

# RESONANCES

What do images tell us of the past and how do they resonate in the present? *Resonancias* [Resonances] proposes a re-reading of Fundación MAPFRE's collection of photography: a series of works by classic North American authors which invite us to trace their reverberations or resonances in a range of contemporary photographic practices. By doing so one pedagogically visualizes the transition from photography to post-photography. In other words, the gap between one type of photography—consolidated as a form of aesthetic expression committed to truth and memory—and the anti-artistic experiences that understand images as shared gestures of activism and social articulation.

In order to illustrate this shift, a number of works from Fundación MAPFRE's collection of photography dated between 1940 and 1980 have been paired with recent photographic projects. Thus, Helen Levitt's street scenes find their "dance partner" in the decisive instants captured in Google Street View by Jon Rafman. Diane Arbus's freakism will dance with the installation *La parada de los monstruos* [Freak Show] from the series *Obscurities* by Juana Gost. Garry Winogrand's *Beautiful Women* will dance with the alleged missing prostitutes in Joachim Schimd's series *L. A. Women*. The maze-like compositions by Lee Friedlander will dance with the unconnected images in *The Random Series* by Miguel Ángel Tornero. The forlorn mall patrons portrayed by Robert Adams will dance with the specters detected in virtual cartographies by Paolo Cirio. Finally, the

intimacy of Emmet Gowin will dance with Kurt Caviezel's stolen privacy.

As a result, there are indications of new acts of image. Traditional artistic traits are substituted by a will for desanctification that transgresses the canons and the very notion of photographic quality. The value of authorship is problematized: we are witnessing the paradox of photographers who renounce the act of taking photographs and withdraw into the action of making sense of recycled images. Photography points to a new visual and political order, abandoning its condition as a corpse and a fragment. Will we drown in an excess of photographs? Perhaps what will save us—beyond the epiphanic melody of some of these images—will be their ability to resonate.

**Joan Fontcuberta**

Curator

## Robert Adams | Paolo Cirio

Robert Adams (Orange, New Jersey, EE UU, 1937) initially became interested in the landscape of the North American mid-west, but was also an excellent portrait artist. In the late 1970s and early 80s he documented the routines of people who lived close to the nuclear weapons factory in Rocky Flats, Denver. We cannot extract ourselves from the notion that the characters he portrayed walking down the streets going about their daily business aware of being exposed to an invisible danger are somewhat zombie-like.

The idea of the intangible threat is found throughout contemporary experience and confronts us with one of human kind's vulnerabilities: defenselessness. Paolo Cirio (Torino, Italy, 1979) is one of those artists who highlight the conflicts that loom over the citizens of ultra-modern societies when technology becomes an instrument for oppression. In *Street Ghosts*, the artist cuts-out images of pedestrians extracted from Google Street View screenshots and makes life size print-outs of them in order to place them on the walls of public buildings at the precise location they were spotted by Google Street View. Once re-inserted into the urban stage these "ghosts" question us on different matters: from the right to privacy to the symbolic substitution of reality for its representation.

## **Garry Winogrand | Joachim Schmid**

Natural heir to Robert Frank, Garry Winogrand (New York, EE UU, 1928–Tijuana, Mexico, 1984) chose to focus on the transformation of North America as the subject for his studies, much like his predecessor. His photographs did not lack in sense of humor and irony. They were the product of a range of sensations; unease and hope in the face of the turmoil that was battering the United States throughout the 1970s. Thus, the street has been—and remains—the source of inspiration for both Winogrand and Joachim Schmid (Balingen, Germany, 1955). In 1975 Winogrand published the cult book *Women are Beautiful*, a testimony of the incipient liberation of women.

Fuelled by the urgency of fostering a sort of visual ecology, Schmid has focused on recycling found images as a critical reflection on the mass production of photographs in our globalized culture since the early 1980s. Through his project entitled *L.A. Women* the artist demonstrates the inherent ambiguity found in the meaning of images while pointing to the scourge of femicide and violence suffered by women to this day. This series unveils a sequence of bruised and injured faces, victims of a form of violence whose origin we know nothing about; everything is contained within the frustrating limits of the image. On the bright side: happy smiling faces of empowered women; in the darkness: barbarity, misogyny, and crime.

## Lee Friedlander | Miguel Ángel Tornero

Lee Friedlander (Aberdeen, Washington, EE UU, 1934) is considered the portrait artist of "America's social landscape." In his images he privileges chance guided by a sort of childish or uncontrollable impulse giving way to what may seem like disorderly and chaotic scenes.

Nevertheless, his unruliness when taking photographs has materialized into an extensive and coherent body of work from which an objective gaze emerges that is free of prejudice and focuses on American city streets. Similarly, the landscape and the social fabric of the streets also caught the attention of the artist Miguel Ángel Tornero (Baeza, Jaén, Spain, 1978).

Tornero meanders through places where the limits of fear are expanding and are open to an emotional component. His *Random Series* stem from photographs taken intuitively and portray daily life in different cities. The artist's method for capturing said instants is born out of an attitude that is half way between the attentive and relaxed gaze of the Baudelarian flâneur and the scattered and hurried perspective of the compulsive tourist photographer. Subsequently, the author manipulates the photographs with software that allows him to create panoramic views; linking several shots while simultaneously perverting the procedure by introducing unconnected images that the program is forced to adjust. The result is a sort of Surrealist cadavre-exquis, an unruly and unpredictable collage whose interpretation requires some effort in order grant it meaning.

## Emmet Gowin | Kurt Caviezel

Since the 1960s the work of Emmet Gowin (Danville, Virginia, EE UU, 1941) has focused greatly on his family: his wife Edith and their children Elish and Isaac. The artist translates the family album and their daily life into artistic opportunities imbuing his photographs with a sense of closeness and ease that is deeply moving. Edith consciously offers herself to her husband's camera because she knows she is loved and respected by the person who is contemplating her. Intimacy is not desecrated, but rather sublimated. Thus, Gowin's images are at odds with what is represented by the furtive gaze of a *paparazzi*; inconsiderately meddling in other's privacy.

For years Kurt Caviezel (Chur, Switzerland, 1964) hacked thousands of surveillance cameras throughout the world and compiled an archive comprising over 5 million captured images. In the series *The Users* he has gone a step further; infiltrating the webcams of numerous users worldwide and observing their videoconferences from a perspective akin to the pathology of a voyeur. Products of espionage, these images highlight the end of privacy in the era of surveillance. This leads us to pose the following question: if a mere artist acting as hackerazzo can penetrate our private homes, what would intelligence agencies and large corporations not do with the unlimited technological resources available to them?

## **Helen Levitt | Jon Rafman**

Helen Levitt (New York, EE UU, 1913–2009) is—prior to Garry Winogrand—one of the pioneering figures in so-called Street Photography. Her legacy is a vitalist testimony of New York’s bustling streets during the period following the stock market crash of 1929, particularly in lower income neighborhoods such as Harlem and the Lower East Side. Levitt was able to remain unnoticed, capturing children at play and passersby with total ease. This granted her photographs a sense of true transparency and imbued her subjects with “grace, theatricality, humor, poignancy and, wonderment” as described by MoMA’s conservator of photography John Szarkowski.

In the ongoing project entitled *The Nine Eyes of Google Street View* Jon Rafman (Montreal, Canada, 1981) explores the intersections between the real and digital worlds; between the tangible and the virtual. In 2008 he began to collect screenshots taken from Google Street View, following these “decisive instants” by clicking his mouse instead of activating the trigger on a camera. Diving into the parallel world that exists on the other side of the screen, Rafman manages to compile fleeting actions or incidents that are accidentally caught by Google Street View’s cameras. Thus, his work replicates Levitt’s spontaneity albeit by means of an interposed screen; in other words, deferred and second hand.

## **Diane Arbus | Juana Gost**

Diane Arbus (New York, EE UU, 1923–1971) has always caused fascination for her work as well as for her personal history. The gallery of portraits she produced throughout her entire career was mainly characterized for being made up of a succession of strange, unique, and marginalized subjects who do not conform to the canons of social normalcy. Observing them is not always easy and occasionally may even become uncomfortable as it forces the spectator to confront an otherness he or she might prefer to ignore. In this sense, Arbus problematized conventionalisms and prejudice and—despite seeming contradictory—tried to extract every bit of the terrible beauty that is paradoxically born out of the vulnerability and pain of those who know themselves to be different and feel excluded.

Juana Gost (Soria, Spain, 1987) also focuses on otherness. However, instead of searching for subjects on the streets, she finds them in cyberspace; on sites such as Instagram, Flickr, Fotolog, Picassa, and Photobucket, extracting images of people with scars, tattoos, piercings, extreme body modifications, or who are suffering from anorexia. These subjects represent what she describes as “community identity profiles of the capitalist underworld.” What appears in Arbus’ work as a load one must carry and a source of rejection is transformed into a symptom of an exceptional identity in the post-photographic era and therefore is subject to each individual’s choice; individuals who nowadays understand the breaking of norms as an essential imperative.