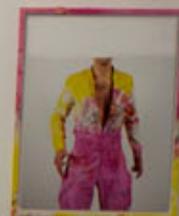


Edgar Leciejewski

— Welt im Kopf —



Edgar Lucienweil  
Welt im Kopf





Edgar Leciejewski

Welt im Kopf



## Edgar Leciejewski. Welt im Kopf (World in Their Minds)

The exhibition's title reflects not so much a specific artistic point of view as rather the incessant challenge of the expressiveness of contemporary photography. Equipped with a solid basic skepticism regarding photography's traditional promise to render an immediate image of reality, Leciejewski's creative practice insistently confronts the medium with the question of which forms of truth can still be conveyed by aesthetic means. This critical-analytical angle is recognizable in 'Zwoelf' ('Twelve'), a series of large-format portraits of artists in which the subjects, identified by their first name in the titles, appear in their work wear. The color photographs capture the sitters in extraordinarily rich detail, a realism that is both reinforced and irritated by the use of the garments that appear in the portraits as textile frame trimmings. Breaking the barrier between the photograph and the space around it, this alteration disrupts the self-contained image and turns it into an object soliciting the viewer's touch. The fabrics heighten the closeness already conveyed by the depiction of the individuals into a form of intimacy.

The artist then negates this excessive tendency toward personalization with a radical intervention that establishes a similarly palpable anonymity: he has abraded the photographic prints with sandpaper at the height of the faces, leaving a white band, a blank, which the viewer must supply. The artist thus erases what is at bottom the single most important feature of a portrait, while adding something elsewhere. The immediate effect on the viewer is one not of reduction but of displacement. "The hierarchy of things and the automatisms of seeing"<sup>1</sup> are upset. "What used to be peripheral becomes the center of attention. The viewer's gaze roams the image without a predetermined destination."<sup>2</sup> This sort of anti-photography plunges us into a mirror cabinet of references and contradictions. "The photograph as a surface, as the 'skin' of the subject, clothes as a 'second skin,' and the picture as a material body. Like earlier works by the artist, 'Zwölf' represents an attempt to reach the heart of photographic imagery. It seeks to reveal the complex interdependencies between production, visual codes, and beholding."<sup>3</sup> The aesthetic strategies Leciejewski's works put into practice are always

tailored to a specific project and its chosen subject matter and often pioneer novel uses of photographic processes and techniques. In another work, 'A Circle Full of Ecstasy,' he returns to the portrait genre, but with a very different approach and mode of presentation.

Taking up an entire wall, the tableau composed of 77 unframed individual panels puts the more or less familiar exponents of the contemporary global political scene on display—a few privileged individuals make two appearances. For the portrait series 'Zwoelf,' the artist had recruited artist friends of his own generation; the imagery in this work, by contrast, is drawn from his personal archive of collected press clippings. What unites the assembled distinguished characters on the international diplomatic stage is that they were captured in the instant when they raised their hand (almost always the right one) to greet a public audience that was sometimes present, sometimes imaginary.

Another unifying element is the cyan blue in which all panels are bathed; in the overall view, it freezes them en bloc de glace, as it were. It speaks to Leciejewski's experimental spirit that he produced this tone not by way of digital editing, which would have been easy enough, but by employing an old fine-art printing process called cyanotype.

First invented in 1842, this process is now primarily associated with the British natural scientist Anna Atkins. For a moment one is tempted to suppose that Leciejewski's political panopticon makes tongue-in-cheek reference to the botanist and illustrator's published attempts at a scientific cataloguing of algae and ferns. Yet the recourse to a historic phototechnical process reveals a conceptual contradiction. In the early era of photographic history, the cyanotype was chosen because it promised the most accurate depiction (of scientific samples). In Leciejewski's typology, the effect is the opposite: a retraction of the photographic realism possible today by means of the leveling color filter of abstraction.

Reading 'A Circle Full of Ecstasy' row by row, the viewer gradually realizes that the title is proverbial. From picture to picture, the politicians in the pictures rotate by a few degrees so that, over the course of the series, the



Edgar Leciejewski, *Justus*, 2017,  
140 cm x 109 cm x 5 cm, color-print scratched with sand paper on  
aludibond, cotton, polyester, elastan, oil paint



Edgar Leciejewski, *Abiba*, 2014  
143 cm x 109 cm x 5 cm, color-print scratched with sand paper on  
aludibond, viscose, elasthan

poses come full circle. Comparable to the mechanical doll on a music box, the movements of the robotic figures come to seem operated by the automatism of a blind machine. Poring over the images, one is filled by a growing sense of dehumanization and meaninglessness. The replicated greeting is on the verge of hardening into a vacant gesture. The circle is broken; the ecstatic entrancement collapses. The unsettling impression is that of a system malfunction and alienation whose mounting absurdity recalls 'ghosts and flowers,' Leciejewski's critical contribution to the street photography genre: spectral and dysfunctional fragments of human persons, the by-catch of an Internet giant's exhaustive scan of New York City's urban reality.<sup>4</sup> 'Welt im Kopf' ('World in Their Minds') would be incomplete without 'A Scene in a Library,' the large-format photograph of a bookcase. It shows books and objects unconnected by a shared thematic reference, placed on the shelves in insular groups, an arrangement that seems haphazard rather than the product of some strict system. The viewer can make out some titles, but others are illegible, covered up by wrapping or effaced, as though the artist meant to signal that they belong to a private sphere to which he does not grant the viewer access. The desultoriness of the books' placement is contradicted by their appearance before a uniform black back panel or backdrop, which accentuates the impression that this is a carefully installed display of selected significant objects, the precious elements of a concentrated still life. Leciejewski's visual hint as to the writings on photography that inform his work might be read as a manifesto of sorts, even as an incomplete self-portrait. Moreover, the work is a tribute to book culture and a reflection on the creative interplay between the book and photography.<sup>5</sup> If we go back for a moment to the titles included in the 'A Scene in a Library,' one book that catches our eye is a slim volume that has become a standard since it was published 90 years ago: László Moholy-Nagy's *Malerei Fotografie Film*. It is not hard to see how the avant-gardist would be a crucial source of inspiration for Leciejewski's art. Moholy-Nagy's critical study of the photographic medium and its aesthetic potential in the engagement with social realities, his fascination with experimental approaches, and his investigation of the interpenetration of aspects of tactility and forms of virtuality

have a powerful impact even today. And so it is not unlikely that, browsing Leciejewski's personal copy of the book, we might find that he annotated this passage:

"We may say that we see the world with entirely different eyes. Nevertheless, the total result to date amounts to little more than a visual encyclopaedic achievement. This is not enough. We wish to produce systematically, since it is important for life that we create new relationships."<sup>6</sup>

Thomas Appel

(translation Gerrit Jackson)

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1 Estelle Blaschke and Kito Nedo, "Sensitive Territories: On Edgar Leciejewski's 'Zwölf.'"

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Edgar Leciejewski, NYC, Ghosts and Flowers/How to Build a Sun, Leipzig 2011

5 Edgar Leciejewski, A Scene in a Library, Berlin 2016

6 László Moholy-Nagy, *Painting Photography Film*, trans. Janet Seligman, London 1969, 29.











# A CIRCLE FULL OF ECSTASY

77  
CYANOTYPES

EDGAR  
LECIEJEWSKI

2K17



- 1 PAUL BIYA, Republic of Cameroon
- 2 PETRO POROSHENKO, Ukraine
- 3 ANDRÉS MANUEL LÓPEZ OBRADOR, United Mexican States
- 4 ABDULLA II BIN AL-HUSSEIN (KING OF JORDAN), Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
- 5 BASHAR HAFEZ AL-ASSAD, Syrian Arab Republic
- 6 FIDEL ALEJANDRO CASTRO RUZ, Republic of Cuba
- 7 JOHN FREDRIK REINFELDT, Kingdom of Sweden
- 8 ABDULLAH BIN ABD AL-AZIZ, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- 9 ALBERT I OF BELGIUM, Kingdom of Belgium
- 10 KLÁUS IGHÁNY, Romania
- 11 ELLEN JOHNSON SIRLEAF, Republic of Liberia
- 12 MARION ANNE PERRINE LE PEN, French Republic
- 13 DANIEL ORTEGA, República de Nicaragua
- 14 KIM JONG-UN, Democratic People's Republic of Korea
- 15 SUSHIL Koirala, Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal
- 16 RAÚL MODESTO CASTRO RUZ & MARGOT HONECKER, Republic of Cuba
- 17 CHELSEA VICTORIA CLINTON & WILLIAM JEFFERSON CLINTON & GEORGE WALKER BUSH & DESMOND TUTU, United States of America (Republic of South Africa)
- 18 JOHANNES ADAM FERDINAND ALOIS JOSEF MARIA MARCO D'AVIANO PRINZ VON UND ZU LICHTENSTEIN, Principality of Liechtenstein
- 19 PARK GEUN-HYEE, Republic of Korea
- 20 Angela Dorothea Merkel, Federal Republic of Germany
- 21 JOSEPH KABILA KABANGE, Democratic Republic of the Congo
- 22 MUHAMMAD MUHAMMAD ABU MINYA AL-GADDAFI, State of Libya
- 23 MALCOLM BLYTH TURNBULL, Commonwealth of Australia
- 24 CHARLES MICHEL, Kingdom of Belgium
- 25 MARGRETHE ALEXANDRINE PØRHJØUR INGRID (QUEEN OF DENMARK), Kingdom of Denmark
- 26 IBRAHIM BOUSSACAR KEITA, Republic of Mali
- 27 BORUT PAHOR & JADRANKA KOŠČIČ, Republic of Slovenia & Republic of Croatia
- 28 DMITRI ANATOLJEVITŠ MEDVEDEV, Russian Federation
- 29 JOACHIM GAUCK & BARACK HUSSEIN OBAMA II, Federal Republic of Germany
- 30 VIKTOR MIHÁLY ORBÁN, Hungary
- 31 DORIS BUNZHALTER, Swiss Confederation
- 32 ELIZABETH ALEXANDRA MARY (ELIZABETH II), United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
- 33 MATTEO RENZI, Italian Republic
- 34 STEPHEN JOSEPH HARPER, Canada
- 35 VLADIMIR VLADIMIROVICH PUTIN, Russian Federation
- 36 ANGELA DOROTHEA MERKEL, Federal Republic of Germany
- 37 HILLARY DIANE RODHAM CLINTON, United States of America
- 38 ERNA SOLBERG, Kingdom of Norway
- 39 BARACK HUSSEIN OBAMA II & MICHELLE LAVAUGHN ROBINSON OBAMA, United States of America
- 40 FELIPE VI FELIPE JUAN PABLO ALFONSO DE TODOS LOS SANTOS DE BORBÓN Y GRCIA, Kingdom of Spain
- 41 SAYYED ALI HOSEIN KHAMENI, Islamic Republic of Iran
- 42 JORGE MARIO BERGOGLIO (POPE FRANCIS), Vatican City State
- 43 MAHMUD AHMADINEJAD, Islamic Republic of Iran
- 44 KIM JONG-UN, Democratic People's Republic of Korea
- 45 Xi Jinping, People's Republic of China
- 46 RECEP TAYYIP ERDOĞAN, Republic of Turkey
- 47 SHINZŌ ABE, State Japan (Nippon-koku)
- 48 JAMES EARL JIMMY CARTER, United States of America
- 49 ABD AL-FATTAH SAID HUSAIN CHALL, AS-SIBI, Arab Republic of Egypt
- 50 DONALD JOHN TRUMP, United States of America
- 51 JUSTIN PIERRE JAMES TRUDEAU, Canada
- 52 SUSILO BAMBANG YUDHOYONO, Republic of Indonesia
- 53 ALEXIS TSIPRAS, Hellenic Republic (Greece)
- 54 FRANÇOIS GÉRARD GEORGES NICOLAS HOLLANDE, French Republic
- 55 BENJAMIN NETANYAHU, State of Israel
- 56 BARACK HUSSEIN OBAMA II, United States of America
- 57 UHURU KENYATTA KENYATTA & MARGARET GAKUO KENYATTA, Republic of Kenya
- 58 RAME HAMADALLAH, State of Palestine
- 59 DAVID WILLIAM DONALD CAMERON, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
- 60 PEDRO MANUEL MAMEDE PASSOS COELHO, República Portuguesa
- 61 HAJI MOHAMMAD NAJIB BIN TUN HAJI ABDUL RAZAK, Malaysia
- 62 JOSÉ EDUARDO DOS SANTOS, Republic of Angola
- 63 TRUONG TAN SANG, Socialist Republic of Vietnam
- 64 RAFAEL VICENTE CORREA DELGADO, República del Ecuador
- 65 ELIZABETH ALEXANDRA MARY (ELIZABETH II), United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
- 66 GEORGE ALEXANDER LOUIS (PRINCE GEORGE OF CAMBRIDGE) & WILLIAM ARTHUR PHILIP LOUIS (PRINCE WILLIAM, DUKE OF CAMBRIDGE), United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
- 67 REUVEN RIVLIN, State of Israel
- 68 DILMA VANA ROUSSEFF, Federative Republic of Brazil
- 69 RODRIGO RODRYGO DUTERTE, Republic of the Philippines
- 70 ENRIQUE PEÑA NIETO, United Mexican States
- 71 THERESA MARY MAY, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
- 72 MANMohan SINGH, Republic of India
- 73 JOKO WIDODO, Republic Indonesia
- 74 BHUMIBOL ADULYADEJ, Kingdom of Thailand
- 75 CRISTINA ELISABET FERNÁNDEZ DE KIRCHNER, República Argentina
- 76 BEATA MARIA SZYDŁO, Republic of Poland
- 77 MARK RUTTE, Netherlands



1 A Circle Full of Ecstasy / Daniel und Chantal, 2016 jeweils Farbfotografie auf AluDibond, Glas Holz, 245 cm x 183 cm x 7 cm

2 Abiba, 2014, Farbfotografie mit Sandpapier gekratzt auf AluDibond, Viskose, Elastan, Holz, Museumsglas, 143 cm x 109 cm x 5 cm

3 Cristina, 2013, Farbfotografie auf AluDibond mit Schmirgelpapier gekratzt, Baumwolle, Holz, Museumsglas, 123 cm x 94 cm x 5 cm, Privatsammlung Berlin

4 Felix, 2013, Farbfotografie auf AluDibond mit Schmirgelpapier gekratzt, Polyester, Baumwolle, Holz, Museumsglas, 126 cm x 96 cm x 5 cm, Sammlung Kaiser, Markkleeberg

5 Oskar, 2013, Farbfotografie auf AluDibond mit Schmirgelpapier gekratzt, Polyester, Baumwolle, Srühfarbe, Lack, Holz, Museumsglas, 126 cm x 96 cm x 5 cm,

Sammlung F.C. Gundlach, Hamburg

6 Hang, 2013, Farbfotografie auf AluDibond mit Schmirgelpapier gekratzt, Wolle, Polyamide, Holz,

Museumsglas, 124 cm x 97 cm x 5 cm

7 Ronny, 2014, Farbfotografie mit Sandpapier gekratzt auf AluDibond, Baumwolle, Polyester, Öl, Farbe,

Holz, Museumsglas, 129 cm x 101 cm x 5 cm

8 Helga, 2013, Farbfotografie mit Sandpapier gekratzt auf AluDibond, Baumwolle, Holz, Museumsglas,

112 cm x 88 cm x 5 cm

9 Max, 2013, Farbfotografie auf AluDibond mit Schmirgelpapier gekratzt, Wolle, Alpaca, Holz, Museumsglas,

123 cm x 94 cm x 5 cm, Sammlung F.C. Gundlach, Hamburg

10 Roman, 2014, Farbfotografie mit Sandpapier gekratzt auf AluDibond, Baumwolle, Holz, Museumsglas,

138 cm x 108 cm x 5 cm

11 Inga, 2013, Farbfotografie auf AluDibond mit Schmirgelpapier gekratzt, Polyester, Baumwolle, Ölfarbe, Acryl, Holz, Museumsglas,

126 cm x 96 cm x 5 cm, Sammlung F.C. Gundlach, Hamburg

12 Justus, 2017, Farbfotografie mit Sandpapier gekratzt auf AluDibond, Baumwolle, Polyester, Elastan, Ölfarbe, Holz, Museumsglas,

140 cm x 109 cm x 5 cm

13 Molina, 2013, Farbfotografie auf AluDibond mit Schmirgelpapier gekratzt, Baumwolle, Ölfarbe, Holz, Museumsglas,

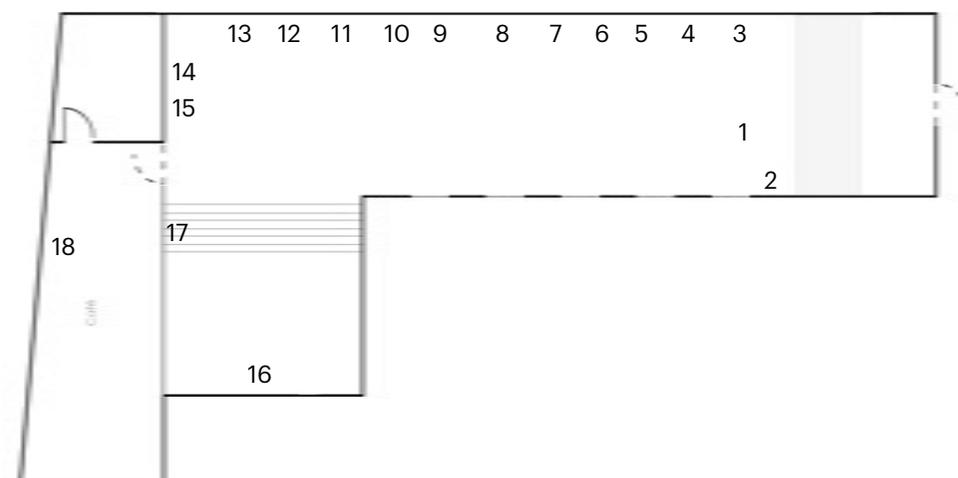
127 cm x 99 cm x 5 cm, Sammlung Kaiser, Markkleeberg

14 Fabian, 2013, Farbfotografie auf AluDibond mit Schmirgelpapier gekratzt, Baumwolle, Holz, Museumsglas,

139 cm x 109 cm x 5 cm, Privatsammlung Basel

15 Matthias, 2013, Farbfotografie auf AluDibond mit Schmirgelpapier gekratzt, Polyester, Baumwolle, Ölfarbe, Holz, Museumsglas,

139 cm x 109 cm x 5 cm, Sammlung Kaiser, Markkleeberg



16 A Circle Full of Ecstasy, 2016, Tableau, 77 jeweils Farbfotografie, 45 cm x 33 cm, installiert 397 x 490 cm

17 A Circle Full of Ecstasy, 3 Hände, 2016, jeweils Farbfotografie, Holz, Museumsglas, 55,5 cm 43,5 cm x 5 cm

18 A Scene in a Library, 2013 / 2014, Farbfotografie auf AluDibond, Holz, Glas, 134 cm x 258 cm x 7 cm



Edgar Leciejewski, A Scene in a Library, 2013 / 2014,  
color photography on AluDibond, wood, glass, 134 cm x 258 cm x 7 cm





SEPTEMBER 9TH - OCTOBER 21ST, 2017

WE., TU., FR. 2 - 6 PM, SA. 12 AM - 6 PM



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