

'UNNECESSARY WARSAW CORRESPONDENT'

Exile Gallery Berlin 13.10 -17.11.2016

Do you take pictures to remember things, as a way to hold on to reality?

The brain apparently has its own ways of updating the past. Depending on our mood and neurological status, we decide what to remember and which pictures we recall. I took those pictures out of a wish to record certain atmospheres, to preserve them and the opportunity to re-use facts of mysteria in the future. Growing up in Düsseldorf, Warsaw became a part-time reality for me through my regular visits. Since I was a teenager, I imagined my other life, as if my parents had not have left the country in '85. It was as if Warsaw had become a sort of muse for me.

What is left out of the frame is equally intrinsic to your images as what's included. The process of remembering, documenting, and re-discovering. Working with a two-dimensional surface, how do you prevent a sense of flatness in your work?

I think the moment I decide to take a certain picture, to set a fictional frame, is when I see that it has a connection to previous situations, future projects, or simply if I assume that it can unravel its semantic meaning within my artistic work. Through these connections, the photographs stay active and eventually will have a deeper meaning.

The way you use images seems to challenge a photograph's three-dimensional characteristics, especially when translating the image onto different surfaces. Photographs become objects. Can you describe how you balance the two-dimensionality of a photograph and the three-dimensionality of the photograph-as-object?

The process of translation is for me the most exciting part of my artistic production. In the moment of translation I have to connect precisely with a multitude of layers of possible meanings. This becomes a real three-dimensional adventure for me. From a collection of exterior settings, shop decorations and wall pieces, for example, I was inspired to write the short text 'Ko-realia' in 2014. I enjoy the idea of using the collected photographs like actors taking part in a play. On the other hand, by taking a picture of a loose sculptural arrangement and naming it a piece of work, I also wish to add value to the format of documentation. Once an image is released from the burden of being representative, it becomes fluid and may be put to a related use.

Quite a few of your motifs, which are printed on fabric and other surfaces, resemble poster art from the 1950's and 60's in Poland realized for theatre and cabaret by the so-called Polish School of Posters, for instance. Do your images and patterns reminisce that kind of allusions and aesthetic tensions in print?

As I work with print myself, this issue is something that I am using rather intuitively. Bringing together images and texts for an event in spe, the poster as a medium has been attractive to me. This format exists with its easy access for public, both in interior and exterior spaces between being functional and being experimental. I found myself interested in the diversity of printed ephemera that I discovered in Poland. During a recent visit to the Wilanow Castle in Warsaw, which is known for its tradition in showing mainly Polish posters, my attention rised above the paperworks. I found myself looking precisely at the material of the marble floor, hearing the ladies talk about their shifts and what they will buy on the weekend. Maybe that is a reason why I am interested in setting up systems in-between media. Its my desire to update reality.

The format of the photographic prints is also very distinctive. What is the reason for them to be in a particularly small format?

I have started printing negatives in the format that was used for previewing developed film. Then I decided to integrate this pretty unknown standard size into my work. This 7x10 cm format appears to be functional and personal but also transmits the very essence of my observations. Even if I eventually enlarge certain images for other collage works, for this exhibition, which is part of the European Month of Photography, I wanted to highlight this format and concentrate on a conceptual level.

Those photographs can also be seen as poetic material with a visual narrative. Is that the reason why you use the format of the album?

The format of the album started as a practical decision, like a raw database. Some pictures placed next to each other automatically seemed to promote a story. So somehow yes, the album was perhaps the moment when I realized it has potential to be continued. For the exhibition at Exile I composed 'Set Jaunesse' a mash-up with photographs, sprayed passepartout, and plexiglass. The twentyone tableaux form their own format and provide the viewer with links to other elements of my work.

As you have mentioned, most of the photographs are taken on your visits to your your native city Warsaw – friends, buildings, shop windows ... They seem to form a sort of travelogue or visual diary, which you define as correspondence. Could you tell a bit more about your role or your "job" as the so-called correspondent?

The title 'Unnecessary Warsaw Correspondent' used to name the pictures I took and collected around the city. I understand its diverse meanings even better today. While my photographs show exterior sensations, social situations, vague objects it became a description for the job that I am doing as an artist, which involved correlating a variety of media objects and text into a narration and every day situation. Warsaw is linked with my biography, it is also a historically adored terrain where i used to express my artistic and personal autonomy. In the 1990's I perceived the necessity to record this feeling of 'neither belonging nor not belonging' to a system. These gaps empowered me to develop my own visual language. I saw it on the streets, the walls, in writings, on buildings, women's expression- the city talked back to me. There was something to do about it. I wanted to carefully capture this ephemeral beauty/ugliness, poetic/politics which was recognizable to me. Job issues are becoming an important topic in our times. Recently, I read about the top ten jobs that will definitely disappear soon. What other purposeful jobs can be given to people instead? I thought about ones that will be based on new skills. Mine could be delivering these 'non capable sensations'. Now the only question is how this correspondence will be brought onto the table? With this exhibition I want to respond to the fascinating strength I received from Warsaw. I believe this is contemporary topic. In the end I fantasize that these images might activate people to complex decisions into joyful temperaments.

a conversation between Melissa Canbaz and Katharina Marszewski in September 2016