

DOCUMENTS: An Introduction to the Study of Discontinuance

Perhaps one of the most important undertakings in Modernist photography is the cycle and book *The World is Beautiful* by Albert Renger-Patzsch. Albert Renger-Patzsch summarized the utopian Modernist idea of development and progress in the dynamics of industrial mills, objects for everyday use and plants. According to him, the secret of a good photograph lies solely in its realism.¹ Criticizing this kind of thinking and referring to Bertolt Brecht, Walter Benjamin pointed out that “a simple ‘reproduction of reality’ is now less than ever able to say anything about reality.”² The second half of the twentieth century showed that the possibilities of photography are unlimited and that it can be approached, in theoretical or artistic sense, in countless ways. Thereby, its documentary quality has become part of different art analyses.

Started in 2004, the project *Documents: An Introduction to the Study of Discontinuance* by Nenad Malešević includes several cycles of photographs: *The Age of Renewal*, *For Goethe's Eyes*, *Donau*, *Die Pflanzen*, etc. By photographing the chimney of a city heating plant from the same spot in different weather conditions, flowers, a deserted factory and house, empty paths, railroad, Nenad Malešević confronts us with a different perception of the world around him. Although it does not look like that at first glance, none of the photographs was created with the pretention of being a pure document. The author does not put himself in the position of a classical photographer who records hidden, deserted places, the traces of human existence and interventions, landscapes, plant motifs, various processes of vanishing, alienation and oblivion. Most of the photographs were taken without the presence of people, and in those with people, we get the impression that they were given side roles. Through his shooting mode, Nenad Malešević, almost exactly like a film director, transforms selected places and situations in the film scenes where the action is magical, terrifying and almost surrealistic at the same time.

The specificity of the photographic medium does not lie only in the vast transformations and the possibilities of taking photographs but also of the presentation. If a film presentation usually requires a cinema and classical media require a gallery, photography does not have such requirements because it can be presented anywhere and in any way. This project by Nenad Malešević does not end with shooting and archiving of the photographic material. In continuation of the work, the author connects certain photographs from the above mentioned cycles and further emphasizes film narration through the gallery setting.

The Cycle *Documents: An Introduction to the Study of Discontinuance* can be also viewed as an unfinished project because it constantly develops and is supplemented by new frames that, not only by their structure, but also by their representations of the apparent realism and the banality of everyday life, draw the viewers in, requiring from them different readings and interpretations.

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¹ See: Michael Frizot (ed.), *The New History of Photography*, Konemann, Cologne, 1998, p. 464.

² Walter Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography", in Walter Benjamin, *On Photography and Art*, The Cultural Centre of Belgrade, 2006, p. 27.