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"It's a very fine line between the reality we photograph because it looks beautiful to us and the reality that looks beautiful to us because it was photographed."

– Italo Calvino[1]

The photos in this pictorial encyclopedia form a labyrinthine architecture, losing their way on a chronological journey through a series of scenes and moments that form a pictorial diary. This succession of images seems to reconstruct memory to form a modern-day *Mnemosyne* atlas, a pictorial encyclopedia, framed and supported by a clear-cut geometric structure. Like the tesserae of a mosaic, each image forms a small part of the whole. Hanimann's works often make use of images of ordinary collective everyday life to form a pictorial encyclopedia. These ordinary images become works of art when they activate a combination of all the other images, serving as momentum, as drivers of movement and of the dynamic of constant flux and ceaseless change that characterizes the contemporary.

The influence of images in our society has increased exponentially. So has our ability to capture, reproduce and transform reality into images, which, in turn, have come to take up more and more space in our culture. The reproduction of images has become a means of constructing a truly universal architecture, a parallel world of images, a mosaic of icons which, taken together, form a reproduction of reality.

The serial nature of Hanimann's photographic work reveals a contextualizing structure, a continuity resulting from a sequence of facts and events. His work is not about discovering a place, but embarking on a journey. The artist leads us through a reality composed of a profusion of cleverly interconnected images. It is in fact the interconnections between these pictorial fragments that form the basis of this pictorial atlas.

And because they are interconnected, the individual images should not be considered separately. The images fuse to form an atlas that chronologically retraces the artist's trajectories through a series of recurring subjects and motifs. The images are sequenced according to a rhythmic structure – divided up into short chapters in this book – that links up the various scenes. The photographer's lens pursues an objective reality, often revealing a dimension of true realism.

So what do we see in these pictures? The nature of the world that surrounds us. Hanimann's contemporary brand of realism interleaves the most contemporary aspects of our present day and age with elements of nature. Indeed, one would be hard put to come up with

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[1] "La follia del mirino", in *Il Contemporaneo*, April 30, 1955.

a better depiction of the contemporary than Hanimann's photo series, his rapid, objective images that seek to capture the various "moments" around us: architecture, roads, information and the dialogue between man and nature that forms a leitmotif running through the whole book.

Hanimann assembles fragments of time and photographic moments –the moments in which it is possible to capture an image –, juxtaposing big city landmarks with anonymous corners and rural villages, to create a mosaic of the contemporary. Each fragment, each detail rendered in a certain manner, comes to encapsulate the contemporary, like a tile laid beside others to form a pattern, a combination that refers to a whole series of universal iconographies.

Hanimann's experiment consists in combining a series of particulars to depict the universal. The speed and serviceability of the photographic medium creates a dynamic with which to represent the complex landscape of the contemporary. Through the use of a precise visual rhythm, the image is no longer relegated to the medium of photography, but serves instead as an instrument with which to describe a complex reality and to gauge the "contemporary age".

By arranging his photographs chronologically, Hanimann creates a diary of situations and travels. From the surrounding landscape we can glean a portrait of the artist, who, though invisible, is always at the center of his oeuvre. While his photos show countless different scenes and places, they are all shot from a single point of view: that of the artist. The book becomes a structure akin to Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, in which every part of a building or system can be observed and controlled from a single central vantage point. Bentham designed his Panopticon as a means of surveillance for prisons in the late 18th century. He named it after a figure from Greek mythology, Argus Panoptes, a giant with a hundred eyes who sees everything. Bentham's ideas have caught on with posterity, especially since the end of the 20th century, when the contemporary became a key concept in philosophy and art.

"All-seeing" might also describe Hanimann's photographic oeuvre, which ranges from details to landscapes, from zenithal views to tautological pictures (i.e. images within images) as in his series of photographs of televised images.

Attaining omnipresence through the image is, of course, the attraction of contemporary existence, and it is what turns the artist into an all-seeing Argus Panoptes. Naturally, in the endless mosaic of Hanimann's images we find traces of his other works, many of which were produced to serve as studies for still other works or as sources of inspiration. And so these become tautological images of works within works.

One such series is of the models for the sculptures exhibited at Hanimann's 2019 *Same But Different* show at the Kunstmuseum St. Gallen. The figures are portrayed posing naturally in an ordinary moment, providing a dose of contemporary realism characteristic of our present day and age.

The book also includes photographs of *Anne-Sophie*, a large mirror-finish chrome steel figure Hanimann made in Zurich. In a number of different exposures, the artist tried to capture this neutral moment of a student leaving the academy building with her books in one arm and a large shoulder bag in the other. Hanimann seeks to capture the present by taking naturalism to

extremes, freezing a figure in a single unsuspecting moment: the resulting image becomes a document of the contemporary.

This book project would not have been possible without Hanimann's archive, which is a core element and an essential tool in his artistic practice. His archive of thousands of meticulously sorted and boxed clippings, especially from newspapers and magazines, is based on a balance between visibility and invisibility. It is a structure that becomes visible only if and when activated.

Animals abound in Hanimann's mosaic, framed by the overarching relationship between man and nature. As urban reconstructions of natural habitats, zoos are a leitmotif of several sequences in the book. Animals are put in a zoo to concentrate specimens of nature's diversity in a single place, just as Hanimann photographically reconstructs various regions of the world in a single place: in a book. The upshot is a great collage, every section of which is natural. Each animal is embedded in its natural habitat as a subject in its ideal frame. Both reconstruct a natural sequence in which shifting to a wholly different place becomes perfectly natural. But an artificial context is concealed behind them. In fact the animals in Hanimann's photographs often appear in an art museum, already synthesized into works of art, or in a museum of natural history, in which taxidermy eternizes the forms and figures of the animal world.

Hanimann's pictures of animals and human beings recall Eadweard Muybridge's late 19th-century studies of the hidden aspects of motion. Muybridge used stop-motion photography to ascertain what lies between two images, the gaps that characterize a sequence. From one image to the next, a rhythm is created that is specific to this unique sequence. As in Muybridge's work, each of Hanimann's isolated photos would be meaningless without its rhythmic context, without the landscape created by sequencing them into a unified whole.

In addition to stop-motion photography and the Panopticon, a third element of this story is Aby Warburg's picture atlas. *Mnemosyne*, as his vast unfinished project was called, consisted of over a thousand photographs of pictures collected from a wide variety of sources. He analyzed them and pinned them to wooden panels in groups based on their themes or subject-matter. In creating this picture atlas, the great art historian was able to discover hitherto unimagined connections between widely disparate images and cultural phenomena, and to trace the transformations and migrations of forms over many centuries in very different cultures and societies. This kind of migration is a survival strategy that enabled the pictures to preserve their cultural dimension over time in order to re-emerge and flourish centuries later.