

Hanna Putz

Hanna Putz was born in Vienna in 1987. Her work has been exhibited at Kunsthalle Wien, Lentos Museum, MOCP, FOAM Museum Amsterdam, The Photographers Gallery, AUTOCENTER Berlin, FOTOHOF and at the 6th Moscow Biennale 2016 and she is published in TAR, New York Magazine, SPIKE, Zeit Magazin, i-D, Wallpaper*, DUST Magazine and Dazed&Confused amongst others. She is a visiting lecturer at the University of Art and Design in Linz, Austria as well as at the Bauhaus University in Weimar, Germany. She works primarily in the medium of photography.

TS Your relationship with the people portrayed, be it friends or strangers, turns into anonymity as one looks at the photographs. What is the key for turning an individual identity into a shareable visual matter? Does it relate to distance and detachment?

HP I can relate to anything more easily if I feel that there is space for me to see. I find it difficult to believe in something that is obviously trying to offer me a final answer. That is when things end or become boring. What my photography states is frank; this is how I see. Rather than providing an answer, it serves me to pose questions. Distance and detachment represent the space I need to look at something closely, and for things to remain questions.

TS Your series *Working Title* sees a change of subject. Empty surfaces have replaced human bodies. Is there a connection between these anonymous subjects and the people represented in most of your photographs?

HP With the ongoing series of empty canvases I focus on the moment when something is about to happen; everything can go wrong or right or stagnate in-between. I noticed how much I enjoy looking at the blank canvases in my painter friends' ateliers, a pleasing pause for the eyes. The moment before I start working on something is quite stressful – it's the most unenjoyable part but also the most productive, things get condensed and become more clear. That's the empty canvas: the peak of holidays and of hard work.

TS You lived in the most buzzing, tough metropolises in the world – New York, Tokyo, Paris, London. Did these cities shape the desire for authenticity underlying your body of work?

HP Authenticity is hard to grasp in terms of photography, but I have always had a genuine interest in observing people. Living in big cities must have something to do with it, but I grew up in Vienna,

a village pretending to be a city, and that also shaped me. This interest in looking at people might be related to me as a happy child, free and unconditionally loved, then having to face a world where things just do not go that way. You want to be loved and fear getting hurt, so you make sure you are analysing your subject matter to the extent that it doesn't happen. Or maybe I just enjoy looking at people, like most people I know.

TS It is almost inevitable for photographers, especially in their youth, to turn their camera towards themselves. If everybody becomes a photographer, this feature reaches the dimension of "the selfie". What is your reading of this?

HP Not everybody becomes a photographer, arguably everybody becomes a narcissist. What I find fascinating is that there is really only one selfie gaze practiced by people globally. It's this "I'm selling myself to you but you can't have me" look. It's strong, direct and distant while obviously trying to connect. There is also gaze two, which simply says "Life is awesome, this is amazing, look at me smiling – wow." There might be few others, but most of them are variations of gaze one and two. Otherwise the selfie is a logic continuation of the self portrait that has got out of hand.

Interview by Massimo Torrigiani
and Ilaria Speri



Above sadb 17, 2015.
Courtesy of the artist.