

VASA 2020 E-CATALOG



FRONT PAGE EXHIBITIONS
VASA EXHIBITION
JOURNAL on IMAGES and CULTURE
VIDEO / FILM SERIES
ON PHOTOGRAPHY

VASA : center for media studies

ABOUT VASA



This publication, provided free to an international audience, was made possible by VASA staff and supporters.

The e-catalog is designed as an interactive internet-based publication. The content of this publication is linked to the exhibitions, essays, and video/film series on the VASA site (<http://vasa-project.com>). All images and texts are under © of the author / artist / VASA.

Users need to be connected to the Internet for interaction with the on-line programs on VASA. Users may freely move between this publication and VASA website.

This publication may be used as a stand-alone digital publication.

VASA is an online center for media studies. The VASA mission is to provide an internet platform for disseminating the work of theorists and image makers on a global scale. The VASA community shares an interest in media studies, photography, film/video and sound.

To meet its mission, VASA supports online curated exhibitions; film/video screenings; the Journal on Images and Culture (VJIC); The VASA Front Page Exhibitions, On Photography conversations and other programs.

VASA was founded in July of 2009 and is directed by its founder Roberto Muffoletto.

VASA curators, editors, design and production team and contributors are all volunteers. VASA hosts no ads, is not supported by grants or sells anything.

VASA is a non-profit making organization. VASA Membership is free.

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Igor Manko (Ukraine)
Sandeep Biswas (India)

Invited Curators

Lara Ciarabellini (Italy/Brazil)
Andrea Motta (Greece)
Sinyagur (Ukraine)
Paula Scamparini (Brazil)
Larry Chatman (USA)
Kyunghye Lee (South Korea)
Ximena Echague (Belgium)
Michaela Bosakova (Slovakia)
Judith Rodriguez (Argentina)
Stefanie Zorzi (Italy/Austria)

Video/Film Series

Miha Colner (Slovenia)
Carla Della Beffa (Italy)
Christian Gold-Kurz (Austria)

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This publication demonstrates the activities of VASA throughout the year 2020. We have grouped the material into five chapters as it appears on the VASA website.

The *Front Page Exhibition* and the *VASA Exhibitions* programs present the work of established and emerging artists in photography, video, digital media and sound arts.

The *Journal on Images and Culture* publishes occasional papers that develop a theme or position. Papers draw from theoretical and research manuscripts, visual dialogs, video and sound works that offer significant perspectives.

The *Video/Film Series* is designed to stream an artist(s) work or to explore a theme. All film/videos are archived.

On Photography is a new project started in 2020. It presents video recorded conversations with imagemakers, critics, gallery directors and theoreticians on a variety of subjects.

Naturally, this catalog doesn't embrace all the variety of material presented on the website. The *Artist and Author Index* provides a list of all artists with links to their individual projects on the VASA 2020 site.

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The illustrations are linked to the artists' online exhibitions. The catalog also provides excerpts from the essays and screen grabs of video pages linked to the corresponding online essay and video/film.

VASA FRONT PAGE EXHIBITIONS



The VASA FRONT PAGE EXHIBITIONS
presents the work of photographers, video,
and sound artists

VASA : center for media studies

Dmytro Kupriyan*Ukraine***Home***#50 Curator: Igor Manko*

Dmytro Kupriyan's *Home* is a series of light installations that merge landscapes and cityscapes into phantasmagorical night images where manmade objects invade natural surroundings. With a portable computer projector the artist projects his cityscape images over the scenery of trees, rivers and rocks at nighttime and takes a photo of the resulting two-layered reality. This photo-of-a-photo approach adds a conceptual dimension to his strikingly convincing and beautifully produced set of works.

“People have adjusted the environment for the needs of their comfort and thus transformed it. We have erected cities, confined ourselves in apartment buildings, joined shores with bridges and turned paths into roads and highways. And still we dream to be closer to nature, decorating our homes with natural materials, growing plants, etc.

Are we happy with our private living spaces? Should we reconsider our modus vivendi?

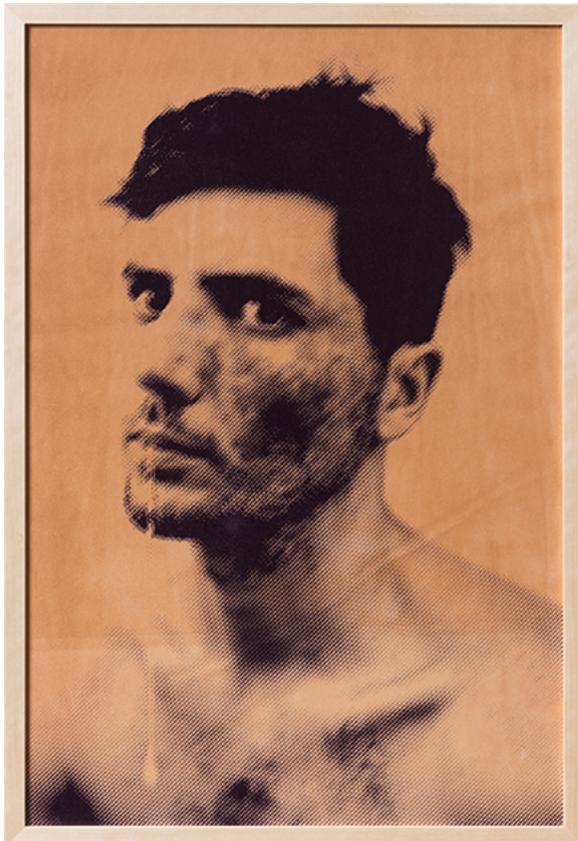
In this project I research human environment and the homo sapiens's need of the acquired as opposed to the natural.”

Dušan Kochol

Slovakia

Cruising for a Bruising

#51 Curator: Michaela Bosakova



“Brother, sometimes you get beaten up because you simply ask for it. Getting a testosterone thrill out of the emasculating pain and then wearing your marks proudly as war medals of phallic legion. Fed on the adoration all that you, my hero, can deliver is to bully yourself to unconsciousness, as the castrating eclipse occurs. The collection of black and blue maps is growing but the only road they show leads through your skin to the ugly side. Man up, shake off your ego erected goose bumps to make way for the pain to paint those bruises all over again,”

In the mentioned project, most of Dušan’s models were chosen randomly. The process of portraying was purposely physically and psychologically complicated, maybe even harassing at some point, the models have not been instructed or briefed before the photo shoot. Without them knowing, it was actually up to them to set the boundaries, which they don’t want to cross. The outcome portraits where hands of the photographer can be seen deforming the faces of his models, on one side become some kind of an archetypical picture of pain seen mainly in the western painting tradition, while on the other they contrast with the technic of screen printing ink used a lot in pop-art.

Vaughn Sills*USA/Canada***Beyond Words***#52 Curator: Sandeep Biswas*

“I have chosen objects from nature one by one, found them, dug them, preserved them – a squirrel’s skeleton, poplar saplings that sprout from one long root, broken egg shells lying on the forest floor. I have taken them, or been given them, from the land on Prince Edward Island where my grandparents visited each summer, where I now have a cottage. I chose these things because of their extraordinary beauty – and because they seem to hold the mystery of life and death.

My family’s 1932 Oxford English Dictionary seduces me with its promise to teach, to offer knowledge, even to dispel mystery. But entrancing as it is, leading me from one word to the next, this well-used book lets me down. Words are incomplete; they fall short of conveying the miraculous presence of a squirrel’s skeleton, the complexity of a bird’s nest, the delicacy of a moth. Six letters – l, u, p, i, n, e – represent the tall stemmed purple, pink, yellow and white flowered perennials whose palmated leaves turn a dusty grayish green then brown, giving way to hairy seed pods that lyrically soften the late afternoon sun by the middle of August. The word ‘lupine’ doesn’t convey what I see and love, but neither does my long string of words. A word cannot even describe the beauty of a book.”

Clemens Ascher

Austria

Allusive

#53 Curator: Roberto Muffoletto



The art of Clemens Ascher is multi allusive, in both his use of layered symbolism and his treatment of photography as a medium. In his works he continues to critically explore different methods of societal control. From capitalism and advertising via patriotism and nationalism to religion, generated ideas like fears, hopes or desires are implanted into people's minds in order to control them. Such controlling structures use strong symbols to represent their belief systems. This is also the starting point of Ascher's works. In his photography he recreates similar symbols representing and satirizing these manipulative methods. He continues to construct a surreal world, in which these topics occur in heightened form and multi allusive. Just as the portrayed believe systems, this parallel world is entirely built with photo realistic collage. In this fictional world people function like interchangeable marionettes playing on a theatrical stage. The content just like the working process reference the conceptual superstructure of Ascher's work. Formally the large format works appear painterly with strongly altered perspectives and nearly abstract compositions. They seem hyper real, yet graphically reduced and with pleasing colors. Just like tempting candies in a shop window.

Fran Forman

USA

Midnight Sun

#54 Curator: Sandeep Biswas



“In her body of work “Midnight Sun” American photographer Fran Forman recreates a painterly world of mystery and fantasy to release and lose herself into her own creative universe. The images traverse through an unknown world, where the characters of her story as well as the viewers submerge themselves into this uncanny and extraordinary world. My first reaction to Fran’s work is that of a visual poet, a dreamer and an idealist living in a practical world of physicalities, yet never giving up on the faith in her dreamlike world of contradictions. These contradictions are a way of life, that question the conscious and the subconscious, the reality and the perception, the ordinary and the extraordinary. Her fairy tale world seems to have evolved out of a process of many extremely creative years that discovered the use of camera amalgamating with support of changing technology to enhance her storytelling and imagery opening a surreal world for the viewer. Fran calls her works photo paintings, which are actually way beyond what they seem to appear to the naked eye and the thinking mind.”

Alena Grom*Ukraine***The Womb**

#55 Curator: Igor Manko



Alena Grom was born in Donetsk, Ukraine, where she lived until 2014. In January that year she ran a housewarming party in her long awaited newly-built house. In April 2014, when the separatist coup began, she had to abandon it and flee to a refuge in Kyiv. Later her house, left unattended, was robbed by marauders, there were shootings and pools of blood inside it. The artist keeps returning to the frontline territory in Donbas to make her photoprojects. Photography has become a therapy to help overcome the traumatic reality.

“Since the beginning of the war, many mines have closed. Makeshift coal mines (“pits”, places of illegal coal mining) have turned into hideaways and bomb shelters. People have gone down into the mines once again, this time in order to be safe. Grom created *The Womb* project in 2018 on the front-line territory of Donbas. The images tell stories of the women who decided to give birth to a child while living in a war zone. The artist’s models are both mothers and children of war, some of the latter more than four years old by now.”

Iren Moroz*Ukraine***In The Grip Of Quarantine***#56 Curator: Sinyagur*

The project of Iren Moroz neither laments on hard life in the ordinary Ukrainian village nor moans on extreme times of the pandemic. It just focuses on the living conditions of one typical family sharpened by the quarantine. As in plenty of her projects, Iren reports the reality, documenting its pleasant and ugly sides as they are, with a human being as a key character of this visual narrative. It is left for us to reflect upon that, to imagine how it feels to stay isolated in a tiny house in a small closed society of a village. I personally hope this will lead us all to some positive changes both in our private lives and globally. However, the devil is in details, and those of our home routine are the most tangible.

“I started to work on the project on April 15 in Kornyn village, at that time no patients with Covid-19 were detected there, a total of 17,330 people were diagnosed in Ukraine, 4,473 of them recovered and 476 died. Once I arrived at the village with a project idea in my mind, people came into contact with caution; however, meetings with the heroes were scheduled for a whole week. And on April 17, there were rumors in Kornyn that a coronavirus patient had been found in a nearby village and all contacts had been severed, so my project was in danger of failing.”

Malkiat Singh*India***Soul of Sikhism***#57 Curator: Sandeep Biswas*

Malkiat Singh's documentation of the Sikh community is a visual journey of an ardent visual storyteller, who is also a strong follower of the discipline and faith. He has travelled extensively spanning almost 2 decades to live and experience every aspect of the life of various sects of Sikhism, exploring and searching for a deeper meaning within their distinctive world.

Through this photographic series we witness a large crowd cleaning the Holy Pond at Gurudwara Sri Harminder Sahib (Popularly known as The Golden Temple) in the city of Amritsar, people working in the community kitchens that feed thousands of devotees and visitors regardless of their race or ethnicity, an artist who paints the Sikh Gurus and various portraits of the Sikh men and women within their everyday lives are among a few mesmerising historically significant moments, which beautifully narrate about their proud identity within a world of coherence. The images are a visual treat for anyone looking for an insightful journey into the lives and celebrations of the Sikh communities in and around the country. These photographs draw us into an experience, where they create a perception for the viewer as if one is gazing at paintings from the renaissance era.

Graziano Filippini*Italy***Claustrophobia***#58 Curator: Stefania Zorzi*

The *Claustrophobia* photographic project by Graziano Filippini shows us claustrophobia not simply as a pathological fear, but also as an exasperated and inconsolable sense of loneliness and frustration. The pictures exhibited here depict places depopulated by an indifferent humanity where stillness becomes implacable and an escape route is unlikely. The photographs speak about desolation, carelessness and the closure of spaces as a mirror of a broken, empty everyday life. Filippini intentionally and consciously creates distressing, cold and claustrophobic atmospheres. Using a photographic style drawing upon the dark tones of black and white, where colors are de-saturated to shape the images, all suggesting a feeling of oppression. Graziano Filippini first creates the shot, he manipulates the real to deliver us a dramatically surreal work in the name of extreme experimentalism.

Filippini understands the image as a consequence of an emotion, deep knowledge of this art and of the experience that no medium can replace. Linked to this concept is the fact that for Filippini, taking care of the moment is the very essence of photography.

Parth Sanyal*India***Just to Get a Glimpse***#59 Curator: Sandeep Biswas*

How does one describe India if asked, and how does one knit that one answer in the simplest possible way? Quite a few things about our country cannot be explained but only experienced and that experience is strikingly visual.

This magnificent visual and biographic anecdotes by a seasoned and ex Reuters photojournalist Parth Sanyal *Just to get a Glimps* revolves around one of India's youngest political leaders and a youth icon Akhilesh Yadav. Once the previously elected chief minister of India's most politically active state of Uttar Pradesh (UP) in the north of India, his popularity in the state remains immense for his highly optimistic fan following. The state of UP is presently ruled by the BJP led Government, while Akhilesh Yadav continues to remain among the strongest opposition and contestants under the banner Samajwadi Party. The word Samajwadi would translate into English as Socialist.

Parth Sanyal who is presently the personal photographer of the party leader and president, has travelled extensively through the state accompanying him for the last 5 years.

VASA EXHIBITIONS



VASA ONLINE EXHIBITION PROGRAM
hosts the work of established and emerging artists
in sound, photography, and the digital media arts

VASA : center for media studies

Gigi Scaria*India***City Unclaimed***Curator: Sandeep Biswas*

“I have been engaged with the city of Delhi for over 2 decades.

Observing and engaging with Delhi on a permanent day today basis has formed much of my perception of urban spaces in India. The layers of social structures and hierarchies’ one encounters in a single day in Delhi leaves thought for the understanding of a much larger and wider notion called ‘India’. The urban and the rural, the class and cast, religion and practice and the endless list of eccentric and idiosyncratic exchanges of different social groups somehow create its own mystery in any urban space in India. For us ‘modernity’ is a big claim, which has to be approved and contextualized at every stage of any discourse. On the other hand an economically booming India stands with millions of middle class on its side, which constantly erase and redraw the map of India with a completely different set of tools and calculations. The repercussions and resonance of these new voices has also been woven into the urban fabric with variety of architectural and cultural forms. The new construction fever and mall culture could be a result of this phenomenon.”

City Unclaimed is yet another individual process of coping up and adapting to the urban settings of Delhi by artist Gigi Scaria. Gigi embraced this city as a youth, after growing up in the southern Indian state of Kerala.

Valentyn Odnoviun*Lithuania***Architecture of Evidence***Curator: Igor Manko*

The exhibition *Architecture of Evidence* is comprised of several bodies of work: *Surveillance*, *Horizons*, *The Process*, *Traces of Memory*, *Concealment*, and *Imprints*. These series present abstract-like photographs linked with historical events in Eastern Europe and were mainly taken in prisons of former oppressive regimes. The locations were used for the incarceration of political and war prisoners, as well as objectionable “unwanted” people for their dissent and ideological activities. The project shows how images can become evidence of an event and create a paradoxical perception. They call into question the relation between what we see and what we perceive before the act of recognition.

These photographs, as patterns and traces, emphasize the borders of human perception and where the consequences of human action meet reason. Actual photographs are both documentary and subjective, they embody real traces of events, objects and memories, serving as platforms for imagining them in a more interpretative and conceptual form. Historical origins influence us more than most of us realize, they are a part of our surroundings, our logic, and what makes sense when we put them together.

Małgorzata Wakuluk*Poland***Not What You Think***Curator: Roberto Muffoletto*

“I believe it’s worth to share about places we’ve been to, people we were fortunate to meet, and the emotions they evoked in us. Photography is a passion of mine which I embraced four years ago and continue to cultivate, and it is through photography that I was able to experience all of those things. In this extraordinary journey I am on, I find that people fascinate me the most. I strive to approach them in the most astute of ways while showing them respect and humility. I resolve to learn something unique from these encounters and then share my lessons with others.

This time, however, I decided to use pictures to tell stories about someone I’ve gotten to know the most, Me. About my place in this world, my desires, my freedom, and perhaps my fear. About relationships, similarities and dissimilarities. It’s a deep personal story that I decided to tell. This intimate account is a voice which hopes to touch the values that are close and important to other women as well. And it’s a voice which resonates at the key moment for me, as I’m trying to find the courage within me and stop identifying myself with the physicality of my body, but rather focus on the penetrating consciousness of my mind. It is also an attempt to discover my own myth and my life’s individual meaning.”

Group exhibition*Central and South America***Magical Realism***Curator: Ximena Echague*

Image © Luiza Borges, Brasil

Magical realism is a Hispano-American literary movement that includes fantastic elements in the narrative, which seeks to deepen reality through the magic that we find in it.

Fotógrafas Latam (Latin American Women Photographers) is a new photographic initiative that aims to showcase the best of the new wave of women photography across the whole continent. This collective effort, that held its first Congress in Colombia on September 2019, has already attracted widespread participation and also a massive interest on social media. Latin American countries have always been, and still remain, the most unequal societies on the planet. Whatever the measure used, there are huge wealth and income differences in all Latin American countries, with a tiny elite of super rich, a shrinking middle class and a vast majority of poor and excluded. This is fertile ground for discontent and periodic violence. Naturally, this social struggle has traditionally been the focus of photographers, often from USA or Europe, trying to capture the region's reality. But there is also another fascinating story to be told beyond the headlines, and Latin American women photographers are well placed to do that.

Group exhibition*Mexico***Magical Realism***Curators: Ximena Echague, Fernanda Pineda*

Image © Fabiola Zamora

Magical realism is a Hispano-American literary movement that includes fantastic elements in the narrative, which seeks to deepen reality through the magic that we find in it.

Mexican photography is strong in symbolism, sometimes rough but often lyric, portraying tough realities but seldom far from poetry and even comedy. Mexican photographers never shy away from interpreting reality in original and poetic ways, never seeking to be politically correct or just aesthetically pleasing. These Mexican Women Photographers have a message and are not afraid of conveying, forcefully or subtly, often both. Their work never ceases to surprise and leave no one indifferent.

The series focus is not the usual one, where the Latin American photographers traditionally explore through documentary photography the complexities of its political and social fabric. On the contrary, in this innovative approach, the artists explore new ways, in which “the object” merges with pretty surreal or fantastic elements, creating a photographic language deeply connected to Latin American Magical realism in literature.

Juul Kraijer*The Netherlands***Muse; Chimaera***Curator: Sandeep Biswas*

Dutch artist Juul Kraijer's photographic practice recreates a surreal, poetic and metaphoric world of uncanny relationships between the human body and certain elements from nature without any literal representation. In her imagery, the human is just a physical container of the self, without any further relevance.

Muse is a series of non represental portraits of female models without the narrative of the character as well as representation of an era. Emerging out of an infinite background of darkness, the heads and hands are objectified into a classical still life incorporated with elements from nature like snakes, scorpions, bugs, animal skeletons, birds and sometimes even self in form of a reflection, creating a hauntingly mysterious space. *Сршьфукф* is a series of images based on human body contortion, deliberately devoid and denying femininity. The bodies break their own reality of human form to transform themselves into reminiscents of unidentified and sometimes identified forms from nature, recreating itself into an illusion through the acts of a female contortionist and a Butoh dancer who playfully exhibit moments of hypothesis for the viewers.

Livio Senigalliesi*Italy***Imagine No Heaven***Curators: Roberto Muffoletto, Stefania Zorzi*

“I can’t conceal my despair in the face of such suffering. Geared up by the desire to document this human tragedy, I kept taking pictures, always in the most respectful way towards the victims, but somehow I felt restrained. Compassion was overwhelmingly stronger than my sense of duty. Those pictures had to be taken but more often than not I gave in to long enforced breaks, with tears streaming down my face.”

Livio is a war photographer. This separates him from a photographer who is assigned to cover cultural and news worthy events. As he explains in his text and interviews included in this exhibit, he places his well being, his life on the line every time he ventures into a conflict zone, points his camera or talks to a person at the wrong moment. Carrying press identification was no guarantee that he was protected or free to record what was before him. It was not a given that the people, soldiers and civilians photographed would accept him or trust him. At any point he could be captured, tortured or killed. Yet, he had a job to bring back to his publisher images and stories about the unfolding of events he witnessed. This witnessing, being in the presence of, refers to the human factor of any witness.

Group exhibition

Argentina

Magical Realism

Curators: Ximena Echague, Fernanda Pineda



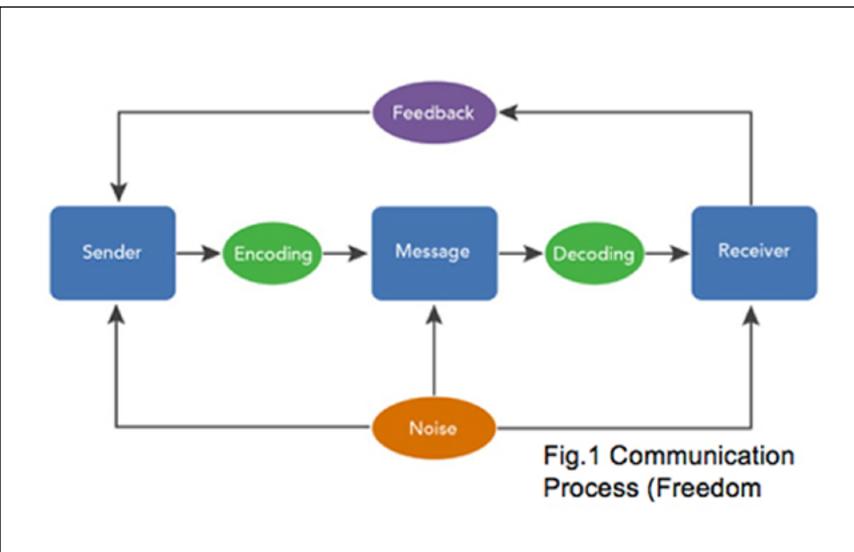
Image © Belen Alcat

Magical realism is a Hispano-American literary movement that includes fantastic elements in the narrative, which seeks to deepen reality through the magic that we find in it.

Argentina is unique in Latin America, and probably in the world, having moved from riches to rags over the last century. No wonder Buenos Aires is sometimes referred to as “the capital of an empire that never existed”, a subtle irony about a magnificent yet decaying metropolis in a country that defies easy understanding. This troubled trajectory has undeniably affected Argentines image of themselves and, unavoidably, how photographers have tried to portray their evolving reality.

Argentine women photographers embody these tensions and richness of life experiences. They are used to live on the edge, facing sudden and sometimes cataclysmic changes, stability is for them an alien concept. Always ready to adapt, to mix and fuse various sources of inspiration in a constantly evolving reality. Never afraid to risk and innovate, to create beauty against all odds. At the same time classic and experimental, even transgressor.

JOURNAL ON IMAGES AND CULTURE



The JOURNAL's aim is to publish outstanding theoretical and research manuscripts, visual dialogs, video and sound works that offer significant contributions to current scholarship and creative efforts

Dan Duda

USA

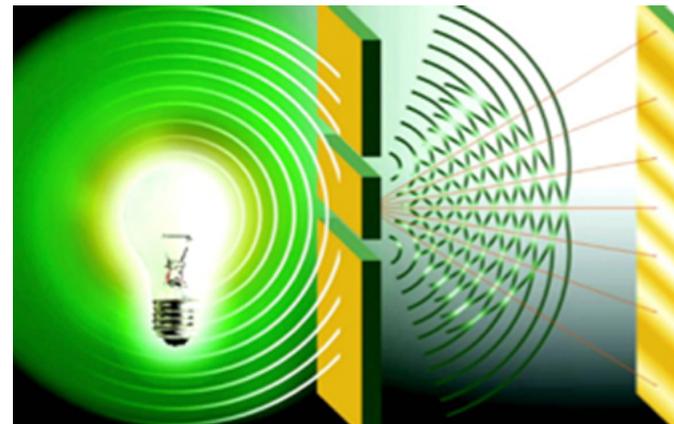
Do We Create Reality?*A thematic series*

Jim Morrison picked a powerful verse on which to base his group—The Doors. The fusion of science and religion has been in progress for more than a century, but the pace of that fusion has increased many fold in recent decades. And the progression of artistic meaning has matched this fusion providing a clearer window into our collective mind. The issue we're addressing in this essay involves the possibility that much of art is an attempt to bridge the gap between us and an overarching universal consciousness.

First, we'll look at science. One of the biggest enigmas in science today is the observer effect, where consciousness seems to dictate the form that matter will take. This is the consistent result of more than a century of experiments using the famous "2 slit" apparatus. The interpretation of the results of these experiments is that there is no reality until it is observed. This suggests that everything that we consider "real" requires our observation, otherwise it exists only as a cloud of possibilities. The obvious challenges to this interpretation have been silenced by a series of new experiments called "delayed choice" which not only confirm the original explanation but deepen the mystery by suggesting that our observation can affect a past reality (see Hugh Everett).

An interesting parallel to this strange scientific theory is now emerging in new age philosophy. Rupert Spira, a current leader in metaphysical inquiry, makes this observer effect a platform for his description of what he believes to be the true nature

of reality. "It was over a hundred years ago that it was first suggested by Albert Einstein, Max Planck, Niels Bohr, Erwin Schrodinger and others that the observer may affect the observed, opening the debate as to the relationship between consciousness and matter." Are we part of a universe that is conscious? If so, are we part of that one consciousness? And to the point, do we see that connection expressed (consciously or unconsciously) in our art?



Next, let's think about something that seems way off the path, we'll bring it home shortly. Have you ever seen a movie and felt that the book was so much better? The reason is when you read a book, your mind fills-in many of the details: the environment; the way the characters look; the sounds; etc. But when you see a movie all those things are provided for you, and your imagination is Handcuffed. Now let's link that to overall consciousness. Think about why it is that some people respond to certain works of art while others do not. Recently, our understanding of the doors of

perception have been opened a crack by new theories including Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP). This concept acknowledges that we cannot perceive reality as it is. Our sensory apparatus absorbs vibrations from the environment that are interpreted and completed in our brain. Immanuel Kant, in the 1700s addressed this very issue with the phrase "the thing in itself." He pointed out that we perceive the world through our five senses. Never do we actually touch reality—we only sense what it might be. Whether the sky; the ground; other people; or anything, we never directly encounter "the thing in itself." (see "Critique of Pure Reason," Kant) Specifically, regarding the new science of NLP, It's important to realize that our conscious minds can deal with only a limited number of inputs, so we filter out most of the information available in the environment and fill-in the colors and textures as needed or desired. Ironically, in spite of absorbing minimal information we can generate a full and rich picture. According to Joseph O'Connor (author of *Introducing NLP*) "...we see through a complex series of active perceptual filters. The world we perceive is not the real world ... it is a map made by our neurology." Therefore, a book, a musical composition, a painting, a photograph, etc. is only the beginning of the process of art. The ultimate perception takes place within and with the collaboration of our mind.

So, a work of art is only initiated on the page, the keyboard or the canvas and completed in our minds.

Nkosinathi Gladwin Dlamini

South Africa / Austria

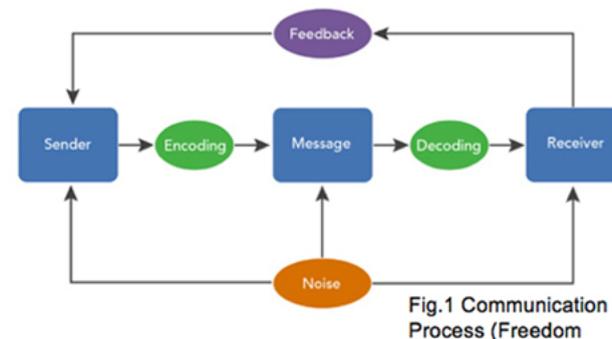
Etut situt tutut metut itut gut klitut. Betut tutsi futut betut. Metut wetutu jetut. Tutgetut hetut sotut tut tut tuts. Thetut betut hitut metut. Tut, undtut sietut. Tut! Brutut dertut tut.

This is a poem written in Dlaminia. I created Dlaminia to allow me to express myself freely as a writer. In the creation of Dlaminia, I have followed the basic process of creating a simple language: I have chosen a basic sound for the language, a simple lexicon, non-complex grammar rules, and a simple writing system that that uses the English alphabet. I am proud of my new created language, though I would have to admit that only I could understand what I have written above – that might change over time dependant on how much effort I put into post-rationalising what I have written.

The origin of language, and pursuit of understanding

There are many theories and ideas pertaining to where language originated, many linguists challenge these theories of explaining where we as humans started using fixed sounds and phrases to speak to one another. Interestingly though, there seems to be one common golden thread in these theories. Language originated as a means to communicate. No matter how and when language originated, most can agree that it serves as one of the primary vessels for social and communicative functions. When we learn a language, we first learn how to use ba-

sic expressions to satisfy basic needs and when we reach fluency within a language, we are able to express abstract ideas and explain ourselves with adept precision within complex situations.



Communication is a basic goal of language. Communication within itself is a complex process, which relies on clarity and shared understanding. The communication process, figure 1 above, relies on the sender and receiver having a shared language that they both understand. Even with a shared language, the sender still needs to encode the message, the message then travels through noise within the environment, and then the receiver decodes this message and extrapolates meaning and understanding. Once all these steps are completed, one can still find that some parts of the message have been “lost in translation” or misheard. Now imagine this process if I had to speak with a person in Dlaminia, no matter how well I encode my communication with them, there is little to no chance of them being able to decode my communication. That is the

Can An Artist Create Their Own Language

A thematic series

burden of creating a new language; very few people would be able to understand it. Leaving the new language being useless within the current paradigm.

The universality of music and art

I am of the belief that music and art are arguably some of the most universally understood and transcendent forms of expression that humans possess. There are split opinions when it comes to defining music and art as languages in themselves. In the context of answering the question that prompted this essay, I will view them both as languages with a myriad of dialects.

One of my earliest childhood memories are off my Gogo (grandmother in isiZulu) singing a popular lullaby called “Thula Thula “(hush hush my child). My grandmother often recounted how I would instantly calm down when she sang for me, and when I got older I would often hum the song to myself whenever I was anxious. I am very fortunate to have grown up in a very musical family, with singing being a constant mainstay of my formative years. When I started primary school I started to formally learn music, and I was introduced the 12 Note system of Western music, fast forward to present day. In my spare time, I am a blues/soul guitarist and vocalist for a band here in Vienna. We represent three nationalities and speak nine languages between the three of us, I do however account for seven of those languages. What unites us is what I view as our tenth language, music.

Mike Amrose

USA

Visual language of Photography — a visual form of communication using visual elements and principles to construct a photographic language through which photographers convey meaning, emotions, ideas, opinions, and narratives.

The second half of the 20th Century saw the beginning of Postmodernism in Western society and culture. Postmodernism was a rejection of Modernism and its rigidity, and a reaction to the basic principles and practices of modernism. Postmodernists focused on popular and more democratic ideas of art. This led many artists to connect deeply to social issues. Artists were released from the form and structure of modernism allowing them to depart from traditional rules of art. It offered a wide latitude to go beyond Modernism theory to convey meaning about the world, society, and everyday life.

Modernist and Postmodernist Movements shaped the art of the 20th and 21st century while influencing photographers' experimentation, creativity, vision, and art. Postmodernist Theory and its tenets along with technological advances have given photographers more tools, techniques, and processes to express themselves. Photographers have more capabilities and opportunities to innovate and create. As a result, visual language has become more comprehensive, expansive, and unrestrained leading to a proliferation of photographic genres like figurative art, abstract art, minimalism, op art, pop art, and storytelling, street photography, and con-

ceptual art photography. With each genre and those not listed comes a multitude of visual languages.



Sally Mann, Candy Cigarette, 1989 © Sally-Mann

Visual Language Today

The visual language of photography is comprised of visual elements and principles of art. Elements, each of which is normally independent of the image's interpretation, are the building blocks of the image. The principles arrange the elements bringing them together into a cohesive, affecting design. The visual elements, each having a sensory response, are line, color, pattern, texture, space, shape, form, value, light, time, perspective, focus, and text. Principles include unity, harmony, balance, emphasis, proportion, contrast (value), and rhythm. Composition arranges the elements according to the principles and unifies

Can An Artist Create Their Own Language

A thematic series

the image to express the photographer's statement of intent. Composition plays an important role by creating an aesthetically compelling and impactful photograph that communicates the photographer's intent.

Can a photographer create their own unique visual language? The answer to this question is "yes." Reviewing the history of photography, one can see many innovations and changes to the visual language over time from Modernist photographers Steiglitz and Moholy-Nagy to Postmodernists such as Andy Warhol and Cindy Sherman. The visual languages they and many others created are truly unique. Their photographs are recognized for their artistic value, delivery of their message, and the application of their visual language. What makes a visual language unique? Let us assume there is a fine art exhibit showing photographs of a particular type for example still life or architecture, and each image effectively communicates a message or an emotion. Some of the images will be similar to other images conveying similar messages while other images will stand out. Why? Their visual language and the messages they communicate are different and distinctive. They used the visual language in a way that drew in and spoke to the viewer and communicated a message or an emotion. As a result, one can probably say that their visual language is unique. If the photographs are similar, one can assume the visual language used by them is also similar. The language may even be unique, but it does not communicate or connect with the viewer. Communication is considered essential.

VASA VIDEO / FILM SERIES



The VASA VIDEO / FILM SERIES is designed to stream an artist(s) work or to explore a theme over a period of time. The series are archived and may be accessed through the VASA platform

VASA : center for media studies

A 1947 Film by Joe Orffeo, Jim Tuttle and Tony DeCorse

USA

The Buffalo Series

Curator: Roberto Muffoletto

Still from *Seven Beers with the Wrong Woman* © Joe Orffeo, Jim Tuttle and Tony DeCorse

The “Buffalo Series” is an evolving platform exhibiting the work of Buffalo based film and video artists.

Buffalo New York (USA) has a rich history in the visual arts. Home to the Burchfield Penny Art Center, the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, CEPA Gallery, Hallwalls, Center for Media Studies and many other cultural organizations and exhibition spaces, in the 1960s and 70s Buffalo was a hub of energy and creativity attracting and supporting the work of many artists. In 2012 the Albright-Knox Art Gallery posted an exhibition titled: *Wish You Were Here: The Buffalo Avant-garde in the 1970s* (curated by Heather Pesanti).

Seven Beers With The Wrong Woman*14 min (1947)*

The 14 minute short black & white film, “Seven Beers with the Wrong Woman”, Directed by Anthony “Tony” DeCorse and based off the original 1940 song of the same name by Tommy Tucker and is a pantomime drama that uses papier-mâché masks & cardboard painted scenery to illustrate the folk song about true love lost. Joe Orffeo created the set paintings and played the ‘Piano Player’; Tony DeCorse designed the sets, music, masks & costumes and he played the ‘Singing Waiter’; Mary DeCorse played the ‘Woman’; Jim J. Tuttle producer & cameras and he played ‘The Drunk’; and John Cosline as the ‘Bar-tender’, Medusa Films Buffalo, NY. The film was shown at the Buffalo Film Makers, CEPA Gallery and at the International Cinema, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. In the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library permanent collection (VHS tape).

A 1997 film by Lawrence Brose

USA

The Buffalo Series

Curator: Roberto Muffoletto

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Still from *De Profundis* © Lawrence Brose

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De Profundis

65:00 min (1997)

De Profundis is a mesmerizing and seductive investigation of Oscar Wilde’s project of Transgressive Aesthetics. Incorporating home movies from the 1920’s and early gay male erotica along with images from Radical Faerie gatherings and queer pagan rituals, radical drag performances and images of confinement, the film sets up a haunting investigation of queerness, masculinity, history and sexuality. The film employs experimental hand and alternative chemical processing techniques to alter the original images. The transformed footage addresses the fixed framing of masculinity while questioning concepts of redemption, contamination and transgression set against critical readings of Wilde and of contemporary gay culture. These images are buttressed against a soundtrack composed of Wilde aphorisms, a score by Frederic Rzewski, and multi-tracked interviews of diverse contemporary gay men.

A 1987 film by Paul Sharits

USA

The Buffalo Series

Curator: Roberto Muffoletto

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Rapture

4 min 59 sec (1987)

Rapture is a tightly controlled visual statement about the abandonment of the self to heightened transportive states. It is also an exploration of the similarity between ‘religious’ and ‘visionary’ ecstasy and psychotic states. It illustrates the inarticulateness of pain - the inadequacy of a recording device to capture the radical subjectivity of pain, or ecstasy. Paul Jeffrey Sharits (February 7, 1943, Denver, Colorado—July 8, 1993, Buffalo, New York) was a visual artist, best known for his work in experimental, or avant-garde filmmaking, particularly what became known as the structural film movement, along with other artists such as Tony Conrad, Hollis Frampton, and Michael Snow. Paul Sharits’ film work primarily focused on installations incorporating endless film loops, multiple projectors, and experimental soundtracks (prominently used in his film *Shutter Interface*, produced in 1975).



Still from *Rapture* © Paul Sharits

The *filmkoop wien*

Austria

Selected works from Austria's young Avant-Garde

Curator: Christian Kurz

Still from *Ferragosto* © Alina Tretinjak**Alina Tretinjak****Ferragosto***Super 8, digital / Black and White / silent / 2 min 15 sec*

AT, IT / 2016

In the courtyard of Juliet's house in Verona, the camera captures the unique behaviour of visitors and tourists when meeting with the statue of this famous Shakespearean character. *Ferragosto* shows a sequence of short emotional encounters that last no longer than a few seconds. An Italian summer romance.

Markus Maicher**Mountain View***16mm, digital / colour / silent / 2 min 40 sec*

AT / 2018

Three continuous zooms towards a landscape are deconstructed into a discontinuous appearance of single frames. The panoramic view is obstructed, the organic movement of the hand dissolved into structural variation of the basic units of film. Indexical content is inevitably present on the physical film strip and yet lost in the structure of the film.

Christian Kurz**Gotteserscheinungen unter Orangeneinfluss***16mm, digital / Black and White / Stereo / 2 min 30 sec*

AT / 2008-2010

Being a portrait film, we watch the filmmaker's subject in his natural habitat. The camera scans the details of the room of this adolescent young man. Possessions give us a glimpse of his inner self as double, tripple and quadruple exposures layer movements and gazes that form the complex nature that is being a human.

Alena Grom*Ukraine***Gray Zone: Video works on Donbas, Ukraine***Curator: Igor Manko*Still from *Children of the war say* © Alena Grom

Alena Grom was born in Donetsk, Ukraine, where she lived until 2014. In January that year she ran a housewarming party in her long awaited newly-built house. In April 2014, when the separatist coup began, she had to abandon it and flee to a refuge in Kyiv. Later her house, left unattended, was robbed by marauders, there were shootings and pools of blood inside it.

The artist keeps returning to the frontline territory in Donbas to make her projects. The videos displayed here are the artist responses to conditions in what Grom refer to as the “The Gray Zone”.

Hypoxia. Airport*2015, 4 min 15 sec***Medium of instruction***2017, 5 min 15 sec***Children of the war say***2017, 4 min 02 sec***The Womb***2018, 4 min 05 sec***The Gray Zone***6 min 25 sec***Residents of the City of Roses***2019, 9 min 09 sec*

Polish Woman Photographers group*Poland***Special video screening***Curator: Małgorzata Wakuluk*

Still from the video

Polish Women Photographers and Vasa Project are presenting a documentary on the current situation in Poland. On October 22 Polish Constitutional Court ruled a near-total ban on abortion. Since then crowds of women have been protesting against the decision that outlawed terminations on the grounds of severe health defects.

*The decision means terminations are only valid
in cases of rape or incest, or to protect
the mother's life.*

Abortion is a deeply divisive issue in Poland, which already had one of the strictest laws in Europe.

There are just over 1,000 legal abortions every year in Poland. Almost all of them - 98% last year - have so far been carried out on grounds of severe foetal defect, which has now been ruled out as a valid reason.

Special video screening in cooperation with the Polish Woman Photographers group and VASA

16 min 34 sec

VASA ON PHOTOGRAPHY



The VASA On Photography
is a series of conversations with imagemakers,
critics, gallery directors,
and theoreticians

VASA : center for media studies

*VASA On Photography is a new project started in 2020.
It presents video recorded conversations with imagemakers, critics, gallery directors and theoreticians on a variety of subjects.*

The project is curated by VASA Director Roberto Muffoletto.

Livio Senigallesi, Italy
photojournalism
May 1, 2020

Sandeep Biswas, India
photojournalism/documentary
May 2, 2020

Michael Michlmayr, Austria
conceptual
May 3, 2020

Clemens Ascher, Austria
conceptual
May 5, 2020

Judith Rodriguez, Argentina
street photography / portraits
May 16, 2020

Stephanie Gengotti, Italy
reportage and portrait
May 18, 2020

Inez Baturo, Poland
landscape, arts director
May 20, 2020



Judith Rodriguez



Inez Baturo



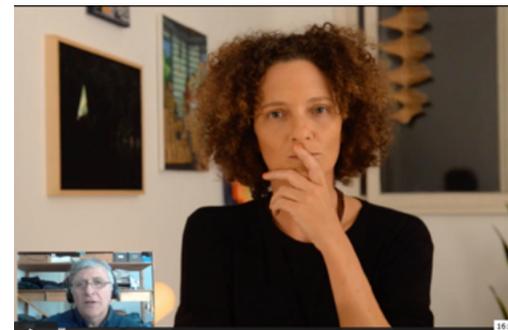
Clemens Ascher



Giorgi Mrevlishvili



Michael Michlmayr



Paula Scamparini

Eva Petric, Vienna / NYC
performance and installation
May 22, 2020

Jerzy Gawel, Poland
gum printing, arts director
June 5, 2020

Giorgi Mrevlishvili, Georgia
documentary film
August 17, 2020

Paula Scamparini, Brazil
conceptual / documentary
September 2020 (recorded 2017)

Malgorzata Wakuluk, Poland
reflective
October 4, 2020

Anna Tihanyi, Hungary
photography
November 2020

Anthony Bannon, USA
photography / book
December 2020

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*Artists' and authors' names
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