

## **Art and politics – a constellation of images.**

### **The Archive as an image.**

by Katarzyna Zolich, PhD candidate in Fine Arts at Pedagogical University in Krakow, Poland

In my research at OSA, I was interested in the visual tension between public and private, that would become the inspiration for further actions. Thanks to OSA's staff I came across Peter Forgacs's Amateur Photo Collection that covers the year 1989-90. These visuals are consisting documents from the transformation in Hungary: 213 boxes of pictures. The objects themselves are the perfect example of the tension between what is public and what is private, since there is an issue regarding copyrights and publicity.

There is also another fascinating status of these amateur photos. They are no longer considered to have a value for emotional use, they have become objects of another, scientific or artistic purpose. Their previous, original function is now restricted by the copyright (and personality) laws.

Nonetheless, I was very curious about what can be found there and determined even to re-create some specific images if I needed to use.

During my stay, I was engaged largely with this compelling visual material (thousands of developed pictures) which could also make an amazing source for a sociological interest in all kind of issues regarding everyday life in Hungary during transformation. The majority of these pictures cover family life events with its up's and not many downs: weddings, childbirth, birthdays, family and school celebrations and holidays.

Since I was interested in publishing some of the materials, my choices were also driven by the necessity of avoiding the problem of copyrights. I decided to cast the 'less problematic' pictures, meaning those which would not contain any recognisable faces or with no faces at all. My main preference though were pictures which were attractive to me for many different reasons. I was looking for pictures with aesthetic value and for something unfamiliar or not understandable without its original, lost context.

In conclusion I was left with images that were either blurred, damaged, over-exposed, or taken by mistake, and with pictures of interiors or other mysterious locations and finally: pets.

## **Collective Unconsciousness of Regime Change. Private Hungary - Gestures.**

By looking at this arbitrary selection I have learned that these snapshots organised our sentiment and memory of the past. But, personally I believe, what more important is it documents the



collective unconscious of the transformation. The majority of these materials are simply leftovers, not taken intentionally, focusing on the wrong subject or proofs of the photographer's defeat by the (camera) machinery. They have become a quasi-document of transformation.

## THE SWAN



THE KISS



TESSÉK VÁLASZTANI



## THE RAGE



It contains archetype figures and symbols and when they are put into a specific context, they show us the visual language itself.

While I was editing the material I decided to use the visual key inspired by Aby Warburg's *Atlas Mnemosyne*. During the work over the amateur archive I was trying to create a visual story-line using intuition, formal similarities, (color, composition, perspective), nonlinear narration, associations, "jumps of imagination".

By taking away any individual who could be a protagonists, what remains is a quasi-document that exceeds expectations and motivations of the authors.

This is indeed a true fiction about times of transformation – the process of converting to another form.

## The Archive as an image.

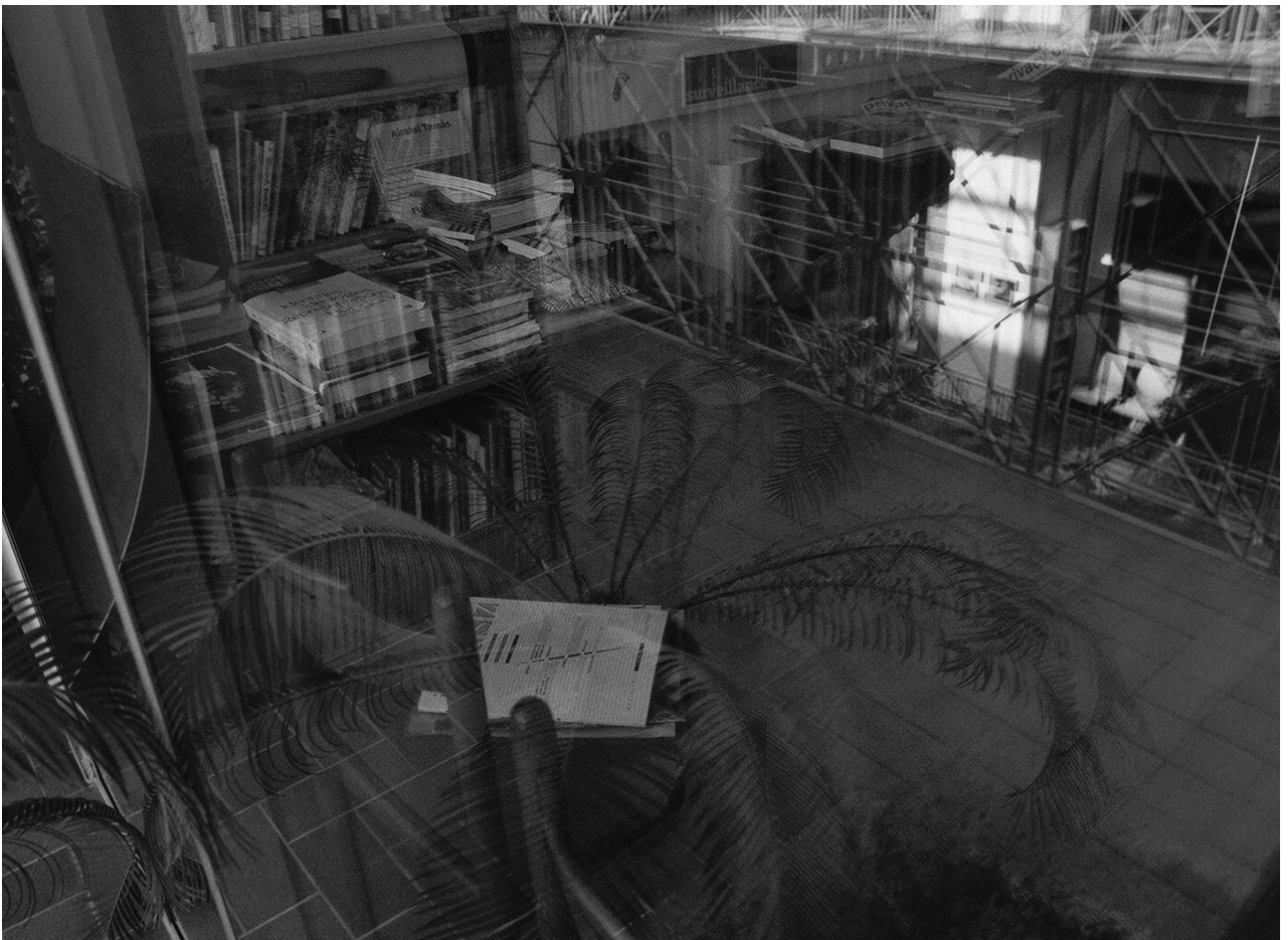
My next focus was on the Archive itself. I decided to take some photographs in the storage – a domain of the document and the upper floors – where documents are being processed.

In my understanding, the main goal of the archive is

- bringing outside what is hidden
- bringing to the public space what is private.

But, at the upper floor, where documents are being processed there is an opposite movement: bringing inside the outside world. Through the glass windows by bringing in the daylight and through nature by bringing in indoor plants. From a specific perspective, they might seem dominating the interior space.







The time I spend in the Research Room, the professional help that I got, kindness and inspiring conversations with OSA's staff and other Visegrad Scholars was very beneficial in my profession as well as in the social field. Thank's to this experience I have developed my doctoral dissertation. It will be also valuable in my future works.

Documents used:

HU OSA 320-1-1 Photographs and Home Movies Collection of Privát Fotó és Film Alapivány  
HU OSA 320-2-2: 1-213 - Peter Forgacs Amateur Photo Collection (20 random boxes)  
HU OSA 394-0-1 Propaganda and educational films [Propaganda- és oktatófilmek]  
HU OSA 205-4-140 Családi ünnepek, társadalmi szertartások  
HU OSA 300-120-13 Subject Files Relating to Eastern Europe

