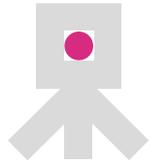


PhotoResearcher



ESHP European Society for the History of Photography

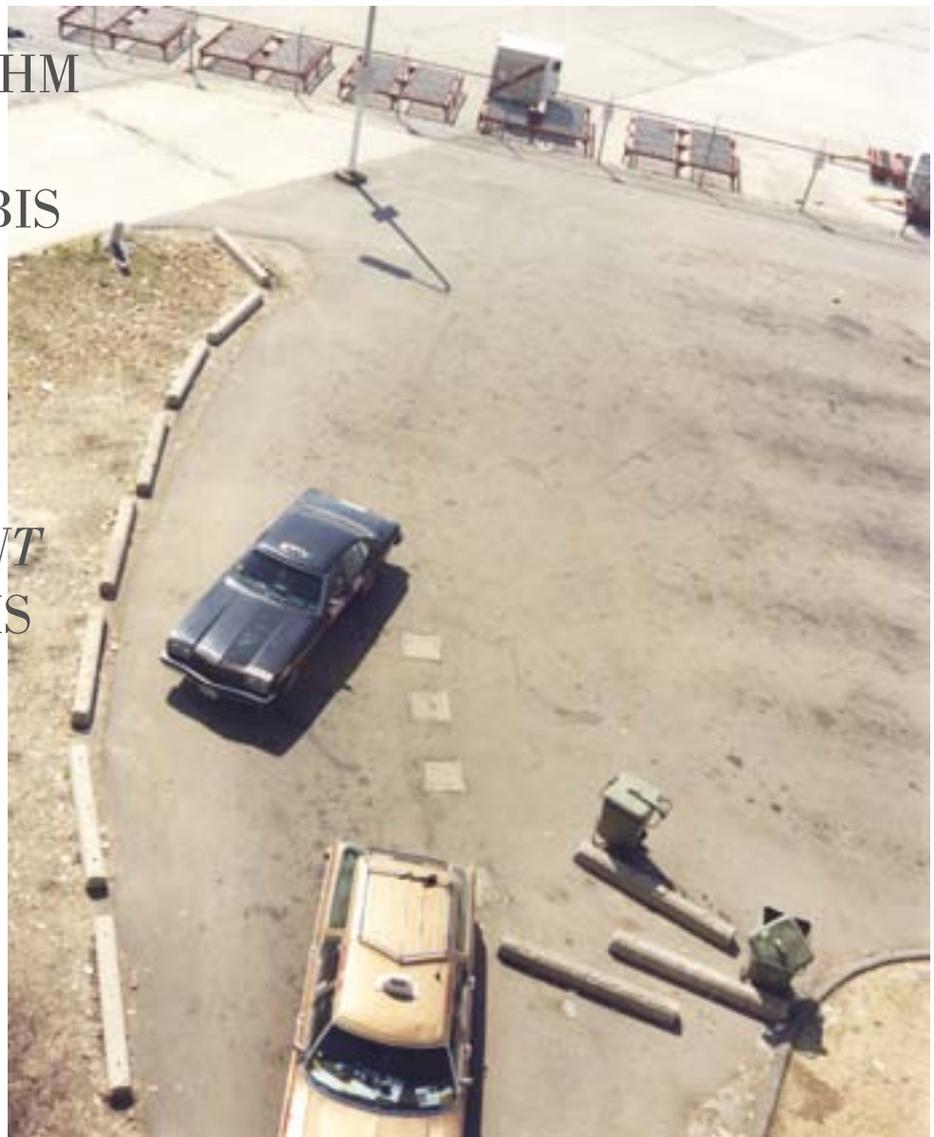
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FOTOAUS-
STELLUNGEN
*HERBST /
WINTER 2011*

JOACHIM BROHM
COLOR
10. NOV. 2011 BIS
19. FEB. 2012

STEPHANE
COUTURIER
MELTING POINT
1. DEZ. 2011 BIS
5. FEB. 2012



Joachim Brohm, Taxi (Ohio), 1983-1984, 30 x 40 cm / 60 x 50 cm, © Joachim Brohm, VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2011

Editorial

Dear Reader,

The history of Europe in the first half of the 20th century can be described as a series of turning points, marked by two world wars, political instability and the resulting socio-political changes and new beginnings. For photographers and artists, the question of the view of humanity that was often postulated as the search for the “new person” in a “new age” became one of the most decisive factors in their visual depictions. This number, devoted to **Depicting People – The Human Image in Photography**, makes a detailed investigation, concentrating on social relationships, into the multifaceted aspects of the subject of the image of man in photography, ranging from self-perception to transformations in the representations of the body.

We are delighted that many renowned experts have agreed to present the results of their most recent research in this largest edition – in terms of pages – of PhotoResearcher published so far.

This issue starts with an interview **Martin Parr** gave to **Uwe Schögl** on the occasion of his visit to Vienna for the opening of his exhibition *The Real World*. **Christopher Webster van Tonder** questions the role of the almost-forgotten German photographer Erich Retzlaff, who was a celebrated photographer between the 1920s and '40s. The essay highlights the work of a highly skilled and aesthetically gifted photographer, without ignoring that it was certainly ideologically motivated and useful to National Socialist propaganda.

Ulrich Pohlmann examines the mutual influence of the German nudist movement of the first third of the 20th century and nude photography of this period in connection with the film ‘Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit’ (1925). **Patricia Gozalbez Cantó** provides an analysis and comparison of how photographs in German and Spanish magazines from the 1920s and '30s represented the genre of the nymphet, how this traditional feminine model was created on the visual level in the magazines and interpreted as a contrast to what was, at the time, the image of the modern woman. **Frauke Kreutler** deals with the staged nude photographs of the dancer Claire Bauroff by Trude Fleischmann and their coverage in the press, while **Gerard Hastings** makes the British painter Keith Vaughan’s photographic work of male nudes available for the first time. **Christina Natlacen** describes how the avant-garde artists Peter Kubelka and Floris Neusüss developed the depictions of the human body in their films and photography respectively.

Moritz Neumüller and **Andrés Garay Albújar** characterise the South American photographer Martin Chambi who portrayed the Andean people from a European perspective. This European point of view also applies to Robert Frank and Henry Cartier Bresson and their insights into the deep south of the USA of the 1950s as described in **Katherine Hoffman’s** essay.

Ulla Fischer-Westhauser, Uwe Schögl
Vienna, October 2011

The Last Resort – and a Great Day in Vienna

Martin Parr in Interview with Uwe Schögl



Interview
Martin Parr and Uwe Schögl,
Anzenberger Gallery, Vienna March 2011
© Anzenberger Gallery.

THE LAST RESORT¹ is considered one of the most important photobooks and, 25 years after its publication in 1986, has lost none of its topicality.² Martin Parr made the “New Brighton” amusement park and its visitors his motif. Although the photographer originally saw his pictures in a comic, but simultaneously touching, vital light, today they are regarded as a “Homage to Unculture and its Rituals” (Sandra Phillips).

Martin Parr has been a full member of the Magnum Photographic Corporation since 1994 and knows how to bridge the gap between artistic and social documentary photography to capture the changes in society and its values better than any other.

Martin Parr talked about his work with Uwe Schögl in an exclusive interview for PhotoResearcher on the occasion of the opening of his *The Real World* exhibition in the Anzenberger Gallery in Vienna on 25 March 2011.³

Uwe Schögl: Let's begin by looking back: When you first discovered your interest in photography, did you think you would become a photographer, collector, author and curator?

Martin Parr: Certainly a photographer, but I was only thirteen or fourteen at the time, still quite young. My grandfather was a very keen hunter-photographer, and he was the person who got me excited about photography in the first place; so, at that age, that's what I wanted to be. I had no idea about being a curator or editor, just a photographer in those days – and that was enough.

U.S.: “The Last Resort”, which is now being shown for the first time in Vienna, started a revolution in documentary photography going far beyond the borders of Great Britain. What were the most surprising – or touching – situations you experienced while taking these pictures between 1983 and 1985?

M.P.: I mean, it was very exciting, because I'd made this move from black and white to colour, so that was an excitement. And of course, you felt, you knew, you're on to something, that was interesting, so that was exciting too; when I saw the prints coming out of the lab, that was also pretty good. So yeah, it was an exciting time, because you knew, that something was happening. You had no idea what it was, but you knew you're on to something.

U.S.: Using colour for documentary work was not new; I am thinking of photographers like William Eggleston, Stephen Shore and Joel Meyerowitz. How significant was colour for the project as whole at the time?

M.P.: Well, colour is integral to that project. It wouldn't work in black and white. You have to remember, way back in the '80s, if you did serious photography it was generally in black and white. The Americans changed this in the late '70s. So, in terms of sensibility, I was not the first on the scene, but perhaps I took it in a different direction. And colour was an integral part of that.

1 Martin Parr, *The Last Resort: Photographs of New Brighton*, Stockport: Dewi Lewis Publishing, 1986. Also see the recent German edition: *The Last Resort. Fotografien von New Brighton*. Fotografiert von Martin Parr. Mit einer Einführung von Gerry Badger, Heidelberg: Kehrer Verlag, 2009.

2 *The Last Resort* was published in 1986 and the photographs were exhibited in the Serpentine Gallery in London in August of the same year.

3 Exhibition: *Martin Parr und Rimaldas Viksraitis: THE REAL WORLD*, Anzenberger

Gallery, Vienna [25.03–31.05.2011] www.anzenbergergallery.com. I would like to thank Elisabeth Mariel of the Anzenberger Gallery and freelancer in the field of contemporary photography and painting in Vienna for her assistance in this interview. Elisabeth Mariel is currently writing her diploma dissertation on “Johann Victor Krämers Orientalist Travel Photography taken in the years 1898 to 1900” in Vienna.

U.S.: Was your satirical look into British everyday life politically motivated or was it just a general observation of the human condition?

M.P.: No; I mean, for sure it had a political backdrop, in so far as that was the time of Mrs. Thatcher... I hated Mrs. Thatcher. She was telling us, what a great country we were; I knew the country was in a really miserable state in the north of England. Politicians live way down in the south, and I wanted to contrast this run-down backdrop of a resort like "New Brighton" with the domestic activity that was going on in front of it. So this is a perfect contradiction and I tried to express it through photography. So that was the basic, let's call it, agenda of this body of work.

U.S.: Which role does authenticity play in your work?

M.P.: That's a tricky one in so far that I'm creating fiction and reality. Reality is there in front of you, but of course I'm exaggerating it, so I'm going to New Brighton at a time when there is the most litter, at times when there are most people, so I'm exaggerating reality. So it's fiction that I created out of reality.

U.S.: Are portraits and depictions of people important for you?

M.P.: Well people are the core agenda; where they place themselves, what they do, the backdrop, and of course the dialogue between the backdrop and the people.

U.S.: I have especially noticed the high level of precision in your work; both in your programmatic stringency as a documentary photographer capturing the highs and lows experienced by residents and, at the same time, transmitting a feeling of atmosphere. You once stated that you are an "aficionado of the British seaside". How would you evaluate or describe the two concepts of precision and atmosphere?

M.P.: I mean these are not something one is conscious of at the time; you know, you see the subject, you connect to it, you try to capture it. Precision and atmosphere were what you said. They are just part of what you see, so I wouldn't analyze it with those terms, that's what intellectuals like you do. I'm an intuitive photographer; I go in and see something I like and try to capture it.

U.S.: In addition to irony, do ugliness and vulgarity play a role in "The Last Resort"? Would you describe this as an "aesthetic of ugliness" and, if so, how would you define it?

M.P.: Ugliness is the wrong word. Everyone always wants to single out one element, the whole point of this is, that you have the shabby backdrop and an optimistic activity going on in front of it. That's the contradiction. That might be an ambiguity. That's what I'm trying to

express. You're talking about the relationship between these people who are absorbed in their family life, the situation, sitting, walking or just being there. That's the core idea of these photographs. I mean, I don't regard it as ugly, because it's full of energy, it's real and you can smell and sense that, but again, critics – of which I have many – love to criticise my work. I welcome all criticism, 'cause it's a way of being noticed: They always say that I'm, you know, ugly, exploitative, condescending, patronising, these words are used all the time, but I'm pretty much used to that.

U.S.: From the point of view of the curator Martin Parr, what is the significance of "The Last Resort" for today?

M.P.: Well "The Last Resort" has nothing really to do with my curating career. Curating came as an opportunity; I'm very well travelled, I see a lot of work and someone offered me this platform to show my discoveries and that was quite successful. I started in 2004, and since then I've had other curating opportunities and it's a great way of sharing the discoveries I've made as a photographer with other people. I think the world of photography is full of lazy curating. I feel I have something to add, because I'm very pro-active, look at things, I have a keen sense of what I think is good and I hope to convince other people of this as well, to have a platform, or an exhibition.

U.S.: How important is Magnum Photography in the way you deal with how people live?

M.P.: I'm very happy to be part of Magnum. It's an artistic corporative that has survived for a long time, a very elite agency; they only take very few people, because they have to be voted for by the peer group, who are the most critical. If you want to get criticism on something, get people who are very much like you, because they are quite stern and tough when it comes to that. So I think that the basic principle and idea works very well. Of course we're having difficulties surviving – as all agencies are. So we're currently in a process of restructuring. But I think the one thing that's good is, in the 20 years since I left – ah, since I joined, forgive me – the agency has been taking on different types of focus. So in terms of documentary photography we have a very wide church, and this has helped us survive. Documentary is being taken up by the art world, so we have many people like, let's say Alec Soth, who's represented by the Gagosian Gallery, they're very important new members of Magnum in terms of keeping a role, a vibrancy, in the agency, and that keeps us a serious player in this world.

U.S.: Are there any new items in your collection of curious objects – and where do you store all this?

M.P.: Recently I've been collecting Martin Luther King, for example. Because when I collected



Martin Parr, New Brighton from
The Last Resort, 1983-85, chromogenic print,
51 x 70 cm,
© Martin Parr/MagnumPhotos.



Martin Parr, New Brighton from
The Last Resort, 1983-85, chromogenic print,
51 x 70 cm,
© Martin Parr/MagnumPhotos.

Obama, I noticed that a lot of this was paired with Martin Luther King, so I decided to make an effort to collect him. So that's my latest face.

I have a storage space where I keep most things, and I have one cabinet in the house, which is full of things I've collected. Then I have the rest crated up. Some are on show in Prague at the moment, in DOX (Centre for Contemporary Art, Prague),⁴ so they go touring, they go out for little outings, become part of exhibitions.

U.S.: Do you plan a museum for your collection of objects?

M. P.: The objects will go to the Victoria and Albert Museum in London after my death. But, before you ask, I don't know when that will be. (laughs)

U.S.: I assume that you will devote yourself entirely to the photobook in the near future?

M.P.: My research on the photographic book continues. I'm very heavily involved with a book about Latin American photobooks that's coming out this autumn. One goal is for this to completely re-evaluate the way we think about Latin-America-photography. So that's a very exciting project to be involved with. Then I'm researching China and the role of the photographic book in China. China is about to become the most powerful country in the world, so a better reading of its photographic history and culture is welcome. And, of course, you have to remember that theorists, academics – they don't understand the importance of the book. This is slowly but surely changing. Up to now the history of photography has left books out entirely. So if we look at our histories, they are all subjective and inaccurate, including all the things that you write. It's all inaccurate, but this doesn't matter, because it's a contribution to the ongoing dialogue. The book has a very marginal part. So one of my missions in this world is to re-evaluate the book, make it a central player. Because, in terms of the history of photography and the way photographers learn from photography, the book is the most important thing. We don't see all these exhibitions; we don't see the stuff in magazines. The thing we see, the thing we live off, the thing we thrive on, is the photographic book.

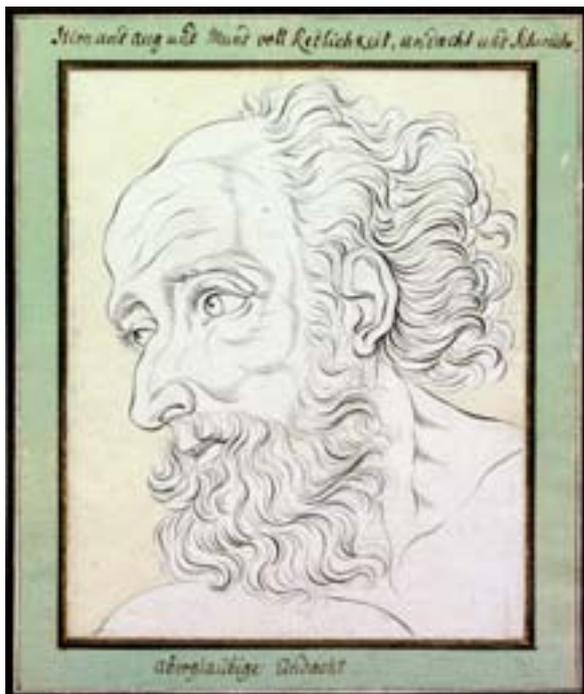
U.S.: If you were forced to choose between photography in an exhibition and in a book, which would it be?

M.P.: I think if I had to choose, if I was at the pearly gates and asked to choose between exhibitions and books, I would choose books.

⁴ <<http://www.doxprague.org/en/exhibition?46>> [16.09.11]

Erich Retzlaff: Volksfotograf

Christopher Webster van Tonder Erich Retzlaff (1899–1993) is a name almost forgotten in the ever-swelling annals of the various histories of photography. Yet, in the early twentieth century, Retzlaff was a prolific and celebrated photographer with a long list of photographic books published between the two world wars.¹ Indeed, his work was well known outside of his native Germany. A reviewer of Retzlaff's book *Die von der Scholle [Those who till the earth]* (1931), writing for the University of Oklahoma's *Books Abroad*, observed in 1932:



*The art-photographer Erich Retzlaff has assembled two volumes of large full-page photographs which are grippingly real and at the same time strikingly unusual...They are wholesome average members of the laboring classes...presented in their everyday appearance...these collections are both striking and edifying.*²

In addition to a growing and acclaimed repertoire of black and white studies of these 'laboring classes', Retzlaff was one of the first German photographers to use the 'Agfacolor-Neu' colour film introduced in October 1936.³ 'Agfacolor-Neu' was a subtractive three-layer reversal film with a single chemical process that greatly simplified the taking of vivid colour images and meant that photographers could process their own films without undue difficulties. Along with contemporaries such as Herbert Voß and Emil Grimm, Retzlaff's work was reproduced in a special edition, *Agfacolor, das farbige Lichtbild [Agfacolor, the colour photograph]* (1938).

Retzlaff's ignominy stems primarily from the fact that his output and star continued to rise during the twelve years of National Socialist rule in Germany. Retzlaff was a photographer for the Reich. Thus, any merits that his work possessed or indeed relationship to the practice of other photographers working in similar genres outside of National Socialist Germany, are eclipsed by his guilt by association. It is, in Retzlaff's case, a continuation of that art historical assumption that:

*...all art under National Socialism was repellent and barbaric, even to the point of being too repellent and barbaric to analyse; and that aesthetic interest attaches only to that art which National Socialism set out to crush and destroy.*⁴

The numerous studies, books and exhibitions on the work of the photographer August Sander (1876–1964) might be considered a case in point.

Figure 1
Johann Caspar Lavater, *Abergläubige Andacht*
"Hirn und Aug und Mund voll Redlichkeit,
Andacht und Schwäche" (Superstitious
Devotion "Forehead and Eye and Mouth full
of Honesty, Devotion and Weakness"), ink
on paper, gold margin and water coloured
frame, 18.1 x 15.3 cm, Zurich 1797. Johann
Caspar Lavater Collection, Picture Archives
and Graphic Department, Austrian National
Library LAV VIII 71/19800.

1 Retzlaff's work was published post-1945 as well, some as reprints such as his study of German national costume, *Deutsche Trachten*, Königstein: Langewiesche, originally published in 1936 then reprinted in 1958. 2 R.T.H., in: *Books Abroad*, University of Oklahoma, vol. 6, no. 2, April, 1932, 228.

3 The American 'Kodacolor' process had arrived in 1932 but involved a complex lab-based processing system. 'Agfacolor-Neu' enabled photographers to self-process their colour films. 'Agfacolor-Neu' became available as a 35mm reversal film and medium format film with an initial speed of 17 Scheiner.

When Retzlaff's name is mentioned in any contemporary survey of photography of that period, it is generally in a negative context and in relation to the use of photography as an extension of the social-Darwinist policies of the NSDAP ('Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei' – National Socialist German Workers Party or 'Nazis'). For example, in 2001 Retzlaff was included in the exhibition *Perfecting Mankind: Eugenics and Photography* at the International Center of Photography in New York. Four of Retzlaff's portraits were exhibited although the catalogue does not discuss them in any depth.⁵

At best, Retzlaff has become a footnote in all the varied histories of photography. Yet, even taking into account the often-unavoidable political and racial overtones surrounding his prodigious output, his work merits further examination. This is certainly the case in relation to his use of colour materials, and especially so in the context of his hugely ambitious catalogue

of the German working classes (and agricultural workers in particular) that he made between the two world wars.

This essay is not intended as an *apologia*; rather it serves to highlight the work of a highly skilled and aesthetically gifted photographer, who was making subjective, but nonetheless visually engaging, documents from a pivotal period of social, ideological, and economic change in Germany and indeed the world.

Face of the Nation

By the early twentieth century, ethnographical images were commonly being utilised as an increasingly sophisticated tool for validating claims centred on the distinction between one race and another. Scientific texts such as *Deutsche Köpfe nordischer Rasse* [*German heads Nordic race*] (1927) written by the racial scientists Hans F. K. Günther (1891-1968) and Eugen Fischer (1874-1967) set out to illustrate the Nordic 'type' using the clear eye of the photographer's lens. The use of photography as a comparative means of assessment and identification became increasingly paramount during this period, not only in scientific documentations but also in popular publications that contained photographs of racial types from around the world displayed in photographic charts. What these studies highlighted was not only the geography and range of race but also what was perceived as the

negative admixture and miscegenation that, according to celebrated scientists like Günther, posed a threat to German and Nordic race society.



Figure 2
Erich Retzlaff, *Tagelöhner 74 Jahre* [*Labourer 74 Years old*], silver gelatin print reproduced from: *Das Antlitz des Alters* [*The Face of Age*] 1930, plate 27.

4. Brandon Taylor and Wilfried van der Will, *The Nazification of Art: Art, Design, Music, Architecture and Film in the Third Reich*, Winchester: The Winchester Press, 1990, 4.

5. *Perfecting Mankind: Eugenics and Photography*, International Center of Photography, New York, January 11–March 18, 2001, curated by Carol Squiers; PDF brochure online-available: http://museum.icp.org/museum/exhibitions/eugenics/perfecting_mankind.pdf [04. 10. 2011]

In line with the development and use of documentary photography in other parts of the world, Weimar Germany (1919–1933) also quickly established the photographic form as an archival document of the German people. Moreover, whether the ideology was of the left or of the right, many photographers were galvanised to impose a typological approach. Progressive photographic practice in Weimar Germany was straight, direct, sometimes brutal, and very much of the ‘Neue Sachlichkeit’ when photography, “came to occupy a privileged place among the aesthetic activities of the historical moment.”⁶

Therefore, the photographic focus on the physiognomy of Germany that preoccupied so many of the photographers between the two world wars was not solely because of National Socialist ideology; indeed, it very much predated it. August Sander for example, employed physiognomy as the central pillar of his portrait catalogue of the German people. Following a personal visual interpretation of Hegelian dialectics, Sander sought to demonstrate how degeneracy is co-equal with progress.⁷ But so too did photographers who prospered under National Socialism. Erna Lendvai-Dirksen (1883–1962), for example, included examples of physiognomic traits in her work with images specifically recalling earlier physiognomic studies such as those of Johann Caspar Lavater (fig.1).⁸

When the National Socialists emerged as the dominant political force in Germany in 1933, Erich Retzlaff was considered something of a pioneer in his photographic output with regards to depictions of the racial German proletariat. Indeed, Retzlaff’s studies seemed an ideal vehicle for broadly disseminating notions centred on the ‘Volksgemeinschaft’ or people’s community. Whereas a more academic audience might encounter Günther’s work, Retzlaff’s visually appealing documentations reached a much wider sector of the population. This was a time when:

*...ordinary people increasingly recognised themselves as inhabitants of cultural territories distinguished by language and custom...As Germans came to regard each other as contemporaries, they took increasing interest in the tribulations of fellow citizens, tied their own biographies to the national epic, and thereby intertwined personal with national history.*⁹

In Retzlaff’s publication *Das Antlitz des Alters [The Face of Age]* (1930), a series of tightly cropped, on the whole highly detailed, and often breathtakingly powerful portraits are presented as a study of elderly types (fig. 2). But they are not intended as an anthropological series; rather, they seem to express a developing personal vision. The *Quarterly Review of Biology* commented in 1931:

6. George Baker, ‘Photography between Narrativity and Stasis: August Sander, Degeneration and the Decay of the Portrait’, *October*, vol.76, spring 1996, 76.

7. Sander fell foul of the National Socialists not so much due to his personal political leanings but more relevantly due to the universality of his vision.

8. The Swiss pastor Johann Caspar Lavater (1741–1801) is perhaps the most famous of apologists for physiognomy and he helped to revive it as a credible study after it had fallen somewhat into disrepute during the Middle Ages and Renaissance when it became associated with palmistry and other divinatory practices. Lavater brought together 22,102 drawings and engravings for his

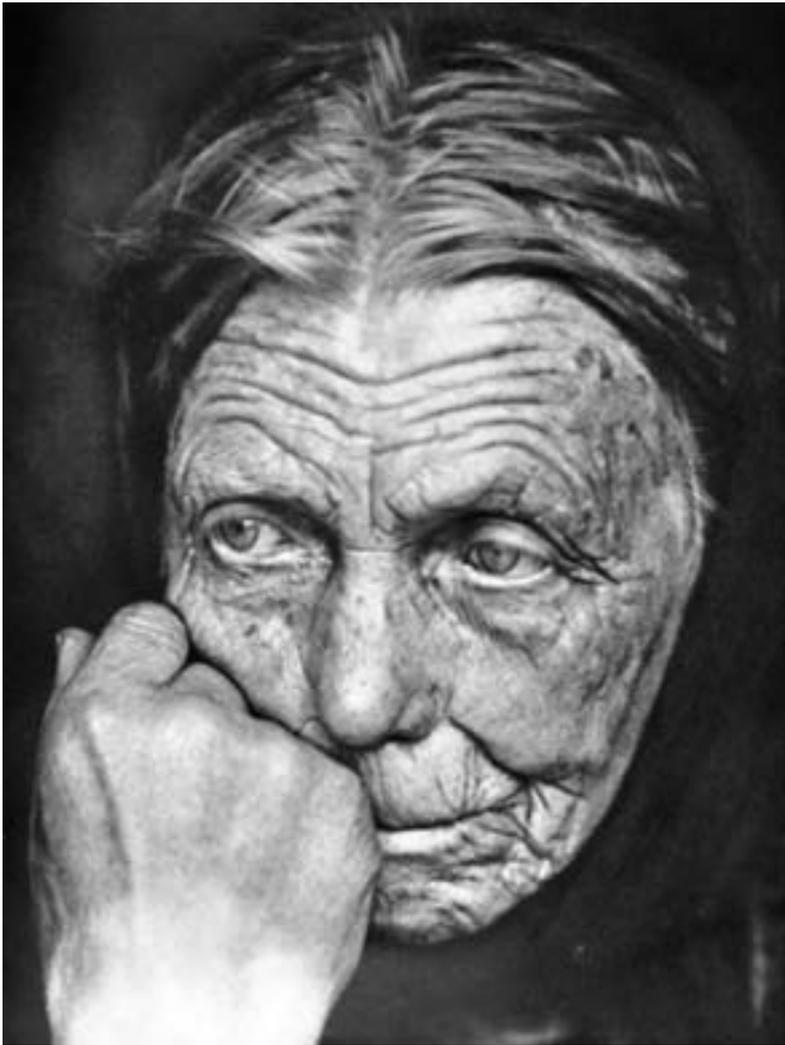


Figure 3
 Erich Retzlaff, *Bettlerin 74 Jahre* [Beggan Woman
 74 Years old], silver gelatin print reproduced
 from: *Das Antlitz des Alters* [The Face of Age]
 1930, plate 29.

*The viewpoint and the purpose of this beautiful volume are literary and artistic rather than scientific. The superb portraits of some 35 old men and women will, however, be of interest and use to students of human senescence, senility, and longevity.*¹⁰

These photographs are examples of a then emergent Modernist photographic practice with the vigour of the 'Neue Sachlichkeit' and the directness of an Edward Weston. The subjects are anonymous but their professional status is noted; farmer, fisherman, sailor, etc.

These portraits are presented without filters and where there is a hint at a romantic vision it is far removed from the soft vagueness of Pictorialism. It has more in common with Walker Evans' portraits of sharecroppers in Alabama, or Dorothea Lange's migrant workers. These American counterparts were producing photographic studies as a marker of their time, when their subjects were enduring the trauma of the Depression and its deleterious effect on labour and farming.

Supported by government salaries these photographers sought to 'show and tell', to underscore the primacy of the American relationship to 'honest labour' whilst simultaneously highlighting the plight of these people under turbulent and even disastrous economic times.

Retzlaff's portraits echo this concerned documentary approach. Yet it is not images of plight that are recorded, but rather a celebration of the vitality of the peasant and proletarian. Retzlaff's photographs are situated as a counterpoint to the perceived dangerous effects of Weimar cosmopolitanism and urban living. They emphasize notions of 'Heimat' [the homeland] and 'Blut und Boden' [blood and soil]. Such concepts were embedded in National Socialist thinking as well. NSDAP ideologue Alfred Rosenberg (1893-1946) stated:

Today we see the steady stream from the countryside to the city, deadly for the Volk. The cities swell ever larger, unnerving the Volk and destroying the threads which bind humanity to nature...¹¹

The faces in Retzlaff's book are unavoidable. In *Das Antlitz des Alters*, the encounter with his subjects is one of face-to-face, almost literally. Many of the portraits are reproduced at near life size creating an unsettling sense of intimacy – sharp eyes, creases of skin, wrinkles,

studies and art collection, which came to Vienna in 1826 and is located in the Austrian National Library today. For a detailed analysis of Lavater's work, see: Ingrid Goritschnig, 'Faszination des Porträts', in: Gerda Mraz and Uwe Schögl (eds.), *Das Kunstkabinett des Johann Caspar Lavater*, Vienna: Böhlau, 1999, 138 – 151.

9. Peter Fritzsche, 'The Archive', *History and Memory*, volume 17, number 1/2, Spring/Summer 2005, 17.

10. *The Quarterly Review of Biology*, vol. 6, no.4, Chicago, December, 1931, 476.

11. Alfred Rosenberg, *Der Mythos des 20 Jahrhunderts*, Munich: Hoheneichen Verlag, 1938, 550. [Author's translation].

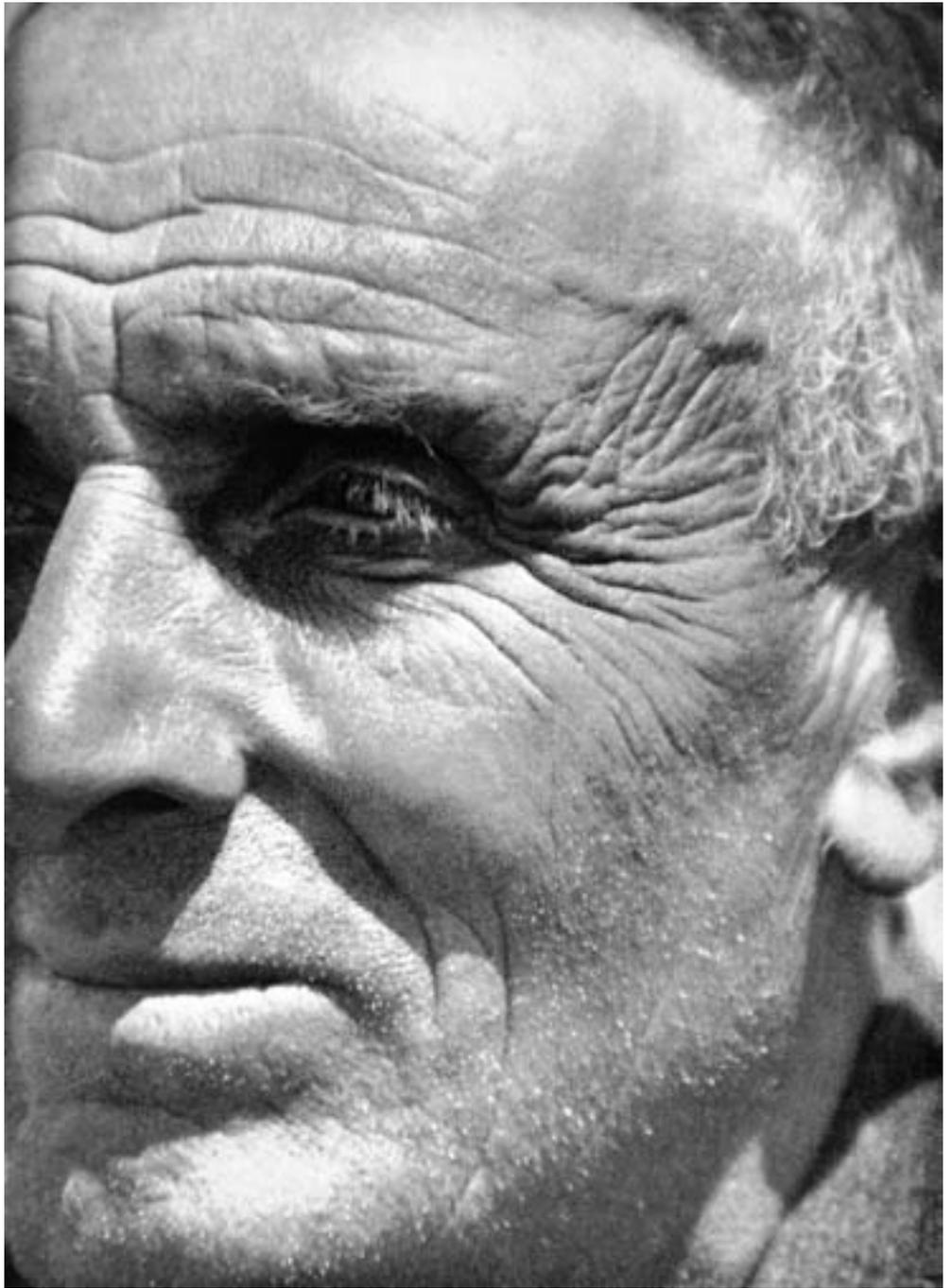


Figure 4
Erich Retzlaff, *Heidebauer [Heath Farmer]*,
silver gelatin print reproduced from:
Die von der Scholle [Those who Till the Earth] 1931,
plate 15.

stubble, and roughness. It is an essay on beauty in simplicity, a sympathetic vision not a critical one (fig. 3). There can be no doubt that his work is an attempt to ennoble his subjects. If they are physiognomic markers then Retzlaff is echoing Lavater in that, “the physiognomy is often a sermon on the goodness of God.”¹²

Die von der Scholle, [Those who till the earth] published in 1931, contains a series of portraits of farmers, fishermen and other craftsmen. The photograph of a farmer is typical of Retzlaff’s approach and style. Closely cropped, yielding large amounts of detail, hard light and a face re-

12. John Graham, ‘Lavater’s Physiognomy in England’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 22, No.4, October–December, 1961, 563.



Figure 5
Erich Retzlaff, *Müller aus Hessen* [Miller from Hesse], silver gelatin print reproduced from: *Die von der Scholle* [Those who Till the Earth] 1931, plate 40.



Figure 6
Erich Retzlaff, *Frau aus Schwaben* [A Woman from Swabia], silver gelatin print reproduced from: *Die von der Scholle* [Those who Till the Earth] 1931, plate 55.

produced just over life size. The farmer depicted (typically anonymous - simply a 'Heidebauer' or heath farmer) is unshaven, his face wrinkled by exposure to the sun and the elements (fig. 4). He gazes away out of the left hand side of the frame intimating his view over the landscape. Although monochrome, the image leaves no doubt that the face is tanned, his eyes light blue peering from the shade of his weathered features. The right hand side of his face is cropped away. The viewer is forced into close contact with the farmer and thus with his condition.

'Miller from Hesse' (fig. 5) is cast in chiaroscuro, his jutting jaw and hawk-like nose are illuminated by strong directional light, no doubt intended to be read as a metaphor for harshness and strength. Rather than a typological profile or an anthropological study, this image is romantically staged to create a theatrical atmosphere that transforms the miller into an almost mythical being. The environment is reduced to a set of light and dark shapes that serve to frame the miller's features.

Retzlaff's portrayal of women equates to this drama (and is equivalent to Socialist-Realist tropes). The penultimate image in *Die von der Scholle* and the book's cover image is titled



Figure 7
Erich Retzlaff, *Friesisches Fischerkind* [*Frisian Fisherman's Daughter*], silver gelatin print reproduced from: *Die von der Scholle* [*Those who Till the Earth*] 1931, plate 12.

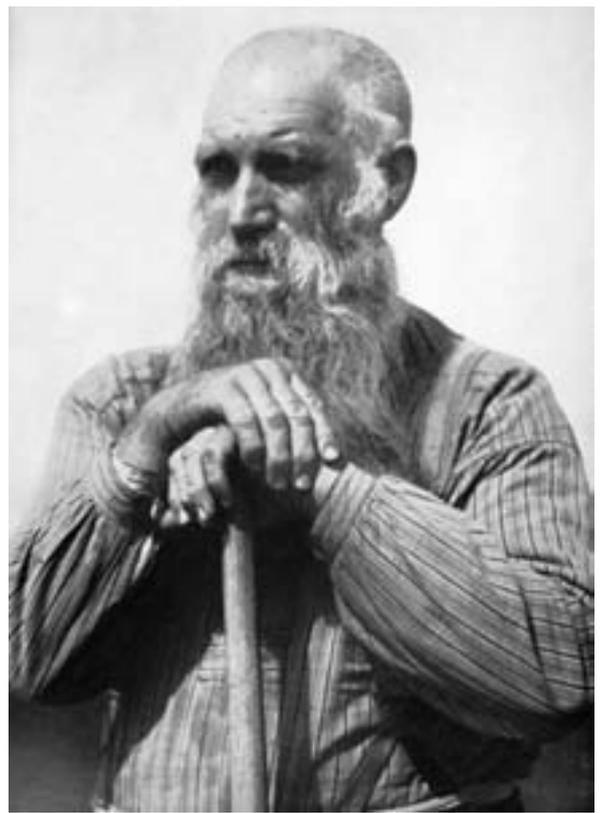


Figure 8
Erich Retzlaff, *Friedhofsgärtner aus Friesland* [*Graveyard Groundsman from Frisia*], silver gelatin print reproduced from: *Die von der Scholle* [*Those who Till the Earth*] 1931, plate 13.

'Frau aus Schwaben' (fig. 6). Her gaze, like the farmer's, is out of the frame and above the camera into the distance. She wears a light coloured headscarf and is reminiscent of the socialist 'mother', the idealised peasant woman whose strength and surety are etched in her features. Retzlaff ennobles her through light, cropping and anonymity to present an example of the proletarian ideal of the 'Volksgemeinschaft'. Like Walker Evans' iconic portrait of Allie Mae Burroughs the Alabama sharecropper's wife, the woman in Retzlaff's image implies both hardship and determination. There is a suggestion of indomitability.

Retzlaff's photographs in *Die von der Scholle* are nearly always skilful photographic manipulations of space and light, portraits that aim at creating strong symbols of the German peasant stock. When these photographs become more whimsical it is in Retzlaff's depictions of children though they can still be read as ideological. The children are the inheritors of tradition and the racial characteristics of their elders. For example, the image of the 'Friesisches Fischerkind' stares at the camera as she stands in front of the fisherman's nets (fig. 7). Her dress is shabby but her racial characteristics are good (she is healthy looking and blond). The opposite plate shows another Frisian ('Friedhofsgärtner aus Friesland'), a sage-like bearded figure leaning on a stick (fig. 8). The two are counterpoints, separated by age and sex, yet unified by race and the knowledge of their community. Their placement together underlines such a reading.

As in Socialist-Realism, Retzlaff's images are real and ideal. They do indeed extol the virtues of simplicity, unity, identity and purity that formed part of the notions of the German national community. There is no doubt that Retzlaff was a photographer with a national sentiment.

The photographs of his subjects are not abstracted nor is the focus purely typological (as in Sander's work); rather, Retzlaff's vision is in addition empathetic. This is a photographer concerned with the "poetics of nationhood".¹³ Retzlaff's images can be seen to fit into a crafted demonstration of 'national culture'.

Agfacolor-Neu

We have become so accustomed to black and white photographs that we accept them as the real thing. Actually, black and white photography is considered a two dimension, abstract medium. It has perspective and contrast, but it can only record color in shades of gray and therefore does not represent reality as such.

Nature, on the other hand is vivid with color. We see colored objects around us constantly... Color photography is therefore, more realistic than black and white photography. It adds a third dimension - that of color.¹⁴

The advent of the 'Agfacolor-Neu' process led to a specially produced book *Agfacolor, das farbige Lichtbild. Grundlagen und Aufnahmetechnik für den Liebhaberphotographen* (1938).

In the introductory note to this text Retzlaff wrote:

It is hoped that the preoccupation with colour photography, which will surely become commonplace for millions of people, will enhance what we've neglected to see and bring the secrets of nature closer...¹⁵

The text included technical as well as aesthetic guidance and was illustrated with sixty-four colour plates.

Many of the images echo the kinds of photographs that an amateur photographer experimenting with a new medium might pursue. These include street scenes, flowers, animals, people at work and leisure, and foreign travel. Retzlaff's contribution of ten plates is predominantly portraiture. Where these images may lose something of the aesthetic 'aura' surrounding a crafted black and white photograph, the images now become truly 'modern' objects. The contemporary gaze is reminded of the nearness of these faces to our own time. But more importantly to the photographer, there is an enhancement of the connectivity with the 'real'. When these photographs were made, the process enabled photographers to explore this new dimension (colour) with relative ease – they could be self-processed and for Retzlaff at least, colour seemed to introduce a resonance with the physicality of his subjects that black and white could not render. Their racial characteristics were even more evident. They were

13. Ian Jeffrey, *German Photography of the 1930s*, exhibition catalogue, Royal Festival Hall, London 1995, 10.

14. Edwin Conrad, 'Color Photography, an Instrumentality of Proof', *The Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology, and Police Science*, vol. 48, no. 3, September–October, 1957, 323.

15. *Agfacolor, das farbige Lichtbild: Grundlagen und Aufnahmetechnik für den Liebhaberphotographen*. Munich: Verlag Knorr & Hirth, 1938, 23. [Author's translation].



Figure 9
Erich Retzlaff, *Jungbauer aus Westfalen* [Young Farmer from Westphalia], Agfacolor-neu image reproduced from: *Niederdeutschland - Landschaft und Volkstum* [Lower Germany - Landscape and 'Ethnicity'] 1940, plate 49.

still grizzled, hardworking, labouring, youthful, elderly, peasant faces – but they were also now blond, blue eyed and distinctly of the ideal Nordic and Germanic nation. Bathed in the ever-present sunshine of the 'Heimat', colour underscores once more the 'Volksgemeinschaft'. Whether it is a farmer from Westphalia or an old man from Pomerania or a young woman from the Lüneburger Heath, they are now even more firmly connected (fig. 9 and 10).

Subsequent books corroborate Retzlaff's enchantment with the new colour process and his continuing obsession with the image of the peasant.

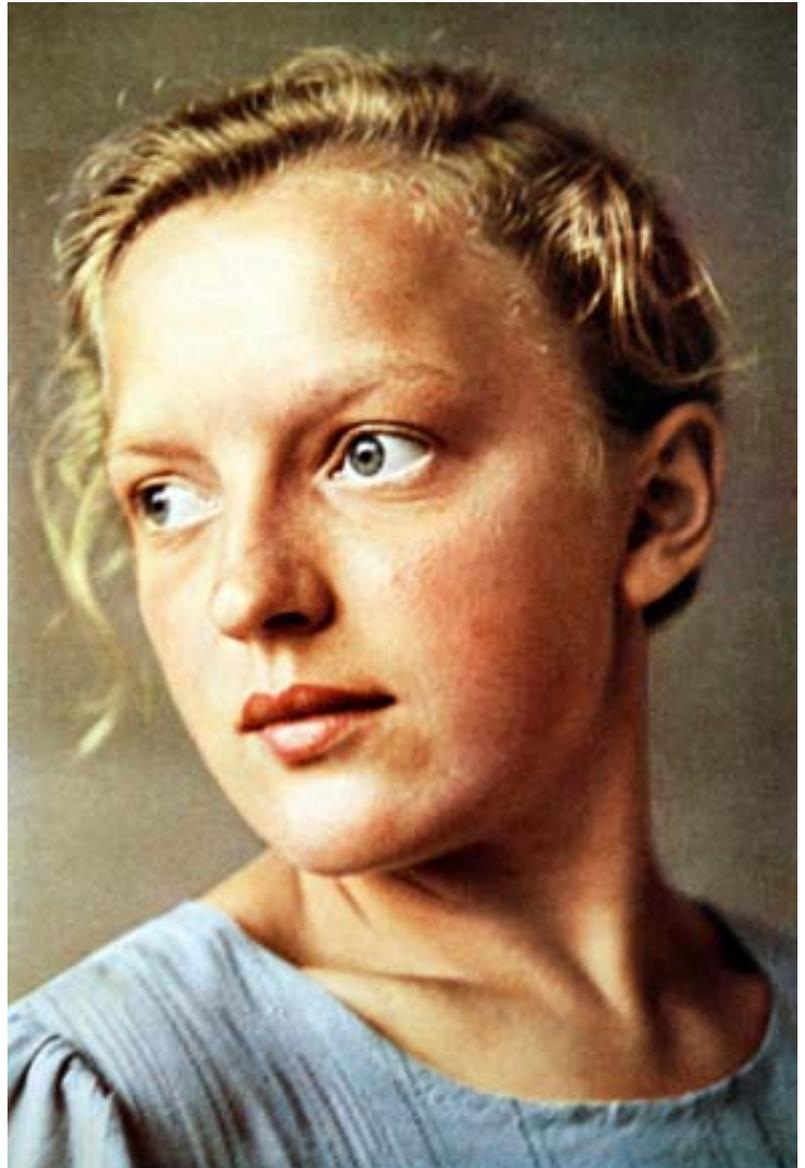


Figure 10
Erich Retzlaff, *Junges Mädchen aus der Lüneburger Heide* [Young Woman from the Lüneburger Heath], Agfacolor-neu image reproduced from: *Agfacolor, das farbige Lichtbild*, [Agfacolor, the colour photograph] 1938, plate 47.



Figure 11
Erich Retzlaff, *Die Windmühle, das Wahrzeichen
Niederdeutschlands* [*The Windmill, Symbol of
Lower Germany*], Agfacolor-neu image repro-
duced from: *Niederdeutschland - Landschaft
und Volkstum* [*Lower Germany - Landscape and
'Ethnicity'*] 1940, plate 52.

Images from *Niederdeutschland - Landschaft und Volkstum* [*Lower Germany - landscape and 'ethnicity'*] (1940) are produced with this firmly in mind. In the introduction to this book, Retzlaff states that the images are to show the beauty of the 'Heimat' and its integral link with its people and is not intended as an instruction book of colour techniques. He states:

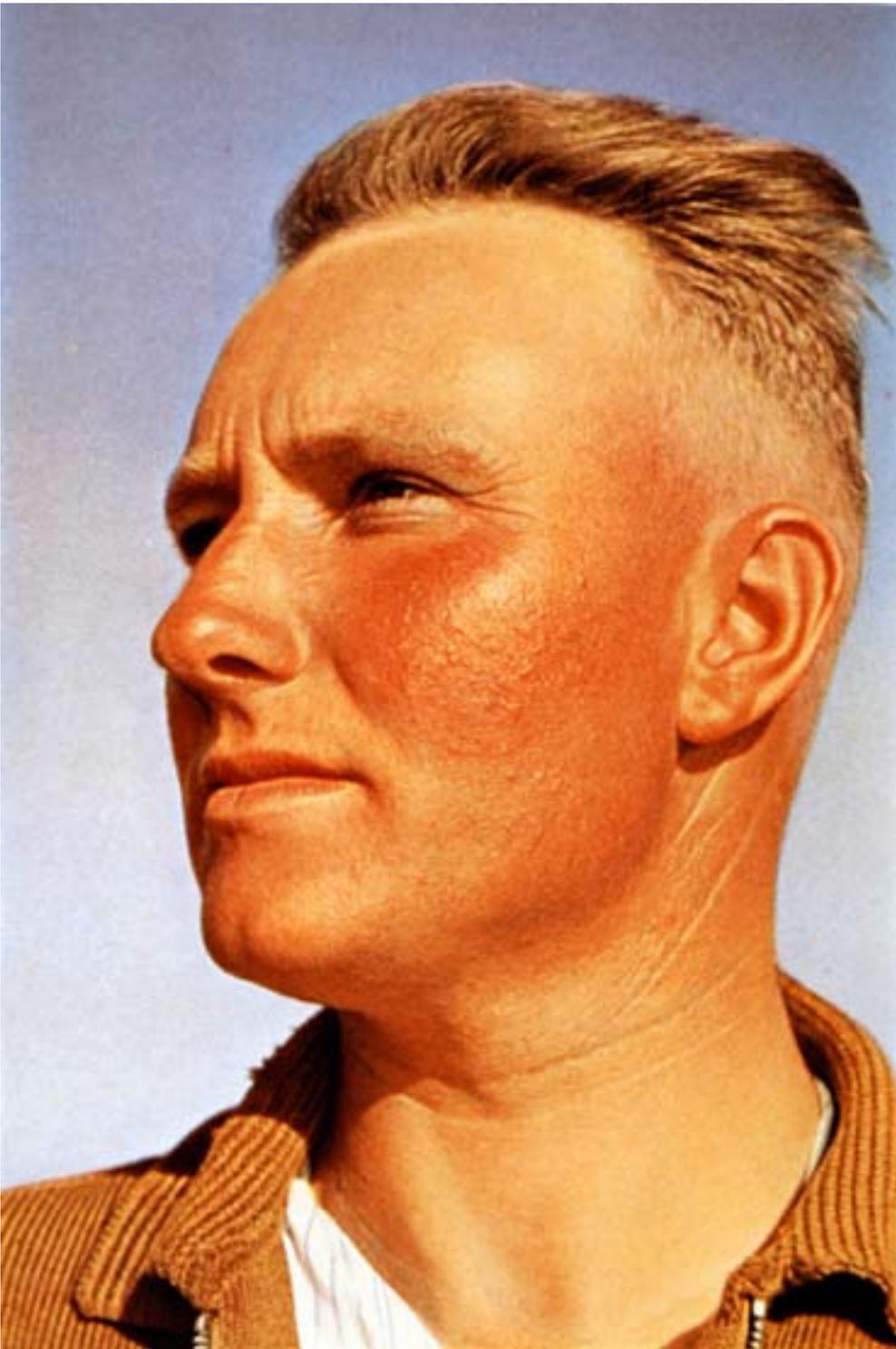


Figure 12
Erich Retzlaff, *Jungbauer aus Mecklenburg*
[*Young Farmer from Mecklenburg*],
Agfacolor-neu image reproduced from:
Niederdeutschland - Landschaft und Volkstum
[*Lower Germany - Landscape and 'Ethnicity'*] 1940,
plate 11.

unifying spirit. These images are presented as the supreme 'antidote' to the cosmopolitanism that the Weimar government represented to many nationalist minded Germans. Within these photographic portfolios, there are no derivations from the singular notion of the 'Heimat-bound' German (fig. 12).

Without doubt, colour photography is a tremendous asset to the scientist, especially for the 'Heimat' researcher, but also for the 'Heimat friend', for through faithful colour reproduction they have a unique educational material to hand... To make visible this harmony between the native people and their homeland, between landscape and 'Volkstum', is the intention of this book...¹⁶

These photographs affirm the notion of the nation as one that contains beautiful ordered landscapes where man and nature work together in harmony, where town and village are neat and architecturally rich but where the best is represented by the relationship between the German and the earth of his homeland (fig. 11). And the images of the country people themselves, young and old, are linked by common physical attributes and their connection with the earth, Blut und Boden, [blood and soil], which neatly ties the entire portrait together. For, even when the photographs are not specifically 'portraits', they still 'portray' the same core values: richness, purity, order, history and a

16. Erich Retzlaff and Wilhelm Pekler, *Niederdeutschland*, Munich: Verlag Knorr & Hirth, 1940, 62. [Author's translation].

17. Quoted in: Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi Politics*, London: Methuen, 1987, 56.

Colour accentuates this heady mixture into a reassuring recipe that would have confirmed the ideological currents of the time. It is interesting that, where colour photographs from Roosevelt's Farm Security Administration (FSA) project were generally perceived by their government originators as less powerful than their black and white counterparts, the colour of the German documentarian served to reinforce the idealised vision of the 'Heimat'. Colour was an enriching element in Retzlaff's careful constructs of the 'Volk' identity and, like the black and white work before it, they are powerfully conceived and presented. Again reproduction is often near to life size when photographs of the face occur, the people gaze intently back to the viewer or out into the imagined spaces of the landscape. As well as the familiar resolute quality of these faces, there is also, quite often, a suggestion of gentleness and fragility. They are indeed powerfully evocative 'ideographs' of the documentary mode and would no doubt have been well received by the political elite of Berlin.

Icons of ideology

Photography became an integral tool in delineating the notion of a unified German identity during the National Socialist era. Certainly in order to continue practising their craft, photographers needed to be aware of, and in line with, the expectations of the state. This was applicable to cinematographers, sculptors, painters and indeed anybody working in the arts in general at the time. Should anyone be in any doubt about these requirements Joseph Goebbels (1897–1945), the Minister for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, stated in 1938:

*Art...must feel itself closely connected with the elemental laws of national life. Art and civilisation are implanted in the mother soil of the nation. They are, consequently, forever dependent upon the moral, social, and national principles of the state.*¹⁷

The requirement of photographers was, "to promote photography in a racial sense."¹⁸ This was too narrow a scope to allow Sander entry. It was essential that photography must include, "a vital link between the work and national customs and traditions."¹⁹

Unlike August Sander's inclusive physiognomy, Retzlaff tended to plough a straight furrow with his work fixed on those physiognomic fundamentals that comprised the idealised elements of the 'Volksgemeinschaft' and 'Blut und Boden' ideologies. Retzlaff was undoubtedly committed.

The racial mystical ideal had become enshrined in physiognomic photographic images produced in Germany prior to and during the National Socialist era; images that ultimately emerged from roots that were racist, romantic, scientific and esoteric. The notion of a

18. Klaus Honnef, Rolf Sachsse and Karin Thomas (eds.), *German Photography 1870-1970: Power of a Medium*, exhibition catalogue, Cologne: Dumont Bucherverlag 1997, 8.

19. Klaus Honnef, Rolf Sachsse and Karin Thomas (eds.) 1997 (reference 18), 88.

racial German identity was that of a mystical 'Volk' who were not simply in the land but were part of it, a 'völkisch' peasant race. These photographs effectively both unify and exclude.

Photography like other modern inventions and ideas was readily utilised in the promulgation of National Socialist thinking. Certainly in terms of the definition of the ideal racial type, it was seen as indispensable. Often these studies would not be produced under the direct auspices of the Reich Ministry for Propaganda but rather they were made in an ostensibly independent mode and thus appeared to have a greater degree of creative freedom.²⁰ More directly, controlled instances such as images reproduced in the National Socialist journal 'Volk und Rasse', in which Retzlaff's work was regularly featured, focus on using the photographic image as a rather blunt tool to overtly highlight the 'ideal' racial type as part of the corporate national identity.²¹

Nevertheless, Retzlaff's work is more than simply a crude bludgeon to hammer home a point about the purity of the peasant. Taken in its entirety, Retzlaff's portfolio can be read as a narrative of an era that attempted to reject uncertainty and become a celebration of the ordinary as an extraordinary thing. By focussing on those so-called 'wholesome, average members of the laboring classes', Retzlaff's work emerged from a re-awakening sense of place and identity in the often dismal and melancholic years of post-First World War hubris. His work certainly was ideologically motivated and useful but, like the work of most documentary photographers of this significant period, Retzlaff's photographs transcend those strictures.

Photographic documentarians made, and continue to make, photographs which, to paraphrase John Grierson, apply a *creative treatment* of the real. As David Bate pointed out in a recent insightful article:

...documentary images are those that create an allegorical sense, a picture with a non-literal significance, a meaning and point beyond literal content...All good documentary photographs generate this implicit commentary, where the content and form are combined, harnessed together to make a 'bigger picture' and meaning.²²

In Retzlaff's case, the work is a documentary from a particular standpoint at a particular time. It is without doubt a subjective vision and one that was, when it was conceived, undoubtedly ideological. However, Retzlaff used 'living actors' to construct and direct a panorama of German proletarian life that retains a dramatic richness that is a visual tapestry of an idealised realm.

20. See, for example: Matthias Weiss, 'Vermessen – fotografische 'Menscheninventare' vor und aus der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus', in: *Maßlose Bilder: Visuelle Ästhetik der Transgression*, Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag 2009, 359.

21. Corporatism is a specifically fascist notion of the individual as part of a whole national organism subsumed into a single organic being. Thus, each

'cell' must be of the best quality and, in the ideology of National Socialism, racially echo the whole (with ominous results for those who fell outside of this racist philosophy such as the Roma or the physically and mentally disabled).

22. David Bate, 'The Real Aesthetic: Documentary Noise', in: *Portfolio: Contemporary photography in Britain*, no 5, 1 May 2010, 7.

Postscript

In January 2011, I had the opportunity of examining the Erich Retzlaff collection held in Munich at the Münchner Stadtmuseum.²³ There was certainly something strikingly different about all the photography from the post-war period. The more I looked at them, the more apparent it became. I began to feel as if the end of the Third Reich had produced a palpable difference in the creative output of this prodigious photographer. It seemed to me that this visual transmutation in Retzlaff's work must be attributable to the general calumny and forced psychological shift that many Germans were experiencing in that most uncertain of periods following the cataclysm of the war and the collapse of National Socialism. In a general sense the photographs were less dynamic than the work made in the 1920s, '30s and '40s. The subjects tended to be rather clichéd and without the punch and bite of the younger Retzlaff. The ideology was gone and with it the sense of purpose that his earlier photography seemed to possess. Instead, a sugar-coated dreaming, a charming dreaminess had taken hold. In images of German scenes and villages, peasants still occasionally appeared but they seemed old and isolated figures. The vigour and construction of the earlier work was absent, as if leached from the will of the photographer but also shunned and hidden in the landscape and people themselves.

Acknowledgments: I would like to thank the following individuals for their time and helpful communications whilst I was trying to trace any copyright of Retzlaff's work and extant prints: Rudolf Scheutle [Münchner Stadtmuseum]; Angelika Betz [Bayerische Staatsbibliothek]; Michael Ponstingl [Albertina, Wien]; and Sven Riepe [Süddeutsche Zeitung, Photo].

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Many thanks indeed to Rolf Sachsse for his kindness, quick responses to my questions and his enormous help with documents, leads and always sound advice.

Last, but by no means least, I owe a debt of gratitude to Angeline Schube, Christine Szinner and Constanze Thielecke for their patience with their tutor and readiness to help with my German grammar and communications. Especial thanks must go to Angeline for her time, commitment and enthusiasm in working with me in Munich and afterwards on the Retzlaff research.

²³ According to Retzlaff himself (letter 22.4.70) most of his negatives and slides from the early period of his career were destroyed by allied bombing in 1944 – therefore, the Münchner Stadtmuseum collection is the largest extant collection of vintage prints of Retzlaff's work.

“We’re naked and on a first-name basis” Naturism and the Return to the Roots – Scandal and Censorship in Connection with the Film “Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit” from 1925¹

Ulrich Pohlmann In the course of the Lebensreform-Bewegung [Life Reform Movement] that attracted at large following at the end of the 19th century, particularly in Germany, nudism took on a special new pertinence. Sunbathing, cavorting in the open air and swimming in the altogether were among the activities favoured by the nature-minded reformers, who also sang the praises of vegetarianism, reform dress, strength training, dance and sexual hygiene. The devotees of nudism initially understood their nakedness as an ideology-free reaction to the prevailing conventions of fashion, and as a protest against a civilization that was increasingly caught up in the throes of industrialization and urbanization. People took to the outdoors with nothing between their sin and nature in an effort to reclaim the “body’s soul,” something that was long thought lost. “We have to return to the sources,” remarked Paul de Lagarde as early as 1881, “high up in the lonely mountains, where we are not heirs but rather ancestors.”² With all the changes wrought on the environment by advances in modern science and technology, people saw their relationship with nature being irrevocably destroyed. The culture of nudism in combination with bodily hygiene promised a way to overcome this plight: “Our ideal of physical education [...] should be a psycho-physical aesthetic culture; raising awareness of the body and its movements as a mirror, a symbol of the soul; as a part of ourselves worthy of being educated and trained to freely master its limbs, and to achieve harmonious beauty in all its expressions of life.”³

Nude photography proved an effective way to promote nudist ideals and it thus found a forum in the movement’s publications. In magazines such as *Die Schönheit*, *Kraft und Schönheit* and *Kunstwart*, a holistic way of life was propagated, illustrated with nude photographs. These nude studies came in part from the Mediterranean south, from photographers such as Wilhelm von Gloeden, Guglielmo Plüschow, Lehnert & Landrock and Elisàr



Figure 1
Carl Locht, *German Nudist*, 1925,
gelatine silver print, 13,9 x 8,8 cm.
Münchener Stadtmuseum,
Sammlung Fotografie Inv. 2009/25-5.

1. “Wir sind nackt und nennen uns du”: Title of a nudist magazine edited by Adolf Koch. Cf. Ulf Erdmann Ziegler, *Nackt unter Nackten. Utopien der Nacktkultur 1906-1942*, Berlin 1990. This contribution is an expanded version of: “We’re naked and on a first-name basis!” Naturism and the Return to the Roots!, in: Ulrich Pohlmann, Rudolf Scheutle (eds.), *Nude Visions, 150 Jahre*

Körperbilder in der Fotografie. 150 Years of Nude Photography, Heidelberg: Kehrer Verlag, 2009, S. 37-40, 75 -78.

2. Paul de Lagarde, 1881, quoted after Klaus Wolbert, ‘Deutsche Innerlichkeit. Die Wiederentdeckung Caspar David Friedrichs um 1900 und die Verbildlichung des reformerischen Naturverhältnisses’, in: Kai Buchholz, Rita



Figure 2
 Anonymous, *Family at the Lake*, 1925,
 gelatine silver print, 14,5 x 9,1 cm.
 Münchner Stadtmuseum,
 Sammlung Fotografie Inv. 2001/298.

von Kupffer, but "local" pictures of nudists "out in nature" were also printed. With respect to the setting in which the nude was shown, there was a strict code dictating what was permitted and what was taboo. Interior scenes were for example considered unseemly and frivolous. Apologists for the culture of naturism such as Richard Ungewitter, Heinrich Pudor and their followers were also suspicious of representations of the nude that were all too realistic. To be avoided at all costs were sensuous, erotically stimulating depictions of the naked form. The result was a pseudo-religious sanctification of the body. In the texts on early physical culture there is constant talk of the "gospel of the body", "sacred mystery of the body" or "woman as goddess", while, antithetically, readers are also warned of the "devil of sensuality" and of the "demon woman." The declared goal was "ideal nakedness", which was also the title of a successful edition of booklets, along with the "noble delineation of human beauty",⁴ which

Latocha, Hilke Peckmann, Klaus Wolbert (eds.), *Die Lebensreform. Entwürfe zur Neugestaltung von Leben und Kunst um 1900*, vol. II, Darmstadt 2001, 191.
 3. Heberle, 'Körper-Kultur', in: *Der Kunstwart*, 17. Jg., Heft 22, 1904, 410.
 4. Willi Warstat, *Der Schöne Akt. Bildmäßige Aktphotographie, ihre Ästhetik und Technik*, Berlin 1929, introduction. – Cf. Viktoria Schmidt-Linsenhoff,

"Körperseele", Freilichtakt und Neue Sinnlichkeit. Kulturgeschichtliche Aspekte der Aktfotografie in der Weimarer Republik', in: *Fotogeschichte*, Heft 1, 1981, 41-59.



Figure 3
Gerhard Riebicke, Film still from *Ways to Strength and Beauty - A Film about Physical Culture*, Director Wilhelm Prager, 1925, gelatine silver print, 21,7 x 27,7 cm. Münchner Stadtmuseum, Sammlung Fotografie Inv. 2001/300.

excluded any kind of sexual allure. Through retouching, lighting and a careful choice of poses, the necessary precautions were taken to create an idealized representation of the body that exemplified the distinction between “immaculate beauty” and its more profane mirror image. The dominant physical aesthetic endeavoured to make models appear like “living marble”, the title given to a series of such images. Pictures of this kind were taken before 1914 on so-called “evenings of beauty”, when the naked dancer Olga Desmond and her partner Adolf Salge performed their “sword dance” for a private party.

The picture *Lichtgebet* by Fidus attained the status of a cult image of the Lebensreform-Bewegung [Life Reform Movement]. The composition was first conceived in 1890 and in subsequent years painted or drawn by artists in numerous variations. Fidus’ “Salute to the Light”, which shows a young boy standing on a cliff opening his arms wide to salute the sun, could supposedly be found hanging on the wall in one out of ten German homes.

Photographers also made use of this dramatic pose again and again (fig. 1), just one example of the rhetoric of emphatic gestures that characterized so many open-air nudes up to the end of the First World War – gestures that seemed like an emotional appeal to nature herself. In an apparent attempt to restore harmony between man and nature, people drew – probably unconsciously – on forerunners in Romantic painting, quoting in particular Caspar David Friedrich, whose work was gradually being rediscovered around 1900.⁵

In the Weimar Republic there were noticeable changes in nudist culture and its visual expression (fig. 2). The sensitive impressionistic nude studies gave way to depictions in which bodies were seen actively engaged in exercise and sports. These athletic figures, shown performing demanding rhythmic gymnastic exercises or dance moves, signalled above all the will to achieve, with bodies effortlessly integrating themselves in a choreography of symmetry an ornament. Attesting to this new physical awareness are the photographs in the book *Getanzte Harmonien* by Paul Isenbart. A high point in the modern nudist culture movement was reached in the UFA film *Wege zur Kraft und Schönheit* (1925) by Wilhelm Prager (fig. 3), in which apart from Johnny Weissmüller, Gerhart Hauptmann, and Benito Mussolini on horseback, Leni Riefenstahl played a cameo role as a dancer in the Mary Wigman School. The script, with the motto of “mens sana in corpore sano”, was written by the doctor Nicholas Kaufmann and an artistic-scientific committee, with famous sculptors such as Fritz Klimisch and Arthur Kampf among its members, accompanied the production of the film. However, *Wege zur Kraft*

5. Wolbert 2001 [reference 2], 189-197.



Figure 4
Gerhard Riebicke, *Nudes - Movement*, 1926,
gelatine silver print, 16 x 10,2 cm.
Münchner Stadtmuseum,
Sammlung Fotografie Inv. 2001/286.

German public health” and used it for anti-Semitic attacks. The most beautiful stills were shot by Helmy Hurt und Gerhard Riebicke, probably the best-known photographer of nudist culture. His specialty was precisely capturing dynamic movement sequences performed

und *Schönheit* caused a sensation. Although the Mayor of Berlin publicly stated that it was a valuable, cultural asset after the film had been shown hundreds of times in the city, it met with great resistance in Bavaria, Baden and Hesse. In Munich, the Bayerische Turnerbund [Bavarian Gymnasts’ Society] and the so-called “Sittliche Volkswacht” [Guardians of Public Morals] Union protested against the cultural film because it “speculated in a deceptive, and occasionally kitschy, manner with eroticism”.⁶ The Bavarian State Government’s call for the censorship authorities who, in keeping with the Reich’s cinema legislation, were required to examine “films dealing with morals and sex education”, triggered a bizarre argument among the experts. While a Berlin vicar took the director’s side and found the film “harmless”, the opponents had the film shown in the presence of a school-leaver from Munich who considered the film “unethical”. The national film control board in Berlin rejected the complaint and, in a detailed statement, came to the conclusion that, if the film was shortened by a few scenes, it would not “negatively affect morals” and should be shown throughout the Reich. The cuts were to be made in the scenes showing “a noble Roman woman Bathing”, a massage and semi-nude “slave girls” that had caused feelings to run particularly high in Bavaria.

The controversial debate actually increased the film’s success. For the first time *Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit* brought awareness of physical culture to broad sections of the public, inspiring a lasting interest in sports and rhythmic gymnastics. However, voices could be heard in the right-conservative press that misinterpreted the film as an expression of “national,

⁶ Quoted after *Der Film*, Nr. 21, 24.5.1925. – See also the benevolent review of Siegfried Kracauer’s film, in: *Frankfurter Zeitung* [Stadt-Blatt], 21.5.1925. *Verbotene Bilder, manipulierte Filme. Zur Online-Edition der Zensur-*

scheidungen der Berliner Film-Oberprüfstelle aus den Jahren 1920 bis 1938, Deutsches Filminstitut: www.deutsches-filminstitut.de/zengut.



Figure 5.
 Willy Zielke, *Discus thrower (Living Statue)*,
 reproduced in: Leni Riefenstahl, *Schönheit im
 Olympischen Kampf [Beauty in the Olympic
 Competition]*, Berlin: Deutscher Verlag 1937,
 with numerous photographs from the
 Olympic Games 1936, double page 26/27,
 each 31,5 x 24,5 cm. Münchner Stadtmuseum,
 Sammlung Fotografie Inv. 2000/604.

developed an extremely popular form of strength training for modelling the body. The vision of an egalitarian society that had inspired the early devotees of nudist culture was replaced in Surén's teaching by an elitist male alliance that oriented itself on the National Socialist worldview. Training was now akin to a military drill, designed to prepare men for their duties as soldiers. Nudist culture had at last lost its innocence and ended up being perverted into a repressive ideology.

After postwar years marked by a mood of prudery, it was not until the advent of the protest and liberation movements of 1968 that interest began to revive in the utopian ideals of the Lebensreform-Bewegung [Life Reform Movement]. As if the nudist culture of Höllriegel-skreuth had finally reached the heart of the city, the photographs taken by Heinz Gebhardt and Vladimir Vinski document the matter-of-factness with which the "nudies" took over the English Garden in Munich. What at first attracted countless gawkers has today developed into a state of tolerant co-existence. (fig. 6)

by both men and women during sports and gymnastic dancing. The photos also showed the models' pubic hair and genitals (fig. 4). A more pictorial echo of this development can be found in the prologue to the 1936 Olympics film *Schönheit im Olympischen Kampf* by Leni Riefenstahl, which was shot by cameraman and photographer Willy Zielke. In what is probably the most famous sequence, the antique Discobolus statue by Myron comes to life as a male nude mode (fig. 5).

Gerhard Riebicke's photographs also illustrated the publications of Hans Surén, a military school physical education teacher who de-



Figure 6
Joachim Giesel, *Nudist Group*, Hannover 1977,
gelatine silver print, 23,4 x 33,4 cm.
Münchner Stadtmuseum,
Sammlung Fotografie Inv. 1979/142.

Lolita – Observations on an Iconography of Femininity in German and Spanish Magazines in the 1920s and 1930s

Patricia Gozalbez Cantó



Figure 1

Lili Baruch, *Das unsterbliche Kind*, reproduced from *UHU*, no. 8, vol. 2, May 1926.

The origins of the nymphet phenomenon can be traced back to ancient mythology and the Christian cult of virginity.¹ Nymphets are described as being young girls who are physically mature at an early age and amalgamate both childish and womanly, naïve and erotic, qualities. In the middle of the 20th century, the nymphet became increasingly known as a Lolita based on the title figure of Vladimir Nabokov's successful novel.² Since the end of the 18th century, the unspoilt, virgin girl, at the beginning of puberty, on the threshold of adulthood, in the intermediate stage of adolescence, had increasingly been seen as an ideal and source of inspiration in literature and art. The increasing visualization of the type at the beginning of the 20th century and the spreading of its image in the mass media³ increased the popularity of the nymphet. Or, to put it differently: Her impact largely increased with the iconographic establishment of her image in the modern media. The illustrations are much less concerned with showing a transitional stage, and capturing the actual development from a girl to woman that takes place, than with giving expression to male ideals and constructing an "imagined femininity".⁴ The child's body is transformed into a sexual one through the symbiotic union of seductive and innocent gestures.

The following will provide an analysis and comparison of how photographs in German and Spanish magazines from the 1920s and 1930s represented the genre of nymphet.⁵ At that time, an increasing number of pictures of nymphets started to appear in the illustrated print media and usually showed a clumsy, shy, naïve type of woman who needed protection. The modernization of the image of women, as well as their strong emancipation after the First World War,⁶ resulted in the male audience's need for a new "controllable" type of woman. The nymphets' youthfulness and purity made them appear worthy of adoration and turned their bodies into a male projection surface.⁷ At the same time, the magazines also brought a mass of photographic depictions of the so-called "new woman",⁸ She was diametrically opposed to the nymphet-model and associated with emancipation, independence, mobility, industrialization, and modernity. However, the phenomenon of the new woman is not the subject of this study.⁹ We are much more interested in dealing with the questions of how the nymphet type – that is principally understood as a traditional feminine model – was created on the visual level in the magazines, its meaning in the social context, and how it is to be interpreted as a contrast to what was, at the time, the image of the modern woman. In both Germany and Spain, the 1920s and 1930s were characterized by numerous technical inno-

1 In the article 'Körper-Moden. Der Wandel im Schönheitsgeschmack', which appeared in *UHU* in 1924, Eugen Holländer (1867–1932) explains that, in Christian iconography, the female body was often depicted as that of a child: "The ascetic position of the church and the resulting reservations about showing naturalness went so far as to depict the Mother of God nursing Jesus with the breasts of a child in religious pictures. [...] For centuries, the child-like female body remained the model for all church paintings." (*UHU*, no. 1, October 1924, 12–24).

2 Cf. Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*, New York: Vintage International, 1955.

3 Here, we must draw attention to the invention of heliography (a photographic engraving technique) and the rotary press at the end of the

19th century; without them, the mass distribution of photographs in magazines would not have been possible.

4 Cf. Michael Wetzel, *Mignon. Die Kindsbraut als Phantasma der Goethezeit*, Munich: Fink, 1999, 7.

5 A detailed study of the types of women shown in German and Spanish magazines in the 1920s and 1930s can be found in my dissertation: *Fotografische Inszenierungen von Weiblichkeit. Mass mediale und künstlerische Frauenbilder der 1920er und 1930er Jahre in Deutschland und Spanien*, Bielefeld: transcript 2012.

6 The situation of women changed dramatically after the First World War as many had to fend for themselves and do without financial support from their husbands, most of whom had gone to war. A great number of bourgeois



Figure 2
N. & C. Heß, *Niddy Impekoven*, reproduced
from *UHU*, no. 3, vol. 5, December 1928, 59.

vations¹⁰ and sweeping socio-political change. The two liberal republics – Weimar Republic (1919–1933) and Second Republic in Spain (1931–1936) – opened up completely new possibilities, especially for women: These included fundamental changes, such as the introduction of women’s suffrage, the juridical foundations for carrying out a profession and the legal equality of man and woman, that were to have a great effect on the plans for women’s lives.

The material we have studied comes from *UHU* (Berlin 1924–1933) and *D’Ací i D’Allà* (Barcelona, 1918–1936) that were among the most modern and innovative magazines in Europe in those days. *UHU* was published by the liberal Ullstein Verlag and had a circulation of more than 200,000 copies. It was characterized by a wide range of topics and columns from the areas of fashion, stars, travel, sport, society and politics and had bourgeois readers of both sexes as its target audience. On the other hand, *D’Ací i D’Allà* was published by *Editorial Catalana* in Catalan. Although some sections were specifically oriented on the region, it was notable for its cosmopolitan contents that covered fashion, art, lifestyle, stars, society, etc. The magazine was published monthly until 1931 but only quarterly after that. *D’Ací i D’Allà* had a print run of over 15,000 copies and was aimed at a well-off audience in the upper middle-classes and aristocracy. Most of the media business at the time, as well as the two magazines in question,¹¹ was dominated by men and it can therefore be assumed that the images of women we have investigated mainly represent a “male view” of the female body.

The nymphet as an “innocent little angel”

The shy, naïve nymphet type can mainly be seen in the star and fashion photographs published in the two magazines in the 1920s and 1930s. We made a study of some (portrait) photographs of actresses and models of the period to illustrate the childish type.

families became impoverished as a result of the First World War and this also forced women to look for work. The changes in society brought about by the war also led to an increasing number of young middle-class women consciously taking up a profession (usually, in the service sector) to guarantee that they had an income and more independence. Cf. Maren Dorner/Katrin Völkner, *Lebenswelten der weiblichen Angestellten: Kontor, Kino und Konsum?*, in: Petra Bock/Katja Koblitz (eds.), *Neue Frauen zwischen den Zeiten*, Berlin: Edition Hentrich, 1995, 84–111.

7 Cf. also Heinz von Lichberg, *Die verfluchte Gioconda*, Darmstadt: Falken-Verlag, 1916.

8 I refer to depictions in journals including the following: *UHU* (Berlin 1924–1933), *Die Dame* (Berlin 1912–1943), *Crónica* (Madrid 1929–1938), *D’Ací i D’Allà* (Barcelona 1918–1936).

9 Cf. Katharina Sykora, *Die Neue Frau. Herausforderungen für die Bildmedien der Zwanziger Jahr*, Marburg: Jonas, 1993, and other publications.

10 The telephone, film, cinema, 35mm camera, typewriter, etc were just some of the innovations that represented modernity and urbanity and played a significant role in changing the lives of people at the time.

11 This can also be seen by the names mentioned in the magazines’ lists of contents.

12 *UHU*, no. 8, vol. 2, May 1926.



Figure 4
 Fox-Photo, "Seit gestern abend berühmt..."
 Madge Bellamy, ein neuer Filmstar in
 Los Angeles, reproduced from *UHU*, no. 2, vol. 3,
 November 1926.

A three-quarter length portrait of the German dancer and actress Niddy Impekoven was published in *UHU* in 1926 (fig. 1).¹² The protagonist is shown looking at the viewer from the front and has a dreamy, almost plaintive, expression. She has her head inclined to the side to make her appear smaller than she really is. This can be interpreted as a classic element of humility and as a stylistic "expression of charm and an effective way to appease in social situations".¹³ In a symbolic way, this gesture expresses shyness and weakness and is often used in portraits of children to give a sense of charm to their expression of helplessness. However, this "sign of voluntary subordination"¹⁴ is frequently used in medial stagings showing women as an indication of feminine fragility and willingness to compromise. Not only Impekoven's slanted head transmits a feeling of insecurity, but also the entire posture of her body appears limp and without any tension. In this case, the movement and dynamism that play a major role in other portraits of the artist dancing have been completely eradicated. The heading and caption of the picture make it clear that it was the magazine's intention to portray the nymphet in a prototypical manner. The heading reads: "Niddy Impekoven [...], still childlike, charming and delicate, had the same success dancing as she did seven years ago at the age of fourteen when she became famous."¹⁵ Here, characteristics such as delicacy and charm are mentioned that correspond with the posture, clothing and expression in the picture. The portrayed woman is invested with characteristics, on the textual and visual level, that substantiate the image of the nymphet.

Another portrait of the artist that was published in the *UHU* in 1928 (fig. 2)¹⁶ makes it clear that the illustrated press liked to present Niddy Impekoven as the nymphet type. Here, it is mainly her transported look that makes her seem vulnerable and in need of protection, probably explaining why the portrait was also printed in the context of the article *The Defenceless* by Alfred Polgar.¹⁷ Polgar's text compared modern and traditional types of women with the author regretting the loss of the childlike, graceful woman in need of help. The photograph has the following caption: "Niddy Impekoven. Among the many independent and energetic women of today, it has become rare to find such a delicate, seemingly helpless, soul."¹⁸ As can be seen, both portrayals stress the fragile, vulnerable side of the protagonist.

The nymphet between saint and whore

Portrayals as the "woman eternal" classifying women according to a dual principle (saint or whore) must be regarded as traditional images of femininity. Seen from this point of view, there are only chaste, virtuous women or those that are instinctive and sexually active.¹⁹ This dual principle can also be observed in the phenomenon of the nymphet. The visual representation of the nymphet showing her beauty, purity and innocence also often includes an erotic dimension. The presentation of specific (naked) parts of the body gives the nymphet a

13 Gitta Mühlen Achs, *Geschlecht bewusst gemacht. Körpersprachliche Inszenierungen. Ein Bilder- und Arbeitsbuch*, Munich: Frauenoffensive 1998, 64.

14 Mühlen Achs 1998 [reference 13], 65.

15 *UHU*, no. 8, vol. 2, May 1926.

16 *UHU*, no. 3, vol. 5, December 1928, 59.

17 Cf. Alfred Polgar, 'Die Schutzlose. Ein Gespräch zwischen Männern', in: *UHU*, no. 3, vol. 5, December 1928, 56-61.

18 Cf. Polgar, in: *UHU*, no. 3, vol. 5, December 1928, 59.

19 Ellen Spickernagel, 'Geschichte und Geschlecht. Der feministische Ansatz', in: Hans Belting, et al, (eds.), *Kunstgeschichte. Eine Einführung*, 5th ed., Berlin: Reimer 1988, 340.



MADGE BELLAMY

Amb el seu nom francès i la seva cara de nina bonica, resplendia amb claror pròpia en la brillant constel·lació de la «Paramount».

Figure 3
Paramount Pictures (?), Madge Bellamy
reproduced from *D'Ací i D'Allà*, January 1928.

strong impact that, in contrast to the femme fatale²⁰, appears to be unintentional. The Spanish magazine *D'Ací i D'Allà* published a portrait photo of the American actress Madge Bellamy in 1928 (fig. 3).²¹ On the one hand, the raised shoulders are used to protect and hide her face while, on the other, the flawless complexion of the actresses underlines the seductive pose. It is interesting to note the way she brings her hand to her face; Bellamy does not create the impression that she wants to touch herself lovingly or gently, or maybe hind behind it.²² The hand supporting the face seems much more to be modelled on the classic pose of the thinker.

20 The femme fatale was thought of as a sensual seductress. Famous examples include historical and mythical figures such as Judith, Salome and Lulu. Especially at the end of the 19th century, the femme fatale was the subject of heated debates as it was thought that an almost incalculable danger could result from her often-described arts of seduction (particularly

for young 'inexperienced' men looking for a 'marriageable' woman).

21 *D'Ací i D'Allà*, January 1928.

22 In her analysis of advertising pictures, Gitta Mühlen Achs makes it clear that women frequently use their hands to hide behind them symbolically, cf. Mühlen Achs 1998 (reference 13), 74.



Figure 5
Paramount Pictures, *Julie Haydon*, reproduced
from *D'Ací i D'Allà*, Summer 1936.

follows: “Famous since yesterday evening...Madge Bellamy a new film star in Los Angeles.” This is an indication that the young actress was at the start of her career when the picture was taken and that her still insecure, helpless personality probably fitted in well with will her image at the time. However, a comparison of Bellamy’s pictures reveals that she made the shy pose with the raised shoulders her trademark.²⁵ The simultaneous depiction of naïveté and seductiveness refers to two traditional concepts of the woman, the saint and the whore, that are united in Bellamy and amalgamated with the modern insignia of femininity (including her short hairstyle and strong makeup).

The nymphet touching herself

As could be seen in the photos of Bellamy, touching played a central role in the medial presentation of the nymphet. The protagonists’ hands were often placed on their face or chest but they only gently grazed it. Firmly grasping the body, or a gesture symbolizing self-assuredness and decisiveness, can only rarely be observed.²⁶ Female hands were usually shown stroking, embracing protectively or caressing. In this way, the gestures of the woman touching herself sometimes created the feeling that her “own body was something precious and sensitive.”²⁷ This kind of self-touching gesture can be seen in the head-and-shoulders portrait of the American actress Julie Haydon that was published in the *D'Ací i D'Allà* magazine in 1936 (fig. 5).²⁸ The folded hands gently brushing the face create the impression that the protagonist was imagining a (male) vis-à-vis who could be dreamt up through her touch.

23 Original: “Madge Bellamy. Amb el seu nom francès i la seva cara de nina bonica, resplendeix amb claror pròpia en la brillant constel·lació de la ‘Paramount’.”

24 *UHU*, no. 2, vol. 3, November 1926.

25 Cf. also *D'Ací i D'Allà*, March 1928.

26 Cf. pictures of the Garçonne, who frequently stands with her arms akimbo and assumes a space-filling pose with masculine connotations [e.g. the portrait of Anita Loos in *UHU*, no. 12, vol. 4, September 1928].

27 Erving Goffman, *Geschlecht und Werbung*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981, 131.

The air of innocence and the seductive and thoughtful pose in the picture unite various symbols that can be associated with specific types of women. Symbols of the nymphet, femme fatale and thinker (this pose was actually reserved for men) can be detected here in one and the same staging where they create a strange kind of tension with each other. But, the caption only assigns the actress to the nymphet scheme: “Madge Bellamy. With her French name and pretty, doll-like face, she dazzles in her own glory in the brilliant Paramount production.”²³

Taking another picture of the actress, which appeared in *UHU* in 1926, into consideration it becomes clear that Bellamy represented the type of the shy, but simultaneously seductive, nymphet from the very beginning (fig. 4).²⁴ The portrait was commented on as



Figure 6
Tres Graciosos Models per a Noietes, reproduced
 from *D'Ací i D'Allà*, September 1928, 320.

In a series of photographs on children's fashion printed in *D'Ací i D'Allà* in 1928, we see one that also takes up this gesture of the folded hands (fig. 6, top right).²⁹ The girl is shown with an extremely controlled posture. Like a little adult, she is completely in command of specific poses and stylized, girlish behavioural patterns. Both the physical expression and clothing of the child demonstrate disciplined self-control in contrast with a carefree childhood. The folded hands in this portrait remind us of the pose of a child sleeping. In contrast to the portrait of Julie Haydon however, it is striking that the girl positions her head slanting

28 *D'Ací i D'Allà*, Summer 1936.

29 Cf. *D'Ací i D'Allà*, September 1928, 320.



Figure 7
 Vestit de soirée en tul i puntes de color verd clar
 que ha obtingut un gran èxit en la presentació de
 la col·lecció de models per a estiu, de la Casa Manuel
 Morell, reproduced from *D'Ací i D'Allà*,
 June 1931, 221.

30 *D'Ací i D'Allà*, June 1931, 221.

31 The concept of the male gaze has its roots in the feminist film theory of Laura Mulvey. In her study *Visuelle Lust und narratives Kino* (1975), she established that, in the visual media, female characters are always shown from a male, heterosexual, hierarchical perspective and that women are usually degraded to objects of male desire.

towards the folded hands as if these would support her head. In Haydon's portrait, touching herself makes one aware of the longing for closeness and the desire for physical contact and tenderness.

The nymphet and fashion

The outspread skirt is a motif that increasingly appeared in fashion photography in the 1920s and 1930s and one that is also associated with a childlike nature; it was also used in figure 7 showing a young woman in an evening dress.³⁰ She has averted her eyes and this, together with her meek posture, makes her seem to lack confidence; the body language reminds one of a shy young girl. The woman shown is obviously presenting her elegant evening gown to an invisible audience. The gesture of the spread skirt makes the principle of presentation apparent. The position of displaying something shows that the young woman is aware of the presence of the viewers even though she is turned away from them. We observe the ambivalence of presenting oneself in front of the camera and turning away from the receivers at the same time. It is interesting that the figure definitely does seem to be aware that she is being watched and reacts to this with a shy, naïve gesture. In this way, she falls into a role that appeals to the 'male gaze'.³¹ "In the exhibitionist role ascribed to women, they are simultaneously looked at and exhibited, their appearance is designed to create a powerful visual and erotic aura; it could be said that they connote 'wanting to be looked at'.³² A connection can be created with 'wanting to be looked at' in both figures 7 and 6 (upper left). However, the focus is less on an eroticizing or exhibitionistic depiction of the figures and more on attributes such as fragility, helplessness and shyness.

The nymphet and objects

The nymphet can be associated with other characteristic features on the iconographic level. Children's games and toys played a significant role in this respect. For example, in 1929, *D'Ací i D'Allà* published a portrait of the American actress Anita Page sitting on the floor holding a doll (fig. 8).³³ The way the toy is held is significant as it reminds one of traditional portrayals

32 Laura Mulvey, 'Visuelle Lust und narratives Kino' (1975), in: Liliane Weissberg (ed.), *Weiblichkeit und Maskerade*, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1994, 55.

33 *D'Ací i D'Allà*, December 1929, 394.

of a mother with her child. Page's expression shows that the actress is emotionally moved. With her blonde locks, intense expression and childish clothing, she seems like a small girl overcome by her emotions. The caption states: "A childish Christmas allegory. MGM's beautiful actress Anita Page was pleased to pose in front of a Christmas tree laden down with toys to create this charming allegory of these magical holidays."³⁴ In this way, the actress is quite clearly assigned to the nymphet scheme on the textual level.

It has become clear that, in the portrayals of nymphet, a connection between child-like innocence and seductive eroticism can be observed. On the visual level, symbols that are associated with helplessness, naivety and fragility are mixed with erotic attributes. On the one hand, the nymphets make use of the modern insignias of femininity of the time including makeup, hairstyles and fashion and, on the other, the poses and glances remind one clearly of traditional images of the femme fatale. This wraps the classic type of woman in modern garb. As can be seen, the iconography of the nymphet is not an invention of the 1920s and 1930s but much more a traditional way of portraying women in the mass medium of photography. Of course, photographic depictions of nymphets were modern stagings that did not simply copy artistic models of the traditional concept of the woman. However, it is easy to make out traditional concepts of women behind the modern façade. With their, usually shy, girlish, helpless expressions, the nymphets suggest that they rely on the protection of the man. As a result, the classic role of the man as protector and provider, which was increasingly questioned by modern developments such as the phenomenon of the "new woman", became upgraded. This can also explain why Alfred Polgar made an especially positive evaluation of the nymphet in his article *The Defenceless* seeing that her existence justified the male connotation of the protector role and the traditional male and female roles (active/passive, strong/weak, etc) as known to the bourgeoisie of the late 19th century. The supposed virginity and virtuousness of the nymphet was also meant to provide information on her "suitability for marriage". Her naïve and virginal aura made her appear easy to form and educate to the man and, therefore, the "ideal" future marriage partner. It is interesting to observe that, in both the Weimar Republic and Second Republic in Spain, the nymphet was launched in the same way in the two magazines we have studied and entered into competition with pictures of a progressive type of woman. These parallels in German and Spanish journals make it clear that, during a phase of liberal government in both countries, the nymphet type once again brought traditional values and gender roles to the fore. Although a modern iconography was used to a certain extent, the type once again cemented classical concepts of femininity that were intended to be internalized by a bourgeois or aristocratic readership.



Figure 8
10MGM Pictures, *Allegoria Pueril de Nadal*,
reproduced from *D'Ací i D'Allà*,
December 1929, 394.

34 Original: "Allegoria Pueril de Nadal. La bella actriu Aníta Page, de la M. G. M., ha volgut posar-se davant un arbre de Noèl carregat de joquines per formar una amable allegoria d'aquestes diades illusionants."

Trude Fleischmann and Claire Bauroff: The Naked Female Body as a Staged Nude

Frauke Kreutler The end of the First World War and collapse of the Habsburg monarchy resulted in major political changes and economic crises in Austria. In spite of poverty, the hardships facing refugees, unemployment, the loss of the war, and rampant anti-Semitism, democratic, socialist, reform ideas had the upper hand for one and a half decades. The traditional gender roles were also questioned to a large degree. The war had led to a shortage of men in the workplace and all other areas of life; vacant positions were filled by women – this also applied to the field of photography. Shortly after the First World War, many young – predominantly Jewish – women opened their own photographic studios in Vienna and made careers for themselves in what had previously been a profession traditionally dominated by men. Young female photographers rapidly established themselves in all genres – advertising, magazine photography, theatre and fashion. Women had first been permitted to study photography at the Graphische Lehr- und Versuchsanstalt in Vienna, the leading training centre at the time, in 1908.¹ Trude Fleischmann was certainly one of the best known and most innovative female Austrian photographers in the 1920s and 1930s. Her portraits of famous writers and architects, conductors and theatre stars, politicians and dancers, laid the foundations for her reputation as an excellent portraitist. However, her international renown was mainly due to her series of nude photographs of the dancer Claire Bauroff whose “scandalous permissiveness” caused heated discussions in various magazines and journals in the 1920s. The scandal created by the Bauroff nudes cannot be treated as an individual phenomenon; they are much more characteristic of a short period of time during which it was possible for photographers of both sexes to experiment with the artistic exposing of the naked female body in a manner that was in no way pornographic.

Trude Fleischmann

Shortly after finishing her studies at the Graphische Lehr- und Versuchsanstalt in Vienna² and her subsequent apprenticeship in Hermann Schieberth’s respected photographic studio, the 25-year-old Trude Fleischmann opened her own atelier directly behind the Vienna Town Hall at Ebendorferstrasse 3, not far from the most important theatres in the city. The Theater in der Josefstadt, Burgtheater and Volkstheater were all within walking distance. The young photographer was a superb networker and was able to take advantage of being so close to these theatres.³ She expanded her circle of clients, mainly from Vienna’s artistic and cultural world, through the exhibitions and parties she organized in her studio. Conductors, writers, actresses, singers and dancers regularly sat in front of Fleischmann’s camera in her studio. Along with her reputation as an outstanding portraitist, she was also able to establish herself in the area of dance photography. Her expressive, dynamic

1 Anton Holzer, ‘Atelier und Illustrierte. Trude Fleischmanns Fotoarbeiten für die Presse’, in: Anton Holzer, Frauke Kreutler (eds.), *Trude Fleischmann der selbstbewusste Blick*, Vienna 2011, 122-127.

2 The “K. k. Lehr- und Versuchsanstalt für Photographie und Reproduktionsverfahren in Wien” (Imperial Educational and Experimental Institute for Photography and Reproduction Techniques) was opened on 1 March 1888 as the first recognized educational centre of the kind in the world. The pupils were

trained in portrait, landscape and reproduction photography as well as all the mechanical printing techniques in use at the time. In addition to the scientific experimental institute, a section for book and illustration trades was established. Women were first allowed to take part in photo courses in 1908, see: Astrid Lechner, ‘Künstlerische Fotografie an der Graphischen Lehr- und Versuchsanstalt 1888-1955’, in: Monika Faber (ed.), *Das Auge und der Apparat. Eine Geschichte der Fotografie aus den Sammlungen der Albertina*, exhibition catalogue Albertina, Paris, Vienna 2003, 174.



Figure 1
Trude Fleischmann, *Dancers Mila Cirul and Hedy Pfundmayr*, Vienna c. 1925, gelatin silver print, 20,4 x 16,7 cm. Austrian National Library, Picture Archives and Graphic Department.

from the bourgeois traditions and guidelines of institutionalized ballet (in the opera house, for example).

Nude dancing in Vienna

Until the end of the First World War, scantily dressed dancers could mainly be admired on the stages of various variety theatres. The stage artists showed themselves in their risqué costumes to a largely male audience; they exposed their midriffs as Indian temple dancers and revealed a lot of leg – and sometimes a little bit more – when they whirled to the cancan.⁷

3 Trude Fleischmann: Vienna 18.12.1897 – 21.1.1990 Brewster (New York). Marion Krammer, 'Blende auf. Trude Fleischmann in Wien. Bausteine einer Biografie', in: Holzer, Kreutler 2011 (reference 1), 146-156.
4 In Austria, the period between the two world wars starts at the end of 1918 and finishes with the Nazi assault on Poland in September 1939.
5 Andrea Amort, 'An der Wende. Zur Situation des künstlerischen Tanzes in Wien um 1930', in: Wolfgang Kos (ed.), *Kampf um die Stadt. Politik, Kunst und Alltag um 1930*, exhibition catalogue Wien Museum, Vienna 2010, 260.

movement studies were especially in demand with the avant-garde of Vienna's dancers. International stage stars including Tilly Losch, Toni Birkmeyer, Berta Reidinger, Mila Cirul, Julian Algo, Katta Sterna, Niddy Impekoven and Claire Bauroff used the carefully photographed dance experiments to cultivate their photographic image (fig. 1). Published in journals and magazines, these photographs not only increased the photographer's popularity but also that of the dancers.

Free dance in Vienna

Vienna was a centre of free dance in the years between the wars⁴ and many of the female dancers were extremely popular in the 1920s and early 1930s. Several founded their own dance schools and also worked as freelance choreographers. As was the case with the photographers, many of them came from liberal, Jewish families.⁵ The origins of the Viennese dance scene that was so rich in personalities and forms of expression can be traced back to the turn from the 19th to 20th century when free dance started to develop under the influence of the pioneer Isadora Duncan.⁶ Along with the multifaceted trends of the life-reform movements and gymnastics with their different expressions of the cult of the body and physical culture, new dance was characteristic of the go-ahead feeling of the time; it played a central role in the development of a new body awareness stressing its unity with the spirit. Fleischmann's photographs represent a new generation of male and female dancers who had liberated themselves from the aristocratic constraints of the corset and ballet shoes, as well as

6 The impulse for these new developments in dance in Vienna came from the young American Isadora Duncan (1877–1927) who performed for a closed audience in the Viennese Secession in 1902. She became the model for generations of female dancers including Grete Wiesenthal, who, with her sisters, redefined the Viennese Waltz in 1908 and progressed to become one of the most famous representatives of free dance in Vienna.
7 Claudia Balk, Brygida Ochaim (eds.), *Varieté-Tänzerinnen um 1900. Vom Sinnesrausch zur Tanzmoderne*, Frankfurt 1998, 22.

Expressive dance in flimsy clothing was something new that – in contrast to the performances in variety theatres – attempted to establish itself as a serious art form. Similar to naturism, which was widespread around the turn of the century, expressive dance attempted to establish new images of the body. Developing from the teachings of the Frenchman François Delsarte, the Swiss Émile Jacques-Dalcroze, and Rudolf von Laban who had been born in Pressburg (today, Bratislava), dance and gymnastics evolved into new forms of expression with the body as the bearer of what had been experienced spiritually and intellectually.⁸ The focus of attention was on the “natural” functions and motions of the body; the goal was to express inner emotions through movement. Moving away from the conventions of classical ballet that were considered to be inflexible was accompanied by a rejection of the traditional dress regulations; it was stated that the inner being could only find expression through the body. As symbols of aristocratic etiquette, ballet slippers and corsets were replaced by bare feet and hardly clothed – or completely nude – bodies.

Loïe Fuller⁹ was probably the first dancer to appear on stage without a corset.¹⁰ She gave her first performance in the Ronacher Theatre in Vienna in 1898.¹¹ She was followed by Isadora Duncan who danced barefoot in front of an entirely male audience in the Secession¹² dressed in transparent flowing robes and rang in a new era of dance. The dancer refused to appear in variety theatres as they did not satisfy her artistic demands. The high point in her unclothing was reached when she appeared completely naked. Dance continued along these paths with the nude dance of Olga Desmond in the 1910s and the scandalous performances of Anita Berber as a femme fatale in the 1920s. Both dancers moved freely between the sensationalism of the variety theatre and the artistic demands of modern dance that was developing at the time. Claire Bauroff was one of the most famous dancers of the period whose, completely naked, performances went as far as the moral concepts of the time allowed.¹³

The dancer Clair Bauroff

Klara Amanda Anna Bauer, who became famous under the stage name of Claire Bauroff, was born in Weissenhorn/Neu-Ulm in Germany on 26 February 1895. Overriding her parents' resistance, the young woman decided on a career on the stage and moved to Munich where she studied acting under Friedrich Carl Preppeler and, later, received dancing instruction from Rudolf Bode.¹⁶

Under the influence of Boder's concept of expressive gymnastics, Claire Bauroff's dance performances rapidly became popular and film producers started to take notice of the young dancer. She played the female lead in *Pán* directed by the Hungarian Pál Fejös. The film, which dealt with Eros, beauty and dance, was considered too permissive and censored

8 Gisela Barche, 'Als der siebte Schleier fiel. Tanz und Gymnastik auf dem Weg zu neuem Körperbewußtsein?', in: Michael Köhler, Gisela Barche (eds.), *Das Aktfoto. Ansichten vom Körper im fotografischen Zeitalter. Ästhetik, Geschichte, Ideologie*, Munich 1985, 356; Gunhild Oberzaucher, 'Der Freie Tanz in Wien bis 1938', in: Andrea Amort, Mimi Wunderer-Gosch (ed.), *Österreich tanzt. Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Vienna, Cologne, Weimar 2001, 61.

9 Loïe Fuller (1862-1928) was an American dancer and is regarded interna-

tionally as one of the pioneers of modern dance. She became famous for her performances where she appeared wrapped in gigantic lengths of material and, with the help of light and music, moved in a never-ending flow through the room. Here dances were hailed as a veritable manifestation of Jugendstil.

10 Balk, Ochaim, 1998 (reference 7), 23.

11 Amort, Wunderer-Gosch (eds.) 2001 (reference 8), 55.

12 The Viennese Secession was an artists' society founded in Vienna by Gustav



Figure 2

Trude Fleischmann, *Nude study of dancer Claire Bauroff*, Vienna 1924, gelatin silver print, 22,6 x 10,4 cm. Wien Museum Karlsplatz.

to removal all of its supposedly objectionable aspects.¹⁵ In 1923/24 Bauroff had a supporting role in the UFA film *Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit* (Paths to Strength and Beauty) directed by Wilhelm Prager and Nicholas Kauffmann. The film was a great success and helped the naturism movements of the period to popularity. She appeared completely naked in this film but could only be seen from behind.¹⁶

In the years that followed, Vienna developed into the centre of Bauroff's stage activities. At the end of October 1924, she appeared in a dance drama she had choreographed herself for the first time: *Das Licht ruft* (The Light Beckons) in the Theater in der Josefstadt. She visualized seven scenes and types of society in this dance-pantomime: the greedy skinflint, the liar, the child, the pariah, the fat capitalist, the fool, and the desiring person, partially naked, which naturally led to much discussion in the press.

Max Ermers, the critic of *Die Zeit* magazine, was full of praise and talked of "danced ethics" and that the dancer was "blessed with an extremely slim, beautiful, Praxitelean body (...) and with an overabundance of strong, non-intellectual feelings that incessantly fight on the light of the muscles and epidermis."¹⁷ Although the Christian-social *Reichspost's* final judgement was very positive, it had "strong reservations" about Bauroff's "lack of costume" that was also not considered appropriate for an audience in the metropolis.¹⁸

But, Trude Fleischmann's nude photographs of Bauroff really triggered lasting excitement in the press and illustrated magazines. And, the aesthetics of this photo series were to receive attention going far beyond the year 1924.

Naked in front of the camera

The series of photographs of the dancer Claire Bauroff (figs. 2 and 3) were created in the Atelier Fleischmann in 1924.¹⁹ Fleischmann positioned the slim, muscular body of the dancer in front of a neutral background. The dancer posed – seen from behind, then striding and later seated – without any eye contact with the viewer. The dancer is completely concentrated on herself, her body and the act of introversion. Nothing draws attention away from the woman: There are no props, no shadows to reveal where the photos were taken. In the pictures, Fleischmann staged the dancer like a statue and, in this manner, removed any anecdotal motivation for

Klimt, Koloman Moser, Josef Hoffmann, Joseph Maria Olbrich and others on 3 April 1897 following a break with the Künstlerhaus due to their rejection of what they considered to be the conservative style of historicism.

13 Karl Toepfer, *Empire of Ecstasy. Nudity and Movement in German Body Culture, 1910–1935*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1997, 54; Gisela Barche, 'Als der siebte Schleier fiel. Tanz und Gymnastik auf dem Weg zu neuem Körperbewußtsein?', in: Köhler, Barche (eds.) 1985 (reference 8), 361.

14 For information on the life of Claire Bauroff, see: Ralf Georg Czapla, *Claire Bauroff. Gedichte*, Bonn 2011; Ralf Georg Czapla, '„nach Maß gearbeitet“.

Hermann Brochs Gedichte für die Tänzerin Claire Bauroff', in: *Jahrbuch für Kultur und Literatur der Weimarer Republik*, vol. 12, 2008, Munich 2009, 69-113.

15 The Hungarian film *Pán*, named after the Greek god of flocks and herds, came into the sights of the censors and had to be changed massively after a press screening on 1 August 1920. The erotic scenes between Pan and Lucy



Figure 3
Trude Fleischmann, *Nude study of dancer*
Claire Bauroff, Vienna 1924, gelatin silver print,
22,2 x 16,8 cm. Wien Museum Karlsplatz.



Figure 4
Trude Fleischmann, *Nude study of dancer Claire Bauroff*, reproduced from *Bettauers Wochenschrift. Probleme des Lebens*, vol. 52/1925, 20–21.

her complete nakedness. These are not photographs that capture dance as a movement in a specific space or its dynamism and speed. The photographer was much more concerned with showing the dancer in carefully orchestrated poses that corresponded with the theatre productions of the dancer.

Bauroff's choreographies were much more like expressionist body sculptures based on the physical ideals of antiquity than dance-like performances. This was not "dance" in the traditional sense but expressive art in the form of "living statues". There was also no musical accompaniment to these performances. Bauroff avoided any kind of eroticising provocation and was in no way interested in arousing the audience. The body was not intended to be a projection surface for longings and desires but was itself the bearer of emotions. Her statement that she never danced naked must be understood from this position. She protested strongly against being categorized as a nude dancer.²⁰

Fleischman transferred this interpretation of the desexualized artistic body to the medium of photography with great mastery. The photographer used the lighting, the neutral background, the contrasts of light and dark, and the completely shaved body with its skin shining like marble to stage the body as an abstract work of art and, by doing so, opened up new paths in the aesthetics of nude photography.

Only a few years before, a similar presentation of the naked body would have been inconceivable and, even more, censorship would have made it absolutely impossible for such an explicit depiction to find its way into the illustrated press. And, these nude photographs found their way into the press more than once. Then, although the new era that was dawning in society in the 1920 made this kind of picture possible, the general public would not have accepted them without protest, objection and scandal. The photographs rapidly became known; they had not been made for the dancer's private use.

Nude photography and the public

When Claire Bauroff appeared in the "Admiralspalast" variety theatre on Friedrichstrasse in Berlin in 1925, the Fleischmann photos were on display in the showcases. And the "spicy" bits were not pasted over. The scandal was not long in coming and the pictures were censored and confiscated by the police – of course, this made them even more famous. The art

[played by Bauroff) were clearly too spicy for the censorship authorities.

16 The documentary film *Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit* used gymnastics, dance and sports scenes, as well scenes of bathing culture, to promote the healthy care of one's body in nature. With this film, the director reached a mass public and enjoyed great popularity. The UFA Film (Universum Film AG) was first shown in Berlin in 1925.

17 Max Ermers, 'Claire Bauroff: Das Licht ruft! Zur heutigen Uraufführung im Josefstädter Theater', in: *Der Tag*, 26 October 1924.

18 Oscar Reich, 'Theater in der Josefstadt. Tanzmatinee Claire Bauroff', in: *Die Reichspost. Unabhängiges Tagblatt für das christliche Volk*, 28. October 1924, 2.

19 Czapla 2011 (reference 14), 86.

20 Czapla 2011 (reference 14), 87.



Figure 5

Trude Fleischmann, *Nude study of dancer Claire Bauroff*, reproduced from Werner Suhr, *Der nackte Tanz*, Hamburg 1927, fig. 2.

theoretician Max Ermers, one of Bauroff's admirers, immediately reported on the events in *Bettauers Wochenschrift*: "Now this slender, Swabian maiden, who has remained the same girlish, budding person in spite of her fate and marriage, has experienced what fame really means. For years, the critics in our city, where she found a second home, attempted to make the public aware of the sense of this previously unknown revelation of the human body. For years, in vain. And now, a Berlin constable or police assessor comes along and confiscates her pictures from a showcase – and a miracle happens. Praise be to the police – the Berlin police, of course."²¹ Ermers garnished his article with the series of photographs by Fleischmann he mentioned (fig. 4).

Two years later, Werner Suhr recalled this episode in his standard work on nude dance: "A cabaret in Berlin was so tasteless as to cover the so-called obscene parts of the photos in its showcase with pieces of paper (...) However, one year ago, a constable thought that the safety of the public was actually endangered by a photo of Claire Bauroff dancing that was displayed at the Admiralspalast. Courageously – but, thank goodness, in vain – he took action against these aesthetically and artistically exceptional nude photographs, without any traces of pasting..."²² Here, Fleischmann's photos were once again used as illustrations (fig. 5).

In the years that followed, the photos repeatedly appeared in magazines including the *Uhu* in 1926 and the Berlin *Roland* in 1925. Why did these photos cause such an uproar, were they the only nude photographs that appeared in illustrated papers and magazines at the time?

Nude photography

Nude photography is not an innovation of the 1920s; it has existed since the beginnings of photography. Originally shot in back rooms, these photos often changed hands under the counter. The appeal of these photographs lay in their "natural" representation. The woman on the photo was considered "real" and stereo technology led to the viewer feeling that he was in the middle of the action. The action was often focussed on the unclothed woman; the position of the camera and eye-contact with the model made the viewer feel that he was her imaginary lover.

Great numbers of these photos were sold – mainly to men – under the guise of being of "artistic" or "scientific" interest. The widest variety of scenes was offered under designations ranging from "academic nudes" to "ethnographic study".²³ Around the turn of the century, the artistic branch of "pictorialist" photography attempted to extract photographs of nude women from the area of voyeuristic commercial photography. Analogous to artistic nude drawing, photographing the unclothed female body experienced a rehabilitation. This turned these photographs into artworks that were in keeping with bourgeois moral codes and no longer scrutinized by the censors so that, similar to salon painting, a limited market for nude pictures established itself in the 1920s.²⁴

21 Max Ermers, 'Claire Bauroff oder der beseelte Leib', in: *Bettauers Wochenschrift. Probleme des Lebens*, vol. 52, 1925, 20.

22 Werner Suhr, *Der nackte Tanz*, Hamburg 1927, 28.

23 Viktoria Schmidt-Linsenhoff, "'Körperseele', Freilichtakt und neue Sinnlichkeit. Kulturgeschichtliche Aspekte der Aktfotografie in der Weimarer Republik', in: *Fotogeschichte. Beiträge zur Geschichte und Ästhetik der Fotografie*, vol. 1, 1981, 41-42.

Nude photography experienced a real boom in the 1920s and 1930s. Reforms in the style of clothing and lifestyle, new dance, gymnastics and especially the new ideologies of naturism, led to a fresh interpretation of pictures of the female body: The erotic female became less important and was replaced by the nature-loving, sporty, supple, androgynous type of woman. The naturism movement was a deciding factor in the enormous interest shown in the naked bodies of both sexes in the press. The aim and ideology of the naturism culture of the great range of reform movements was to return to a “natural” way of life, one that was “close to nature”. “Natural, hygienic” nudity replaced “shameless” nakedness with its erotic connotations.²⁵

The aesthetics of nude photography within the reform movements mainly defined itself through the nude in the open-air, in nature. However, if nude photographs were shot indoors, they were usually structured rather conventionally to avoid any voyeuristic overtones. The model posed against a single-coloured background, as restrained as possible with a pleasant facial expression and classic posture, reclining or standing. Women were often shown with hoops, cushions or balls; men with spears, discusses or swords (fig. 6).

Female dancers corresponded completely with these new ideals of the body that replaced the lavish, passive, ample, feminine, appealing curves of the ideal female body of the turn of the century with the sporty, active, muscular, hygienic, androgynous body of the “new woman”.

Although naturism led to a boom in nude photography in the 1920s, it still needed legitimation. Magazines and journals were only too willing to illustrate their publications with nude photographs and often gave reform education methods, rhythmic gymnastics, sex education and even photography itself as legitimation.

The guiding principle of “mens sana in corpore sano”, a healthy spirit in a healthy body, was illustrated with photo documentations to make it appealing to the readers (fig. 7). Competitions for the best nude photographs were organized but they were often accompanied by detailed

information on inoffensive, ideal nude photography. The invitation to a competition in *Die Schönheit*, one of the main German-language naturism magazines, stated: “The photographs must be morally righteous and unobjectionable and not serve as models for artistic purposes, but inspire women and men from all educated circles to strive towards their own physical perfection.”²⁶



Figure 6
John M. Harnic, ‘An American Apollo’,
reproduced from *Die Schönheit*, vol. 3, 1926, 107.

24 Schmidt-Linsenhoff 1981 [reference 23], 43-44.

25 Michael Köhler, ‘Lebensreform durch Körperkultur. “Wir sind nackt und nennen uns du”’, in: Köhler, Barche (eds.) 1985 [reference 8], 342.

26 Köhler, Barche (eds.) 1985 [reference 8], 347.



Figure 7
 'Die Grazie der Modernen Frau', reproduced
 from *Die Bühne*, vol. 104, 1926, 3.

Women photograph women

Female photographers played a major role in the stylistic development of nude photography in the years between the two world wars. Expressive dance, on the one hand, and the new-objective understanding of photography, on the other, showed the female body from unusual perspectives. Along with Trude Fleischmann, Madame d'Ora was one of the photographers who shot the naked body in an unconventional fashion. In 1922, she shattered traditional moral concepts of nude pictures with her photos of the scandalous dancer Anita Berber and her partner Sebastian Droste in her series *The Dances of Vice, Horror and Ecstasy*.²⁷ With disturbing titles such as *Martyrs* and *Cocaine*, the photographer did not portray the couple as glamorous or noble artistic nudes but showed them in all of their dynamism as tortured, demonic, suffering bodies (fig. 8). The photos published in the book of the same name, as well as Fleischmann's photos of Bauroff, are not snapshots of danced moments but precisely staged poses taken from the dance. The difference between these photographs and Fleischmann's, and in contrast to photos from the naturalism movement, is that they do not show anonymous nude models but internationally respected dancers known by name.

Yva²⁸ took a completely different approach to dance with her fourfold exposure of Claire Bauroff. The Berlin *Uhu* magazine published this photo under the title of *Starfish* in 1930. Three years later, this photograph was exhibited at the First Paris Salon of Nude Photography "Nus-

La beauté de la femme" and published in its catalogue. In this photo, which shows Bauroff in never-ending movement, the photographer was not concerned with contributing to removing the taboo from the public display of nudity, her photos must be primarily interpreted as a contribution to artistic photography. Yva's nude oeuvre is little known but the works show a multifaceted approach and experimental concept of nude photography. Some of her photos are indebted to the objective photography of the 1920s. The title *Nude Geometry* is a clear indication of an objective approach to this subject. The photograph of an unknown nude woman, seen from behind, has been cropped at the top and bottom, and the diagonal composition of the picture, as well as the play of light, stresses the simplification of abstraction of the female body (fig. 9).²⁹

27 Monika Faber, *Madame d'Ora Wien-Paris. Portraits aus Kunst und Gesellschaft 1907-1957*, Vienna, Munich, 1983, 191.

28 Yva was the pseudonym of the Berlin photographer Else Neuländer-Simon (*26.1.1900, †probably 1942 in the Majdanek concentration camp).

29 Marion Beckers, Elisabeth Moortgat (eds.), *Yva. Photographien 1925-1938*, Berlin 2001, 111-123.

30 Anton Holzer, 'Sich vor Frauen entblößen', in: *Die Presse. Unabhängige Tageszeitung für Österreich*, 16.4.2010.

31 Anton Holzer, 'Atelier und Illustrierte. Trude Fleischmanns Fotoarbeiten für die Presse, Biografie', in: Holzer, Kreutler 2011 (reference 1), 123-124

32 Czaplá 2011 (reference 14), 70.



Figure 8
Madame d'Ora, *Study of dancers Anita Berber and Sebastian Droste in "Märtyrer"*, gelatine silver print, 30,4 x 17,9 cm, Collection Frank, Upper Austrian State Museums, Linz.

The end of the experimental phase

This experimental phase started to draw to a close in the early 1930s. At the latest, Austro-fascism in 1934 led to a sense of shame and prudery once again gaining the upper hand. And, in 1938, the National Socialist's seizure of power resulted in the persecution and expulsion of the Jewish photographers.³⁰ In 1933, Trude Fleischman lost her contracts to provide photographs for the German press and, later, she – as a Jewish photographer – was not permitted to publish in Austria. She fled from Vienna on 3 September 1938; she was not the only one who had to leave the country in a hurry, most of her colleagues suffered the same fate.³¹

However, nude photography did not completely disappear from the public's eye but became increasingly reduced to the outdoor nude embodying collective physical discipline as a means of controlling one's drives and mainly representing the Aryan race myth.

In 1935, Bauroff was forced to defend her nude photos by Fleischmann in court and wrote a letter on the affair to the author Hans Brandenburg: "...seeing that [the trial] is a test case for all my colleagues who have themselves photographed nude in their serious striving for physical culture. If I do not win, they are all aware that, one day, they will be denounced and torn away from the work – never to be seen again."³²



Figure 9
Yva, 'Aktgeometrie', reproduced from *Deutscher Kamera Almanach*, vol. 22, 1932, 91.

The scandal with the Bauroff photographs reached its peak with this court case and can be interpreted as representing the cut-off point in a brief period of adventurous exposure.

The reason that precisely Fleischmann's series was confronted with censorship and criticism could be a result of her going far beyond the borders and actually displaying the photos publicly in a showcase where they could be seen by all – not secretly and bashfully, in keeping with the cliché of the feminine, but self-aware and direct.

Ballet Dancers and Bathers: An Introduction to Keith Vaughan's Photography

Gerard Hastings The eminent British artist Keith Vaughan (1912-1977) is considered the leading painter of the male nude of the generation that included Sutherland, Nicholson and Bacon. His paintings are noted for their unique depiction of male figures in landscapes, succulent use of colour and the manner in which his forms oscillate between figuration and abstraction (fig. 1). The sensuous way his paint is employed as an equivalent of male flesh acts as a counterpart to Freud's

depiction of female flesh. Vaughan was a distinguished teacher and writer and several succeeding artists (Hockney among them), acknowledge a debt to him. Vaughan was also a photographer of no small merit but his work in this medium remains unknown apart from a few isolated examples. He published a set of his male nude photographs in Keith Vaughan: *Journals and Drawings* in 1966¹; some photographs have been occasionally exhibited at Aberystwyth University from their collection²; in 2007 in the exhibition *How We Are: Photographing Britain*³, Tate Britain included other images from the Aberystwyth collection but only as documentary material, rather than photographic works in their own right. Other than these scant showings, Vaughan's photography remains unpublished, unexhibited and unrecognised. The male nude is at the very heart of Vaughan's vision and his oeuvre seems to have been divided into two categories: work deemed acceptable for public consumption and work that requires a more specialised, discerning viewer. His photographs have been placed firmly in the latter category. After his death, Vaughan's friends guarded his reputation and restricted the viewing of his 'questionable' images. This is understandable; for most of Vaughan's working life, homosexuality was a criminal offence, punishable in Britain with long prison terms and, during the 1930s and '40s, this could be accompanied by enforced curative 'treatments'. The erotic nature of some of Vaughan's photography automatically bars it from public consumption, specifically because of its homoeroticism. Had his models been



Figure 1
Keith Vaughan, *Neapolitan Bathers* (1951),
oil on board, 630 x 480mm.
Collection Sir Peter Shaffer.

female and his imagery of a more sapphic nature, these works would now be widely known and celebrated. Galleries and auction houses are also guilty of filtering and censoring. In 1991 Vaughan's *Erotic Fantasies*, 1940-1960, an album of unexhibited drawings and paintings, were auctioned at Sotheby's⁴. None could be illustrated in the catalogue and were only made available on request; viewing had to be supervised and took place in private. It is inconceivable that work involving heterosexual or lesbian subjects, for example by Schiele, Klimt, Schad or Rodin, would have been subjected to such restrictions. Moreover, Vaughan's images are of a gentler character and, for the most part, of a quiet, poetic nature. 2012 is the centenary of Vaughan's

1 Keith Vaughan, *Journal and Drawings 1939-1965*, London: Alan Ross, 1966. All quotations come from Vaughan's Journals, published and unpublished, unless otherwise stated.

2 In the gallery of the School of Art, Aberystwyth University, in various mixed

exhibitions, drawn from the university collections; no catalogues or other details were published.

3 Exhibition: *How We Are: Photographing Britain*, Tate Britain, 22 May-2 Sept, 2007. Catalogue: Val Williams and Susan Bright, *How We Are: Photographing Britain*, London: Tate Publishing, 2007.

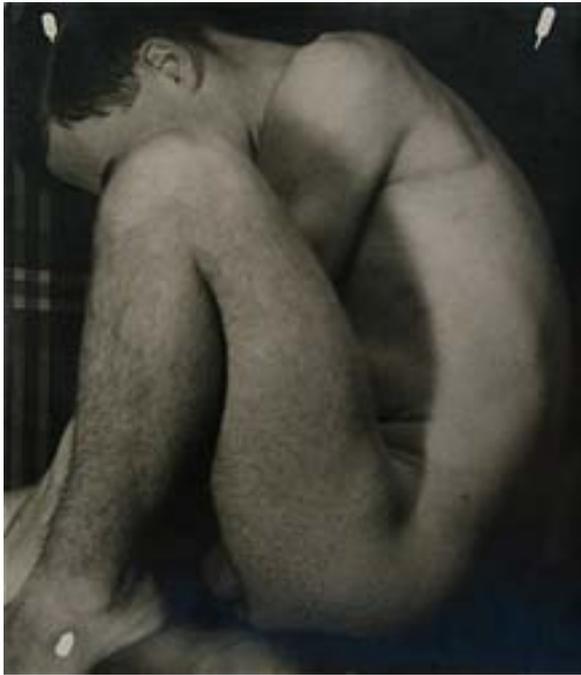


Figure 2
Keith Vaughan, *John Wood* (1930),
silver print, 202 x 185mm.
Collection of the author.

birth⁵. It is therefore fitting to examine his photographs for the first time now; some of his closest friends and patrons have recently died and a large body of photographic negatives and vintage prints from 1930 until the late '60s have come to light. They validate the claim that Vaughan was a photographer of considerable worth and raise interesting questions concerning the nature of their imagery, their functions in the context of the artist's personal and creative life, and how they relate to his paintings.

Vaughan bought his first camera in the mid-1920s and learnt the rudiments of photography at school under a teacher called Captain Horsley. Later, he began exploring the subject of the male nude using his first lover John Wood as his model. His earliest known photograph, inscribed 'John Wood 1930' (fig. 2), calls to mind Flandrin's *Jeune Homme Nu Assis au Bord de la Mer* (1836) and of course, von Gloeden's photograph based on that painting, as well as Mapplethorpe's later use of the same emblematic pose. "I had become interested in photography", Vaughan wrote, recalling his early days as a photographer, "and would take artistic photographs of boys against cloudy filtered skies in the fashionable Eisenstein style completely naked and lushly sexual. These I would offer for admiration to my mother and

her lady friends without the least hesitation. Art justified all. Nothing could have been more innocent."⁶ In 1931 Vaughan went to work as a trainee layout artist at Lintas. It was there that he acquired his perceptive eye, his understanding of composition and placement and how best to achieve tonal balances - all skills that fed into his photography. Two colleagues influenced his development. Reg Jenkins owned a Leica camera and suggested that Vaughan too should buy one. Edward Bishop had designed posters for Stoll Theatres in London where Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes* appeared. He was a keen balletomane, never without his Leica, and shared his enthusiasms with Vaughan who joined a kind of 'Lintas Leica Club' armed with his new state-of-the-art camera.

Photography enabled Vaughan to gather visual data rapidly and effectively to better inform his design activities and paintings. He used photographs as *aide memoires* long after his sessions with his models had taken place; he recorded poses photographically that otherwise would have been impossible to sustain while making a painting. But there were very practical reasons why Vaughan was forced to make his own prints. Given their explicit nature, his photographs could not be printed commercially in the 1930s; images of male nudes were not readily available at this time of high prejudices and modest attitudes. Having received no

4 See sale catalogue: Modern British Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture from the Collection of the Late Sebastian Walker, Sotheby's London, Wed. 20th November 1991, Lot 35, 34.

5 There are several events and publications planned to mark Vaughan's centenary year. Exhibitions: *Keith Vaughan*, Pallant House Gallery, Chichester, West Sussex (March 2012). *Keith Vaughan*, Osborne Samuel Gallery, London

(October 2012). Forthcoming Publications: Phillip Vann and Gerard Hastings, *Keith Vaughan*, Lund Humphries (scheduled publication date: October 2012). Gerard Hastings, Michael Helston (eds.), *Drawing to a Close: The Final Journals of Keith Vaughan, 1975-1977*, (scheduled publication date: March 2012).
6 Keith Vaughan: *A Memoire (1921-1965)*, February 1965 (unpublished).



Figure 3
Keith Vaughan, *Figure and Footprint:*
Pagham, (1939), illustration (endplate) from
Keith Vaughan: Journal and Drawings: 1939-1965
(Alan Ross, London 1966) 253 x 187mm.
Whereabouts of original print unknown.

formal training in anatomy or guidance at art school, Vaughan had limited experience of the male figure in the life-class. The camera therefore liberated him to investigate male anatomy and all its attitudes, gestures and poses. He picked up tips from Jenkins and Bishop, but his darkroom techniques were largely obtained empirically. Vaughan's early photographs are silver prints made on Agfa Brovira paper in matt or gloss finishes and they demonstrate an impressive range of skills. For example, he sandwiched together multiple negatives and employed double and triple exposures (fig. 3); he invested in costly studio lamps to create atmospheric and inventive shadow plays. He was also eager to exploit unexpected and arresting viewpoints and novel compositions.

Vaughan's executors, the painter Prunella Clough and his doctor, Patrick Woodcock, cleared the studio after his suicide in 1977; around one hundred vintage prints were discovered. His neighbours, Dr. Gordon Hargreaves and his partner Professor John Ball, bought material from the estate including some of these photographs with the remainder going to Dr. Woodcock. Neither party was particularly interested in them as art objects *per se*, since Vaughan was neither identified nor recognised as a photographer; aesthetic and monetary value was attached solely to his paintings, drawings and prints at that time. Dr. Woodcock kept his photographs⁷ at his flat above his medical practice in London, haphazardly stuffed into a bedroom cupboard with numerous

other works on paper by Vaughan.⁸ Dr. Woodcock also had a small collection of photographs belonging to Vaughan, including images by Bill Brandt and Man Ray, whose solarisations evidently influenced him. An example from the 1930s demonstrates how expert Vaughan became in making partial image reversals (fig. 4).

There was an assortment of homoerotic magazines in Woodcock's cupboard that Vaughan occasionally referred to when constructing his figure compositions and from which he borrowed poses for paintings. In 1975 he bundled these up the evening before entering hospital for major surgery, in fear of them being discovered should he fail to return home. "Have packed

7 These consisted of: 1 image of a male nude (John Wood) (1930), 39 images of the *Ballets Russes* (1933 onwards), 8 images of a male nude (Percy 'X') (early 1930s), 1 image of a still-life (c.1939), 1 image of a male nude (Len) taken at Pagham (1939), 34 images in *Dick's Book of Photographs* (c.1933-1939).

8 These lay forgotten until discovered by the author in 1981 while researching for his undergraduate thesis. Professor Alistair Crawford, his supervisor then purchased most of these photographs and other examples of Vaughan's work from the estate in 1984, on behalf of the Art Collection of Aberystwyth University. I



Figure 4
Keith Vaughan, *Solarization* (mid 1930s),
silver print, 280 x 182mm, from *Dick's Book
of Photographs*. Collection Aberystwyth
University.

away all my photo-boys”, he confessed in his journal, “in whose presence I have enjoyed much pleasure. Maybe we shall meet again? It’s perhaps the end of that era too?” (27th October 1975). Unfortunately Dr. Woodcock destroyed almost all of Vaughan’s printed erotica; only a couple of torn pages survive, but even these seem to have inspired compositions for paintings. Hargreaves and Ball were more careful with their photographs⁹ but nevertheless attached little artistic merit to them, taking the view that they could not be exhibited as they might adversely affect Vaughan’s reputation. In fact, Professor Ball frequently hinted that he wanted to destroy them, though thankfully never did so; they were only shown to his most discerning and discreet visitors.

Much of Vaughan’s obsession with the male form may be traced to his first visit to the ballet in 1929. It was a performance of *Le Fils Prodigue* with Serge Lifar who created the role that year in Paris for Diaghilev’s final season of the *Ballets Russes*. The experience affected Vaughan profoundly and both

the dancer’s dramatic interpretation and emotional commitment remained with him for many years. He recalled: “Blood streaming down his legs after dragging himself across the rough boards of Covent Garden at the end. Sweat streaming down his lynx-like face and bare shoulders.” (11th November 1973). Vaughan visited the ballet all through the 1930s and became acquainted with other regulars such as Harold Colebrook whom he met in the ticket queue; they became lovers for a time. In his biography of Vaughan, Malcolm Yorke¹⁰ writes that Vaughan began taking ballet photographs from about 1935 onwards. In fact some can be dated to 1933 by matching cast lists and productions for Colonel de Basil’s *Ballets Russes*. Yorke supposes that Vaughan took them from the wings of the stage but the angles and viewpoints do not match up. They were most likely shot from the end of the stalls circle, adjacent to the stage where exposure could be controlled and a tripod could have been set up without disturbing anyone or, more likely, his camera could have rested on the handrail. Vaughan’s ballet photographs were good enough for publication; one appears in Cyril M. Beaumont’s *The Complete Book of Ballets*.¹¹ Vaughan must have been trying to sell his work as part of a commercial enterprise since some have ‘Copyright, J. K. Vaughan’ and his address, inscribed on the reverse.

Several leading dancers befriended Vaughan, including two of the greatest prima ballerinas of their generation. He “took Danilova out to dinner”, he recalled “and Toumanova down for the day to the beach at Pagham.” (24th May 1973) Other productions of de Basil’s company were photographed including *Beau Danube*, *Soleil de Nuit*, *Les Présages*, *La Boutique Fantasque*

would like to acknowledge my gratitude to Professor Alistair Crawford for his support while compiling this article.

9 These consisted of: 11 images of a male nude (Percy ‘X’) (early 1930s), 6 images of a male nude (unidentified) (1950s?), 5 images of a male nude (Johnny Walsh) reclining (mid 1950s), 4 images of a male nude (Johnny Walsh) in Vaughan’s stu-

dio (1956), 20 erotic images of a nude male (Johnny Walsh) (early 1960s).

10 Malcolm Yorke, *Keith Vaughan, His Life and Work*, London: Constable, 1990.

11 Cyril M. Beaumont, *The Complete Book of Ballets: a Guide to the Principal Ballets of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, London: Putnam, 1937, inserted between pp. 880-881.



Figure 5
Keith Vaughan, *Choreartium* (1933),
silver print, 217 x 251mm.
Collection Aberystwyth University.

and *Beach*. Vaughan's photographs of *Choreartium* (Fig. 5) communicate the formal, fragile and fleeting nature of ballet, while Debussy's *L'Après-midi d'un Faune* (fig. 6), from the end of the 1930s, shows David Lichine in the leading role, towering with extraordinarily phallic authority above the line of nymphs. These form an important record of the twilight years of the *Ballets Russes* and, in particular, of Léonide Massine's productions and they capture, with freshness and spontaneity, the performances of some of the leading artists of the day. Vaughan's ballet photographs are hauntingly atmospheric and in the grainy images we perceive the dancers as if through the gauze of time, hovering in a dim, ghostly twilight.

In 1931, Vaughan discovered the bathing ponds at Highgate in North London, "with its permanent exhibition of genitalia and [he] became a regular visitor"¹² during the summer months. He made drawings and photographs of the young men who sunbathed naked and swam there in a specially cordoned off area (Fig 7). He wrote: "One afternoon I was photographing (I had a Leica by then) a smooth skinned, blond haired boy who was doing handstands. He took my breath away. His voice, looks, body were radiant and impeccable. I invited him back to tea."¹³ This was the only way Vaughan could find his models and later he recalled how he enlisted one of his finest recruits: "It was 1933/4 in the June heat wave; I was taking photographs in the bathing enclosure. It was the second day I had seen him standing in the sun naked watching me. We talked of photographs. I asked him if he would come back to supper. In the winter Stan came to pose for me each week and was disappointed at any break in the routine. A silent objectively physical relationship grew between us."¹⁴ Vaughan introduced Stan to Harold, with whom he had been spending weekends at Pagham on the South coast in huts constructed out

12 Vaughan, 1965 [reference 6].

13 Vaughan, 1965 [reference 6].

14 Vaughan, 1965 [reference 6].



Figure 6
Keith Vaughan, *L'Après-midi d'un Faune* (1933),
silver print, 252 x 303mm.
Collection Aberystwyth University.

of railway carriages. They visited this summer retreat from 1935 until 1939. Harold, taken by Stan's good looks, invited him along too. "It suited our fantasies", said Vaughan, "to behave like pagans. Stan and later an even more ravishing younger brother joined us and the pagan life became more colourful and innocent."¹⁵ Vaughan was twenty-four, Stan was twenty-one and Len, the "ravishing" younger brother, sixteen. Harold's friend Max and Vaughan's brother Dick joined them. "I exposed hundreds of feet of Leica film", Vaughan wrote, "I am glad I did

Figure 7
Keith Vaughan, *Two Bathers, Highgate Ponds*
(mid 1930s), silver print, 241 x 298mm,
from *Dick's Book of Photographs*. Collection
Aberystwyth University.



because in the end images are better than memories and the results of those summers of 1935 and 1936 still exist and reveal the simple innocent face of their pagan eroticism."¹⁶ A bank of hot shingle rose up on one side of beach with the cool sea on the other and, since no one else frequented the beach, "there was no need for us to observe what are considered the normal decencies of public bathing." They spent whole days naked under the baking sun; Vaughan used up rolls of film on his savage young friends at play (fig. 8) and then printed the images back in London. The final Pagham summer of 1939 was cloudless and idyllic and then suddenly war was declared. "It is difficult to recall those days of last summer", Vaughan wrote, having joined the army, "difficult to believe they ever existed. Waking each morning through the shallows of the sinking tide and wandering all day over the islands of shingle with nothing but the white flecks of birds and our naked bodies browning in the sun and salt. Impossible to believe then while we were playing at pagans that war was anything more than a figment in the imagination of politicians. Yet it must have been some premonition that made me spend so much of each

¹⁵ Vaughan, 1965 [reference 6].

¹⁶ Vaughan, 1965 [reference 6].



Figure 8
Keith Vaughan, *Three Boys: Pagham* (1939), illustration from *Keith Vaughan: Journal and Drawings: 1939-1965* (Alan Ross, London 1966), 18, 168 x 188mm. Whereabouts of original print unknown.



Figure 9
Keith Vaughan, *Two Boys: Pagham* (1939), illustration from *Keith Vaughan: Journal and Drawings: 1939-1965* (Alan Ross, London 1966), 15, 196 x 188mm. Whereabouts of original print unknown.

day with my eye screwed to the view-finder of a Leica in a desperate effort to preserve something one was afraid was vanishing forever.” (6th February 1940).

Vaughan was keen on cinema and attended screenings of foreign films at the Hampstead Everyman Cinema during the 1920s and '30s. Some of their visual grammar fed into his photographs in suggestive shadow plays and silhouettes. Similar qualities are found in Eisenstein's figures outlined across the sky in *Strike* (1924). Vaughan also employed dramatically low viewpoints in the manner that shots are set up in *Battleship Potemkin* (1925). Most interesting, is how he sheathed Stan and Len in bolts of sea-soaked linen, ingeniously draped about their wet torsos, the fabric serving simultaneously to conceal and yet reveal their anatomy (fig. 9). There is a matchless vitality, raw energy and understated eroticism in these photographs and yet they retain an innocence

rare in male nude photography today. The 'Pagham Photographs' were not made public until 1966 when Vaughan published eight in *Keith Vaughan: Journal and Drawings*. Six years later he attended a party at Dr. Woodcock's house and was surprised to discover that his photographs were known even in American literary and intellectual circles. "Good Evening at Woodcock's", he wrote in his journal. "Edward Albee extremely agreeable. Much impressed that he was familiar with my published Journals. Wanted to know if the photographs at Pagham were 'discretely' selected. Tried to explain the complete innocence of those days (and the complete sexual suppression) so hard to comprehend today." (14th February 1972). Tragically, the publishers did not return Vaughan's prints or negatives and they have never since been located. In 1981 the author discovered a single vintage print at the back of Dr. Woodcock's cupboard; it was taken during that final summer of 1939 and shows Len eating a melon (fig. 10). This is the only known surviving example of Vaughan's 'Pagham Photographs'. The author also discovered a hand-made album containing 34 images taken between 1933 and 1939.

Vaughan probably made the album after his brother Dick, who served in the RAF, was killed in 1940; the cover carries the dedicatory inscription, *Dick's Book of Photographs*.¹⁷ Vaughan consciously selected the images, assembled them into a formal collection and produced a unique visual compendium. The subject matter is varied and in-

17 In the collection of the School of Art, Aberystwyth University.



Figure 10
Keith Vaughan, *Len Eating a Melon:*
Pagham (1939), silver print, 73 x 47mm.
Collection of the author.

cludes pastoral landscapes, architectural subjects, silhouetted trees, portraits, children, divers, bathers, still-lives, sunbathers and figures taken at Highgate Ponds, all arranged with consummate editorial care. The album is also notable for its technical variety and stylistic range as well as its interesting social record. Some figures recall Vaughan's idyllic Pagham summers since Dick, Stan and Len reappear and their luxuriant poses communicate Vaughan's sensuous delight in the athletic male form. For example, *Lotus Eater* (fig. 11) conveys a complete involvement in the physicality of the subject who, unaware of the camera lens and the presence of the photographer, is absorbed only in his own corporeal experience.

Vaughan's photographs of ballet dancers and bathers subliminally found their way into his paintings. He executed a series of 9 canvases between 1952 and 1977 consisting of unidentified nude male figures inhabiting featureless landscapes (fig 12). The connection had not occurred to the artist: "In 1962 when I showed them to Brian Robertson it was apparent to him that this was one of the sources of the *Assemblies of Figures* on which I was working. Confronted with this proposition it seemed obviously true, though at the time I was painting I had no conscious recollection and never referred to the photographs. To me they existed only in connection with the technical possibilities of photography in which I had been interested at that time." Several characteristics of the photographs filtered through to Vaughan's painting vocabulary, including the congregations of figures, grouped and overlapped into interpenetrating clusters, limbs extended outwards into surrounding space and athletic forms spread across the picture plane.

During the 1940s and '50s Vaughan continued to photograph the male nude and his recent lovers, John McGuinness and Johnny Walsh, served as models, the latter doing so between his frequent prison sentences for petty delinquency. When they were unavailable or if a particular image had potential, photographs continued to provide Vaughan with raw material for paintings. No early negatives survive, but a considerable number of later ones have been discovered since the death of Dr. Woodcock in 2002 and Professor Ball in 2010. Many have yet to be printed and catalogued, but early indications show they are in sound condition. They reveal that Vaughan continued to take large format, black and white photographs and then 35mm



Figure 11
Keith Vaughan, *Lotus Eater* (mid 1930s), silver print, 237x 303mm, from *Dick's Book of Photographs*. Collection Aberystwyth University.

colour images during the 1960s. These connect with his early photography of bathers, since they depict male nudes standing by the pond in his Essex garden (fig. 13). As ever, Vaughan's models are at one with their environment, natural in both their form and their activities; the landscapes do not function merely as settings or backdrops, but seem to be extensions of the dreamy and pensive figures that inhabit them.



Figure 12
Keith Vaughan, *Assembly of Figures VII: Nile Group* (1964), oil on canvas, 1219 x 1372mm. Collection The Hargreaves and Ball Trust.

In his declining years Vaughan increasingly turned to the subject of pure landscape, both on canvas and in his photography. Some late colour photographs are melancholic and capture fertile foliage, ripe vegetation and trees silhouetted against dying daylight; they are handled with the same spirit of formal enquiry and analysis as his figure paintings. The landscapes also document the progress of Vaughan's garden, budding and blossoming as the growing season matured. The vivid colour quality is characteristic of Kodak processing at that time and relates them to the chromatic way in which Vaughan was depicting the Essex landscape on canvas during the late 1960s.

In Vaughan's photographs of the male nude, eroticism is suggested rather than emphasised and this becomes abundantly obvious when they are set alongside contemporary male nude photography for comparison. Mapplethorpe's models, or those employed by Bruce Webber, Richard Phibbs and Herb Ritts, appear inherently and consciously eroticised. The suggestion of a sexual encounter with one of them is presented as a distinct possibility, we may feel, as they stare at us with their predatory gazes. Vaughan's models however do not look at the camera nor do they seduce the viewer and, as a consequence, only the delicate possibility of a liaison may be inferred. His are every-day nudes, fully engrossed in their own beings and immediate physical activities. They possess authentic bodies unlike the professional, oiled-up, steroid-fed camera junkies of today's 'homotography', tempted out of the gymnasium only by well-paid

photo shoots and parties. Vaughan's photographs are more elegiac, naïve even, and perhaps echo the work of von Gloeden, Plüschow and Galdi. We become aware of their sense of gentle, visual poetry concerning the presence and experience of man in his environment; their eroticism is not simulated but truly tender, something almost unknown today. Vaughan's photography conveys a remarkable awareness, through the medium of light and shadow, clarity of purpose and sheer delight in the male form, of what it means to be male and to possess a body.



Figure 13
Keith Vaughan, *Figure in a Garden* (c.1966),
print from negative, 120 x 135mm.
Collection of the Author.

Shadow Pictures and Light Imprints: Depictions of the Body in the Work of Peter Kubelka and Floris Neusüss

Christina Natlacen Shadows of bodies: in the one case, couples that – time and time again – come towards each other and then move away to the sound of hypnotic music; in the other case, frozen, life-size images that mostly show a woman captured in a specific pose – kneeling, crouching, lying. At first glance, the film *Adebar* (1957) by the avant-garde film maker Peter Kubelka (fig. 1) and the numerous whole-body photograms created by Floris Neusüss after 1960 (fig. 2) reveal a number of analogies in connection with the subject of depicting bodies.¹ In both cases, the human body is presented in a substantially reduced manner: Instead of representing the body's volumes and structure, both examples are content with abstract shadow pictures.² In this way, the two artists enter a sphere that consciously sets them apart from conventional cinematic and photographic forms of representation. The reduction to a monochrome body form, which provides the viewer with little information on the person shown, makes one suspect that, here, other interests are being followed. Work with the medial properties of film and photography – more precisely, camera-less photography, the photogram – takes the place of the realistic reproduction of the body. Kubelka's experimental film and Neusüss'

photograms of bodies provide us with the possibility to make fascinating comparisons on the theme of shadow pictures of the body. It must be stressed from the outset that we are dealing with two artistic approaches that have nothing in common on the medial level, and that the two artists have not influenced each other. However, I feel that, on the one hand, these two examples enable us to elaborate on the characteristics of shadow pictures and, on the other illustrate similarities on a more profound structural level.

Let us begin with Peter Kubelka's film *Adebar* that predates Floris Neusüss' photograms of bodies. After *Mosaik im Vertrauen*, a coproduction with Ferry Radax, *Adebar*, which was completed in 1957, was the first solo film made by the Austrian director Peter Kubelka.³ He founded the so-called metric cinema that paved the way for the structural films of the 1960s and 1970s.⁴ It is surprising that this early, significant Austrian avant-garde film was actually a commissioned work. Through the help of Konrad Bayer, a member of the *Wiener Gruppe* and one of Kubelka's friends, the owner of an artist's bar and meeting place – the *Adebar* – provided the finance for a publicity film. The only condition he set was that a group of people dancing should be filmed. At this time the general public had absolutely no concept of the avant-garde film but, with *Adebar*, Kubelka created a film that was to be a pioneer work in



Figure 1
Peter Kubelka, *Adebar*, still frames, 1957,
by courtesy of Peter Kubelka. Photocollection
Austrian Film Museum, Vienna.

1 All illustrations in this article are based on black and white originals (35mm-film and photograms) which are digitally reproduced in grayscale here.

2 In his *Short History of the Shadow* Stoichita focuses primarily on the shadow of the human body [Victor I. Stoichita, *A Short History of the Shadow*, London: Reaktion, 1997]. Within the history of painting, the antagonism between a three-dimensional body and his non-realistic shadow stimulated a broad variety of theoretical reflections.

3 Peter Kubelka, born 1934 in Vienna, Austria, studied music at the Universität für Musik und Darstellende Kunst in Vienna, known for his experimental films

since the 1950s, co-founder of the Anthology Film Archives in New York, since 1978 professorship at the Städelschule in Frankfurt am Main. I would like to express my gratitude to Peter Kubelka for the interview he gave me in Vienna on 1 April, 2011 from which I derived most of the knowledge used in this text. For general information on Peter Kubelka's film oeuvre see: Gabriele Jutz, Peter Tscherkassky (eds.), *Peter Kubelka*, Vienna: PVS, 1995.

4 For information regarding the Austrian contribution to structural film see: Ernst Schmidt, *Österreichischer Avantgarde- und Undergroundfilm 1950-1980*, Vienna: Österreichisches Filmarchiv, 1980.



Figure 2
 Floris Neusüss, *Untitled*, photogram, 1964,
 135 x 99 cm. By courtesy of the artist.

the experimental film world and had the character of a manifesto for his own metric cinema. The basic material was 60 metres of 35mm film that Kubelka exposed with his Arriflex film camera. Under the beams of two powerful spotlights, the dancers only appeared as shadows in front of the white wall.⁵ There was neither a script nor any direction – Kubelka simply let the persons dance to the boogie-woogie music that was popular at the time and exposed his limited amount of film material with the dark silhouettes. The real artistic work began later with the processing of the raw material. Starting with a melody from a pygmy people, Kubelka developed a mathematical structure that he subjected the footage to. Eight selected takes of the dancers were inserted into a score based on the number 26 (the exact length of the musical phrase). The film fascinates with the repetitive singsong of the music and rapid succession of the scenes assembled alongside each other. On the formal level, priority is given to two stylistic devices: First, the incessant change from negative to positive and vice-versa is striking and second, freeze frames are used to stop the picture and, in this way, contrast the series of movements with a static image. The silhouettes of the dancers are shown in a manner that only gives the viewer the absolute minimum of easily interpretable information: Not only are the bodies fragmented and some times even slip out of the film, the proportions also change between the shots. In addition, staggering

towards the back makes the position of the figures in space ambiguous and blurred contours, along with the flickering background light, make it difficult to connect the silhouettes with realistic depictions of bodies (fig. 3). This shows that Kubelka's film *Adebar* is characterized by a series of contrasts: black versus white, positive versus negative, standstill versus movement. Its inherently complex structures make it obvious that, here, we are not confronted with the simple illustration or reproduction of reality but that Kubelka is concerned with a theoretical treatment of what the medium "film" actually is and what it is capable of achieving.

The idea of making a comparison between *Adebar* and Neusüss' photograms of bodies was originally based on the assumption that there was a direct influence. Neusüss discovered whole-body photograms autonomously in Berlin in 1960.⁶ This means that he was probably the first in Europe to develop this technique independent of external influences and then

5 media history, the silhouette is closely connected with the shadow image: When artists fabricated silhouette portraits, they used shadows projected onto a screen for depicting the outlines (see: Ernst Biesalski, *Scherenschnitt und Schattenriss. Kleine Geschichte der Silhouettenkunst*, Munich: Callwey, 1978 and Marion Ackermann, *SchattenRisse. Silhouetten und Cutouts*, exhibition catalogue Munich, Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2001).

6 Floris Neusüss, born 1937 in Remscheid, Germany, studied photography at the Hochschule für bildende Künste in Berlin, known for his preoccupation

with the technique of the photogram since the 1960s, founder of the Fotoforum Kassel, since 1972 professorship at the Kunsthochschule Kassel. I am deeply grateful to Floris Neusüss who was so kind as to consent to a detailed conversation in Kassel on 14 May, 2011. Much of his shared information has been incorporated in this text. For the body photograms of Floris Neusüss see: T. O. Immisch (ed.), *Floris Neusüss – Körperbilder. Fotogramme der sechziger Jahre*, exhibition catalogue, Halle: Staatliche Galerie Moritzburg, 2001.



Figure 3
Peter Kubelka, *Adebar*, still frames, 1957.
By courtesy of Peter Kubelka.
Photocollection Austrian Film Museum,
Vienna.

make it the centre of his work.⁷ In 1963, he spent several months in Vienna where he associated with the circle of artists Monsignore Otto Mauer championed in the Galerie nächst St. Stephan he had founded and who represented the avant-garde in Austria at that time.⁸ Neusüss was especially influenced by those artists who had elevated gestural expression to their overriding principle including his life-long friend Josef Mikl and Arnulf Rainer.⁹ Kubelka was also active in this environment. In the late 1950s, he had already been a guest at the International Art Talks organized by the Galerie nächst St. Stephan; this was where many artists living in Vienna met regularly, participated in public events and even planned joint projects.¹⁰ Floris Neusüss quite clearly knew of Peter Kubelka but had no direct contact with his film *Adebar*.¹¹ The obvious motival analogy between a photogram by Neusüss, such as the one from 1965 that is sometimes entitled *Dance* (fig. 4), and the dancers in *Adebar* is therefore purely coincidental. There can be no discussion that the motif of the dance, or any other impulses from Kubelka's film, were assimilated into his work with the photogram. Removed of any biographical influence, the intermedial comparison of two artistic approaches without reciprocal references remains an expression of two styles that appeared in parallel and can therefore be considered symptomatic for the artistic activities in the years around 1960.

Neusüss' photograms are at variance with general concepts of the medium of photography – just as Kubelka's *Adebar* turned the principles of the normal film upside down. Throughout the history of photography, technology has been constantly improved to permit the image to come as close to reality as possible, whereas the fundamental characteristic of the photogram is “doing without”: doing without the camera, and drawing within the contour; doing without a negative and any form of realistic depiction.¹² When dealing with the history of photography, it has repeatedly been stressed that the photogram has absolutely no connection with lens photography.¹³ A photogram is created by laying an object on photographic paper and exposing it in the darkroom. A white area is produced wherever the objects prevent the light from reaching the photosensitive surface while the rest of the paper is black. That is the reason that a photogram is frequently referred to as a shadow picture. However, the term “contact image” is more precise.¹⁴ The major challenge with the whole-body photogram is being able to cope with the

7 So far, the only earlier examples known are the body photograms by Robert Rauschenberg and Susan Weil from around 1950. For the history of the whole-body photogram see: Tim Otto Roth, 'Imprint, Impression, Expression – Peter Gerwin Hoffmann's Traces in the Historical Context of the Whole-Body Photogramme', in: Günther Holler-Schuster (ed.), *Peter Gerwin Hoffmann*, exhibition catalogue Graz, Cologne: Walther König, 2007, 252-258.

8 Floris Neusüss' stay in Vienna included two invitations by Monsignore Otto

Mauer to participate in exhibitions in the Galerie nächst St. Stephan: in 1964 jointly with Josef Mikl (*Neusüss fotografi*, 24.4.-7.5.1964) and in 1967 within the framework of a group exhibition focusing on the photogram (*Lichtgrafik. Moholy-Nagy, Floris Michael Neusüss, Man Ray, Seidenstücker*, 10-28.1.1967).

9 Neusüss integrated the spontaneous and gestural expression in the post-production of his photograms when he used developer and fixer as painting liquids.



Figure 4
 Floris Neusüss, *Untitled (Dance)*,
 photogram, 1965, 250 x 255 cm.
 By courtesy of the artist.

life-size dimensions. The darkroom, photographic paper, development possibilities – all go far beyond standard photographic techniques. A view of the exhibition held in the Galerie nächst St. Stephan in 1964 under the title of *Neusüss - Fotografien* where body photograms were presented (fig. 5) gives an impression of the size and materiality of these works: The vertical sections – some of them as long as two metres – were fitted into the narrow areas of the wall between the door and window in order to increase the hanging space normally available. The transfer to the vertical made the originally reclining persons, erect. Shadowy, apparently

10 One of these collaborations developed between Peter Kubelka and Arnulf Rainer [see: Christina Natlacen, *Arnulf Rainer und die Fotografie. Inszenierte Gesichter, ausdrucksstarke Posen*, Petersberg: Michael Imhof, 2010, 59-72].

11 Floris Neusüss, letter to the author dated 21 February, 2011.

12 For general information on the photogram see: Floris M. Neusüss, *Das Fotogramm in der Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts, die andere Seite der Bilder – Fotografie ohne Kamera*, Cologne: DuMont 1990. A substantial bibliography is

available online: <<http://www.photogram.org>> [02.08.11].

13 See, for example: Tim Otto Roth, 'This is not a Photograph. Some Remarks on the Photogram as a Picture', in: Anna Auer and Uwe Schögl (eds.), *Jubilee – 30 Years ESHPh. Congress of Photography in Vienna*, Salzburg: Fotohof, 2008, 464-469.

14 Floris Neusüss repeatedly uses the term "Berührungsbild" for characterizing photograms, see, for instance: 'Wirklich möglich. Das Fotogramm –



Figure 5
Exhibition View *Floris Neusüss - Fotografi* (con-
jointly with Josef Mikl), Galerie nächst
St. Stephan, 1964. By courtesy of the artist.

dematerialized beings are the result and create the impression of being partly moving and partly frozen in a pose.

Let's return to our starting point, the direct comparison between Kubelka's *Adebar* and Neusüss' body photograms from the first half of the 1960s (cf. figures 1 and 2). Along with all the differences that distinguish between the two media of film and photography – especially the temporal dimension of film and all the inherent implications (flow of a series of individual images, use of montage, sound amplification, etc) – we will now focus on the analogies. I would like to deal with four points that I find illuminating and have given the following titles: simplicity of technique, black versus white, materiality, and movement.

Both Neusüss and Kubelka consciously reduce the technical means of photography and film in their artistic work. The photogram and avant-garde film are not characterized by their technically complex, elaborate methods but, much more, by simplicity and the great value placed on manual work. A set concept, allowing little leeway in its execution, is not planned in advance; the creative work develops in progress. The first attempts at whole-body photograms in particular are characterized by playing with various poses and arrangements. The aspect of “chance” is granted a great deal of space, the results are produced by trial and error. In Neusüss' body photograms, the fact that exposures are made using artificial light in the darkroom or studio at night means that no image can be seen before it is developed. It is only later that it appears in the form of areas free of white and gray-shadowed zones that

Erfindung und Entdeckung', in: *Kamera los. Das Fotogramm. Eine künstlerische Position von der Klassik bis zur Gegenwart*, exhibition catalogue, Salzburg/Munich: Pustet, 2006, 7-9, here 7.



Figure 6
Peter Kubelka, *Adebar*, still frames, 1957.
By courtesy of Peter Kubelka. Photocollection
Austrian Film Museum, Vienna.



Figure 7
Peter Kubelka, *Adebar*, still frames, 1957.
By courtesy of Peter Kubelka.
Photocollection Austrian Film Museum,
Vienna.

show the parts of the body that were not in direct contact with the paper. Kubelka's approach to filming is also direct. Script, storyboard and a film team on the set – there is no room for these elements in his cinematic work. He simply starts filming because his main concern is getting the material to be processed later. As with Neusüss, he has everything in his own hands: the camera, development, editing, the ongoing adaptation of his concept. In both cases, the concentration of all steps of the work in a single person is made possible by the fact that dealing with technology is not given top priority.

It is significant that both Kubelka's *Adebar* and Neusüss' body photograms are distinguished by a number of contrasts¹⁵ the most prominent being the opposition between black and white. The strong contrast between black and white is implemented even more explicitly as a stylistic device in *Adebar* than in Neusüss' photograms. During filming Kubelka used lighting in such a way that the dancing protagonists only appear as dark silhouettes in front of a white background. He subsequently increased this effect by copying the film backwards and forwards several times. This reduces any intermediate steps in grey tones even more and the image becomes marked by a maximum level of contrast (fig. 6). However, the binary couple "black/white"¹⁶ plays a decisive role a second time. Each individual frame, each sequence in *Adebar*, is seen once positive and once negative. Kubelka combines parts of the negative film strip with parts of the positive one (fig. 7). The aim of the concept behind this is to guarantee that exactly the same amount of light falls on each centimetre of the screen during the one minute of projection time – in this way, the motif and background neutralize each other. Neusüss also deals with the reversal of the image that always appears as a negative in the case of the photogram. The absence of a negative makes the use of reversal papers that reproduce the otherwise white silhouette of the body as a black shadow image necessary. This gives a certain physical materiality and weight back to the dematerialized white form, which is so typical of the photogram, in front of a totally blackened background. Neusüss played with the correspondence between the positive and negative on the invitation to his previously mentioned exhibition in the Galerie nächst St. Stephan in spring 1964: A foldout sheet shows a print of the motif of a reclining woman with crossed

15 Martin Barnes enumerates the following dualisms with regards to Neusüss' work which can also be transferred to *Adebar*: "black and white, shadow and light, negative and positive, object and reflection, movement and stillness, real and ideal, presence and absence" ('Floris Neusüss: Metamorphoses', in: Martin

Barnes, *Shadow Catchers. Camera-less Photography*, exhibition catalogue, London: Merrell, 2010, 20-25, here 24.

16 Kubelka's later film *Arnulf Rainer* (1960) only consists of pure black and white frames.



Figure 8
 Floris Neusüss, *Untitled*, photogram, 1963,
 110 x 105 cm. By courtesy of the artist.

legs and bent back (fig. 8) recto as a positive and verso as a negative image. When held against the light, the black and white motifs coincide and neutralize each other.

Thanks to the simplicity of their technique and direct contact with the material, the physical properties of the film strip and photographic paper play a major role for both Kubelka and Neusüss. Peter Kubelka creates all of his films “by hand”; he touches and feels the exposed material in a double sense before the montage. His dictum is: film = sculpture. In his eyes, the physical strip of film and the individual frame represent the medium “film” and not the projected image.¹⁷ That is the reason that Kubelka repeatedly exhibits the strip of film.¹⁸ *Adebar* was the first example to experience such an unusual presentation. During the Hochschulwochen in Alpbach in 1958, Kubelka nailed the strip of film to several wooden posts; this exposed the material to all the phenomena of nature such as the sun, rain, wind, etc and invited the visitors to appropriate the film in an extremely physical and tactile manner. Floris Neusüss carried out a similar action during the Rencontres Internationales de la Photographie in Arles in 1977.¹⁹ The whole-body photograms created in the *Image du Corps Flugtraum und Körperauflösung* workshop were exposed to the elements water, earth, fire and air by the participants (fig. 9). Although usually spread on a wall, here, the photographic papers flutter in the wind, come into contact with seawater, are buried in sand or set aflame. In both cases, the object is to confront the immateriality of the shadow images with something concrete, tangible and tactile through their contact with the elements of nature.

17 Peter Kubelka’s understanding of film focuses on the single frame as the most important element. Another term for the single frame in film theory is the German “Fotogramm” and the French “photogramme” [see for instance Roland Barthes, ‘Der dritte Sinn. Forschungsnotizen über einige Fotogramme S. M. Ei-

sensteins’, in: idem, *Der entgegenkommende und der stumpfe Sinn*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1990, 47-66 and Karl Sierek, ‘Photogramme’, in: *Meteor. Texte zum Laufbild*, no 1, 1995, 72-80]. So far, I have not found any reference to the double use of this term within photo- and film theories.



Figure 9
 Floris Neusüss, *Water (Workshop Images du Corps)*, Rencontres Internationales de la Photographie, Arles 1977.

The history of art with its nudes and sculptures has shown that images of bodies always have something to do with tactility: the artist attempts to reproduce the sensual qualities of the surface of the body as plastically and haptically as possible. Instead of appealing to the eye, the aim is to activate the sense of touch. The body and touch belong together. The two examples we have discussed boil down to this motif of touch. Touch plays an important role on two levels: in terms of content and medially. On the content level, both Kubelka and Neusüss are concerned with the moment when the sexes come into contact with each other: closeness and distance, sensuality and eroticism, solitude and multitude. In *Adebar*, Peter Kubelka attempted to find a concise expression for the attraction between man and woman; something that repeatedly ends in breaking away. Floris Neusüss' works have their origin in a love affair with a woman who was the first model for his whole-body photograms. However, the special aspect of these works is that the motif of touch is not only dealt with thematically, but transported directly to the medium itself. Both artists appropriated the photogram and metric film in a way that returns the sensual qualities to the abstract, dematerialized shadow image of the body. What, at first glance, appears to be a loss of visual values that characterize these extremely reduced images shows itself much more as an advantage. Neusüss' photograms and Kubelka's metric films not only communicate on an aesthetic level, they are also distinguished by a media-reflective moment that conveys the theme of touch in and through the medium.

18 This was most recently the case with Kubelka's Arnulf Rainer shown at the exhibition *Bild für Bild – Film und zeitgenössische Kunst* in the museum

Ostwall Dortmund in collaboration with the Centre Pompidou Paris (18.12.2010 – 25.4.2011).

19 See Gesamthochschule Kassel (ed.), *Floris Neusüss. Körperauflösungen*, Kassel: Edition Fotoforum, 1978.

The Andean People in the Work of Martin Chambi

Andrés Garay Albújar
Moritz Neumüller

Martin Chambi (1891–1973) was undoubtedly one of the most prominent photographic figures in the first half of the 20th century in Latin America. He was born into a life full of hardships in Coaza, a mountain village near Lake Titicaca. Nonetheless, he was able to use these circumstances in his own way and became one of the most important photographers of the country, and even the continent. His father worked in the Santo Domingo Mining Company and this was where young Chambi was first exposed to photography, through a chance meeting with a British photographer. The teenager became fascinated with the medium and spent two years panning for gold in order to save enough money to travel to Arequipa and learn the photographic trade from the local masters. After nine years in the renowned studio of Max T. Vargas, he left Arequipa for the small but prosperous provincial capital Sicuani where he founded his own studio. Two years later, however, he moved on to Cuzco, the legendary capital of the old Inca Empire, a tourism magnet, famous for the then newly discovered Machu Picchu sanctuary. Martin Chambi soon became the most distinguished photographer of the city and – through his publications and exhibitions abroad – a photographic reference of the continent¹. However, there is still a lack of in-depth research on Chambi's life and work. His craftsmanship and mastery are often presented as the peculiar ingenuity of an exceptional talent,



Figure 1
Martin Chambi, *Musicians*, Cuzco 1925,
glass plate, 10 x 15 cm.
Archivo Martin Chambi, Cuzco.

1 The work of Martin Chambi had been recognized and published already in his lifetime, especially in his native Peru, as well as in other countries, mainly Chile, Bolivia, Argentina, Mexico, and Spain. It was widely published in magazines, especially in Buenos Aires and Lima, and also in the *National Geographic Magazine* (1938). Yet, it was the posthumous retrospective *Projects: Martin Chambi & Edward Ranney* at the Museum of Modern Art in 1979 that triggered a comprehensive international reception. The Press

Release is available at <http://www.moma.org/learn/resources/press_archives/1970s/1979> (02.11. 2011). This travelling exhibition led to a huge interest that resulted in other major exhibitions, mainly in Spain, France, Argentina, the US and, of course, Peru. In order to understand Chambi's reception history, though, it is important to deconstruct the myth that he was "discovered" posthumously by Ranney and his team of American researchers. See, for example, Alejandro Castellote's introduction to



Figure 2
 Martin Chambi, *Self-portrait with glass negative*,
 Cuzco, not dated, glass plate, 10 x 15 cm.
 Archivo Martin Chambi, Cuzco.

fit into the social substratum of the Inca communities. It was perhaps precisely this tension that made him a modern man, a successful photographer, and an influential artist whose visual language was – and still is – unique. Without being particularly cultured, he used the camera as a vehicle to be introduced into the upper social circles of Cuzco. Together with his family and his assistants, he ran a business that covered all technical aspects of the studio portrait, as well as commissions for weddings, social gatherings, family portraits, parties, and so on. This diversity of clients and situations required a set of standard solutions in terms of

not as the peak of a movement or tradition. This isolated view may be misleading as it does not account for the photographically quite well-developed landscape in the Southern Andes at the beginning of the 20th century. While primarily concentrating on Chambi's images of the Andean people, we want to contribute to a broader vision on this celebrated photographer: One that takes both his artistic training in the European tradition, and the cultural context of the Andean region in the 1920s and 30s into account. We see this approach as a step towards giving Chambi his place in the general history of photography, without neglecting his special origin, context and artistic value.²

By means of his photography, Chambi introduces us to the socially and historically complex scenario of a region split into politically independent (and often belligerent) nations, within a continent that was looking for its own cultural identity founded on the heritage of the high cultures of the past: the Mayas, Aztecs and, of course, the Incas.³ Therefore, looking at Chambi also means looking at Cuzco, the Andes, its history, its cultural mix, its people and their environment, which the artist portrayed throughout his lifetime. Another unavoidable fact in the analysis of Chambi's work is his biographic duality: Chambi combines indigenous and Western influences; he spoke Quechua, but also Spanish. He was an elegant city man, who could also easily

Martin Chambi poeta de la luz, exhibition catalogue, Museo de Arte Iberoamericano/Ediciones Larivière, Buenos Aires, 2008, 14. A full list of (life-time and posthumous) exhibitions can be found in *Martin Chambi*, exhibition catalogue, Fundación Telefónica, Madrid, 2006, 159-162.

² The authors of this article are currently preparing an exhibition project on Chambi. The image selection will include masterpieces that have defined the reception history of Chambi's oeuvre, as well as unpublished works from

the Chambi Archive in Cuzco. The exhibition will also feature photographers from the Andes region, including his teacher, Max T. Vargas, in addition to views of the Alps and other mountain photography, studio photography and group portraits that show direct or indirect borrowings from the European photographic tradition. Ultimately, it will be precisely this detour through familiar comparisons that should avoid an all-too exoticizing gaze at Chambi's work.



Figure 3
Max T. Vargas, *Old Beggar*, Arequipa c. 1905,
postcard, 13.5 x 8.5 cm. Private Collection.

image frame, illumination and developing, which made it possible to resolve the majority of possible cases that could come up.

His mastery of the medium is, in part, due to his apprenticeship in Arequipa. Since the mid-19th Century, Arequipa had been strongly influenced and shaped by the cultural and social impact of its European immigrants. By the 1890s, the city had become a centre of photography, both in terms of studios and travelling photographers who usually came from Italy, France, the USA, Bolivia, Spain, Portugal, Germany and England. The society had a strong European component and a Western-style taste, yet its substrate was mainly criollo. This was where Chambi acquired his knowledge of the technical and aesthetic aspects of photography. When he settled in Arequipa in 1908, the photographic scene was dominated by two studios, those of Emilio Díaz and Max T. Vargas: two local photographers who were the state of the art and fashion, especially when it came to artistic portraits and outdoor scenes.⁴ Max T. Vargas, nearly twenty years older than Chambi, had visited Europe and ran two photography studios, one in Arequipa, and another one in La Paz, Bolivia. In his work, he covered architectural and archaeological her-

itage, and made representative studio portraits. Early 20th century society in the Andean region was characterized by strict class-consciousness and a constant search for identity. Hence, there was a strong demand for portraits. The concern was less the preservation of a likeness for posterity. Rather, the customers came to the studio to obtain a document to certify a certain status in the social hierarchy. Photographers such as Vargas – and later Chambi – were well aware that they were asked to endow their portraits with a reality that did not always correspond to that of the model, the location or the social context. In this sense, the client “went to the studio, not in order capture his personality but to insert his face into an image that might be unreal, but visually pleasing. [...] The retouching pen and knife complete and shape the photographically obtained image”.⁵ Both Vargas and Chambi used large format cameras, a rather simple studio setting with only one background, few props, and straight-

3 Cf. Ramón Gutiérrez, ‘El aporte de Martín Chambi a la revalorización de la arquitectura peruana’, in: Martín Chambi poeta de la luz, exhibition catalogue, Museo de Arte Hispanoamericano Isaac Fernández Blanco, Buenos Aires, 2001, 11-22.

4 Andrés Garay, Jorge Villacorta, *Max T. Vargas y Emilio Díaz, dos figuras fundacionales de la fotografía del sur andino peruano (1826 – 1926)*, Lima: Ediciones Icpna, 2007.

5 Cf. Isidoro Coloma, *La Forma Fotográfica. A propósito de la fotografía española desde 1839 a 1939*, Málaga: Universidad de Málaga y Colegio de Arquitectos, 1986, 161.



Figure 4

Luigi Domenico Gismondi, *Indio and Girl Dressed as Incas from Cuzco*, La Paz c. 1917, gelatine silver print, 24 x 18 cm. Colección Diran Sirinian, Buenos Aires.

Figure 5

Martin Chambi, *The Mayor of Tinta with his Family*, Cuzco 1930, glass plate, 15 x 10 cm. Archivo Martin Chambi, Cuzco.



forward lighting to flatter their clients. This simplicity gave their portraits a certain natural quality. In the case of Chambi, the curtain is often substituted by a selective focus and very low depth of field, and a distinctive lighting that Chambi referred to as the *Rembrandt Effect*⁶, which he also applied to some of his self-portraits, such as figure 2.

Another key idea that Chambi took over from his teacher Max T. Vargas was the notion of Peru as a country constructed on typically Andean aspects including the people and their customs, the landscape and cultural heritage. These were the subjects that Vargas used for his postcards, some of which were printed in Germany, or self-published in “Arequipa & La Paz”. Chambi later transferred the same practice to Cuzco, both for subject matter and target

⁶ This technique was made popular in Peru by the American photographer William Kurt in the 1860s and consists of a variation of what is called “short lighting” in portrait photography. However, as mentioned in an article published in 1914 (‘Rembrandt’, in *La Fotografía*, Madrid, July 1914, 5), the

name was used soon after in a very general way, designating studio lighting that plays with strong light/shadow effects, cf. Andrés Garay, *Martin Chambi por si mismo*, Universidad de Piura [Peru], 2006, republished by Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 2010, 86-91.

Figure 6
 Martin Chambi, *Gendarms from Cusco in Saqsaywaman*, 1928, glass plate, 15 x 10 cm.
 Archivo Martin Chambi, Cuzco.



Figure 7
 August Sander, *Customs Officers*, 1929, gelatin silver print, 26.0 x 16.7 cm.
 © Die Photographische Sammlung/ SK Stiftung Kultur - August Sander Archiv, Cologne; VBK, Vienna, 2011.

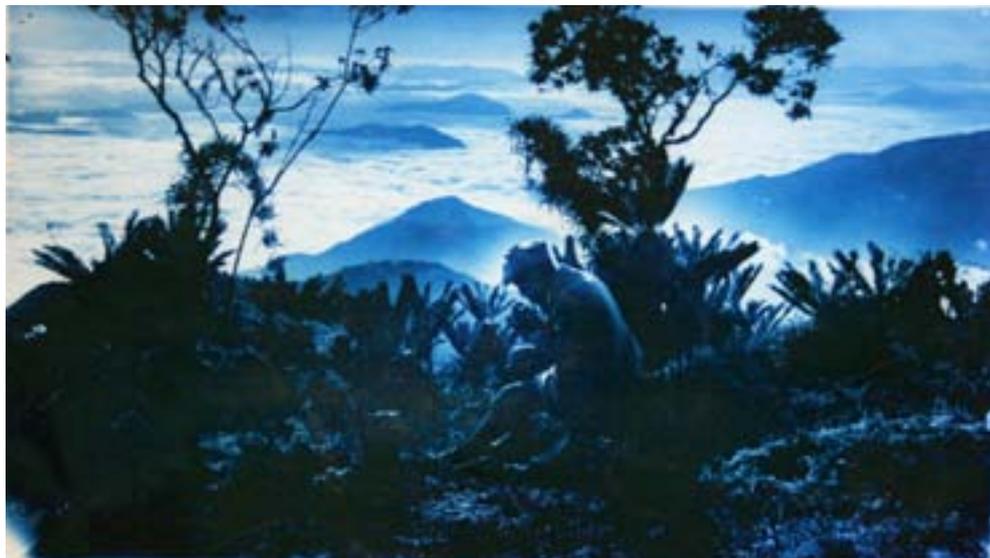
costumers, i.e. tourists *and* locals⁷. Max T. Vargas' assistants included many photographers who later made a name for themselves. His studio acted as a magnet for aspiring artists and was very influential in the development of photography in the region. Towards the end of his nine-year apprenticeship, Martin Chambi won prizes, presented his works in exhibitions, and established personal relationships with local photographers including the Hermanos Vargas, Emilio Diaz, and Enrique Masías, the painters Vinatea Reynoso, Martínez Málaga, as well as with writers, intellectuals and poets.⁸ If Chambi later (e.g. in an interview in 1947) claims that

⁷ In this sense, the case of Vargas and Chambi supports Enrico Sturani's claim for a new view on the postcard industry in peripheral regions: Enrico Sturani, 'Das Fremde im Bild. Überlegungen zur historischen Lektüre

kolonialer Postkarten', in: *Fotogeschichte*, vol. 79, 13-24.

⁸ Chambi won bronze medals in 1916 and 1917, and his work was exhibited in the Centro Artístico de Arequipa, cf. Garay and Villacorta 2007 (reference 4), 19-22.

Figure 8
Martin Chambi, *Self-portrait in the Carabaya Mountains*, ca. 1918, blue-toned gelatin silver print, 8 x 13.8 cm. Collection of Teo Allain Chambi, Cuzco.



“my art is Arequipenian, because this is where I learned to make landscapes and portraits”, he also refers to a style that can be described as clearly European, or rather, Europeanized, despite its regional influences. Vargas’ architectural views, his postcards and studio portraits (some of them also show the indigenous populations, such as the *Beggar* (fig. 3) epitomize this Europeanized style, as do the works of the Italian-Bolivian photographer Luigi Domenico Gismondi in his studio portraits of indigenous people, for example. In one of them (fig. 4), we see Gismondi’s own son dressed up as an indigenous girl (sic!), a masquerade that shows the clear distance of the photographer from the exotic world he depicts. Chambi, on the other hand, develops a style that is based on an often daring visual language and a truly authentic relationship to the subjects. While taking over the achievements he had been taught in Arequipa quite directly in his commercial work, he considerably adapted and extended them for his lifetime project of documenting the Andean People, their cultural heritage and their present-day way of living. This project already started in Arequipa, but it was in the ancient capital of the Inca Empire that it fully developed.

After arriving in Cuzco with his family in 1920, Chambi swiftly became integrated into the new environment. His collaboration with the already established photographer-painter Juan Manuel Figeroa Aznar was short-lived, and he soon had his own studio that served a wide range of social strata. The 1920s was a time of ideological tensions in the ancient capital when it underwent, according to Jorge Flores Ochoa, its “first modernisation”⁹, which caused in

⁹ Jorge Flores Ochoa, personal interview with the authors, Cuzco, June 2010. Flores Ochoa also underlines the importance of the train connection between Cuzco, La Paz and Buenos Aires, which supplied the southern

Andes region with the latest publications, trends and visitors from Europe, weeks before they arrived at the capital, Lima, by boat.



Figure 9
 Martin Chambi, *The Lomellini Family, Immigrants from Italy*, Cuzco 1928,
 glass plate, 10 x 15 cm.
 Archivo Martin Chambi, Cuzco.

important changes in the traditional feudal structures. The social classes suffered, in consequence, unexpected adjustments that strongly contrasted with the rural heritage. An urban proletariat formed and defended its rights by means of trade unions and interest groups, which led to social contrasts and juxtapositions. Chambi documented this shift with a sharp

10 Luis Valcárcel, 'Glosario de la Vida Incaica', in: *Revista Universitaria*, vol. XI, No. 39, Universidad del Cuzco, 1922.

11 Lilly Litvak, *El tiempo de los trenes. El paisaje español en el arte y la literatura del realismo (1849 - 1918)*, Barcelona, 1991, 53 - 54.

12 José Uriel García, in his article 'Martin Chambi, artista neoindígena', in: *Excelsior*, August-October 1948, praises Chambi's works but laments his

lack of determination to denounce injustice more feverously.

13 'El Gran Estudio Fotográfico de Martín Chambi e Hijos tiene entre sus méritos haber hecho conocer en las cinco partes del mundo las maravillas de arqueología, paisajes, tipos, costumbres, etc., de la tierra de los incas', in: *KOSKO, Revista Libre*, vol. III, No. 68, Cuzco, August 22, 1934.

14 Cf. 'El Alma Quechua alienta en los cuadros de un Artista Vernáculo', in: *Hoy*, vol. V, No. 224, Santiago de Chile, 4 de marzo de 1936.

and modern eye, and through the means of a personal, non-dramatized vision; something quite rare in the circles of the artists and intellectuals of the period. In this context, the debates around concepts such as “indigenous”, “land”, “history”, “identity” and so forth were echoed in the majority of publications that blossomed during the romantic indigenous crusade in Cuzco. It was Luis Valcárcel who led the Indigenismo movement and preached the renunciation of the “moribund European Civilization”; for example, in his *Glossary of the Inca's Life* he writes: “Only if we go back to the land, can we be purified from the bad habits of our false urban democracy. [...] The simple peasant's life will restore the confidence and cheerfulness of a life that we have lost due to our servile imitation of everything foreign.”¹⁰

It was precisely from Europe, however, that the same romantic ideas and claims for a reengagement with the rural past swept over. Lily Litvak points out that it was from these premises that the archetype of the farmer as the incarnation of the people arose, endowed with his elemental qualities: “simplicity, patience, constancy, linked to the immemorial past by collective experiences, integrated with the land by rituals and customs, and transmitter of a telluric wisdom”.¹¹ Photographs such as Rudolph Koppitz' *Heavy Burden* (ca. 1930) symbolize this reversion to the soil, and show interesting parallels to Chambi's melancholic images from the same years. The fact that the indigenous people of the Andes actually do have a strong link to the land and to the past was underlined, and then politically used, by the Indigenists. Martin Chambi's work must be seen in this socio-political context, but not as part of it. In fact, Chambi's search for his own artistic, not political, language was criticized by the dominant tendency of the Indigenismo, which demanded a return to the Andean roots and the re-creation of the Inca Empire.¹² Chambi's works have been described as a visual expression of this political movement, because they depict a vision of the Andean people that celebrates the past glory of the Andean culture on the one hand and do not avoid showing the crude postcolonial reality on the other. However, his images also bestow a certain dignity to the subjects. When he depicts a major's family (fig. 5), gendarmes (fig. 6) or a band of musicians (fig. 1), they seem to express a great solemnity, even pride, in their posture, clothing and expression. Formally speaking, they are treated in nearly the same way as his upper-class clients that paid for their portraits to be taken in the studio or an exterior setting.

In an announcement for the *Gran Estudio Fotográfico de Martín Chambi e Hijos* in a magazine in 1934 we can read that it “has achieved, among other things, making the marvels of architecture, landscape, types, customs, etc. of the land of the Incas known in the five parts of the world”.¹³ In his solo exhibitions, however, Martin Chambi mainly concentrates on the historic riches of his culture, landscapes and architecture, which he refers to as a *mestizaje Colonial*.¹⁴ As can be judged from the vintage prints that have been reacquired by the Chambi Archive in Cuzco, these works – mounted on cardboard for hanging on the wall – are carefully composed,

15 According to Publio López Mondéjar, Chambi progressed from his “balbuces decorativistas y sensibileros” to full aesthetic maturity between 1927-30. However, in a photograph that shows Chambi in front of a wall covered with his images in gallery, we can clearly make out some that would belong to this “decorative babbling” phase. It is thus clear that for Chambi himself, this distinction did not exist, at least not in his exhibition practice, cf. Publio

López Mondéjar, *La magia de Martín Chambi, Martín Chambi 1920-1950*, Madrid: Lunewerg, 1990, 15-16.

16 Lira Espejo writes that Martin Chambi “pertenece a esa raza de bronce, y se mantiene leal a su origen y a su clase”, cited in López Mondéjar 1990 (reference 15), 18.



Figure 10
Martin Chambi, *Farmer Woman from Q'eromarca with her Child*, Cuzco 1934, glass plate, 15 x 10 cm. Archivo Martin Chambi, Cuzco.

Figure 11
Martin Chambi, *The Giant of Paruro, Juan de la Cruz Sihuana*, Cuzco 1925, glass plate, 15 x 10 cm. Archivo Martin Chambi, Cuzco.

often have dramatic lighting effects and are mainly tinted in the colours red, blue, green and sepia, in keeping with the taste of the time (fig. 8). Free of the fear of being overly pictorialist (this discussion did not exist in Peru) or “decorative and over-sentimental”¹⁵ (this judgment is the fruit of our modern view), he uses his imagery to disseminate the beauty of his country. His pictures show both colonial and indigenous architecture, both white and “bronze-coloured”¹⁶ people, both the city and the rural environment. These pictures are documents, but do not use documentary language to denounce the crude reality of the dispossessed rural population. It has been claimed that he chose this rather melancholic, inoffensive approach “in order not to hinder his recent access to the middle class and the possibility to provide his family with a status and an education far from the rural precociousness”¹⁷ he came from himself. However, we are more inclined to see an artistic intention behind this decision to stay clear of a direct political and judgmental documentary practice, and to describe his people in terms of a somewhat monumentalized dignity and melancholy, by means of balanced compositions, diffused natural lighting and the harmonious distribution of the pictorial elements.

As part of his intention to document Peru’s cultural heritage, Chambi also showed a great interest in music and instruments (both autochthonous and imported by the colonizers), for costumes and dresses, rites and celebrations, but also for new inventions, such as tennis clubs, cars and motorcycles. Yet, it is really the people that capture his interest. By convincing his compatriots to pose for the photograph in their mother tongue, he created a spontaneous and direct relationship with the photographic subjects and avoided the colonizing attitude of his many photographer colleagues who came from the capital or other countries to capture exotic views of the Andean region. Even if Chambi did look for characteristic motifs for his postcards and magazine-illustrations, he still captured them with a certain kind of natural spontaneity. However, he did not hesitate to arrange people and find the right camera angle in order to create a balanced composition in a group portrait (fig. 9), or to counterbalance architectural elements for a postcard.¹⁸

17 Castellote 2008 [reference 1], 11.

18 Jorge Latorre, *Santa María del Villar, Fotógrafo Turista*, Instituto Príncipe de Viana, Gobierno de Navarra, Pamplona, 1998, 147- 149.





Figure 12
Kel Marubi (1870-1940), *Two members of the Shala, the oldest catholic tribe, Albania* probably 1912/19, from a collection of 42 Albanian photographs and postcards. Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art, Vienna Inv. pos/5267.

Sometimes, he takes people from the street to his studio portraits and photographs them using the same technique, decor and illumination as in his commissioned portraits. These documents, such as figure 10, do not get retouched or manipulated in any way. They represent types and customs in the European tradition of the *Volkstypen* and the picturesque portrait. In this sense, Chambi's Chicha-carrier, as well as Max T. Vargas' beggar, follows the

same logic as the Romanian photographer Carol Szathmari's farmers and gypsies¹⁹, or the Albanian photographer Kel Merubi's double and group portraits (fig. 12). A comparison between Chambi's Gendarmes and August Sander's Customs Officers show a surprisingly similar composition, enactment, and even posing (figs. 6 and 7). Chambi's portraits, however, do not share the ethnologic focus of the 'albums' published since the mid-19th century in Europe, nor do they follow the strict ratio of Sander's life-project. Rather, we encounter sensitive and magical moments of a relationship between the photographer and his subject, in the setting of a commercial studio, but without the self-representational habitus of the paying client, and without any intention other than capturing the essence of the Andean People, the light on their faces, the tone of their skin, the texture of their clothing. If we look at the portrait of the so-called Giant (fig. 11), it is clearly a photograph of a curiosum, a distinctive person of extraordinary size, much taller than the average Peruvian, and thus a somewhat "extravagant" image. However, the dissemination of this photograph was practically nil, except for a publication in October 1925.²⁰ In fact, Martin Chambi did not include this photograph in any of his exhibitions or publications. It can be argued that this anecdote underlines what can be seen more directly in Chambi's best images of the Andean People: That he was not interested in the otherness of the subject, but rather in the commonness, a symbolic, emotionally charged relationship of a concrete to a universal meaning. In his non-commissioned work, Chambi was not an anthropologic or ethnographic collector of images, but a portraitist looking for a dignifying and meaningful representation of his vis-à-vis. Furthermore, his natural and direct engagement with the people helped him to stay clear of overly political messages that the Indigenistas (many of them intellectuals who did not even speak any of the indigenous languages) claimed. He was an artist who combined, in life and work, the autochthonous Andean culture with imported European Modernism. This bipolar identity furnished his images of the Andean people with a magical power and a universal aesthetic that goes beyond his own lifetime.

19 Cf. Adrian-Silvan Ionescu, 'Fotografie und Folklore. Zur Ethnofotografie im Rumänien des 19. Jahrhunderts', in: *Fotogeschichte*, vol. 103, Spring 2007, 47-60.

20 The photograph was published in *La Crónica* and in *Varietades*, cf. Herman Schwarz, '¿Gigante de Paruro?', in: *El Peruano*, Lima, 14 de noviembre de 2000, 14.

Note: The glass negatives have been made available in digital format by the Studio of Juan Manuel Castro Prieto, Madrid.

The Human Image and Visual Music: Robert Frank and Henri Cartier-Bresson in the American South

Katherine Hoffman *Black and white are the colors of photography. To me they symbolize the alternatives of hope and despair to which mankind is forever subjected... I am always looking outside, trying to look inside, trying to say something that is true...*
Robert Frank¹

As the United States has been celebrating the 150th anniversary of the American Civil War, there has been renewed focus on the American South. This paper will discuss the influential role that the American South played in the depiction of the human image in the work of two “outsiders,” European photographers, Robert Frank and Henri Cartier-Bresson. Other photographers of the American South, such as Mathew Brady or Alexander Gardner emphasized Civil War imagery, and Farm Security Administration photographers recorded Depression

Figure 1
Robert Frank, *Trolley- New Orleans*, 1955, from
The Americans. Copyright ©Robert Frank.
Courtesy Pace/MacGill Gallery, New York.



¹ Robert Frank, quoted in Edna Bennett, 'Black and White are the Colors of Robert Frank', in: *Aperture*, ix, 1961, 20; 'Robert Frank: His Photographs recorded an Unvarnished America', in: *Christian Science Monitor*, November 23, 2009, 17.

era scenes while others, such as Clarence John Laughlin, commemorated Southern plantation life. More recently, photographers such as the Memphis based Ernest Withers recorded the Civil Rights movement. But such photographs didn't necessarily make viewers truly learn "to see" or understand the complexities, tensions, and nuances of life in the American South. Thus, Frank's and Cartier-Bresson's depictions of the human image in the American South are particularly significant.

The year 2009 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the American publication of Robert Frank's then controversial book of photographs, *The Americans*² with an introduction by the writer Jack Kerouac (1922–1969). Frank and Kerouac, in collaborating on this important project that explored visual and verbal imagery, emphasized the significance of interdisciplinary work and intermediality. It is perhaps helpful to consider Chapple's and Kattenbelt's concept of intermediality as "a space where the boundaries soften and we are in-between and within a mixing of space, media, and realities."³ The project also carried with it continuing themes such as "the road", exploration, youth culture and alienation that have had on-going influences on American culture into the 21st century.

Similar to Kerouac, Robert Frank was restless and often impulsive. Born into a German Jewish family in Zurich in 1924, he was interested in taking pictures as a young man, apprenticed to various local photographers, and then headed for New York in March 1947 where he worked briefly for *Harper's Bazaar*. Traveling in and out of New York, Frank also photographed in Central and South America, France, and Spain. In New York, he met the photographers Edward Steichen and Walker Evans, who hired him as an assistant and encouraged him to apply for the Guggenheim fellowship that was to allow him to produce the body of work that resulted in *The Americans*. Edward Steichen, who had been Director of the Department of Photography at MOMA since 1946, included seven of Frank's photographs in his well known 1955 *Family of Man* exhibit and wrote a recommendation for Frank's Guggenheim application. The *Family of Man*, opening in 1955 at the MOMA in NYC, emphasized a common humanity and universality of human emotions. Between 1955 and 1962, the exhibit, traveling throughout the globe, was seen as a kind of cultural propaganda for the U.S. in the Cold War era. That exhibit was to provide a stark contrast and backdrop for Frank's project.

With his fellowship, Frank made three separate car trips of different lengths between 1955 and 1956: the first from New York to Detroit, the second from New York to Savannah, Georgia, and the third – this time in a second hand Ford business coupe – through the Deep South, then from Texas to Los Angeles. There he was joined by his family. On that trip Frank, not yet an American citizen, viewed U.S. culture from the perspective of a foreigner and validated the concept of a "snapshot aesthetic". He often photographed his subjects unaware with

2 Robert Frank, *The Americans*, New York: Grove Press, 1959. The 50th anniversary of the publication was marked in part, by the organization of a large scale exhibit in 2009, "Robert Frank's *The Americans*: Looking In," organized by the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., then traveling to the Metropolitan Museum in New York and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

3 Freda Chapple and Chiel Kattenbelt (eds.), *Intermediality in Theatre and Performance*, Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 2006, 24.



Figure 2
Robert Frank, *Charleston, South Carolina*, 1955,
from *The Americans*. Copyright ©Robert Frank.
Courtesy, Pace/MacGill Gallery, New York.

a small camera, shooting 767 rolls of film, which were ultimately edited to 83 images to form the book, *The Americans*. Of those final 83 images, 18 were taken in the American South and are among the most powerful, iconic, and poignant human images in the book. The trip was illuminating not only for the images that Frank produced, but also for the manner in which he was treated at some of the places he stopped. As a foreigner, he was harassed and told to get out of town in Mississippi. When he stopped to help an African-American hitchhiker, he was surprised that he refused to sit on the front seat with him for fear of reprisal. Frank was arrested in McGhee, Arkansas, for being an unshaven foreigner with New York license plates. He was thrown into jail and interrogated harshly on the grounds that he might have Communist ties. The body of work he produced did not emphasize a common humanity, nor an all-inclusive American culture, but rather frequently reflected a sense of alienation, loneliness and desolation, as he concentrated on marginalized groups such as African-Americans, cowboys, or senior citizens, along with some politicians, celebrities, and teenagers. Initially Frank could not find a publisher in the U.S.; instead he found a sympathetic publisher, and friend, in Paris; Robert Delpire, who published the work in 1958 as the fifth volume in a collection entitled *Encyclopédie essentielle*. Frank's poetic vision for his book was finally realized in the U.S. when the more daring Barney Rosset took on the project. His Grove Press had already published controversial figures such as Samuel Beckett, Henry Miller, and D. H. Lawrence, including the first unexpurgated American edition of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Rosset risked

4 H.M Kinzer and John Duriak, 'An Off Beat View of the U.S.A.: *Popular Photography's* Editor's Comment on a New Book', in: *Popular Photography* 45, no 5, May 1960, 104-105.

publishing a relatively small edition of 2600 copies of Frank's project in 1959. Frank was given a \$200 advance for the book, while Kerouac received \$30 for his introduction. Frank's photograph *The Trolley-New Orleans* (fig. 1) appeared on the cover. That now iconic photograph seemed to set the tone for the book as it epitomized the social and economic hierarchy of the time. The image is like a classical frieze, setting forth issues of race and gender of the era. As Kerouac wrote, images such as this were "the gray film that caught the actual pink juice of human kind." The photograph is perhaps also significant as a cover image because its form is self-reflexive, its windows like the frames in a roll of film, thus commenting on the power of the film medium to carefully observe, and produce, social commentary. The placement of Frank's and Kerouac's names on the lower part of the trolley on the cover helped to integrate them more fully into the journey as guides through American land- and cityscapes. Another iconic image from the book, taken in Charleston, South Carolina in 1955, reveals Frank's ability to present contrast, as well as a sense of both despair and hope. (fig. 2). Here is a black nanny in uniform on a public street, holding a well-dressed white baby; there is no eye contact between the two. The woman is clearly a servant, but there seems to be a glimmer of hope for future racial understandings in the actual physical contact, versus the distinct, separate window frames of the trolley image, as the woman tightly embraces her charge.

The book was harshly criticized, receiving such comments as "... being a slashing and bitter attack on some U.S. institutions", and "a wart covered picture of America."⁴ Further, Frank was described as being "willing to let his pictures be used to spread hatred among nations,"⁵ and that his photographs had "no sociological comment... no real reportorial function... [being] merely neurotic..." and were "flawed by meaningless blur, grain, muddy exposure, drunken horizons, and general sloppiness."⁶ In contrast to these statements, critics in more recent years have praised Frank's work as having contributed much to the history of photography and to a better understanding of American culture and the American South.

Jack Kerouac's introduction to the American edition provided a strong verbal complement to Frank's visual poetry. Prior to writing the introduction, Kerouac's role as a significant member of the Beat Generation had become more established with the publication, in 1957, of *On the Road*⁷, which celebrated the life of traveling youth, adrift in America, exploring the expanses of the country. Collaboration and mutual inspiration were an important part of many of the Beat Generation's creative processes. Kerouac is often credited with introducing the phrase, "The Beat Generation," in 1948 to characterize the anti-conformist youth gathering in New York as "beaten down" and later expanded the term to mean "upbeat" or "beatific", as well as having an association with a musical "beat". Kerouac's language in *On the Road*, as in his introduction to *The Americans*, emphasized spontaneity, open emotion, visceral engagement with one's environment, and non-conformity.

5 Minor White, 'Book Review: *Les Américains*', in: *Aperture*, no. 3, 1959, 127.

6 William Hogan, 'Photo-Coverage of the Ugly American', in: *San Francisco Chronicle*, 1/27/1960, 25; Arthur Goldsmith in 'An Off-Beat View of the U.S.A.' (reference 4), 104.

7 Jack Kerouac, *On the Road*, New York: Viking Press, 1957.



Figure 3
Robert Frank, *Café- Beaufort, South Carolina, 1955*,
from *The Americans*. Copyright ©Robert Frank.
Courtesy, Pace/MacGill Gallery, New York.

Kerouac has also been said to have been influenced by jazz improvisation and the blues that have had such a significant role in Southern culture. Both Kerouac in his introduction, and Frank in his images, make reference to music, along with movies, mass media publications and vernacular signage which punctuate a number of images in the same manner as a staccato rhythm might punctuate a musical composition. As Kerouac wrote in his introduction, “That crazy feeling in America when the sun is hot on the streets and the music comes out of the jukebox, or from a nearby funeral, that’s what Robert Frank captured in tremendous photographs taken as he traveled on the road... After seeing these pictures you end up not knowing any more whether a jukebox is sadder than a coffin.” As an example, one sees a café in Beaufort, South Carolina, where a juke box with its glistening insignia stands like a guard, watching over a small black child left alone on the floor of the café. (fig. 3). In many of Frank’s images, we, the viewers, quickly become part of the scene, feeling the power



Figure 4
Henri Cartier-Bresson, *New Orleans*, 1947.
Copyright ©Henri Cartier-Bresson/
Magnum Photos.

of the image more closely. Seemingly simple street scenes, such as those taken in Savannah, Chattanooga, or Elizabethville, North Carolina, New Orleans, or the interior of a Miami hotel, become windows on the diverse worlds that, in Frank's eyes, make up America. Frank and Kerouac's collaborative project may be viewed as a kind of 'Gesamtkunstwerk', where the "in-between spaces," were sometimes as significant as the images, and where the visual, verbal,

musical and theatrical converge to provide a multi-leveled sense of wholeness. With Kerouac's introductory text as complement, many of the images become elegiac laments about Americans laying bare their souls so that the outside viewer can indeed look "inside" and discover multiple facets of American life in general and American life in the South in particular. Indeed, Frank presents some of the Americans he photographs as blinded by patriotism and subsumed by the broken promises of an "American Dream." In several of the images, such as those taken in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and Beaufort in South Carolina, one sees the image of the Christian cross as a suggestion of an underlying search for religion and spirituality beneath the surface of everyday life. With their verbal and visual images, Frank and Kerouac brought forth an epic poem of human imagery that is elegiac and revealing, that explores issues of power, alienation, ennui, and asks the reader/viewer to rethink the nature of being "American" and, in the southern images, the nature of life in the American South.

Prior to, as well as following, Robert Frank's project, the French-born photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson (1908–2004) also spent a significant period in the American South. As a number of his contemporary photographers, including Kertész and Doisneau, Cartier-Bresson was influenced by a growing snapshot aesthetic that was also encouraged by the establishment of illustrated magazines in France such as *Paris Match* in 1926 or Lucien Vogel's *Vu* in 1928, while the illustrated American counterpart, *Life*, was not established until 1936. His use of a small handheld Leica throughout most of his career enabled him to capture scenes of everyday life more quickly, emphasizing humanistic elements. Cartier-Bresson primarily composed with his eye, doing little cropping or manipulating of his images in the darkroom. Cartier-Bresson, honored by MOMA's desire to hold an exhibition of his work, arrived in New York with his wife in 1946 to work on the show, which opened to much critical acclaim on February 4, 1947. According to Cartier-Bresson's biographer, Pierre Assouline, the critic Lincoln Kirstein "attributed to him the typical qualities of the French classical tradition: a sense of proportion, clarity, economy of means, a frugality that did not preclude generosity. He discerned something almost Racinian in Cartier-Bresson's taste for invisible conflict, suggesting that his approach was what he described as 'Jesuit-Protestant'... The left eye was for the internal world, the right eye for the external, and the grace of his work was a fusion of the two. He saw him as the heir to the line stretching from Saint-Simon to Jean Renoir, taking in Beaumarchais and Cézanne on the way. All of these contributed something to the photographs, with an extra touch of freshness, elegance, and truth added that set them apart...The Harper's Magazine critic distinguished him from other 'documentary humanists' by virtue of the emotional intensity of his photos."⁸ These words may well describe much of the work that Cartier-Bresson did in the American South.

⁸ Pierre Assouline, *Henri Cartier-Bresson, A Biography*, New York and London: Thames and Hudson, 2005, 147.

⁹ Walker Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1941.

Admired by Carmel Snow, the chief editor of *Harper's Bazaar*, and Alexey Brodovitch, its art editor, Cartier-Bresson began to work for the magazine and found himself accompanying the 22-year-old writer Truman Capote (1924–1984) on a journey to the American South, focusing on New Orleans, the city of Capote's birth. The October 1946 *Harper's Bazaar* article, 'Notes on N.O.' (n.p.), contained Capote's impressionistic account with Cartier-Bresson's photographs. Capote found the trip too long, bringing him a sense of malaise. But Cartier-Bresson, inspired by this trip and James Agee's and Walker Evans' collaboration on *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*⁹, hoped to form a partnership with a writer for a book-length project. He teamed up with the 30-year-old poet, John Malcolm Brinnin (1916–1998). The hope was to have the book designed by Alexey Brodovitch and published by Pantheon Books. In mid-April 1947, the two began a car drive of about 12,000 miles across the United States. Much time was spent in the South as they drove through Washington, D.C. to Tennessee, Mississippi, and Louisiana. Unlike some of Walker Evans' photographs, which focus on the architecture, monuments and interior details, Cartier-Bresson's images almost always have a human presence as he seeks to pierce beneath the surface of everyday life and – as with Frank – produce elegiac images that often communicate a sense of underlying tragedy or pain in the lives of Americans. On the 77-day trip the two men also photographed celebrities, including William Faulkner, Henry Miller, and Frank Lloyd Wright, for *Harper's Bazaar*, to earn extra money for travel expenses. During the trip, Brinnin reported that Cartier-Bresson frequently read the French Symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé, whose aesthetic emphasized the role of music and dance in reaching a higher reality, and that such musicality could be incorporated in the visual and verbal arts. It seems that many of Cartier-Bresson's southern photographs contain that spirit of music and dance in their rhythmic and lyrical qualities that are integral parts of numerous images. Brinnin and Cartier-Bresson went their separate ways after the 1947 trip, during which the New York opening of the newly founded Magnum photojournalist agency, which Cartier-Bresson helped found in Paris and NY, took place. The book that was envisioned was never published. It was not until 1991 that a number of Cartier-Bresson's images of the South appeared in Bullfinch Press' publication *America in Passing*, with a foreword by Arthur Miller, introduction by Gilles Mora, and design by Robert Delpire. In his introduction Mora makes numerous allusions to the American South and to music, particularly jazz and rock n' roll. In the meantime, Cartier-Bresson had made a number of other trips to the South in 1957, 1960, 1961, 1969, and 1970. Cartier-Bresson's southern images included depictions of whites and blacks, of rural and urban scenes. Some were beautifully lyrical, some, poignant fragments of otherwise unmarked lives, and others, deeply thought provoking, alluding to broken and tragic lives and events in the South, in his words "decisive moments"¹⁰. For example, one sees a small

10 See Henri Cartier-Bresson, *The Decisive Moment*, New York: Simon and Schuster in cooperation with Editions Verve of Paris 1952, Preface, n.p.



Figure 5
Henri Cartier-Bresson, *Vicksburg, Mississippi*, 1947.
Copyright ©Henri Cartier-Bresson/
Magnum Photos.

black girl, dressed in pure white, gracefully running as if she were dancing, in the shadows of larger trees and protective buildings (New Orleans, 1947) or card players from diverse backgrounds focused intently on their game on the stage set of a beautiful New Orleans porch (fig. 4). A sense of musicality and dance is seen more directly in images such as his photographs of San Antonio street musicians of various ages (1947) or his various images of Vicksburg, Mississippi cotton pickers, where the movements of labor appear like well-choreographed dance movements in the surrounding field that has become a stage. Cartier-Bresson's ability to render a sense of visual music in many of his photographs heightens their emotional power as they probe deep into the souls of both his subjects and his viewers. As Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, "Music takes us out of the actual and whispers to us dim secrets that startle our wonder as to who we are, and for what, whence, and whereto."¹¹ Further "decisive moments" are seen in images such as that of a large, black, Vicksburg, Mississippi woman dressed in white, renting out rooms, who becomes a kind of spiritual earth-mother while, ironically, reading a comic book with white characters.

(Fig. 5) The horror of lynching is evoked in a photograph of a used car advertisement with a figure hanging from a tree in Jackson, Mississippi. (Fig. 6) Jean Clair, while director of the Musée Picasso, discussed the Greek concept of *kairos* as being related to Cartier-Bresson's idea of the decisive moment, Clair wrote of Cartier-Bresson's photographs, "*Kairos* exists in the blink of the photographer's eye, it is the phenomenon of hitting the mark in space and of hitting it at precisely the right time."¹² Cartier-Bresson seems to balance both *chronos* and *kairos* in his photographs of the American South as he captures moments in time and space, mainly of everyday life, and renders many of them timeless and uncommon.

Cartier-Bresson also demonstrated his ability to capture "decisive moments" in a cinematic manner in his 1969-1970 25-minute film, *Southern Exposures* that he directed for the American CBS news. There is no voiceover or commentary, rather a colorful montage of images and scenes from various areas of the South with musical accompaniment. Cartier-Bresson

¹¹ Ralph Waldo Emerson, quoted in Wendy McDaris (ed.) *Visualizing the Blues: Images of the American South*, Memphis, Tenn.: The Dixon Gallery and Gardens, 2000, 6.



Figure 6
Henri Cartier-Bresson, *Jackson, Mississippi*, 1947.
Copyright©Henri Cartier- Bresson/
Magnum Photos.

made use of close-ups, as well as having his camera linger over his subjects' figures. There is much use of movement, singing, and dance-like gestures. Shot not long after the tragic 1968 Memphis assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. (whom Bresson had photographed earlier), the film records, in part, the bitter struggles of black minorities to achieve their civil rights in the late 1960s. At the beginning of the film, blues music accompanies the images of the South, showing both poor housing for black people and scenes of an old plantation. Cartier-Bresson's

12 Jean Clair, 'Kairos: The Idea of the Decisive Moment in the Work of Cartier-Bresson', in: Robert Delpire, Introduction, *Henri Cartier-Bresson, The Man, the Image, and the World*, New York and London: Thames and Hudson, 50.

use of the blues in the film and his evocation of blues sounds and emotions through his visual imagery, both cinematic and still, produce a portrayal of poignant depths of human emotion. As one writer noted, “The blues is an apt analogy for the American South’s complex culture. Every shade of human emotion can be found in the blues, many lyrics of which are powerful poems bearing a singular and refined economy of expression.”¹³ Cartier-Bresson was no tourist, rather one who sought moments of truth and clarity, sometimes using sarcasm or irony, sometimes simply having a direct, singular, and inspired gaze that recorded moments of human truth. In April 1970, Cartier-Bresson wrote in *Creative Camera*: “The intensive use of photographs by mass media lays ever fresh responsibilities upon the photographer. We have to acknowledge the existence of a chasm between the economic needs of our consumer society and the requirements of those who bear witness to this epoch... We must take greater care than ever not to allow ourselves to be separated from the real world and from humanity.”¹⁴ These words seem to describe both his and Robert Frank’s work well; in particular the work they did in the American South. Frank’s images were sometimes more “hard-hitting”, frequently capturing moments of despair and alienation. Frank described Cartier-Bresson: “He traveled all over the goddamned world, and you never felt that he was moved by something that was happening other than the beauty of it, or just the composition”¹⁵, while Peter Schjeldahl wrote, “The hallmark of Cartier-Bresson’s genius is less in what he photographed than in where he placed himself to photograph it, incorporating peculiarly eloquent backgrounds and surroundings...”¹⁶ In contrast, Frank sometimes concentrated on the emotional content and impact of his work and less on the aesthetics of his composition. Their European roots were significant for both photographers. They were “outsiders,” looking into the American South, bringing their individual backgrounds and experiences to their photographic work, bringing forth insightful, nuanced, human images, providing a special visual music, and often unique perspectives on the U.S. South. Without that European vision, it is doubtful whether we would have the powerful images that they provided, many of which have become iconic in the history of American photography and culture.

13 Wendy McDaris 2000 (reference 11), 16.

14 Henri Cartier-Bresson, ‘In My View’, in: *Creative Camera*, April 1970, 107.

15. Robert Frank, quoted in ‘Picture Perfect: An Henri Cartier-Bresson Retrospective’, in: *The New Yorker*, April 19, 2010, online article, 07. 10. 2011.

16. Peter Schjeldahl, ‘Picture Perfect’, in: *New Yorker* 2010 (reference 15), 2-3.

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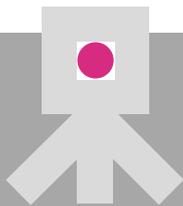
Born 1956, PhD, studied Art History, Ethnology and Art Education. Since 1989 director of the photo collection of the Münchner Stadtmuseum; until 2010 guest professor at the universities Züricher Hochschule der Künste, Zurich and Hochschule für bildende Künste Hamburg; curator of numerous monographic and thematic exhibitions on photography, author and editor of international publications on history of photography, recently edited *Roger Ballen, Photographs 1969 - 2009* (Kerber 2010), and together with Rudolf Scheutle *IndustrieZeit, Fotografien 1845 - 2010* (Wasmuth 2011).

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