

Migratory Birds - Romantic Capitalism

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The camera, Viktor Hasselblad modified to photograph birds in flight, fell from the sky.

“German surveillance planes violated Swedish air space and several went down on Swedish soil. Most of them were destroyed. However, one surrendered its cargo intact: a fully functioning German aerial surveillance camera.”*

The image of birds in flight, shot by Victor Hasselblad in the 1940ties is abstract: sky and birds, black and white.

“All the while, Hasselblad viewed the production of military cameras as merely the first step towards the development of a civilian camera. He had his sights on the consumer market.”*

The image of birds in flight speaks of the human dream to fly. It relates to progress, and the tool that helps us to surpass the boundaries of our own limited being on earth and therefore reassures us of being modern. One of modernism’s ideas is how we can share a dream collectively. And it is not without great capital and its self-made entrepreneurs that this dream could be achieved. And it is not the dream itself but the machinery of technology, where it can be reproduced, corrected, updated, renewed.

On the 3rd of December 2006 I auctioned one of Viktor Hasselblad’s first constructions: a photo camera, from 1940 and two films from 1958. Dream ones again to be re-examined.

Susanne Kriemann

*www.hasselblad.com

The fact of photography precisely is that it is a technique of representation, which has been invented.*

“If we now consider ourselves as being at the end of an era of modernity constituted through certain industrial processes, configurations of capitalism, organisations of sexual and racial-ethnic differences, and machinic - specifically, mechanical - apparatuses and operations, then this conglomeration (whose coherence we are moving out from) is likewise held to be the era of representation. At least, modernity defined through such a Euro-American expansionism is an age organised through representation, and the recent developments in techno-science, post-structuralist and post-modern critical theory, art and literature have each in their own way presented important challenges to that alleged domination. However, the pivotal moment in the history of modern representation - and so what must be a central issue for its critique - is without doubt the invention and mass popularisation of photography. This historical transformation, which also transforms history (as what and how the past and the present are apprehended), is taken up in these terms perhaps most famously by Walter Benjamin in his cultural analyses from the 1930s, at the height of photography’s own expansionist reign over representation.”

(Light Memories (Modernity, Photography and Mass Production),
Suhail Malik)