

Daniela (rachel) VAVROVA
rachelfromgurun@hotmail.com
www.reflectangulo.net

Matr.Nr.: a 0105710
Stud.Zhl.: A 307
Geb.: 05.12.1978

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Vienna SEP 2004 © daniela rachel

Sharing of Visual Fiction in Everyday “Reality” (photography & film)

In this short account I would like to focus on the relationship between visualization and “staging reality” and connect it to the past movements known under the names of *direct camera* and *camera vérité*. Although these expressions were mainly used in connection with film medium, they could nevertheless be expanded to still photography, especially in regard to one characteristic: seeing and using the camera as a participating tool. With a camera in our hands we have an extraordinary though quite specific opportunity to communicate with the group under study and present their “reality”. On the other hand, the direct recording, far from giving a perfect equivalent of “reality”, showed that “in the real world, we have forgotten how to look and listen. We pass over things, we use people, we look beyond them or we project our own problems and our own desires on to them. It teaches us, once again, the kind of rigorous, open observation which, through its very existence, fights and improves the increasingly poor fiction that the mass media put out daily to build up our personal mythology” (Marcorelles 1973: 95-96). It is the fiction of the mass media – penetrating people beyond their imagination – that blinds us and deprives us from recognizing hundreds of tangible moments around us, in everyday life. We just need to see them.

Multiple dimensions of choreography in “staging reality” brought me to magnificent moments when I realized that I see through the lens more than with a naked eye. All of a sudden many details jumped out, light became science, subjects got their emplacement. I thought for quite some years how true it is that one sees differently through mechanical eye than through biological eye. However, today the mechanical eye is for me a kind of extension and expansion of my mind, heart and eye, all brought together at one single spot. The solitary and unique expressions on the streets, for example, are for me many times unrepeatable performances.

The photograph on the first page shows a midday on Kaertnerstrasse in Vienna. Throughout several days I was capturing impressive staging “realities”. That’s for me the most precious action, which I always enjoy and photograph. The second photograph shows a unique metal construction staged in an interior, a kitchen in Stuttgart. The third photograph from Andaman Islands made in 1911 is for me one of the strongest expressions of human “staged reality”.

Visiting different places, countries, and communities enables me and my mechanical eye to expand and to become more diverse in the visual perception of the world. The unique individual frozen moments from different “staged realities” suddenly become connected and the comparisons create original narrative tableaux. Capability to see more angles is crucial in staging ourselves and the light is a non-forgettable factor. Colours often cover up those details that a B&W option can reveal. One can make something unfamiliar familiar and vice versa; and just as one unveils a place out of space one also enables the viewer to see space beyond a place. In *The Decisive Moment* (1952) Henri Cartier-Bresson wrote: “For each of us space begins and slants off from our own eye, and from there enlarges itself progressively toward infinity. Space, in the present, strikes us with greater or lesser intensity and then leaves us, visually, to be closed in our memory and to modify itself there.”

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