

# VASA 2021 E-CATALOG



FRONT PAGE EXHIBITIONS  
VASA EXHIBITION  
PARTNERSHIPS  
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, interviews, 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 theorist 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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Director:  
Roberto Muffoletto ([roberto@vasa-project.com](mailto:roberto@vasa-project.com))

### International Curatorial Team

#### *Photography*

##### Lead Curators

Roberto Muffoletto (Austria/USA)  
Rui Goncalves Cepeda  
(Portugal/UK)  
Igor Manko (Ukraine)  
Sandeep Biswas (India)  
Stefanie Zorzi (Italy/Austria)

##### Invited Curators

Lara Ciarabellini (Italy/Brazil)  
Andrea Motta (Greece)  
Sinyagur (Ukraine)  
Paula Scamparini (Brazil)  
Larry Chatman (USA)  
Kyunghee Lee (South Korea)  
Ximena Echague (Belgium)  
Michaela Bosakova (Slovakia)  
Judith Rodriguez (Argentina)  
Małgorzata Wakuluk (Poland)

#### *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 2021. We have grouped the material into six 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.

*VASA Partnerships* describes the organizations that helped VASA implement its projects internationally.

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

The *Artist and Author Index* provides a list of all artists with links to their individual projects on the VASA 2021 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

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**Loredana Denicola***Italy / the UK***Love, Sex and Relationships***#60 Curator: Stefania Zorzi*

*“Love, Sex and Relationships* is a series of portraits and videos, which include questions to myself, to couples and to individuals who are, or were, in love, sex and relationships. Some of them I met in the streets, others were friends of friends, others I met online. Nothing was planned.

Simply, I went to their home, introduced myself and my video photography project, put the camera on a tripod, pushed record. I was there to listen. Through interviews, I enter an intimate space of memories, thoughts and feelings. We looked into each other’s eyes, heard each other’s voices, opened our hearts: we created a connection, we shared past love experiences, we related with respect embracing vulnerability.

I interviewed them individually, asking them the same questions I was asking myself at that time: does education, culture and religion confuse us? What do we fear? Do we choose how to live our life? What is love? What is Sex? What is a Relationship? Do we love ourselves?

Traditionally, a photographer searches for telling images of his or her subject. My approach has been, rather, to find out how the subjects of my project might portray themselves. I want to explore what it is like for others to be in a relationship.”

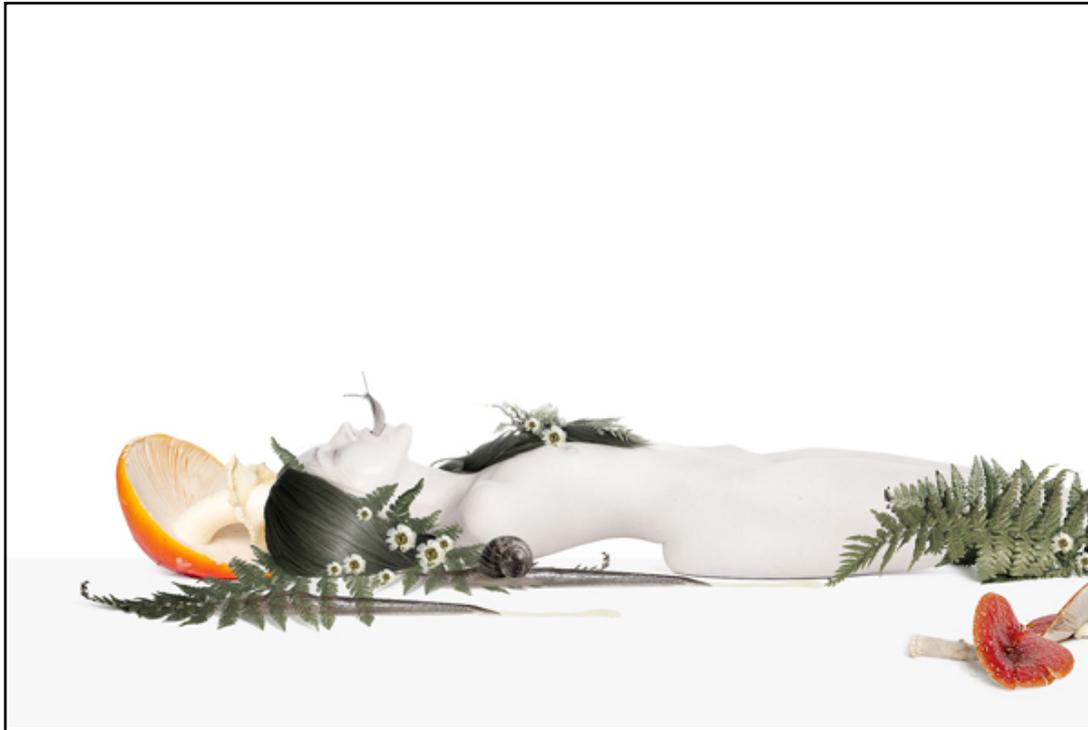
**Joanna Mrowka***Poland***How life is, as life is***#61 Curator: Stefania Zorzi*

**The individual photographs** presented in this exhibition form a unitary body that reveals the guiding thread of the Joanna Mrówka's vision. We immediately recognize the particular choice of light and shadows, the color contrasts, the readiness and sensitivity of the photographer in capturing the gazes of the people she met on her travels. But Joanna's photographs show us much more. If the photograph brings the three-dimensional back to a two-dimensional plane, on one layer, we actually discover that there are multiple levels within it. Joanna Mrówka captures multiple dimensions in reality and frames them creating a single image that relates to the different elements that compose it. We can see the structures that create separations in several situations, which are visualized at the same time. Frames, lines, walls, doors, windows invite the viewer into other world, other emotions, other ages.

We can also see this mode in her choice of lights and shadows, in the contrasts between the colors and the gaze by the people portrayed, embedding situations in other situations. Through the position of the bodies and the poses of the people photographed Joanna Mrówka captures different associations and relationships between the various characters portrayed.

**Ma'am Butterfly****Fern Flowers**

#62 Curator: Roberto Muffoletto



**“Pearls** are the only gemstones that come from a living creature. They are created by mollusks such as oysters and mussels as the result of a defense mechanism. When an irritant gets inside mollusks, they begin to cover it with thousands of layers of nacre to separate themselves from this particle.

An irritant was usually a parasite, not a grain of sand as many people think. The idea that the core of a precious, perfectly beautiful pearl is a gross worm... Natural pearls, created without human interference, are very rare these days, but man, driven by his greed of beauty, has found a way to make mollusks produce them. Cultured pearls are a result of the deliberate implantation of an irritant inside oysters and mussels. This process of creating pearls is the closest metaphor of me and the place that photography plays in my life and found in the world of nature..

The project *Fern Flowers* consists of several separate series connected by one element - a magic fern. According to the Slavic legend, an unusual phenomenon takes place during the shortest night of the year - ferns begin to bloom.”

**Swarat Ghosh***India***Beyond Street***#63 Curator: Sandeep Biswas*

**“India is known** for its diversity and the streets are unique. The prime motivational factor behind this particular body of work *Beyond Street* is to capture life around the everyday ordinariness of India in my own unique manner - unattributed moments of beauty, grace, absurdity, sorrow, delight, outrage and more. It is that magical space where I can communicate and create dialogues with these unknown and unposed strangers with whom I unintentionally built a strong bond with.

In fact, the neighbourhoods across India are very different from one another when you travel from rural areas to small towns and the larger cities. It feels like movie sets, with something changing constantly, with new characters appearing on the stage and interacting with each other at any point in time. From simple everyday occurrences to new encounters that ripple out and touch people continents apart - a great street photograph often merges them all memorably. It reminds me of the famous quote

“All the world’s a stage, And all the men and women merely players” - William Shakespeare.”

**Marco Circhirillo***Italy***The theater of The Ego***#64 Curator: Stefania Zorzi*

**“My pictures bear** my own sign: they show the multiplicity and fragmentariness of the Ego, in a process of splitting of the personality.

The theme of identity is the main one: the human machine (body/ mind) and the real essential self (soul). We imagine that we are one “I”, but in reality we are many different “I’s”. Considering ourselves as one is the biggest mistake we make: it is a great illusion. We are actually divided into hundreds of different “I’s”. From here come all the phobias of our mind, first of all the fear of death and the awareness of the passing of time.

Contrapositions and contradictions vanish when we can accept them as ontological to our existence, so that pain and grief also become means of understanding. Through them we experience real world’s boundaries, and we raise ourselves where the borders between opposites shade till every contrast is dissolved.

I use the camera to create my visions.

Everything starts from a vision. Then, this vision gets crystallized. There is an incomprehensible mosaic within each of us. My will is to make it visible.”

**Paulina Bajorowicz***Poland***Anaklia***#65 Curator: Igor Manko*

**The sea, seagulls,** enormous empty beaches — a paradise for someone looking for “getting away from it all”, dropping, albeit temporarily, out of the rat race. Seagull screams and splashes of waves... And then you see that weird structure, all glass and metal, standing in the middle of nowhere, evidently empty and unattended. And you suddenly realize that something is completely wrong here, that the sea, the seagulls, and the beaches -- they are all part of a larger picture, a phantasmagoric, almost lunar scenery. That there must have been a story, a history to that place, and quite a recent one.

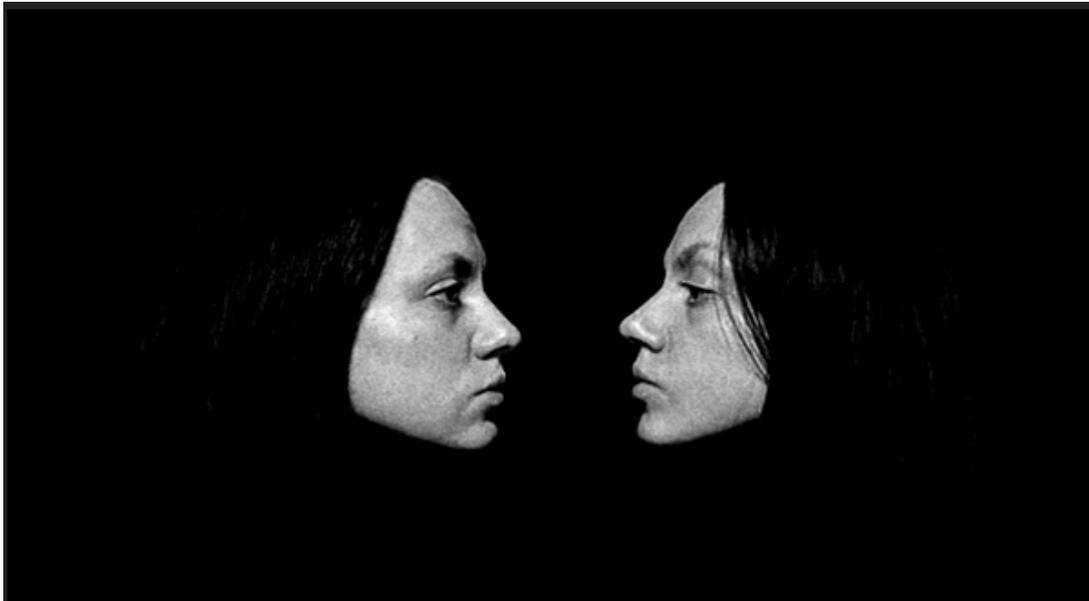
“At the first glance, Anaklia seems to have everything to be a seaside resort. But its recent history is strongly affected by Georgian-Abkhazian-Russian political conflict. In 2008 Anaklia was a war zone with Russian tanks in the streets, when Abkhazia, a state bordering with Anaklia, declared independence from Georgia.”  
(from the artist’s statement)

# VASA EXHIBITIONS



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

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**Maria Pleshkova***Russia***Innerscapes***Curator: Roberto Muffoletto*

**The VASA exhibition** by Moscow based Russian artist Maria Pleshkova presents three bodies of work: *Afterlove*, *Limbo* and *Days of War: A Pillow Book*. The exhibition presents each collection in three different formats: videos, still images and books. In doing so she invites us, as readers, to step back and consider a number of presentational elements in relationship to her images and their impact on our reading of her work as iconic and metaphoric.

Within the borders of each body of work she invites us to experience a symbolic and metaphoric journey. As with any collection or series, it is the experience, the individual and shared readings (meanings) of the work that is the result of our inquiry. I refer to “shared readings” from the perspective that the author/artist encodes their experience to be read first by them (it is part of the editing process), and second by an agreeable viewer (compared to a disinterested pedestrian) who decodes (and recodes) the codifications, the image inbetween the author and the reader.

**Polish Women Photographers***Poland***Obsession of reality***Curator: Małgorzata Wakuluk*

Image © Małgorzata Wakuluk

**Contemporary documentary** photography in Poland takes various forms, not sticking to rigidly set standards. Viewing the documentary work of photographers, one gets the impression that Polish photographers do not focus on popular news topics that are sensationalized in the media, or it is their main goal to dazzle the public with images full of bestial death, rich colors and war tragedies. This does not mean that such topics are not important to documentary photographers. Quite the opposite. Human suffering, hunger, war and the agony are extremely significant problems and issues. However, perhaps thanks to their female intuition, women photographers know exactly where all these misfortunes are. After all, the world, by itself, is quite alright. It's only with people and their behaviors that something bad has happened recently; and it feels like we are lost in this world.

Filled with the desire for possession and power, we forget about the simplest values in human life. Polish photographers, thanks to their history, sensitivity and enormous amounts of empathy, try to draw our attention to these lost values. Due to their sensitivity, but also curiosity about the world, they make us engage much more in their photographs than we manage to see every day.

## Polish Women Photographers

Poland

## Obsession of reality

Curator: Małgorzata Wakuluk



Image © Agnieszka Maruszczyk

**Their attentiveness** and sharpened intuition engages us through their photographs with seemingly extremely simple subjects. However, when we begin to look at them more closely, we can read the complexity of these stories.

Thanks to the photographs of Polish documentary photographers, we can learn about the habits of the community of small Polish towns while discovering the power of women in the other hemispheres of the world. What these seemingly very distant places have in common is found in the strength of their inhabitants. A force that allows them to resist every day the most difficult moments while making their dreams come true despite many adversities. It does not matter whether the protagonists of these photographs come from a small town near Warsaw or from distant Bolivia. Are they spend their last days in the solitude of the Polish retirement home or seek God in the Sicilian mystery, or maybe they are struggling with their difference, locked in their own homes, trying to fit in with the million crowd in Tokyo? It doesn't really matter where their stories take place. What matters is that each of them is important, because there is a women photographer behind each of them. It is hard not to notice that the common element found in the photographs and in the photographers themselves, is a caring empathy to human life; its passing and the troublesome human loneliness.

## Polish Women Photographers

Poland

## The Power of Imagination

Curator: Małgorzata Wakuluk

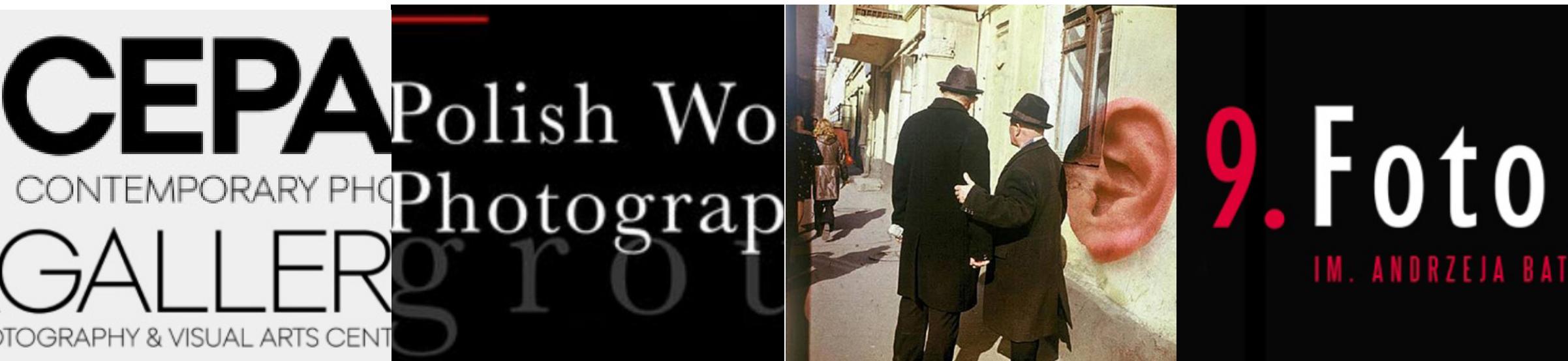


Image © Edyta Kielian

**Throughout the 20th century** the use of photography as an artistic medium became ever more abundant. In the hands of avant-gardists photography became integral to fine art as practiced by surrealists, expressionists, and others. Photography's ability to capture the flux of reality at a still-stand lent inspiration to abstract art across many media, and to abstract photography in particular. Conceptual photography is one of fine art's most productive tributaries. For the conceptual photographer, a photograph is an artist statement. Whether or how the photograph itself is a work of art is up to the viewer's interpretation. Artistic and conceptual photography offers an exceptionally wide spectrum of possibilities for expression. An artist who tries to draw our attention in an original way to see that which appears to be inaccessible to us in its thought and content. We only need to use our imagination to free ourselves from pre-conditions and to summon the sensitivity abandoned on the run, in order to see the creation of an artist who tries to perceive unusualness in everyday life; telling more than meets the eye.

Extract from it the content that we so often lose in our daily run. Look more closely to keep what is apparently invisible to the eyes in the frame.

## VASA PARTNERSHIPS



In 2021 VASA made several projects  
in partnership with organizations  
around the world

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**In 2021** VASA made several projects in partnership with other organizations.

**The Polish Women Photographers** organization and VASA hosted a number of exhibitions providing a platform for relatively unseen work. VASA supported the efforts of PWP in their inclusive exhibition in the 9th Foto Art Festival. As part of the 2021 VASA film series the work of PWP members addressing the political situation in Poland. The exhibitions were curated by Majgorzata Wakulk.

**VASA** provided exhibition (Polish Women Photographers and Italian photographer Livio Senigalliesi) and portfolio review support (Igor Manko and Roberto Muffoletto) for the 9th Foto Art Festival in Bielsko-Biala, Poland. The festival is international, bringing together photographers and their images providing a cross-cultural platform.

**CEPA Gallery** located in Buffalo New York (USA) is cooperating with the VASA journal on images and culture (VJIC) in an exhibition from the journal series “Photography and the Holocaust: Then & Now”. The VJIC series is edited by Robert Hirsch.

**Finally**, VASA repeated its 2014 *Kharkiv School of Photography: Soviet Censorship to New Aesthetics* project (extended and updated) on the Ukrainian Institute portal, Kyiv, Ukraine.

**Ukrainian Institute***Ukraine***Kharkiv School of Photography***Curator: Igor Manko*

Image © Boris Mikhailov

**Kharkiv School of Photography** is an artistic milieu that emerged in the 1970s in the city of Kharkiv, Ukraine. It was a school of aesthetic thought where “education” happened in clubs and coffeeshops — not a school to attend classes. Still, the artists created an original visual language that broke free from the dominant Soviet dogma in arts. It defined the artistic discourse for next generations of artists in Kharkiv and entire Ukraine and evolved into a distinctive aesthetic system, offering a documentary chronicle of over 50 years of its history. This project is a comprehensive online archive of over 2000 images by 29 artists of Kharkiv photographers arranged by generations, groups and individual artists.

The portal is created within #UkraineEverywhere program of the Ukrainian Institute — an attempt to reveal and systematize Ukraine’s presence in the histories and cultures of other countries and communities, to re-attribute the personalities and phenomena, lost due to longtime Ukraine’s non-subjectivity. Project partners are the Museum of Kharkiv School of Photography (MOKSOP) and Bagels & Letters PR-Agency, Kharkiv, Ukraine.

# 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

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## Robert Hirsch

USA

Photographs are excellent at reproducing Renaissance linear perspective and its aesthetics, but are not good at explaining what is actually happening. This is because photographic meaning is fluid and depends on its surrounding context, including the reader of the image and the historical moment as well as text, other images, and audio. The aforementioned cultural cues prompt how photographic images are understood and meaning is constructed.

Today we recognize that this ambiguity makes photographs unreliable as historic witnesses. However, when the Holocaust photographs were made most people accepted that photographs, especially such “documentary photographs,” were mirrors of reality. As a result, photo-based images have played and continue to play an enormous role in how the public comprehends the Holocaust. Also, this points to a divide with academics who are more responsive to the elusiveness of photographic meaning and the everyday cultural grasp of history.

The Holocaust, also known as the Shoah (Hebrew for catastrophe), was the genocide of European Jews carried out by Nazi Germany and their enablers during World War II. The Holocaust did not happen in a vacuum. It was the result of a combination of economic collapse, political rivalries with unintended consequences, and nationalism that fed into the world’s oldest form of racism: antisemitism – the hatred of Jews that was fueled for over a thousand years by Christian Churches.



Paul Johnson has argued that antisemitism is a “disease of the mind,” a hatred so peculiar that it deserves a category of its own. It’s a disease of contradiction and irrationality.

Simultaneously, Jews are covetous capitalists and conniving communists; Christ-killing religious fanatics and godless atheists; superhuman rulers of the world who drink the blood of Christians (Blood Libel), and subhuman leeches of society. It has been said that if the Jews did not exist people would invent them so they would not have to take responsibility for their failures and problems.

Beginning in the nineteenth century some German and other European writers, philosophers, and theologians claimed that the presence of a Jewish minority in society was a chronic problem that must

## Photography and the Holocaust: Then & Now

*A thematic series*

be solved. This “Jewish Question” became the subject of heated debate in a time when Jews were gradually being granted civil rights and equality after centuries of unrelenting antisemitism that included being abused, banished, confined to ghettos, and murdered.



## Robert Hirsch

USA

The cultural, economic, political, psychological situation in post-World War I Germany created an environment in which the Nazis (National Socialist German Workers' Party) could claim that their fabricated, superior, primordial Aryan identity gave them the right and the duty to create a super fatherland (Vaterland). This black hole singularity of National Socialism produced mass lunacy, a psychic blind spot<sup>[ii]</sup> that correlated with the Nazi's spurious racial hygiene theories,<sup>[iii]</sup> which gave them a "scientific" rationale for conquering, enslaving, and murdering everyone whom they considered outsiders. The German knack of seeing into the future that produced outstanding achievements in the arts and science was only bested by their ability to look away from the present.

The key issue Nazi Holocaust photography raises is not aesthetic or process oriented, but a communal question: Why do people engage in intolerant and merciless behaviors? Every Nazi Holocaust photograph reflects, at its core, the result of dehumanizing racism—the first step towards authoritarian repression and violence. Antisemitism is a timeless, shapeshifting, multipurpose, scapegoating hatred that transfers the responsibility of ones actions and problems collectively onto Jews. Antisemitism remains such a significant international problem that the German government is currently spending \$40 million researching its causes, in order to see what might be done to diminish it. Additionally, the European Commission has reserved \$28 million (24 million euros) to heighten protection around already



guarded synagogues and other Jewish events or sites. This installment inspects Holocaust photography made from the point of view of the perpetrators reinforcing the premise that every photograph made by a German, whether a common soldier or civilian, is about death and the insanity of seeking perfection through delusion. Each of these photographs has an embedded subtext of complicity—causing harm directly or indirectly by being involved in the unmerited wrongdoing of others. Their small, individual, self-serving actions and nonactions are what made the collective depravity of the Holocaust possible. Heinrich Joest (aka Heinrich Jost) was a German soldier stationed in Poland who decided to spend his 43rd birthday taking "tourist" pictures in Warsaw. Joest openly defied the German Army's prohibition of photographing the Jews imprisoned inside the Warsaw ghetto's 10-foot-high walls. On Sept. 9, 1941, he made 129 photographs, including images of

## Photography and the Holocaust: Then & Now

*A thematic series*

starving and dead children in the street, while walking in uniform, with his Rollicflex camera. Joest even came across Jews he knew, but did not photograph them. In a number of photographs, he recorded another German soldier buying items at bargain prices from desperate Jews who needed money for black market food and coal. He did not show his "sight-seer" photographs to anyone until shortly before his death when he gave them to Günther Schwarberg of the German magazine *Der Stern*. In comments to Schwarberg, Joest said: "In my letters home I didn't say anything about what I'd seen. I didn't want to upset my family. I thought, 'What sort of a world is this?' I didn't tell my comrades anything either. Later on, when they burned down the ghetto, we didn't pay any attention." *Der Stern* declined to publish any of the photographs, but in 1987, turned them over to the Yad Vashem Museum in Israel.

Joest's raw photographs provide a candid, gut-wrenching record of ghetto prisoners suffering from extreme lack of housing, food, medicine, or sanitation and offer a tragic foreshadowing to what would befall the 500,000 Polish Jews locked up in a 2.4-square-mile area. In all likelihood, every person in every photograph was eventually gassed. Psychologically, why would a middle-aged man want to spend his birthday photographing a nonstop horror show of death? It would have been highly unusual for anyone at that time to spend the money for film, developing, and printing for so many photographs on any subject. Was Joest curious?

## Sabine Kutt

Germany

To understand the feminine element in photography, it is best to ask ourselves a series of questions such as: What is the feminine element, and is it given or acquired? Why is this topic essential and current and what is its social relevance?

First of all, the question arises whether this specifically feminine element even exists. And if we answer that positively, why it matters to photography. The answer to this question is a very clear 'yes', because the female as well as the male sex are determined biologically by birth. The socio-cultural component is then added by the social conditions and the individual living conditions. From this it follows that there is an especially female form of existence, connected with corresponding perceptions, worlds of thoughts and the resulting actions. Just as there is a male perception, a male view of the world, connected to a corresponding value system.

The research results from the neurosciences provide evidence of the emotional and intellectual differences. Since the latest findings from brain research in the 1990s and with the help of studies and many educational books, such as the Australian couple Allen and Barbara Pease, the differences have been clearly identified and made known to a wide audience. For example, it is scientifically proven that male and female differences are to a far greater extent a product of biology than a product of social circumstances. We are different because our brains are built differently. As a result, we experience the world differently, have different values and set different priorities. Not better or worse, but different.

What we have to keep in mind with the feminine element is the fact that male perspectives quite naturally determine our everyday life. They accompany us through our lives and are often not perceived as specifically male. It is quite simply the general and therefore binding social perspective. There is mostly consensus about this. But this is exactly the beginning of the distortion and the violent displacement of the feminine gaze.

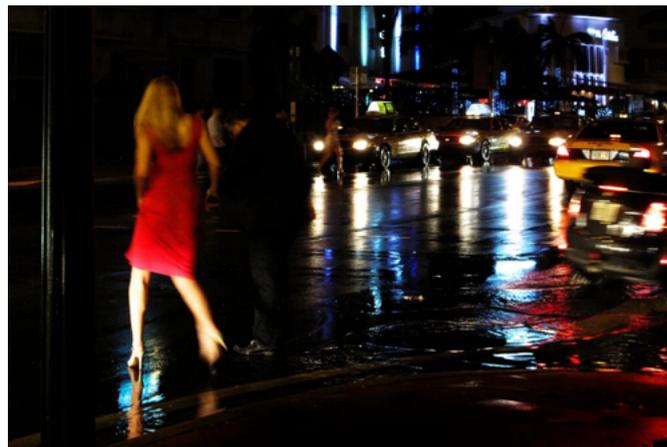


image © Erika Anna Schumacher

***To break away from these distortions and repressions is a challenge. When women part with the generally applicable observation patterns, they usually go through a long process. It leads from perception to knowledge and finally to a change in consciousness.***

What we perceive is interpreted and judged by our value system. This in turn triggers feelings and resulting

## Only women can do that

*A thematic series*

actions. In the main, it revolves around questions of self-determination. What do we decide for ourselves and what do others decide for us, even against our will? In this identification process, existing values are therefore questioned and replaced by new ones. These values can be very different things in other cultures and societies: access to education, the right to work, the right to vote, childcare, equal pay, opportunities for advancement.

And what is the relationship like in art? Compared to their male colleagues, works by female artists are commonly perceived as secondary. Women's art is therefore often overlooked and usually significantly undervalued.

The path of self-discovery for women often triggers a shift in the entire value system. This is a long and sometimes very painful process. A wide range of injustices come to light, and a lack of respect and deliberate oppression become startling experiences. The moment inevitably comes when women hit the glass ceiling with their heads. All these life experiences strengthen the feminine consciousness and thus sharpen the view.

The feminine element in photography is directly linked to the artist's conscious being as a woman. The more she clarifies this, the more consciously she can implement it in the work of art. Her constant search for self-discovery and redefinition leads to an expanded self-perception. It is not only about the representation of external things, but especially about the visualization of emotions and intuitivism.

## Linda Troeller: Personal Opera

Germany

When the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, there was a storm of contacts between the previously separated people. The citizens of the still existing GDR, locked up behind the wall for so long, discovered the world for themselves and the world came to get to know the communist east. In this great whirlwind, I met Linda Troeller for the first time. She had traveled to Leipzig to meet women and to photograph them in their surroundings. At that time, I was working as a ballet master and choreographer at the Schauspielhaus Leipzig and as a dance teacher at the State Ballet School. I introduced Linda to many women and was also her city guide at the same time. During these excursions we found perfect backdrops for Linda's photos. Her way of working as a photographer was extremely interesting to me. It was the exact opposite of what happens in choreography. In choreography, every movement, every gaze is placed. Nothing is left to chance. In contrast, Linda's photos were hardly posed. They arose more out of spontaneity. They appeared almost by accident. Linda's sense of the moment and the situation was fascinating.

When I was in New York for the first time in the mid-1990s, Linda invited me over. At that time, she was living in the legendary Chelsea Hotel. When the closure of the hotel became known in the late 2000s, there was a large art party in the hotel, which was hosted by the artists who lived there. Linda invited me to this event and during this encounter our friendship deepened. This resulted in my first work as a curator. During Art Basel/Miami Beach 2011 I showed

a large Linda Troeller retrospective. Part of the exhibition illustrated her biography in photos. The other part presented outstanding photos that mark her career.



image © Erika Anna Schumacher

### Artist Statement About "Personal Opera"

In my self-portraits I call on a private, subjective

## Only women can do that

*A thematic series*

sensation to gather personal associations in an atmospheric and emotional style. My photography works directly and inseparably with changes whether it is a sensual image, or an image reflecting on identity or on memory. I wish to discover tranquility, unearth sadness, unusual beauty and the playfulness of the soul. When the viewer sees the work, it is my hope that its essence, punctum links to a larger cultural recollection that brings closure and discovery to their own progression. During lockdown I started walking in a nearby forest which led to challenging awareness of the bareness of Winter and the fragility of my age. Time had slipped away and my metamorphosis unwinds. Yet I continue to face myself without shame or imposed social fabric rules.

### Biography

After graduating from WVU in Journalism, MS in Photojournalism from Newhouse School of Communications, and MFA from School of Art, Syracuse University I assisted Ralph Gibson, George Tice, and Annie Leibowitz at the Ansel Adams Summer Workshops, Yosemite Park. As my art practice evolved, Robert Heineken, Director at UCLA Photography, championed my first portfolio and show at Everson Museum, "Greenhouse and Beyond."

I was invited to exhibit at the Havana Biennial by curator, Juan Alberto Gaviria, who traveled this show in South America from Centro Colombo America Gallery, Colombia. In Germany, the Apolda Museum commissioned me to photograph Fashion Catalogs 2000-2005.

## Sandeep Biswas

India

**Authors from various disciplines were invited to comment on the theme from their perspective. Authors come from linguistics, photography and video, critical theory and criticism.**

Nkosinathi Dlamini, Linguist, Austria,  
Mike Amrose, Photographer, USA  
Sandeep Biswas, Photographer, India  
Andreas Muller, Theorist, Austria  
Paula Flores, Filmmaker, Mexico  
Lawrence Brose, Filmmaker, USA

“If the artist does not create their own unique language then they are not artists. They are at best practitioners of their respective art practices. For a true artist is an innovator who thinks out of the box and creates a visual language which is singular and unique” – Dr Alka Pande (Art Historian, Curator and Author)

After a lot of speculation I feel that language has a tremendous capacity to control the mind. Even an artist is a controller of their own personal perspective and expression. Art like any other expression is also based on the fundamentals of the artist’s human nature.

Artists consciously and subconsciously are constantly dealing with their emotions at every possible level, which are derived from their cultural and social backgrounds as well as their past and present circumstances. These emotions traverse through their actions of making art, trying to reach out and speak to the world around them.

“Formulating an artistic lexicon is a complex process that involves both conscious and subconscious, internal and external stimuli and when an artist brings a unique experience and expression to their work it is a serendipitous combination of all these factors. I do believe that when that happens it is a wonderful ‘eureka’ moment.” – Georgina Maddox (Art critic and Curator)

Every movement in the process of the evolution of art, right from the first line that was drawn has also been responsible towards a further evolution of certain individualistic languages.

This process of communication has become an introspection for their critics to decipher its purpose for centuries.

“I think artists revisit an event / experience and rearrange things the way in which they perceive them to be. In my opinion, this process of reinterpretation makes things unique.” – Susanta Mandal (Artist)

Somewhere it seems that even the use of material in art involves a language. This can make an artist’s making process and conceptual thinking to take a desired shape. The concept and the action becomes an enactment of the performance which defines into a meaning. Therefore the language, the methodology of practice and its context keeps changing over time continuously replacing the modern with the contemporary. This continuous evolution over centuries has brought in a constant search for a present-day meaning and a deeper critical thinking, unendingly engaging the mind with a more unique and a powerful way to enrich the expression even centuries after a work

## Can An Artist Create Their Own Language

*A thematic series*

of art was created.

**“In the world where vision created identity and identity created definitions, what must one believe in or not?”**

For years Rene Magritte’s “Key of Dreams” has inspired me to rethink the idea of a language. This has constantly made me question the perception of our existing realities.

Why does one need to understand or completely relate to something to experience its wonders and uniqueness? The joy of experience doesn’t need the tool of language, it just needs to remain an experience, which is not obliged to be understood, explained or justified.

“If we take a broad definition of ‘language’ I think we could say no, artists don’t create a language, rather they use and modify existing ones, resulting in a more or less unique style, as every individual is different. This process happens voluntarily and involuntarily; making a perfect forgery, that is, leaving one’s self out, is extremely difficult.” – Juul Kraijer (Artist)

This also questions if the unique language is a prerogative of the artists, that guides the viewer to comprehend them as a recreator of a vision. I would also love to distinguish the viewer as a unique experience for the artist.

## Andreas Müller: Ohne Titel/Untitled

*Austria*

Regarding the question of an independent artistic language, Rosalind Krauss linked her critique to the definition of innovation and originality. Krauss shows how in modernity the same image forms consistently reappear as part of a different avant-garde, which is to be understood as a direct consequence and further development of Walter Benjamin's theoretical approach to the conditions of the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction. When with Benjamin, the aura of the unique and the original in the reproduction of artistic work gets lost, Krauss illuminates this process beyond this purely technical aspect. With the shift in the meaning of aesthetic experience in the art of the 19th century, which essentially ties the concept of originality to craftsmanship in the execution of artistic work, towards a stronger emphasis on intelligible experience in modernity, there is ultimately also a weakening of (the) authorship accompanied. Say we use the readymade as an example for modern art, it is embedded as a foil for theoretical and philosophical debates in an overall dispositive that receives artistic creation exclusively in a contextualized form, which at the same time deprives art of its actual autonomy. Marcel Duchamp himself said tellingly that he would actually not create anti-art, because this can only arise through indifference to objects and things of everyday life. In the consistent interpretation of Duchamp, art is therefore primarily dependent on our attention, and subsequently on the discourse about art. If every thing and every action already has the potential to be art in itself, and this is only activated by attention, then

the question necessarily arises how an independent artistic language can be still be developed today. It almost seems as if modern art has to deconstruct, dissolve and rediscover itself in a repetition of the socio-cultural breaks of the 20th century, based on a philosophy of the post-war period, in order to ultimately keep asking the question of meaning. However, this sense always arises from logical-causal relationships rather than the sense of human experience, the subjective sensorium. On the one hand, originality by definition is outlined through an ongoing canonization of art in the sciences as the new, as a break with tradition, while art itself can be more easily integrated into this primarily academic discourse due to its intelligible part. As important as Duchamp was in retrospect for modernism in the 20th century, the fusion of his concept of art with current neoliberal economic strategies is proving to be fatal today. The urgency of an independent artistic language does not necessarily have priority in art today, but a dispositive art system that steadily consolidates its sphere of influence, in which everything becomes possible that is possible. Art thus becomes a matter of attention, which is advertised, but which can also be instrumentalized. Edmund Husserl found in his phenomenological investigations that we always first focus our attention on the space as a whole, and only then on its section. The clarity of the object of observation is preserved, as is the decision of a continuous or discrete observation by the subject. With the onset of modernity, the artistic work is (mostly) still clear in the actual space, but not its discourse, which has be-

## Can An Artist Create Their Own Language

*A thematic series*

come disproportionately independent. The language that is peculiar to art, which we paraphrase at best, but which we can never really speak about, has become noticeably externalized through the increased establishment of a canon. But it would be quite possible to talk about the basic conditions of an artistic language, as well as of its originality, by decoupling artistic creation from historical definitions and terms. If, in the discourse of art history, thinking about art is given up in favor of thinking with art, the dynamics of artistic authorship can ultimately be brought to the focus of attention instead of an overall dispositive. Just as Harold Bloom sheds light on the development of authors in literature, artistic biographies could also be outlined analogously: He shows how artistic creation, and thus also the respective artistic language, is always only influenced by role models. In a second step, authors consciously turn away from these models, but thereby create a passive dependency, because it is precisely in the negation of a role model that its influence is consolidated and confirmed. An independent authorship and language can therefore only emerge in a third movement in which artists become aware of their role models, but no longer have to react to them. Neither proximity nor distance to the work of their predecessors are relevant, since any formal or content-related overlaps have arisen from an artistic process that has outgrown the – also historicising – comparison. Originality as a criterion of an artistic language is implicitly described by Bloom as the end point of a development that formulates art and its concept of work as self-contained.

## Stefano Ruffa

*Italy*

## The idea of a Wall

*A thematic series*

I

Thirty years ago or a little more, a Wall fell. An important one, a watershed in history. It was a 156 km line of concrete in the heart of a city, in the heart of Europe, dividing the World in two. Height just over three meters, but inviolable as if it went up in space, beyond the Moon.

It was not a work of high engineering indeed, especially in the early years it showed up as an informal barrier of barbed wire, woods, and debris; then trenches, Friesland horses and towers surveillance. Indeed, in its very first version, it was nothing more than a row of men who became an ideology and structure. Nonetheless impassable. To keep inside who is inside and outside who is outside; to leave no room for nuances and distinguish on who we are and who they are, who is a friend and who the enemy.

II

It was an August night in 1961 and the Earth woke up with a new scar; yet another laceration caused by ulcers hatched in previous decades, one of the longer and darker nights of our reason, which too often continues to doze off. The sleep of reason generates monsters, one of them is war. The most common nightmare.

From Vienna to Sarajevo via Paris and Warsaw, from Berlin to Rome (6); Europe to the Americas, from Africa to Japan, moving from year to year toward a closer East. But that still does not let dawn be seen. Narcolepsy of the intellect, perhaps this is the illness that afflicts us more than others. Or perhaps, more simply, war and violence are characteristics inher-

ent in the human soul, which we pour into the world through words, thoughts and actions, every time (8) we meet someone standing on the other side of some kind of wall. The wrong one.



East German workers near the Brandenburg Gate reinforce the Berlin Wall in 1961. (Photo/research.archives.gov)

A small interlude to illustrate a nuance that is lost in the narrative, but it is an integral part of the complete experience of the journey presented here, born in the context of a room that is less and less a bookstore and more and more open studio and specialized library in uncommon and rare contemporary photo books: the last title cited, *Language is war* by Fabio Mauri, is reported and illustrated, proposed to deepen, but without having and offering real access to it.

It is a rare and sought after book, and the market says it is worth more than I can afford. Not for the importance of its content is clear, but for the scarcity of its availability. After all, that's how you calculate the value of an object, considering too often only one possible meanings of the term 'value', the economic

one, not capturing other possible variations.

Building a wall that leaves us all shut out from the knowledge of those pages, allowing us only to peek at the cover surface through the windows in our browsers of some online ads.

And a third rereading of Bertolt Brecht's work offers us a convenient passage for ending the break and returning to our path.

III

Going back on our steps we find a transformed world. A breach in a wall, a door opened almost accidentally on a November evening in 1989 suddenly erase old distinctions, by starting a fast transition from a side, and fueling the illusion of a World finally made of "Us" on the other.

By asking several questions. Watching on television the images of that incredulous people freely in transit through a checkpoint for the first time in decades, Laurie Anderson recognizes in those gazes something familiar.

The sparkle of a burning desire, a hatched flame too long under the ash of austerity: not craving for freedom, but consumption. People in line at bank counters claiming the 100 Deutsche Mark as "welcome gift" offered from a generous Federal Germany to the newly found Eastern brothers, followed by rows in the wealthy boutiques on the Western streets, from whose windows appears the bright and luxuriant forbidden fruits of our Eden.

# 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

**Dick Blau**

USA

**Milwaukee Night and Day**

Curator: Roberto Muffoletto

Still from *Milwaukee Night and Day* © Dick Blau

Dick Blau has a BA from Harvard in English and a PhD from Yale in American Studies. He is the author of six photo books and a number of films on subjects ranging from interpersonal family dynamics to the music and culture of the Roma of northern Greece. Dick is also known as co-founder of the internationally ranked UWM Film Department, which he chaired from 1980-2000. During his career as a teacher, Dick has attracted a great many gifted students, among them is Chris Smith, whose MFA thesis, *American Movie* won the Grand Prize for Documentary at the Sundance Film Festival and was listed by the New York Times as one of the best 1000 movies ever made.

**Milwaukee Night and Day***Length: 18:21**Sound and editing: Yinan Wang**Music: Nii Noi Nortey, Niii Otoo Annan, Alex Coke, Tom Guralnick, and Steve Feld*

*Milwaukee Night and Day* is a film that Blau has spun out of the 1,000 pictures he's made on block where he lives in the very center of Milwaukee — at the intersection of Plankinton and Wisconsin Aves — over the last ten years. It is the newest version of what he calls his “730 Project,” named after the building where he lives.

Blau says, “When I first made my pictures, my thought was to register Everything notable around me at all times of the day and night and in all the seasons — to look intently at things as different as the weather, the pavement, and the protests. When I came to make this film, my idea was to tease out the strands of thought and feeling inside or underneath the images that I'd made and spin them into an allusive, an atmospheric story that took the form of a Joycean day.”

**Yinan Wang***USA/China*Still from *Yen Ching* © Yinan Wang**Yen Ching: a family portrait of a Chinese restaurant***Curator: Roberto Muffoletto*

Yinan Wang was born and raised in Beijing. He is a filmmaker, photographer, occasional stop-motion-animator. In China, Yinan studied visual arts and film, making documentaries about minority cultures. In 2013 he transferred to UWM where he finished up his BFA degree in Film, Video, Animation, and New Genres at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Now he is working on his MFA at Temple University.

He is currently living in Milwaukee, teaching online for Temple, and working on his MFA thesis, a study of Chinese immigrants in the US.

**Yen Ching***Directed by Yinan Wang**Length: 64:20*

*Yen Ching* is a 60-minute documentary film taking a fresh look at the family dynamics in a Chinese restaurant of the same name. The film takes an intimate look at the how a typical Chinese restaurant owner, named Chen, and his children, practice their very different American dreams. *Yen Ching* sheds light on the Chinese restaurant owner's life as it explores his dilemma. Neither of his sons, for very different reasons, wants to follow the traditional Chinese/Chinese-American path in which children take over the family business.

**A 1987 film by Paul Sharits**

USA

**The Buffalo Series**

Curator: Roberto Muffoletto

*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).

**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 Women 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 Women Photographers group and VASA**

*16 min 34 sec*

# VASA ON PHOTOGRAPHY



Above image: Anthony Bannon, past director of the George Eastman House of 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 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.*

**Maria Pleshkova**  
Russia  
*Photography*  
February 2021



Maria Pleshkova



OFF Bratislava

**Steven Perloff**  
USA  
*Publication/photography*  
August 2021

**Karolina Jonderko**  
Poland  
*Photography*  
March 2021



Karolina Jonderko



Steven Perloff

**Dina Goldstein**  
Canada  
*Photography*  
September 2021

**OFF Bratislava**  
Slovakia  
*Photography Festival*  
April 2021



Dina Goldstein

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*Artists' and authors' names  
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