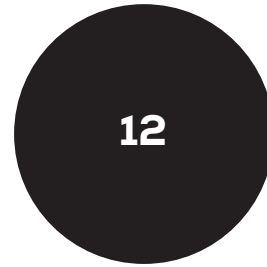




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View. Theories and Practices of Visual Culture.

title:

Gesture And Photography. A Performative Symposium

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source:

View. Theories and Practices of Visual Culture 12 (2015)

URL:

<http://pismowidok.org/index.php/one/article/view/388/770>

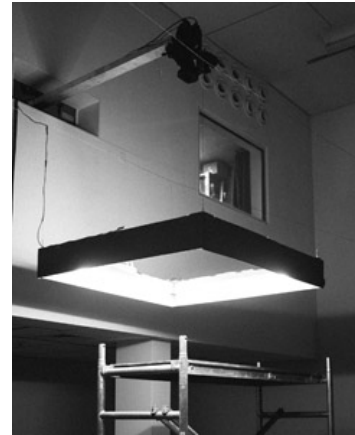
publisher:

Institute of Literary Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences
Institute of Polish Culture, University of Warsaw
View. Foundation for Visual Culture

Gesture And Photography. A Performative Symposium

Our aim – to investigate, describe, and above all, to “demonstrate” the visual and practical ways of expressing thought; to “show” the work of the imagination and the critical mind that expresses itself in and through photographic images.

To show imagination at work, one has to break, or at least transform, the convention of a traditional scholarly conference. In place of a situation where the speaker, separated from the audience, shares his readymade knowledge, the performative symposium proposed a series of meetings of several people – artists and theorists – to discuss specific photographs in any format, books or contact sheets, in order to “discover” or explore them – for each other and for the gathered audience. The process of discovering / exploring the images was carried out not only through discussion, but essentially, via the exchange of gestures: by pointing a finger, juxtaposing, cropping, inscribing, outlining, etc. – the whole repertoire of responses to images which the body has at its disposal. Such a formula resulted from the assumption that it is artists who most effectively “think” in and by means of images. This is why it is artists who were at the center of attention here – not as the subject of discourse, but as partners in dialogue, in an exchange of thought while confronting pictures, books, and photographic objects.



What seems crucial in this context, is the setting of these meetings: they took place at a round table, placed on a square podium, with a loosely organized auditorium scattered around it (with comfortable seating). The meetings were recorded by a high definition camera, placed vertically above the table. The eye of the camera didn't record the faces of the participants but their hands and the works that were the object of discussion. The recording in turn was projected back onto a freestanding screen positioned in the hall in such a way as to bring about a “separation of attention”: the gathered audience, occupying the space between



the podium and the screen and listening to the voices of the participants, were able either to follow the choreography of gestures, the work of the hands confronting the pictures, or watching the dialog taking place "live" on the podium, but ultimately inaccessible to them – the discussants were both "elevated" above, and sat with their backs to the audience, absorbed in conversation.

During the symposium, Aneta Grzeszykowska and Jan Smaga talked about their series of photographs *Private Archive* (Archiwum prywatne) with literary scholar, cultural critic and historian, Katarzyna Bojarska. Elżbieta Janicka and Wojciech Wilczyk entered into a discussion about their collaboration *Other City* (Inne miasto) with Waldemar Baraniewski, art historian and expert in the matters of Warsaw. Michał Kaczyński and Łukasz Gorczyca participated in the symposium as authors of an artists' book, *D.O.M. Polski*, to subject it to contemplation together with Paweł Szypulski, collector of photographic books and curator. The avant-garde director, dramatist and theorist Weronika Szczawińska reflected on *Colleagues* (Koleżanki i koledzy), a series of works by Paweł Bownik, in dialogue with the artist, while director, cultural theorist and philosopher Kuba Mikurda together with Nicolas Groszpiere animated his photographic objects (not only in the sense of movement of thought). Lastly the photography curator and historian Joanna Kinowska discussed with Rafał Milach and Anna Nałęcka-Milach their joint work on the medium of the photobook.



Of course, it's not only about inventing a "new" formula of symposium – attractiveness was not our purpose. Rather, it resulted directly from ways of formulating thoughts by the invited artists, and was designed both to extract an unacknowledged aspect of our relationship to images, and to identify modes of artistic production which clearly emphasize the physical aspect of the photographic image and go beyond the feedback mechanism (based on reflex) of eye and camera shutter. The "thinking in images" by the invited artists consists, among others, in



that they extend the “decisive moment” over the entire process of working on a given picture, so that they are able to endow their work with a certain “density” – a density, which is not easily translated into the language of discourse.

[The programmatic statement was slightly modified]

The symposium took place on October 21st and 22nd, 2013, at the Zachęta National Gallery of Art in Warsaw, as a part of the festival Warsaw Photo Days 2013 (<http://warsawphotodays.com>)

Gesture And Photography. A Performative Symposium

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production

Association of Polish Artists Photographers

The Lodz Film School

publication

The Lodz Film School

project Partners

Zachęta – National Gallery of Art

participants (in order of appearance)

Rafał Milach and Anna Nałęcka / Joanna Kinowska

Paweł Bownik / Weronika Szczawińska

Aneta Grzeszykowska and Jan Smaga / Katarzyna Bojarska

Nicolas Groszpiere / Kuba Mikurda

Łukasz Gorczyca and Michał Kaczyński / Paweł Szypulski

Elżbieta Janicka and Wojciech Wilczyk / Waldemar Baraniewski

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special thanks

Elżbieta Protakiewicz

Hanna Wróblewska

Katarzyna Majak

Jolanta Rycerska

and all the participants