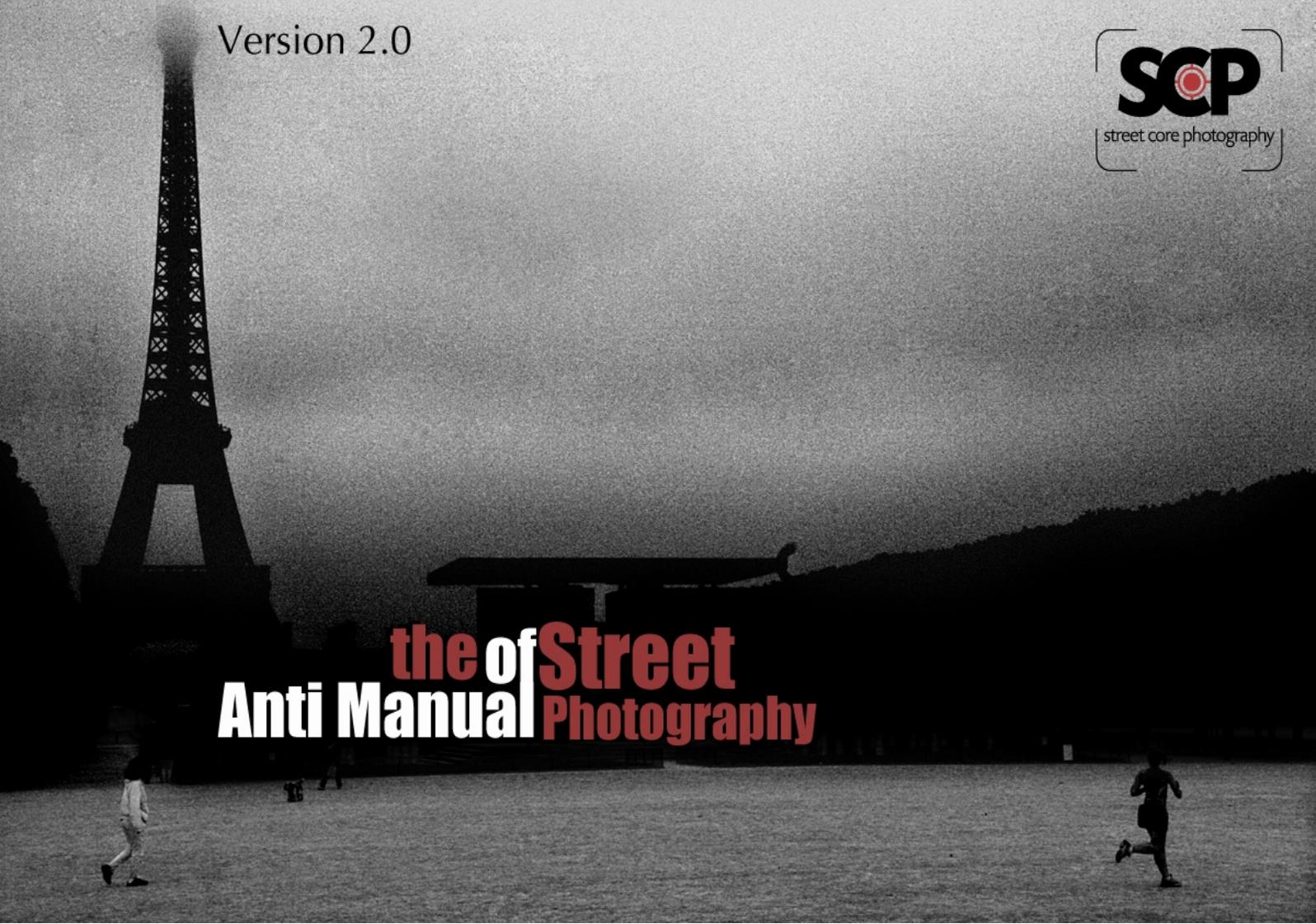


Version 2.0



the of Street
Anti Manual Photography



VERSION 2.0

Preface to the 2nd Edition

(Chapters have been rearranged and extended, new chapters have been created, others merged. A multitude of new images has also been used)

More than a year has passed from the previous version and in the meantime, I saw many photographs, I made even more, bought more photo-books, had them signed, tattooed even ... read.

In the meantime more expensive royal marriages have taken place, more bloody shootings in f. Texas, the FIFA World Cup, the NorthKorean World War, the Balkans stayed in their place but their people didn't ... in short: the world continued going into pieces.

In the meantime, I saw documentaries on, and interviews of, Masters, read their transcripts, tried to understand "Blow-Up" better than during the previous tens of

screenings. I didn't learn much more than before but, hey it's me, who has attention deficit (ADD).

In the meantime and "suddenly, the world was flooded with photographs that resembled the image of a badly adjusted television screen ... a picture's first impact was more important than its staying power."

Believe it or not, the above quoted lines by John Szarkowski refer to the 1950's state of photography!

Fortunately, since then we have learned to accept and to understand the descriptive power of the photograph(er). We have transcribed with agility the surrealist negations: "Ceci n'est pas une ... photo". We have accepted with brio that "The Treachery of Images" is not a vice, but a virtue to which capitulate and live with.



The Anti Manual of Street Photography *(or the subtle forgery of photography)*

by Michail Moscholios, August 2018

intro

"The fact that the majority of people share certain ideas and feelings does not prove the validity of these ideas and feelings. Consensual validation as such has no bearing on reason or mental health." Fromm

In this short little red book on photography we will criticize in order to self-criticize ... "However, such criticism should not be dogmatic, and the metaphysical

method should not be used, but efforts should be made to apply the dialectical method." Tse (Tung)

You won't read about shadows, reflections, kids, animals, how to wait, how to hunt, how to shoot from the back, from the top, from the hip. Not a word about buses, trains, homeless, anecdotes, contre-jour or blur.

You won't read either about great photographers or the history of photography. There are no definitions, bibliography or conclusions. For a good and noble reason! All the above you can find on the Internet. Better: you don't need it.

I am also sure that you will visualise anything that is missing. What a photographer is doing if not creating and completing puzzles?

There are no contents, no page numbers. As for who I am, I'm sure you will google me!



chapter 1

QUID EST, QUI EST

So many times people ask themselves, or even worse, ask others, if what they are doing is Street Photography.

Ladies and Gents, I give you the biggest scam, the worst fallacy in contemporary art photography.

There is no such a thing as photographic genre, style, trend, movement. We are not painters, nor artisans! Clumsy poets, maybe! The photographer is a peculiar human being. Within days, an isolated and socially limping individual, finds a way to connect to an otherwise untouchable world. One day, all 3-dimensional monsters become 2-dimensional pets!

One day, all ghosts and nightmares are packed in a box, if necessary with a straightjacket.

One day, the photographer wakes up and decides (s)he has something to say. Except that words wouldn't do. Words wouldn't be enough, either because of a young and untrained Logos, or because of a constant failure to verbally communicate with peers!

A photograph would do better than words, more subtly and possibly more honestly. But such a photograph should have the power of contradiction, the elegance of well-balanced colours or greys, and the symbolism of an unspoken universal truth: We follow our obsessions to ease our fears, we fight death with immortalisation, we are detaching from a cruel reality by getting behind a viewfinder.

Photographers are fugitives and persecutors at the same time. But then again, who isn't? Could it be that the photographer is easily adopting an eccentricity of manner and an irregularity of life just to find refuge into the illusion that everyone except





oneself is bourgeois? And could it be that the time spent between shots, is nothing but a conscious choice of ignoring time itself?

The photographers' confrontation with their surrounding world is a pretty precarious state. They instantly sketch fortuitous movements and all- changing expressions and faces. But even more delicate is the reaction to the result of their work appearing before their eyes.

They know that photography is a double edged knife with no grip. It cuts out both the photographer and the viewer.

A picture can free the author and devastate the viewer, as easily as it can harm the photographer and save the spectator. This inherent duality of a photograph is sometimes coupled with the explosive tension of a waiting, a longing.

So, why on earth, categorise art, why put boundaries. I enjoy seeing street photographers capturing devastated brides, and wedding photographers (ab)using church, priests and spouses in creating the creepiest of realities, revealing the most

disturbing of the truths. I feel undeclared pleasure seeing action photographers mutilating doped athletes for a symbolic image of hypocrisy. I admire wildlife observers putting down their top-notch cameras and, with a Polaroid, portraying the brainless crowds leaving a haemorrhagic corrido.

A photograph is no more a window. It is a metamorphosis with a new identity(ies). A street photograph must challenge the documentary identity and authority of an image.

Not to be confused however with the erroneous (but dear to many) concept that any motion-blur or out-of-focus image is automatically engaging abstraction and surrealism; and respectively, sharply executed and spontaneously composed images are not necessarily closer to a documentary approach.

On the other hand, the above described challenge should not reach the limits of an obvious manipulation which would make the viewer loose her interest on a scene by making her doubt that this very scene or action has truly taken place.

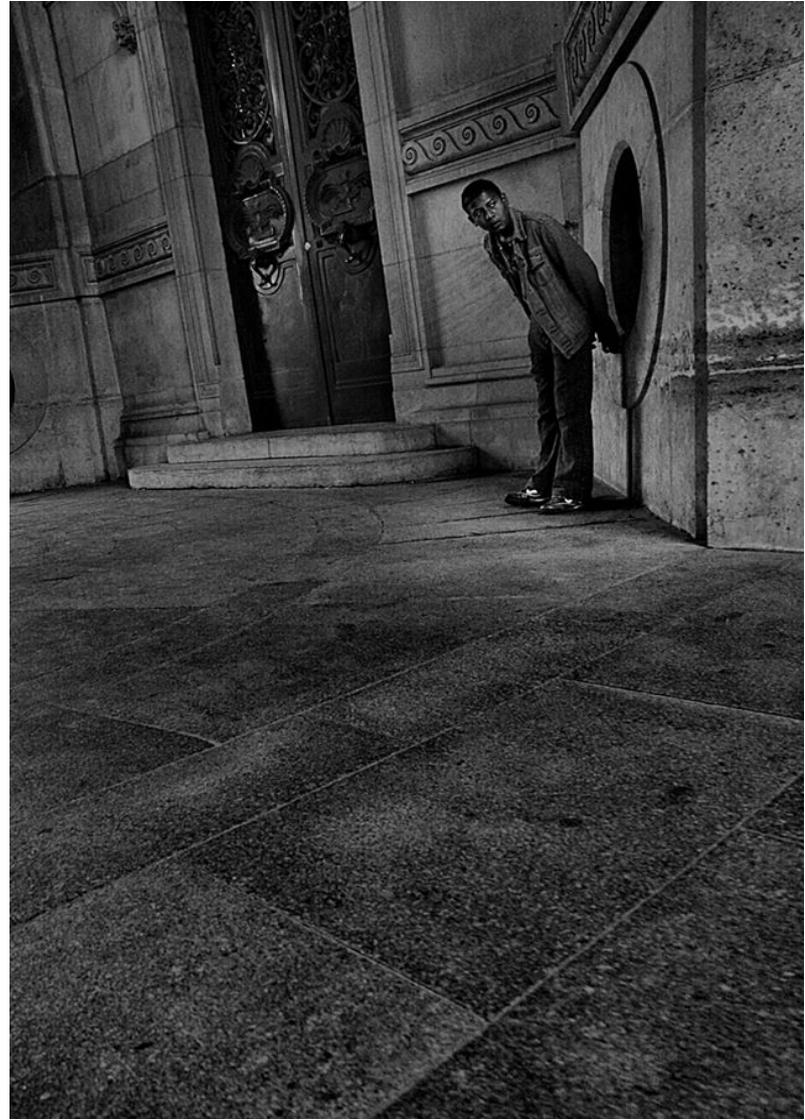
Are you reading all this? Well, don't. Allow me to go further into deconstructing (once again) the pretentious body of work of myriads of photographers, a work usually bundled with expensively paid reviews, then self-published, the whole packaged in a gift special edition.

Bresson said that "il faut signifier le monde" which translates into "reveal the world, uncover it, give it a meaning". I would take this further by stating that photography is there to give the photographer's life a meaning instead, and nothing else. This last axiomatic statement may appear so close to the Plato's "aphorism" that art has no value for us since the works of art are simply a mere mirroring of reality. And this becomes even more plausible when we refer to photography, a mechanical process.

Shouldn't we let art to the artists and to the critics, and start following what always was the initial drive of a photographer: The quest of her identity, first of all, and the universal truth's, secondly; only with not much time available. A photographer is an impatient investigator. She cannot afford in-depth reading or studying the human issues. She gets quickly overwhelmed by the phenomenological variety and the

difficulty of explaining the world; and so she does what represents a closure, an instant truce with these demons. She triggers the shutter. The photograph is no more a window opening to a new experience. It is a door slammed into the viewer's face, into society's burden.

And I am perfectly fine with that. Aren't you?





chapter 2

HAVE A DREAM

Have a dream and project it, have a dream and protect it. Don't handicap it, don't adapt or detract from it, let it rawly impact you. Otherwise you will be serving the establishment. And who needs form in photography?

Or framing, or composition? Let your vision solve the image by itself, worry not about its limits, your photograph has seen to this by existing only within four angles.

The approximation of a dream, the "almost" (le presque), can be dreadful according to R.Barthes. Nevertheless, we cannot deny that this very incompleteness can be photography's only hope to survive the lethal disorder created by the deluge of photographers and their digital captures of the obvious. And if the result of your photographic vision is an almost simulacrum of your oneiric activity, no matter how

fade or approximate, don't repeat it. Sharpness and accuracy are the most futile and hostile of all imagination constituents.

The photographers must realise that their only and outmost skill/talent is to cut the time in meaningful slices. This is what they do best (as others recognise the perfect perfume or discover the perfect zest).

By unleashing the impulse, without impediments (chapter 9), the photographic mirage is realised in anticipation. Only then you press the button, that button.

And if someone will call your dream a distortion, just disdain knowing that metamorphosis is the only outcome of desire and passion.

Have a visual urge and don't trick yourself and the others of being a professional (an image worker)!

Labels oblige to choose a camp and state a specialisation for nude, for portrait, for landscape, for action, for product, for documentary.

Rethink the above as phases in your photographic art, as oscillating preferences (erratic obsessions) for classic (nude), for faces (portrait), for plains (landscape), for commotion (action), for stillness (product), for surveillance (documentary) ...

Portrait photography can be so monosemantic (with a single direction, with no transgression, monadic, with no duality) as much as the news photographs, and (who will throw the first stone) as much as the most widespread type of photography, the tourist.

But there are ways to avoid this. Take for instance nude photography. It has the same problem of monosemanticity as long as it remains homogenous, naive, with no intention to surprise or to disturb. It remains a pornographic photograph and never rises to the level of the erotic unless it breaks through to the secondary levels (beyond sex). Unless it manages to "half conceal, delay, or distract ..."

A photograph has to contain disturbance and adapt its meaning, in order to be remembered, to be loved. Being just interesting is not enough.



45-49
Chandos Place



A photograph understates that there is much more happening than recorded because a photograph is not a memory, it is a commemoration (idealisation).

The most popular use of the photograph is as a "memento of the absent." John Berger explains this by referring to the absent elements of a photograph which are more or less effectively invoked by the subjects recorded in the actual picture. The presence of grief, for example, invokes a tragedy, absent in a frame but highly influencing the spectator's reading.

There are moments when the photographer "takes a subject beyond just being a picture of something and let it float as an invention" as S.Wagstaff says. Seek and find these moments. Don't let the photographic passion be as frivolous as a morning eagerness.

Our (photographic) existence is not fragmentary but cumulative. Everything rushes in a tiny frame.

The visual trail when we finally release the shutter is: sensibility, emotion, impulse, awareness. Then it becomes absence. Until we meet again with the framed "reality".

Which, as someone said, is never the one we have imagined. It is either worse or better.

The greatest danger, fear, nightmare of all, is that the viewer's interest will not exceed the time span needed for taking a picture. If there is no inner disturbance, if your instant record of untransformed reality does not create an enigma, a mind-twister (not twitter), then it will be a puff of visual smoke. Gone in a split second!

So what will it be? An image worker or an art disciple? A politically correct professional or a visionary rebel photographer?

Myself, I have a poster in front of me on the wall reminding me: "More provoking, less ethics, more aesthetics"!





chapter 3

VISUAL LITERACY OR CREATIVE NAIVETY?

A photograph, in order to transcend must be able to trigger the imagination of both the educated and the ignorant viewer. The unknown has undoubtedly more power in installing ignorance, essential to "reanimate" a conventional documentary image and confer an enigmatic reality.

At the other end of the visual communication there is the photographer trying to cultivate a visual literacy. A noble task, surely, but not without taking into account that our aesthetic values and feelings are there by intuition and a natural talent will always be able to detect a meaningful image. Wouldn't it be that the less exposure to theory, the more chances for an original expression to emerge?

When we discover vision (based on healed blind people testimonies) the first and only thing we see is just the light. All the rest is a mental construction, is learning. We learn to see, to interpret, to represent. That is why an "imperfect" image takes us back to the beginnings, and as such, it is intriguing, with full potential and unlimited interpretations.

The day comes when our photographic endeavours find their way out, we find a solution, and this is the fruit of talent, intelligence and hard work.

Unfortunately the next moment the critics and the teachers are entering the "stage" and they start juggling with artificial parameters, rules and recipes. Only to justify their sterility and their (usually erroneous) choices. Only to trap and suffocate any emerging talent.

Just ignore them, because beauty changes, it becomes banal. Putting order in the world is utopic, even for a photographer. "Amateurism" or "accidental art" are not anymore considered erroneous.

There is no pure luck in photography, only visual anticipative intelligence. The attentive photographer uses previous trials and errors to construct an educated intuition and thus apprehend the brief blessed moments of an ephemeral flow.

Having said that, should you, albeit the warnings, embark in a long educational trip, don't trust KODAK's "you press the button, we do the rest", don't adopt Buster Keaton's monkey cameraman, don't browse techno-magazines. Read Calvino instead, to help you build your own Rome around you, over and over again.

Change its alleys, transform its fountains, burn its skies, but never exchange your Rome for another city. If however, by force majeure, this is ever needed, then let it be Paris.

Author's note: Paris and Rome are by no means the real cities but the invisible space around us created through tales, narrations and libretti. They are mentioned here as a tribute to Calvino's Invisible Cities and to Baudelaire's flâneur.

I am surprised how many people like a silhouette in front of an exotic beach under a special light (usually a sunset).

But why our aesthetics, our perception of beauty only surfaces in situations we do not feel concerned with?

Why our liking goes only to "illusional windows" that we may hang in our living room but not hide under our bed for private reading? (mind you, this is not a puritan discourse).

The beautiful and the ugly, the important and the trivial can have equal artistic value. Moreover, if there is something left to discover (blame the Greeks and their classic aesthetics for this), it may be found only in the dusty roads, the ravaged buildings and the turfed concrete.

We should shift away from the aesthetic rightness and go into the truth of disorder, embrace the revealing and the compelling rather than the contemplative and the placid.





chapter 4

STAGING

In *The Balcony*, a play by Jean Genet, it is amazing how in a couple of lines of a play mostly centred on the appropriation of revolutions, we may find the answer to some recurrent questions in photography.

After a staged photographic session of bishops, generals and judges (what a mix!) the Queen is informed:

THE ENVOY : It's a true image, born of a false spectacle.

FIRST PHOTOGRAPHER (cynically) : That's common practice, your Majesty. When some rebels were captured, we paid a militiaman to bump off a chap I'd just sent to buy me a packet of cigarettes. The photo shows a rebel shot down while trying to escape.

THE QUEEN: Monstrous!

THE ENVOY : But have things ever happened otherwise? History was lived so that a glorious page might be written, and then read. It's reading that counts.

"Truth is not objectivity, authenticity can stand without veracity"

I had to fight with people who lapidate staged photographs. Why getting anger in front of such images? It is compassion we should feel. Cannot imagine greater pain and suffering than those which a photographer feels when trying to construct from scratch a scene obsessing him/her and not finding it around!

What is staging if not artificially creating the mojo needed for the reverie to happen. Photography, in its strive to reach Arcadia, is constantly escaping the studio for the streets, and vice-versa.

And when you will find Arcadia, Utopia, the Urban pastoral where you wanted your art to live and breathe, then use this land of lost content to chase away the demons.

Eliminate, instead of planting meanings, reduce instead of expanding, sow doubt instead of explaining.

People seek freedom and the very same people erect walls. The biggest moron of all creatures, man, the ultimate oxymoron producer among art adepts, the photographer. We should not seek adulation, we should only mirror our beliefs through a camera's mirror (or a simulacrum thereof); produce a photograph deprived of pretentious expectations, liberated from opportunism.

The fact that the individual sees and interprets a picture differently does not change the picture itself.

The photograph's fate and combat is only one: To stay timeless, to exist independently from the brains and the eyes of the beholder and even of the author itself.

A great photographer was once asked: "Did you stage your iconic picture?"

He said: "How can someone think that I was able of ever imagining such a composition, setting or subjects?"

And yet, it is possible! You can have a dream and transpose it, to share it. You can have a nightmare and picture it, to transcend it. You can simply know what reality will look like after "visiting" it through a bi-dimensional rectangle. It's called vision, talent. And only a few possess it.

Most of us are simple witnesses being here just to appreciate, analyse and understand these visual representations of screams, whispers, monologues and autistic gestures of triggering the diaphragm blades; of cutting the world, cutting the self. A blade cut will always bleed and the scar will persist long after the shutter release. Do you still call photography a mechanical process?

"I'm an eye. A mechanical eye. I, the machine, show you a world the way only I can see it." - Dziga Vertov, Soviet film director, 1923

Back in the 70's during a logorrheic speech, G. Winogrand nailed a good one: "The photograph has to be more dramatic than what has been photographed. It's all about drama or nothing!"

Not poetic? Poetry has to be dramatic!

Not narrative? Narration has to be dramatic!



chapter 5

ALL HAS BEEN SAID

What is there to say anymore? How can we continue to create rare from banal, new from the known, beat again and over again the conventional and the stereotyped?

To illustrate this let's take the example of documentary. We are the right person at the right place and moment, we capture with realism and authenticity an iconic image carrying an amplified narrative impact. Most of the times we leave the scene after having intensively lived the rich interaction with the events, which moreover is conveniently documented in our camera.

However the breakthrough is operated only after evacuating the obvious, and thus freeing the eye to continuously recycle the observation process. Revisiting obsessively

the same subject, activating the peripheral angles, "watching the ballet from the wings", loosening the proportions and inviting poetic accidents.

Turning relative into absolute (realistic image) and vice-versa, repeatedly, vacates the superfluous, shifts from morality to a revolutionary consensus, and allows for a meaningful transformation towards a symbolic image of an uncertain duration.

So, nothing new under the sun. All has been seen and said under the sun, that's why there was (and still is) a huge trend in contemporary street photography to harden the shadows, implode the blacks, blow the highlights.

It looks like sometimes it is amusing, or even seemingly original, to dissimulate flaws and underline beauties (or vice-versa). But then what a fragmented representation of our "dear" subjects this is. Life under strong and permanent sunlight, hard shadows, profound blacks and bright faces, is not ourselves.

The persons represented this way are not the ones as we know them or as we meet them fleetingly. The human eye when scanning a scene instantly adapts to the quantity

of light around the points of our interest. There is no way to see such clotted blacks or such blown whites with our bare eye (maybe only after getting in and out of a dark room under a summer sun).

There is no doubt that the uncanny effect is welcome but how many extremely high contrasted photographs have survived in time (considering that Man Ray's works were photograms and not photographs). These manieristic pictures may look impressive but at the same time this very feature makes them ephemeral. They will perish easily into oblivion. As with all the rest, experiment but don't imitate it for life nor make it a life achievement!

In photography subjects and objects are most honestly represented under a diffuse light. Photographs found in museums are mainly of a delicate and natural palette of shades and contrasts. That is why you (we) should shoot with care! Use smoothly the contrast cursor (respectively don't over-push your film rolls) and try to include as many details as possible in this precious tiny frame called a photograph. This last bit may be in contradiction with some ideas (illustrated elsewhere in this book) of using

abstraction by reduction and subtraction, of
composing by elimination and not by
inclusion.

But who told you that photography is not
anymore a young child full of enthusiasm
for experimentation and contradictions. It
still is, for our good luck and awe.



chapter 6

THOU SHALT NOT COPY BUT STEAL

Originally quoted by T.S.Eliot "Immature poets imitate, mature poets steal", then attributed to Picasso as "good artists copy, great artists steal", let's keep it short by saying that, whatever your work is, stand behind it!

In any case, everything you read, watch, listen, dream, is channelled into your pictures and most of the time they are Déjà-vus. The only problem is to know and carefully select what to carry with you, your burden in this wonderful and scary trip.

All is light and light is all. That's why in times of darkness and obscurity we look for the moment that will make the difference. What if we can find the vision and the salvation in others' work and talent? Or should I say obsession? Sometimes (almost always nowadays) we run out of ideas.

Then it's time to stimulate inspiration by stealing and appropriating some alien visions (rather remote than contemporary).

Photographers are aware of the artistic value of the scars of time and imitating past photographers is a successful appropriation of the surrealism inherent in the pictures. A kind of nostalgia-revisited. But when copying or emulating previous work of past masters, we just give birth again to a child that has already been born and lived.

Take for example the first ever window view of Nicéphore Niépce. How many window views (my favoured is Robert Frank's from *The Americans*, Butte, Montana, 1955) have you seen in almost 200 years of photography and how many will we see until the end of its days?

Niepce's window will never leave us ... (alone)! Why? Why does a window have so much appeal to us? Isn't the camera viewfinder already enough of a window for looking at the world breaking down any responsibilities towards reality and preventing us from acting?

The debate is long, but let's take the odds of saying that a window in a photograph accentuates the imaginary, it confirms that the scene is definitely out of reach. A kind of justification, a confession and an absolution at the same time.

"Voyeurism", one might exclaim "encouraging whatever is going on to keep on happening, the person who intervenes cannot record; the person who is recording cannot intervene" (Susan Sontag On Photography)

One sole certainty: windows are proscenium arches in the photographers' theater of life.

The second liberating thought that you should have is to consider photographs no closer to works of art than cardiograms.

A photograph does not, and it is not supposed to, provide any assurance as to the faithfulness of the events. No authenticity statements, no proof of the real experienced facts.

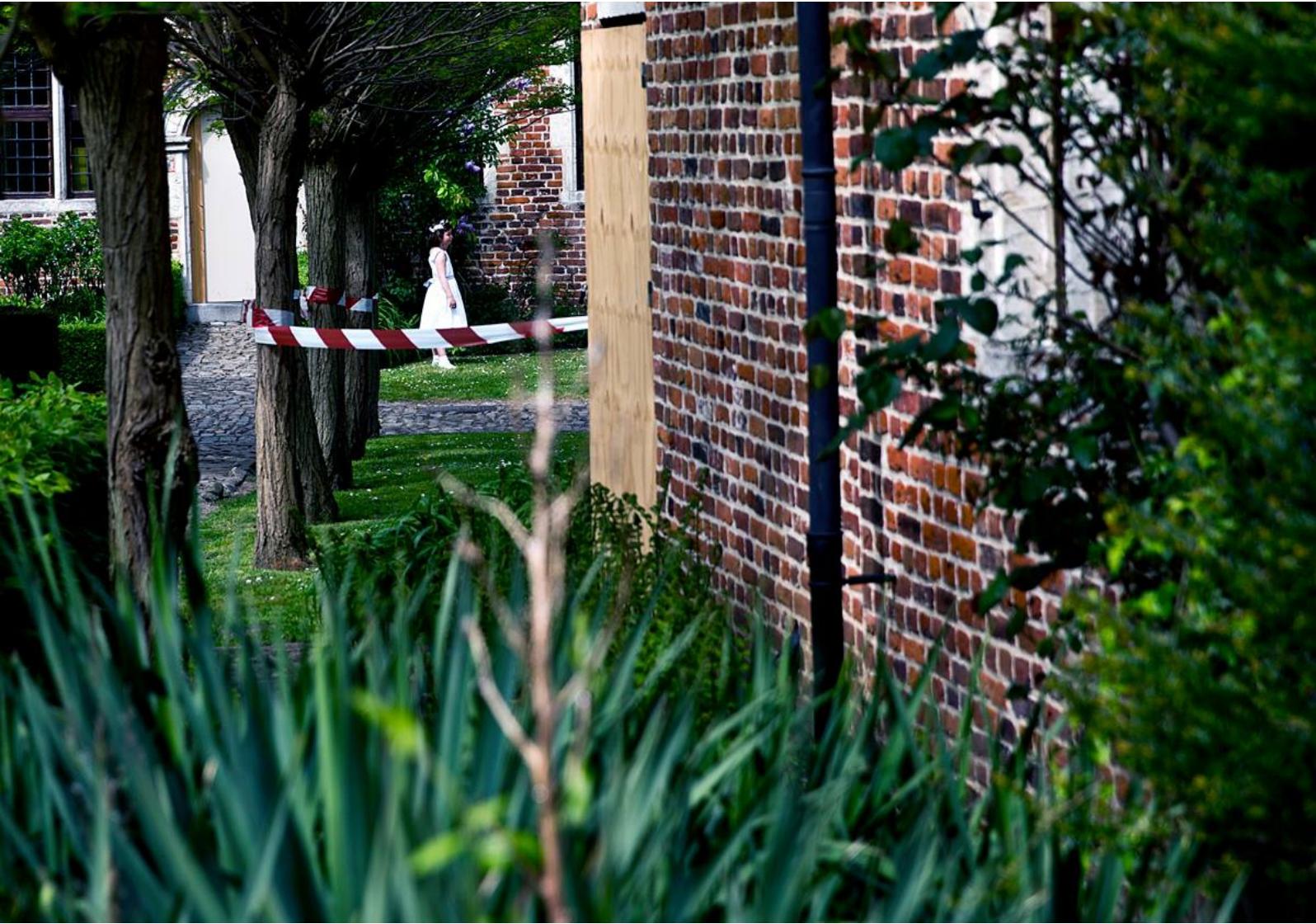
It is not within the span of our lifetime that photography will acquire the fine-art label, so why care if your work will ever enter a Museum or a personal collection!

In any case, both destinies are so eclectic (in a sacred isolation) that the masses will not have access.

And your happiness of taking photographs won't be shared more than it is today! After all, we are nothing without the others, even the indifferent or hostile ones.

Inevitably old mastery is populating every new emerging talent. And following the art trail we can see how many photographers are guided by Brandt's nudes, the latter inspired by the derivative photography of Man Ray, back to Brandt's luminous and ominous frames, influenced, in their turn, by the Citizen Kane's low-angles.

Inevitably we will carry Moriyama and d'Agata with us for many years. Inevitably the more we grow in photography the less the instruments will help us. And inevitably time will betray us.





chapter 7

GO VIRAL OR GO HOME

"Extra! extra! A viral iconic image's awarded a prestigious prize!"

We all know what a viral image is, as for iconic, Webster says: "widely known and acknowledged especially for distinctive excellence."

But since when is Viral identical to Iconic? People are so untrained to the social media tsunami, taken by surprise, asked for instant reaction. All stages of thoughtful behaviour have been burnt down to a few finger slides and taps. Similarly, assessing and evaluating have been severely compromised by the push algorithms suggesting to you that what is liked, shared and heavily commented, by definition, is worth looking at!

Should we now add a new semiotic category to photography? Indexical, iconic, symbolic ... viral? If the only criterion for one image to be consecrated is its virality,

then crutches in the form of captions/words are more than necessary. And so pictures become irreversibly mute, since words speak louder than images.

Naturally there are powerful indexical images that become iconic through their resistance in time and under repetitive reading. Then the road to symbolic is brief. They usually represent ideas, without captions and without necessarily referring to a certain reality other than the one created by the perceptual anxieties of the viewer.

Imagine Robert Capa's iconic image of a Spanish soldier needing words to obtain a permanent meaning.

Take another example, Robert Frank's "Trolley, New Orleans 1955" which was like a contact sheet. A notion that in the digital era has only an archival and historical use (if any). Frank's image was presenting many different frames, stories, emotions put together in a single shot. A political essay and statement on the American society of segregation. My argumentation is simple! Robert Frank's picture was a single shot! Check out the 81 contact sheets from "The Americans": a single shot, exposure nr 16, of an ISO125 KODAK PLUS-X film!

That shot was/is the favourite of hundreds of photographers, it made the cover of the book, it made Kerouac write about it. And my haunting question is: Why on earth can't we do such pictures anymore? Is it because triggering the shutter means nothing in terms of cost and it won't consume another exposure of the once precious film roll?

Is it because no one waits anymore for the meaningful moment to shoot?

Whatever the reason, I think it is time to have every picture accompanied by its subsequent and preceding shots. I need to see what was there before and after. I need a

contact sheet. And I need to see why, with all this unbelievable digital gear, we are unable to make a difference, an icon, a meaningful image. I am also taking the liberty to declare us victims of a technology that has taken over our visual sensibility and it just records randomly and accidentally.

Go viral or go home coz it's the end of the world as we know it, and it was so for some years now but no one seems to care!

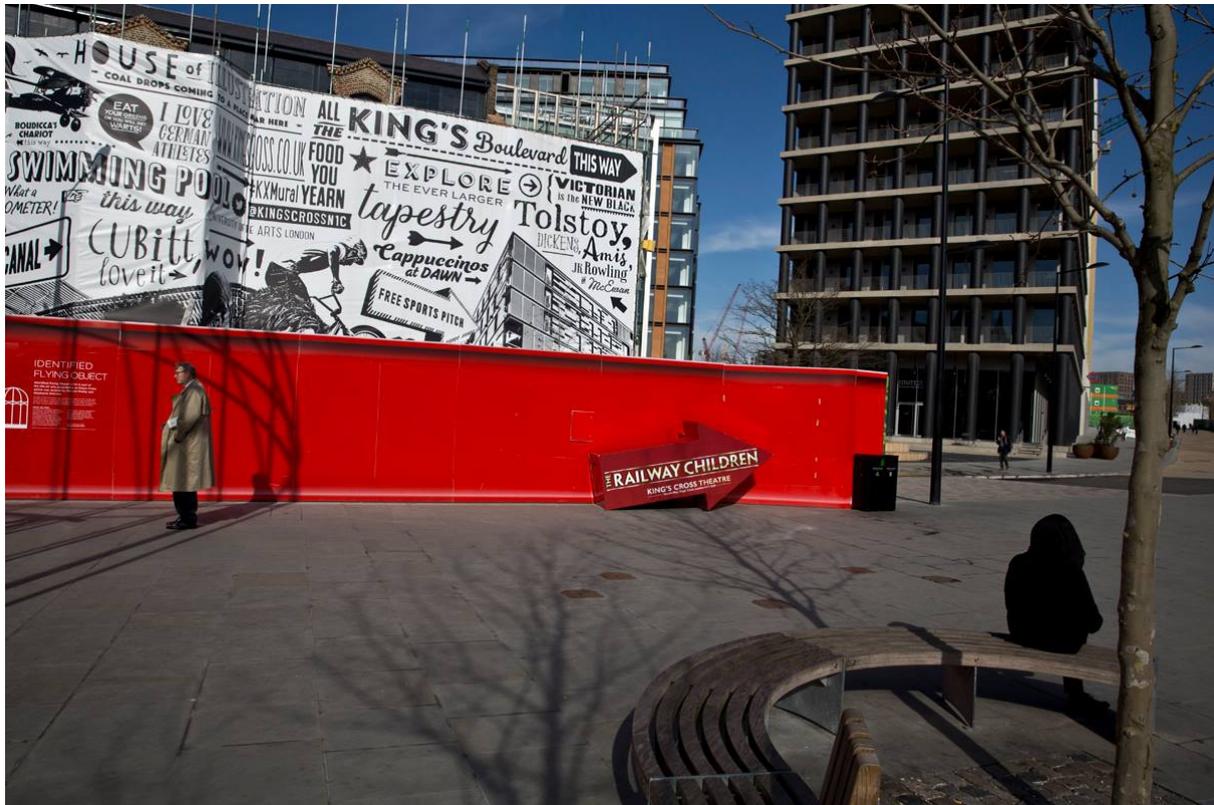
Do something different than Google's 9-eye monster recording everything on every street! Street View is not at all a child's play. All, and I mean all, street photography at eye level has been done by that gigaphotographer.

Why are you people still shooting without bending your knees, without putting the camera somewhere, anywhere, except against your wonderful front scull of divine homo erectus that you are. Why are some still disturbed by a tilted horizon? How is an Italian urban facade under a warm hue of summer light anymore something worth recording?

Grow, get connected, use all the gadgets you carry in your pockets and on your tablets and laptops. Use the power of the limitless digital space, use your neurons for editing and selecting quickly and on the money, sort the meaningful bits out of petabytes of raw pixels. Stop composing! Start curating!

Throw your ego away and punish your own creations by banning them for a long time. They will gain their deserved nostalgia, their temporal surrealism, one of the greatest virtues of the photographic medium. Expropriate yourself from them, then appropriate them again. The more the alienation the better the selection. In any possible way, we possess so little of the materiality of a photograph, the latter being mostly created by ingenious mechanics and electronics.

Don't be fooled by the "creative" touch of the photographer-artist and his ruling over automation. That "touch" is nothing more than touching the shutter button! Or nothing more than re-"touching" a universe that never existed and never belonged initially to the author (this is the undersigned's clumsy definition of post-processing).





chapter 8

MADNESS vs MEDIOCRITY

Again, what is Street Photography? Is it hyperrealism (extremely accurate reality), surrealism (contradiction between dream and reality), meta-realism (a comment on reality)?

It is all of the above and all the rest, but foremost it is choices. And when you are making a choice, this isn't only photographic; "it is a choice of life, which leads you to exclude dramatic conflicts, the knots of contradiction, the great tensions of will, passion, aversion. So you think you are saving yourselves from madness, but you are falling into mediocrity, into hebetude", as Calvino puts it!

If madness is disturbing as an attribute for your work, then call it heroism, it won't change things very much, except the way your dissociative behaviour is perceived by

an admiring public. Mediocrity on the other hand is very easy to achieve. Just let hypocrisy, egotism and conformism invade you.

Recall the appeal and the virtues of the raw and gritty street photography, the one with an unconstructed image unreadable for its meanings. Void from any conceptual construction this kind of photograph(y) leads us to a purely psycho-sensory contact with the world. Incomplete details (partial materiality) invite our capacity to concentrate and essentialise without being overexposed to the appearances.

Baudelaire would define great art as the ability to distil experience in gestures of synthesis and abbreviation, gifts of memory and imagination, which are in synergy with the memory and imagination of the viewer, so that the latter can reconstruct and participate in the originating experience. Create the ultimate visual experience with compositional instability which makes the scene "pregnant" with an upcoming event but where the real is absent.

So what will it be? Madness or mediocrity? And why all the above absolutism about choices? Do they provoke rage in you, a shock? Do they violate your usual way of seeing? Good!

Furthermore, what once was considered contemplatively beautiful, it now inspires indignation. Moral decline or rise may in the future revive or annihilate your work. So stop worrying about something so futile and deceiving as the public taste of a consumer society.



chapter 9

THE "REAL" PHOTOGRAPHER

Or the camera pre-sets, editing, cropping, projects.

I had in mind to leave this chapter blank all the way, symbolically. However let's put in words what can't be otherwise described, and since I have been criticised for being too concise.

Day settings, night hacks, <1600 ISO, Tv, Av, M for moron, P for pinhead, 35mm, get Nike shoes, DOF till you drop, it's bracketing stupid, LR presets, PS filters ... After all those settings, do you still have time for making photography? Shooting is not a synonym of creating photographs! We do not have much time when taking a photograph except bringing some order in a puzzling invasion of visual stimuli.

Instead of over-preparing a picture, use your camera as these one-use plastic boxes (just a shutter button). I would speculate here to the point of affirming that PhoneCamera users have much more chances to make a breakthrough in modern photography.

Maybe I failed to mention: before becoming a good photographer, get yourself a good editor, or become one! A good editor will tell you that you should not limit your choice in freezing a scene where a kid is throwing a ball, even if the ball is looking like a globe (Alex Webb, Tehuantepec, Mexico).

A good editor in you, will tell you not to limit yourself to a passing shadow in the foreground when there are whole worlds to discover in the background (Economopoulos, Cuba).

And if you start refusing to take pictures of reflections on bus and train windows; if you put your camera down in front of misery and suffering (the engines of western society); if you realise that fails are nothing more than sparklers; if you admit that all the above







are transient, illusory and ephemeral bubbles, then you will probably become a great editor and know how to juggle with both a fugitive moment and a perpetual geometry.

"What to choose?" is many times answered with another question: "Why choose?"

Just a quick look at the MAGNUM Contact Sheets collection will answer the second question. If these masters/monsters of photography were denying themselves already when film was precious, if they would dumb 95% of their work by circling or checking just 3-4 frames out of 24 (36), there must be a reason.

The reason is that you will be remembered for just a handful of pictures so better choose well, because no one will dig in your TERA hard drives to find your hidden posthumous masterpieces.

Another usually dismissed question is "Why was the photographer him/herself there?". The well-known transgressive fallacy of the photographers not living the moment but just mechanically registering a reality alien to them in order to explain it later, is not enough to justify their presence in the shooting location.

It must be more than this! My gut feeling, my cacophonous internal voice, is saying that they are there because they can't be anywhere else.

Photographers are pushed at the brinks of the society, they are marginalised, and rightly so, due to a distant behaviour and a clumsy interaction with contemporary values. So they become perpetual satellites of a collective order remote to them.

On the other hand, the wise advice in art schools (whether it is painting, drawing or photography) "use the whole frame/canvas" does not mean only to fill the rectangle with objects, subjects, shapes, colours, shades ...

Populating every angle does not necessarily mean that the frame is used meaningfully. Because, oddly some might say, the most important part are the limits, the edges of the frame against which the contents are measured.

A shape, any shape, looks totally different depending on its distance from the outer limits, and consequently any cropping becomes an act of creation.

Unfortunately, not in this art, not in photography. We are lucky enough (unlike cinematography) to have a rectangular "dictator" trapping not only our vision but also our subjects. The impossibility of escaping is for once welcome. In fact, the whole artistic endeavour in photography is the choice of what stays in.

Widely known stuff you would say, but allow me this reminder: Cropping is denying your art previously made through the viewfinder when triggering the shutter. Obsessively changing the limits of your pictures is entering another world, sometimes a world of pain (for the viewers).

Ever wondered why great photographers had/have never the eloquence to talk about their photography or about photography in general?

Coz they didn't/don't need it.

Coz they didn't have any street photography projects.

Coz street photography is a life long project with no start and ending.

Coz, even if they did have projects (rather assignments) to make a living, they knew there is something more than delivering documentaries, news, fashion, travel pictures, wildlife, nightlife, family portraits, flowers, revolutions, pornography, misery, glamour, suffering, pain, wealth, decay ...

Coz they knew that the only thing that counts is spotting a meaningful photograph out of hundreds made.

Coz they knew that there is nothing out there to be discovered, until it has been photographed!

Coz they knew that "B-side-pictures" are those which stand out of the bunch.

That's why the only project in the history of photography that gave so many meaningful pictures was the Farm Security Administration's project on agricultural workers led by Walker Evans and Dorothea Lange both fired, laid off, by the Farm Agency for not respecting the project's requirements. For the record, the "inspired" editor was punching a hole in the negatives he considered inadequate.

That's why Winogrand had no other project except serving his obsessions. Thank you Garry for saving the face for the rest of us.

Stop street photography projects, and above all, stop talking about street photography; after all there is no need to be apologetic for your photography.

Nevertheless I will stick to a couple of Garry's phrases: "A hammer, a saw, a piece of time and space. That's what a photograph is, nothing else. Alright?" "It's a funny business. It's a compulsion. I wind up, I'm weak, you know, if I see an attractive woman, I'll try to take a picture."

As an intermediate-final word (mind you, oxymoron is the ultimate pre-set) do as you please, just bear in mind that there is a global conspiracy to keep your focus away from the essence, aside of the core.

There is a continuous manipulation to put barriers to your talent and to your inspiration. Just a few of them: Theory, magazines, critiques, personal trainers,

shadows, tunnels, umbrellas, street performers, your own family pictures ... your own family.



chapter 10

ARTE POVERA

For those needing a framework for their art to exist, and all the previous chapters did not connect to their vision, there is, since the 60's, the 'poor art' movement.

In a nutshell, it is a complete openness (and rejection) of materials, processes, theoretical and technical bases which privileges the relationship between art and real life. Similarly, the photographer may take a radical stance attacking the established values of the cultural industry. In particular, the urban cultural activity can easily lead to an open-ended experimentation.

In photography we have an additional tool/constraint to deal with. The camera! Is a photograph non-material and invisible (Barthes) or is the materiality of a picture linked inseparably to the apparatus, the object, the medium, and the viewer (Derrida)? Are the

virtues of the mechanical devices humiliating any subjective or objective talent?
(Calvino)

All those questions about the importance (or not) of the photographic gear are raising clearly the issue of resisting technique by focusing on the process, the creative gesture. Transforming the insignificant into a meaningful object, the sublimation of the futile, is the essence of this process.

However the abolition of the identity of both the author and the object, leads inevitably to the absence of any appropriation and artistic property. All becomes nomadic, unseizable.

The quest for an original perspective, forging a signature, the unique attribute that would make an artist recognisable, is very legitimate. The problem is that photography is by nature a copying, imitating and forging process and very soon anything original falls into redundancy through its repetition. Nobody "sees" anymore redundant images.

Many anti-conformist artists are flirting with Dadaism. Their photographs, albeit their visual confusion, and thus provocation at first reading, they convey a nonsensical and ethereal narrative after a while.

They fall under what André Breton termed "convulsive beauty" in the Manifesto of Surrealism. The same goes for Kertesz's distortions, Man Ray's violin, Atget's shop windows. Dadaism appeared post WWI, hand-by-hand with Surrealism as an anti-bourgeois protest "against this world of mutual destruction." As a scream against the madness of collective homicide.

But why now, at times of relative peace, this cyclical re-emerging of the opposite of everything? Why still go beyond aesthetics, offending the established harmony?

It is because almost two centuries of photography could not convince us that perfection in art can perdure. Better technologies, cameras, films, lenses, sensors came to provide crisp images able to be magnified at gigantic levels. And yet, we merrily and

happily embrace Man Ray's words: "I would photograph an idea rather than an object, a dream rather than an idea."

Abstract photography (no matter its artistic value, which I am not capable of judging) is a necessary exercise both for the photographer and the viewer to get familiar and open to the multilevel representations and transformations of street photography.





chapter 11

CURATORS AND JUDGES

From the "Get out" movie 2017: Chris is a photographer. Jim Hudson is a **blind** art dealer, curator and critic.

“ JIM: - I am an admirer of your work. You have a great eye. You've got something. The images you capture. So brutal, so melancholic. It's powerful stuff, I think. Believe me, the irony of being a blind art dealer isn't lost on me.

CHRIS: - How'd you do it?

JIM: - My assistant describes the work to me in great detail. “

Of course the allusion was that critics are little, if not at all, related to visual faculties.

Your photography ain't that great? Suffering from lack of talent? Become a curator! But be warned and read my lips! Curating is **not an adolescent collection of favourites!**

Seriously, I am deeply disappointed that no one is giving a couple of reasons for their selection(s). Of course it is personal and subjective but try harder or don't try at all. We are flooded by "Picture of the day / month / year", worldwide contests "Best portrait / landscape / action", but no one is daring to give their justification for the selection. No time? Then stop doing this. No reasons? Then keep your silence.

It is of an extreme importance whenever you try to pick a photograph, be it for presenting it to a competition or for submitting it in a group of people, or even to advise a friend on the qualities of their images, to give it the deserved thought.

If not anything else, you should be aware that any choice can only be idyllic, apologetic, consolatory. It can be the result of a gut feeling or of your artistic culture. Equally valid!

After all, is there any real difference, any aesthetic advantage or disadvantage, between revealing a beauty or ripping off a mask?

Personally, I want to see the injuries of time, to remove the masks of the society.

Someone was saying that there is just a tiny probability a teenager Lartigue and a senior Atget to have known and seen each other shooting at the Bois de Boulogne.

It would have been no way to miss each other today with the infinite availability of everybody's work through modern communication tools.

And still, my ignorance of so many talented photographers has not been getting any better albeit all the accessibility and ease of information.

Curating is as much a private moment (or even more) as photographing.







chapter 12

REVELATIONS

NB: Heavily inspired by Calvino's Antonino Fanaragi

For each one of the photographers the path is more or less the same! At a first stage there is doubt. We photograph anything, one another. We continue to believe that only the tangible proof of the photograph is the reality of our life, the rest being vague memories.

Nevertheless, the facility of the devices does not allow for the creation of a joint all-photographic society, where everybody would talk about aperture, ISO, technical and artistic skills. We are instead, once more, separated into amateurs and professionals, ignorants and connoisseurs, the fake and the "real thing".

We are still doubting our mental capacity of expressing ourselves through photography. Fortunately it is enough to have some accidental successes to embrace the photographic activity, start, and most probably, never stop, as said before, photographing everything.

And so we arrive at the day when all becomes a paradox. We take spontaneous pictures but the next second they are deprived of their temporal characteristic. They become past, nostalgic, commemorative.

We explore all possible photographic methods, approaches, perspectives but what we seek, the real hunt, is the impossible, the invisible, the immaterial, the dream. We want a picture that contains both the tangible and the futile.

We learn to control the transformation, to transmit a message, but at the same time we know that the magic comes from the unexpected, the alienation and even the distortion of the message. For the most fortunate at this very moment comes a muse to make all the above possible or to fail irrevocably.

A muse can be a person, a place, but also as immaterial as an idea. But let's give it a woman essence for the purposes of this last allegory and for the sake of giving a face to the obscure object of obsession. We start photographing it (her) unceasingly, everywhere, all the time, in all the hypostases.

Alone, in crowds, visibly, invisibly. We photograph the muse's presence, the muse's absence. And this is how we notice a muse: A muse "recognizes as acts of love those photographic rapes."

The end of a cycle arrives. We (the photographers) stand in front of the pile of our images, some in the trash, some in expensive mountings. Having acquired extraordinary technical skills we think being at the end of the road. Having exhausted every possible angle we elude our true course.

The course of collecting indefinitely a fleeting reality ... "because once you've begun, there is no reason why you should stop. The line between the reality that is

photographed because it seems beautiful to us and the reality that seems beautiful because it has been photographed is very narrow."

Photographers are much more than talented illusionists. In the end they are inspired manipulators. They dig into the depths of the viewers' minds and souls. They play with our primal feelings but we can give them that. Simply because, in order to produce these pictures they have undergone the exactly same process. A denudation process.





chapter 13

WHAT'S NEXT

"This new situation has created an army of photographers who run rampant over the globe, photographing objects of all sorts, sizes, and shapes, under almost every condition, without ever pausing to ask themselves, is this or that artistic?... They spy a view, it seems to please, the camera is focused, the shot taken! There is no pause, why should there be? For art may err but nature cannot miss, says the poet, and they listen to the dictum. To them, composition, light, shade, form and texture are so many catch phrases...."

I am just trying to describe today's state of photography; or am I? Could it be that I am just protesting? Welcome to the army of perpetual protesters because the above text was written in 1893, i.e. more than 120 years ago. (E. E. Cohen)

Observe some of the elements of the contemporary street photography as it is performed nowadays. Infinite sharpness (due to bright lenses in hyperfocal by default), hyperreal colours (due to AWB doing a super job), anecdotal by contradiction (a surprisingly extraverted behaviour of a dull society), are some of them.

In addition, in a maximization effort, the ambitious artists are trying to fit as much as possible in a single frame. They photograph humans in all of their hypostases, and many of them. Faces, expressions, body parts all around. Frontal, partial, in the background, everywhere. And the even more ambitious critics have a wealth of interpretations, reading paths, leading lines, intersecting glances, shapes, clusters, parallel stories and surrealistic juxtapositions.

Usually these frames come from very busy cities (NY, New Delhi, Havana ...) and the photographers, once there, quickly give up any effort to cut out meaningless information, and they skip the very essence of composition (reductionism, and inclusion by exclusion).

I am against exotic or multi-photographed places which were discovered by pioneer photographers and then they became destinations for **supertourists** (an extension of the anthropologist, visiting natives and bringing back news of their exotic doings and strange gear - S.Sontag) and for workshops by assault!

These "expeditions", where photographers pass through boredom into fascination, usually produce millions of asexual, self-replicating prosaic images.

And they are satisfied with the raw result of a "chaotic order" (the same contradictory concept as the "tilted equilibrium"). And they are right on the money. And there is a huge body of exceptional work from many photographers within the above approach.

Nevertheless, and happily, there are also, and still, compositions where the monosemantic reading needs no crutches in order for the picture to prevail and perpetuate in our memory.





Nevertheless, here and there some of the newcomers transgress the obvious and create pictures with "noema" as a result of an intentional experience!

These insightful photographers bring with them their own vision and are not easily taken over by the superb light and the nostalgic scenery.

Albeit all the above, the question remains: How much has all this interference of touristic hordes, transformed a desolate underworld into a plastic overworld? A world which is behaving within the absolute inhibition, or which at best, is unsuccessfully evading a counterfeit beatitude.

We know where street photography came from, but where is it going? Content, composition or storyline? Story in itself is not enough. HCB was the first to acknowledge that form and content are inseparable and their harmonious combination makes the picture.

Then we have understood (probably due to photographic overdose) that harmony is boring. And some "fast-food" ingredients appeared. Street photographers started

relentlessly to portray the juxtaposition of amputated human body parts in the foreground and some unrelated objects in the background.

This in itself was not something new. It was known that distortion is appealing. Already in the beginning of the last century we were experimenting with fetishization and self-mutilation, headless or limbless mannequins (now humans). It was and it is an approach where normality plays with abnormality, a self-confrontation.

My appreciation was (maybe not anymore) that the important elements are surrealism (contradictions between dream and reality), symbolism (absolute truths described in a metaphoric way) and abstraction (suspending reality by avoiding the literal description of things from the visible world). Or are they? The essence lies elsewhere and most probably only within the artist's vision. As for the future of street photography, only time will tell what is perishable.

Almost a 100 years of street photography since Kertész.

The photographic stills of the so called living theater changed a lot in all those years. Greys became colours, the plot became experimental, arbitrary, without a start and an end, unlike the compositional gems of HCB.

The odd, the peculiar, the anecdotic became the standard. As if the less we understood, the greater the artistic breakthrough of the photographer. Freaks and monsters (*sensu largo*, including half bodies entering and leaving the frame, juxtaposed in Siamese twins postures) became and stayed a dear subject for the street photographers because of their clear and immediate impact on people's delightful suburban lives.

Presently, the once most fearful situation when assembling a scene (seeing fragments not fitting the kit) is almost what makes nowadays a street photograph stand out in the "experts" eyes.

Unfortunately, the people who tell you that, the curators who convince you to be as odd as possible ... well they spend their lives indoors in verbose symposia, colloquia and round tables. What a waste ... (of time mostly).

If we look closely at the work of the Masters we will see that they all had only a few "good" years. As someone said, don't remember his name (wink): "to be a good photographer is not an eternal achievement but just a clandestine touch of genius!"

Go out there at dawn, at night, by any weather, under any light, mostly alone, and shoot like there is no tomorrow. Coz there isn't!

Go out and shoot, because life is a beach and then you dye ... or paint (yours truly talking in front of the mirror).







chapter 14

CONFESSION

When starting this short essay I thought: I am about to commit another "blasphemy", another betrayal of self. I have to talk about something I just do not understand. About hidden emotions unable to be described. About the unseizable differences between fake talent and "talented faking". Or about how mannerism (feel free to use any definition of it, it would fit) is the worst enemy of originality and change. And I realised that I need once more to take huge distances from the established, to take a vacation from myself.

Then someone told me: Stop talking and go out and shoot. Talking about others' photographs does not make you necessarily a good photographer. True! Even more true from the moment that photography is the exaltation of the futile, the elevation of

the trivial! Artists are spiritual teachers of the world, and for their teaching to have weight, it must be comprehensible and not elude in a narcissistic "art for the art's sake".

In my turn I am saying, Go beyond "recipes" and try not to just capture the world parading in front of us! But try to put your obsessions in a frame. Like an instant straightjacket to your dreams. Otherwise the emotions and the intensity we would like to convey will not be visible. This is my answer to that.

Your vision should not be connected to any school or aesthetics. Your vision should come from working with the "thing itself", from engaging your skill of choosing and eliminating, and from acknowledging that time is not continuous but made out of personal crescendos, including visual ones.



**Go shoot and then present your work knowing that you are a
hero!**

**Because it takes courage to reveal, to share the intimate
moments of a partial failure, to understate that to be a good
photographer is not an eternal achievement but just a
clandestine touch of genius!**







Reviews to V.1.1 (April 2017)

Thought provoking. In your face. Anarchist. Is not this street photography?

From DREAM...

Everything starts inside you.

To MINDSET...

The vision is taken by you and who you are.

To REALITY...

The construction process depends on you.

This Anti-Manual on Street Photography is simply one of the best texts about Photography ever read. Why?

Because this is exactly what I want and what I look for in a book, thought for Street Photographers. In this Anti-Manual you will find disseminated semantics and ontology, but don't expect the professor's dismal approach with the usual chapters about what is street photography and the consequent sub genres.

This is applied anarchist thought to photography, unconventional, baudelerian, intimate like a kick in the balls, "More provoking, less ethics, more aesthetics" ... this is a real rebel book, this is a book that academics will hate ...

Alex Coghe

"The humor, the sadness, the EVERYTHING-ness and the American-ness of these pictures" - Jack Kerouac on "The Americans" By Robert Frank.

How would any photograph of Robert Frank's "The Americans" perform in a contemporary street photography contest? Would it be allowed in the pool of one of those highly curated Flickr groups?

And if we say that "The Americans" is great but historic work and as such dated, what about any photograph of Alec Soth's much applauded and very contemporary "Songbook"? Would this work be absurd, edgy, humorous, layered, juxtaposed, surreal and ironic enough to meet today's standards of street photography? Much of what I see in contemporary street photography feels to me a bit formulaic.

The same ingredients over and over again. Layerly over-crowded frames, people extending environmental forms and vice versa, cut-off body parts and weirdly connected elements, the occasional head replacement thrown in for good measure. Mostly Webb-Harvey colour, some in Moriyama Black and white. Very skilfully composed, it really takes great skills to take this kind of shots. Yet same, same and little different.

Seeing these shots feels a bit like hearing a master musician playing the same chords over and over again. You start out admiring the skills being mildly entertained by the pleasantness of the chords. Yet eventually you will ask yourself. "Where the fuck is the music?"

Michail's book is all about getting the music back into street photography. A polemic rant, witty, angry and educated. In many ways this book is anti: Anti-establishment, anti-preconceived ideas, anti-rules. Yet this book is so much more. It is mind opening and inspiring. A passionate plea to free street photography from any artificial boxes. Enjoy the read, you are in for a treat.

Martin U Waltz

Michail Moscholios anti-manual is a philosophical diatribe on the state of street photography (and photography) today.

Even though it is a brief book doesn't mean it's a quick read. It is chock-full of meaningful content, ideas, thoughts, and sage advice for photographers, only best digested after repeated readings.

Chris Suspect

It is obvious that Moscholios is not about to school the reader on what street photography, by popular definition, should be. Launching into the first chapter it becomes immediately clear that the author has put as much time into thinking about his passion as he has actually practicing it with the camera.

The bold opening statement, “there is no such a thing as photographic genre, style, trend, movement,” builds upon his introduction and he closes the chapter questioning why should we categorize art, or put boundaries on it. But after diving deeper into the book, it also becomes clear that Moscholios is not just being rebellious for chaos’ sake.

He is a rebel with a cause. My take is that his cause is freeing the reader’s photographic mind.

Andrew Sweigart

Έκδοση 2.0



τα Αντί φωτογραφίας δρόμου της

