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Book Review: Verena Gamper, Hans-Peter Wipplinger (eds): *Ludwig Wittgenstein – Fotografie als analytische Praxis / Photography as Analytical Practice*. Köln: Leopold Museum Wien, Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther und Franz König, 2021, ISBN 978-3-7533-0049-8

The exhibition *Ludwig Wittgenstein – Fotografie als analytische Praxis / Photography as Analytical Practice* was held at the Leopold Museum in Vienna from November 12, 2021, to March 6, 2022. The exhibition and book (304 pages) researched and presented archival photographic material that refers to the life and the philosophical researches of the Austrian-British philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. Parallel to the basic biographical course of the exhibition and book, photographic works of contemporary artists for whom the philosophy of Wittgenstein was important are also represented. The curators of the exhibition were Verena Gamper and Gregor Schmoll, and the editors of the book were Gamper and Hans-Peter Wipplinger.

The Ludwig Wittgenstein was born in 1889 in Vienna and died in 1951 in Cambridge. He published two influential books *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921/1922) and *Philosophical Investigations* (1953). Later, his various manuscripts, from diaries and notebooks to student lecture notes, were published. The *Tractatus* was accepted for the doctoral dissertation he defended with Bertrand Russell and Edward Moore in 1929. He taught at Trinity College in Cambridge from 1929. He was elected professor in 1939. He is considered one of the most influential philosophers of the twentieth century. He dealt with philosophy of natural sciences, logic, mathematics and philosophy. He had a great influence on the emergence of analytic philosophy and cognitivist philosophy. He was involved in the design and realization of a villa (Stonborough House or Wittgenstein House)¹ for his sister Margarete Stonborough-Wittgenstein between 1926 and 1928. He was a passionate amateur photographer and collector of photographs.

The book's foreword describes Wittgenstein as a cameraman, photo editor, photo model, photo collector, and someone who combined and arranged sets of photos in albums. He didn't write about photography, but his theory of the image from the *Tractatus* and the theory of "language games" from *Philosophical Investigations*

¹ The house is located at Parkgasse 18, 1030 Vienna. It was designed by Wittgenstein and Paul Engelmann.

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suggest possible approaches to the photographic medium, that is, he used the photographic metaphor to establish ethics. The book interweaves discussions and biographical interpretations of Wittgenstein's life and philosophical work in relation to the photographic medium in different chapters. We should certainly mention several chapters that open a new perspective on his life, but also the essential permeation of the life and philosophy of this thinker. The chapters of the book are: Verena Gamper, Gregor Schmoll: "Ludwig Wittgenstein. Photography as Analytical Practice"; Michael Nedo: "Ludwig Wittgenstein: His Life, Work, and Practice"; Elisabeth Kamenicek: "The Wittgensteins, Visually"; Ulrich Richtmeyer: "Wittgenstein's *Laocoon of Photography*"; Verena Gamper: "Composite Photography and Blurriness"; Gregor Schmoll: "(Self-)portraits"; Verena Gamper: "The Album"; Verena Gamper: "Portraits"; Verena Gamper: "Photographed Spaces"; Gregor Schmoll: "Grammar and Use of Photographs"; Gregor Sachmoll: "The Philosopher's Camera"; Gregor Schmoll: "The Lies of Photography"; Joseph Wang-Kathrein: "Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Nonsense Collection*" and numerous data in the appendix.

Reading this book and looking at numerous photographs by well-known and unknown authors, we come face to face with photography as a family tradition within the wealthy Viennese family. We are also faced with the individual and, often, mysterious confrontation between the gaze of the recorded-figure and the cameraman, as well as with the important analytical position of setting, a proposition for viewing. The oldest family photos, taken before his birth, are from 1869. The Wittgenstein family was close to three Secessionist artists who also used photography: Ferdinand Schmutzer, Johann Victor Krämer and Moriz Nähr. Photography was of fundamental interest to Nähr, and many of the shots in Wittgenstein's albums are Nähr's. According to Elisabeth Kamenicek, Ludwig Wittgenstein came into contact with procedures as well as concepts of visualization from photography and architecture to philosophy. For example, Ludwig's personal album numbered 102 photographs from around 1900 to the late 1930s. It is pointed out in certain authors that they identify Wittgenstein's distinction between different forms of vision, among which photographic vision is indicated. His intention was to write the text "Laocoon for photographers" referring, perhaps ironically, to Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's famous text "Laocoon: An Essay upon the Limits of Pottery and Painting" (1766). The relationship between image and language was indicated in his preparations for this text.

The earliest notes on photography were made at the time of Wittgenstein's return to Cambridge in 1929. He referenced the "method of image synthesis of given face shots" developed by Francis Galton around 1870. In the "Lecture on Ethics" (November 17, 1929) Wittgenstein referenced the Galtonian method of superimposed facial photographs to illustrate his attempt of sketching out a concept of ethics. Instead of a single definition, he laid out a whole series of synonymous terms, from the intersection of which the audience was supposed to be able to identify the defining characteristic of any ethics. Interesting examples are the photographic portraits of members of the Wittgenstein family, which were realized using the composite technique.

Composite photography is the use or combination of two or more different images to create a new one. One early example of a reference to photography as a new technical image can be found in Wittgenstein's self-portraits taken on a street photo machine in Vienna in 1930. It was then a completely new public photography device.

And if Ludwig Wittgenstein was a philosopher of science, mathematics, logic, psychology and language, he had a great influence on neo-avant-garde, post-modern and contemporary artists. Today there are already several histories of his influence on artists: on American Neo-Dada (John Cage, Jasper Johns), on conceptual art (Art&Language, Joseph Kosuth, Hanne Darboven, Mirko Radojičić, Group 143), on postmodernism (Andy Warhol, Sigmar Polke, Language poetry) etc. In this book, artistic photographers and artists were chosen who used photography to indicate complex visual and conceptual relationships with photographic techniques, photographic concepts and language games, that is, visual potentialities. Artists such as Thomas Ruff, Gottfried Bechold, Katharina Sieverding, Manfred Willmann, Trevor Paglen, Friedl Kubelka, Dóra Maurer, Sturtevant, Brigit Jürgenssen, Cindy Sherman, Timm Rautert, Andy Warhol, Peter Weibel, Peter Handke, Gillian Wearing, Gerhard Richter, Hanne Darboven, Christian Boltanski, Hans Peter Feldmann, Alfons Schilling, Anastasia Khoroshilova, Margherita Spiluttini, Heimo Zobering, Sharon Lockhart, Peter Hujar, Nan Goldin, Miriam Bäckström, Inés Lombardi, Olafur Eliasson, John Baldessari, Timm Rautert, Sherrie Levine, Martha Rosler, David Lamelas, Vito Accornci, Norman Saunders, Dominik Steiger, Sigmar Polke, Anna and Bernhard Blume, Mike Kelly, Anna Jermolaewa, Herbert W. Franke, Heinrich Heidersberger, Otto Zitko, Peter Hujar.

The exhibition and the book pose three characteristic questions: “What does photography mean for a philosopher?”, “How does photography mediate visual agency between the public sphere of philosophy and the private life or intimacy of the philosopher?” and “In what way does photography take over the models of philosophy in the field of artistic articulations or rearticulations of visible?” In other words, this is not about the autonomy of life versus the autonomy of philosophy and the autonomy of art in relation to life and philosophy. Rather about the various relationship between events (life), philosophy (concepts) and art (visual agency). Reading the book *Ludwig Wittgenstein – Fotografie als analytische Praxis / Photography as Analytical Practice* reminded me of two other books dedicated to a philosopher (*Deleuze, Un Album*)² and a theorist (*R/B Roland Barthes*)³. It seems to me, therefore, that the only relationship between philosophy and theory is not interpretations/speculations about visual meanings and visual effects of photography on the cameraman or viewer, but also a question of visual exchange, mediation and efficiency: visual agency. This possibility of mediation of philosophical conceptual packages, memories of family, personal or social life and recording of newly discovered clairvoyance are the challenges presented to the reader in this book.

² Dominique Païni, Hubert Damisch, *Deleuze, Un Album* (Paris: Centre Pompidou, 2005).

³ Marianne Alphant, Nathalie Léger, *R/B Roland Barthes* (Seuil, Paris: Centre Pompidou, 2002)