

## A FOREWORD TO AN INTRODUCTION

The exhibition Documents by Nenad Malešević is a selection of photographs from several series (A Time of Renewal, For Goethe's Eyes, Donau, Die Pflanzen and others) taken by the artist in the period from 2004 to 2014.

Documents is a kind of visual diary. Malešević claims that his art does not serve to promote any kinds of critical or emancipatory practices, but that his interests rather lie in documenting as archiving that which is not completely clear or whose meaning has not been fully deciphered, in terms of the structure of manifestation, commonness or uniqueness.

Malešević links that which he observes with that which he (sometimes apocalyptically) imagines, with the gap between the seen and the idealised being the space of the artist's pleasure. The photograph thus becomes a stage where something can happen unexpectedly. It is the cinematographic quality of the scene/sight that matters to Malešević when taking a photo, not its relation with the truth, and quite often it is as if the selected frames do not belong to reality or are the kind of space in which one can imagine the sequences of a film taking place. He does not wait or stalk, he rather directs scenes. By doing so he constructs the possibility of understanding reality as standing opposite or beyond the known. In fact, he shows that photography is a medium through which the world can be seen as a large depository of strange things, which can be looked at in the way someone looks at all the things around for the first time (the first time always borders on fear). It is a poetic narrative of that which changes and does not stop changing, a testimony within the reach of the elusive. For instance, his photographs of flowers emanate a sense of transience or vulnerability of something. Those photographs showing scenery

anticipate a happening, and even the shortest delay or waiting for something to happen is disturbing. Some scenes/sights were photographed obsessively and continually, in a manner combining the eternal with the ephemeral, creating an effect of prolonged observation and duration, as well as of slight tension (the skyline is far away, allowing the observer to inspect the vast area around, probably following the artist's inquisitive look). This is the case with the photographs from the Donau series, which took the artist four years to create, by photographing the same scene almost daily – the chimneys of the city's central heating plant by the river. Occasionally, there is a touch of magic realism to Malešević's photographs, with dreamlike, fantastic unity of reality and unreality created in them. Unreal scenes usually embody the coexistence of the banal and the dramatic.

The photographs lack in geographical or temporal determinants, that is, there is nothing to indicate the exact place and time of shooting. (According to Jung, time and space do not exist in themselves, but are only assumptions whose basis is merely conceptual and archetypal, and which may be taken to be principally the same thing.)

The possibility of likening these photographs to Antonioni's work is just as exciting. Malešević visibly follows Antonioni's style, especially in his photographs of landscapes devoid of human presence (those with a strong sense of aesthetic non-happening). Antonioni's films talk about the weather, transience, duration and waiting, where everything can be equally trivial and important. Nenad Malešević obviously shares the same conviction as he attempts to preserve and perpetuate the present moment, in order to turn it into duration, as if by magic.

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