

Essay 2020
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Effect of image in the time of covid-19 and climate change

to what extent photography affect our perception of Pandemics,
natural crisis and the climate change

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Intro

The aim of this essay is to discuss and try to understand the role of image its effect on forming our way of thinking and ideology, specifically in relation to nature crisis and pandemics. On the other side I'm also willing to bring attention to our our consuming lifestyle and its impact on the climate. I want to investigate and research the use of art, especially photography on the problem of climate change which is related to it. The use of Photograph and film especially on social media nowadays are major influencers that have a positive and negative effect.

In my research, I will use different approaches to gain a better understanding and see the subject from different angles. Moreover I want to discuss the use of text accompanied with the image and what it brings with it.

As we live in very special times right now with pandemic, I got interesting in starting to look at the use of image and its impact from the Here and Now and find the relation between pandemic and the other problems we are facing during the recent years. I'm also willing to compare the outcome in both cases.

During the last years, we have been facing several major problems from my point of view that endanger our future on this planet in the longer-term. And also endangering our peace, our well-being, our surrounding, and our very existence. From my point of view, photography is and has to play a major role to raise awareness and work against these major challenges that we are facing.

Thanks to efforts of several photographers and activists in form of videos and still images, Problems like plastic waste in oceans and shores, melting of glaciers, pollution, distinction of species, over consumption and the abuse of nature is being exposed during the last years and urge people to act and change something in their way of living, I'm going to take a closer look at some artists work working with environment and problematize their practice at the last part of this research.

The over consuming and extreme profit oriented industrial society we live in is a major player in climate change and the rise of new unknown viruses and threats that we have never seen before. I will elaborate more on this point in the chapter 2 under the section of Corona and climate change.

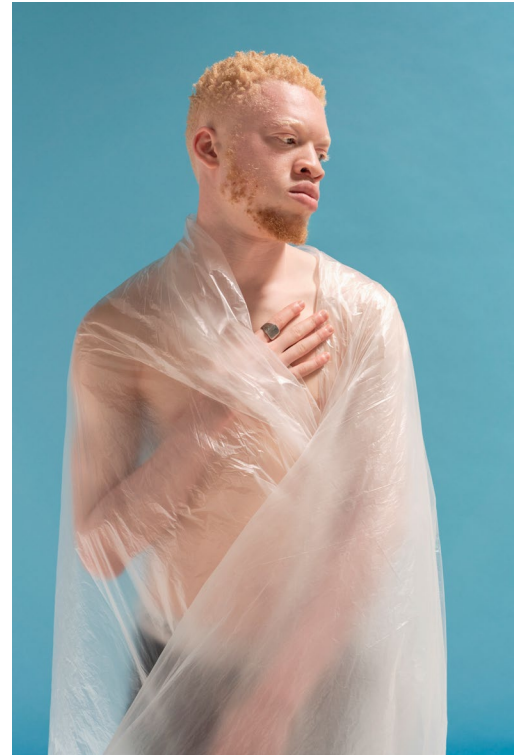
Chapter 1

About me and my process

I'm a photographer and visual artist with background in graphic design and advertising. How image is used in advertising and give utopian idea about products always interested me.

I'm history and psychology enthusiast and often I question the "raison d'être" and this affected my practice. In my work, I'm concerned with the critical sociological and environmental subjects.

Maybe also the long years of playing chess since I was 7 affected me. When you play chess you try to understand the opponents way of thinking and accordingly predict how the person would react to your next move. I find a resemblance in how advertising with an image or art works in that sense, it knows in many cases how the viewer will react to the message withing the image, like in the holidays brochures for instance. It's not a secret that me and you have at least booked once a trip because we couldn't resist the image of sunny sandbeach with the turquoise sea water. And it interest me to analyze how even the text used withing this image makes the message clearer or enhance it, even if it's puzzling or not made so clear.



Project about over use of plastic



Own project about exploitation of Africa

I like to use the surreal language that the advertising use to deliver my message. I use photography in staging reality or create alternative reality.

In other cases I use a photographic style close to the classic documentary. The photographers that influenced me the most in my early stage of photography were documentary photographers, especially Henri Cartier Bresson, he has contributed the most with Ansel Adams in forming my idea and understanding of photography earlier in the 2000s.

Henri Carrier Bresson is one of the pioneers of the photo journalism, his images are well known for the decisive moment, a moment where the subject light and shadow comes to a perfection.

Despite his amazing imagaging during an interview with

Philippe Boegner in 1989, Cartier-Bresson jokingly said that as a photographer he “behaved like a thief”. He thought a photographer is “somewhere between pickpocket and tightrope walker”, because taking a photo “takes something that belongs to [the subject]: their image, their culture”¹. Henri Bresson was well aware of how the camera violates it’s subject, a part from his good intentions. Henri’s work is unique cause at the first glimpse it seem to be carved from real life, but in many cases it was questioned weather he has some political agenda or another message he wants to deliver to the viewer instead of the meer reality. Henri Bresson’s work show the order and perfection even in the ultimate chaos. Susan Sontag wrote about Cartier Bresson saying “*For Cartier-Bresson, to take photographs is “to find the structure of the world—to revel in the pure pleasure of form,” to disclose that “in all this chaos, there is order.” (It may well be impossible to talk about the perfection of the world without sounding unctuous.)*”,²



Henri Cartier Bresson, Gold Rush: scrambles in front of a bank to buy gold. The last days of Kuomintang, Shanghai, 1948

I practised event photography in the night life and at music festivals since 2007 and I learned alot about people, people shows their anxiety when being violated by a camera. In a club people would prefer to have some drinks before being photographed just to get over their fear of being refused by the camera. Some never have the confidence to be photographed, i remember some telling me the cameras don’t like them. One of the reasons that people didn’t like the version of themself shown by the camera, they want the camera to lie, because they don’t find themself attractive. While beauty has been argued a lot since the time invention of the camera and the that some few fortunate look better in photos than reality, that seemed not to be the problem here, I have met people who could

1 website, <https://www.tcs.cam.ac.uk/henri-cartier-bresson-and-the-value-of-photography>, visited 01.12.2020

2 Susan Sontag, on photography, 1977, p 78

be imagined on a vogue cover and they saw themselves as ugly and others who are less fortunate and was full of confidence and accepted the reflected version of themselves in a picture.

There is a myth that is also noticed when photographing people that people tend to have more trust and relax more if the photographer has a bigger lens, even though there is a resemblance here between a weapon and a camera, the sound of the shutter when the camera is shooting reminds me with a shooting with a gun. If the photographer is having a small camera people tend to refuse being photographed because it seems that they are not so confident about the capability of the photographer. People felt more violated or found closeup images of themselves to be aggressive as it reveals more of their defaults than an image from a distance.

Through my observation, I see the rise of the selfie image has contributed also to teaching people more about themselves and how they look better according to their view, this reflects when a person stands in front of me and starts to pose and ironically if I took 1 or 10 images the result will be mostly the same. The ease of taking an image of one's self moved many people to practice their presence in front of a camera and be totally comfortable with it. Now the amateur is the photographer and the object in the meantime in collaboration with the camera.

Another interesting thing that I saw shifting is also the use of photography in intimate or personal space.

Many of the clubs in Berlin don't allow cameras or mobile phones with cameras in for two reasons, first is to avoid the touristic gaze inside and second is to keep the private space from being violated. They want to avoid people being photographed in their most vulnerable state when they are off-guard or while they are not aware due to the drug influence.

Many of the photographs in clubs is based on a trust developed between the place, the people and the photographer. Once you earn the trust of the audience you are allowed to enter into the private or intimate space. Often the people will ask that they would like to have images with their friends in the club, it's as if they want to frame this moment into memories for the future.

I also was permitted to take images at fetish parties, where people should be more vulnerable and anxious by the presence of a camera, 10 years ago this could be an issue for many to be seen partying in a fetish club with some kinky outfit. Interestingly in the recent years this vision is noticeably shifted, the image is not the enemy or something to be afraid of anymore, being naked or kinky with a cam-

era around in a public space is not a tabu anymore, exhibitionism seems to be a normal behaviour. People want to be documented and immortalised even in their most delicate situations. As Susan Sontag once said:

“The freakish is no longer a private zone, difficult of access. People who are bizarre, in sexual disgrace, emotionally vacant are seen daily on the newsstands, on TV, in the subways. Hobbesian man roams the streets, quite visible, with glitter in his hair.,”³

People didn't have a problem with me being around with the camera because they knew they could show them self as they want to be, it was a sort of a democratic process where the freedom to express themself was granted, my camera didn't judge.

I rarely use film since years now even though I enjoyed photographing on film and I'm one of the people that joined digital photography very late in 2007. The reason back then was the high cost of time and material for manual photography in Germany and the deminishing demand for analoge photography, it was almost impossible to earn a living while photographing on film and there was always the surprising factor that was sometimes not pleasant for the client. So in short it was starting to be cumbersome unless it was for art.

Ofcourse the use of digital imaging have changed the use of image dramatically. Not only for professionals but much more for the average individuals. Technology allowed us to creat an exodus of images. In 2012 It's said that 10% of the images ever taken have been taken in one year. more pictures are taken every two minutes than were taken throughout the 1800s.⁴

That puts into dimension, how much influence the image has gained thanks to the ease of use and accesibility of the digital photography. Today everyone could do images if they have a smartphone. It also brings another question about the authencisity and credibility of the image and which context it's put. Here text is also playing an important role that adds to the image. Camera brands have been advertising for their cameras that everybody could use them since the beginning of the end of the 19th century as Kodak advertised for their first camera:

³ Susan Sontag ,On Photography, 1977 , p30

⁴ Website, fstoppers.com/other/stats-how-many-photos-have-ever-been-taken-5173, visited 01.12.2020

“You press the button, we do the rest.” The purchaser was guaranteed that the picture would be “without any ⁵mistake.”

In my work I keep the use of editing software to the minimum. In my work that is having a documentary approach I prefer to stick to the code of ethics as mentioned in the World Press Photo website:

1. A photographer should be aware of the influence their presence can exert on a scene they photograph and should resist being misled by staged photo opportunities.
2. Must not intentionally contribute to, or alter, the scene they picture by re-enacting or staging events.
3. Must maintain the integrity of the picture by ensuring there are no material changes to content.
4. Must ensure captions are accurate.
5. Must ensure the editing of a picture story provides an accurate and fair representation of its context.⁶

I like to take photos as a reflection of reality in order to be able to keep the value of the content and its authenticity.

World press photo foundation is playing an important role and believes in the power of showing and the importance of seeing high-quality visual stories. It all began in 1955 in Amsterdam when a group of photographers organized an international contest to expose their work to a global audience.

Images from clubs
in Berlin, Armand
Tamboly

⁵ susan Sontag, on photography, 1977, p41

⁶ website, worldpressphoto.org/programs/contests/photo-contest/code-of-ethics/28580, visited 18.04.2020







Chapter 2

Use of image in times of crisis

Use of image in times of crisis

Photography is playing a vital role in our understanding and observation of the here and now, in times of crisis image is often replacing the word as Walter Lippmann wrote in 1922: “Photographs have the kind of authority over imagination today, which the printed word had yesterday, and the spoken word before that. They seem utterly real.”⁷ The power of image has shown that it could raise panic or care-fullness with some others, interesting to observe is how a similar imagery or news video is perceived differently. Here we get back to how the context the image is put in or the text attached to the image is again playing a role in the delivered message. Helmut Gernsheim once wrote that

“Photography is the only “language” understood in all parts of the world, and bridging all nations and cultures, it links the family of man. Independent of political influence—where people are free—it reflects truthfully life and events, allows us to share in the hopes and despair of others, and illuminates political and social conditions. We become the eye-witnesses of the humanity and inhumanity of mankind....,,

—Helmut Gernsheim(Creative Photography [1962])

While the statement is true the very same language is perceived by each group differently, one should not expect a language to be perceived by different individuals in a similar way. I think we as human don't usually follow the same visual code because it varies from one's background and culture and also the time its used. Me as a person of color perceive this statement as more a reflection of the western white man, how he sees and how he feels, but it neglects the people with a different culture

Images were used in several ways during the crisis. I will split this use into the official use: Newspapers, media and government and the private use: In social media channels like Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and Tiktok recently. With Covid-19, while the media was trying to bring the dimension of the pandemic which was in some cases dramatizing the subject, as photography and editing programs became more accessible to the almost everyone with a computer and a smartphone, this democratized the image and people could also state their opinion and have their voice heard by others. People found the image as a way of expression or lighten the hard situation with images that served as jokes, this was very present in the early stage of the pandemic with the lockdown in March and April.

As Susan Sontag mentions **“photography is not practiced by most people as an art. It is mainly a**

⁷ Barbie zelizer, Remembering to forget: holocaust memory through the camera's eye, 1984, P 9

social right, a defense against anxiety, and a tool of power.,⁸

An example for that is the project 6 Feet Covers which redesigned several covers of iconic band under the concept of social distancing.⁹

In the meantime, galleries and exhibitions went online, literally art went from the gallery room to the bedroom. Some new movements are being established, one of these are sixfeet.photography which is a collaborative photography project that began as an urgent call to photographers everywhere to share personal and intimate images from within this time of social distancing and confinement. Some photographers offered their images for sale to support cultural venues in London and Berlin. Now after eight months of the pandemic there has been several organizations, festivals and awards, calling for artists to present their work about living under the pandemic.¹⁰

We have all seen how our view and feeling shifting as the pandemic was not something that hit shortly and went but as it became a part of our everyday life in a degree that we started to forget how living before pandemic felt like, as if the images is the only evidence that remind us of how we lived before the pandemic. It recalls in my mind the image of my grandmother when she used to look at old family images and tell me stories from these earlier times.

By putting strict regulations and lockdowns and governments telling people to stay home, several social problems appeared. People found their escape in the internet, through social medias people were expressing their emotions, thoughts and opinions about the pandemic that most of people alive haven't experience something like this before. In their research "Framing COVID-19" Philipp Wicke Department of Computer Science, University College Dublin and Marianna M. Bolognesi from Department of Modern Languages, Literatures, and Cultures, University Bologna explained how War-related terminology is commonly used to frame the discourse around epidemics and diseases. The discourse around the current epidemic makes use of war-related metaphors too, not only in public discourse and in the media, but also in the tweets written by non-experts of mass communication.¹¹

Seeing people laying in intensive beds or being barred gave us a certain level of immunity to develop feeling towards it, It's like seeing images from the Syrian conflict after ongoing 9 years or seeing images of dead corpses in a war zone. We developed a certain kind of immunity towards these images that it doesn't shock us anymore.

"a pseudo-familiarity with the horrible reinforces alienation, making one less able to react in real life.,_ Susan Sontag¹²

8 Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, 1977, p 5

9 <https://www.designboom.com/design/social-distancing-album-covers-the-beatles-abbey-road-activista-03-24-2020/>, website, visited 04.12.2020

10 www.sixfeet.photography, website. Visited 20.05.2020

11 Philipp Wicke, Marianna M. Bolognesi, *Framing COVID-19: How we conceptualize and discuss the pandemic on Twitter*, 2020, p 1

12 Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, 1977, p33

Sontag once noted that The vast photographic catalogue of misery and injustice throughout the world has given everyone a certain familiarity with atrocity, making the horrible seem more ordinary—making it appear familiar, remote (“it’s only a photograph”), inevitable.¹³

One problem is that we are surrounded by the news of miseries from everywhere in the world on television and the internet. Our memory cannot cope with the load of images that is presented to us on a daily basis. Many people distanced themselves emotionally from what the media presents for them in form of news due to image fatigue. In the age of democratic photography where everyone, thanks to the technology could make his voice heard, it seems that the poor image has got accepted by the people for being cult, an image that has been circulated for long and lost its quality due to resizing and copying.

It’s an image that for many doesn’t follow a political agenda or mainstream media and is often embraced by system critics or conspiracy theorists. Poor images are thus popular images, images that can be made and seen by the many. They express all the contradictions of the contemporary crowd: its opportunism, narcissism, desire for autonomy and creation, its inability to focus or make up its mind, its constant readiness for transgression and simultaneous submission.

“The poor image is no longer about the real thing the originary original. Instead, it is about its own real conditions of existence: about swarm circulation, digital dispersion, fractured and flexible temporalities. It is about defiance and appropriation just as it is about conformism and exploitation. in short: it is about reality.,”¹⁴

Pictures of extreme events could give a more authentic feeling when they lack a good composition and illumination, it gives the feeling that such images are most likely less manipulative.¹⁵ The imperfection of the image is what it gives it the value as the information the image is delivering gives the impression of being authentic.

13 Susan Sontag, On photography, 1977, p15

14 Hito Steyerl, In Defense of the Poor Image, 2009, p9

15 Susan Sontag, On photography, 1977, p23

UK preparing to deploy army to fight Coronavirus outbreak

Monday, 16 March 2020 7:05 PM [Last Update: Monday, 16 March 2020 7:24 PM]



As part of Operation Broadshare the British army could be deployed on the streets of London to protect national landmarks

The image published by Press gives the impression of war and not how someone would practically fight a pandemic. Its an interesting choice of imagery.

How I expected
my apocalypse
outfit to look

What it
is



CLIMATE & ENVIRONMENT



Coronavirus shutdowns are lowering greenhouse gas emissions; history shows they'll roar back



A terminal at John F. Kennedy International Airport was sparse on March 7, 2020, amid growing concerns over the coronavirus. Plummeting air travel is one reason the outbreak is expected to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions. (Getty Images)

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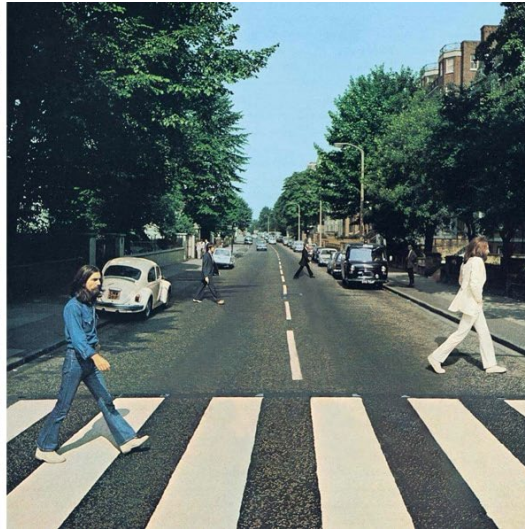
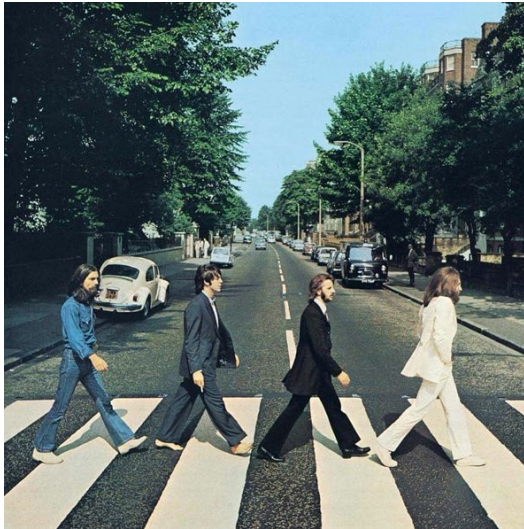


- 1 Coronavirus drugs: Where we are and what we know
- 2 L.A. County gives up on containing coronavirus, tells doctors to skip testing of some patients
- 3 'Time to wake up.' Newsom says, again urging Californians to stay home in coronavirus fight



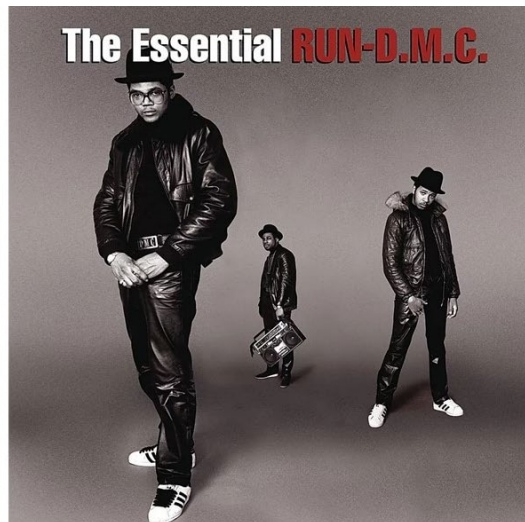
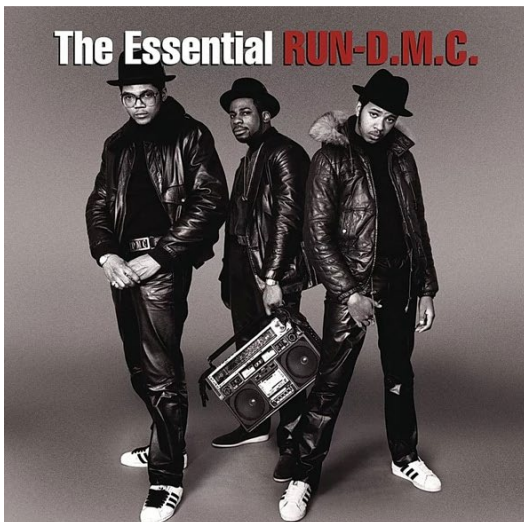
Shoppers left a 'staggering' trail of destruction in a north London Tesco

Credit: Twitter



★THE CLASH★COMBAT ROCK★

★THE CLASH★COMBAT ROCK★



6 Feet Covers, by Activista, Ad agency, Los Angeles

Covid-19 and climate change

There were question marks about if rise of new viruses like Covid-19 is having any relation to climate change which is related to our lifestyle. Dr. Aaron Bernstein is the director of Harvard University's Center for Climate, Health, and the Global Environment at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. He is also one of those who work on the frontlines.

in an interview with Insideclimate.org he refers "I think the strongest links I see are actually related, first of all fossil fuels as a source of air pollution, and fossil fuels, of course, are the major cause of climate change. The other connections I see are that the way we think about the environment as it pertains to health has gotten us into a rut with the emergence of infections like COVID and climate change. We have transformed the nature of the Earth and as such, we shouldn't be surprised that it affects our health. If you look at the emerging infectious diseases, the vast majority of those are coming from wild animals. We are having a massive effect on how the relationships between all life on Earth operate and also with ourselves."¹⁶

We react differently to a pandemic than the problem of climate change, this could be seen and felt from the regulations and tone the government and media is using as mentioned before that it resembles the language of a war declaration. We definitely reacted to the climate change but we reacted differently. Image has played a role in raising awareness about catastrophes over time, this had made a certain effect of raised suspicion towards the image and often question its credibility or need a photograph to confirm the truth of the other photograph, maybe a photograph from the same event from a different angle. Susan Sontag refers "**Needing to have reality confirmed and experience enhanced by photographs is an aesthetic consumerism to which everyone is now addicted. Industrial societies turn their citizens into image-junkies; it is the most irresistible form of mental pollution.**"¹⁷

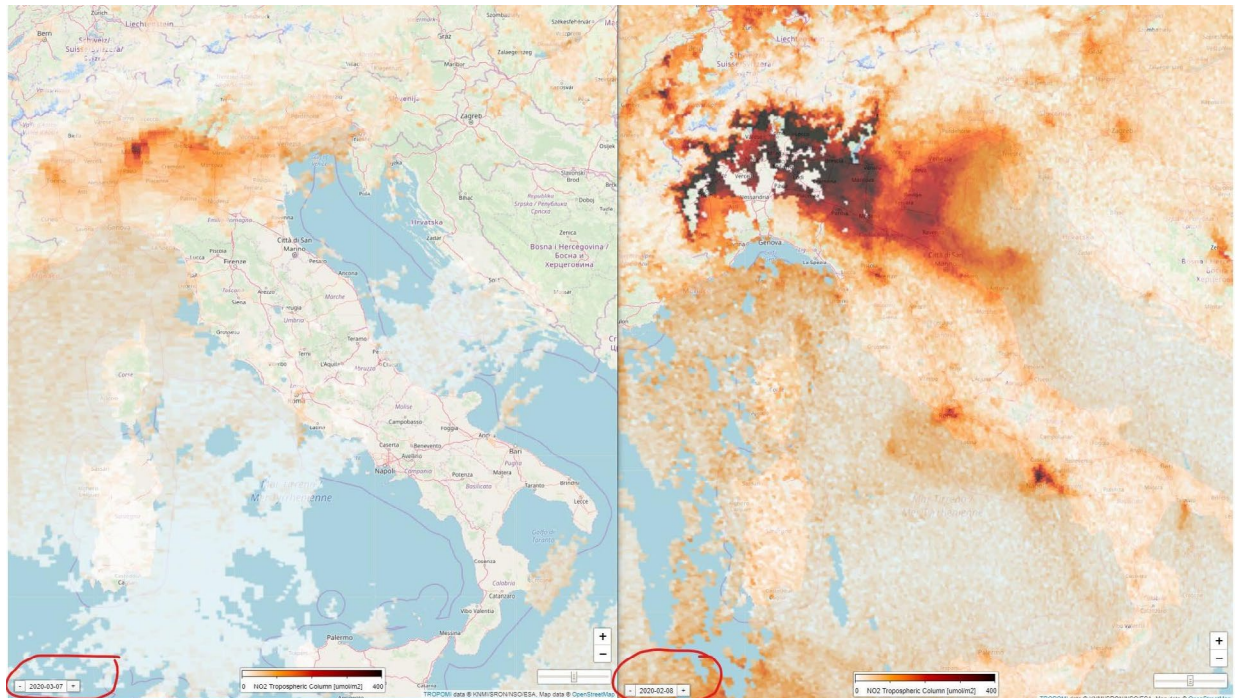
Dr. Aaron adds the following on why the scale of actions to combat Covid-19 and climate change are starkly different: Infectious diseases are scary because they are immediate and personal. They radically and rapidly change how we lead our lives, and they are an immediate threat to our friends and families. They hit all of our "go" buttons.

Climate change seems, to many, as an Armageddon in slow motion and its dangers can feel impersonal and its causes diffuse. It's easy to think "I didn't cause this" or that "it doesn't directly affect

me.” But there’s another way to look at it. Like COVID-19, if you’re concerned about climate change, you can take actions right now to improve your health and the health of your friends and loved ones.¹⁸

On the other hand, the machine made image that lacks own opinion and is subtracted from feelings helped us in understand our impact on the environment better. My opinion is that machines are more neutral and show more objectivity in contrary to us. In a unique event of the whole world is shutting down and taking a moment to breath. The satellite images from the European Space Agency faced us with the honest machine made images that delivers reality without modification. The satellite photographs shows the impact of a global shut down in March on climate to be very beneficial. Big drops in air pollution concentrations has been detected as millions went under lockdown or quarantine to slow the virus. The mapped images were published in a time sequence showing the drop simultaneously, comparing the air pollution level in Wuhan during the lockdown in Wuhan to 2019.¹⁹

Similar satellite mapped images has been published also from northern Italy, France and several parts of Europe. We are a single species on this planet that of course contribute for so much troubles in it but the latest satellite post-apocalyptic images from places we know as packed all the year around push some of us in reconsider our position and how we treat our planet.

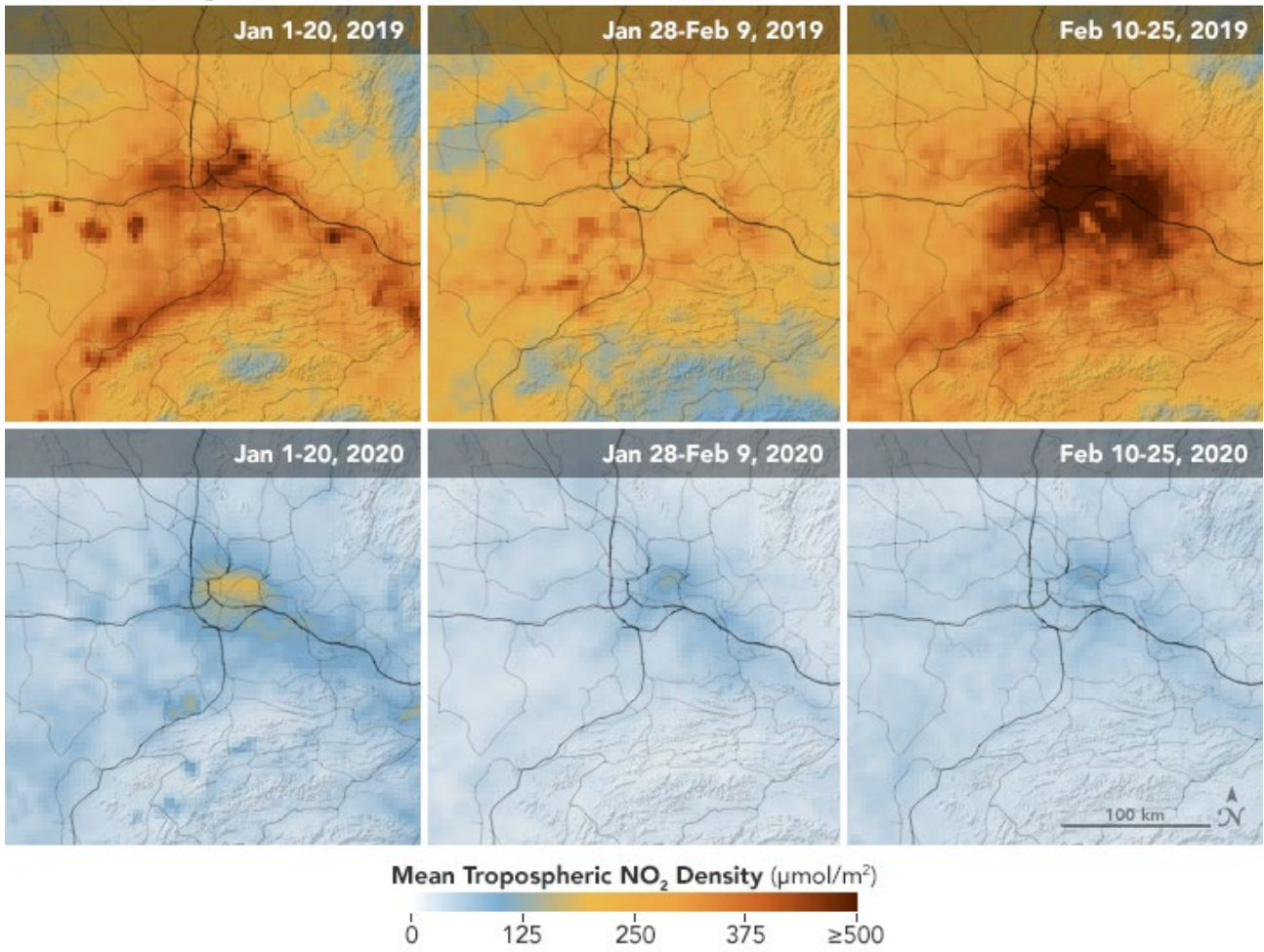


Italy satellite image sequence by ESA, NASA,

17 Dr. Aaron Bernstein, Environmental health news, <https://www.ehn.org/coronavirus-environment-2645553060.html?rebelltitem=9#rebelltitem9>, Mar 20,2020
19 GIS Lounge, www.gislounge.com/mapping-air-pollution-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/, website, 01.04.2020

Pollutant Drops in Wuhan—and Does not Rebound

Unlike 2019, NO₂ levels in 2020 did not rise after the Chinese New Year.



Wuhan satellite image sequence by ESA, NASA,

Melting Glaciers

Worldwide glaciers are shrinking, glaciers are having an important role, they work as a cooling down for some volcanic areas like in Iceland and in general it helps in keeping the temperatures down in summer and they are storing huge amount of Methane and Co2 gases beneath them, so melting of glaciers result in the emission of more of Methane and Co2 to the air which result in more rise in temperatures according to the scientist Keith Larson in the climate station in Abisko.²⁰

By the disappearing of glaciers the sea level is in constant rising, many inhabitant areas by the coasts are predicted to suffer from this, especially in areas known for its flat landscapes like north of Germany or Holland. Desertification is a more of a possible scenario, the biodiversity and ecosystem is suffering extremely from those changes.

According to the Swiss Glacier Monitoring agency, since 1850 glaciers were retreating constantly.

Michael Zemp investigated in his thesis at the UZH (university of Zürich) in 2006 the Glaciers and climate change. He used different calculation and observing methods in combination with a digital elevation model to analyse the glacier fluctuations between 1850 and the end of the 21st century of the entire Alpine mountain range.²¹

The use of photography is especially noticeable at this stage. Not only the scientific advanced imaging methods that is in many cases not comprehensible for the average person were used. Researchers took this a step farther by using time-lapse imaging techniques to bring the subject closer to the public by making the problem more comprehensible to the viewer.

One good example for this practice could be seen at the website of swissglaciers.org, where you have the option of choosing the year of documentation since 2007 and see how greatly the glaciers have been affected over the last 13 years.²²

while a photograph at the moment in a time sequence might illuminate the dimension of the problem or makes us feel the emotional guilt, interestingly this may seen differently in 100 years, the use of this

20 Keith Larson, Kuno course Climate art Abisko, video lecture. Recorded 11.05.2020

21 Michael Zemp, Glaciers and climate change: spatio-temporal analysis of glacier fluctuations in the European Alps after 1850, University of Zurich, Faculty of Science, 2006.

22 swissglaciers.org, website, visited 05.12.2020

images may shift, it wouldn't maintain the same emotional charge. It could develop a feeling of nostalgia or be used for documentation.

As Language and words mutate and change their meaning and effect over time, what was once socially accepted is not accepted anymore, its not appropriate certain works that were circulating normally 50 years ago, there are also words that shift their meanings and embrace another, or new words being invented, this makes communicating with the same language different in different times of history,

same goes for the image, the photograph has a function of preserving, mummification of a moment of time and space that is longest gone. I see photography as a way of communication between the

camera and the person behind it and between the image produced from the apparatus transformed to paper and the viewer. The english language used during the Victorian era and the writings of Shakespeare is somehow different from modern english. Translating this to the image, the effect and role and context of a certain image will shift by time. What is now for instance is an image showing a nature catastrophe could in the future develop a nostalgic feeling. Same as an example like the documentary films about the WWII, eventhough it was a drastic event and still is, there is something more into it.

The center for Biological diversity published an article about this reciting the following "Our planet is now in the midst of its sixth mass extinction of plants and animals. We're currently experiencing the worst spate of species die-offs since the loss of the dinosaurs 65 million years ago. Having this distinction means the destruction of the local ecosystems which means more unpredicted and unstable events. As a matter of fact in this field researchers and scientists still haven't agreed on the exact number of spices in the planet, the real figure estimated by the researchers in between 2 and 100 million species.²³

23 Eric Chivian and Aaron Bernstein, *Sustaining life: How human health depends on biodiversity*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2008.

Traveling, Blogging, Instagram and Digital nomads

People have been travelling more than ever before since the invention of the camera, The idea of a globalism, A world where you can be anywhere and get exotic fruits from and to anywhere in the world and ofcourse wrapped in plastic, working from everywhere in a cafe wherever you please or blogging about the places that no body knows about, all of them are influencing each other and photography is the tool here, the selling factor to an undiscovered place where you can have the unique location for a selfie for the social media. There are many examples where a place being destroyed by tourism as a result of instagram posts, famous TV series, documentaries or movies.

The drama documentary from Netflix called Chernobyl that made a touristic site from instragramers and others out of the place of other people's suffering.

Susan Sontag talked about travel and photography explaining why it seems natural to us nowadys to travel and take images everywhere **“photography help people to take possession of space in which they are insecure. For the first time in history, large numbers of people regularly travel out of their habitual environments for short periods of time. It seems positively unnatural to travel for pleasure without taking a camera along. Photographs will offer indisputable evidence that the trip was made, that the program was carried out, that fun was had. To take a picture is to have an interest in things as they are, in the status quo remaining unchanged (at least for as long as it takes to get a “good” picture), to be in complicity with whatever makes a subject interesting, worth photographing—including, when that is the interest, another person’s pain or misfortune.,”**²⁴

Indeed things have changed a bit during the last months which brought me to look at the subject from a different angle under the light of the new lifestyle we are forced to have right now. definetly our life will change after the pandemic is over. The kind of awarness we might have by the end of this crisis is a question that I ask to myself. For sure photography will still play an important role in it.

Chapter 3

Artists dealing with climate change

There are few artists who contribute to the subject of climate change such as Tyronne Martinsson, Ester Vonplonn, Olafur Eliasson, Thomas Wrede, Trine Brumiller, Jan Erik Waider, James Whitlow Delano and Klaus Thymann and some more who do projects explicitly about related environmental subjects like plastic garbage are Aljenadro Duran with his “Washed Up” project, Chris Jordan with his project “Albatross” and Liina Klauss with her project Salvaged Flip-flops.

Olafur Eliasson

The Danish Icelandic artist is known worldwide for his environmental projects. His project “Ice Watch” that has been presented in Copenhagen, Paris and London was a new project of its kind. He transported 100 Ton of glacier ice from the Fjords of Greenland and installed 12 pieces of them in a form of a huge clock in front of the city hall in Copenhagen and let it melt as a solid witness of climate change and the melting of glaciers. The ancient pieces of ice that exceeds in age the whole documented history of mankind, were timed to start melting as scientists published the latest report from the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. In contrary to the large extensive report, that is not easy to digest, the installation was something people could connect with and touch, it was a physical feeling of the whole problem. Eliasson hopes with his art to raise awareness about the concerning environmental challenges we are facing.

“I often make works with ephemeral qualities—I think ephemerality is a great tool to make us feel ourselves, feel present, feel ourselves feeling,” he adds. “With Ice Watch, the ephemerality also introduces real urgency to the work—we are running out of time.”²⁵

Artists like some hours after the installation the ice was totally gone, what remained was the photos, videos people and Eliasson’s team have taken. Eliasson’s installation has changed its form after the ice melted, it was memorized in the form of photography.

“photographic images, which now provide most of the knowledge people have about the look of the past and the reach of the present.

What is written about a person or an event is frankly an interpretation, as are handmade visual statements, like paintings and drawings. Photographed images do not seem to be statements about the world so much as pieces of it, miniatures of reality that anyone can make or acquire.,²⁶

- Susan Sontag

When I first saw the project I was fascinated but then I was sceptical as the project of Eliasson does not seem sustainable. In a way his project simplified the white privileged artist at its best. I wonder how this project would be perceived if it would be funded at all if its from a person of color that doesn’t have an established name. It seems that producing pieces of ice or even bring the ice from a glacier in Norway would have been more sustainable than bringing ice all the way from Greenland. But by knowing the colonial history of Denmark and the colonized Greenland, it translates in how colonialism contributes to the subject, if indirectly but the idea of being of possession of the resources of some

²⁵ Quotation O. Eliasson, Adele Peters, Fastcompany.com, interview with Olafur Eliasson, published 29.10.2014

²⁶ Susan Sontag, On Photography, 1977, p3

place occupied that wouldn't naturally belong to Denmark.

Eliasson wants to change the world through his actions, he is not only aware of the climate change, he is also concerned about the rain forests in Brazil and also about people in africa that lack access to electricity.²⁷

His art project "Little Sun" which is a small Led light powered by solar energy and is taking people who live of the grid in to consideration went as a funtional design into production in China and motivated locals in Africa to sell it and make a living out of it, he didn't just offered an innovative solution to a problem in many parts of Africa but he also created jobs to people living there set up a small business. Eliasson created a piece of art object that is also functional and contributes to reducing co2 emission and climate change. He brings optimism with his projects and works towards a better tomorrow actively.

Eliasson used also the medium of photography in the 90's documenting volcanos, hot springs and isolated huts in the nowhere's land in Iceland.



Ice Watch, 2014, Place du Panthéon, Paris, 2015, Photo: Martin Argyroglo

27 Jordan Koshins, fastcompany.com/1670566/branding-little-sun-a-work-of-art-that-works-in-life, published 09.04.2012



Ice Watch, 2014, Photo: Jørgen Chemnitz



Little Sun, 2012 Doha, 2012, Photo: Penny Wang

Tyrone Martinsson

A Swedish professor, photographer and researcher at Gothenburg University in Sweden. awarded a PhD at the University of Westminster in London for his dissertation titled Photographic Archaeology and Nils Strindberg's Photographs from the Andrée Polar Expedition 1896-1897. In his dissertation he employed the use of photo archives and demonstrated how by using the artistic representation this historic documentation could be brought back to life.

Tyrone works with environmental photography and its use within the challenges of climate change and the human relationship to environment. Martinsson works cross-disciplinary and cooperates with scientists and researchers from other fields in his projects, as an example in his project about the historical descriptions of the landscape in Svalbard and how our view of nature and landscape alters over time. His work methods are very different than Eliasson and more sustainable in my eyes.

How photography and thereby art has become part of the visibility and stance around what human activity does to the world. That the image can be a valuable method for the message to reach. One wants to create political art or wishes to spread a message to influence the viewer. Tyrone Martinsson is critical about the concept of environmental artist and when he present him self, he considers himself a photographer or researcher, perhaps also a photo historian, rather than an artist. It's important that the artist position himself, which affect how the receiver is seeing in the art project and how the information is processed.

Tyrone is deeply involved and dedicated to his longterm projects which makes him involved in depth in the subject he is treating and understand how to approach it, to extract the right expression. without a grounded curiosity and commitment to the subject , it's hard to maintain such extensive projects.

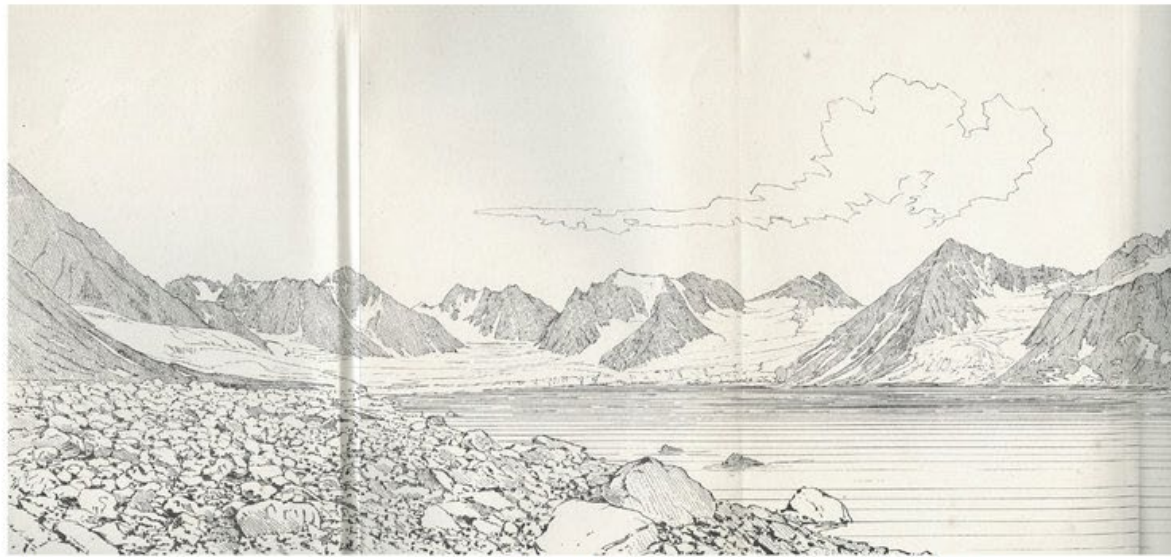
His choice of the locations where his projects taking place comes from a good understanding of the historical roots of the place and how people can relate to it. The use of the archival image and extend it by revisiting works multidimensional in combining the past with the present, that doesn't only illuminate the change over time but it makes this change measurable. In Tyrone's project Svalbad it's not about finding a new angle to photograph a scenic landscape, it's more about a follow up of the archival image that already exists.

In his project with Per Hulmlund that turned out to be a book "Frusna Ögonblick, Svensk Polarfotografi 1861-1980" or in english translated "Frozen moments, swedish polar photography 1861- 1980". Tyrone he could demonstrate the difference clearly and the effect of climate change based on his work and research in relation to the archival image.²⁸

28 Tyrone Martinsson & Per Holmlund, Frusna Ögonblick, Svensk Polarfotografi 1861-1980, 2017



1818



1861

Waggonwaybreen

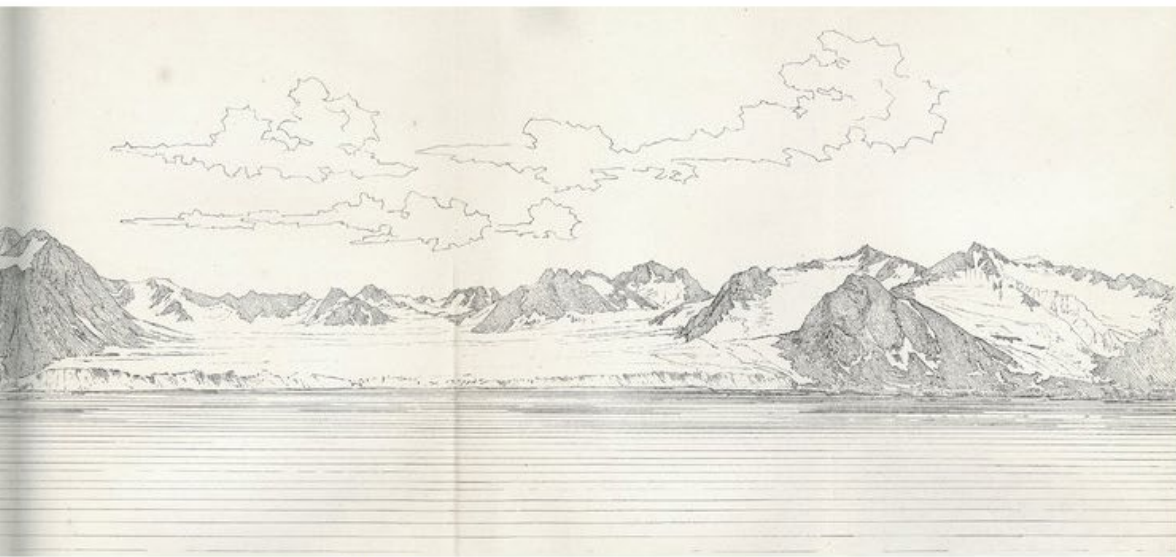
Hanging Iceberg



2012

Waggonwaybreen

Magdalenefjorden, Svalbard, Tyrone Matinsson & Archival images



Gullybreen



Gullybreen

Klaus Thymann

A Danish-born award winning multi talented photographer, artist and creative director that had several environmental projects. In a project of him called “Project Pressure, Visualizing Climate Change” from 2008 in which he used art as a positive touchpoint to inspire action and behavioral change. The project has commissioned world known artists to make more than 30 expeditions around the world. The projects were to be understood as a multidisciplinary that were developed and executed with scientists to guarantee accuracy.

Klaus Thymann filed several roles in some of the projects, also as individual artist.

“Project Pressure” has pioneered innovative, new technological strategies and forged partnerships with the World Glacier Monitoring Service (WGMS) and NASA. In 2011, Project Pressure was recognized as an official contributor to the Global Terrestrial Network for Glaciers (GTN-G).³⁰

Thymann shows a high interest in exploring and mapping. He is passionate about seeking out new practices and experimenting with new approaches and techniques. He is identity by his fine art photography and documentary photography where a delicate and sharp procedure is needed in order to make a powerful statement and inspire others to greater action and engagement.

Thymann is known by his expeditions and projects from too many spots in the world from disappearing glaciers in the Congo and Uganda to be the only one who was allowed to dive in a holy lake for Maouri that is known for having the clearest water in the world and is access to it is forbidden. Klaus Thymann has been on the top of the world in 6 continents above 6300 meter alltitude. Klaus Thymann is concerned about the rabid climate change and the methods of visualizing it and bring people to react to it. he is aim is to create eye opening artwork and documentary that project the dimension of climate change and its rabidity. Klaus Thymann is a Hasselblad Ambassador and winner of Sony Photo world Award and in 1996 he won the Kodak Gold Award as the youngest ever.³¹

Klaus Thymann describes his process as following: **“Mapping appears frequently in my body of work, not just in a geographic sense, but also applied to sociology and ecology. This is why subjects as diverse as gay rodeo, mining and Congo’s glaciers fit together. Mapping goes hand in hand with exploration, something I enjoy doing in a physical sense and also in a conceptual manner. The first involves going to places and bringing back never-before seen images, the latter involves creating new processes using technology. I have devised new trekking routes in search for glaciers, and I am the only person on the planet to have scuba dived in the world’s clearest lake.,”**³²

30 klausthymann.com/projects/project-pressure/#0, visited in 08.12.2020

31 hasselblad.com/ambassadors/klaus-thymann/, Website, visited in 08.12.2020

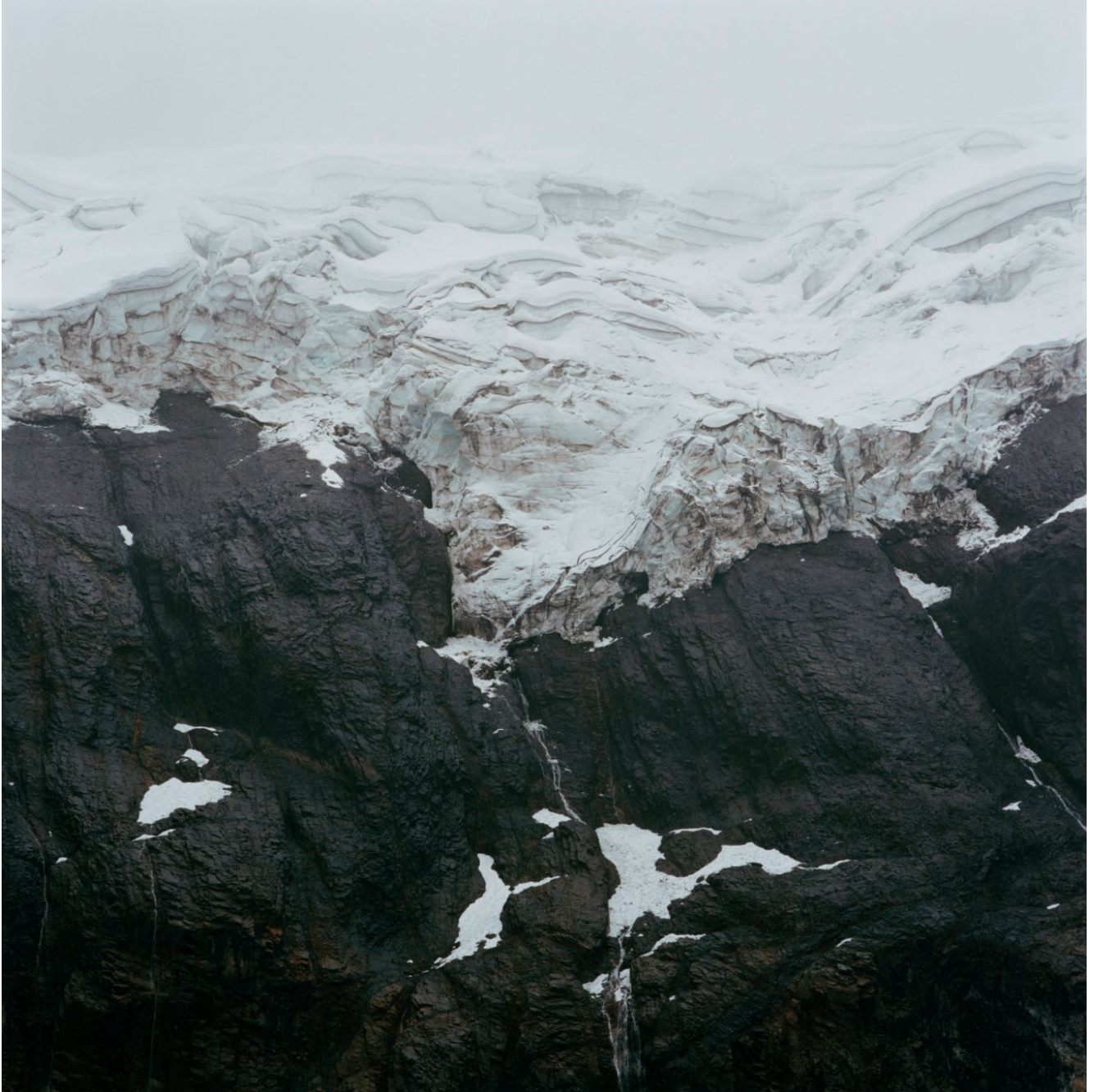
32 klausthymann.com/projects/project-pressure/#0, visited in 08.12.2020



© Klaus Thymann



© Klaus Thymann



© Klaus Thymann

Ester Vonnplon

Swiss artist that studied in Zürich and Berlin and later on she went back to her homeland, Switzerland and now works in Chur and Castrisch. Her trilogy project of three parts from 2013 till 2016 was about the melting glaciers. The photographs in Vonnplon's project reveal a vanishing world. They divulge a desperate attempt to counteract the effects of climate change. The tripartite project is composed of Gletscherfahrt ("Glacial Movement"), from 2013; Wohin geht all das Weiss, Wenn der Schnee schmilzt ("Where All The White Goes When The Snow Melts"), created between 2013 and 2014; and Wie viel Zeit bleibt der Endlichkeit ("How Much Time Remains of Finitude"), her most recent work from 2016.

Ester heard that people covering a glacier in Switzerland with sheets to slow down the melting process. But the artist was not travelling for that exactly in mind, she wanted visit the snowy mountains in summer to take photos, then she stumbled upon this glacier where she was not convincend about the practicality and effect it does. The scene triggered mixed feelings in the artist, she was touched by the scene she saw, eventhough its a sad one, she could find a beauty in it. **"This got me thinking about the process of dying, and the way we cover dead bodies with a white sheet. This was consistent with a recurring theme in my work about disappearing things. The glaciers are part of a world which is quickly going away., Ester Vonnplon³³**

One of the things that moved Ester Vonnplon also was not environment related, it was her interest in the concept of white, she sees that white stands for many different things in the western society and that is what fascinated her also, how white was covering, be it a deceased, landscape or dirt, she is interested in the abstractness of whitness.³⁴ The images are strong and poetic, melancholic and intimidating in a way, Ester worked cross disciplinary in this project by recording the sound of the melting glacier under the cover, you could hear the melting drops clearly.

Ester documented in 2016 the melting of glacier in Spitzbergen, in Svalbard, in attempt to collect impressions about the melted ice and vanishing galciars. not so far from the working site for Tyrone Martinsson's project mentioned earlier. She could turn the glaciers covered with cloth into an artwork, even though the black and white here gives it a more dark feeling of sadness which in the end serves the subject. Using sound medium as an evidence of the melting and endorse this in a piece in cooperation with a composer is also a something that makes her project stands out and try to reach different kinds of audiences which is great in order to raise attention to the subject.

Vonnplon developed this trilogy as part of a collaboration with the musician Stephan Eicher; this latest

³³ Jack French, lensculture.com/articles/ester-vonnplon-gletscherfahrt-beyond-the-visual, interview with E Vonnplonn, visited 08.12.2020

³⁴ lomography.de/magazine/332577-frozen-observations-an-interview-with-ester-vonnplon, interview with E. Vonnplonn, visisted 0812.2020

work is accompanied by music from the duo Taylor Deupree and Marcus Fischer. She considers her trilogy a requiem for the natural world that is slowly slipping away.³⁵ Her trilogy has been published as a photobook with Stephan Eicher by “bFrank Books” with the title “When the glaciers melt, will we melt then too?”. Vonplonn sees photobooks as a big part of her work, she plans her projects obviously with the idea in mind how would they communicate in a book.

“Anyone exploring barren, untouched nature, will be captivated by its tranquility and grandeur and begins to turn his attention inward. It’s not the sceneries that are captured by Vonplon’s images, it is the impact they have on viewers ...” _Dorothea Cremer-Schacht³⁶on occasion of an exhibition at the Museum zu Allerheiligen (Schaffhausen)

unlike the work of Tyrone Martinsson and Klaus Thymann, Ester’s work is more abstract and less of a typical documentation. The images by nature are documenting the event and the happening with more focus on the abstractness of the awkwardness of the scene. Ester’s work isolates the subject from it’s surrounding, a classical characteristic of the camera. By looking at the images which mostly shows the piece of cloth covering the glaciers I had to think about ghosts, it feels like under the cloth something that is unreachable, forbidden for the eye or in its way to vanish or invisible.

The photographs are surreal and real in the mean time, they remind me of early photographs of the late 19th century and develop a nostalgic feeling in a way. The photograph rendered the reality and transformed to something different and telling something poetic.

“Surrealism lies at the heart of the photographic enterprise: in the very creation of a duplicate world, of a reality in the second degree, narrower but more dramatic than the one perceived by natural vision.,, _Susan Sontag³⁷

35 Jack French, lensculture.com/articles/ester-vonplon-gletscherfahrt-beyond-the-visual, interview with E Vonplonn, visited 08.12.2020

36 Dorothea Cremer-Schacht Qoutein [Südkurier](https://suedkurier.ch/en/stephan-witschi/artists/ester-vonplon.html), stephanwitschi.ch/en/stephan-witschi/artists/ester-vonplon.html, visited 08.12.2020

37 Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, 1977, p41

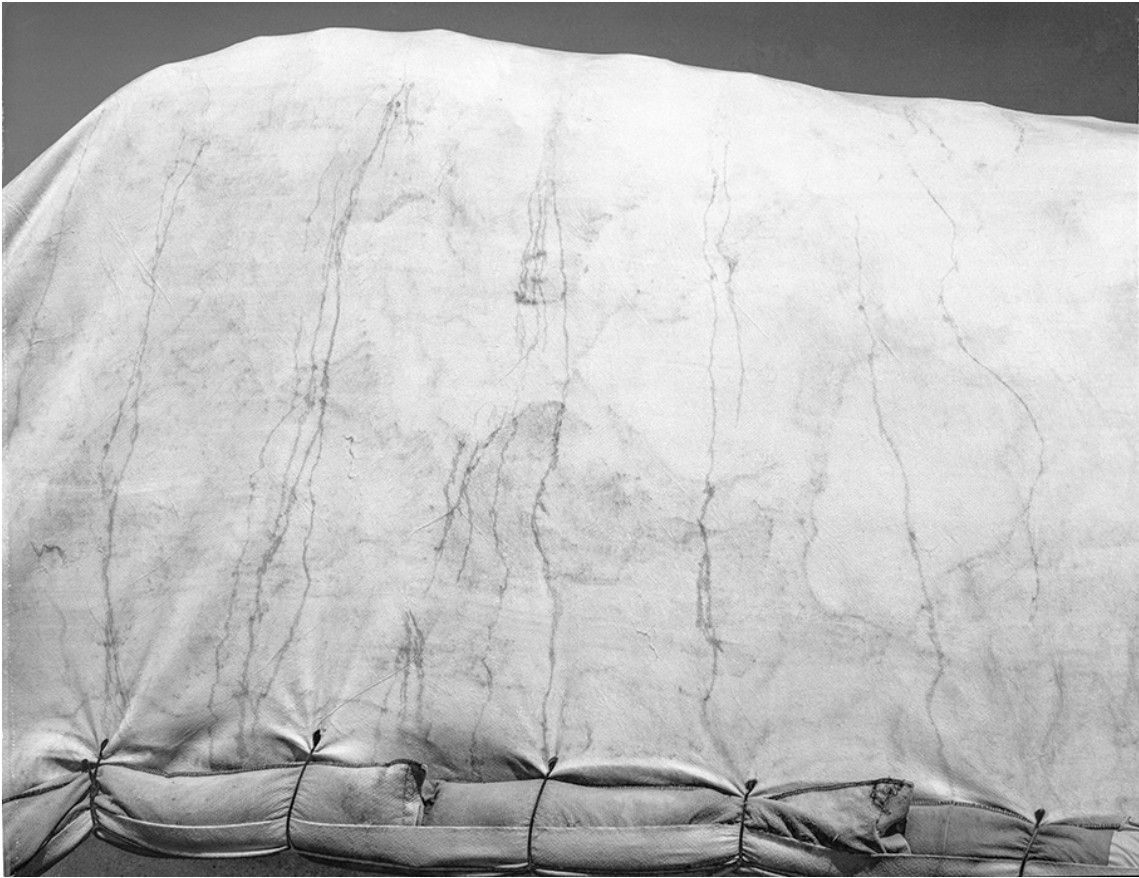


Fig 1,2,3,4: © Ester Vonplonn "Glacial Movement"



Thomas Wrede

Thomas Wrede is a German artist professor for photography and media art at the “University of Visual Arts” in Essen. He also photographed the same glacier in Switzerland, like Ester Vonplonn, in his project “Belvédère -Weiß war der Schnee”. Belvédère is the name of a famous old hotel that lies on the Furkapass in the Alps on the way to Italy and is now closed, the hotel lies on the edge of the Rhône Glacier and is now closed since years. Photo artist Thomas Wrede spent two years investigating the rapid retreat of the glacier and its transformation due to climate change.

The images of Thomas Wrede are closeups, it isolated the glacier from its surroundings and concentrate on the sheets communicating and reacting with the glacier. The sheets due to hard weather circumstances get ripped off after a while and need to be changed. The action shows the power of nature and the violation of humans with artificial object trying to alter or change the happening. It looks like a battlefield between nature and the human act. The images shows a surreal painting like scene. It the despair behind the idea which give a melancholic effect and call for action to the viewer.

I was not sure if it's advocating for a reckless act like covering glacier with huge sheets which brings the questions of what is the CO₂ emission and cost for the production of these sheets.

When asking the scientist Keith Larson which is located in the Abisko climate station, north of Sweden, in his words he said “it's plain stupid”,³⁸.

After doing some research I stumbled upon the word “Snow Farming”, a friend from Austria told me that they cover parts of the glaciers in summer and store the cover in winter, that is also proven to be successful and fundamental for the survival of the ski resorts on the Alps. The process happens by collecting the snow that still remain in April and pile it up and then cover it with foils or foam plates. The cost for the sheets and maintaining them is 2 Euros per m², the remaining question is who is going to finance it stays open.^{39,40} It's said that the sheets helped reducing the melting of the glacier in summer by 70%⁴¹

38 Keith Larson, Kuno seminar about climate change in the arctic and art, video recorded, May,2020

39 Daniela Wallner, snow-online.com/skimag/snowfarming-recycled-heaven-for-skiing.htm, last update on 30.01.2020

40 Tirol ORF, tirv1.orf.at/stories/527656, online article, published 20.07.2011

41 Chelsea Harvey, eenews.net/stories/1060075503, online article, published 06.03.2018

The Rhone glacier has a long history and special meaning for the Swiss people, since 150 years tourists visit the glacier and its ice cave, The history of Rhone glacier has been photo archived since the 19th century and the images could be seen at the “Gletscherarchiv”⁴², its importance lies beyond being a violated motiv for photos for tourists since 150 years, but it lies also in the demographic and economical change it brings by its disappearance as the glacier is the water source for lake geneve and Rhone river, beside the economic loss due to the disappearance of the glacier tourists, that could be seen in the hotel that is now closed since years for instance.⁴³

Since I’ve seen the images of Werder and Ester Vonnplon. I started researching and collecting information about the location and then I travelled there. I simply wanted to eyewitness of the action. And to follow up on the glacier since Wrede did his project. The sheets are now partially swimming underwater in the lake of the melted glacier tongue. When I saw the glaciers situation with the sheets, it triggered different feelings and impressions in me. Chaos, melancholy, despair, someone shouting for help and aggression. Have you ever looked at landscape and started crying? This was my feeling when I first looked at the images I took from the glacier when I got home.

This spot by the hotel is well known from the movie of James Bond “Goldfinger”, it might sound like a crime for some people but I actually haven’t seen all the James Bond movies, especially those from the 60’s.

After looking at those images and the images I have taken I must say, it’s a catastrophic development in such a very short period of time. We are talking about 4 years difference. The thing that made me decide to revisit Rhone glacier in the future and track its development.



Thomas Wrede, Belvédère -Weiß war der Schnee



Screenshot from James Bond movie "Goldfinger" 1963



Belvédère Hotel with the glacier still seen from the road, found footage, 1973



Belvédère Hotel with the glacier still seen from the road, found footage, 2003



Rhone Glacier, 2020, drone imagery, Armand Tamboly



— Workers cover the ski slopes on the Pitztal Glacier in Austria with an innovative white fleece in an effort to protect the mountain from glacier



Kitzbühel, snow depot covered in foamboards and foils, ©Bergbahn AG, Kitzbühel

Rhonegletscher

v. 4466 Furka-Grimsel, Rhonegletscher mit Nägelisgrüti



o. Jg.



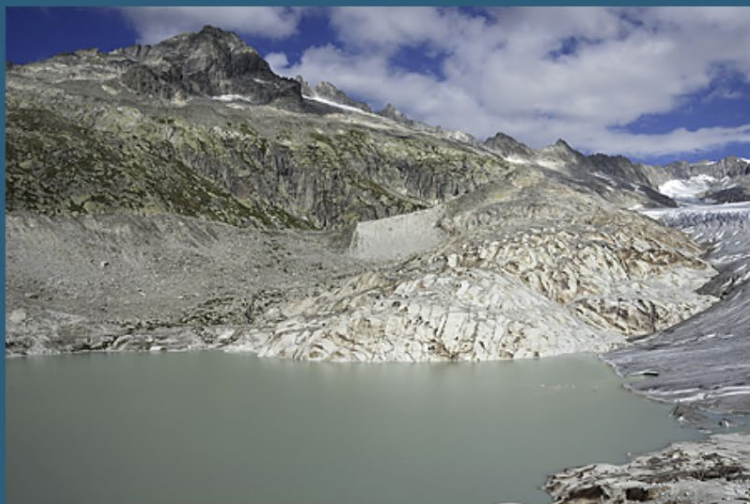
2003



2012



2015



2018

Wallis, Schweiz, o.Jg. / 2003 / 2012 / 2015 / 2018 © G6F

The use of text and image

Use of text with image is a practice known since the invention of text. In my experience I could relate to the combination of image in the “Ancient Egyptian” drawings in the graves and temples which usually tell a narrative about the illustrated character. The practice of image and text combined could be also traced in the roman era. Earlier in this essay there the mention of use of text with image in several parts, combining two different mediums and blend them together and let the text react with the image, there is a dialogue going on here and different ways of interpretation.

After the “WWI” the “Dadaism” was established in Germany. The new art that was regarded as political was attempted to create a new kind of art that was valued primarily for its conceptual properties rather than focusing on aesthetics. Dadaism used photo-montage to attack traditional art.

Much of the photography of this time evolved surrealism’s combination of imagery and text in order to carry the artist’s intention through to the viewer. By borrowing methods from the magazine and newspaper industry, these artists were turning their work into “advertisements” of the individual artist’s mind.⁴⁴

Rod Slemmons the director of the “Museum Of Contemporary Photography in Chicago” explains that placing words and images in the same perceptual space is not as easy as it looks. The artist has to keep track of four phenomena, not just the apparent two. First, the words have accepted, coded meanings and contexts that affect what we see in the adjacent images. Second, the words invoke mental images that might also conflict with what we see. Third, images have meanings and contexts that may alter our engagement with the adjacent words. Fourth, images can call up words in the mind of the viewer. The coordination of image/word/word/image is not easy, but the more difficult it is, the more possibilities present themselves for qualifying or clarifying the larger world.

Slemmons considers Walker Evans as one of the pioneers in his field, he made images including advertising signs. His images offer a good base to understand the contemporary inclusion of the text in photography. he purposefully explored both the formal and conceptual implications of placing text and image together.

⁴⁴ theartstory.org/movement/dada-and-surrealist-photography/, online archive, visited 08.12.2020

words in his prints force awareness of the limitations of the photograph. The two-dimensionality of the text reestablishes that we are observing a flat field of limited information in spite of the seeming replication of visual perception.⁴⁵

The work of the the American artist Barbara Krüger is circulating around the use of text in combination with the image. She uses bold words laid over her photography that challenges the view we and address political cultural construction of power, consumerism and sexuality. The work of Barbara Krüger is strong and dynamic, I could see also how it relates to modern advertising campaigns about political subjects.

Her poster for the 1989 Women’s March on Washington in support of legal abortion included a woman’s face bisected into positive and negative photographic reproductions, which was titled “UNTITLED” accompanied by the strong text “Your body is a battleground.” Obviously the artist decided to put the title in the image. A year later, Kruger used this slogan in a billboard commissioned by the Wexner Center for the Arts. Twelve hours later, a group opposed to abortion responded to Kruger’s work by replacing the adjacent billboard with an image depicting an eight-week-old fetus.⁴⁶

“The artist’s compelling and predictive use of aphorisms has blurred the lines between political slogans, poetry and the language of advertising, offering a dark mirror for our meme-driven age.,,_Megan O’Grady⁴⁷

In my recent project about albinism I experienced also with text statements within the image in a public space that is a form of political activism and what it adds to the photographs. The text reveals in the images diverts from the optic, makes us more connected to the person in the picture and the problematic he is trying to communicate through his written statement. The person in the image is leading a dialogue with the viewer.

45 Museum of contemporary photography, mocp.org/exhibitions/2000/4/conversations-text-and-image.php, exhibition article, vsited 08.12.2020

46 Megan O’Grady, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/10/19/t-magazine/barbara-kruger.html>, online Article, published 19.10.2020

47 Megan O’Grady, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/10/19/t-magazine/barbara-kruger.html>, online Article, published 19.10.2020



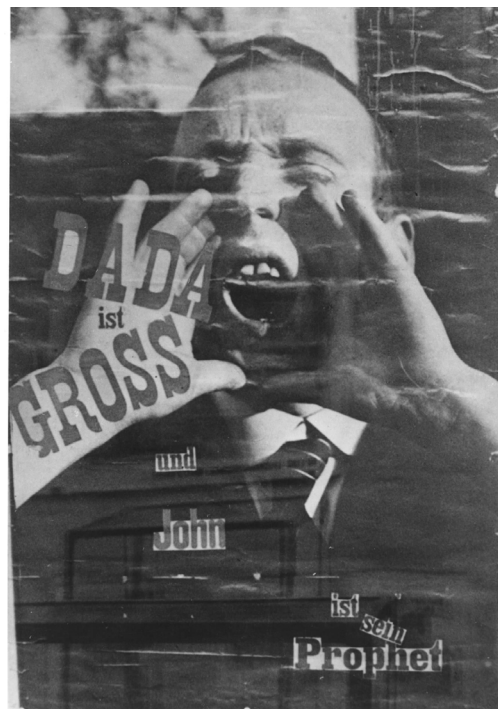
Images from the project "I will always be a stranger" about people with albinism, Armanfd Tamboly



Nic Aluf. Portrait of Sophie Taeuber with Dada head, 1920. Galerie Berinson, Berlin © Estate of Nic Aluf



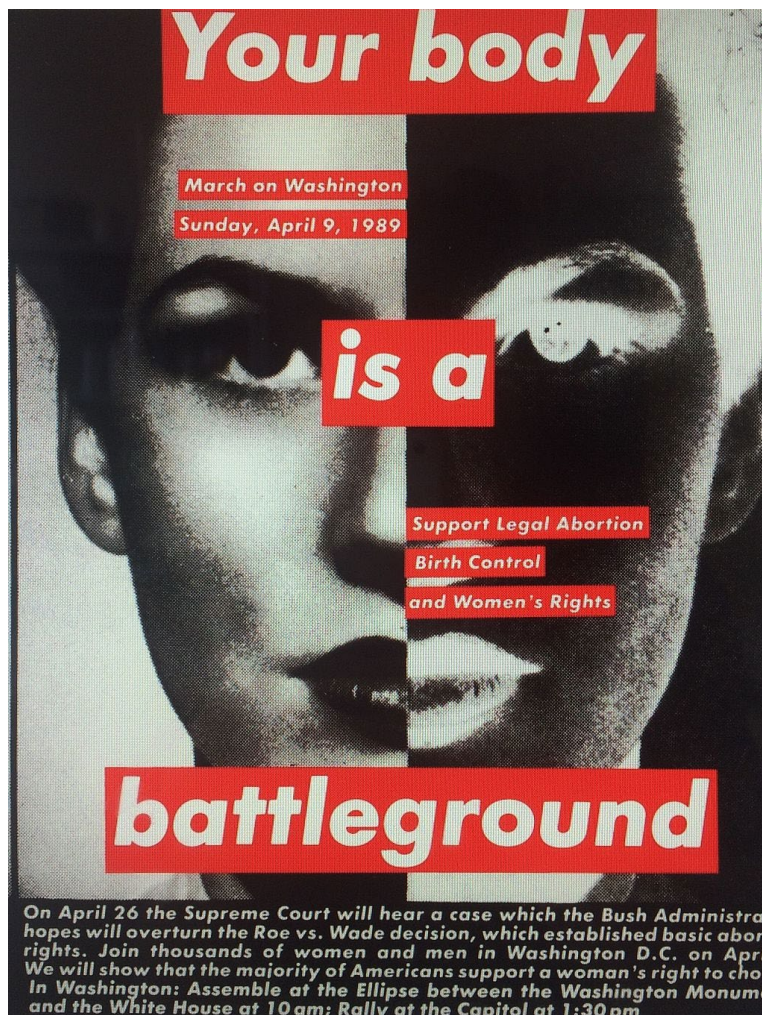
AIZ (Arbeit Illustrierte Zeitung) Cover August 10, 1933, John Heartfield



Montage photography for the Berliner DADA exhibition 1920, John Heartfield



Walker Evans, Workers Loading Neon “Damaged” Sign into Truck, West Eleventh Street, New York City, 1928–30



Barbara Krüger, (untitled), Your body is a battleground, 1989

Conclusion

After working on this text and researching, I came to this conclusion as a reflection on my essay. Eventhough photography has contributed so much to our way of seeing and understanding of the world, taking in consideration the massive amount of photographs are surrounding us everywhere, photography is having impact on our everyday life and how it has been used to form ideas and ways of thinking. Photography can help in raising awareness and bring the unseen to the people. Photography is the only medium that is honest and naive often, The quality of photography in replicating what we see and record it cannot be reached or challenged by painting or writing. The image is an effective weapon and it could impact the climate change and the crisis we are facing positively or negatively depending on the application, I couldn't opt out any of the effects through my research, it all comes down to how it is been used. Photography is educative and direct, it confronts us. But how could we minimize the environmental damage related to photography and intensify the use of photography to raise awareness, is an important question. After all I think photography is having an entertaining factor, which could be used to deliver vital message. I think we need more support and funding to environmental photography projects. we need also to find constantly new means and different approaches to speak to different kind of viewers as well. In my opinion artists also need to be very careful about the sustainability of their projects. Text is also having an interesting role when used wisely within or combined with the image, it could be dangerous as it is able to alter the image and bring it out of context but in most of the cases the image could benefit from it.

“photographic images, which now provide most of the knowledge people have about the look of the past and the reach of the present.

What is written about a person or an event is frankly an interpretation, as are handmade visual statements, like paintings and drawings. Photographed images do not seem to be statements about the world so much as pieces of it, miniatures of reality that anyone can make or acquire.,,_S. Sontag⁴⁸

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