognomy cannot be read and old age and disease has left anarchic marks on her body. (Fig. 5)

In this connection, a "Little Brothers´" ad (1998) proves particularly interesting. It presents age lines as "roadmaps of the soul," lines which are supposed to be read and deciphered. The furrowed brow of the man talks about "Worrying if I´d ever return from Ivo Jima alive." According to the underlying psycho-physiognomic model, his first encounter with his future wife had to leave a lasting impression on this face. And there are also subversive traits which hint

CS Hospiz Campaign 2006, Lowe GGK

© CS Hospiz Rennweg

5

Nicholas Nixon, *M.A.E., Boston*, 1985

©Nicholas Nixon, Courtesy of Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco

at "The smirk of a man who ignored prohibition." As viewers, faced with the landscape of these old faces, we are supposed to know which events deserve to be read back into the faces of aged people and to construct a meaningful facial cartography. Nixon´s photographs, in turn, seem to be random records of wrinkles, bruises, age spots and the disfigurement of the approaching death. (Fig. 6)

Close-Up Views as a Powerful Pictorial Strategy

When it comes to depicting the reality at nursing homes and hospices, there seems to be one main type of pictorial rhetoric. Everyone knows the corresponding images of an old and weak person being taken care of by a nurse, or some other friendly staff. This highly standardized version can be found in many brochures and promotional materials of institutions like *CS Hospiz* or *House of Mercy*. The images emphasize the degree of attention and the dialogical character of the relationship depicted. In this obviously close relationship, one party needs help and care while the other most willingly provides what is needed and seems to derive pleasure from this engagement. Interestingly, *CS Hospiz* and *House of Mercy* do not argue along these lines in their public campaigns. With a few exceptions, they avoid such imagery. Instead, they work with close-ups of single faces of their patients. From the 148 images circulated by the *House of Mercy* in the above-mentioned period, 69 of the photos are close-ups. They are used in various versions framed by various text messages.

In light of Emmanuel Levinas´ humanist philosophy, this pictorial strategy can take on a particular meaning. By confronting the public with these blown-up, frame-filling human faces that look directly at the viewer, the designer of the campaign manages to tune the public into a fundamental ethical dimension, as Levinas (1998) understands it. For him, any ethical relationship is grounded in this face-to-face experience of another human being. When looking into someone else´s eyes, I am confronted with an ultimate, inaccessible otherness that will always withdraw from me. We may share a particular language, temporality, and subject status, but, ultimately, the other is out of reach for me. His/her defenseless eyes make me hold my invasive gaze and by pulling back, in a kind of contraction, self-awareness, and an understanding of my limitations and boundaries are created. At the same time, any responsibility for the other emerges from this deeply affecting encounter, capable of transforming the subject. In a kind of pre-lingual experience mediated by the epiphany of the human face, a primary insight into the irreducible difference at the heart of everything is gained. For Judith Butler (2005), it is also this face-to-face experience through which human beings are confronted with the heteronomy of existence, and ultimately have to acknowledge their inadequacy and vulnerability.

House of Mercy Campaign 2005, Lowe GGK

© Haus der Barmherzigkeit
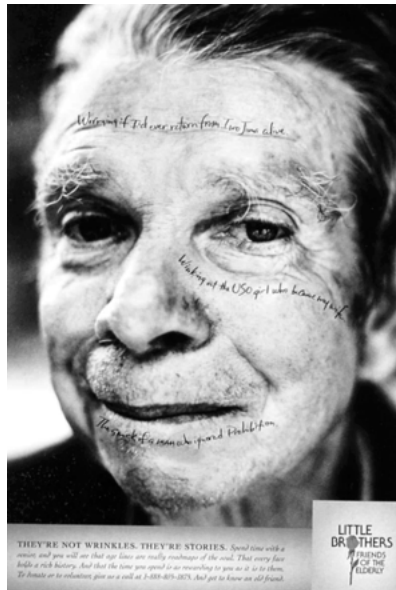
But coming back to the campaigns: From Levinas´ perspective, the close-ups of old faces mainly introduced by the *House of Mercy* allow for a reenactment of this original experience of otherness that disrupts any certainty and challenges the viewer as an ethical being. Due to the close-up technique of these photos, one is overwhelmed and instantly drawn into a relationship that triggers pre-lingual bonds and redefines the classical I – you relation. The unsolvable mystery of these faces generates a type of respect that has very little to do with the common attempts to picture the old person as the receiver of professional care and personal kindness. Presenting the patient as an object of help and good will would mean to automatically reinforce the kind of subject – object hierarchy questioned by the humanist philosopher.

The Old Person and His / Her Youthful Other

A second pictorial strategy I would like to single out concerns the irretrievable passing of time and the scourge of aging. How to address these issues in a PR campaign? Again, the point seems to be to draw everyone in and work with the fact that everyone is subjected to these processes. Everyone will be old one day and a heightened awareness of this heart-rending issue will eventually create solidarity and result in support for the institutions. Consequently, several of the *House of Mercy* campaigns deal with the irreducible gap between the former youthful and now old self of their patients. The corresponding images introduce their protagonists as people who have come a long way. In the past, they were all young and attractive, which seems to guarantee them a certain bonus factor in a society that is obsessed with youthfulness. The fact that they all started out fresh, proper, and handsome is supposed to make their current state less alienating. In the following, I would like to present some of the campaigns which approach the topic in variations.

In one of the 2005 campaigns of the *House of Mercy*, a close-up of a current view of an old face is juxtaposed with a photo of the person when she was young. The snap-shot quality of the current image stands in strong contrast to the framed, staged, and well-composed old photo presenting an authorized version of the former self. The eye wanders between the two photos trying to gain orientation by pinpointing some of the similarities. The task set in this physiognomic puzzle is to create likeness and to detect features unaltered by time. XY proudly presents her former self yet untouched by the signs of aging. The close-up of the old face creates a feeling of unmediated presence, whereas the small framed photograph seems to have emerged from the past as a single, precious, charged item. The accompanying two sentences further support the antagonistic structure between past and present. It says: "This age is carried by the wind. This age is car-

ried (supported) by us." (Fig. 7) "Heute bin ich 79" (Today, I am 79) represents an even more radical, plain, and unsentimental version of the above-mentioned concept. An old photograph of a man is presented in front of a wooden background which blocks the sight, allows for no perspective, and has something highly factual about it. As text and image do not correspond, there is no possibility to verify the statement accompanying the image. It is simply the authority of the handwritten note and its shaky appearance that evokes an aged version of the person shown in the photo. Or is it the person´s imaginary voice, verbalizing this message that makes up for the lacking image? The corresponding visual proof is missing, but we all know what time and life do to faces and bodies. He is still alive, but it does not say how old he was when the photo was taken. He was in his best years then and that is apparently no more the case now, which is sad and hard to accept, but will eventually generate empathy and solidarity. (Fig. 8)

A comparable strategy is deployed in a *House of Mercy* campaign of fall 2006. It is about two representations of one person in the same picture frame. The image features two cropped versions of the same person. The person on the right is set back in space and is therefore smaller in size. The accompanying text reads: "18 or 80 – so what. To be old has its advantages. At least here" (meaning in the nursing home). The text mentions an age difference, but the faces are identical and of the same age. The difference is generated by the different positions in space and by the conjunction "or" which creates difference and speaks of alternatives. On the other hand, the image plays with the mechanisms of perception. 18 or 80 does not make much of a difference for those who still feel "the same." Apart from biological matters, it is the gaze of the others and their mapping of the person on a time line which determines his/her age. (Fig. 9)

Images of Desire and Fun
Against the Bleakness of Old Age

Another main strategy of these campaigns seems to aim at a revision of old age as a sad, unpleasant, and austere phase of life. This makes sense in light of the overall goal of the two institutions to question preconceptions and stereotypes of old age and to work against its stigmatization in society. The still life arrangement presented in a *CS Hospiz* campaign of 2006 wants to demonstrate that terminal illness (the text mentions an incurable cancer disease) and temporary pleasure are compatible. In the arrangement of a Campari and candles on a tray, the little red bottle stands out and signifies worldly temptations and pleasures. The person absent from the photo asked for a Campari because he/she felt that this could provide comfort or delight. (Fig. 10)

8 / 9

House of Mercy Campaign 2006, Lowe GGK

© Haus der Barmherzigkeit

Unheilbar krebskrank:
Eine Tür geht zu. Eine andere geht auf.

CS Hospiz Campaign 2006, Lowe GGK

© CS Hospiz Rennweg

11

House of Mercy Campaign 2004, Lowe GGK

© CS Hospiz Rennweg

12

Wiener Städtische Campaign 2013, Demner, Merlicek & Bergmann

© Wiener Städtische

Next, I would like to deal with a variety of campaigns that try, in one way or the other, to link old age with joy or even "fun," to use one of the key terms of our consumer society. In a *House of Mercy* campaign of Spring 2004, old people present their hobbies as (former) sources of pleasure. In the case of a man in an outdoor scenario, it says: "81 is divisible, social responsibility too." He is presented with a motorcycle, but from his stiff and immobile body posture one can tell that the times of his wild rides are long gone. He seems strangely removed from the vehicle. The man has tucked a helmet under his arm and is obviously dressed to perform as a biker, but there is no indication of action. He is just glancing at the camera, somehow hoping for approval as a biker. The Kawasaki seems to have been added to the scenario as a signifier of the man´s desires, or as an attribute that once formed a part of his identity. Everything is well arranged; he is even wearing a leather jacket, but all this attention to details cannot deny the fact that there is a tremendous and unbridgeable gap between him and his former passion. (Fig. 11)

Classical advertising strategies do not allow for such gaps and the sadness that resides in them, but would rather go for the story of the aged biker who preserved his vitality and remained full-fledged member of our fun society. As Mag. Stipits, the PR person of the *House of Mercy*, mentioned in conversation, they frequently find the concepts and motifs of their campaigns emulated by commercial advertising, which is a considerable source of frustration to them. He added: "They usually can afford the better photographers and will always try to top our images." And indeed, an Austrian insurance company seems to have appropriated the motif of the biker. In this case, it is a female who is riding a bike. She is shown in action, wearing a helmet, goggles, gloves, and a sporty red jacket. There is more of everything: more power, more dynamics, more denial of the restrictions of old age, and, of course, more promises. The ad argues for financial security which will make this kind of fun possible. The message is that with the right choice of a retirement savings plan, the pursuit of your passions will be guaranteed. In terms of the photograph, the action shot featured in the insurance advertisement is definitely more ambitious and exciting than the other more static picture, but it lacks the moving quality of the latter. Both charity institutions have, so far, recruited their models mostly from among their patients, and that makes all the difference in the world. The Kawasaki man may have maintained an imaginary connection with his machine, but his active time is irretrievably over. One can feel the inadequacy and lack at the heart of this identity construct, which is not covered up by false promises. (Fig. 12)

Another interesting example of promoting a positive image of old age and at the same time reflecting upon the conditions of such well-being is the image of the "Faschingspaar" (carnival couple). The image is cropped and snap shot like. The protagonists are nicely dressed, as for a ball or a party. She has a nice orchid

pinned to her dress. Everything seems to be slightly outdated. The party horn she is teasing him with is dated and does not really explain the fun they are obviously having. They are fully absorbed in their action, but the hand written inscriptions superimposed on their bodies seem to identify the potential trouble makers that could abruptly put an end to their enjoyment. It is a precious, carefree moment; for the time being, thyroid, bladder, prostate, lymph nodes, colon, all collaborate and function in a way that no major disturbances are to be expected. It is a precarious equilibrium which could be thrown off balance in the next moment. Images like this stand in strong contrast to the familiar depictions of super-fit old people and vital couples who seem to enjoy a kind of well-being that is a given. Unlike the *CS Hospiz* campaign, these ads leave out the subversive inscriptions or a kind of accompanying subtext that would add a realistic note to the idea of well-deserved and therefore unrestricted joy in the advanced phases of life. (Fig. 13)

The question is what to make of the *House of Mercy* campaign "Live your freedom. We live our responsibility" of spring 2011? When these images appeared in the news media, I clipped all of them because they seemed so irritating. In the headline featured on the photos, freedom and responsibility are juxtaposed. The imperative "Live your freedom" seems to provide the patients with kind of a jester´s license for unrestricted behavior while doctors and staff maintain their sense of responsibility. What could this freedom be about: to do forbidden things, to ridicule expectations and norms? To mock the role of the elderly, chronically sick person in the last phase of his/her life? Is it about the freedom to cause indignation in the viewers? Or is it just about the freedom of being oneself, a right explicitly supported by the institution? How does all this go together with the dignity these institutions want to ensure for their residents?

"Edna" has dressed up for the photo opportunity. She has put on her fancy pink glasses, picked her golden gloves and her fan, and carefully arranged a pink scarf. She is back on stage reviving a former version of herself. As Mag. Stipits points out, that several of their patients enjoy these kinds of photo sessions a lot and collaborate most willingly. They get excited and draw great pleasure from being part of an advertising campaign. In Edna´s case, she first enjoyed her prominence in the community, but soon enough grew tired of her newly achieved glamour and withdrew more and more afterwards. (Fig. 14) Another protagonist performs as the well- dressed gentleman he probably was in the past. In an ironical and almost defiant act, he created a big chewing gum bubble, a speech bubble talking nonsense, blown right in the face of the camera. Like all the other models from the same series, he is presented in front of wallpaper reminiscent of the 70s, which seems to contextualize the tame joys of the models in a bygone framework. And there is the man with the pinwheels in motion. Will the pinwheels let him forget

CS Hospiz Campaign 2004, Lowe GGK

© CS Hospiz Rennweg

House of Mercy Campaign 2011, Lowe GGK

© Haus der Barmherzigkeit

his wheelchair? The fun object is adorned with dots and flowers, but the most disconcerting dot can be found above the man´s left eye. No one took the pains to retouch this marker of mortality. He looks into the camera in a skeptical way and seems to wonder about the effect of his performance on the viewer. Considering the fact that the man is no professional model, he plays his part reasonably well and somehow manages to communicate that he is still fit for fun. (Fig. 15/16)

No doubt, the liberating effect of these images is tremendous. These views contradict any conception of a stale and mournful last phase of life, and question moralizing and restrictive notions of dignity, maturity, and the so-called wisdom of old age. On the other hand, this choreography of fun seems to say more about the director of this show and certain conceptions prevailing in our society than about those depicted. The ad refers to "responsibility", but who exactly was responsible for providing these requisites of fun which the patients seem to hold in front of themselves as if they wanted to hide behind them? In addition, the "freedom" that this campaign promotes seems to be mostly about dressing up, performing, masquerading, and pretending to be unburdened and unconcerned. The question is whether this so-called freedom can be sustained and extended beyond the confines of a photo shoot.

In spring 2013, the *House of Mercy* completely remodeled its campaigns and currently uses comic-like drawings to promote its message. *CS Hospiz* has refrained more and more from working with their "guests." Instead, they try to develop powerful metaphors and signifiers of the special conditions of living close to death. The time of encountering the photographs of hospice residents in public space seems to be over.
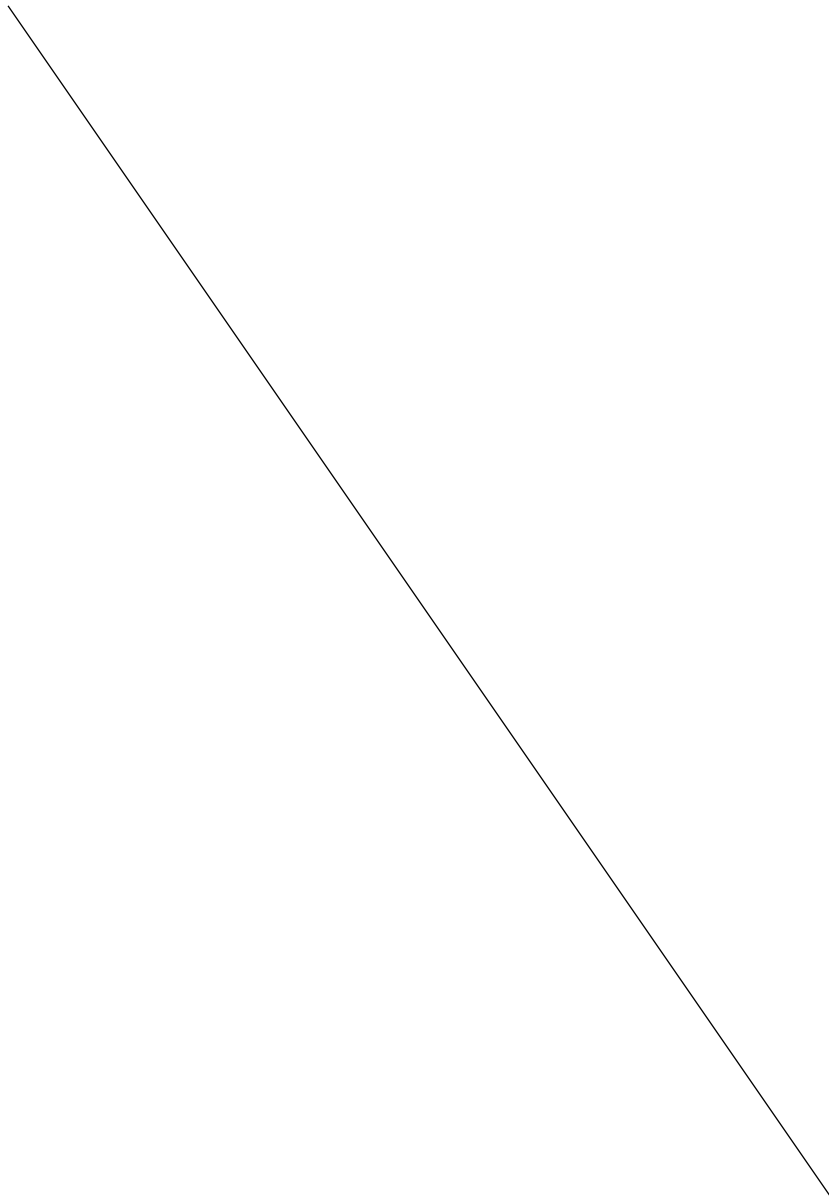
15

———

House of Mercy Campaign 2011, Lowe GGK

© Haus der Barmherzigkeit

16

———

Photo Shoot at the *House of Mercy*, 2011

© Haus der Barmherzigkeit

"The Beast"

On the Photographic Staging of the Large Hadron Collider at the Nuclear Research Center in Geneva

LHC, the book on the construction and set-up of the Large Hadron Collider at *CERN*, the European Organization for Nuclear Research, was from the very beginning promoted with powerful visual metaphors and bombastic rhetoric. The visual urgency of these motifs left no doubt that this was a photographic project operating at the borderline of what can be shown. How could the processes in connection with the particle accelerator, the Large Hadron Collider, be shown? The main challenge obviously existed in developing a visual language that would make it possible to illustrate these operations, most of which are immaterial and transcend our human powers of imagination. The photos in the *LHC* volume were taken by Peter Ginter, a renowned photographer who works for journals such as *Geo* and *National Geographic* and who has, in recent years, made a name for himself with commissioned work in various high-tech fields including biotechnology and plasma physics. The pictures assembled in the *LHC* publication are the yield of a 15-year documentation of the processes around the Large Hadron Collider at *CERN*. "The beast" or "world machine," (Franzobel, 2011, p. 56) as the largest particle accelerator on earth has been called, is able to accelerate protons to almost the speed of light. It subsequently brings them to collision in a 27-kilometer ring housed in a subterranean tunnel. This makes it possible to simulate a scenario comparable to the situation immediately after the Big Bang.

In the following, I would like to give a close reading of Ginter´s photographic response to the challenges faced at *CERN*. The first striking thing noticeable in his photographs is the highly charged atmosphere created by the lighting effects of these images. The question is how to align these light-enhanced pictures with technology photography in the conventional sense? Which visual discourses do so-called technology pictures follow today? As Peter Ginter's photos seem to suggest, a couple of standard models of picturing high tech institutions and the activities taking place there have crystallised. These photos, which are included in the annual reports and information brochures of the respective institutions, show an elevated caste of scientists pursuing their jobs in an environment that is bathed in a type of radiant lighting owed to digital post-production. The spirit prevailing in some of Ginter´s *LHC* photographs can be best described as awe. Rolf-Dieter Heuer (2011), *CERN*'s director, calls Ginter's pictures "an impressive hymn to research" (p. 13). Most of the

photos are jubilant, solemn, and work with an almost religious pictorial rhetoric. The protagonists in these photos of a digitally generated afterglow become astral beings and part of an illuminated world that seems to be conducive to mental clarity and allows for a type of knowledge production that is without failure. They seem to be far removed from a more mundane working environment and apparently act in line with a mission that is legitimized by the strong and all-encompassing light. In Ginter´s photos, the *CERN* crew becomes enlightened in the real sense of the word .The supernatural lighting turns the formulas on the board into the proverbial "writing on the wall" and invests them with a sense of a revelation. (Fig. 1/2)

Glossy Surfaces

In Peter Ginter´s version, *CERN* becomes an environment of glossy surfaces. Metal components, tubes, copper wires, the crystals of the CMS subdetectors, the "big wheel" made of brass, etc., all shine. A reference to the French Abbot Suger occurs. As early as in the 12th century, he "attributed Christian cultic objects made of gold, silver and precious stones with having an effect on the spirit of the believer transcending the aesthetic" (Krauter, 1997, p. 9). The sight of shining, precious metal could result in experiencing levitation and transport the believers to higher spheres. (Fig. 3) As described by Andreas Cremonini (2005) in his essay "Über den Glanz," ("On Brilliance"), in many cases brightness can develop an "aesthetic life of its own, […] which transcends its indexical function of being an expression of the nature of an object" (p. 222). If one considers shininess as a special case of a reflection, these reflections do not necessarily mirror the empirical world in a realistic way. When light hits concave, convex or moving surfaces, the reflected surroundings appear anamorphotically distorted and develop a life of their own. A hardly noticeable shift of the light source or the reflecting object can immediately result in further modifications of the reflected reality. At the same time, reflections on shiny surfaces are extremely dependent on the position and angle of the viewing subject; Glint is ephemeral and can therefore not be counted among the stabilizing aspects of our perception. In the eyes of the phenomenologist, the viewer is also challenged and affected by brilliance because it is accompanied by a kind of blinding and the dissolution of the active gaze. From this dissolution of the active gaze it is only a minor step to the conclusion that "this light, heralded by an irreal, intrinsic brilliance, is not of this world" (Cremonini, 2005, p. 224).

1

Peter Ginter, LHC Publication
Edition Lammerhuber, p. 43

© Ginter
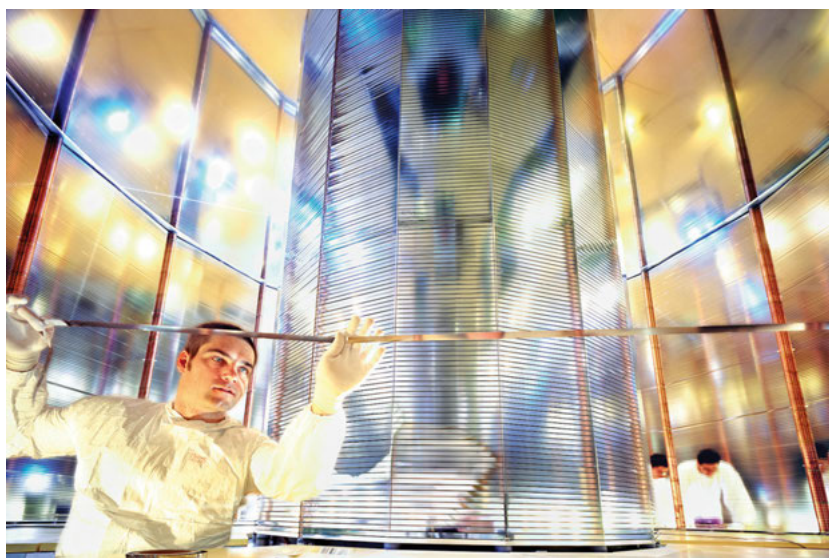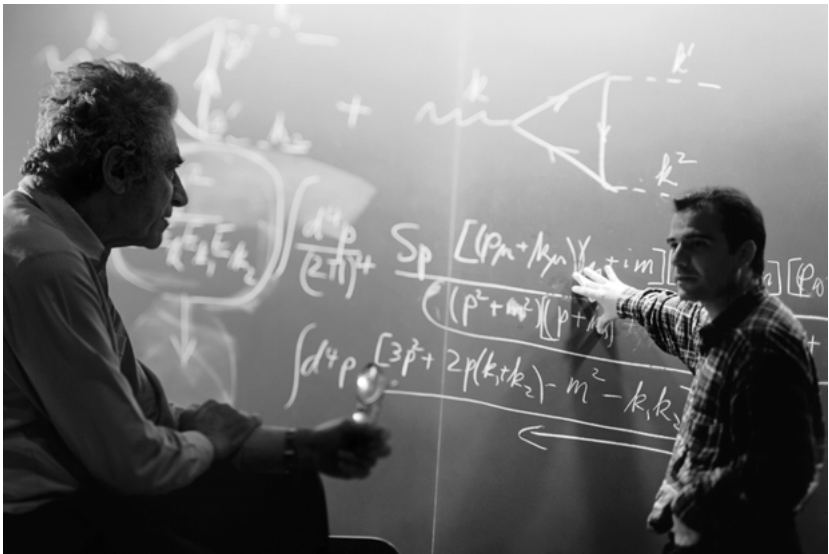
Computer Enhanced Documentary Photography

However, in reality everything is actually much more banal, and shiny technology in contemporary photographs has nothing to do with allusions to a transcendental reality. The animating forces at play are a matter of selecting the appropriate post-production programmes. In this connection, Herta Wolf's (2004) reading of a type of technology photography by Thomas Ruff proves particularly interesting. Ruff's "Machines" cycle from 2003 forms the basis of her analysis. In this series, Ruff dealt with the holdings of the picture archives of the "May" Company, a tool and machinery factory operating in the 1930s in Düsseldorf-Oberkassel. Ruff scanned 60 glass negatives, processed them digitally, and subsequently transformed them into large-format C prints. However, if one looks at these pictures of products that Ruff tinted with the colours of old, hard-wearing industrial paint, it becomes apparent how far these objects are removed from their original context. (Fig. 4) In Ruff's digitally processed version the workpieces, which were originally photographed for the company's sales catalogue, become floating, dazzling, digitally platonic ideas of themselves. They are transformed into immaculate, hard, shiny objects of a consumer world whose longings they reflect and transport. The objects can stand on their own, stimulate their own desire and become simulacra of themselves. As Wolf (2004) continues to elaborate, Ruff's photos are actually only a final, but logical, step in a process of alienation and decontextualisation which is inherent in any photographic act. The ongoing iconization and virtualization of our world have led to a dispensability of the photographic referent. The machinery parts shown in Ruff's depictions owe their appearance to a high degree to "the codes controlled by the (appropriate) computer graphic programmes" (Wolf, 2004, p. 27). The fact that *CERN* staff members may hardly recognize their immediate working environment in the *LHC* photos should therefore come as no surprise. Ginter´s reportage photography actually creates a digitally processed variant of their familiar reality that follows its own logic of representation and can only partly be judged on its documentary claims.

On the Staging of the Man-Technology Relationship

How is the relationship between man and technology staged in these photos? In the beginning of the *LHC* book, a worker appears inserted into the skeleton of the *LHC* construction. In this way, the gigantic technology takes on the character of a framing device for the tiny human. Throughout the entire book, numerous variations on this motif of the individual who occupies the centre of action and assumes his/her rightful position at the core of this scientific-technological order are simulated. Many of the photos develop such force because the actual shape

4

———

Thomas Ruff, *3237*
2003, C Print, 111cm x 86 cm

© Ruff

of the *LHC* makes it possible to play with the metaphor of the centre and the desires connected with it. These alluring circular forms appear to breathe new life into the bygone "visions of centrality of the Newtonian age" (von Falkenhausen, 2011, p. 343). Workers, engineers, and scientists act as empowered masterminds of processes taking place in what seems to be laid out as a centred world. (Fig. 5)

One of the pictures that most emphatically spotlights human brain power, autonomy, and spirituality is definitely the photo of the "monk" in a meditative pose. This particular motif was also heavily used to advertise the *LHC* book. Everything surrounding the protagonist flows, shines, reflects, whereas his dark clothing absorbs the light around him and amplifies the impression of substance and weight concentrated in his person. The position of his hands takes up the symbolism of the closed yoga circle of energy. In addition, the white wave of energy, which passes through him at head level, emphasizes his claim to mental power. On the one hand, the image features the figure of the bold monk – ascetic, concentrated, flawless, with absolutely nothing redundant about him, invested with the orders of spirituality and all the weight of a corporeality defying reflections. On the other hand, there is this metallic contraption which appears almost dematerialised due to the reflections flickering across its surface. The photo leaves no doubt as to who is the master in this scenario, and suggests that it would just take the monk a gesture to withdraw the machine or subject it to his will. This master/priest/scientist is in control of the technology and has preserved the power of putting it in its place. (Fig. 6)

In this connection, I would like to establish a connection with Andreas Gursky´s work and his revised version of individuality and personal mastery in view of the overpowering processes characteristic of our time. In Gursky´s digitally processed photos, the individual gets totally assimilated in the structures of a partly technological, partly economic sublime that exceeds the power of comprehension. Humans appear to have shrunk in these vast scenarios of proliferation and multiplication and are no longer assigned privileged positions. At the same time, these protagonists seem to lack any desire to stand out as single persons or distinguish themselves from their digital mates. In comparison, Peter Ginter´s *CERN* personnel are still capable of demonstrating individuality and of finding satisfaction through identification with a strong scientific superego. They, too, work and act in an environment deemed to relativize human power, but that does not show in the images. In this regard, Ginter reveals himself as a representative of a photo-journalistic tradition that can be traced back to the human interest photography of the 1950s. In those images, the human individual was set off against the disaster of the Second World War and reintroduced as a carrier of hope and dignity. As a photographer who is indebted to this tradition, Ginter has to picture the *CERN* staff as empowered subjects that can live up to their grandiose environment.

5 / 6
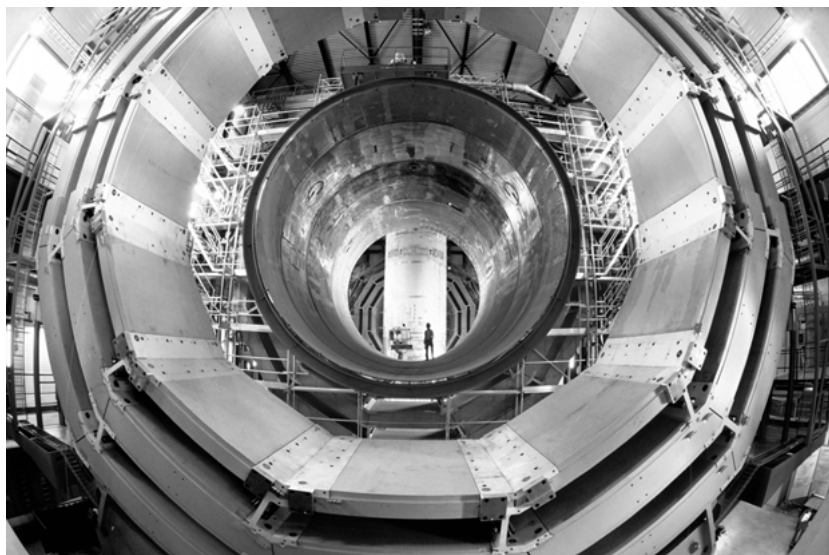
Animated Machines

With some of Ginter´s photographs, Felix Guattari's term "machinic animism" (Melitopoulos & Lazzarato, 2010, p. 103) comes to mind. As is well known, Guattari propagated the concept of a decentralised subjectivity that also included the object as a bearer of dimensions of partial subjectivity. This "polysemic, transindividual and animist subjectivity" – or "subjectity" (Melitopoulos & Lazzarato, 2010, p. 103) as Guattari called it – is mainly formed in machinic structures such as social, technical, aesthetic, or biological machines. In Guattaris's opinion, animist machinic structures possess their own power of enunciation. Several of Peter Ginter´s images bestow the technology depicted with a kind of energy that results in animated structures. In this connection, his *LHC* photograph showing the arrival of a focussing magnet, produced in the research centre "Fermilab" in Chicago, is particularly telling. What at first looks like the delivery of a piece of technical equipment, turns out to be a celebration of the spectacular arrival of a machine invested with Guattarian "subjectity." The photograph suggests that the focussing magnet, powered by its own will and sense of orientation, reached its final destination without the need for manpower. Its path is marked by dynamic lighting effects. The human personnel are only bystanders at this event. The person on the left of the picture seems to demonstrate the appropriate mode of reception and bears an iconographic resemblance to various art historical staffage figures that are shown standing by, in mere astonishment and wonder. The arrival of the focussing magnet is presented as an explicit act to enliven the grey-blue façade and enhance the dynamic forces driving the institution. This is even more interesting as in Guattari´s understanding a machinic organism like *CERN* is a dynamic entity that, in either case, produces its own subjectivity. As the machinery pulls in with such force, one cannot but read this arrival as a demonstration of potency. At a fleeting glance, one could read the sign on the focussing magnet as *femme* and *lap*; but that would be another story and entail investigating these photos from a gender point of view. (Fig. 7)

Final Comment

Peter Ginter's digital post-production can be interpreted as a way of retroactively providing liveliness and animation for his images. As a counterexample, I would like to present a quasi non-animated view of the *CERN* detector that featured in the newspaper *Die Zeit*. In contrast to Ginter's pictures, the image seems lustreless, dead, uninspired. (Fig. 8) The question is whether all of this sophisticated and skillfully deceptive photographic post-processing cannot simply be attributed to the age-old frustration about the limitations of the photographic medium. Photographers such as Ginter upgrade these records of the factual

and attempt to invest them with an additional dimension meant to increase their appeal and make them blaze, shine and radiate. The question remains: Is Ginter an animist or animator? Is he an animist driven by the desire to take the photographic medium beyond its limits or is he more of an animator in the service of a media society that demands stronger and stronger visual stimuli. Or is he primarily a professional who makes use of the technology available to his craft?

In all fairness, it is necessary to say that not all of the photos assembled in the *LHC* publication follow this sensationalist form of aesthetic. Some of the scenes are reminiscent of everyday work situations, and appear comparatively sober, while some even display a sense of ironic distance to the monumental approach of this project. In any case, Peter Ginter's photos undoubtedly help to legitimize and promote the *CERN* endeavour. By providing the fundamental research being carried out in Geneva with an almost mythical frame and investing it with religious overtones, the processes taking place there become emphatically removed from the sphere of mundane productivity and the various interests involved. When looking at these charged images, no one would question the legitimacy of the endeavour and the money that flows into it. The views of the visitors´ centre included in the *LHC* volume suggest that the institution itself promotes its cause with a comparable rhetoric and also draws on the persuasive power of light.

Und alle Fragen offen

Wahrscheinlich haben Physiker das Higgs-Teilchen entdeckt.
Es vervollständigt eine alte Theorie – und bringt gleichzeitig der Teilchenphysik viel Ungewissheit
VON ROBERT GAST

8
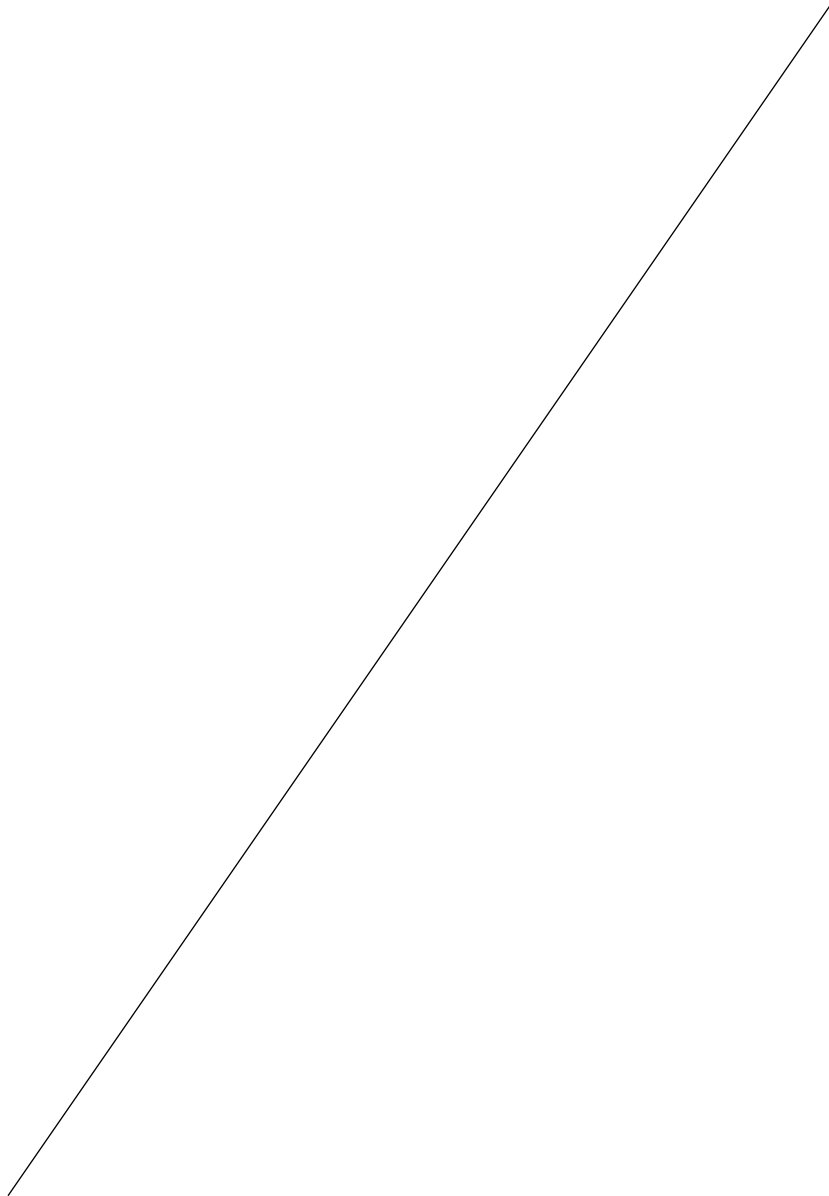
Denigrative Views
On the Deconstruction of Visages in Print Media

In June 2006, George W. Bush was prominently featured on the cover of the Austrian news magazine *profil*. The corresponding heading said, "The Crazy World of George W. Bush. From Alcoholic to US President: How does the leader of the last superpower tick? How fanatic is he really? And how is he viewed by the Austrians?" At that time, the opinion of the Austrian readers did matter because Bush was paying an official visit to Austria and many of the citizens had mixed feelings about his stay. The headline provided a few significant clues concerning Bush´s potential image in Austria, but the following analysis will concentrate on the visual presentation of Bush on this *profil* cover. (Fig. 1)

A close–up of his face was basically crammed into the upper part of the page while the headline accompanying the image was given ample space. His forehead was cropped and additional verbal messages were superimposed on it. In terms of space, Bush appeared severely restricted and was clearly denied the necessary room to fully develop his presidential authority. In that sense, he was indeed "verrückt", which in German can also mean "moved away or pushed out," as in this case of the pictorial center. The photo was obviously taken in a moment of careless control over his facial features. Consequently, Bush looked skeptical and clueless. His appearance did not match any expectations of what a dignified statesman should look like. In fact, he looked improbable, untrustworthy, and unreasonable. In 19th century psychological studies, exaggerated facial expressions were considered an indicator of insanity. At that time, individuals whose facial expressions failed to match behavior were viewed as a threat to the concept of autonomous subjecthood. Along with the psychological impressions of President Bush also came a mass of physiological data. The close-up revealed a badly shaved presidential chin, hair growing out of his nose, a downward pointed mouth. There were pores and wrinkles, and due to the uneven lighting, the right half of the face seemed more advanced in terms of aging, which further destroyed any impression of symmetry and good form or "Gestalt."

In the print media, images are, of course, only one component of an overall strategy to convey a particular message. The corresponding visuals are supposed to support the main arguments of the journalistic text and to illustrate the points made there.

In that sense, the highly polemical view of the American president on the *profil* cover should provide a first orientation for the readers and tune them into a story of questioned authority. In fact, one of the featured stories (*profil*, 2006, p. 117) referred to a kind of psychogram of the president created by Justin A. Frank, an American Psychiatry Professor and expert in the field of Applied Psychoanalysis. In his book – it carries the symptomatic title "Bush on the Couch" (Frank, 2004) – Frank elaborated on his tele-diagnosis of Bush and contemplated the particular defaults and handicaps of his potential patient. As the *profil* article mentioned, his diagnosis was meant to topple the symbolic father figure of a nation and dismantle his claim to leadership. In that sense, the idea of Bush as a potential psychiatric patient and Regine Hendrich´s deranged close-up of the president´s face on the cover of the magazine formed a perfect match in a journalistic discourse.

Excessive Media Discourse

In the following I will not concentrate on the political dimension of these denigrating views but will, instead, have a closer look at the destructive energies at play in these dismantling processes. My point is that unfavorable close-ups of the sort described above should not just be taken as expressions of criticism and polemics, but could be viewed as acts of excess by which journalism celebrates the destruction of its own icons. To support my argument I would like to refer to Georges Bataille and his understanding of energetic processes. According to Bataille (1988), all systems – and journalism would be a significance system – are fueled by the abundance of cosmic energy circulating on our planet. These systems assimilate energy and turn it into production, growth, or the expansion of existing structures. Yet, the capacity of a system to bind energy and use it productively is limited. At a certain point, energy as a limitless resource that exceeds any possible economical context regains its anarchic, unbound status and creates waste, loss, and destruction. The exuberant energy which can no longer be held at bay by the system eventually subverts it and an orgiastic, liberating type of force is released. My thesis is that in the case of these disfigured close-ups, the media industry decomposes its own fabrications. The destructive energy involved defies cultural sublimation and subsequently creates the abject. The same energy or concern that went into the making of publicly ingrained images now goes wild and turns against its own products. As the flip side of the effort to establish positive and identifiable images for well-known faces, these unflattering close-ups are orgies of deconstruction. Something excessive and cathartic seems to manifest itself in the attempt to distort what was brought into form before. Distance is replaced by radical closeness and the logic and laws of reception seem to undergo an archaic revision. In a cathartic act, the print media apparatus frees itself from the restrictions of its own pictorial standards and conventions.

The cover of the magazine reads:

Nr. 25 • 37. Jg., 19. Juni 2006

profil

Das unabhängige Nachrichtenmagazin Österreichs

Hubertus Czernin (1956–2006)
Zum Tod des früheren profil-Herausgebers

ÖGB-Krise
Die geheimen
Sitzungsprotokolle
des Präsidiums

DIE VERRÜCKTE WELT
DES GEORGE W. BUSH

Vom Trinker zum US-Präsidenten: Wie tickt der Führer der letzten Supermacht?
Wie fanatisch ist er wirklich? Und wie sehen ihn die Österreicher?

€ 2,60

www.profil.at

1

The Crazy World of George W. Bush
profil no. 25/37, June 2006

Photograph: Brooks Kraft / Corbis, Regine Hendrich

Constructing Iconic Faces

In order to deconstruct images, the media industry first has to build them up. Spurred on by an insatiable need for iconic images, an effort has to be made to inscribe certain views of prominent individuals in the consciousness of the public. That requires a repetitive act of presenting certain images over and over again and to achieve a branding of them. In this connection, Claus-Christian Carbon´s (2008) research paper, ""Famous faces as icons. The illusion of being an expert in the recognition of famous faces" developed at the Department of Experimental Psychology at the *University of Vienna,* proves especially insightful. Carbon basically worked with two pools of faces – famous faces and personally familiar faces. The 70 test persons involved were assigned the task of identifying these images. As it turned out, the processing of famous faces was quite impressive when the test subjects were confronted with well-known versions of a famous face. A good example of such an image would be Alberto Korda´s highly popular photograph of Ernesto Che Guevara. When the test persons were confronted with unfamiliar, less promoted views of a celebrity, the identification performance dropped significantly. Images of Che with an altered hair style, of Cindy Crawford without her beauty spot, or of the pope without his pileolus, posed problems for the persons asked to identify them.

The conclusion that Carbon (2008) draws from these results is that "the successful processing of famous faces might depend on icons imbued in society but not the faces as such" (p. 801). He points out that although we all consider ourselves experts in terms of face processing, we are in fact only good at icon processing, which is "for the most part pictorially rather than structurally based" (Carbon, 2008, p. 801). With images of personally familiar people the results were significantly different. The participants in the tests recognized these faces even if the identification job had to be done "under very restricted quality conditions" (Carbon, 2008, p. 801) or very quickly. They recognized the individuals depicted even if the photographs were from different stages of their lives or if the views had been altered. With first-hand experience or the corresponding memory of a person, the rate of identification errors turned out to be significantly lower.

It seems to be the job of the media industry to reinforce this iconic identification by etching particular versions of a prominent face into the viewer´s memory. This conditioning of the viewer happens in the form of visual bombardment and an excessive distribution of branded images. At the same time, this dissemination process is based on selection and a streamlining of the corresponding output. In the light of Bataille´s (1988) "general economy", these overdetermined medial casts are prone to breaking at any time. The available energy accumulates and builds up

to a certain point and, when reaching a level of saturation, either gets lost or turns into unbound and destructive forces. With really well introduced views of famous protagonists, the insults of these merciless dismantling acts are obviously felt the most.

The Formless, the Waste, and the Abject of the Media System

These crushed and shapeless forms can be compared to Georges Bataille´s "informe" (Krauss, 1997). It is the unassimilable waste created by a surplus of energy which undermines processes of giving form and meaning. Another example of such a denigrating representation would be Alfred Gusenbauer´s image featured on a cover of *profil* shortly after he was nominated the Austrian chancellor in January 2007. The headline read "Main Thing Chancellor" and referred to the fact that the Austrian Socialist politician had agreed to severe revisions of the original promises made during the election phase in order to ensure his chancellorship through an agreement with the conservative party. On the title page, Gusenbauer looked foolishly happy. His face, which protruded from a uniform black background, was reminiscent of a shallow disk, severed from the rest of his body. As his polemically inflated head lacked clear outlines and boundaries, it turned into an open form, unable to contain and to communicate solidity. Monumental in form, but highly fragmentary and almost fluid by nature, this "portrait" of the new chancellor was not suitable to promote him as a guarantor of reliability. For Thomas Macho (1999), this kind of representation would be a perfect example of the branded faces generated by the print media. As ghost-like signifiers of prominence, their relation to a bodily existence has been cut. They are free-floating facial logos that follow their own dynamic and logic of distribution. In Macho´s view, these severed faces with no reference to a body are particularly prone to appropriations of all sorts, including the disfigurement discussed in this text. (Fig. 2)

The lighting could be described as, what Rosalind Krauss (1997) calls, "wild light", "[…] producing the subject […] as a stain rather than a cogito, a stain that maps itself […] onto the world´s picture" (p. 242). In her elaborations on the formless and Cindy Sherman´s work in particular, she writes, "This scattered light, which sometimes takes the form of abrupt highlights on bits of flesh or fabric popping out of an opaquely undifferentiated darkness […] acts to prevent the coalescence of the Gestalt" (Krauss, 1997, p. 242). Thus, the media practice of creating alienating views of well introduced public figures confuses communication and interferes with identification. This has far-reaching psychological consequences for the beholder of such images. How do viewers react to this overdetermined form of pictorial rhetoric? In these polemically

Alfred Gusenbauer, *Main Thing Chancellor*
profil no. 02/38, January 2007

Photograph: Georges Schneider

distorted close-ups, an assault against the positive and pleasant form is launched and a surplus of destructive and image-eroding energy makes itself felt. As Rosalind Krauss (1997) points out, "Gestalt" as the "good form" in terms of geometry, morphology, and cognitive unity has always been a construct. What appears well-centered, in turn, centers the beholder, the so called well-built stabilizes its onlooker, and what we perceive as a whole allows the viewer to become complete.

> *For no matter how riven the body is, between up and down, front and back, and right and left, and thus how unequal the spatial coordinates, it is the centering of the conscious subject through the experience of the Gestalt itself as centrically organized image that is continually mapped onto the perceptual field. (Krauss, 1997, p. 89)*

In that sense, images like the Gusenbauer or Bush close-ups destabilize the viewer not just on a surface level of perception but also on a more precarious level of cognitive balance. Of course, these negative variations of actually positively connoted pictures create fear, rejection, and aggression on the part of the viewer, and the print media most efficiently use these psychological undercurrents to create hostility and aversion to certain people. However, from the perspective of Bataille (1988), individuals do not just fear the excess implied in these visual assaults, but they also desire them and wishfully anticipate the devastating effect that the excessive might have on their framework of normality. To gain a new distance from role models and figures of admiration and, at the same time, get rid of the straightjacket of pictorial patterns can indeed be liberating. This liberating effect may also partly explain the laughter of people as a possible reaction to such unfavorable images.
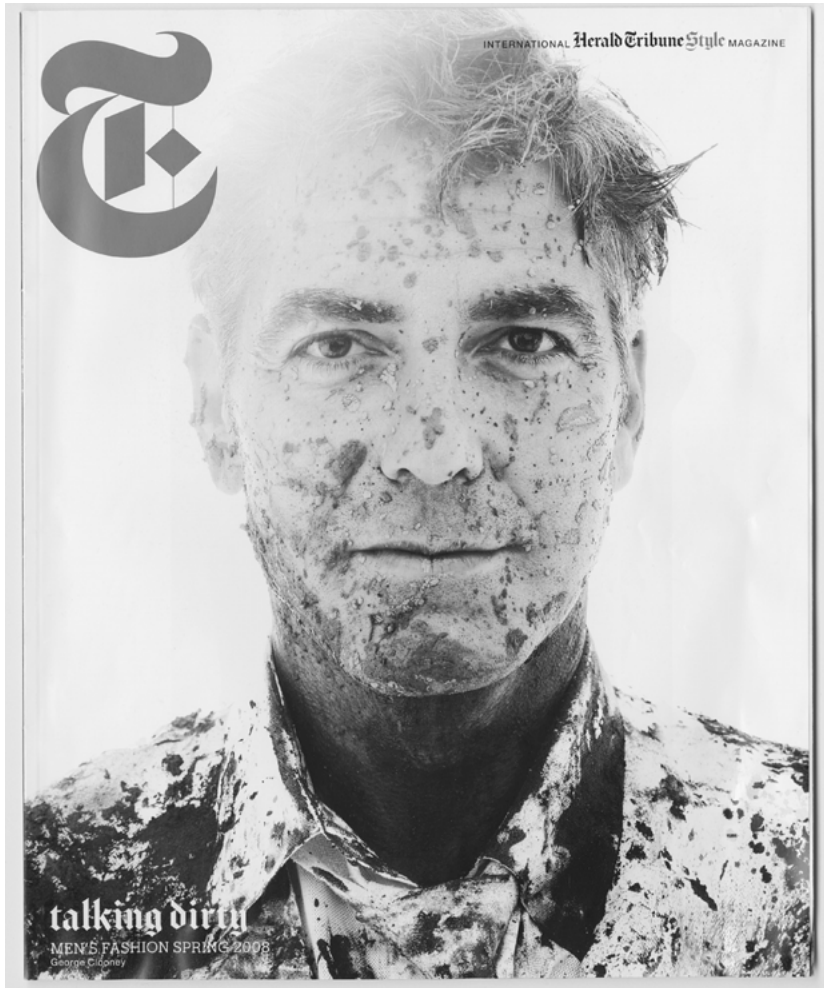
The Digital Making of the "Informe"

The spring 2008 cover of the *International Herald Tribune Style Magazine* presented a Jean-Baptiste Mondino picture of the American actor George Clooney. The text superimposed on the photograph said "talking dirty" and referred to the dirt covering the actor´s face and body. It was "dirt" that looked like a rash. The dirt particles were reminiscent of an infection that slowly eroded the perfect façade. Uncontrollable organisms seemed to grow on Mr. Clooney. They invaded his facial territory and bit into the smooth façade. Their expansion and exuberant growth were especially disconcerting considering the Clooney face as a perfect projection for male beauty. (Fig. 3)

In Mondino´s version the Clooney portrait deviated strongly from the usual, well introduced iconic images of the film star. Clooney as a brand name in film industry stands for a prim look, perfect hairstyle, and elegant clothing. On the *Herald Tribune Style* cover the womanizer´s normally perfectly combed hair was messy, and grey with dirt. His neck, which jutted out of a formerly "three-piece white cotton-and-linen suit, made to measure cotton shirt and tie" (p. 8), was all black and suggested a dirty job. The lighting was also significantly different from that of a normal photo shoot and seemed to hit Clooney´s head more by coincidence. It was definitely not the kind of lighting meant to bring out the best in movie stars. As an outcome of this random lighting, the outlines of the upper left part of his head dissolved and diffused the perfect oval of this famous face. Due to the lighting, the actor´s left ear turned into an alienating body part. It is the type of light that Rosalind Krauss (1997) relates to the luminosity and gaze structure as developed by Jacques Lacan. Clooney seemed to be unexpectedly captured by an agent of visibility that provides random visual renditions of people and denies control over these images. To those familiar with Clooney images, this did not feel right. It was not enough that the star was splattered with dirt and that his Ralph Lauren outfit was severely ruined; there was also the prospect that this gentleman might be "talking dirty." With this heading the sexual connotations of this unusual depiction of the film star become explicit. Everything hinted at low level satisfaction and liberation from the constraints of sublimation. Playing in the dirt, soiling oneself, carrying the physical marks of transgression – this was what the image signalled.

As further research on the photographer revealed *(lumiere, Jan. 1996),* Jean-Baptiste Mondino is a master of digital manipulations. In his more recent photo series "mutilations," he digitally manipulated some of the highest-paid bodies and faces from the world of models and stars. For instance, he presented Shalom with a black eye, Nadja with her throat slit, and Kristen McMenamy´s body covered with scars. Apparently most of the models vetoed the publication of these images. As to the image featured on the *Herald Tribune Style Magazine* cover, George Clooney obviously willingly agreed to Mondino´s experiments and lent him his façade for his digital transformations. He fearlessly handed himself over to operations that would not hurt, or create any bodily discomfort. As Clooney´s self-confident posture and the expression of his eyes indicate, he was fully comfortable with this digital assault that would just affect the outer layers of his persona. In this way, two media professionals cold bloodedly decided to stage something which looked like the old fashioned body-and-soul-racking excess and generated a possible version of the "informe."

Concerning Mondino´s experiment, I would argue that his representation of George Clooney can be taken as a critical comment on print media practices. Both,

George Clooney, *Talking Dirty*
International Herald Tribune Style Magazine Spring 2008

Photograph: Jean–Baptiste Mondino

photographer and actor collaborated on a project of reflection upon the destructive energies which lie at the bottom of all the media attempts to generate appealing and sexy images. In fact, the image producing media machinery can cancel its contract of loyalty towards its subjects at any time and subsequently destroy what it first brought into form. Of course, in most cases these unfavorable close-ups are embedded in a journalistic context which justifies the polemically changed view of a person. Still, there is something highly irrational about the verve with which these pictorial assaults, or violations of good form, are launched. In these medial fits of aggression, boredom, and annoyance with its own products, a type of energy breaks free, which is cathartic. There is more at stake than just polemics. In the course of this demontage of prominent individuals, pictorial agreements prevailing in our society and conceptions of subject hood are cancelled and called into question. In times of digital image production, this transgression seems to be easy to achieve – and George Clooney was even able to turn a denigrating revision of his well-known persona into another successful media performance.
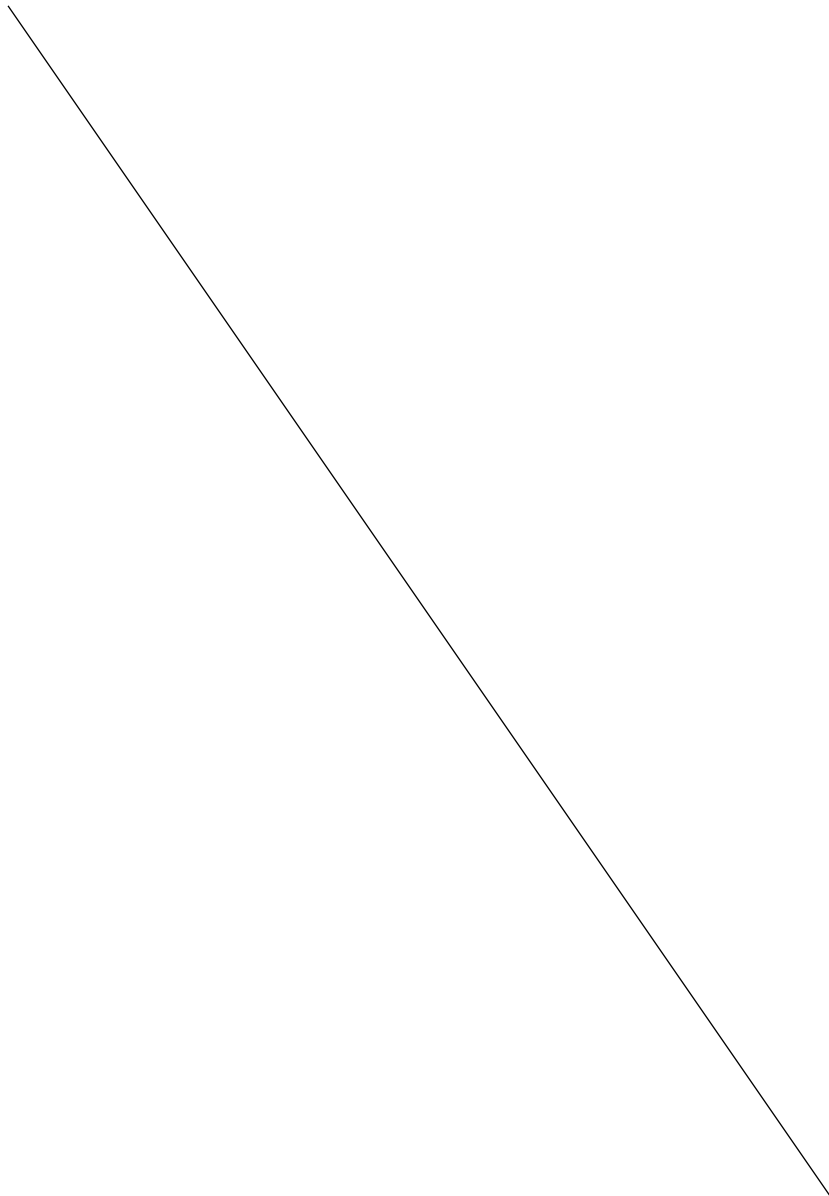
The White Handbag
Photography and Ownership

In 1992 the Austrian artist Andreas Karner came across the slide collection of an unknown person at the second hand store sponsored by *Caritas*, a charity organization in Vienna. He bought the collection of about 1000 slides and decided to make these images the basis of an artistic project. Subsequently, he created a fictitious portrait of the unknown woman who appeared in many of the photos and displayed this installation in a show at the *OK Centrum für Gegenwartskunst* in Linz. He gave the woman a name, calling her "Frau Elfriede," and set up a room for her where he presented the photographic remnants of her life. The idea was to give Ms. Elfriede a space for her imaginary presence where she should be available for assumptions about her life. Years after the exhibition, the artist generously left the slide collection to me as one of the co-curators of the show. As a kind of property on loan, it sat in a box in my working room awaiting further attempts to decipher its riddles.

Indeed, the challenge is considerable, but worth trying. Without any available information about the persons depicted, it takes time and careful scrutiny to reach conclusions about the identity and role of the depicted people and to determine their relationships. It is obvious that the collection belonged to one person. All of the hand-written captions, which are carefully affixed to the slides on narrow strips of paper, follow the same pattern of recording the date and the locations of the various images. The captions were obviously written by one person, namely Alfred, an elderly man by then. This is beyond doubt because the man referred to as "Alfred" in the captions took a photo of himself in the mirror and called it a "self-portrait."

The largest portion of the collection, and in particular the photos taken between 1966 and 1978, are travel photos. These pictures owe their special charm to the performance of "Elfie" or "Elfriede", as she is called. For about a decade, she acts as his partner and travel mate and then again disappears from his slides in the late 70s. The photographs from this period reveal the fascinating universe of a couple that enjoyed travelling and took pains to leave records of their moderate touristic ambition to posterity. They did not venture out too far, and kept the radius of their touristic explorations manageable.

A possible narrative of these journeys could revolve around Ms. Elfriede and her white handbag. Interestingly enough, she took a particular white handbag with

her when she travelled. She had it, for instance, with her on their trips to Rovinj and Figarola in 1968, their journeys to Opicina in 1969, and Porec in 1970. (Fig. 1) The bag features prominently in the photographs and becomes a strange sign of familiarity to the viewer. It guarantees continuity and is the comfort of the stranger. It is truly outstanding in the sense that it does not really match her other costumes. In many of the slides, especially those taken from a distance, she becomes identifiable by her white handbag. The bag accompanies her, is carried by her side and sits next to her, respectfully placed like an alter ego. The bag is white, chaste, closed but waiting to be filled with event units and portions of foreign reality suitable for the moderate appetite of a middle aged female traveller of the 60s and 70s. In its capacity to contain, it may as well receive impressions and perceptions and become both the stomach and the mind. The ladylike accessory can be taken as an indicator of a well–contained receptiveness. No doubt, she wants to carry something home but the appetite involved is restricted (Fig. 2/3)

All the travel images of that period seem to follow a particular photographic mode. Ms. Elfriede, Mr. Alfred´s model, seems inserted into the selected reality in a kind of montage technique. She primarily stands in the foreground – upright, stable, reliable – and reminds one of the marker figures of early travel photography with their declared aim of introducing a parameter of scale into the unfamiliar surroundings. With Ms. Elfriede´s appearance in the photos, Alfred seems to add a dose of human presence to the mostly unpopulated scenes. In some of the images she is planted into the Croatian environment like the poplar shown in the background. (Fig. 4) Concerning their documentation of foreign realities, Mr. Alfred and Ms. Elfriede act as a team. They mutually pose for each other and seem to adhere to a common staging method. It is either Elfriede or Alfred who occupies the foreground of the image and demands attention from the camera. Their photographer/model relationship is monogamous. They remain fully concentrated on each other and celebrate their mutual dependency. Consequently the one behind the camera would never tolerate a libidinal involvement of his/her model with the reality depicted. The non–negotiable standardization of their photographic recording results in an aesthetic stalemate of these images. Staying true to each other and to their documentary mission basically allows for no flirtation with the reality they turn their backs to.

Photography and Ownership

Many of the photographs in Mr. Alfred´s slide collection show personal belongings which are proudly presented to the viewer. My point is that the pictorial codes of these images strongly resemble those of the views of the foreign countries that they visited. In this connection, Mr. Alfred´s house bar assumes special

1

_____

Figarola, 7/68
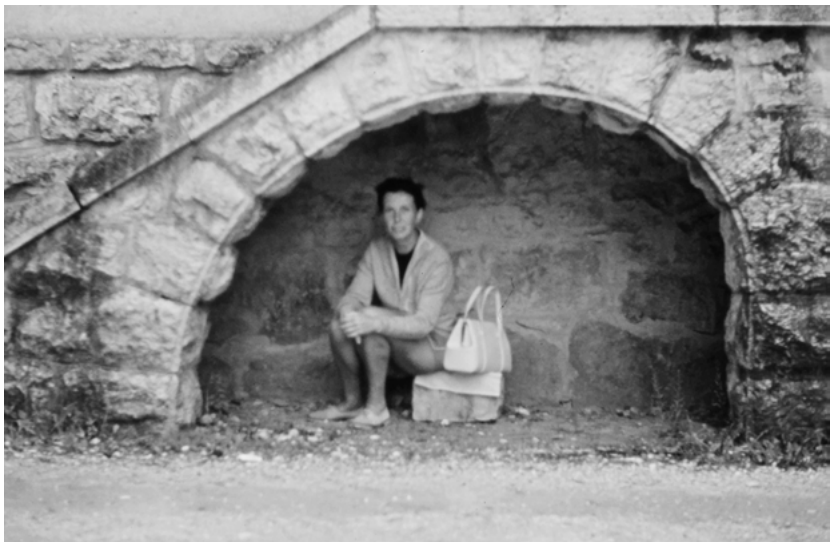
importance. Someone, probably the owner himself, opened the door of the bar to introduce a view of its impressive contents. Bottles of Cinzano, Bols, and Stock prominently feature in the first row. The scene is theatrically lit by the type of light mechanism that is activated the moment the door is opened. There are three glass shelves of different heights. The bottles and glasses present themselves in perfect formation. The mirror in the back enhances the illusion of depth and the rows of glasses seem to recede in an almost militaristic order. A half-filled decanter hints at instant and spontaneous consumption. The carefully taken photograph presents a middle class sanctuary of potential temptations. While the impressive parade of bottles speaks of alcoholic excesses, the frontal view and rigid order of the setting suggests that this would not be appropriate. To reach into the well ordered space of the bar would result in the destabilization of a perfect arrangement. For certain, the temporary removal of the Cinzano bottle in the first row would create a scandalous void at the core of this disciplined order. (Fig. 5/6)

In connection with his analysis of 17th century still life paintings, in particular those of Juan Sánchez Cotán, Norman Bryson (1990) calls such arrangements of defied appetite and subliminated pleasure "*anorexic*" (p. 66). This term seems applicable to Mr. Alfred´s photographs of his and Elfriede´s belongings. With a motif like the well assorted bar, it becomes especially clear that this zone of possible consumption is essentially meant for contemplation and documentation. Pleasure is presented as an option but what is actually celebrated is abstinence. With post-war house bars of this sort there is too much light, glass and tranparency to guarantee a zone of remorseless consumption. The specific light mechanism would flash up and haunt the alcohol addict with its enlightened clarity. In contrast, the flash of the camera ensures unstressed visual pleasures.

Mr. Alfred´s proudly presented personal items are mostly for display. The Milva cassette is not depicted as a music producing device but as an object of wonderment and scopic desire. Placed on the "Agfa Stereo Chrom" cover, which takes the role of a pedestal, no traces of use spoil the image. The intended musical portrait of the singer turns into a photographic portrait, meant for the eyes only. And the diva turns to Mr. Alfred, her photographer, acknowledging his sense of distance and his disciplined desire with a gracious and mesmerizing smile. (Fig. 7)

Tourist Photography

Mr. Alfred´s photographic appropriation of a foreign environment does not differ much from his demonstration of ownership of a Milva cassette or a well-stocked house bar. The foreign reality is presented within reach but is left untouched.
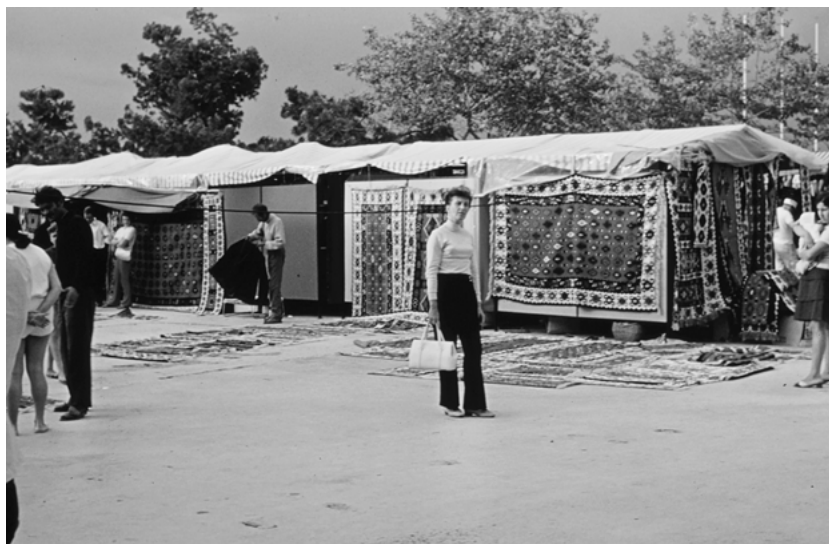
4
_____

Beograd, 7/68

In his photographs the backcloth of the unknown environment remains sealed and unaccessible. As a mere backdrop for their temporary posing, reality takes on the character of a two-dimensional stage set. This type of photography cannot be compared with the touristically animated scenarios of today´s travel brochures where people are shown in interaction with their surroundings. They splash in the water, taste food, take up offers custom tailored for them, participate in local festivities, etc. When Mr. Alfred discreetly inserts Elfie in the carpet market in Rovinj, there is no indication of interaction. From today´s point of view, Ms. Elfriede would not pass as an enthusiastic traveller. There is no demonstrative excitement in her encounter with the carpet display behind her. Although a street market was probably tempting and alluring for an Austrian traveller of the late 60s, the photograph does not render this appeal. Ms. Elfriede with her white handbag stays unaffected by the scenario behind her and is quite obviously unable to turn the market into an adventure zone, or an arena for consumption and fun. Neither does she as a tourist force her environment into a happy relationship. There is a sense of solitude and distance in these images and something that I earlier tried to describe as firmly rooted in a dialectics of desire and renunciation. (Fig. 8)
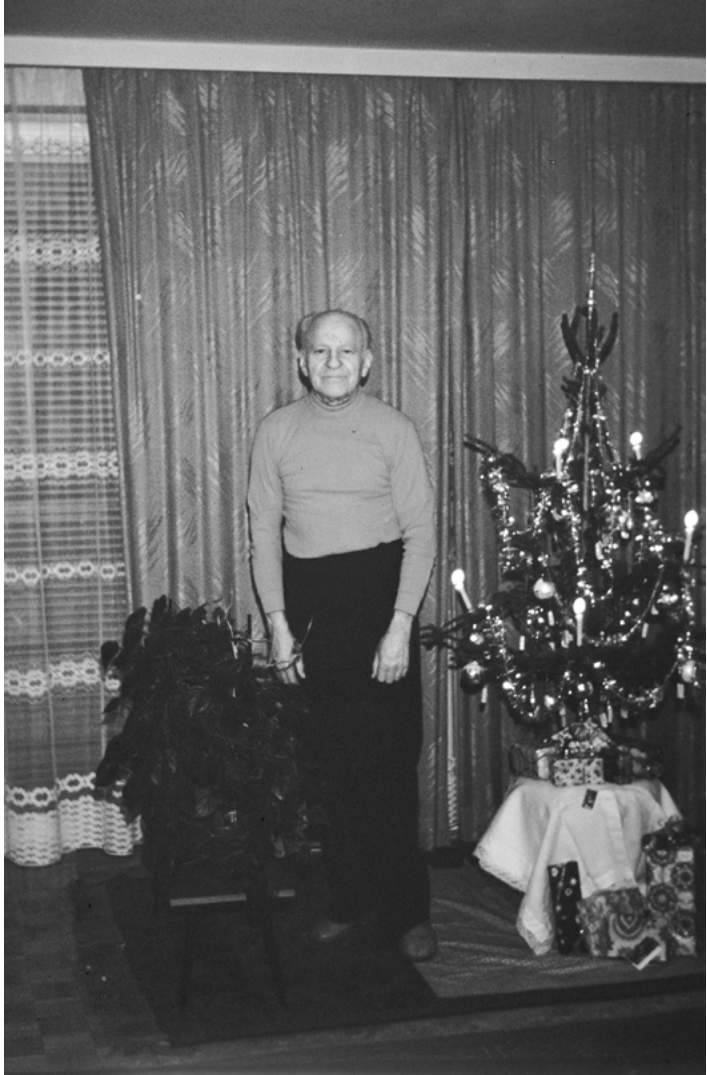
A Tourist in One's Own World

Susan Sontag´s statement (1979) that "essentially the camera makes everyone a tourist in other people´s reality, and eventually in one´s own," (p. 57) seems to hold true for many of these images. Tourists usually pose in an environment that is not their own. Their desire for a change of scene provided them with photographic backgrounds that require explanation. In their photos, they look like a species taken out of context and transplanted into a different habitat. Consequently, the persons in tourist photos sometimes have an air of not-belonging about them. While the camera should attest to their almost limitless capability to adapt to any given foreign surrounding, it often preserves their alienated status. In many instances featured in the debated 60s and 70s photographs, Mr. Alfred and Ms. Elfriede remain foreigners. Their lives pass in front of the rolling panorama of Elfriede´s red living room curtain. The almost monochrome background of the curtain effectively brings out the specificities of the travellers´ appearance at certain stations of their journey through life. Details of clothing stand out, as for example, Mr. Alfred´s blue turtle neck pullover from 1977, or the chic pullover that Ms. Elfriede wore in the same year. Their poses vary almost indiscernibly, while their bodies increasingly show signs of aging. For their photo shooting, they draw the curtains of their amateur studio, shut out the world and pose there, strangely disconnected and isolated. For the sake of these records, they agree to a ritual of being displaced from their own environment. (Fig. 9/10)

Haus Bar, 15. 1. 76

7
___

MILVA, 20. 7. 79

Rovinj Markt, 7/70

9

Elfi /Abendhl, 77

W–Baum Fred, 12/77

11
_____

Fir / Fernhafen / Dom, 9/79

Photos Without Elfriede

As Ms. Elfriede repeatedly assumes the same position in the travel photos, she can be legitimately called a strategically placed figure. In that function she is, of course, replaceable, preferably by another female person who stands in an equally central position and looks into the camera. There is in fact nothing random about the constellation in which the Elfriedes in Mr. Alfred´s photos are shown. They are his deputies, delegated to ease the conquest of pictorial space. Marked as the main protagonists, they are mediating figures who draw in and ward off at the same time. As signifiers of desire, they communicate the appeal of the reality depicted. By occupying privileged pictorial space they, on the other hand, relegate the depicted reality to the back and thereby establish and guarantee distance from it. Mr. Alfred´s muses lure in and at the same time protect him from too much closeness. These observations tie in with investigations about the gendered nature and libidinal structure of the classical perspectival space. As a number of writers like Silvia Eiblmayr (1993) and Daniela Hammer–Tugendhat (1994) have argued, the challenge for the viewers has always been to feel the allure of this potentially unlimited pictorial space opening up in front of them and at the same time be safe from its libidinal pull.

In 1978, Elfriede disappears form the slides and probably also from the life of Alfred, who nontheless continues to fill his "bag" with photographic findings from his travels. On his journeys to Berlin and Leipzig (1981) or to Rome and Florence (1979) he can no longer rely on her performance in his images. The absence of Ms. Elfriede as catalyst of desire leaves a vacuum that the photographer refuses to fill. Instead, in a most radical move, he empties his photographs of people. With no one looking back at him, the photographed reality becomes mute and unaware of its appeal. (Fig.11)
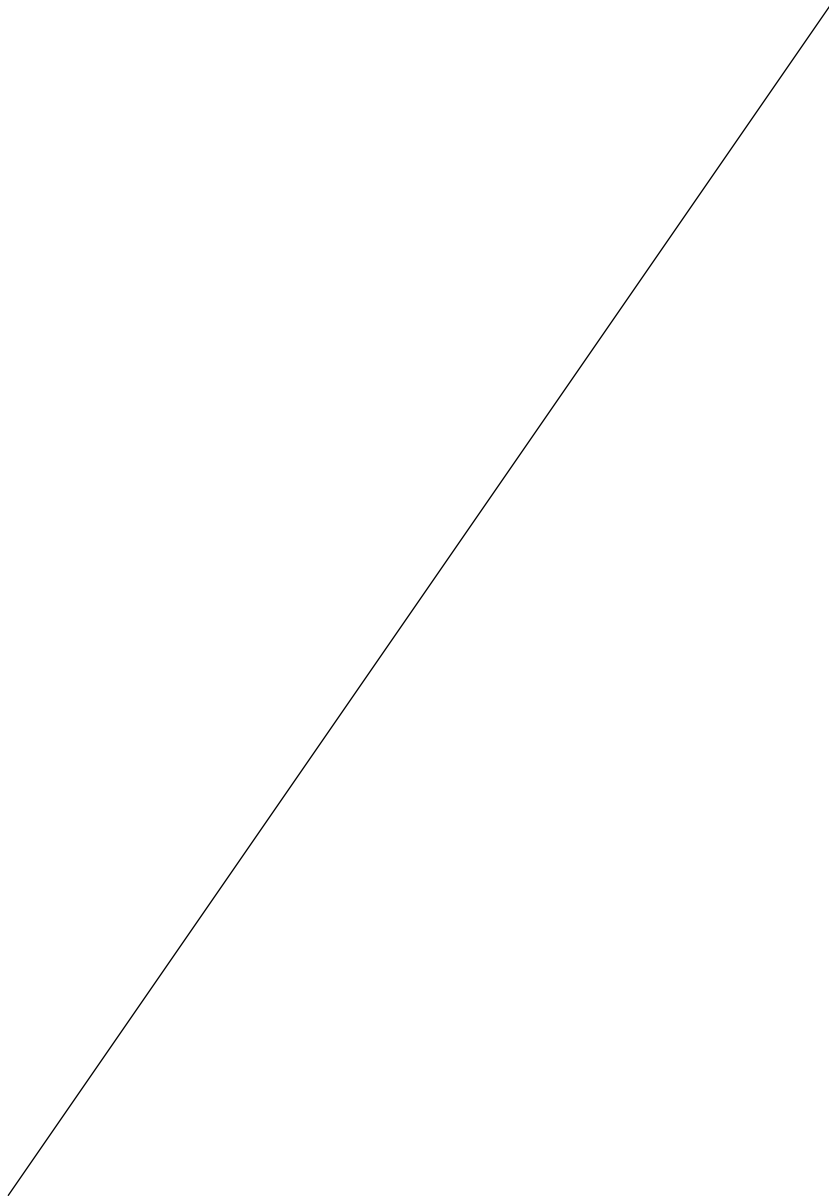
References

Introductory Remarks

Macho, T. (1999). Das prominente Gesicht. Vom face to face zum Interface. In M. Faßler (Ed.), *Alle möglichen Welten. Virtuelle Realität. Wahrnehmung. Ethik der Kommunikation* (pp. 121 – 136). München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag.

Pfaller, R. (2000). Das Kunstwerk, das sich selbst betrachtet, der Genuß und die Abwesenheit. Elemente einer Ästhetik der Interpassivität. In R. Pfaller (Ed.), *INTERPASSIVITÄT. Studien über delegiertes Genießen* (pp. 49 – 84). Vienna: Springer Verlag.

Schaden, M. (10. 9. 2010). *Interview mit Markus Schaden.* Retrieved from http://www.hatjecantz.de/markus-schaden-5172-0.html

Conscious and Semi-Conscious States of the Camera
Comments on a History of Photographic Parapraxes

Annan, J. C. (1896). Picture-Making with the Hand-Camera. *The Amateur Photographer*, vol. 23, Nr. 599.

Annan, J. C. (1900). Mr. Craig Annan´s Address at the Opening of the Exhibition of his Works at the Royal Photographic Society. *The Amateur Photographer*, vol. 31, Nr. 800.

Annan, J. C. (1896). *The Practical Photographer*, vol. 7, Nr. 78.

Bookchin, N., & Manovich, L. (1996). Digitale Schnappschüsse. In H. v. Amelunxen, S. Iglhaut, F. Rötzer, & A. Cassel (Eds.), *Fotografie nach der Fotografie* (pp. 136 – 139). München: Verlag der Kunst.

Buchanan, W. (Ed.). (1994). *J. Craig Annan. Selected Texts and Bibliography.* Oxford, England: Clio Press.

Freud, S. (2000). *Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse. Neue Folge.* Studienausgabe, Band 1. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag.

Jeffrey, I. (1993). *Photography. A Concise History*. London: Thames and Hudson.

Matthies-Masuren, F. (1899). J. Craig Annan – Glasgow. *Photographisches Centralblatt*, Nr. 4.

Talbot, W. F. (1843). *The Pencil of Nature.* (pp. 17 –18). Retrieved from
http://www.gutenberg.org/files/33447/33447-pdf.pdf

Dressed to Suffer and Redeem
Staged Photography Featuring Biblical Narratives

Bettina RHEIMS & Serge BRAMLY: I.N.R.I. (2000). [exhibition review]
Retrieved from www.absolutearts.com/artsnews/2000/02/18/26586.html

Clattenburg, E.F. (1975). The Religious Photographs. In E. F. Clattenburg (Ed.),
The Photographic Work of F. Holland Day. Exhibition Catalogue Wellesley College Museum.

Diekmann, S. (2006). Die Passion von Massachusetts. In K. Sykora, L. Derenthal, & E. Ruelfs
(Eds.), *Fotografische Leidenschaften* (pp. 113 – 123). Marburg: Jonas Verlag.

Gernsheim, H. (1962). *Creative Photography. Aesthetic Trends 1839 – 1960*.
New York: Dover Publications, Inc.

Hartmann, S. (1978). F. Holland Day: a decorative photographer. In S. Hartmann (Ed.), *The Valiant Knights of Daguerre: Selected Critical Essays On Photography and Profiles of Photographic Pioneers* (pp. 186 – 190). Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

I.N.R.I. Interview with Serge Bramly (1999). [On the occasion of the opening of the I.N.R.I.
exhibition at the Kronprinzenpalais in Berlin]. Retrieved from
www.dhm.de/archiv/ausstellungen/inri/interview.htm

Adi Nes (Photographer).(2008). Retrieved from
www.awiderbridge.org/the-photography-of-adi-nes/

Perez, N.N. (2012). *Picturing Faith: Christian Representations in Photography*.
Doctoral Thesis, University of Brighton.

Saunders, D. (2009). Lejaren Hiller (1880 – 1969). Retrieved from
www.pulpartists.com/Hiller.html

Shaw, G.B. (1909). Photography in its Relation to Modern Art.
The Amateur Photographer, vol. 50 (pp. 416 –417).

Blocked View and Impeded Vision
An Affective Response to the Photographs of
Maria Hahnenkamp and Thomas Struth

Emde, A. (2008). *Thomas Struth – Stadt- und Straßenbilder. Architektur und öffentlicher Raum in der Fotografie der Gegenwartskunst.* Marburg: Jonas Verlag.

Hentschel, L. (2001). *Pornotopische Techniken des Betrachtens. Raumwahrnehmung und Geschlechterordnung in visuellen Apparaten der Moderne.* Marburg: Jonas Verlag.

INTERVIEW: Thomas Struth: Talks About His `Paradise´ Series. (2002). Retrieved from http://www.americansuburbx.com/2008/11/theory-thomas-struth-talks-about-his.html

Wiley, M. (1992). The Housing of Gender. In B. Colomina (Ed.), *Sexuality and Space* (pp. 327 –389). New York: Princeton Architectural Press.

Unedited Glamor
The Vienna Opera Ball and Its Rendition by Network Cameras

Boal, M. (1998, December 8). Spycam Chic. The Surveillance Society: Part Two. *Village Voice.* New York. Retrieved from http://www.villagevoice.com/issues/9849/boal.php

Campany, D. (2014). Spectacles of Surveillance. In J. Spinatsch (Ed.), *Vienna MMIX – 10008/7000 Surveillance Panorama Project No. 4 – The Vienna Opera Ball* (pp. E 10 – E 15). Zurich: Verlag Scheidegger & Spiess AG.

Chmielewska, E. (2010). A Methodological Parkour or Towards Orientation as Implacement. In Institute for Design Research. Zurich University of the Arts (Ed.), *Orient-ierung / ation Des-/Dés-/Dis-/orient-ierung/ 2 ation* (pp. 246 – 250). Baden: Lars Müller Publishers.

Hick, U. (1999). *Geschichte der optischen Medien.* München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag.

Howeler, E. (2002). Paranoia Chic: The Aesthetics of Surveillance. In *Loud Paper,* vol. 3, no 3*.* Retrieved from http://www.loudpapermag.com/article.php?id=16

Kammerer, D. (2005). "Are you dressed for it?" Der Mythos der Videoüberwachung in der visuellen Kultur. In L. Hempel & J. Metelmann (Eds.), *Bild – Raum – Kontrolle. Videoüberwachung als Zeichengesellschaftlichen Wandels* (pp. 91 – 105). Frankfurt a. Main: Suhrkamp.

Kammerer, D. (2008). *Bilder der Überwachung.* Frankfurt a. Main: Suhrkamp.

Miller, J.A. (Ed.). (1973). *Jacques Lacan. Les Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychoanalyse*. Paris: Seuil

Leblanc, S. (2010). The Philosophy of Disorientation. In Institute for Design Research. Zurich University of the Arts (Ed.), *Orient-ierung / ation Des-/Dés-/Dis-/orient-ierung/ 2 ation* (pp. 55 – 57). Baden: Lars Müller Publishers.

Levin, T. Y. (2000). Die Rhetorik der Überwachung: Angst vorBeobachtung in den zeitgenössischen Medien. In G. Sievernich & T. Medicus (Eds.), *Sieben Hügel – Bilder und Zeichen des 21. Jahrhunderts.* Ausstellungskatalog Bd. 4. (pp. 49 – 61). Berlin: Henschel Verlag.

Metelmann, J. (2005). Kontroll-Raum. In-der-Medienwelt-Sein und die zwei Topologien der Videoüberwachung. In L. Hempel & J. Metelmann (Eds.), *Bild – Raum – Kontrolle. Videoüberwachung als Zeichen gesellschaftlichen Wandels* (pp. 174 - 188). Frankfurt a. Main: Suhrkamp.

Morton, F. (1979). *A Nervous Splendor. Vienna 1888 / 1889.* New York: Penguin.

Paglen, T. (2014). Safety in Numbers? *Frieze Magazine*, issue 161. Retrieved from http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/safety-in-numbers/

Pauleit, W. (2005). Photographesomenon. Videoüberwachung und bildende Kunst. In L. Hempel & J. Metelmann (Eds.), *Bild – Raum – Kontrolle. Videoüberwachung als Zeichen gesellschaftlichen Wandels* (pp. 73 - 90). Frankfurt a. Main: Suhrkamp.

Schorske, C. E. (1980). *Fin-de-siècle Vienna. Politics and Culture.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Singer, W. (2014). Iconic Turn – From Image to Perception. In J. Spinatsch (Ed.), *Vienna MMIX – 10008/7000 Surveillance Panorama Project No. 4 – The Vienna Opera Ball* (pp. E 34 – E 43). Zurich: Verlag Scheidegger & Spiess AG.

Wittgenstein, L. (1980). *Vermischte Bemerkungen / Culture and Value.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Lost in Pleasure
Mad Joy in Images of Youth Culture

Freud, S. (1989). Zur Einführung des Narzißmus. In *Sigmund Freud Studienausgabe*, Vol. III. (pp. 37 – 68). Frankfurt/M.: Fischer.

Hebdige, D. (2008). Posing…Threats, Striking…Poses. Youth, Surveillance, and Display. In S. Grau & K. Schlieben (Eds.), *Spectacle, Pleasure Principle or the Carnivalesque?* (pp. 283 – 288). Berlin: b_books.

Highsmith, P. (2004). *The Black House*. New York City: W.W. Norton & Company.

Kwiatkowski, P. (2013). *And Every Day Was Overcast. An Illustrated Novel By Paul Kwiatkowski.* New York: Black Balloon Publishing.

Lacan, J. (1991). *Das Seminar XX: Encore*. Berlin: Weinheim.

Pfaller, R. (2002). *Die Illusionen der anderen. Über das Lustprinzip in der Kultur*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp Verlag.

Samolet, I. (2013). *be happy!* Berlin: peperoni books.

Wilde, O. (1981). Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young. In R. Aldington & S. Weintraub (Eds.), *The Portable Oscar Wilde* (pp. 739 – 741). New York: Penguin Books.

Ulin, D. (2013, October 15th). Every Picture Tells a Story in Paul Kwiatkowski´s Illustrated Novel. *The Los Angeles Time*s. Retrieved from http://articles.latimes.com/2013/oct/15/entertainment/la-et-jc-every-picture-tells-a-story-paul-kwiatkowski-illustrated-novel-20131015

Death Can Wait
Images of Old Age and Dying in Austrian Hospice Campaigns

Berger, W. (2001). *Advertising Today*. London: Phaidon Press.

Butler, J. (2005). *Giving an Account of Oneself*. New York: Fordham University Press.

Heller, A. (2012). Epilog. Zur Gegenwart der Hospizbewegung.
In E. Spörk & A. Heller (Eds.), *Die Hospizidee hat viele Mütter und Väter.*
Die Geschichte der Hospizbewegung in Österreich und die Hospizarbeit der Caritas Socialis.
Innsbruck: Tyrolia.

Levinas, E. (1998). *Entre Nous*. Translated by M.B. Smith & B.Harshav. New York: Columbia.

Nixon, N. (2003). [Press Release Zabriskie Gallery]. Retrieved from
www.zabriskiegallery.com/Nixon%202003/Nixon2003Press.htm

"The Beast"
On the Photographic Staging of the Large Hadron Collider
at the Nuclear Research Center in Geneva

Cremonini, A. (2005). Über den Glanz. Der Blick als Triebobjekt nach Lacan. In C. Blümle & A. von der Heiden (Eds.), *Blickzähmung und Augentäuschung. Zu Jacques Lacans Bildtheorie* (p. 217 – 248). Zurich: diaphanes.

Falkenhausen von, S. (2011). Kugel versus Netzwerk. Neu-alte Totalitäten. In I. Hoppe, B. Uppenkamp, & E. Zanichelli (Eds.), *Susanne von Falkenhausen. Praktiken des Sehens im Felde der Macht. Gesammelte Schriften.* Hamburg: Philo Fine Arts.

Ginter, P., Heuer, R.D., & Franzobel. (2011). *LHC. Large Hadron Collider.* Baden: Edition Lammerhuber in Collaboration with CERN and UNESCO.

Krauter, A. (1997). *Die Schriften Paul Scheerbarts und der Lichtdom von Albert Speer – „das grosse Licht".* Doctoral Thesis. Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg.

Melitopoulos, A., & Lazzarato, M. (2010). Machinic Animism. In Franke (Ed.), *Animism Volume 1.* Exhibition Catalogue (pp. 97 - 108). Berlin: Sternberg Press.

Wolf, H. (2004). Thomas Ruff. The Historian of the Photographic. *Camera Austria International,* 85 (pp. 19 – 30).

Denigrative Views
On the Deconstruction of Visages in Print Media

Bataille, G. (1988). *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy. Volume I: Consumption.* Translated by Robert Hurley. Brooklyn, New York: Zone Books.

Carbon, C.C. (2008). Famous Faces as Icons. The Illusion of Being an Expert in the Recognition of Famous Faces. *Perception*, Vol. 37.

Krauss, R. E. (1997). The Destiny of the Informe. In Y.A. Bois & R. E. Krauss, *Formless: A User´s Guide* (Exhibition Catalogue, May 22 – Aug. 26, 1996 at the Centre Pompidou, Paris). Brooklyn, New York: Zone Books.

Frank, J.A. (2004). *Bush on the Couch: Inside the Mind of the President.* Manhattan: Regan Books.

International Herald Tribune Style Magazine, Spring 2008.

Macho, T. (1999). Das prominente Gesicht. Vom face to face zum Interface. In M. Faßler (Ed.).

Alle möglichen Welten. Virtuelle Realität. Wahrnehmung. Ethik der Kommunikation.
München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag.

Mondino, J.B. (1996). Freeze-Frame on Fashion´s Future. *Lumière Magazine*. Retrieved from
www.lumiere.com/fashion/96/01/mondino/interview.html

profil. The Austrian Independent News Magazine. (2006, June 19). no. 25/37.

profil. The Austrian Independent News Magazine. (2007, January 8). no. 2/38.

The White Handbag
Photography and Ownership

Bryson, N. (1990). *Looking at the Overlooked. Four Essays on Still Life Painting.*
London: Reaktion Books Ltd.

Eiblmayr, S. (1993). *Die Frau als Bild. Der weibliche Körper in der unst des 20. Jahrhunderts.*
Berlin: Reimer.

Hammer-Tugendhat, D. (1994). Erotik und Geschlechterdifferenz. Aspekte zur Aktmalerei
Tizians. In D. Erlach, M. Reisenleitner, & K. Vocelka (Eds.), *Privatisierung der Triebe. Sexualität
der Frühen Neuzeit* (pp. 367 – 445). Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Sontag, S. (1979). *On Photography.* London: Penguin Books Ltd.