

A PLAY WITH TIME AND A MIRROR OF OURSELVES

Visual languages between recollections, archives and algorithms

THE MOMENT AND THE MATTER

My artistic work revolves around showing the interconnection between history and biography and the role that images play in our self-understanding. Addressing such questions may be due to my professional career, founded as it is on studies of history, literature and psychoanalysis, and due to my studies of photography. Increasingly, through my artistic works, I have come to the conclusion that we cannot help but live and think in images.

Through images we face our curiosity for the unexpected and, 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 through them, ideally, we learn to evaluate the authenticity of the images themselves.

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. In addition, poetic language has accompanied me from the very beginning, opening up spaces for our imagination through metaphors, myths and legends, 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: photographs generated by imaging processes as well as 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 focus on situating experiences, embedded as they are in historical time frames. The photographs are derived from the realization that *we continually tell ourselves a story as we live out our own history*, with the texts contributing their share. While 'Journeying 66' (2012) is about the spirit of juvenal optimism and my adolescence in the U.S. and in Germany in the late sixties, 'The Sea Remembers' (2014) reflects my background and childhood in the immediate post-war period in Germany and Poland. The photographs and essays in the third work 'Moon Rabbit' (2020) show how China is increasingly orientated towards the Western way of life and how homogenizing forces such as science, technology, and the global market influence individual lives. On various levels the images in turn also reveal how the precarious developments of modern China in part mirror our own approach to the world. Above all, however, it was important to me to still find traces of the spirituality and wisdom of ancient Chinese culture in the ductus of serenely composed images that seek to concentrate on the essential.

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 in view of our instantly retrievable archives and a present perpetuated and propagated by algorithms. After all, how could it be otherwise than that the vibrant and the vital first and foremost draws on the memories of each individual to shape the future.

THE MULTITUDE OF VOICES

The photographs for my artist's books such as *Carousel of Time* (2013), *As the Eye Wanders* (2017) and *Hidden Patterns* (2011) were likewise created in historical places and in my immediate surroundings. Their contemplation focused on the photographs themselves and their relationship to one another and yet, with time, those very photographs began to morph into the reality of memory images of distinct and archetypal worlds.

At the same time, I began to look through my photographic collections and my poems and lyrical prose in volumes and anthologies from various periods and came across images from a wide array of time periods and places far apart. It challenged me to find a connection that could have arisen among the images 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 *Was wiegen die Wolken* (2024), poems, prose and photographs appear like a multitude of voices in an increasingly complex and disparate world. In its condensed form, each individual image retains its own status, drawing its essence from being part of a larger picture.

The individual images appeared like a multiplicity of voices in my own perception of an increasingly complex world. Yet each individual photograph retains its own status since its very essence is derived from the way it became a 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, empowers us to transpose the surprising and the contradictory into new ways of considering and narrating. And on the other hand, when listening to poems and prose, words and voices can create pictorial structures in the mind's eye, when in contradiction and agreement sounds become words and words become sounds.

Yet the riddle of visibility itself, which emerges in the cut-outs, overlays, collages, montages and various linguistic devices like a kind of palimpsest of inner and outer images, is not resolved in pictures, but duplicated: as a play with time and as a mirror of ourselves. In this sense, I became an observer and a viewer for a second time, just like anyone else with their own associations and ideas.