

1. How does studying history affect the way you photograph?

A part of studying history is finding stories and tell them to a wider audience. This is similar to what I do in Fine Art Photography, I tell stories, stir up emotions.

I wrote my master thesis about the photographs of Gerta Taro and Robert Capa during the Spanish Civil War and learned to read images, to study visual languages, and to recognize different visual tools to tell whatever story I like. I still write concepts the same way I used to do as a historian.

I am still interested in the theoretical aspects of the media of photography like the basic question of what a photograph really is and what it does to us.

2. You started in documentary photography. What made you turn to still life photography? Is it that documentary photography is limited when conveying the "truth"? What kind of world do you want to explore?

I love this quote by Jeff Wall: «I've been very much affected by living within the two founding myths of photography – the first being that photography creates truth, and the second that it doesn't.»

When we think of photography, we think of truth and manipulation at the same time. That's what I love about it. Photography is the most ambiguous media. And I guess you are right: this fascination for the ambiguity of photography lead me to fine arts.

Both the ephemeral nature of a light drawing and the preserving nature of photography are inspiring elements in my work. I am fascinated by the passing of time. I love to witness the lost, enraptured world of withered things: A beautifully wilted flower, the tenderness of an insect's wing, a hint of daylight on an almost forgotten world.

3. What genre of movies do you watch for inspiration? How do they affect you? Please name a few of your favorites.

From an early age on I've loved to watch film noirs and suspense movies by Alfred Hitchcock, Orson Wells or «Peeping Tom» by Michael Powell. I loved the series of Edgar Wallace¹ stories and the murder cases of Agatha Christie's Miss Marple. Their lighting taught me a lot. A huge influence was Wong Kar-Wai's film *In the Mood for Love*. He masterfully puts things and actions outside the frame where you can guess but you can't actually see. By not revealing too much he expresses much more. The choice of colors and how he frames the single stills is just wonderful. All these films taught me different visual tools I started to use in my own work.

More recent favorites are TV shows like Penny Dreadful, The Witcher or True Blood. I not only use the images as references but also dialogs or quotes for my work.

4. How do you decide on the color and type of flowers? What kind of flowers drag your attention?

¹ From the fifties to the seventies Danish Rialto Film produced successfully a series of Edgar Wallace films for the German audience. Edgar Wallace was an English writer who was famous for his mystery and crime novels. The above mentioned films are full of suspense and shot in b/w with dramatic lighting, featuring famous German actors as Joachim Fuchsberger, Klaus Kinski, Uschi Glas, Siegfried Lowitz, Karin Baal, Gisela Uhlen, etc. The films were huge a box office success in Germany, Switzerland and Austria.

My choice of flowers is almost always accidental. The first still life was a bunch of lilies which I got as a birthday gift.

I choose the flowers I work with very intuitive. Sometimes it's a shade of color that catches my eye or a special shape of the petal that triggers something inside me to actually pick it. Most flowers I gather on my way to my studio which is located in an industrial area of the city of Bern in Switzerland. I usually go by bicycle along a path through the outskirts of the city.

5. Please tell us more about the process of "An Apparition Of Memory". How do you observe a plant and carry out a work? Do you have any insistent layout?

Like a scientist I fix found flowers to old slide glasses — with tape, hair spray, or resin, and leave them in salty or calcareous water to dry. The flowers literally get dried onto the glasses. A beam of light transforms the semitransparent petals into photographs. The bright light is juxtaposing with the notion of death, considering the fact that all subjects are actually dead. This strange co-presence of light and darkness interests me. The enlargement of the image shows the gorgeous details that are otherwise not visible to a human eye. The slides are also shown as installations in self designed light tables and light boxes.

6. You mentioned that you have to work with “accidents.” Is there a particular “wow” time that stands out to you?

My working method can be described as something in between consciously staging and spontaneously working with what happens. This working method goes back to my documentary and street photography background. I do not have much control over the flowers. I can decide on what flower to pick but as soon as the drying process begins there is not much I can do to control the shape of the dried plant. In that respect all images of «An Apparition of Memory» are accidents. A real «wow» time was the first image of the series (which has the same name as the series). Dandelions are very hard to work with. They are incredibly fragile. A light draft of air makes the seeds fly away immediately. It was a big wow that the seeds stayed on the glass and an even bigger wow when I saw the final image. I still love it very much.

7. What do you think about the relationship between people and plants? Do you think flowers are less emotional than people? What do you do with the flowers after the shoot?

There is nothing as powerful as flowers to convey emotions. As commonplace as flowers may appear, they do touch our souls. People use flowers to congratulate, to commemorate, to mourn and to celebrate, to remember, etc. Flowers accompany us through life, they heal us, they are symbols to us.

In my work I try to transform the flowers into something more. Looking at my flowers you get a sense of fluid motion. The flower kind of gets individualized. They all seem to have their own story to tell.

I keep some of the flowers in my studio. The oldest are more than 15 years old.

8. How do you adjust the light in "This sense of wonder"? How does light affect the narrative in your work? Please pick a photo that you would like to elaborate more on.

Illuminated by natural daylight only, the flowers emerge from the shadows, unique and self-sufficient. The chiaroscuro still lifes reference the original meaning of the word «*portrait*» which descends from the Latin word «*portrahere*», translating «*to bring sth to light*». I drain the image of contextualizing content, leave literally a lot in the dark and focus on signs of transitoriness, leaving as much as possible to the viewer's imagination. I use the incidence of light as a dramaturgical visual tool and try to create an enigmatic universe that stimulates to dream.

In «Flowers XXII» the chiaroscuro light makes the flower incredibly dramatic in its gesture. We do not see whose flowers they are or where they are located. Like this the viewer can fully concentrate on and contemplate the flowers and their transience.

In «This sense of wonder» I work a lot with projections. And I love this idea: Projections are ephemeral like the electronic light that fuels the projectors: As soon as the power supply is cut off, the images fade into darkness without leaving a trace.

9. Throughout history, numerous artists have been trying to look at themselves through art (self-portrait, photography, video) and explore their relationship with their own bodies. Your works provide a objective way of looking at female bodies, and as the result liberated the female bodies from the male gaze? How do you find a way to look at yourself in spite of the (inevitable) constraints of the male gaze? How is your relationship with your body now?

I love my body but the male gaze does affect me too. My works helps me to appreciate my body as it is, as it has become over the years and hopefully as it will change over the years to come.

With my process-oriented work I question the representation of the female body in photography. I am struggling to break my own stereotypical notion of what a nude female body has to look like. I photograph myself, because I cannot objectify myself. Taking and making images becomes almost a performative gesture. I want to reflect on my own seeing: What one sees, how, when and why. And make this perceptible through art.

How to overcome the male gaze or gender posing? Is it even possible? It is - as Laura Mulvey puts it - «the ultimate challenge: how to fight the unconscious structured like a language <...> while still caught within the language of the patriarchy.»

10. What three words would you use to describe “An Apparition Of Memory” and “This sense of wonder”? (fragility/Withering/Decay/Death/New life?)

Vanitas, fragility, beauty of decay

11. What do you know about death? Is your work "facing" death as a way to "look back" at life?

Transience, the passing of time, and decay are center issues of my work. I do not feel fear or disgust but witness a lost, enraptured universe of withered and faded things. I think that my works

poetically open up views of decay and the process of aging, showing different notions of our own transitoriness.

Both the ephemeral nature of a light drawing and the preserving nature of photography are elements of my work. My images hint at the paradox of photography by making us aware of the inescapable passage of time while photography as a technical medium was intended to preserve life.

12. With the rapid spread of information and the rise of NFT, how do you think "photography" is changing? How do you adapt?

I love the analog process and still take most of my images on film. But I often combine the old technology with the new, bringing together analog and digital photography. This suits me well.

The digital world provides us with more and more commonplaces of cultural experience. The digital world not only takes up more space in our everyday lives, but also opens up essential questions about changes in our relationship to images and realism. So the question is again: What is photography and what does it do to us? With a twinkling eye I think of Neo in the movie «The Matrix». In the film, the protagonist Neo loses certainty about the ontological constitution of the space he inhabits and he has to think about the following question posed by Morpheus: «Have you ever had a dream, Neo, that you were so sure was real? What if you were unable to wake from that dream? How would you know the difference between the dream world and the real world?»

13. What are your future plans?

I am happy to share the news that «An Apparition of Memory» is going to be published as a book in the fall 2023.

I am looking forward to focus on my project «A Gaze of One's Own». I will work with my own body trying to deconstruct the male gaze. I will go a little wild and work with outdated film, cut negatives, tape laser copies together, plaster casts, work with overhead projectors, make collages and leave prints in the water to dissolve. It is going to be fun.

And I have shelves full of dried lilies ... we will see where they will lead me.