

LOCAL ANTHROPOGENIES – PHYLOGENESIS

A PHOTOGRAPHIC HISTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY

21. WILLIAM KLEIN (U.S.A., 1928)

The photonic interference

Because of its Cyclops eye, meaning that it looks to the front, and does not really grip the back's and forth's into depth, photography is not very talented as to the location and its intro-reverberations, but also for meetings, which are multi-directional laterally and frontally.

Concerning the location, we have seen Brassai's and Robert Frank's 'intro-reverberating' solutions. However, these do not show us how to render photographically this unexpected irruption of an individual in the field of another, who sometimes briskly intervenes in the field of the former, what we call a meeting. We shall have to wait until 1970 for William Klein to bring a solution to this question, and simultaneously, the exposure time, because it had previously been as foreclose, probably because of the inbred photographic Cyclopeism.

Cinema knew what to do. There was, for instance, through the use of editing of sequence shots, the possibility of showing a horse running from the front, then abruptly from the side, abruptly from the back, and once again from the front. Our visual brain of primate does not only tolerate this type of discontinuity, but almost demands it, because the endless re-approach of the same given under different angles is the only way for it to escape its very quick habituations, hence to reactivate its short attentions that sometimes last a mere second. Photography does not have this sequential resource. Nevertheless, it has others. And William Klein, who was sometimes torn between cinema and photography, made his photographic subject of it.

The recipe does include some briskness, obviously. And some catastrophes too, in the sense of the passage from one form to another. But it also demands that this catastrophe, in order that it should be felt as an irruption in the territory, an interference, be situated in a circular perspective, where the individuals in reciprocal intrusion be encompassed each by the other, without forgetting the watcher. There is nothing of Jan Dibbets' circular perspective, which is at distance and abstract. But an immediate circular perspective, which is as tactile, auditory, and olfactory as possible.

Three technical resources were then required. Firstly, the great angular used at point-blank, for the phenomenon to splutter from the environment like an exploded capsule. Then, the open flash makes the light splatter around it without ever pointing at anything. Finally, the camera budge in this 'circling' of forms and lights, makes the matters become hirsute instead of becoming blurry, and they are also intrusive or extrusive, like the situation they reveal.

The themes adapted to this topology and cybernetic, and sometimes, they called for them. It was assuredly mainly the mammalian meetings, because solely mammals – and in particular the ape mammals that men are – also have this capacity of endless reciprocal interference. And if William Klein managed to capture 'meetings' of buildings too, it was by treating them like mammoths in heat.

The histories of photography have kept these photographs of streets and parks as being the locations where the physical and semiotic eruptions and interferences are the most varied and the most frequent. It is there that we can observe, on an oblique vanishing line, a lady seated on the background to the right (reattaching her shoe), closer to us sits a man (he dozes), then, at point-blank on the left, a teenage girl explodes over us (laughing), all teeth out.



William Klein, *Cabine Azzedine Alaïa*

But let us recall that yesteryear the street was condensed in the ruelle, this narrow space between the bed and the wall, where the visitors of a star were pressed against one another (in the true sense). Well, today's equivalent to the classic ruelle is the fashion cabin just before the catwalk show, in the ultimate and paroxysmal moment of confrontation of the actors exchanging their heat and wishes between two spaces, that of the we-group of the boutique and that of the out-group of the clientele. And, between these two moments, the before, charged with a huge potential force, and the after (catastrophic) that will be the tipping into defeat or glory. We had to take our illustration in *Cabine Azzedine Alaïa Mars 1985*, at the decisive instant-moment.

In Greek, there is a word to define that, *ormè*. Not the seated movement but the assault, the attack, exactly like the first run up of the mammal. This is as essential as physiology according to Nadar.

* © William Klein.

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