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(MIS)UNDERSTANDING PHOTOGRAPHY – WORKS AND MANIFESTOS

Concept and editing of the exhibition reader, published by Edition Folkwang/Steidl in June 2014

Selection of artist statements from the respective chapters:

I. Meditations on Photography's Materiality

„On the most basic level, everything I do each day is work with sheets of paper. I design colours and dyestuffs on paper and thereby create objects that have more meaning than just the content of the image on its surface. This idea marks the beginning of all my works. How is significance given to a piece of paper? The material itself is industrially produced and doesn't have its own means of expression. Our humanity, our brain fills it with life. The crucial point is how we design the things on paper in order to make them a representation of life, making visible intentions and emotions.“

Wolfgang Tillmans

(in „Abstract Pictures“, Ostfildern-Ruit, 2001)

„...It turns out that a photograph from its basis features incompleteness and impenetrability that we don't notice when we look at photographic images. In front of a photograph we pretend that it is more perfect than we are. It is ridiculous and at the same time worth consideration that we are willing to blunder into a trap that we have set ourselves...“

Józef Robakowski

(„Abysse“, 1978, quoted from T.O. Immisch, Floris M. Neusüss (Ed.), „Die zweite Avantgarde, Das Fotoforum Kassel 1972–1982“, Stiftung Moritzburg, Kunstmuseum des Landes Sachsen-Anhalt u. a., 2007)

II. Social rituals, individuals and Sunday pictures

„What is photography? Is it a print, an object or is it a jpg on your screen? Does it only exist if you print it out? Does it only count if it's a big file, a TIFF? Or is it a snapshot on your phone or a slide projection, or is it the image you see in your mind before you click the shutter? Is it that great picture you missed, the time you ran out of film or the camera jammed or you didn't even have your camera with you? In short, is photography an object or an image, or is it a way of seeing?“

Zoe Leonard

(Excerpt from a conversation with Elisabeth Lebovici, recorded in Paris in April 2012. A version of this text first appeared in the catalogue for the exhibition "Voice of Image" at Palazzo Grassi, Venice, 2012/13)

„I see photography as being like an elasticated waistband. It can and should expand and adapt to accommodate different forms but can just as well ping right back to its original shape. Neither fitting is particularly right or wrong – just different comfort levels for the wearer.“

Clare Strand

III. Role models, afterimages and icons

„... We never see anything for the first time, we always look at an object and we come back to the picture we saw of this object the previous time. We always make one step back into memory, back to the previous picture. We always view our own memories of things, and not the things themselves. It is like one very long permanent journey into our memory...“

Zbigniew Libera

(Hedvig Turai, „The Artist Does Not Own His Interpretations“, in: „Artmargins“, Budapest 2005)

V. The evident nature of documents and the obsession of collecting

„One cannot collect just a little bit. I don't know this. I only know the excessive collector, the passionate collector, all or nothing. It is a reflex of owning. And owning is of course connected to knowing. If you want to own something, you want to know something....“

Bogomir Ecker

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„...Today we're experiencing the evolution of *homo sapiens* into *homo photographicus*: the image supplies most of our knowledge and formats our consciousness. In the age of *homo photographicus*, photography becomes a tool for pondering reality and its purpose therefore exists beyond personal expression or documentary goals. Images aren't simply representations of the world any longer, but rather, they become the world. With that in mind, it's important to learn to live in images, but most of all it is important to survive in images. Since photographers produce the most of the world's images, we must take great responsibility because we generate modes of reality....“

Joan Fontcuberta