

THE HUNGARIAN UNIVERSITY OF FINE ARTS DOCTORAL SCHOOL

Reality Strikes Back

DLA Thesis

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Research objectives

The reason I positioned myself in the center of the research was because I had never taken a self-chronology or *chart selfie*. I wanted to examine how and what I photographed within the framework of the Doctoral School, and this was the right place for this purpose in my opinion. I was curious about the tools I used to take pictures, specifically what technological influences I encountered during my work process, which ones were finally published and how, for example in what form, not to mention which ones were not.

My method also included rereading certain texts, especially from books that, reminiscent to many others, were my very first readings at the beginning of my self-study approach to photography. I wanted to know what I remembered, what I had forgotten, what I was noticing now, what I considered essential, then and now, as well as what I look at with a new/renewed eye, while it also turned out that there were things I had misunderstood in the past.

I gave my thesis the *Reality Strikes Back* title (lent to me by Antal Jokesz), which immediately raises two possible interpretations. On the one hand, we can consider that reality for whatever reason ultimately shortens matters by trimming them down or stripping them back. In this way, their meaning will be narrower and shorter, which in the best case can be considered a type of clarification, because we have to focus on fewer aspects after this process, and thus, like a pruned woody stem, we can grow a green branch again thanks to reality (Go green, if you will...).

The other possibility is that reality will show its true face in response to a quick movement. This is not necessarily a rude or insolent gesture on its behalf. Rather, similar is reciprocated with similar. If one dared to make statements about reality, the consequences must also be considered. What the two cases have in common is that the result must necessarily be to move forward. But, of course, it can also happen that reality retorts by stating that all of our attempts to grasp it are in vain, because it naturally vanishes again and again.

Work theses

1. *Thanks, well!* – Social document

Thanks, well! was actually the conclusion of a long experiment in my investigation into staging. The series of experiments focused on the relationship between photography as a document and the sense of reality. The carefully and methodically selected events provided an environment that undermined the security of the sense of the documentary. The photos were taken at public events in Hungary, the presence of the camera did not bother anyone, and it was not legally objectionable. Since nothing hindered my work, I could simply look for the right frame until it was quite theatrical, seemingly set at first glance, so it was unrealistic. Thanks to the consistency of the working method, if not reality, I was already in control of the viewer's narrative associated with it. I contributed to the process by not adding any further information nor image titles to the pictures, not even indicating the locations or any times to the material.

2. *Death/Crime Scene* – Official document

After the *Thanks, well!* project, I saw no point in taking photos according to the non-intrusive nature of pseudo-documentary documentation rules, because this would have been a repetition of the previous photo project. Actually, I was looking for and found the pure document in photographs *taken at Death/Crime scenes*. My claim for this work ended up being very simplified because there is no truer photograph than a crime photo. In order to incorporate this into my own photography, I visited the crime scene inspections of real crimes myself, in addition to the police crime technicians. The knowledge base was helped by getting acquainted with the methodology of police photography. If we strip the crime footage of its references, the end result will be that what everyone sees in these images will be much worse than what actually happened.

3. *Fortepan Masters* – Document of the last century

My last thesis chronologically is my last art project, in which I also experimented with creating a kind of reality. The subject of use were the photos of the Fortepan collection that had lost their context. The images had non-standard metadata, some of them had author names, but I deliberately omitted those as well. The goal was to create the possibility of image reading. The use of old photographs inevitably entices the viewer to some nostalgia. One thing was known for sure about the photographs, and that was that they were taken in the twentieth century. The structure of the book and the lack of specific textual information about the subject forced the viewer to adopt a changing image consumption habit. Thus, depending on their historical knowledge, they were left alone with their own perception of the twentieth century. Thanks to Péter Salát Zalán's design, the free-flipping structure of the book, the double-spine book body provides thousands of variations on the meeting of images, so neither the beginning nor the end of the meditative activity with it is marked. The book gives the viewer an opportunity, but it is up to them to decide what reality they imagine behind the photos, in place of their own concrete stories.

The Result of the Dissertation

My assumption is that we are prejudiced against what looks like a documentary photo, mostly thinking that we know enough about what we see. For my part, as the creator and/or presenter of the images, I can only say with certainty that the unity of the completed series of photographs consists in the fact that their creation is devoid of any fictitious element.