



Exhibition view, Adam Linder & Shahryar Nashat, *Some Strands of Support / Hard Up for Support*, Schinkel Pavillon, Berlin, 2016



Tutto Infinito, Patrick Tuttofuoco, OGR (Torino, Italia)



Untitled, Pierre Huyghe, dOCUMENTA (13) (Kassel, Germany). Courtesy the artist and Esther Schipper, Berlin



Ich rede zu Dir wie Kinder reden in der Nacht, Ann Veronica Janssens. Esther Schipper (Berlin, Germany). Courtesy the artist and Esther Schipper, Berlin



Exhibition view of "Torbjørn Rødland: The Touch That Made You" (5 April – 20 August 2018). Fondazione Prada Osservatorio, Milano. Courtesy Fondazione Prada



Sarah Lucas, *Deep Cream Maradona*, 2015, installation view, *ISCREAM DADDIO*, The British Pavilion, 56th International Art Exhibition, Venice Biennale, Venice, 09 May – 22 November 2015. Copyright Sarah Lucas, courtesy Sadie Coles HQ, London



Angela Bulloch, *In Virtual Vitro*, Esther Schipper (Berlin, Germany). Courtesy the artist and Esther Schipper, Berlin



Liam Gillick, *Extracted Revision*, 2015. Esther Schipper showroom (Berlin, Germany). Courtesy the artist and Esther Schipper, Berlin



Fausto Melotti, *Autoritratto*, 1962. Laiton, 103x70x28 cm. Vue de l'exposition *Fausto Melotti* au Nouveau Musée National de Monaco – Villa Paloma, 2015 – 2016. Palermo, Palazzo Butera, collezione di Francesca e Massimo Valsecchi © Archivio Fausto Melotti



Philippe Parreno, Gropius Bau (Berlin, Germany). Courtesy the artist; Pilar Corrias, London; Gladstone Gallery, New York; and Esther Schipper, Berlin



Dominique Gonzalez Foerster, *M.2062 (Lola Montez) Apparition*, Circus Cabuwazi (Berlin, Germany, May 27, 2014). Courtesy the artist and Esther Schipper, Berlin



Cómo atrapar el universo en una telaraña, Tomás Saraceno. MAMBA (Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires) (Buenos Aires, Argentina). Courtesy the artist and Esther Schipper, Berlin

ANDREA ROSSETTI

Para mí la objetividad significa que tienes que convertirte en un espectador calmado de una exposición [...], es muy posible que mi subjetividad resulte visible en el discurso narrativo que construyo para documentar una exposición.

To me, objectivity means that I have to be a calm viewer of the exhibition [...], my subjectivity emerges when you see the narrative I have created through the photographs of it.





ANDREA ROSSETTI

Triennale di Milano (Milan, Italy)
La Pittura Farà Da Sé, Walter Swennen
July 17, 2018



Andrea Rossetti does most of his art documentation work in Milan, Berlin and London. As an assiduous spectator of art on the internet, I had come across Rossetti's images on numerous occasions. Among his regular customers are the galleries Esther Schipper, Sadie Coles HQ, Blum & Poe, Kaufmann Repetto, MDC Massimo De Carlo and Monica de Cardenas; institutions such as Schinkel Pavillon, Nouveau Musée National de Monaco and OGR; and artists such as Philippe Parreno. Andrea, as well as Ela Bialkowska, entered the world of contemporary art documentation as an assistant to photographer Attilio Maranzano, from whom he learned the importance of conversing with artists and waiting for the right time before shooting the photo.

He thinks that a photographer's view must be that of a calm observer, and his images reflect that approach. He is a young photographer who lives fully in the digital era. Aware that nowadays most of his images of art will be seen on screens, he directs the viewer's attention, endeavoring to present the works in all their splendor. The selection of images in this book is certain to lack an essential part of his concept of work: the narrative that builds among the images, which is, he believes, the most subjective aspect of his work. I travelled to Milano, where he is based, to meet him at the Triennale di Milano. We talked in one of its bright, spacious rooms, surrounded by paintings and sculptures by artist Walter Swennen.

How long have you been working as a professional art photographer? How did you enter this field?

Since 2009. Actually there was not a specific day one. I started as an assistant to art photographers. The story is that... I mean, I like to tell the story because it was a sort of lucky strike. I was studying a completely different field and, when I graduated, I went for a trip through South America. At that time there were still analogue cameras so it was not as common to take pictures of travels and beautiful landscapes as it is now with social media. I decided to make a report of a three-month trip through Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador. When I came back, I had an exhibition at a small cultural centre here in Milan. One photographer, Agostino Osio, came to the opening. He loved the images and said: "The spontaneity I see in your images is something that I have lost now that I am a professional photographer! Come and visit me at my studio; we will do great things together!". He was very enthusiastic about my work, so I said to myself: "OK, let's try!". So we started collaborating.

At first I was doing simple image editing, learning the newest digital techniques and experimenting with methods to make digital images look more beautiful. In fact, the first versions of Photoshop were coming out on the market and the Digital Era was about to rise. After a couple of years I reached quite a good level in using those digital tools and that was the time when I met Attilio Maranzano. He was believed to be the best art photographer in the world. According to many, he still is! The idea of being able to collaborate with him was really fascinating to me. Attilio was at a very crucial moment of his career. He was very famous in the art world; he had created his "myth" in the 80s-90s travelling the world and documenting contemporary art shows with a large format camera. But he realised that he needed a digital assistant to be able to adapt to the huge, ongoing technical changes in photography. So I became his assistant, collaborating with him on a regular basis for 5 years. I was providing him with all the digital knowledge he needed and curating the digital workflow, from shoots to fine editing for books and prints. In exchange I had the good fortune to see him at work and to understand his special way of interacting with artists and their exhibitions around the globe. It was a perfect win-win situation for both of us.

Could you describe your usual technical equipment?

After a few years I understood which equipment works best for me. It has to be very reliable and not too heavy. Digital cameras nowadays can be really efficient and small. Currently I work with a Canon 5DSR, a pretty new model, with three zoom lenses. I decided not to use fixed focal lenses because, if you work with those, you need to have many of them with you and this is not always convenient, since I travel a lot for my shoots and they might become too heavy to carry around. So I found that this works really well for me now. Of course I have a computer, flash lights for reproduction of artworks, both black and white molton, a professional microphone in case I am asked to record videos and a lot of other small tools.

Do you have a studio?

I used to have one, but now since I moved to a bigger flat I decided to try to have the studio at home, but I very seldom shoot pictures there; it's mostly an office where I concentrate, where I meet my assistants, do digital editing and where I have my collection of artworks and books. After some intense periods of traveling I must say it's a pleasure to work from home, so close to my family.

Could you please describe the process you follow when you document an exhibition? Do you often speak with the artist or the curator? Do you often have enough time to do this?

Of course, yes. That's a very important moment. Even if it's a simpler show like this one [he looks around], which is just an exhibition of paintings, a walk through the show with the artist always gives a plus to the documentation. Some artists can be very specific; some only want to share with me a vision or suggest a specific moment of the day when their show becomes more "magic" somehow.

With "installative" exhibitions I follow a totally different approach. In these cases, the images become very crucial. They can help the work travel the world and be understood and enjoyed by many more users than just the people who can visit the show. I feel a big responsibility sometimes. That's why I want to spend some time with the artists and really understand their vision about their work.

The (In)visible Art of Documenting Art

Sometimes they don't want to ask, so I need to get what they want from their words. Or, sometimes, they say: "I trust you. I know that you are doing your job well so follow your inspiration"; which is also nice to hear. Some other artists or curators, in the case of group shows, are very specific. They really want to have a special narrative of the show. In this case I follow their request precisely and I add some more images I also like so that, in the end, the documentation covers all the needs.

What are the main differences for you between documenting an artwork and an exhibition?

The documentation of the artwork is more technical, I would say. The aim is to create a light that allows the work to show itself at its best. With reproduction it's very difficult to work following a poetic vision, but still you can create some suggestions in the artwork, by moving the lights. Some artworks are really sensitive to the light and it's a pleasure to play with it and see how they react. In general I like to be very clean, very slick in the pictures, so the work looks attractive. I try to make it look as perfect as possible, unless the work and the context ask for a rougher look to be more interesting.

When I document a show, instead, I never alter the light of the space. I want to keep the sacredness of the atmosphere that the artist has created very carefully. With my work I try to transfer the exhibition to the e-users who won't be able to come and see it in the physical space. In these cases I try not to be so slick, I might even leave some minor defects if it helps. It's a matter of documenting the space, which means light, volume and so on rather than the artwork in itself; but, of course, the artwork has to be clearly visible too.

What are the differences for you between working in a commercial context and an institutional one?

Well, in the commercial shoots, there is a need to cover as many elements as possible, both for the show and for the artworks, with special focus on the artworks. Commercial galleries request that I cover them extensively with different views and details, since they need a lot of nice images to show the works to potential buyers. That is something that I always keep in mind when I photograph the artworks for a gallery. It's also a specifically commercial purpose, because often galleries prepare very well done dossiers, and they send these to their main collectors. Sometimes the clients even buy the artwork only through the picture; they don't even see it in person until they have bought it, so the pictures have to be reliable and they have to cover general views and details. In this case I try to put myself in a collector's shoes. I enjoy the artwork, I go close to it, enjoy the nice details, what I love from the artwork, and I try to show it. So, in the end, I cover it extensively.

When I work in a museum show, instead, I have a totally different approach. I speak directly with the artist or the curator, who has to explain to me all the experience of the show, so the shoot is not focused on one specific artwork; it's more on the experience of the exhibition and the picture has to capture that feeling, that atmosphere. It has to do with the space, as I said before.

And what about including spectators or viewers in the photographs? In which occasions do you decide to use this resource?

Yes. It's something that I do when the work is interactive. So if it's a video or something that the audience has to interact with, of course, there has to be at least one person. Another reason I use audience in my photos could be to show the scale of a work. When the work is particularly big, then it is nice to show it in re-

lation to a person. Another particular example is when the audience becomes an important part of the installation. In these cases, the presence of people is crucial to really capture well what the artwork looks like and its meaning.

One of your main areas of work is the commercial gallery. Do you often work when the gallery is closed?

Yes. Most of the time I prefer to work when the space is closed, but if the artwork requires an interaction with the audience to be documented, then of course I want to capture it! Indeed, I try to arrange shoots when the space is not so crowded – especially in commercial galleries – but then it depends also on the lights and many other factors. It's never the same. But, for sure, if the daylight is not important in the pictures, I always prefer to work when everyone has left, maybe in the evening or at night; the best shoots are done at night! No telephones ringing, no emails; nothing happens. You can really concentrate on the show and the magic occurs more easily.

And also the light is not changing that much. Like in this space [there are plenty of windows on the ceiling at the space where the interview is taking place]

Yeah, in this case I wouldn't work in the evening because those windows would be black, so I'm not sure it would look nice. So, if there is a window, I don't know if I would work at night. Unless the work fits well with the dark, I would normally shoot it during the day.

Which artistic medium is most difficult to document and which is the easiest?

The easiest probably is a painting, I would say. Yes, definitely a painting... no mirrors, no reflections... you have to show the colours well and the light has to be well balanced, and that is something that is easy to achieve. The most difficult are the immaterial works; something that does not exist physically. That is really problematic. It happens more and more in the contemporary art world. Artists are always pushing the limits, beyond...

The possible.

The possible, exactly. And sometimes they want the picture to show something that is not there at all. That is the most challenging, for sure.

How would your perfect installation view be? What does it need to have a good photograph of an exhibition?

Something that is described by a unique moment and there is only me to document it, so no one ever can shoot something that is similar to that picture. A special moment of light or the presence of some person from the audience who would look really perfect alongside the artwork. Or, in the case of artworks that change over time, the photo shot at the perfect moment, when the artwork shows itself at its best and, then, suddenly it changes and will never look as beautiful as the way I documented it. That's my perfect installation view.

The photographer is required to be objective, or to look for a kind of objectivity, even though with photography it is impossible to be objective.

Yes, of course.

How do you negotiate being objective but also giving your personal view of something? How do you decide to go one way or the other?

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To me, objectivity means that I have to be a calm viewer of the exhibition. This is the feedback I have sometimes from my clients or from the artists. A picture close to being objective is calm, not too crazy, not too subjective. You have to be a calm person who walks through the show and makes his own narrative. So, probably, my subjectivity emerges when you see the narrative I have created through the photographs of it. When from wide angles you go to less wide angles, longer lenses, let's say, and then you go onto details and then you zoom out again with a wider view. This is part of a technique somehow, to show an exhibition, starting from the beginning, the first impressions, and then to zoom in onto the details. I think it is something that will show my way to document an exhibition.

So, when you give the images to one client, you also give them in order. That is part of your work.

Yes, absolutely. That's very important. If you don't do that, then the work becomes much weaker. In these days, the images are often shown on slideshows, both on websites and social media. So, of course, you have to make a precise sequence to transfer the narrative experiences of the exhibitions.

There have been many different canons in documenting art since the beginning of photography. How would you describe the current one? Do you think this is the most objective?

Yes. It's always very interesting to take a look at old art books, or books that show older exhibitions. There was a show at Fondazione Prada in Venice, an incredible exhibition about Harald Szeemann's exhibition *When Attitudes Become Form*. In a special section of the exhibition there were slideshows of old photographs of that seminal exhibition. They looked complete-

ly different to how we would document it today. I have spent a lot of time watching them and learned a lot from them. Those pictures were with audience, shot during the opening, showing the interaction of the audience but done in a very spontaneous way somehow. Today, as I said before, if we use the audience we do it for a very precise purpose, and not just because it's nice to show that the opening was very crowded [laughs]. This is something that no one would do today. Of course the openings are crowded but this is not interesting anymore. Nowadays is not what we have to underline, because there are so many events, so many art exhibitions, minor, major, and this is not the focus. The focus is, I think, to show the work in its perfection. For this purpose, we want to create a good looking environment around it. In any case, we are living in the Digital Era, and digital editing allows us to reach that perfection, even if sometimes it can look a bit fake. But viewers are aware that these digital tools exist, so I believe every photographer shall find his or her way to use them. However, the purpose is not to fake things but to show them in a better way. So, probably, I would say, the canon today is to show the art at its best. And some small amount of digital retouching is admitted. Everyone knows that this is possible and even the clients ask me to do it sometimes; so it's something that is here and that everyone is aware of. It has become part of how to show art spaces and works.

So you believe these postproduction processes help to focus on what is important.

Yes! It is not a matter of faking information or misleading people in what they perceive; it's not photojournalism where even a small photo editing, for example, digitally removing some elements from the photo, is considered a big offence to the pro-

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feccion. With art it is different. It's not that I am retouching an electricity plug because I want to show the museum in a fake way. I only want to direct attention to the artworks and avoid distractions. I want to help the viewer to go directly on the artwork and I don't want his eye to be distracted by other elements. That's why. And everyone is happy with these digital touch-ups because the artwork is not disturbed by any elements and the museum is happy because the space looks cleaner. I don't think this is a problem in terms of a professional ontology. It is how it happens. So, now, everyone expects it. So if you see some distracting elements on the picture, even the client would say: "Why didn't you get rid of this or that?" So probably this is the new canon for art photography.

And how do you think this affects the physical experience of going to an exhibition? Nowadays we are used to see exhibitions through images; through your images. I understand; it makes sense: why would you leave this fire extinguisher there? But, if we are getting used to this perfection, does that affect us when we actually go to an exhibition and, suddenly, we see that the exhibition is not perfect, that it has some disturbing things that didn't make it into the picture?

When you are in a space, you can focus better on what you really want. When you are in front of a screen on the internet or on social media, however, you already have many distractions: pop-ups, banners, advertising, suggested links and so on. I think that the art space has to be a bit purer; so the more I can show its purity the better. When you are physically in a space you know exactly where to go and what to look at, so you don't mind if you have some disturbing elements.

Yes, because the eye is selecting information. We see this door but we don't look at it.

Exactly.

This opens the discussion to the use of postproduction in your photographs which, I guess, you consider as part of your work.

When you do a digital image, intrinsically you have to do a part on the computer. So you cannot say: "This is the image I took and that's it". You have, at least, to process the RAW and turn it into a high resolution TIFF; a basic digital part, let's say. Then, of course, you can go deeper and deeper into that. Some clients ask for the opposite; they don't want the image to be overworked, so they prefer it this way, even if the shadows are not great or the floor is not perfect. There are different cases. I can adapt to the clients' needs. For me it depends on the situation. If I'm shooting in a sculpture garden, everything that is nature is interesting. Even if there are, for example, a lot of leaves on the ground and they might disturb the view of the artwork, I think that, in this case, it looks beautiful and it may add something to the images. If the room is almost perfect but there are small details that I can get rid of, I retouch them. It's different from retouching a woman, let's say, or a man, in a fashion or beauty shot. I never make the artwork look better. I never change it so in-depth. I don't make it bigger or smaller or...

Better painted [we laugh].

Exactly. I don't add elements. I can maybe increase a bit the contrast or the saturation, but just in terms of the overall image, I do not change the artwork.

The demand for digital images of contemporary art has grown dramatically in the past ten years with digital means, to the extent that that the installation view is becoming one

important part of the exhibition itself, as it's what will travel and reach other people. Would you say that this situation is having an impact, also, on the conception of the artwork and also its display in the exhibition?

Well, what I know for sure is that today, at art schools, they are teaching the students that one of the main steps of the artwork is its documentation. First comes the idea and the realisation of the artwork. Then, the last step is how to show it in the space, but also in the pictures. So this, for sure, has become part of the art creation process. In some cases, maybe not painting, but more installative works, you don't see the work when it's in the studio. You see it when you install it in the exhibition. And, then, you know that the picture has to be taken from that very angle, because you see all the elements, for instance, at the same time, and that is the right picture for the work. So, yeah, some artists think about how to make the perfect picture of the work. I don't think artists are adding elements or changing the works so they can photograph them better. I am not sure about this. Maybe it can happen sometimes. In those cases, I think: "Wow, this is very professional. He also knows how to help me photographing it!" [laughs]. So I definitely consider it as a plus.

Do you consider yourself an author or an interpreter?

I hang out with lots of artists and we get along very well together, because they know I am not an artist. Because artists - I mean, authors - create from the void; they create something. The interpreter always needs another person, in this case, the artist or another object, like an artwork, to express their creativity. In this case I would say I am an interpreter, because if I want to show you why I am good at doing my work, I need to get started from someone else's creation. Then, of course, I'm also able to create. I do my own pictures, when I have time, but this has never become an authorial career. I keep the things very clearly separated because I think it may lead to confusion. Also, an authorial career is something that you have to commit to 24/7. I don't think it's something that you can do in your free time. Because photographers that are authors do it full time. They wake up with it and go to bed thinking about it. Of course, you can create something interesting anyway but, for me, it's not enough to be considered an author. I am one of those people who think that you have to be good at doing one thing, to be very specific in what you do. That's why, for instance, when I see a restaurant that says: "We do great pizza, meat and fish specialties" I always choose to eat somewhere else. If I feel like having pizza, I go to a good pizzeria, and if I feel like having fish, I try to go to a very nice fish restaurant. I never trust this mixture of things. This may not be considered a very contemporary way of thinking because, nowadays, everything is so fluid that everyone needs to know how to do different things. Probably I am a bit old school in that, since I stick to one specific field of photography. Sometimes I do something else, but, I would say, that is only 1% of what I do.

It's a specialisation in the end. You spend a lot of time doing it.

Yes, and it also became a passion. I am far from saying I am an art expert, but I love to get involved in new stories and the contemporary art world, I must say, produces many beautiful stories, it is never ending. I find new stories every day, that's why I find it so interesting and why I entered this world, taking it in 360 degrees. In fact, I also collect art. It started as a game, trading photos with young artists in exchange for artworks. At the beginning it was just for fun, but then it started happening more and more often. Every time I was shooting for artists, I would have to decide: "Do I want to be paid or do I get an artwork in-



stead? Let's go for the artwork". Now I have a small collection and I also started buying some artworks.

Would you always recognise a photo taken by you? How would you recognise it?

As I said, I learnt how to make pictures from Attilio Maranzano. His pictures are still the best pictures you can encounter when you see an art magazine or a book. You can recognise the depth of the image and many elements. And after many years working with him, he transferred to me a substantial part of his view on how to document art. Of course not everything; otherwise I would be him; but I observed his work for five years very intensively, (basically 24/7) [laughs]. But, of course, I was not his first assistant. He had many. I would say three of them are now working on this professionally. When I see one of my pictures, but also of these other former assistants of Attilio's, I recognise his style. We learnt from him how to look at an art exhibition and it's visible. Ideally, I would like to reach that high level of beauty and poetic way to show an exhibition. I've been thinking a lot about it. Sometimes, when I see some artworks of young artists that have been working a lot with a big artist as assistants or students, I see some elements that remind me of their master. I see the same thing happening in my work, having been Attilio's assistant. I wouldn't say that they look the same, because he would not be happy to hear that [laughs]. For sure I have a common approach since I've learnt from him.

And what would you say is the main thing Attilio taught you? A way of looking? Apart from the technical aspects.

More than technical aspects, what I would say I have learnt from him is how to wait for the right moment to shoot the picture, how to see a show, how to interact with the artist in a positive way. He is great at that! Empathy is very important in this field! Many photographers that I see working around me have a different approach. Often they just come, quickly see the show, document it and that's it. Attilio comes from a period when the con-

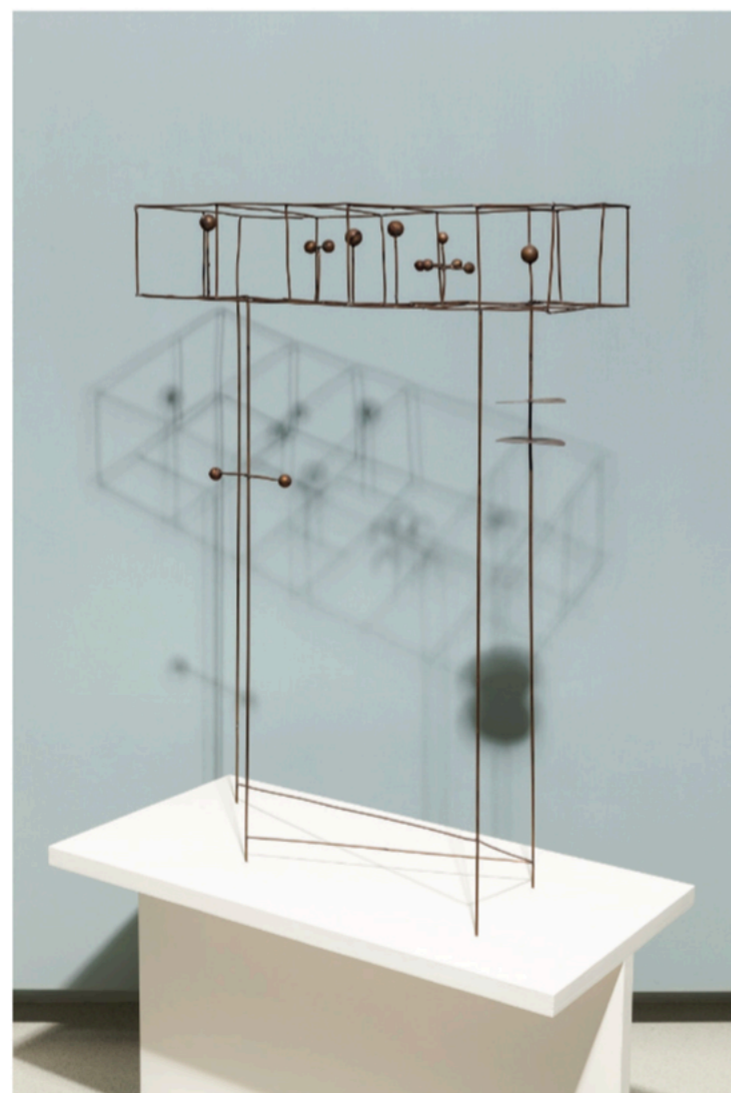
temporary art world was less hectic, so he could even dedicate an entire week to documenting a show like this [points around him]. The shoot in itself may not take too long but most of the time is dedicated to meeting the artist, spending time with him/her, entering his/her mood, discussing how he installed it and why, how he feels about the work, and so on... That's why many of the artists he works with are now friends of his.

And, for example, do you imagine your pictures of documentation of art in an exhibition?

Well, I hope it can happen in a very specific exhibition. I wouldn't do *Andrea Rossetti: an exhibition of art documentation*, filling walls with my pictures. I don't feel it would be the right approach. Why choose these images? If there is a special exhibition and I am asked to show some specific image, then yes, but there has to be a curatorial meaning in that.

I have observed that in other fields of documentary photography, such as architecture, the photographers are a recognised figure in their own right and often there are publications and exhibitions about their work. Whereas in the field of art, it seems like the figure of the photographer is regarded more, perhaps, like a technician.

I wouldn't say art photographers are technicians; it wouldn't represent well this role. On the contrary, art photographers can be less technical than architecture or still-life photographers. I would love one day to make a book about my pictures. I am not sure if I would exhibit my images in an exhibition space, though. It sounds a bit redundant since they are shot in a similar environment. Well... maybe if my photos captured an artwork or big installation that happened in a very unique moment in the past, and some curators want to include one of my photos in a show, I would love to do it.



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