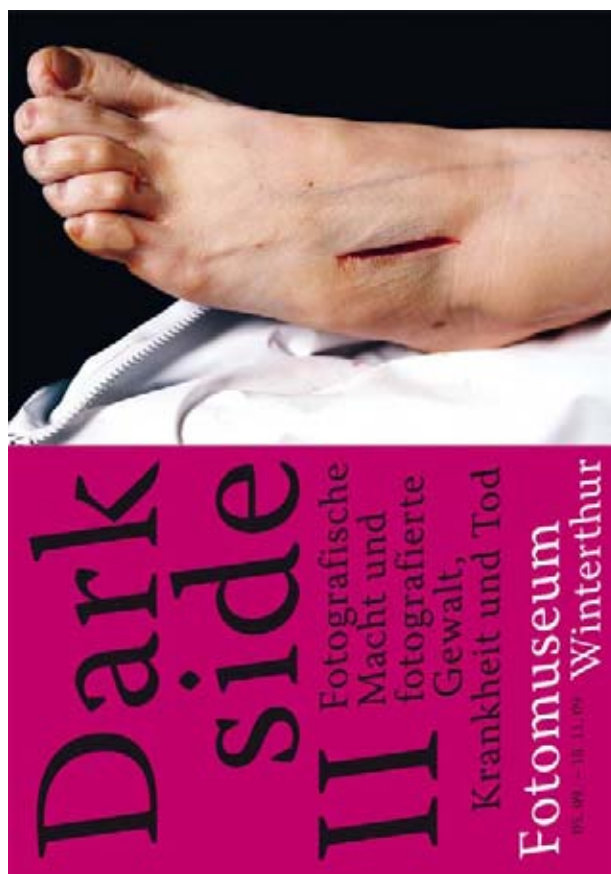


Graphisme : Trix Wetter, Zurich ; Photographie : Ed Van der Elsken



Graphisme : Trix Wetter, Zurich ; Photographie : Andres Serrano

## INTERVIEW

**NEAR rencontre Urs Stahel, Directeur du Fotomuseum Winterthur, [www.fotomuseum.ch](http://www.fotomuseum.ch)**

L'entretien de Urs Stahel avec Nassim Daghighian, historienne de l'art et présidente de NEAR, a eu lieu en anglais au Fotomuseum Winterthur le 21 octobre 2009.

**Urs Stahel (1953, CH)**

Urs Stahel est Directeur du Fotomuseum Winterthur depuis son ouverture en 1993. Il est le curateur de nombreuses expositions collectives et individuelles, ainsi que l'éditeur de plusieurs catalogues, notamment les ouvrages récents *Darksides I – Photographic Desire and Sexuality Photographed* et *Darksides II – Photographic Power and Violence, Disease and Death Photographed*; *Zoe Leonard. Photographs*; *David Goldblatt. South African Photographs 1952-2006*; *Real Fantasies – New Photography from Switzerland* (co-édité avec Thomas Seelig, conservateur du Fotomuseum Winterthur). De formation littéraire, il a été journaliste, photographe et rédacteur, notamment pour le magazine *Du*, avant de devenir curateur indépendant. Il a également enseigné l'art contemporain et l'histoire de la photographie à la Hochschule für Gestaltung und Kunst à Zurich, où il vit.

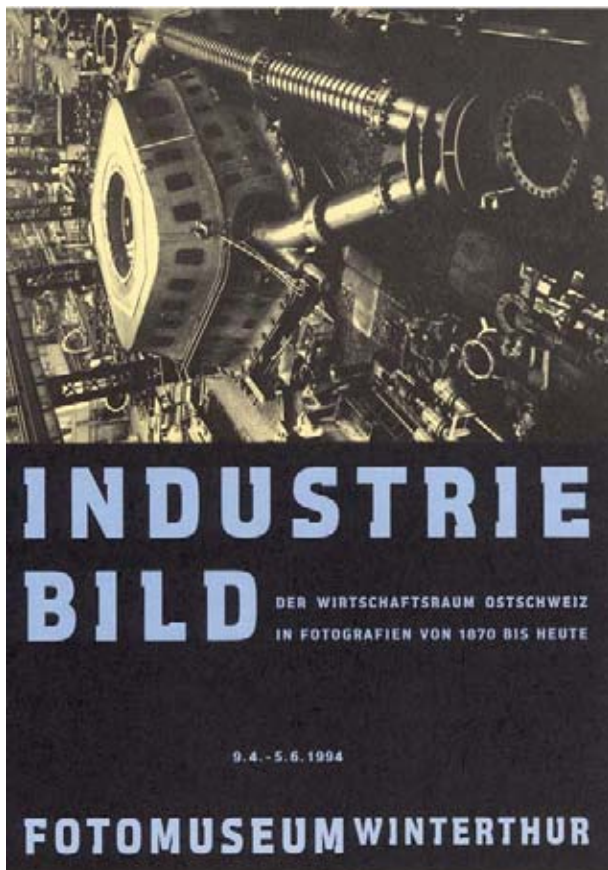
**Fotomuseum Winterthur**

Dans sa politique d'exposition et de publication, Urs Stahel alterne de vastes projets thématiques réunissant différents types de photographies (artistique, journalistique, scientifique, amateur, etc.) – tels *Darksides I* et *Darksides II* – avec des rétrospectives consacrées à de grandes figures de la photographie historiques (Walker Evans ou Eugène Atget, entre autres) ou contemporaines comme Zoe Leonard.

Les collections du Fotomuseum, consacrées à la photographie des années 1960 à aujourd'hui, reflètent cette politique en se basant sur deux axes principaux : photographie documentaire et art conceptuel. Depuis 2007, le musée organise annuellement en janvier *Plat(t)form*, un forum pour la nouvelle photographie européenne. L'institution offre donc une place de choix à la photographie contemporaine.

Une interview réalisée par Florence Gaillard est parue dans *Le Phare*, n°3, Centre Culturel Suisse, Paris, octobre – décembre 2009, pages 19-20 : pdf

Pour télécharger le texte complet sans illustration : pdf



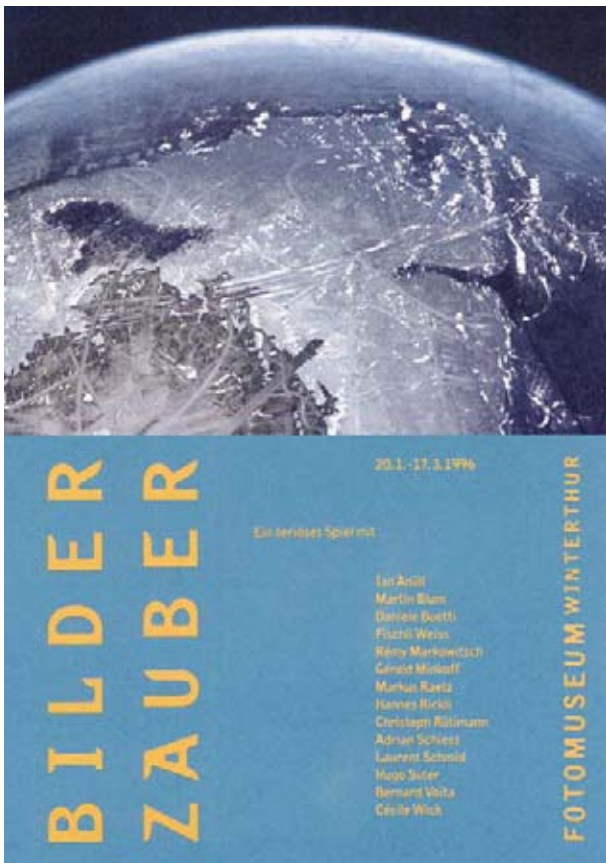
Graphisme : Trix Wetter, Zurich ; Photographie anonyme

## Biography

Nassim Daghighian : Which personal experiences and important meetings had an influence on your life and lead you to specialize in the field of photography through different professions?

Urs Stahel: In an early situation as a young man, I did my own photography, which I would strictly call an amateur photography; I did black and white photography in my own little lab. Apart from that I think it all started during my studies. I studied German literature and linguistics as a main subject and then general history and philosophy at the University of Zürich. During these studies I was working for a magazine called the " Everyday Life " (if I translate it into English) which is *Der Alltag* in German. It was a very specific magazine; the best way to put it would be to call it a sociological, cultural magazine. It was created by two guys: Walter Keller who is a well known person in Zürich (he later started *Parkett*, the art magazine and also founded the publishing house *Scala*) and Niklaus Wyss, a folklorist and sociologist, the son of the writer Laure Wyss. In recent years he has been the director of the School of Art and Design in Lucerne. They created this magazine with an ethnographic point of view and they wanted to make a kind of daily life ethnographic magazine, looking at the neighbourhood the same way you would visit a foreign tribe. It was a crazy, interesting magazine, which ran over something like ten years. So they started it and I joined them maybe in the 3<sup>rd</sup> number and worked for them. We were about the same age, but they were maybe two years ahead of me in their studies, so I was the young student working for them, doing advertising and subscriptions. Then I started to write for them and working a bit on of the layout of the magazine – everything actually! I also started to write on some photographic books, even made an attempt to use my own photography and writing about the Riedtli-Siedlung (a housing colony in Zurich where I was living at the time).

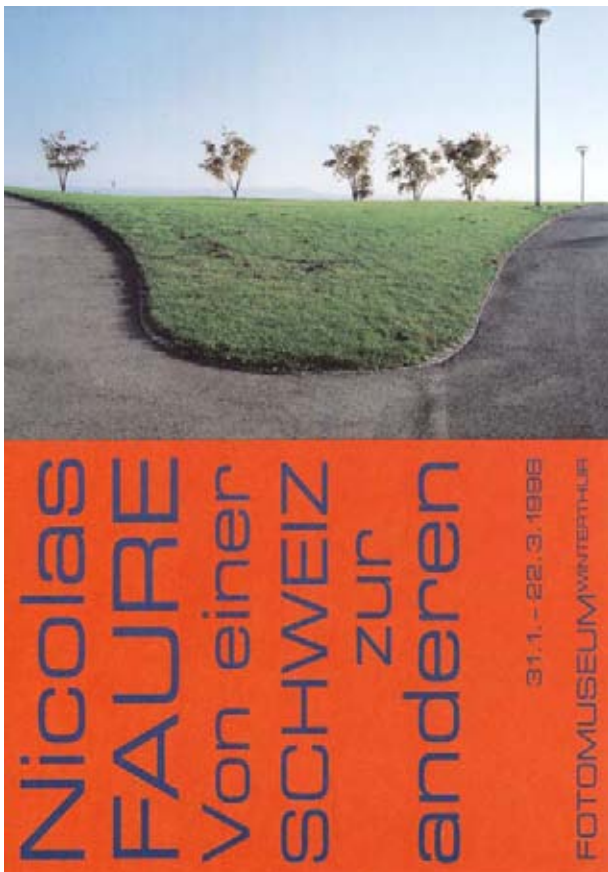
My interest in photography was always there since the age of 15 or 16, but then I started really to like to go to exhibitions, to look at books, and I started writing for that *Der Alltag*, and for *Annabelle*, the fashion magazine, also for *Zytglogge* a cultural newspaper in Berne in the 80's. I did that in parallel to my studies – I was not specialized in photography. I was kind of an amateur writer on photography and art. After I finished my studies, I jumped into that field and I became an editor of the art magazine *DU*. I jumped into it like into the water.



Graphisme : Robert & Durrer, Zurich ; Photographie : Hannes Rickli

US : Three years later I became a freelance art critic, and curator and teacher. It was an interesting time. At that time I was writing basically for *Die Weltwoche* and for *ART* magazine in Hamburg, and I started to curate exhibitions of contemporary art, not photography specifically. And because all of this stuff does not give you any money, I was happy to get a job at the School of Art and Design in Zürich to teach this general course called Cultural Studies. I had to teach language, literature, the history of art, and we developed, together with Jörg Huber, for the first time the history of photography which had not been taught at the School of Art and Design up to that point. There was no course on the history of photography. So we created it, started it, and I was actually teaching it for six years from 1986 to 1992 in parallel to all the writing and the curatorial projects I was doing in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Towards the end of the 1980's I started to be a bit more specialized in photography: In the late 1980's I came back to "Daily Life" magazine, and I wrote a kind of a Lexicon of contemporary photography in Switzerland. I was basically writing about fifty-five photographers: it was like an encyclopedia from A to Z. Fifty-five photographers and each of them had one page, two to three photographs, and one smaller text.

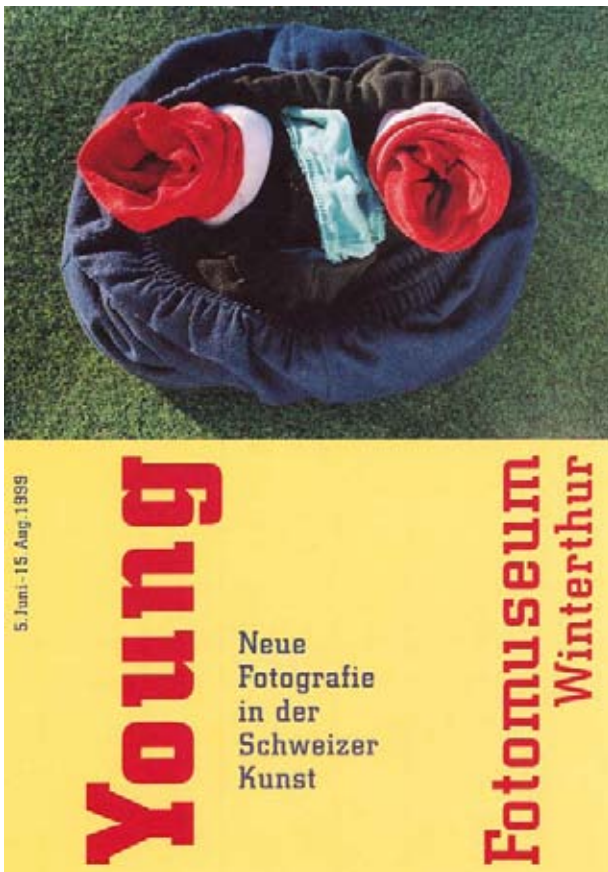
Following that, I was asked by Martin Heller who was the director of the Museum für Gestaltung in Zürich at that time, to make an exhibition on Swiss photography. And maybe that's the crucial point in my life. The name of the exhibition was *Wichtige Bilder* (1990). And of course this term caused a lot of debates: "Ah... these are important images, and mine are not important images...." The idea was not to create a selection, but to risk for the first time a debate within the rather conservative context of Swiss photography. In terms of What is an interesting photograph? What is an important photograph? Our idea was that images today have to reflect about themselves, that they have kind of a built in model of reflection, not just this "introverted or self-centred" "belly" photography that has been seen over the last forty years. So the exhibition was about the 1980's of Swiss photography, but I did a text that summarized Swiss photography from the 1960's to the late 1980's, starting with an introduction on the four or five most famous Swiss photographers. Actually I only wanted to make reference to them, but it then started to be a critical reference not of them, but of the reception of them. So in the end it was a long preface followed by an essay of about 200 pages of a manuscript. I actually wrote on everything I knew at that time about Swiss photography. I think it was a crucial thing; it was a major thing to do, at least for me. The opening was, if I remember well, in June 1990.



Graphisme : Hanna Koller, Zurich ; Photographie : Nicolas Faure

US : In the meantime I was kind of a well established art critic here for contemporary art, and art of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I was writing on Beuys, Lohse, Twombly, and younger people. I was also a co-founder of the Kunsthalle in Zürich which we founded in 1986; I was doing a big exhibition in on Gerhard Merz, the German artist who was important at that time. So, in 1990, Walter Keller and George Reinhart (of the Reinhart family of Winterthur), sat together and said " It's a pity that we don't have a place for photography in the German part of Switzerland. One has to go to Lausanne to see photography. " We actually had The Swiss Foundation for Photography at the Kunstmuseum in Zürich, but they did not have continuous exhibitions there and were not really visible. They asked me to join the group and we had our first meeting in July-August 1990. One year later, I was travelling through the United States for three months to find out how they treated photography over there. After that it went fast. The first meeting with an architect was in January 1992, one year before we opened up the museum. So within one year we had decided what we wanted to do here, how we intended to structure the place and we started to build it in August 1992. Within six months, we had created this place here, where we are sitting now, which is quite an unusual place and it was created with quite unusual speed for Switzerland.

It was possible because there were only three of us. There was George Reinhart, Walter Keller and me. So we only had to make a phone call and then we were all sitting together, immediately. It was not a political process; it was the process of three people who had the same energy, who said: We want to do it now. We won't have the energy in 5 years, because we might be doing something else. So we have the energy to do it now and we have to find the best solutions. This was not the first building we had in mind. We had the choice between several buildings and I was always writing a new concept for each one. We had a very nice bourgeois villa as an option, but that would have made a completely different museum. So I was totally happy that we found this place. It's not in Zürich, not at the main train station in Winterthur. It's a little bit outside, in the fringe, but it's a good building, an industrial building and it allowed me to start the museum with two basic ideas or experiences that I had had during my research. I found out that actually I want to have a contemporary factory building like the one we had created for the Kunsthalle in Zürich. The buildings I saw in America or elsewhere for photography always had a 19<sup>th</sup> century touch. They were not contemporary. They looked old fashioned. I have seen a lot of photographs in a passe-partout, then matted and framed in little golden frames, surrounded by an even bigger baroque imitation of a frame. And each photograph illuminated by one lamp. This was not the way I feel photography. It is a contemporary medium. I wanted to have a factory. I wanted to have raw walls, to have light that doesn't spot to one image, but allows a general light.



Graphisme : Robert &amp; Durrer, Zurich

US : So we reproduced somehow the Kunsthalle in Zürich, (their first major building). On the other hand I liked very much the programme of Martin Heller at the Museum for Art and Design in Zürich. He had a very open minded programme, a very lively programme. It was not a dogmatic one at all, he really opened up and I was trying to find out how we could do an interesting programme here when at the same time, the Kunsthalle, the Contemporary Art Museums started to show photography. How shall we do it? How can we do an interesting museum of photography without entering in a ghetto? So I developed the idea of having three museums within one museum, three concepts in one. If I have only one medium, I needed a specific concept. You know Marshall McLuhan's term " The medium is the message ". I said ok, I love the Kunsthalle of which I am a co-founder, but the Kunsthalle in Zürich was working exactly according to M. McLuhan's term: you know which people will appear, you know how to address them, you know the smell of them, you know that there is new art shown, but in a certain well known context. The medium is already the message, the context: the museum, the Kunsthalle as a medium. If I enter only with photography, I need at least three spaces, three definitions. One definition is to show contemporary photography. I do this as if I would be a Kunsthalle, an art space for contemporary photography. If we show the history of photography, then I act more like a classical museum of photography, with the addition that I do not like to act as a classical photo historian. I'd like to look at the past with the perspective of today. I'd like to show what is interesting in showing Atget today, what is interesting in showing Walker Evans today and therefore going back. And the third one, what was maybe the most specific one: I am also very much interested in all this photography that is not art photography and which is never shown in an art museum. This is 99% of all photography production in this world. And actually this is the photography that changed our perspective of seeing the world, not art photography. The way you look at photographs every day, in newspapers, everywhere, that is exactly the same as if you have a drop of water dropping day by day on a stone, and suddenly there is a hole. That kind of photography does exactly this. We have now seen photographs for over one hundred and fifty years. We look through photographs into the world. So I wanted to research in this field: photography shown in every corner of the world, for any possible purpose. Not showing it as art, not showing it through an author, but showing it as an important instrument for today's society, an important visual instrument. We started in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the museum with an exhibition called *Industriebild* (Industrial Image) and we carried out research in all the factories, well not all, but 200 factories in the eastern part of Switzerland, going into their archives, asking questions to the photographers they had commissioned and showing commissioned photography. We did the same on medical photography, police photography, and photography of objects. The latest big exhibition was in this field: *The Ecstasy of Things* which we did 5 years ago.

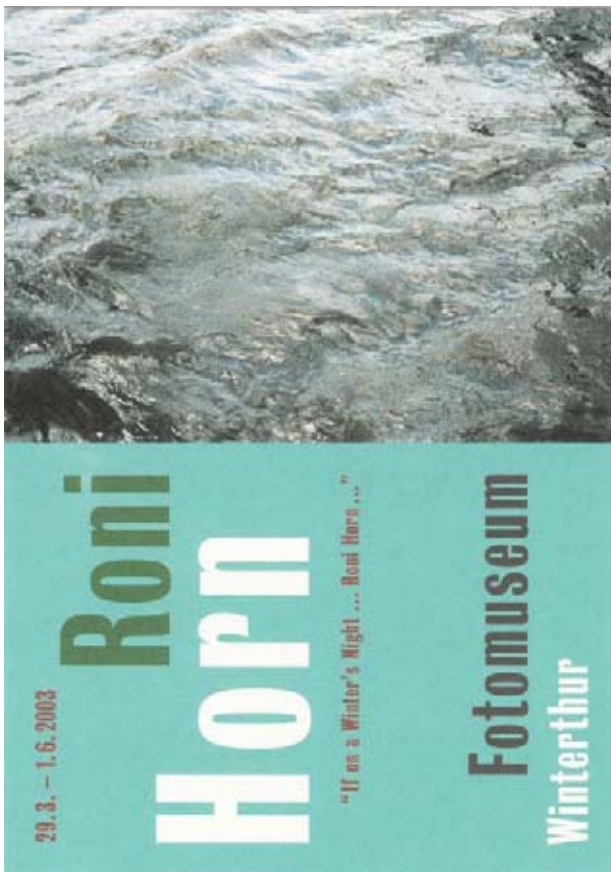


Graphisme : Robert & Durrer, Zurich ; Photographie : A. Blommers & N.Schumm

### Exhibitions, publications, collections, events

ND : Does the museum politics of the Fotomuseum Winterthur aim mainly to be complimentary to the Fotostiftung Schweiz – Swiss Foundation of Photography – also based in Winterthur? In which criteria is your institution different from other museums of photography from the international point of view?

US: It is important to make a time distinction. In January 1993 when we opened up, the situation in Europe was completely different than today. So to make it clear what the idea of the museum was, it's better to talk about 1993 first. We were afraid of making the Fotostiftung Schweiz, the Swiss Foundation for Photography, angry by creating next door a new institution. This was part of the arguments why we took the decision not to make it in Zürich, but making it in Winterthur. But the main reason was that in Winterthur there was the famous Reinhart family who gave us money to start the museum, but also the possibility of having an interesting building. It would not have been so easy to find this building in Zürich. We were skeptical and did not know if that kind of institution would work, so we made a plan for five years and after five years we would decide whether people are interested in visiting such an institution or not. Regarding the situation and the concept I would like to make a comparison: you certainly know how the posters of the Musée de l'Elysée looked like in the 1980's and 1990's. Maybe they still look the same; they had big posters with one photograph, beautiful, and underneath it said, in very small typography: Musée de l'Elysée and the name of the artist. And then you look at the posters we do, and you realize that the image is only taking half of the page, and the text the other half. That is not just a design element. This is a clear decision. I came to the graphic designers and said I wanted to make an institution where photography is shown, presented, hopefully in a most attractive way, so that it is a pleasure to look at. I wanted to make visible that you can do interesting shows with photography (I saw a lot of boring shows in photography like nailing photographs one after the other, 2 cm apart.). I intended to create a seduction through the way we show photography but at the same time, we wanted to introduce a debate on photography, a discourse. My feeling in the 1990's was that the time was over, when you can only show photography. It was important to show photography, but it was also important to reflect about photography and not only in a one-page-introduction, but in guided tours, in symposiums, in essays, in books. We had to make a place where lively debates on photography would happen. I told the graphic designers that this had to be visible in our appearance. Finally they accepted the idea and went back to work, and came with this solution, giving the text the same value as the image: there is a balance between the text and the image.



Graphisme : Hanna Koller, Zurich ; Photographie : Roni Horn

US : For me, that is almost the ideology of this museum: having a constant debate on what is photography, what is the context of photography, why are we showing this, where does it come from, etc. As a basic idea it was this: a place where photography is constantly shown, constantly debated. At that time in Europe it was still quite unique. Not much of interesting places were around. Sorry for being so impolite by saying so. There was this famous place at the Folkwang Museum in Essen which had been doing an interesting job since the 1970's, absolutely important, but the rest was quite conservative, quite stuck with reportage photography as was the Musée de l'Elysée at the very beginning. Charles-Henri Favrod was completely stuck in this - that's ok if he wanted to do that but I just didn't want to copy it. Today you have more places, but still it is not easy for us when we make a big sociological orientated show to find a partner. A lot of museums are not interested in this kind of photography. But today, you have the Netherlands Fotomuseum, in Rotterdam for example, you have other interesting places, like the Bild Museum in Umea, in the north of Sweden. So you have much more interesting places than in 1993.

ND : So if I summarize, it's the sociological aspect of all kind of uses of photography which are, maybe, one of the most specific aspect of the Fotomuseum Winterthur, which is rather rare in other museums.

US: Yes, I very much liked the idea of having a strong and narrow focus and a soft focus and changing between them. For me the narrow focus was concentrating on art and the soft was concentrating on culture, on society. Having a wide and a narrow angle in your perspective and changing your angles.

ND: In the history of your museum, how did you organize the arrival of the Fotostiftung and what is your relation to this institution because you defined your politics before its arrival, so...?

US: Yes, but the Fotostiftung existed before the Fotomuseum, it is the oldest institution in Switzerland regarding photography, and in two years from now on, they will celebrate their 40<sup>th</sup> birthday. It was founded in 1971 and they organized this first big show on Swiss photography, which I had seen in 1974 at the Kunsthaus in Zürich – the first big show on photography in Switzerland, ever. Then they had a show on young contemporary Swiss photographers in 1981, if I remember well. But they were not very visible, and that was the major problem with this institution. They had no continuous programmes apart from the two or three years around 1980.



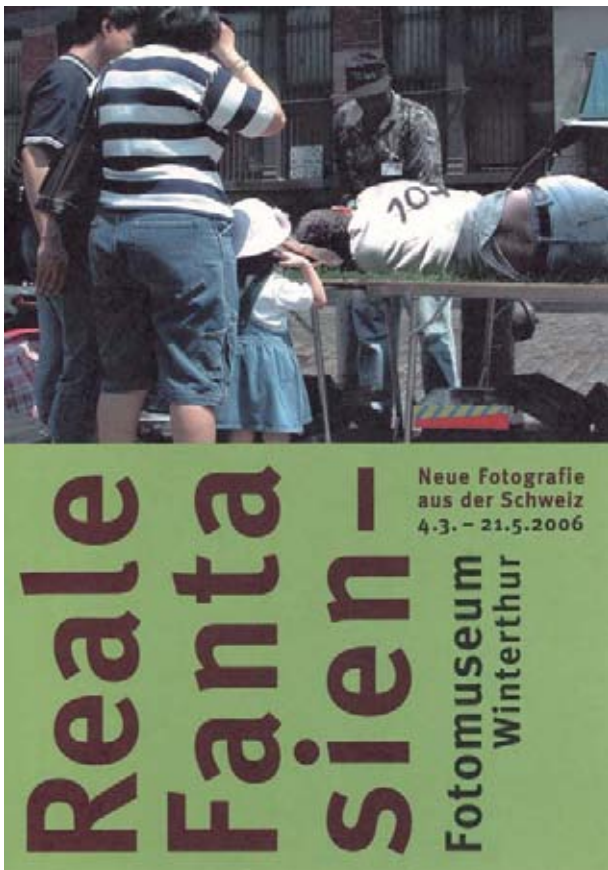
Graphisme : Hanna Koller, Zurich ; Photographie : Hans Dukkers

US : They were making shows in Lausanne actually, before the Musée de l'Elysée existed, they were making shows at the art museum in Lugano, they were making shows abroad. They did a lot of work but it was not really visible here. There was not even a sign outside of the house and no bell, saying that the Fotostiftung is in this famous building of the Kunsthaus in Zürich! That was the major problem of this institution and when the idea of renovating the Kunsthaus in Zürich started, and I saw the architectural plans of what kind of spaces they would get and I was sitting at the press conference, listening to the words of the director of the Kunsthaus in Zürich, I had the feeling, that this was not a good future for this Swiss Foundation of Photography, at this place. I had two feelings, I thought strongly that it was not a good solution for them, and at the same time, that we were almost ten years old, and we had the idea of enlarging our museum. During the discussion about enlarging the museum and making spaces for the collection, I said, well it might be interesting if the Swiss Foundation of Photography would come to Winterthur. We would form together an area of photography, and each institution would help the other one. So we started the discussion with the Fotostiftung. We asked them would it be interesting if they came over to us. Could we do something together? Each one being on its own, there is no fusion, but because we are on the same place, we can create more attention, more synergies. And there is a field in between, we create a "Mehr-Wert" in German, an additional value, it's not just one and one, we create at least three things doing it together. Finally the idea was decided to do this – with the major help of Volkart Foundation – and we started to work together on the enlargement of the Fotomuseum Winterthur and the integration of the Fotostiftung in the same building. I think it's the best decision we could ever have made. The Swiss Foundation was coming here – we enlarged, they enlarged, and we started to form a sort of a center of competence in photography. We have an area of photography, we have storage rooms together, we have a bistro, we have social aspects which work well, and I'm really happy that we have made this decision. The two institutions are so different, that the overlap is only 5%. We are complementary institutions. They have to be concentrated on Swiss photography, whereas the Fotomuseum is completely opened up to contemporary art, and even insists on showing contemporary art rather than classical photography.

ND: So it's complementary?

US: It's very complementary. They are competent on the archive of Swiss photographers. We don't want to constitute an archive at all. We concentrate on making exhibitions, on making projects, making a debate about photography, and collecting or building up a collection not an archive. For some reasons, we also have archives, because we became specialists in industrial photography. So we have some archives here, specific archives from industry and trade. But we are building up a collection which is national and international.





Graphisme : Mark Kappeler, Zurich ; Photographie : Cristian Andersen

### Contemporary photography in Switzerland

ND : According to you, what is the position of contemporary photography in Switzerland on the international scene? Could you define what kind of recent photographic images interest you in particular?

US: First of all, well, this is a big question. I will try not to be as long as before, but first of all, four years ago, we created an exhibition called *Real Fantasies*. It was an exhibition showing young Swiss photography. The border between reality and fiction, between reality and virtuality, that border is changing. I am mentioning this exhibition because for the preparation, we asked people in several parts of Switzerland to let us know about new people whom we did not know yet, either because they were still at school, or they had shown their work in a little gallery in Chiasso for example, and we didn't know about them. We were completely surprised to get 250 proposals. Only young photographers, only people who are still at school, or only five, six or seven years after school. Emerging artists and when I remember back in my previous projects, in 1998 for example, I did a project on young photography here, and we had much less, and when I did the show on *Wichtige Bilder*, in 1990, I had the feeling, I had to use a rake, the instrument we use to make the gravel in front of the museum looking beautiful. So the number of young photographers in Switzerland, four or five years ago was tremendous. It was much bigger, there were many more people doing photography but then there was a bit of a disaster situation, because four or five years ago, the boom of photography stopped. So art fairs did not show photography anymore and galleries stopped the idea of having a photographer in their programme.

ND: In the market of art?

US: Yes in the market of art there was a crisis. It was very interesting to see that there is a lot of young photography happening. Can you repeat your question?

ND: It was about Swiss photography on the international scene.



Graphisme : Trix Wetter, Zurich ; Photographie : Zoe Leonard

US: Switzerland has a problem. Switzerland has a communication problem. I think in art and in politics as we can see every day in the newspaper. Maybe, I'm too skeptical, but it is very difficult for an interesting photographer to gain international audience. For some reason, international audience is not looking at Swiss photography, but it is looking to New York, London, Germany, Japan, Paris, now it's China. What I discovered over the last 20 years is that it is very difficult to promote Swiss photography abroad. So if an individual photographer is not incredibly strong to find their own way, it's very difficult for them because there is a lack of communication, or a lack of interest from outside. We cannot change this. Switzerland is not looked at as a very interesting country; there is not a tremendous interest to really discover intellectuals and art here.

The same quality achieved by a photographer here and in New York, means two completely different careers and receptions. The one in New York will have an international career, the one in Zürich or Winterthur or Lausanne; will have a national career, and not an international one. The second part is maybe that the scene here is a bit saturated. I never really had the feeling, when I was teaching, that the photographers were curious, that they really wanted to do it. This defiant attitude: I want to be an interesting photographer, even though this sounds egoistic, but this attitude I have hardly ever seen at school in Zürich. When they get their first job, in magazines, they are immediately happy; they get some money, etc. So maybe in an environment like New York or Mexico City, the impact of the people who really want to make it is much stronger than it is here. To your question: is there a difference? No there is no difference.

ND: No specific trends?

US: No specific trends. In the end of the 1980's I started to fight against this question, because in the 70's and 80's it was always asked. We tried to find out what was the specificity of Switzerland. Yes there is something. If you go from Tinguely in the 50's to André Thomkins, to Markus Raetz from Bern, to Hugo Suter and artists in the 70's in the area of the Canton of Argovie, and then you go through Fischli & Weiss, then you maybe find one thing that we have much more in Switzerland than other places. It's like a chamber musical situation. Not a big thing, as if you had a paper in front of you, you make little drawings, you play with the image, a witty game with an art piece, a witty game, a downgrading of a big event, and a certain irony... Yes, like an ironical drawing line. I would like to use this as a metaphor. You find this in the Swiss contemporary art since the 50's and you find it also in photography, you find it in Fischli & Weiss, you find it in Körner Union in the series where they photograph the garages of the middle class, when the car is out, you can see what is stored in the background.



**WALTER  
PFEIFFER**  
**IN LOVE  
WITH BEAUTY**  
**29.11.08 - 15.2.09**  
**FOTOMUSEUM  
WINTERTHUR**

Graphisme : Marc Kappeler, Zurich ; Photographie : Walter Pfeiffer

US: This series is pretty much a typically Swiss one. It doesn't mean that you don't find this kind of photography or this kind of art abroad. But you find more of it in Switzerland.

There are also Onorato and Krebs who will be part also of the show here, *Karaoke*, that Thomas Seelig is curating and is opening in two days from now. They have published a book this autumn, which I have not seen yet, I've only seen their tour through America. This is fully the spirit of what I've said, but in a very refreshing way. And you find this ironic humor, the playing down, playing up, pretending to be a mouse. You know if you compare this to the painter Markus Lüpertz in Germany, he has just now a big show somewhere in Germany. He has the clear attitude of being a pope of painting. You will never find an artist in Switzerland who will have this attitude of being a pope. Everybody would say I am the concierge of the hotel, not the director.

But all the rest is very international, if you look at Beat Streuli's work, if you look at John Armleder's work, if you look at Ugo Rondinone, who basically makes his career in the US. So the thinking has very strongly globalised. And then sometimes it's funny to find someone, in some corner of this little country, one person who does something which has really to do with Switzerland, and it's not so globalised. It's also nice sometimes to see that not everybody is following the same question, but there are weird guys, somewhere, doing their own things. Harald Szeemann had a very specific eye for them and loved to show them, to bring them into the art context. It's important to have strange people and not only mainstream people with all the same questions, all over again.

ND: In contemporary photography are there any trends you like?

US: There are not so many trends anymore. The time of strong trends, time of the avant-garde has disappeared since the 1980's. Before, we had every decade a new avant-garde, sons killing their fathers, referring to their grand-fathers, punishing their own sons and then since the 1980's, you have a trend here, a trend over there, you have a parallel of trends, but no longer a strict trend. That's gone. Within that, I'm very much interested in the shifting of reality.

ND: ...between reality and fiction?

US: Yes.



**KARAOKE**  
**BILDFORMEN DES ZITATS**  
 HENRY ROSSBY  
 THOMAS SEELIG  
 JAMES WELLS  
 THOMAS SEELIG  
 ALAN SUTHERLAND  
 JOHN HARRIS  
 CLAUDE LÉVY  
 CLAUDE LÉVY

24.10.2009 -  
 7.2.2010

**FOTOMUSEUM**  
**WINTERTHUR**

Graphisme : Marc Kappeler, Zurich ; Photographie : Ryan McGinley

US : Yes. We did a lot of shows on documentary photography, starting in the first year with *Real Stories – repositioning documentary photography*. That was in 1993, so we had the debate on documentary photography many times. Four years ago we were completely interested in the shift of reality. The generation born and raised within the media in this completely digitalized world will have a complete different reception of reality than I have. That will change the way they make pictures, the way they look at the world and I'm very much interested in that. The *Karaoke* show will be on "Photographic Quoting", looking at artists who re-enact, go back to the 1930's, re-enact things, sing the same song again, thing an old song again, but better, different, make a cover version of it. Having in the art world what you have in music, but the cover versions might be more interesting than the original one. Covering means new thinking. Taking an idea of the 1970's and rethinking it in a new context. Thomas Seelig shows nine people in that context. Very interesting topic, very interesting show. So, here, right now, we are interested in this shifting of different fields.

## Museum of photography in the future

ND : What is, according to you, the status of the museum "of photography" today in the field of contemporary art? What kind of activities or projects would you like to develop at the Fotomuseum Winterthur in the future?

US: Something has not changed at all if you ask the question. It is still interesting to have a museum of photography next to an art museum. Yes. Absolutely. One thousand percent. Because nothing has changed. Photography only enters the art museum when an artist uses photography in a certain art practice. And then photography enters the field, opens the door to the art museum. If an artist is not using it, the art museum will never show it. The art museum will never show sociological exhibitions. We showed in 1994 Industrial Imagery. A few years ago, Thomas Ruff started to use old industrial photographs of machines that are hand colored, what we had shown here fifteen years earlier as historical visual facts. He transformed it into his own work. Then, this aspect of thinking is entering the art museum. It is still the case that 99% of what is done in photography in this world, is not shown in an art museum, it will never be shown in an art museum. So there is a huge space, and a huge field of other practices, that are not art, but are interesting, they are cultural activities that we like to show. So clearly yes. No change. But, when we started the museum, we said, we already asked ourselves this question: Should we be a media museum? Should we include videos and films? And we said, we cannot. We don't have the building, we don't have the money, we don't have the capacity to build up such a big institution, that includes not only photography, but videos, films, etc. and today you would say digital worlds. So we said ok, we do what we can. We created a museum of photography that has no blinkers. When an artist is using video we also show video, when an artist is making sculpture, we put a sculpture in it. In the second or third exhibition here, in the first room you saw cupboards, ten of them, brown, yellowish, from Poland and you had to open up the drawers to see the photographs. So we never limited ourselves to a certain kind of photography. When we showed Blossfeld we did not only show his photographs, but we showed his sculptures, these metal sculptures which he used in his education in Berlin. So we always open up. In the future this will be even more the case I think. In this exhibition *Darksides II*, there are six or seven projections. We are going to show an exhibition on Surrealism, *La Subversion de images*, that is now in the Centre Pompidou, there are ten or twelve projections. So video, film, will enter the museum more and more.

ND: I think your programme is already very large: there are many different things, exhibitions, catalogues, symposiums, and so on... we have not talked about *Plat(t)form* yet. What kind of development of activities do you imagine, which projects do you have?

US: I love to be here, it's a good place to work, and it's nice for people who visit. We pointed out that the art traffic goes from Venice to Basel, to Berlin, and not Zürich, and certainly not to Winterthur. So one thing we will definitely work on in the next two to three years, is working a lot on our website. The website is accessible worldwide. We have eighty percent of our collection online. We have a database already online, from the platform. You can see one hundred and twenty-six young photographers and next January there will be an additional forty-two. We have a link side, which is not only a link, but a system of links, over 400 links on photography, and we will start to use the website not only as a place for information, but also as a programme of the Fotomuseum. There will be projects happening on the Fotomuseum's website. I'd like to include blogs, guided blogs from invited guests. For example, Olivier Lugon, to name a Swiss guy, or Geoffrey Batchen, to name an American, would blog for one or two months on the Fotomuseum's website, so that there is a debate between the world and Geoffrey Batchen through the blog in Winterthur. We will ask artists to make projects specifically for the website. That's something that we are seriously working on now.

ND: That's a very good project.

US: Yes, it's interesting; I would love to work on it.

ND: Different from Coalmine online?

US: Actually I have not had time to look at it as it has only been online for three months. No, no, it will be quite different. I will ask artists to make an online project, like an exhibition. The exhibition is not happening here, the concept is online - in parallel to what we do now. And we will treat the website with the same care as we treat the exhibitions here, and, if at all possible we want them to have the same quality.

ND: Thank you very much. That was very interesting.