

A PLAY WITH TIME AND A MIRROR OF OURSELVES

Visual languages between recollections, archives and algorithms

THE MOMENT AND THE MATTER

My artistic works are about the interaction of history and biography and about the importance of images for our self-understanding. These topics are based on my studies of history, literature and psychoanalysis, as well as photography. The understanding that we can't help but live and think in images – this basic anthropological assumption – has become more and more apparent to me over the years.

Through images we channel our curiosity for the unexpected. As we search for our place in the world, we follow our longing for existential reassurance. It is through images that we develop our powers of imagination and judgement. We use them to re-enact scenarios, just as we do in our dreams and in our thoughts. And in the best case scenario - in the face of the omnipresent flood of images and synthetic image creation by means of artificial intelligence - it is through them that we learn to assess the authenticity of the images themselves and our position in the world.

Among all the arts, poetry and photography play a pivotal role in this context. Indeed, photography's technological ability to capture living moments and to condense emotions corresponds in the most brilliant way to our selective perception of the outer world and our fragmentary recollections of our inner worlds. The poetic language in poetry and photography has accompanied me from the very beginning, opening up spaces for our imagination through metaphors, myths and legends as well as through rhythm and sound.

When I speak of images here, it is meant in a sense that transcends literature and photography. Both forms of expression are understood as parallel worlds in their own right, which do not mix, but which can touch each other: the photographs generated by imaging processes and likewise poetry, prose, and essays with all their rhetorical figures and stylistic forms.

OF THAT WHICH IS LOST THE IMAGES REMAIN

Three of my photographic works and essays in particular situate experiences embedded in the historical environment. They follow the insight that we constantly tell ourselves a story in order to live our own history.

«Journeying 66» is about the spirit of optimism of youth in the late sixties in the mirror of a return after more than forty years to this very Route 66 with the question, to what extent emotions accessible in images can be timeless, apart from experiences made meanwhile.

«The Sea Remember» deals with origins and childhood based on the last months of World War II and the immediate postwar period in Germany exploring how memory and remembrance not only construct but also endow contexts of meaning through artistic forms.

The third work «Moon Rabbit» focuses on sociopolitical conditions and existential concerns. It shows how in recent decades in China oriented toward Western lifestyles, and reinforced by an increasingly political-autocratic system, homogenizing forces such as science, technology, and the global market influence individual lives. Reflecting these views and dynamics, the precarious developments in modern China to which the images bear witness raise the question of how we want to shape our own world. While especially in the more calmly composed photographs, that concentrate on the essential, traces of the spirituality and wisdom of ancient Chinese culture can still be found.

The research and development process involved in bringing these works to publication, whether at exhibitions or in book form, spanned several years. The process was based on an understanding of the world that has always been a common one, one that is shared culturally. An understanding guided by the view that the future cannot be experienced – in fact, it is inconceivable – without the past. All the more so considering our instantly retrievable archives today and a present perpetuated and propagated by algorithms. How could it be otherwise than that the vibrant and the vital are revealed in the fact that the future consisting of memories recurring from the outside is, first and foremost, founded on the recollections of each individual.

THE MULTITUDE OF VOICES

My artist books such as *Carousel of Time* which merges children's worlds with animal diorama images, or *As the Eye Wanders* which thematizes image sequences, were created in historical places and in the immediate environment, as were the poetry and audio books i.e. *Als gingen wir vorüber*, *Vom Gesetz der Währung*, and *Siliziumherz*. Over time, the images began to transform into the reality of memories of their own and archetypal worlds, while more and more the contemplation focused on the images themselves and their relationships to each other.

Some time ago I began to look through my photographic collections and came across images from a wide array of time periods and places far apart. There was something disturbing about it, because the findings seemed to be fragmentary, which virtually challenged me to search for a common thread that could also emerge here among the pictures themselves. It was as if they had taken on a life of their own, and I wondered what they had to do with me, almost as if I had to retrieve them into my own experience and re-appropriate them.

In the process, the individual photographs and the lines of poetry and prose appeared like a multiplicity of voices in an increasingly complex world. In a world, however, where each individual image retains its own status, in its condensed form, by drawing its essence from how it has become part of a larger whole.

TRANSFORMING TIME INTO RHYTHM

To this day, I am stirred by the question of how images resonate through images and how, between two forms such as perception and recollection, the inner and the outer, history and biography, time itself is transformed into rhythm. After all, the eye, that is, our senses, enables sight as a form of touch, a form that traverses space and empowers us to transpose the surprising and the contradictory into new ways of seeing and narrating. And on the other hand, when listening to poems and prose, words and voices can create pictorial compositions in the mind's eye, when in contradiction and agreement sounds become words and words become sounds.

The riddle of visibility itself, however, which appears in poetry, photography and all other arts in cutouts, collages, montages and stylistic devices like a kind of palimpsest of inner and outer perceptions, is not solved in pictures, but doubled: as a play with time and a mirror of ourselves. In this sense, I myself have become a second time an observer/viewer, a writer/ reader, a voice giver/ listener, like everyone else with their own associations and ideas. The good thing about artistic works is that they have a limited open end.