

As the title of the exhibition explicitly states, it's all about a diary, a log. The journal genre, then, which is the approximate premise for the poetics of the work, is the point from which the work begins to unfold. Seemingly, there is an everyday situation, banal, then, typical of the modern consumer age: during a journey, lots of shots are taken, once upon a time with a camera, although now a cell phone is enough. Indeed, it is hard to resist the temptation of photography. Irrespective of whether it is well established tourist spots that are involved, or, put incorrectly, the backs-of-beyond of the world, the photographic image, notwithstanding its cognitive unreliability, is a testimony to presence at this or that place, a confirmation showing that we have been somewhere, seen something, something has affected us, that we have been caught up in something happening. Looking at it in terms of genre, this subjectivity is the key component that differentiates our photographing of people and regions from reportage photography ; the subjective feeling about the contents photographed, whether delight or shame, prevents us from interpreting the image as a would-be objectification of the seen, involves us in the act of looking, awakens guilt or at least unease at the scene, opening up the question: if I can see what I see, who, actually, am I?

For it is naïve to imagine that our gaze was ever innocent; that what we are capable of seeing is not always already instinct with experience and identity. Every image, every single one, perhaps the photographic even more so, depicting the other speaks about us – whence we come, what our gender is, our place in the system of productive relationships, our education and our cultural capital, to what historical time our type of sensibility belongs. In brief, we cannot hide from the image. We look at it to just the same extent as it looks at us. In the very act of photographing, one falls into the crater of history, an unparseable amalgam of social relations and cultural codes. Even if we are not aware of it, or precisely because we are, our individual vision, to which we have the right as individuals, being deeply and sincerely moved by this or that subject, only just brings to the light of day the level of repressed meanings pertinent to intersubjective experience.

Thinking about the interconnectedness of the personal and the collective is actually always present in the creative work of Amela Frankl, and the present exhibition is certainly no exception in this respect. Involved, then, is a set of photographs or photographic montages, into which there are occasional interventions with words, which, although they are non-linearly concatenated, on the principle of the open sequence, nevertheless create a conceptual whole. The artist uses the photograph in an aesthetically indifferent and functional manner – at the level of attitude to what is shot she does not aspire to any particular harmony or the creation of some added value. That which will symbolically upgrade the shots, that is, enfold the photographed material into the diary, takes place in the post-production process – selecting photographs and slotting them into sequences, photo montages or writing out the messages. The reality that the lens of the photographic device recorded in the past, then, is seen and recognised only subsequently, retroactively; only with subsequent treatment of the appropriate contents do we find out what we have actually seen. Or perhaps it is better to say, we sense, for the truth is always unpleasing, and shocking, and it is a good idea to stay a more or less pleasant poetic distance away from it.

The principle of censorship is, after all, characteristic of the way in which awareness works. Here too, then, it is useful to compare the procedure with the help of which the photograph is told-constructed with dreaming, with the mechanisms that psychoanalysis recognises in the work of sleep. The absence of a

linearly legible action, the parallelism of places and times, repetitions of homogeneous motifs, overlappings and mergings, condensations and displacements and so on – all this is typical of the operations in which the dream translates the reality of latent thoughts into its own manifest contents. Since the manifest content of the dream is in itself full of holes and illogicalities, and the subject during the course of the dream will already attempt to correct it, give it a more or less coherent organisation; psychoanalysis calls this phenomenon secondary processing. A dream is, then, a complex concoction that cannot be fully fathomed. Consisting of all kinds of individual, often distant and seemingly entirely marginal experiences, as well as those determined phylogenetically, which belong to the collective unconscious, in the best of cases it is possible by analysis only to approximate to the latent reality.

What, then, can we recognise in the *Diary* of Amela Frankl as manifest content? And what, if any, latent thoughts can be discerned? In compositions of diary photographic images it is possible to observe the interweaving of at least four places of the action. Firstly, there are photographs made during a stay in Mauritania – that West African country that is defined geographically by the long Atlantic coastline and the wastes of the Sahara. This dominant narrative line overlaps with other, European, themes, in which one recognises the commonplaces of western civilisation like Rome and the Vatican, as well as less expected but nevertheless famed treasures of European culture, mainly taken during journeys around France, for example, a Romanesque bestiary or a Late Gothic tapestry with a similar set of motifs; finally, there are also inexplicit but instinctively recognised and extremely well known scenes of domiciliary Zagreb. At the level of structuralist generalisation it is possible to establish a clear gradation between the experientially distant and close – while the African scenes are more, or more often, contextualised by the surrounding space, the European are explained much more seldom; we see only recognisable fragments of certain urban situations or perhaps specific many-times repeated details. The Zagreb scenes in terms of identity significance are totally peripheral and everyday, in no way typical or representative. The time of the action is the present; the European cultural space simply lasts, shot through with its historical heritage, while the African content is come upon in some long-drawn-out moment of the post-colonial present, and the Zagreb is post-seismic. What came before and what after is unimportant for the story; it is all obtained in the matrix of the diaristic dreamy now.

What can be observed as the literal content of the photos, naturally, necessarily sets off complex processes of signification. Although the reality of the deeply repressed remains at the level of conjecture, some basic semantic bases can nevertheless be analytically read off. With use being made of structuralism-inspired generalisation, the visual contents of the *Diary* can be comprehended against a background of patent, expected conceptual oppositions like nature and culture, labour and capital, social and sexual, secular and sacred. Orienting ourselves according to these semantic anchors we can recognise some of the themes addressed by Amela Frankl. We can notice the remnants of contemporary consumer civilisation in the views of the Sahara; of the climatic conditions in which the urban life there unfolds. The theme of labour in Africa is set in the open air, on the street, is presented as day-labouring work, or, perhaps, commerce. Europe is the place of capital, cultural and other; here are scenes of undoubted beauty, which assumes granted wealth; and tourism as a mode of cultural consumption. The cultural heritage has identified Europe as Christian, the common culture of everyday life in Mauretania as Islamic; on both continents societies have long been determined by patriarchal monotheism. Earlier religious cultures pertain to the repressed and forgotten childhood of civilisation. Running through all the diverse situations, in all the places shot, children will appear from time to time;

their energy is biological and unrestrained, undifferentiated by class or gender; this vital force with time will be instrumentalised for the sake of the reproduction of labour and capital; children will become people who are not equal, participants of societal abundance or dearth.

All these places of the action, that is, of the narrative line, are intertwined in the experience and consciousness of the diaristic subject. Amela knows that she always arrives in new milieus with the baggage of her own cultural heritage. And then, there is the narrative topos, particularly of the literature of travel and adventure. The hero sets off on his journey to find himself, to discover what he had always been. What he finds out about himself does not always redound to his credit. And inversely, travel initiates change; their own world will not always look the same to the returning native, the cultural and system from which they came and to which they have returned can no longer exist on its own terms. The knowledge we have taken on will necessarily make us critical, as well as grateful, for one does not exclude the other. And the domicile of the artist, Zagreb, also steals into the series of diary images. The actual event and the consequences of the earthquake of this year inevitably occur as appropriate metaphor. Seen through the ruins and cracks, reality looks different, and the view stretches further from Zagreb, into the heart of Europe. Even more stable and well established identities will crack from time to time, and peering out through the fissures created are their repressed, naturalised premises: colonialism, capitalism, proselytism and misogyny. Although we are persuaded by our liberal world view that identities can be freely chosen, the old cast off, and the new grown into, it is hard to follow this advanced idea all the way. Identities are in the first place a collective dream via which we awaken, a long-since committed archetypal dream the burden of which we bear wherever we go, whatever we do; From this position it is hard to be excepted notwithstanding the intimate anxiety. The *narratrice* of this *Diary* found herself, by leaving for Africa, in one of these dreams. The view encountered, the unnamed horror that the mind refuses to accept. Like every dreamer, at first she attempts to rationalise it, bring it into waking, link it with her own existential experience, with her understanding of the world, her experience, the places and things she is familiar with, the languages she speaks. The photographic images shot more or less rapid-fire are thus reworked, disjoined, edited and rearranged in various combinations, ideas and impressions are written out on them. At the end, however, all this is more like a gesture of revolt and a settling of accounts than an analytical imposition of order. For the emotionally unacceptable by definition rejects conscious analysis. As it resists aestheticisation. What remains, even in the contemporary moment of civilisation, is ritual, symbolic imitation of the reality of the nightmare: to initiate still greater disorder and chaos, to jerk thinking out of its apparent binary equilibrium, to join the incompatible, desecrate the holy, defile the beautiful, steal from the poor to give to the rich, scream, hysterically, wildly invoke the banished goddesses, rulers of war and birth. And then wait to see what will happen.