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Pedagogical Potential of Dolf Schnebli's Photobook. Learning From a Slow Journey and Its Media¹

Abstract: This article aims to investigate the role of the photobook in architectural education and production through the case study of the publication *One Year from Venice to India by the Land Route. 1956: Photosketches of a Slow Journey* (2009). This engages with the formative travel overland from Venice to India (and back) undertaken in 1956 by the young Swiss architect Dolf Schnebli and his wife Clarissa Hall. The slow journey influenced the architect's life, both in a general attitude as well as in his architectural practice. Among the different media used to collect memories from the journey – hand sketches, text, letters, photographs, objects – only black and white pictures shot by Dolf Schnebli's Leica were included in the photobook. The architect referred to these images as *photosketches*, standing at the crossroads between a traditional hand-sketch and a photograph. In this essay the translation of the private memories collected in different sketchbooks into a published biographical photobook will be examined as a representation on the formative journey and as an educational tool itself.

Keywords: photobook; architecture photos; architecture education; formative journey.

Introduction: A Slow Journey to The East

In 2009, a few months before his death, the Swiss architect and educator Dolf Schnebli (1928–2009) completed the publication of an autobiographical photobook related with what he called the *slow journey* to India. The album, *One Year from Venice to India by the Land Route. 1956: Photosketches of a Slow Journey* published in July 2009,² was Schnebli's legacy, a visual and poetic reflection on the trip accomplished 53 years earlier with his wife Clarissa Hall, at the beginning of their career and right after

¹ This paper is result of the ongoing PhD research project developed by the author under the supervision of Prof. Dr Sonja Hildebrand at the Accademia di Architettura, Università della Svizzera Italiana, Switzerland. The author thanks Raffaella Schnebli and Clarissa Hall for their generosity and the insightful and passionate conversations. Special thanks also go to the ETH, gta Archive, where Schnebli's estate is kept, and in particular to Dr Almut Grunewald.

² Dolf Schnebli, *Ein Jahr auf dem Landweg von Venedig nach Indien. Fotoskizzen der langsamen Reise 1956. / One Year from Venice to India by the Land Route. 1956: Photosketches of a Slow Journey* (Zurich: Niggli AG, 2009). The title of the book is in two languages, German and English. For clarity's sake, only the English title will be referred to in the article.

completing their education.³ The trip ideally followed the traces of Schnebli's *Maestro*, the Swiss modern architect Le Corbusier,⁴ who in 1911 travelled for five months from Germany towards Greece and Turkey, through Bohemia, Vienna, and the Balkans. Furthermore, Schnebli's journey concluded in Chandigarh, India, the city designed by the *Maestro*. Even though Le Corbusier's journey was well known, it was not until 1966, after his death, that a detailed personal account was published.⁵ While reviewing this text in July 1965, few days prior his death, Le Corbusier wrote his testament, the *Mise au Point*.⁶ This anecdote testifies that the first publication, the one related with the early memories of the eastern journey and the last one, the testament, ideally meet on Le Corbusier's working table, being reworked and compiled simultaneously. The affinity between the late publication of a formative journey undertaken at a young age and the definitive intellectual legacy links the experience of the master, Le Corbusier, to that of the pupil, Schnebli. This overcomes the geographic analogy of the two formative eastern journeys for embracing an overall context and holding at the same time a future-oriented perspective.

The two architects' accounts – Schnebli's slow journey on the one hand and Le Corbusier's discovery of the East on the other – although crafted at different historical moments, can be linked thanks to an affinity in the component of memory and education, namely learning from a journey and sharing this knowledge. Both works were completed at the end of the architects' careers and represent a profound reflection on what architecture means, how ideas are influenced and how they affect architectural practice. This essay does not claim to provide a comprehensive account of Schnebli's career nor a detailed historiographical analysis of the *genre* of architectural photography, but rather proposes a intermedial approach to the photobook at stake, keeping on the foreground a disciplinary architectural perspective. On the one hand, it deals with photos as objects of self-reflection, focusing on the ones collected and selected to critically scrutinize which information are present and which remained obscure and to suggest impressions and perceptions of the author. On the other hand, it assumes the inseparability of the image content with the publication, which is analyzed in its materiality, that is declined through its planning and realization.

³ Dolf Schnebli studied architecture at the ETH Zurich and at GSD Harvard. For detailed information on Schnebli's biography, see: Dolf Schnebli, *SAM. Schnebli, Ammann, Menz. Neue Bauten und Projekten* (Basel, Boston, Berlin: Birkhäuser, 1998), 181–5. Clarissa Hall worked as an editorial assistant for Harvard's Department of Architecture.

⁴ Charles-Édouard Jeanneret (1887–1965), adopted the name Le Corbusier in 1920. For clarity reason, in the paper it will be used the name Le Corbusier. Schnebli was not a student of Le Corbusier directly, but he did study his work intensively.

⁵ Le Corbusier, *Voyage d'Orient* (Paris: Éditions Forces Vives, 1966). Carnets with sketches and photos of the *Voyage d'Orient* only found their complete publication later.

⁶ Giuliano Gresleri, *Le Corbusier. Viaggio in Oriente. Charles Edouard Jeanneret fotografo e scrittore* (Venezia: Marsilio, Foundation Le Corbusier, 1984), VII. The posthumous book Le Corbusier, *Mise au point* (Paris: Éditions Forces Vives, 1966) has been considered the architect's intellectual testament, being the last book written before his death. The title stands for clarification, focus and refers to a summary of the architect's life. The analogy between the intellectual will – the ultimate text – and the photographic act of focusing – *Mise au point* – must be taken into account.

Recording the Journey through Photographs

Travelling, in the form of a *Grand Tour* to discover ancient and classical cultures, had been part of an architect's coming-of-age training since the 18th century. American *Beaux Arts* students used to go and deepen their knowledge through formative journeys throughout Europe. In this context, since 1935, the Arthur W. Wheelwright Traveling Scholarship grants a consistent amount of money for study outside the USA, encouraging young architects to travel abroad and fostering cross-cultural awareness. As a young student graduated from the Harvard School of Design, in 1955 Schnebli applied and won the Wheelwright Prize. "Through the experience of travelling" his intention was "to look with the eyes of the East at the developments going on in Europe and the USA."⁷ Travelling was "like an inner drive"⁸ for Schnebli, a fundamental part of his learning experience even before he embarked on the *slow journey*. Architectural studies should be initiated by a personal experience, by the embodiment of a particular spatial circumstance, as he wrote summarizing his *modus educandi*: "Experiencing (architecture) myself, seeing it myself, feeling it myself, in order to deepen it critically later in the study of books, became a lived method. [...] I studied the floor plans and sections after I had personally experienced the houses."⁹ Despite these first-person sentences, Schnebli did not travel alone, embarking on the *slow journey* with his life companion, his wife Clarissa Hall. With her, he shared the experience of crossing different borders, facing unexpected situations, sleeping in a tent, and sharing meals with strangers. Even in later life, when their marriage was over, Schnebli remembered that he could not have faced the journey without Hall.¹⁰ The trip to India was a formative path for the couple, where Schnebli found a new perspective on life and strong points of reflection on which to build his architecture for years to come. Especially in his first projects after the journey, it is possible to re-connect the experience of historical or vernacular architecture, in the concept of his buildings.¹¹

The *slow journey* narrated in the photobook actually started earlier, with a preliminary trip, pursuing the American dream of going West, exploring the immense countryside. The discovery of the West strengthened the Swiss architect and his wife, an American writer from New England. In earlier accounts Schnebli wrote how the apparently distinguished two trips, the one through the American west and the one to Chandigarh, even though were geographically separate, they were actually part of

⁷ Unpublished manuscript: Dolf Schnebli, "Büro-Vorlesungen Dolf Schnebli," ETH Zurich, gta Archive, Schnebli's estate, 210-2-5Bürovorträge 1. Serie; translated by the author.

⁸ Unpublished manuscript: Dolf Schnebli, "Das Reisen," ETH Zurich, gta Archive, Schnebli's estate, 210-2-3-Biographie; translated by the author.

⁹ Schnebli, "Das Reisen"; translated by the author.

¹⁰ Conversation between the author and Raffaella Schnebli, Zurich: March 9, 2022.

¹¹ This is the case for example of the secondary school in Locarno, whose design recalls the setting of a vernacular village and especially the so-called "Bubble-village" pictured in Iran.

a complete educational trip.¹² Moreover, Schnebli annotated the idea that travelling through America would serve as preparation for the *slow journey*. The analogy of preparatory work came from architectural praxis, where propaedeutic phases anticipate concrete projects. To conclude this preparation, by the autumn of 1955, the couple had moved to Switzerland. Carola Giedion-Welcker, wife of Sigfried, testifies in a letter to her husband about the journey Schnebli and his wife were undertaking. “Mosers and Schneblis were invited to a goose with Girsbergers the day before yesterday, brilliant atmosphere, Schnebli was charming and also his wife, who resembles Dora Maar by Picasso. [...] Schnebli is going to India by Volkswagen (15 January).”¹³

Photosketches of a Slow Journey

Since the 20th century, for architects, the use of the camera to collect images of lived spaces and landscapes has been a complementary and parallel practice to the traditional tool of hand sketching. In 1911, Le Corbusier left for Germany with a backpack, a camera, and sketchbooks.¹⁴ More than forty years later, in the context of postwar economic growth, Schnebli took sketchbooks, two cameras and several camera films with him, making the photographic medium the most used *modus operandi* of his *slow journey*. This habit parallels coeval accounts that signed travelling in the second postwar period. At that time, the interest in architects had slowly shifted from visiting and picturing Greek classics to unknown cultures and *architecture without architects*.¹⁵ The trigger was the design potential embedded in vernacular culture, used as the starting point for a new way of planning after the first heroic period of modernity. Examples are from the Team 10 generation, such as Georges Candilis and Shadrach Woods, who studied and photographed Moroccan slums or Aldo Van Eyck, who pictured Dogon villages. Also, Fumihiko Maki travelled from Japan via Chandigarh to the Greek islands in his western journey, antithetical to Le Corbusier and Schnebli.¹⁶ These experiences and others like the renowned Venturi and Scott Brown *Learning from Las Vegas* testify to how the camera became the focus of urban research. Architects travelled and studied the form of cities through the lens of their cameras and began to establish new epistemologies, such as photographing through car windows.¹⁷

¹² Dolf Schnebli, “Letter to Werner Max Moser (01.06.1955),” ETH Zurich, gta Archive, Moser’s estate, 4-k-5-1-Sch-41. Unpublished manuscript: Dolf Schnebli, “Einleitung. Vor der Reise,” ETH Zurich, gta Archive, Schnebli’s estate, 210-2-3 - Biographie.

¹³ Almut Grunewald, *Die Welt der Giedions: Sigfried Giedion und Carola Giedion-Welcker im Dialog* (Zurich: Scheidegger & Spiess, 2019), 356, translated by the author.

¹⁴ Ivan Žaknić, *Klip and Corb on the Road: The Dual Diaries and Legacies of August Klipstein and Le Corbusier on their Eastern Journey, 1911* (Zurich: Scheidegger & Spiess, 2020), 218.

¹⁵ The expression “architecture without architects”, currently commonly used to identify spontaneous, vernacular or non-pedigree architectural production, comes from the exhibition and the related publication: Bernard Rudofsky, *An Architecture without Architects: An Introduction to Non-Pedigreed Architecture* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1964).

¹⁶ Maki was close friend with Schnebli, they studied together in Harvard and worked together in St. Louis.

¹⁷ Among the recent scholarship that pointed out this theory, there are for example the publication: *Eyes that*

Using the camera as an instrument of research and investigation became a method of analysis, laying the foundations for a new design approach. Current studies on the use of the camera by Le Corbusier pointed out how it was “a tool of representation, promotion and mediation as much as [...] a mean of artistic research.”¹⁸ All these terms reflect not only an operative action, but a creative process, something that can be learnt and developed. Borrowing from pedagogical studies, it can be affirmed that taking photos wasn’t only a tool for capturing specific views but was an educational and formative activity as well. In pedagogical accounts, cameras have been widely studied as a tool to enhance primary education, both through the visual media of photos as well as through the activity of taking photos.¹⁹ No similar systematic accounts are known in the context of architectural pedagogy, but it is remarkable that terms related to education are part of the recent discourse on Le Corbusier’s photographs.²⁰

Schnebli used a Rolley double-lens camera, equipped with either color or black and white film, but he took most of the shots with a Leica camera, a compact, fast, and easy-to-handle instrument. During the year-long journey, more than one thousand Rolley stained glass slides and about two thousand Leica black and white slides were produced.²¹ The continuous stream of moments captured through the lens of the Leica became what Schnebli called *photosketches*,²² signifying an intersection of traditional hand sketching and photographs or, as Schnebli wrote, *photosketches* can “speak for themselves”²³. Furthermore, the term symbolizes the desire to cross different media traditions and produce photos not as a photographer, but as a draftsman. On one side, *photosketches* have a certain degree of immediacy and imprecision, sometimes blurriness, and the same kind of non-detail as hand sketches. Photographic sketches represent the architect’s gaze and his desire to capture a particular glimpse, an action, a habit, as when he sketches.²⁴ As such, the *photosketches* became part of his learning process, just as the journey played an educational role. They differed from traditional photographs of the time in that being snapshots, capturing the moment. In this sense they might resemble photojournalistic shots, but in reality, they were not only

Saw: *Architecture after Las Vegas* ed. by Stanislas Von Moos and Martino Stierli (Scheidegger & Spiess, Yale School of Architecture, 2020) and the study recently conducted at the ETH Zurich: Marianna Charitonidou, “The Travelling Architect’s Eye: Photography and Automobile Vision” (Postdoc Research, ETH Zurich, 2021).

¹⁸ Nathalie Herschdorfer and Lada Umstätter, ed., *Le Corbusier und die Macht der Fotografie* (Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2012), 16, translated by the author.

¹⁹ See for example: Serena Triacca, “Teaching and Learning with Pictures the Use of Photography in Primary Schools,” *Proceedings* 1, 9 (2017): 1–10.

²⁰ See for example: Herschdorfer and Umstätter, *Le Corbusier und die Macht der Fotografie*.

²¹ In the archives of the ETH Zurich, gta, Schnebli’s estate counts 60 Leica film reels with around 36 photos each. Schnebli also compiled three notebooks with sketches and notes and wrote several letters.

²² The term was coined by Schnebli and used in: Schnebli, *One Year from Venice to India by the Land Route*, 9.

²³ “I have designated as photosketches the black-and-white Leica photographs, a name they deserve after their long sleep of over fifty years as contact prints in three sketchbooks. They speak for themselves.” Schnebli, *One Year from Venice to India by the Land Route*, 9.

²⁴ For example, the *photosketches* showing children, animals or elderly people doing traditional craft work on Mykonos. See: Schnebli, *One Year from Venice to India by the Land Route*, 34–37.

reportage and did not respond exclusively to a commission. Schnebli travelled not as a photojournalist but as a young architect, exploring unmodernized civilizations.²⁵ Like visual snapshots or notes, he took most of the photos as sketches, for documentation, appropriation and ultimately for his learning process as an architect. By capturing a specific moment, a group of people or an architectural environment in a particular light, Schnebli selected the essence of his journey and collected it for later. The photographic process was also part of his formative growth, learning to express his gaze through the camera lens. He focused on small and technical details, materials, and textures for composing a vocabulary of possibilities for his later practice.²⁶ He was very keen on anthropological themes, cultures and their habits, living and dwelling. The landscape, especially in Greece, played a major role in his visual dictionary,²⁷ mainly depicting human traces and structures that have shaped and molded nature over the centuries. Schnebli probably took most of the photographs, although few of them show him and were therefore probably taken by his wife.²⁸

Following another interpretation of *photosketches*, Leica's black and white contact prints can refer to attentive and precise composition rules, as objects are sometimes isolated, light is studied, shadows and lines are taken into consideration for the shoot, and details are carefully pictured. These series of images show a documentary and educational purpose, such as catalogue photos, which are explanatory and objective. Even though Schnebli was free on his trip to picture what he would select and be fascinated about, on the other hand, he was also looking with a specific eye, the one forged by the commission given to him by some Harvard professors, especially by his friend, Sigfried Giedion.²⁹ Giedion played an essential role in the geographical definition of Schnebli's long journey, for example, he officially wrote to Schnebli – on Harvard letter paper – asking to take pictures of specific places in Greece and Italy, to have details of relevant buildings for the students and improve the quality of the lantern slides for his lectures.³⁰ To a possible concern from the professor on the quality of the cameras, Schnebli replied that he would rather use the grant's extra money not for buying better ones, but for spending more time in contact with different cultures.³¹

²⁵ Hilde Heynen gave a comprehensive and clear account of the position of modern architects towards unknown cultures. In: Hilde Heynen, "The Observers observed," (Rotterdam: Het Nieuwe Instituut, 2021), <https://jaap-bakema-study-centre.hetnieuweinstituut.nl/en/activities/observers-observed-keynote>, acc. on July 7, 2022.

²⁶ For example, see: Schnebli, *One Year from Venice to India by the Land Route*, 26–31.

²⁷ Alessandra Como, Isotta Forni, and Luisa Smeragliuolo Perrotta, "One year from Venice to India learning from the landscape: the 'slow journey' of Dolf Schnebli." in: *Arquitectura y paisaje: transferencias históricas, retos contemporáneos 2* (2022): 1393–404.

²⁸ For example, see: Schnebli, *One Year from Venice to India by the Land Route*, 55, 74, 229. A conversation between the author and Mrs Schnebli Hall revealed that Hall only took photographs on a few occasions. Conversation between the author and Clarissa Hall, Zurich: 26 July 2022.

²⁹ In the archives of the ETH Zurich, gta, Schnebli's estate contains letters that attest to Prof. Sigfried Giedion's and Prof. Eduard Franz Sekler desire for pictures. Moreover, Schnebli meticulously kept Prof. Sert informed about the journey.

³⁰ Dolf Schnebli, "Letter to Sigfried Giedion (30.11.1955)," ETH Zurich, gta Archive, Giedion's estate, 43-K-1955-11- 30(G).

³¹ Dolf Schnebli, Letter to Sigfried Giedion (1956), ETH Zurich, gta Archive, Giedion's estate, 43-K-1956.

His idea was to gain high-quality images through in-depth knowledge and compensate for the simpleness of the meanings with his time. This quote introduces the value of time when considering Schnebli's *slow journey* and the photobook. After the road trip, Leica's *photosketches* were developed in 24x36mm contact prints and collected in three sketchbooks, most probably chronologically ordered. These remained for Clarissa's use as a physical souvenir of the trip. Otherwise, Rolley's photos were encapsulated in a glass photographic slide support and shown inside an intimate circle of family and friends. Interestingly, the instructive role of these photos came into play only with the publication in 2009, while during Schnebli's appointment as design professor, these photographs probably found no place in his teaching, unlike others often used.³² The reasons could be the different format and the dual nature of the content of the images, instructive and personal at the same time.

The Photobook as Legacy

The term *photosketches*, moreover, seems to correspond to the graphic translation drawn by Schnebli in 1998, the result of possible first image recognition in the context of editing a biographical book. The small sketches, only in pencil, reproduce 1:1 the contact prints collected in the three sketchbooks, making a first visual selection, indicating the roll number and without further text or explanation. These sketches may be the first selection, followed by the publication of the photobook, ten years later. The original editorial project included a complete recall of Schnebli's life as an architect and dated 1998. While working on the different parts, originally planned for five,³³ the editor Hannes Ziegler³⁴ realised the importance of the experience in India with the rest of Schnebli's biographical account. In one of his letters, Ziegler wrote "after more than forty years, memories of these journeys still come to his (Schnebli's) mind very often, which he sees in context with his current work [...] to use these travel impressions as a 'dramaturgical' framework for the planned book. The journey could provide a structure in which his (Schnebli's) impressions and memories could be confronted with his projects and buildings."³⁵ For this reason, he proposed to use the trip as "scaffolding"³⁶ for the biographical project. This concept may have survived the wreck of the complete biography³⁷ and resulted in the publication of the

³² This assumption refers to a phone conversation of the author with Prof. Arthur Rüegg, 23.04.2021.

³³ Unpublished manuscript: Dolf Schnebli, "Biografie," ETH Zurich, gta Archive, Schnebli's estate, 210-2-3 - Biografie; translated by the author.

³⁴ Ziegler was a former assistant at Schnebli's design chair at ETH Zurich. See: Dolf Schnebli, *Entwurfsunterricht an der Architekturabteilung, Dolf Schnebli, Lehrstuhl für Architektur und Entwurf 1971–1984* (Zurich: ETH, 1984).

³⁵ ETH Zurich, gta Archive, Schnebli's estate, 210-2-3 - Biografie.

³⁶ Ziegler used the German "Baugerüst", strictly related with the construction vocabulary. Unpublished manuscript: "Hannes Ziegler," ETH Zurich, gta Archive, Schnebli's estate, 210-2-3 - Biografie.

³⁷ When Ziegler unexpectedly died, the project immediately stopped, and the work elaborated for the projects was partly re-shaped according to the topic. Information from the catalogue of the ETH Zurich, gta Archive, Schnebli's estate.

photobook. The outcome was a picture book, in German – a *Bilderbuch*³⁸ – a term that does not seem to completely grasp the various facets of the work. The impulse for the publication was given by his and Clarissa's daughter, Raffaella Schnebli, while she was working on the design of the maternity ward at the Hirslanden Hospital in Zurich. A *collage* of Schnebli's *photosketches* became the theme of the corridors' wallpaper and prompted the work on the images and consequently on the photobook. Graphic designer Lisa Greuter and the firm Weiersmüller, Bosshard and Grüniger WBG curated the book; which was published in 2009 by the publishing house Niggli AG. Despite these external contributions, Schnebli had complete control over the publication, choosing the photos and discussing the layout, the book is therefore mainly his product. This attitude fit completely in the definition provided in the volume on Photobooks: "Although publishing is clearly a team effort, the instigators, the editors and often the financiers of many photobooks are the photographers themselves. In other words, photographers generally have a large degree of control over their book products, so that the photobook represents the photographers' view of their medium."³⁹ Before Niggli, Schnebli contacted other potential publishers, like the Zurich editor Lars Müller, who specialised in art and architecture books. Müller refused to participate in Schnebli's project⁴⁰ and, interestingly, only a few years later, in 2014 he published a photobook of the same format, edited by Tom Bellington on Le Corbusier's photos and the related latest research. Even though *Le Corbusier Secret Photographer* is rather a historiographic and detailed analysis of Le Corbusier's activity as a photographer, the example once again connects the two experiences through the format of the two media that depict them. The album with an impressive image collection fascinated several former students, assistants and colleagues, to the extent that the first edition quickly sold out. Several letters testify to the reception of the publication by Schnebli's students, some of which Schnebli shared in content and others he was disappointed with.⁴¹ A second edition followed, which was withdrawn from the market a few years later. Currently, the book is only available in second-hand shops.

With a landscape format of 24x17cm, the photobook contains about 415 *photosketches*. The layout includes full-page pictures, rows of two or three photos and, in rare cases, picture grids, both landscape and portrait. White and gold are the dominant colours: The first provides the background colour and the second serves for text and maps, a reminder of the ancient cultures visited.⁴² Jacques Herzog, former student and assistant, opened the book with a short tribute, while Schnebli followed with an introduction *1956: Photosketches of a Slow Journey. A Year from Venice to India by the Land Route* explaining the exceptional conditions that made the journey possible. At

³⁸ This German term has been used for Schnebli's photobook.

³⁹ Martin Parr, Gerry Badger, *The Photobook: A History Volume 1* (London: Phaidon, 2004), 10.

⁴⁰ ETH Zurich, gta Archive, Schnebli's estate, 210-2-3 - Biografie.

⁴¹ The letters are found in Schnebli's archive. Schnebli's reception has been testified in a conversation with his daughter Raffaella, March 9, 2022.

⁴² Forni Como and Smeragliuolo Perrotta, "One year from Venice to India learning from the landscape: the 'slow journey' of Dolf Schnebli," 1397.

the end of the book, Schnebli wrote a *Postscript* on why and how the book came about, with his thanks and a short bibliography that includes volumes he found useful for preparing for the journey as well later publications.

Schnebli's album is divided into six geographical sections, each section introduced by a group of independent sentences presented as a train of thought, displaying the region discovered, and the significant and educational experiences there. In addition, short sentences appear in some places at the margins of the book, below the photos. Complete sequences of images that linger on various close-ups, details and angles depict architecture and events. In the photobook, there are no numbers or indexes for the images, short texts in a few places support the visual material without indicating precisely what each photo represents, but rather recalling the place or monument and evoking the general feeling. A certain distance is created between the singular photo and the absence of captions, almost without feeling the urge of being factually accurate but leaving the didactic power to the general impression and to the visual material itself. These comments collect personal thoughts and reflections on architecture and the world. In some cases, Schnebli deviates by talking about a special encounter, the personal stories of the people he met, and their political ideals. Encounters and learning about the culture and the world were of paramount interest to Schnebli, who did not only focus on the architectural palimpsest or the scenery. The text resulted in his legacy, a core that accompanied him, his architectural practice and his work for the whole time, it is the message he wanted to pass on. It's a distillate not only of the contingency experience held in 1956, but it resumes the different media he used for collecting memories and the translations of them in the following years, highly influenced by his oeuvre. Texts narrate concepts such as light, shadow, and continuity and are related to the image in the sense of evoking a memory and not directly the content. The book, which was unfortunately written shortly before Schnebli's death, represents the architect's legacy, as a textbook and an autobiographical experience. For obvious timing reasons, the book was never used by Schnebli as a teaching tool, however, one could argue that this might have been one of the author's goals.

All the texts included in the 2009 photobook are bilingual and were written by the two travelers: the German-speaking driver and his partner, the English-speaking Clarissa, who translated and complemented the texts by adding her perspective, memories, notes and recollections. In this way, the photobook became a multi-layered product in which different voices, different circumstances and different times have their say in the same object. Especially in the short captions that appear next to the photos, there is a certain difference in word choice, detail and translations that traces how the two memories have evolved and how personal perceptions can differ.⁴³

As previously mentioned, time played and plays a crucial role in the understanding of Schnebli's photoalbum, therefore attention should focus on the two temporal levels in the book: on the one hand, the photographs taken during the 1956 trip, which are a visual flashback of intentions and interests, taken through the eyes

⁴³ For Schnebli's account on the texts, see: Schnebli, *One Year from Venice to India by the Land Route*, 9.

of a young man and his young wife exploring the world; on the other hand, the texts compiled 53 years later, based on memories and personal notes, written by a senior architect looking back on all his experiences and life and translated by his ex-wife. The kind of narrative that the photos show and the pausing on certain subjects represent the story that Schnebli wanted to tell. The selection appears as the result of a certain mental process that was strongly influenced by the phase in the architect's life when this book was taking shape. In conclusion, the photobook was a way for Schnebli to organize, store and convey his perceptions.

Destination Chandigarh

The last section of the photobook is dedicated to Chandigarh, the new Indian capital of Punjab, the journey's final destination. In October 1956, Dolf and Clarissa reached Chandigarh, the example *par excellence* of the realization of the modern urban ideals. Le Corbusier's urbanisation in Chandigarh is an important part of the architect's learning experience. This choice to end the photobook with Chandigarh is not only the mirror of Schnebli's aim of the journey, but it has a symbolic meaning: the Indian city is the place where the architect's education reaches its peak, mostly thanks to the warm welcome by Pierre Jeanneret and the visit of his office "the workshop of Pierre Jeanneret was the most inspiring school of architecture I ever visited."⁴⁴ In Chandigarh, Schnebli noted in his diaries and made a list, recapitulating the experiences, starting with the USA and the ideal beginning of their discovery journey in the summer of 1955. Compared to the whole conglomerate of photos produced on the trip, the photos picturing Chandigarh are not an enormous volume and especially the buildings by Le Corbusier don't seem the only interest in the city. "Chandigarh was a huge construction site [...]"⁴⁵ and Schnebli captured construction laborers at work – both men and women, a rhetoric figurative imaginary for the time.⁴⁶ Interestingly, he also focused on the celebrations of Dussehra, a Hindu religious feast, which consisted of a theatrical enactment with huge paper or textile religious figures, carried by people. The spirit of the people living and building in this place seems to have the same meaning in Schnebli's photographic eyes as the façade of the buildings by Le Corbusier and Jeanneret. In purely numeric ways, among 26 pictures dedicated to Chandigarh, more than a third are not related to Le Corbusier's or Jeanneret's modern architecture but to the traditional feast. Only a school – the Junior Secondary School in sector 21 – appeared in Schnebli's photographic survey,⁴⁷ possibly a design of Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew, one among many other educational facilities already

⁴⁴ Ibid., 247. Pierre Jeanneret (1896–1967) collaborated as an architect for his cousin Le Corbusier for about twenty years.

⁴⁵ ETHZ, gta Archive, Schnebli's estate, 210-2-4 (prov.) – Materialien zu "Fotoskizzen", unpublished manuscript "Indien Bildlegende. Die neue Hauptstadt des Punjab: Chandigarh," translated by the author

⁴⁶ Arthur Rüegg, "Picturing Chandigarh," in: *Chandigarh: Living with Le Corbusier*, ed. by Bärbel Högnér (Jovis, 2010), 16–18.

⁴⁷ Schnebli, *One Year from Venice to India by the Land Route*, 255.

accomplished by the time Schnebli visited the new capital. In this sense, it holds the particular potential to compare Schnebli's 1956 photos with the photographic documentation made, curiously enough, in the same year, by the Swiss artist, educator, and photojournalist Ernst Scheidegger. This work focused on the architecture and welfare provisions in Chandigarh. It shows the interest in the new founding city and its inhabitants. Some of the photos by Scheidegger were published already the year after in the architectural magazine *Das Werk: Architektur und Kunst*.⁴⁸ The photojournalist planned to publish a complete book of his photographs of Chandigarh in 1956. Unfortunately, the book never saw the light of day until an exhibition in 2006, when the artist loaned the handmade book for the show.⁴⁹ Whereas Schnebli's gaze did not seem to focus particularly on educational buildings, Scheidegger concentrated on infrastructures such as schools, documenting how children inhabited the space and also the presence of art in the children's garden.⁵⁰ These topics will be a fundamental part of Schnebli's later production. On the other hand, Scheidegger's depiction was punctual and mainly focused on the new burn city, as he couldn't count on Schnebli's background of the long journey.

Finally, as far as the photos in the book are concerned, the journey did not end in Chandigarh, as Schnebli and his wife travelled back to Switzerland by car. In the photobook, a short *Postscript* describes the state of the journey home and changes in the geopolitical situation; on the other hand, photos accompanied the journey on the way back, as pieces of evidence are supplemented with other shots that are not published in the book. Once again the time finds a non-chronological translation in the book, where photos of the way back are not included as a proper section, but rather added to the respective sections on the way towards Chandigarh.⁵¹ The topic of time plays a fundamental role in the analysis of the photographic travelogue, not only because of the different times contained in the final object but because of the importance of time passing along the journey, as expressed in Schnebli's definition of the *slow journey*. Schnebli was interested in different cultures, in their cities and way of dwelling, as a way not only to get to know their history but also to grasp the potential for the future. Generally, different temporalities are engaged within every learning process, starting with the possibility to assess an education after time has passed and continuing with its future-oriented perspective. The period in which Schnebli visited India was the so-called second Independence, the country was living in a double-edged era, on the one hand the local architects looked up to the masterpieces of international modern architecture, on the other hand a decorative language with some legacies of the local

⁴⁸ Benedikt Huber, "Gerichtsgebäude in Chandigarh. Architekt: Le Corbusier, Paris," *Das Werk: Architektur und Kunst* 43, 6 (June 1956): 165–72.

⁴⁹ See: Stanislas Von Moos, ed., *Chandigarh 1956. Le Corbusier, Pierre Jeanneret, Jane B. Drew, E. Maxwell Fry* (Zurich: Scheidegger & Spiess, 2010), 224–60.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 251.

⁵¹ Schnebli, *One Year from Venice to India by the Land Route*, 172. The picture of the *Buzkashi* game belongs to the series nr.1, called "Afghanistan Buzkashi [...] Heimweg", "Afghanistan Buzkashi [...] way home," ETH Zurich, gta Archive, Schnebli's estate, 210-1-1 -Indienreise Leica.

past was imposing itself. Schnebli, like other architects already mentioned, undertook a journey to the East, to discover different cultures. The post-colonial background of the journey and the position of Schnebli, a western white man visiting the eastern territory from a position of economic superiority, cannot be denied, but are nevertheless not part of this work and remain open for further studies.

Conclusion: The Photobook as a Pedagogical Tool

In this essay, the book *One Year from Venice to India by the Land Route. 1956: Photosketches of a Slow Journey* (2009) is dissected into its components, voices and phases and placed in its architectural photographic context and inserted in a network of multiple media, that in different ways dealt with documenting the journey. Following the thesis that it is a pedagogical tool, the photobook has been examined as a translation of personal and private memories into a publication and thus opening it up to the general public.

There are various facets to the book that can be interpreted as a pedagogical tool. Firstly, the book is the author's production of a reflection on how the experiences gained and cultures encountered on the journey influenced his education and were reflected in his practice and teaching. This aspect can be identified with the planning of the trip, the desire to experience first-hand and to capture memories and places through certain imagery. Secondly, Schnebli had a desire to pass on his knowledge as a kind of debt concerning scholarship and his students. In this sense, the active pedagogical idea can be realized through the selection of images, through comments – the words expressed under the images – and through combinations of both. Finally, the reader is instructed by the fascination that derives from the images. He is confronted with a narrative of images that the author has chosen to reconstruct the journey, but above all to convey a certain meaning and message. The educational role is then reflected on the viewer, who is expected to react to the images and build an understanding of life and architecture by studying the photos in the photobook as analogies. “The *photosketches* and comments are a tiny part of the richness I discovered – like sediment resting in my whole being – the small crumbs of all the deserts acting as catalysts that force me to work steadily on continuous learning – I became an autodidact – still capable of feeling wonder at our world and the whole universe – besides my work as an architect I have spent much time teaching – if I was a good teacher it has to do with the pleasure I get from passing to my students the treasures I received.”⁵²

⁵² Ibid., 267.

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Article received: April 12, 2022

Article accepted: June 21, 2022

Original scholarly paper

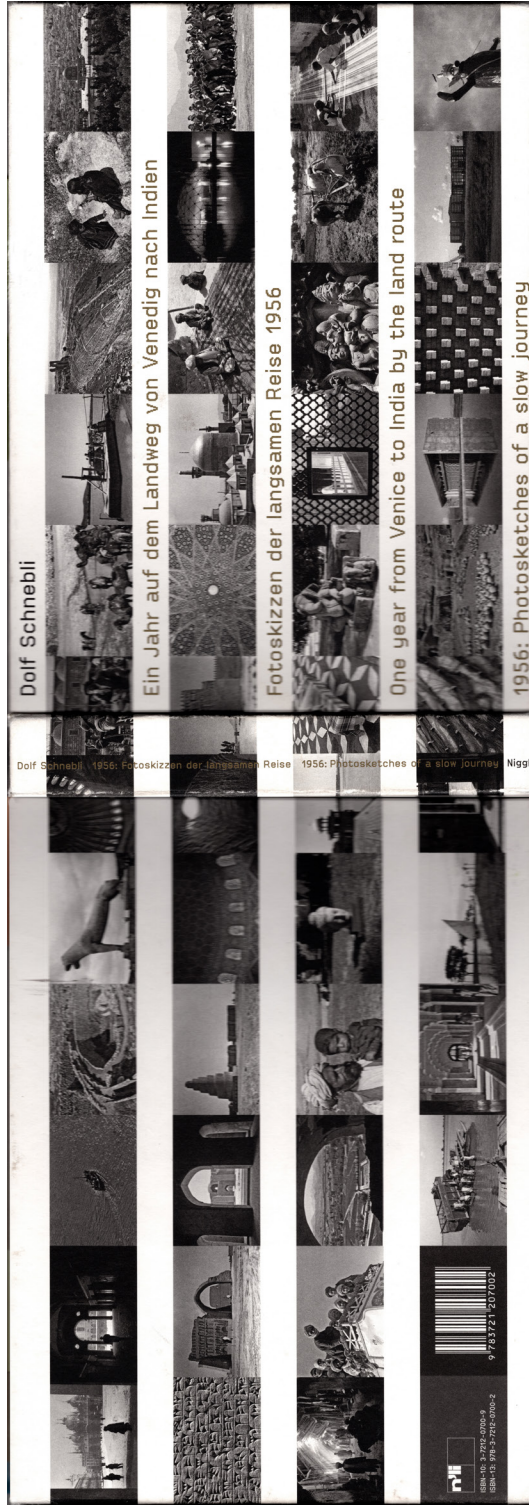


Illustration 1: Schnebli's biographical photobook. Schnebli, *Ein Jahr auf dem Landweg*. Cover.

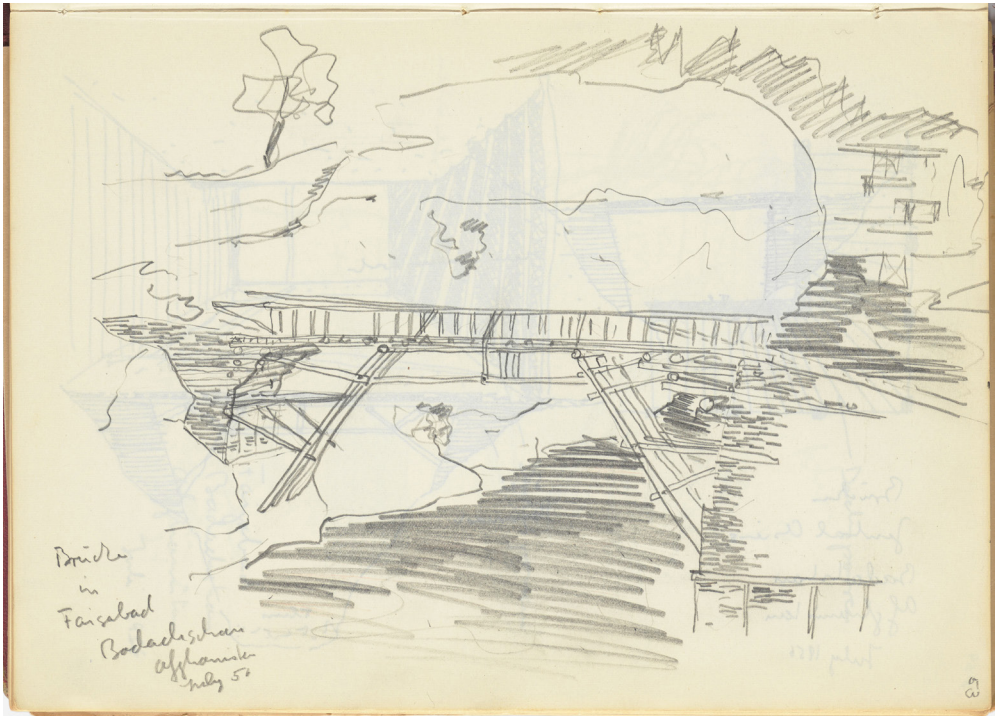


Illustration 2: Schnebli's personal sketchbook, 1956. Feyzabad. © gta Archiv / ETH Zurich, 210–14.



Illustration 3: Collection of contact prints. Schnebli's sketchbook 2/3, ca. 1957. Feyzabad. © Clarissa Schnebli Hall.

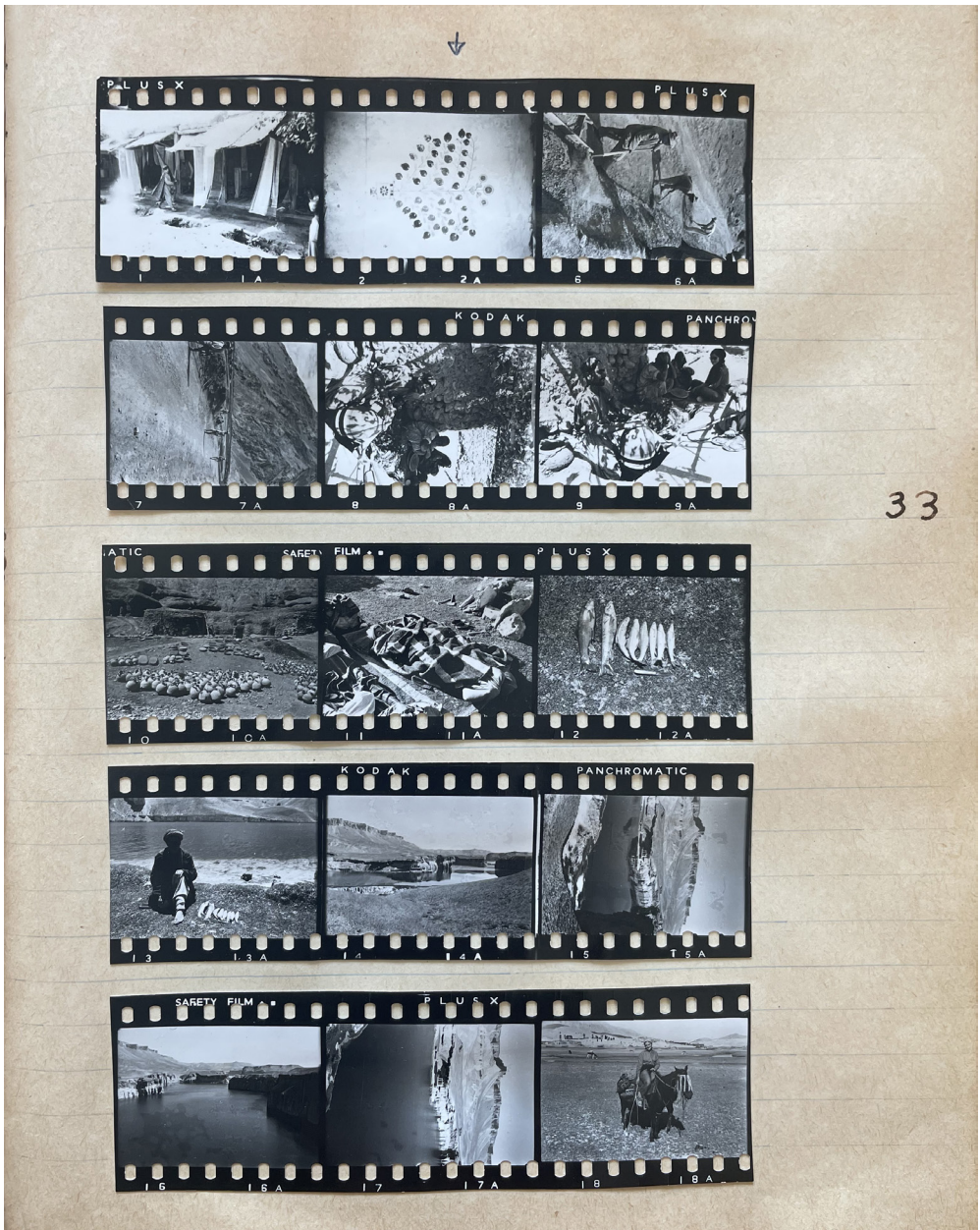


Illustration 4: Collection of contact prints. Schnebli's sketchbook 2/3, ca. 1957. Feyzabad. © Clarissa Schnebli Hall.

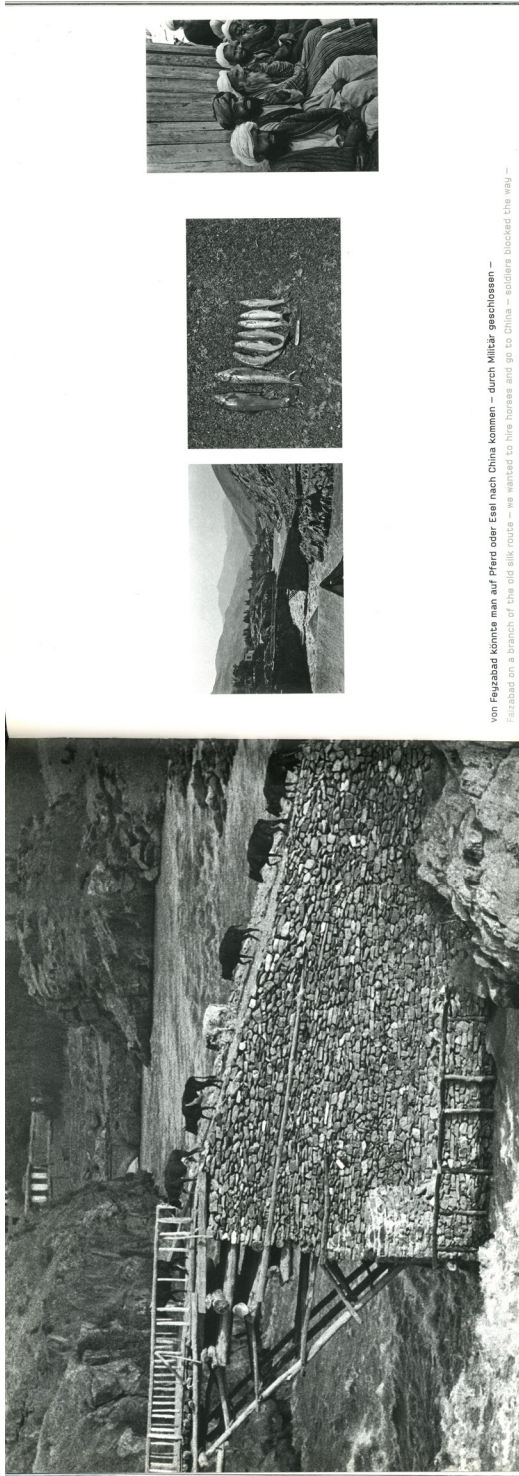


Illustration 5: Schnebli's biographical photobook. Schnebli, *Ein Jahr auf dem Landweg*, 182–83. Feyzabad.



Illustration 6: Collection of contact prints. Schnebli's sketchbook 3/3, ca. 1957. Chandigarh. © Clarissa Schnebli Hall

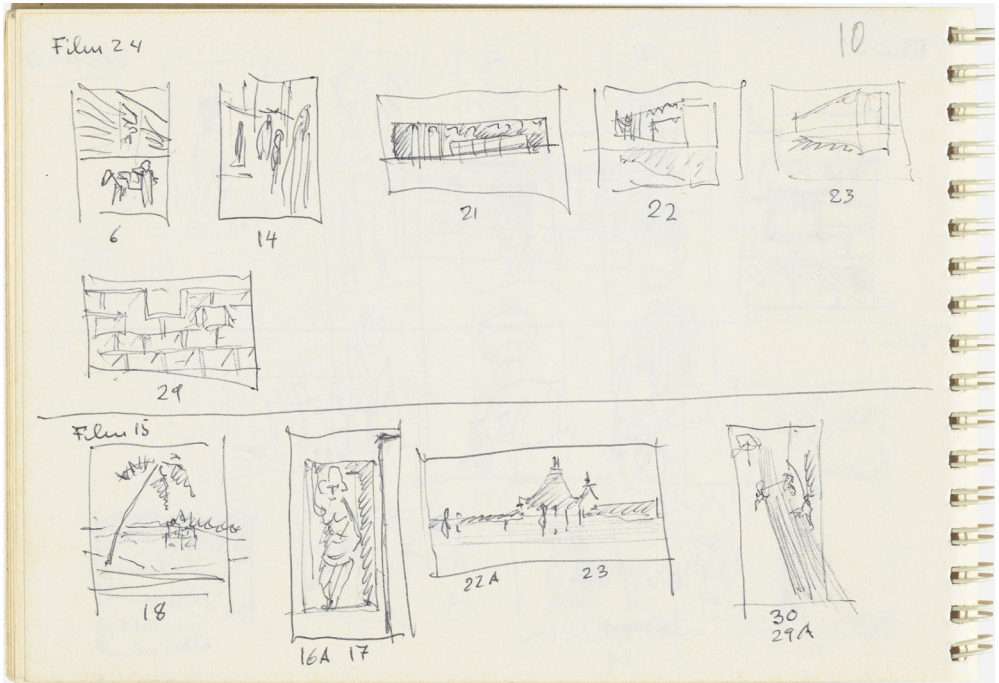


Illustration 7: Schnebli's personal sketchbook, ca. 1998. Chandigarh. © gta Archiv / ETH Zurich, 210–14.

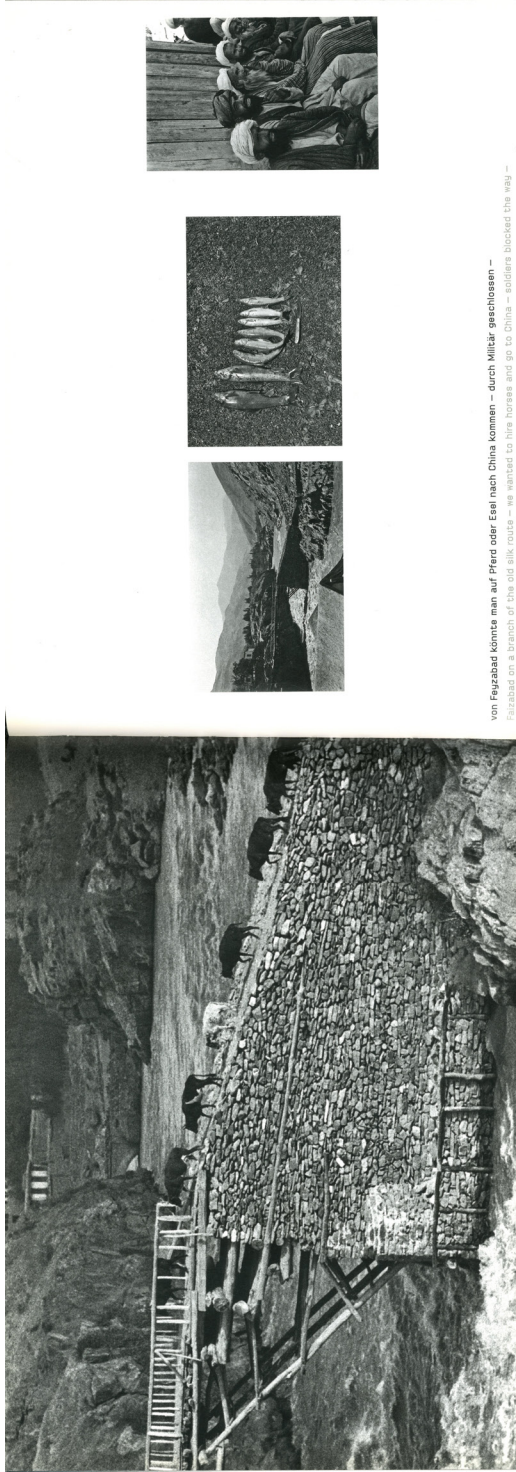


Illustration 8: Schnebli's biographical photobook. Schnebli, *Ein Jahr auf dem Landweg*, 252–3. Chandigarh.