

Positions within the photographic dialogue

"A photographic portrait is a picture of someone who knows he is being photographed."¹ Richard Avedon

The portrait (Lat. *protrahere* = to draw forth) ranks amongst the great themes of art, with the image of humankind continuously changing in both the real and the figurative sense. Photography, with its particular, concrete imaging properties, has shown itself the reflection of its epoch ever since its beginnings in 1839, a reflection that also extends to the composition and handling of its motifs.² Dignity, likeness and beauty play a traditional role in portraiture, which thereby seeks to place the unmistakable individuality of the sitter at the core of the picture. "A portrait is something that contains the relationship to the original image in its own pictorial content. [...] A portrait wishes to be understood as a portrait, even when the relationship to the original image is almost overwhelmed by the pictorial content of the picture."³

But portraiture has long since been about more than this. Many and varied are the interventions in contemporary artistic photography, which manipulates and alienates the human face to such a degree that, in its deformation, identity disappears.⁴ Eyes, noses, mouths and ears are erased, distorted, displaced – true nightmares of morphing, fragmentation, disturbance and dissection that are not so very far from real-life facial remodelling under the scalpel of the cosmetic surgeon, when beauty becomes a façade and the individuality of a lived life is reduced to uniformity. The words of Walter Benjamin appear little short of visionary in the age of cloning: "The peeling away of the object's shell, the destruction of the aura, is the signature of a perception whose sense for the sameness of things has grown to the point where even the singular, the unique, is divested of its uniqueness by means of its reproduction."⁵

The project *Portraits in Series. Photographs of a Century* is devoted to the classic portrait and takes us on a journey through time – from the earliest daguerreotypes and talbotypes right up to the digital present, with its openly apparent photographic manipulations that raise questions concerning the end of the portrait in the conventional sense. The presence of the camera creates a particular psychological situation in which thoroughly opposing interests come face to face, yet are frequently ignored. As well as the fundamental relationship between the photographer and the sitter, there is also – as a third partner – the viewer, who is taken into account even during shooting. This confrontation culminates in the principle of frontality, one still valid in photography today and whose convention is acted out and explored in ever new ways. This active process of dialogue is essential to the photographic portrait in another way, too: just as photographers make mutual reference to each other, so their pictures, too, communicate amongst themselves and transcend their historical context in their reception by the public of the day. The imaginary museum makes it possible to discover ever new connections.

Time and space

Photographs of people always contain the factor of time in a captured, frozen instant that lives on as a once-seen present. Transience and death are inherent within photographic images, something that Roland Barthes (notably towards the end of his life, after the death of his mother) explored in depth in his book *Camera Lucida*.⁶

A photograph's date expresses itself not just through clothing, hair styles and body language, but also through the poses adopted, the roles played and the sexual identity presented. *Die Geschwister* [Brothers and Sisters; fig. x], created in 1901 by Theodor (1871–1937) and Oscar Hofmeister (1868–1943) using the laborious gum bichromate printing process, at first sight presents a model family of well-behaved middle-class children dressed in their Hanseatic sailor suits (pl. x). Another interpretation, one that references the *Elegy* by Heinrich Wilhelm Müller (1859–1933) incorporated like a predella panel beneath the photograph, sees *Brothers and Sisters* as a symbolically charged, Romantic picture of friendship.⁷ The more we know about the context in which a work arose, the more it tells us. Even if *Brothers and Sisters*, as a figural image, is anything but an instant snapshot, it records a unique moment in time together with all the photographers' intentions. A single picture lends concrete expression to history, which it is our task to explore.

Once a year since 1975, Nicholas Nixon (*1947) has assembled *The Brown Sisters* (fig. x–x) in front of his camera for a group portrait whose constellation is always the same. The quick-time effect of viewing these pictures as a whole gives a direct insight into the passage of the lives of these four women. The series is based on the principle of comparability. To mark the millennium, Hans-Peter Feldmann (*1941) took one year as the measure of time by which to portray *100 Jahre* [100 Years; fig. x–x]. By inviting 101 ordinary people of consecutive ages to pose for his camera, he has succeeded in embodying an entire century. The series is generalized by the anonymity of its sitters, identified only by forename and age. Feldmann invites us to identify with his series at a personal level. We look for people who compare with our own age, or the ages of our parents, children and friends. Clothing and body language are eloquent in their typical representation of their day.

Kyungwoo Chun (*1969) uses long exposures to penetrate the depths of the pictorial space. His *Thirty Minutes' Dialogue* (2000, fig. x–x) is inspired by his reading of Walter Benjamin, who was fascinated by the "synthesis of expression which was achieved through the long immobility of the model"⁸. The medium that captures just a single instant during the brief moment of exposure can – by using exposures of extremely long duration – transform time into pictorial space.

Face of the time

The early years of photography include typical examples of the way in which models seem to grow, during long exposures, "not *out of* the instant, but *into it*"⁹, as Benjamin describes the concentration produced by the technique. The remarkable portraits of Newhaven fishermen and members of the Free Church of Scotland, made by the painter David Octavius Hill (1802–1870) and the photographer Robert Adamson (1821–1848) between 1843 and 1848, number amongst the earliest experiments in

the genre (fig. x-x). Contemporary salted-paper contact prints made from the paper negatives have survived right up to the present (enlargements did not then yet exist), along with pigment prints made by James Craig Annan (1864–1946) from 1890 onwards in the fine-printing techniques of Pictorialism. In 1900 Alfred Lichtwark, the then director of the Hamburg Kunsthalle, wrote enthusiastically: "Hill's portraits appear larger and more mature to us than virtually everything that has been done since."¹⁰

Having been rapidly forgotten as technology advanced in leaps in bounds, these pioneering works of portraiture now became the object of rediscovery. The history of portrait photography subsequently found itself formulated for the first time in terms of a phase model: the opening years as a period of blossoming, the mass production of *cartes de visite* at the end of the 19th century as a period of decline, the Pictorialism of the years around 1900 as a revival, and finally the advent of *Neues Sehen* or "new vision" photography in the 1920s as a true renewal of photography.

From today's perspective, the project *Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts* [People of the 20th Century; fig. x-x], commenced by the photographer August Sander (1876–1964) during the politically progressive Weimar years but never completed, marks a crucial and pivotal point in the history of the photographic portrait in the 20th century. Photographs from the project were first presented to the public in 1927 at an exhibition mounted by the Cologne Kunstverein art association, and in 1929 a selection were published by Kurt Wolff in the shape of a book, *Antlitz der Zeit* [Face of Our Time], which was intended as a subscription for the work as a whole. Starting with portraits of the farming community, Sander progressed on to people living in the metropolis. He thereby drew in his portraiture upon a wide variety of stylistic sources, from the studio portrait to the iconography of the art of the 1920s. For all their diversity, his pictures are characterized by the photographic respect with which he treated his models, including beggars and other disadvantaged members of society – those whom Sander called the "last people".

Sander worked with the pose chosen by the models themselves. In-depth analyses of his portraits reveal that "Sander photographs not from the point of view of the sitter alone, but from a differentiated, judgemental, by no means neutral position. He thereby succeeds in rendering visible in photography the discrepancy between the image the person has of him or herself and the image that they actually present."¹¹ In Sander's portrait of an *Großindustrieller* [Industrial Magnate], the side view presented by the sitter establishes a certain distance and signals social differences that are also inscribed formally within his body language.

General titles such as *Bauern- und Bergmannsfrau* [Farmer's Wife and Miner's Wife], *Schauerleute* [Dock Workers,] and *Notar* [Notary; fig. x-x] identify the sitters as representatives of their profession and their class. Sander is searching for types, a concept based on Goethe's idea of the symbolic object. At the same time, the photographer touches upon Marxism's perception of the individual solely as the personification of an economic category, a viewpoint represented by the artist Franz Wilhelm Seiwert, one of the Cologne Progressives with whom Sander was closely associated. In his foreword to *Face of Our Time*, Alfred Döblin speaks of a sociology in pictures with "a scientific viewpoint above and beyond that of the photographer of details"¹² – this last an invective against the egalitarian

tendencies in the photography of New Objectivity, something also criticized by Benjamin.¹³ The latter recognized the political implications of *People of the 20th Century*: "And suddenly the human face entered the image with a new, immeasurable significance. But it was no longer a portrait. What was it? It is the supreme accomplishment of a German photographer to have answered this question. August Sander put together a series of faces that are in no way inferior to the vast gallery opened by such as Eisenstein and Pudovkin, and he did so from a scientific standpoint."¹⁴ It was no coincidence that the Nazis, upon seizing power, impounded Sander's *Face of Our Time*, a book whose physiognomies did not marry with the National Socialist view of the world.

Sander continued a tradition that had originally been reserved for the galleries of ancestral portraits in ruling houses and expanded it to embrace the whole of the society of his day. He was probably familiar, through Rudolph Dührkoop (1848–1918), with the lavish compendium of photogravures entitled *Hamburg Hamburgische Männer und Frauen am Anfang des XX. Jahrhunderts* [Men and Women at the Start of the 20th Century; fig. xx], a collection of dignified portraits of eminent citizens of the Free and Hanseatic city. Commercially astute printers in Frankfurt am Main, meanwhile, were quick to publish and distribute lithograph portraits of the members of the Frankfurt Assembly, which met in the city's Pauluskirche church between 1848 and 1849 (fig. x-x). Based on daguerreotypes (fig. x-x) by Hermann Biow (1804–1850), this portrait gallery of the politicians of the first German parliament thereby offered an early instance of the use of photography as a new and democratic medium.

Everyday faces

At the opposite end of the scale to Sander stood Helmar Lerski (1871–1956), a portrait photographer with a film-making background. In 1931 Lerski published his book of similarly anonymous *Köpfe des Alltags*¹⁵ [Everyday Faces, fig. x-x], in which he married strong lighting with an extremely close-up angle and thereby made an important contribution to "new vision" photography. Lerski focuses upon the aesthetic of the face and models character heads: "I produce the expression, I fashion the head and its lines with the aid of lighting, above all I use my lighting to bring out the soul. In every human being there is everything; the question is only what the light falls on!"¹⁶ Lerski titles his photographs with the sitter's job in an indication of social class. The bounds of portrait photography are burst by this anonymity; from the picture of an individual, we arrive at a generalized image of a class and a time.

Jumping forward to the present day, *Portrait of an Image (with Isabelle Huppert)* by Roni Horn (*1955) illuminates a fundamental problem, particularly in the case of portraits. Original titles, captions and explanatory texts are part of such pictures and play a steering role in their reception (fig. x-x). At the same time, the dominance of linguistic information (as an ostensibly higher authority) harbours the danger of distorting our view of the work of art as such. When we recognize a famous person, the picture we hold of them immediately comes to the fore. An official portrait constructs for the camera an outer personality that psychologist C. G. Jung termed a *persona* (as opposed to the inner personality, the *anima*). The word *persona* is derived from the antique world of theatre, where it

designated a mask worn by actors to characterize their role. The cult of the star, which has flourished since the rise of the film industry and the embrace of photography by the illustrated press in the 1920s, creates an "image". This public face is complemented by insights into the individual's private life, supposedly to allow us access to the worshipped idol as a human being. A reflection of this situation is found in Horn's ambiguous main title *Portrait of an Image*, which features Isabelle Huppert as supporting actress, as we are led to understand from the subtitle in brackets.

The photographer's subject is the process of perception itself. Tension is created by the public medium of photography and the vulnerability of this face seen without make-up and in close-up, constantly altering in the course of its unshielded dialogue with the camera. As Barthes states: "The 'private life' is nothing but that zone of space, of time, where I am not an image, an object. It is my *political* right to be a subject which I must protect."¹⁷ We need time to register minute changes in facial expression. The endless, media-amplified stream of images demanding to be processed is here slowed down and brought to a halt. "The camera isolated momentary appearances and in so doing destroyed the idea that images were timeless. Or, to put it another way, the camera showed that the notion of time passing was inseparable from the experience of the visual (except in paintings)."¹⁸

The series by Judith Joy Ross (*1946) reveal the altered situation in the US in the wake of the Vietnam War. The political dimension of her *Portraits at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington, D. C.* (fig. x-x) of 1983-84 emerges from their titles, which state where and when each picture was taken. The faces of the anonymous individuals reflect the complex emotional reactions of the visitors who are reading, on a wall of black granite, the names of those killed or missing in Vietnam. In the series *Protesting the U.S. War in Iraq* (fig. x-x), created in 2006-07, the US citizens protesting against the war against Iraq are identified by their full names and thereby stand up – as in the case of *Betty Compton, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania* (fig. x) – for their convictions. Here, too, the photographer concentrates upon the individuality of the people she meets, fascinated by the faces in which the seriousness of their purpose expresses itself without irritation by the camera: silently, reflectively, introspectively. "Whether photographing children or visitors at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, members of Congress or protestors against the Iraq War, Ross reveals our common humanity, our common strengths and frailnesses."¹⁹

Dialogue

After psychologists such as Paul Watzlawick, Ronald D. Laing and Horst Eberhard Richter began investigating human communication and the processes of group dynamics, in the 1970s the dialogue between photographer and sitter was also identified as "a constitutive element – both visually and in terms of content – of the structure of portrait photography"²⁰. Through the presence of the camera, which acts as deputy for the later viewer, the pre-existing situation changes. Therefore, "the interchange between the subject and the visual recorder [...] does more, perhaps, than anything else to engender the content of the picture."²¹ It is a complex interpersonal situation, in which the interests of producer, model and viewer intersect. "The portrait-photograph is a closed field of forces. Four image-repertoires intersect here, oppose and distort each other. In front of the lens, I am at the same

time: the one I think I am, the one I want others to think I am, the one the photographer thinks I am, and the one he makes use of to exhibit his art."²²

Implicit questions include: is this a commission or an independent project? Whose interests does the photographer represent? How much does the photographer know about the person he or she is photographing? And vice versa: what do the people being photographed feel about the situation?

John Berger wonders: "What did August Sander tell his sitters before he took their pictures? And how did he say it so that they all believed in him the same way? They each look at the camera with the same expression in their eyes. Insofar as there are differences, these are the results of the sitter's experience and character – the priest has lived a different life from the paper-hanger; but to all of them Sanders's camera represents the same thing."²³

What room is granted to the person being photographed, in both the real and metaphorical sense?

What happens when Stefan Moses (*1928) – in direct succession from Sander – takes to the streets of West Germany in the 1960s to photograph *Deutsche* [Germans; fig. x-x]?²⁴ True, he takes with him a neutral backcloth as a substitute for a studio interior, using it to create a sort of island on which the models can pose for the camera: amused or serious, agitated or self-confident. After the fall of the Berlin Wall and before westernization gave everything a new face, Moses complemented this first series with a second devoted to East Germans, under the title *Abschied und Anfang* [Farewell and Beginning].

Ulrich Mack (*1934), on the other hand, incorporates the surroundings into the picture and in his comparative cycle *Inselmenschen. Pellworm – Harkers Island* [Island People; fig. x-x] allowed people to choose where they wanted to be photographed. As in the case of Sander, long exposures lasting up to 10 seconds demanded and encouraged concentration upon the process. Those being photographed felt they were being taken seriously. These are calm images, created out of the impetus of the social documentary photography being discussed in the 1970s in Germany by "auteur photographers" – a term coined by Klaus Honnef in analogy to the auteur movie.²⁵ "The auteur photographer reacts to his environment with the subjective tools of his feelings, thoughts and personal experiences; he is able to translate this into pictures that exemplify one or several relevant aspects of reality and which illuminate the state of reality in such a way that the viewer gains insights into the contexts of reality."²⁶ The single image is renounced in favour of series established with comparability in mind, in an attempt to catalogue reality without directives from the photographer.

Viewing

When viewed as a complete *œuvre*, the photographs by Diane Arbus (1923–1971) condense themselves into a continuous sequence and reveal the critical dominance of a photographer who does not keep out of her own pictures (fig. x-x). Her eye is by no means objective, even if her contemporaries perceived it as such, insofar as they regularly compared her with Sander (with whom Arbus was acquainted). Arbus's standpoint was criticized early on by Susan Sontag: "For what could be more correctly described as their dissociated point of view, the photographs have been praised for their candour and for an unsentimental empathy with their subjects. What is actually their

aggressiveness toward the public has been treated as a moral accomplishment: that the photographs don't allow the viewer to be distant from the subject. More plausibly, Arbus's photographs – with their acceptance of the appalling – suggest a naïveté which is both coy and sinister, for it is based on distance, on privilege, on a feeling that what the viewer is asked to look at is really *other*.²⁷ A member of America's upper class directs her hegemonic gaze at the "exotic" elements of middle-class society, what Sontag describes as "other".

Arbus determines the way we look at her subjects through deliberate camerawork. Her skilfully composed images include significant pointers²⁸ whose effectiveness is the stuff of reception aesthetics.²⁹ Arbus's freaks pose trustingly in front of the camera and look directly at the viewer. Frontality in this case signifies objectification, making the sitter the object of the photograph. This inherently contradicts with the dignity associated with the pose and its entitlement to respect. "The sitter addresses to the viewer an act of reverence, of courtesy, according to conventional rules, and demands that the viewer obey the same conventions and the same norms. He stands face on and demands to be looked at face on and from a distance, this need for reciprocal deference being the essence of frontality."³⁰ In the case of Arbus, the encounter is only seemingly between equals; in truth, the photographer retains the upper hand and the pose reveals itself to be ambiguous. "If, posing for a photograph, I freeze, it is not in order to assist the photographer, but in some sense to resist him, to protect myself from his immobilizing gaze; [...] Posing then, is a form of mimicry."³¹ To categorize Arbus as a documentary photographer is to misconstrue³² a specific "way of looking at reality"³³. Those being photographed evidently do not understand what is being done with them and have no idea of the strange impression they make upon us.

It is a one-sided, distorted dialogue that gives far from equal voice to the interests of the photographer and those of her models, whom she takes formally by surprise. The *King and Queen* (fig. x) photographed at a pensioners' dance are seen unflatteringly from below: the woman's dress has ridden up above her knees in a less than dignified seated pose. The wide-angle lens distorts the shape of the royal couple's bodies and the flash makes the faces appear frozen. The woman's thick glasses lend her a slow-witted expression. The photographic dialogue has here clearly become a monologue. In Arbus' last series (fig. x) we are confronted with a self-contained world with which no dialogue is even attempted. At the end, significantly, the photographer disappears from the picture as from life. The viewer is excluded. "Nobody is speaking here. The events seem to tell themselves."³⁴ Contemporaries corresponding to the current norm act in a clownish and crazy manner when they dress up. Arbus makes reference to this in her pictures of the mentally handicapped, who – in a mad world – participate in the same game. "Do they see themselves, the viewer wonders, like *that*? Do they know how grotesque they are? It seems as if they don't."³⁵ Such pictures may appear almost harmless at a historical distance of 40 years, but for US American audiences at the time they were taken, they were anything but. It is question of how we look at it.

The same is true for Sander, whose camera was drawn to the rural farming community, to labourers and artisans, to the ordinary man on the street, and whose *Kohlenträger* [Brick Carrier] represented the apotheosis of the working classes. The photographer met intellectuals and the petty bourgeoisie

with a gentle irony which becomes clear in particular when viewed from a later point in time.

"Sander's Notary is suffused with self-importance and stiffness, his Usher with assertiveness and brutality; but no notary, no usher could ever have read such signs. As distance, social observation here assumes the necessary intermediary role in a delicate aesthetic, which renders it futile: no critique except among those who are already capable of criticism."³⁶

Confronting identity

Barthes thematizes the simultaneity of non-simultaneous events that characterizes every photograph showing a moment that has already passed as an eternal present (at least as long as the photo physically exists). "I observed that a photograph can be the object of three practices (or of three emotions, or of three intentions): to do, to undergo, to look."³⁷

The series *5 Stunden und 35 Minuten mit der Kamera im Fahrstuhl eines Verlagshauses, 20. November 1969, 10.35 bis 12.30, 13.30 bis 17.10 Uhr* [5 Hours and 35 Minutes with the Camera inside the Lift at a Publisher's Offices, 20 November 1969, 10.35 to 12.30, 13.30 to 17.10; fig. x-x] by Heinrich Riebesehl (1938–2010) is an attempt to document an authentic situation unobserved, without altering it. "Now, if it's accepted that all behaviour in an interactional situation has message value, i. e., is communication, it follows that no matter how one may try, one cannot not communicate. Activity or inactivity, words or silence all have message value: they influence others and these others, in turn, cannot not respond to these communications and are thus themselves communicating."³⁸ Unaware of the presence of the camera and therefore undisturbed, those riding the elevator can be themselves for a quiet moment and do not have to react to the fact of being observed.

At the opposite end of the spectrum is Irving Penn (1917–2009). He reflects the dialogue that prominent individuals are able to conduct creatively in front of the camera (fig. x-x): sheltered and challenged by the studio corner, in a playful or disciplined, insecure or self-confident manner. The photographer allows his subject room for self-expression by providing an experimental set-up that departs from the one-dimensional neutral background and injects dynamism into the standardized studio situation. "This confinement, surprisingly, seemed to comfort people. [...] limiting the subjects' movement seemed to relieve me of part of the problem of holding on to them."³⁹

Coming to terms with the camera means finding identity. The frontality of the colour portraits (figs. x-x) that Thomas Ruff (*1958) took of his friends and acquaintances in the first half of the 1980s allowed the individual (in his or her ordinariness) to rediscover a sort of dignity in the age of mass media, as the social structures rocked by the generation of 1968 settled back into place. "The conventionality of attitudes towards photography appears to refer to the style of social relations favoured by a society which is both stratified and static and in which family and 'home' are more real than particular individuals, who are primarily defined by their family commons; in which the social rules of behaviour and the moral code are more apparent than the feelings, desires or thoughts of individual subjects".⁴⁰ Ruff's portraits at the same time exhibit an objectivity that deflects any psychological probe into the depths of the sitter's personality and recalls the sobriety of passport

photos or even mugshots of wanted criminals. Ruff establishes a link between this series of portraits and the methods of police surveillance employed in West Germany in the 1970s, in the context of professional disqualifications and terrorism by the Red Army Faction.⁴¹ The sharp, accurately detailed images, invariably frontal in view, show Ruff to be the pupil of Bernd and Hilla Becher, who drew in turn upon Sander and Albert Renger-Patzsch (1897–1966) and who caused a furore with their groundbreaking photographs of sculpture-like pit-head frames. "The people [in Ruff's portraits] were meant to be photographed like plaster busts, since he believed that photography can only reproduce the surface of things."⁴² The serial corresponds to the uniformity of the postmodern individual.

Mirror image

Looking into the camera also signifies self-interrogation. I and you, mirrored in our respective opposite, are fundamental to identity. We recognize ourselves in our complete or damaged state in the eyes of the other. According to the psychoanalytical theory of Jacques Lacan, the mirror stage in infancy is important for the formation of the ego. When the child recognizes itself in the mirror, this gives birth to the Imaginary, the realm of narcissistic fantasies of mastery and omnipotence. Barthes wants "a History of Looking. For the Photograph is the advent of myself as other: a cunning dissociation of consciousness from identity."⁴³ The camera becomes a substitute mirror.⁴⁴ The lens replaces the eye of God, and the picture from the machine created by man himself becomes the super-ego.

A particular role is played by the eyes, which have traditionally been considered the mirror of the soul. The photographed portrait reveals a paradox: "We assume of the gaze that it is the one that the subject himself cannot see in his life. When you look in a mirror, you see yourself either being seen or seeing, but never both at the same time. [...] And when, consequently, I give someone my gaze, the photographed double of my gaze, I give him something with which I see but which I myself cannot see."⁴⁵

Frontality causes the gazes in both directions to freeze; staring back is a form of self-defence. When Walter Schels (*1936) photographs the *Blind* (fig. x-x), the seeing becomes one-way. The people standing in front of the camera, some of them blind from birth, can never see their own mirror image and can barely imagine what photography is all about. As Max Kozloff states: "A blind person cannot be looked at without the act of starting up in the viewer the semblance, at least, of voyeurism."⁴⁶ "It is impossible to look at a blind person without feeling like a voyeur." This makes looking difficult.

Giuseppe Penone (*1947) converted his own eyes using mirrored contact lenses in *Rovesciare i propri occhi* (1970/71).⁴⁷ By temporarily blinding himself for the camera, he prevents the viewer from establishing the direct contact that usually takes place via the exchange of looks. "Precisely because the eyes themselves are not visible in this portrait, the gaze as such becomes the subject; precisely because the mirrored contact lenses reflect the viewer – or the photographer, logically, while the picture is being taken – more clearly than natural eyes, these unsettling mirror-eyes make us enduringly aware of the self-referential nature of the mirrored gaze. The viewer is flung back upon

himself. But the artist, too, is referred back to himself: [...] his gaze, blocked by the back of the mirrored lenses, can only turn inwards. What remains are the images in the head."⁴⁸

In 1991 Ruff reacted to critical prejudice by standardizing the eyes of some of his portraits with the aid of digital manipulation. "In a French art journal, it was insinuated that the series *Portraits* was comparable with the art of 'Socialist Realism', if not with that of Fascism. In reaction to this reproach, Thomas Ruff used digital image processing to replace the irises in the eyes of twelve of his *Portraits* with the luminous blue irises of another model, whose blue was the same time enhanced."⁴⁹

Michael Najjar (*1966) goes one step further in terms of content in his eight-part series *nexus project part I*, created in 1999. In *dana_2.0* and *dieter_2.0* (fig. x-x), the sitter's iris has been digitally modified in such a way as to appear veiled. Although its original colour still shines through, its almost colourless paleness has an unnatural air and the glaring gaze appears threatening. The technological transformation of the body leads to rigidity. Based on the classic studio portrait and set against a neutral background, the photograph becomes that of a cyborg, a cybernetic organism that is part biological and part artificial, "just as the biologically correct body transforms into a hybrid being though its fusion with technological components."⁵⁰ Questions are raised concerning image and likeness, concerning the reference to the "original" person. Shot in the aesthetic of the seemingly objective passport photo, whose frontality follows convention, the over-lifesize image confronts the viewer with beings that do not – or do not yet – exist in this form. For in the accompanying ID that forms part of the work, we are given information about the (fictive) biography of the cyborgs, whose upload still lies in the future. Thus the contradictory data are "clarified".

It is no coincidence that such pictures should be created around the millennium. They mark the end of the analogue era with its similarities and correspondences. With the rise of digital technology, photography is now about exploring new means of production and presenting human perception with new experiences. Najjar inquires into the end of the photographic portrait. A transition is provided by *bionic angel* (fig. x): as a species, impossible to categorize in terms of gender in the artificial coolness and smoothness of its beauty – the same type of beauty that is standard fare in advertising. By means of DTI scanning, computed into a three-dimensional model, the face is visually connected with the nerve fibres of the brain. Since magnetic resonance tomography itself represents an imaging process that has to be interpreted by the viewer, Najjar thus implicitly thematizes the theoretical backgrounds of such visualizing techniques. The artist opens up another dimension with *the sublime brain of jonathon* (fig. x). The work shows the neuronal structure of the brain in front view, a perspective which thus corresponds to looking directly at the face of the sitter. This neuronal portrait presents something entirely new, since it renders visible, with the help of the computer, an aspect that remains hidden from the human eye and the camera lens: the neuronal identity of the individual.

Digitalization marks a paradigm shift for photography – from the mirror image (in the most literal sense) of the daguerreotype to the virtual world of mathematical operations; from the likeness of something seen to the computerized image that renders the unseen visible.

¹ Cited from William Ewing with Nathalie Herschdorfer, *Face. The New Photographic Portrait*, London 2006, p. 29.

² Further reading: Ben Maddow, *Faces. A Narrative History of the Portrait in Photography*, Boston 1977; *Lichtbildnisse. Das Porträt in der Fotografie*, Bonn 1982; Claudia Gabriele Philipp [= Gabriele Betancourt Nuñez], "Porträtfotografie zwischen Dialog und Dominanz – Individualporträts und Gesellschaftsbilder von den Anfängen der Fotografie bis heute", in: *Fotovision. Projekt Fotografie nach 150 Jahren*, Hannover 1988, pp. 158–166; Claudia Gabriele Philipp [= Gabriele Betancourt Nuñez], *Porträtfotografie in Deutschland 1850–1918*, Stuttgart 1991; *how you look at it. Fotografien des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Cologne 2000; *Das zweite Gesicht. Metamorphosen des fotografischen Porträts. The Other Face. Metamorphoses of the Photographic Portrait*, Munich 2002; *Zwiesprache*, Berlin 2003; Paul Ardenne, *Face to Face. The Art of Portrait Photography*, Paris 2004; *Portraits of an Age. Photography in Germany and Austria 1900–1938*, Ostfildern-Ruit 2005; *Bilanz in zwei Akten. Sammlung Niedersächsische Sparkassenstiftung*, Düsseldorf 2005; *click doubeclick. The Documentary Factor*, Munich 2006; *Kopf an Kopf – Serielle Porträtfotografie*, Heidelberg 2007.

³ "Was ein Porträt ist, enthält in seinem eigenen Bildgehalt die Beziehung auf das Urbild. [...] Ein Porträt will als Porträt verstanden werden, selbst dann noch, wenn die Beziehung auf das Urbild von dem eigenen Bildgehalt des Bildes erdrückt wird". Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hermeneutik. Wahrheit und Methode*, vol. 1, Tübingen 1990, p. 150, translated by Karen Willilams.

⁴ Cf. Ewing 2006 (as note 1).

⁵ "Die Entschälung des Gegenstands aus seiner Hülle, die Zertrümmerung der Aura ist die Signatur einer Wahrnehmung, deren Sinn für alles gleichartige auf der Welt so gewachsen ist, daß sie es mittels der Reproduktion auch dem Einmaligen abgewinnt." Walter Benjamin, "Kleine Geschichte der Photographie", in: idem, *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*, Frankfurt a. M. 1973 (6), pp. 65–94, p. 83; cited here from David S. Ferris, *The Cambridge Introduction to Walter Benjamin*, Cambridge 2008, p. 94.

⁶ Originally published in French under the title *La Chambre Claire*, Paris 1980; first published in English as Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida. Reflections on Photography*, translated by Richard Howard, New York 1981.

⁷ Cf. Claudia Gabriele Philipp [= Gabriele Betancourt Nuñez], "Theodor und Oscar Hofmeister 'Die Geschwister' und Heinrich Wilhelm Müller 'Elegie' – ein romantisches Freundschaftsbild der Kunstphotographie um 1900", in: *Jahrbuch des Museums für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg*, 11/12, 1994, pp. 83–96.

⁸ "Synthese des Ausdruckes, die durch das lange Stillhalten des Modells erzwungen wird". Emil Orlik, "Über Fotografie (1924)", in: Wolfgang Kemp, *Theorie der Fotografie II. 1912–1945*, Munich 1979, pp. 181–184, p. 182; cited here from Walter Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography", translated by Phil Patton, in: Alan Trachtenberg (ed.), *Classic Essays on Photography*, New Haven 1980, pp. 199–216, p. 204.

⁹ Walter Benjamin, "Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit", in: idem (as note 4), pp. 7–63, p. 23; cited here from Trachtenberg (as note 8), p. 204.

¹⁰ "Hills Bildnisse erschienen uns reifer und grösser als fast alles, was seither gemacht war." Alfred Lichtwark, "Incunabeln der Bildnisphotographie", in: *Photographische Rundschau*, 1, 1900, pp. 25–30, p. 26, translated by Karen Williams.

¹¹ "daß Sander nicht allein aus der Sichtweise des Porträtierten heraus fotografiert, sondern in differenzierter Weise, wertend und keinesfalls neutral, Standpunkt bezieht. Dabei gelingt es ihm, die Diskrepanz zwischen dem Bild, das die Menschen von sich selbst haben, und dem, was sie wirklich darstellen, in der Fotografie sichtbar zu machen." Uwe Beitz, Ingrid Höpel and Claudia Gabriele Philipp [= Gabriele Betancourt Nuñez], "August Sander – Fotograf (1876–1964)", in: *Tendenzen*, 120, 1978, pp. 23–27, p. 26, translated by Karen Williams

¹² "wissenschaftlichen Standpunkt oberhalb der Detailphotographen". Alfred Döblin, "Von Gesichtern, Bildern und ihrer Wahrheit", in: *Antlitz der Zeit. Sechzig Aufnahmen deutscher Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts von August Sander*, Munich 1929, p. 14, translated by Karen Williams.

¹³ Cf. Benjamin in Trachtenberg (as note 8), p. 213.

¹⁴ "Und augenblicklich trat das menschliche Gesicht mit neuer, unermeßlicher Bedeutung auf die Platte. Aber es war kein Porträt mehr. Was war es? Es ist das eminente Verdienst eines deutschen Photographen, diese Frage beantwortet zu haben. August Sander hat eine Reihe von Köpfen zusammengestellt, die der gewaltigen Galerie, die ein Eisenstein oder Pudowkin eröffnet haben, in gar nichts nachsteht, und er tat es unter wissenschaftlichen Gesichtspunkten." *Ibid.*, p. 210, translated by Karen Williams.

¹⁵ *Köpfe des Alltags. Unbekannte Menschen. Gesehen von Helmar Lerski. 80 Lichtbilder*. With an introduction by Curt Glaser, Berlin 1931.

¹⁶ "Ich produziere seinen Ausdruck, ich gestalte mit Hilfe des Lichts seinen Kopf, seine Linien, ich gestalte vor allem seine Beseeltheit mit meinem Licht. In jedem Menschen ist alles – die Frage ist nur, worauf das Licht fällt!" Helmar Lerski, in: *der mensch mein bruder. Lichtbilder von Helmar Lerski*, Dresden 1958, p. 75, translated by Karen Williams.

¹⁷ Barthes (as note 6), p. 15, italics in the original.

¹⁸ John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, London 1972, p. 18.

¹⁹ Wesleyan University, Davison Art Center, "Spring 2009 Exhibition", <http://www.wesleyan.edu/dac/exhb/past/2009b.html>, last visit 27.11.2010.

²⁰ "ein für die inhaltliche und visuelle Struktur der Portraitfotografie konstitutives Element". Gisbert Tönnis, "Der Einfluß des Dialoges zwischen Fotograf und Fotografiertem auf die Struktur der

Portraitfotografie", in: *Zeitschrift für Kunstpädagogik*, 2, 1975, pp. 89–97, p. 89, translated by Karen Williams

²¹ Max Kozloff, *Photography and Fascination*, Danbury 1979, p. 51.

²² Barthes (as note 6), p. 13.

²³ John Berger, "The Suit and the Photograph", in: idem, *About Looking*, London 1980, pp. 27–36, p. 27.

²⁴ Cf. Stefan Moses, *Deutsche*, Munich 1980.

²⁵ Cf. Kemp (as note 21).

²⁶ "Der Autorenfotograf reagiert auf seine Umwelt mit dem subjektiven Instrumentarium seines Gefühls, seiner Vorstellungen und seiner individuellen Erfahrungen; er ist in der Lage, dies in Bilder umzusetzen, die exemplarisch für einen oder mehrere relevante Aspekte der Wirklichkeit sind und die den Zustand der Wirklichkeit in einer Weise beleuchten, daß der Betrachter Einsichten in die Zusammenhänge der Wirklichkeit gewinnt." Klaus Honnef, "Thesen zur Autorenfotografie (1979)", in: Kemp 1983 (as note 21), pp. 204–210, p. 210, translated by Karen Williams.

²⁷ Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, New York 1977, pp. 33–34, italics in the original.

²⁸ Cf. Claudia Gabriele Philipp [= Gabriele Betancourt Nuñez], "Augen-Blicke. Bilder von Diane Arbus", in: *Fotogeschichte*, 18, 1985, pp. 29–52.

²⁹ Cf. *Der Betrachter ist im Bild. Kunstwissenschaft und Rezeptionsästhetik*, Cologne 1985.

³⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, in: idem et al., *Photography. A Middle-brow Art*, Cambridge 1990, p. 82.

³¹ Craig Owens, *Beyond Recognition. Representation, Power, and Culture*, Berkeley 1992, pp. 211–212.

³² Cf. Allan Sekula, "Den Modernismus demontieren, das Dokumentarische neu Erfinden. Bemerkungen zur Politik der Präsentation (1976, 1978)", in: Hubertus von Amelnunxen, *Theorie der Fotografie IV. 1980–1995*, Munich 2000, pp. 121–129, pp. 127–128.

³³ "Sichtweise der Wirklichkeit", Reinhard Matz, "Gegen einen naiven Begriff der Dokumentarfotografie (1981)", in: *ibid.*, pp. 94–105, p. 97, translated by Karen Williams.

³⁴ Emile Benveniste, cited from: Louis Marin, "Toward a Theory of Reading in the Visual Arts: Poussin's 'The Arcadian Shepherds'", in: *The Reader in the Text. Essays on Audience and Interpretation*, Princeton 1980, pp. 293–324, p. 299

³⁵ Sontag (as note 27), p. 36, italics in the original.

³⁶ Barthes (as note 6), p. 36.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

³⁸ Paul Watzlawick, *Pragmatics of Human Communication*, New York 1967, p. 48–49, italics in the original.

³⁹ Irving Penn, *Passage. A Work Record*, New York 1991, p. 50.

⁴⁰ Bourdieu (as note 30), p. 83.

⁴¹ Thomas Ruff in conversation with Philip Pocock, *Journal of Contemporary Art*, 1993, http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Ruff, last visit 22.11.2010.

⁴² "Die Personen sollten wie Gipsbüsten fotografiert werden, da er davon ausging, daß die Fotografie nur die Oberfläche der Dinge wiedergeben kann." Thomas Ruff, *Fotografien 1979 – heute*, Cologne 2001, p. 180, translated by Karen Williams.

⁴³ Barthes (as note 6), p. 12.

⁴⁴ I owe this idea to one of my many stimulating conversations with my long-standing colleague Harald Dubau.

⁴⁵ Jacques Derrida, "Die Fotografie als Kopie, Archiv und Signatur. Im Gespräch mit Hubertus v. Amelunxen und Michael Wetzel (1992)", in: Amelunxen (as note 32), pp. 280–296, p. 294.

⁴⁶ Kozloff (as note 21), p. 50.

⁴⁷ Cf. *Giuseppe Penone*, Ausst.-Kat. Museum Kurhaus Kleve, Kleve 2006, p. 63.

⁴⁸ "Gerade weil in diesem Portrait die Augen selbst nicht sichtbar sind, wird der Blick als solcher thematisiert, gerade weil die verspiegelten Kontaktlinsen deutlicher als die natürlichen Augen den Betrachter reflektieren – während der Aufnahme logischerweise den Fotografen [...] – rücken diese unheimlichen Spiegel-Augen die Selbstbezüglichkeit des Spiegelblickes nachhaltig ins Bewußtsein. Der Betrachter wird auf sich zurückgeworfen. Doch auch der Künstler wird auf sich selbst zurückverwiesen: [...] Der Blick kann sich, aufgehalten an der Rückseite der spiegelnden Linsen, nur nach innen richten. Was bleibt, sind die Bilder im Kopf." Karlheinz W. Kopanski, *Der männliche Blick in den Spiegel*, Hamburg 1998, p. 116, translated by Karen Williams.

⁴⁹ "In einer französischen Kunstzeitschrift wurde der Serie *Porträts* unterstellt, sie sei vergleichbar mit der Kunst des ‚Sozialistischen Realismus‘, wenn nicht gar mit der des Faschismus. Als Reaktion auf diesen Vorwurf ließ Thomas Ruff mit Hilfe digitaler Bildbearbeitung bei zwölf seiner *Porträts* die Iris in den Augen durch die leuchtend blaue Iris eines anderen Modells ersetzen, deren Blau zudem verstärkt wurde." Ruff (as note 42), p. 222, translated by Karen Williams.

⁵⁰ "ebenso wie der biologisch korrekte Körper durch die Verschmelzung mit technologischen Komponenten zu einem Hybridwesen transformiert". Michael Najjar, *nexus project part I*, typescript 1999; lower case in the original.