



Paris Photo Diary 2016 By Zoltan Alexander

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FACTS – Paris Photo 2016, 20th edition, 10-13 November, Grand Palais, 153 galleries, 30 book publishers, 1.250 exhibited artists, €30 day pass, over 60.000 visitors.

DIARY 9 November 9.30am Café de Flore

Waking up to the horrific news of the US presidential election overshadowed the mood of the morning at Café de Flore where hours earlier we celebrated the Prix de Flore 2016, awarded to Nina Yargekov for her book *Double Nationality*.

What are you doing? You don't know who you are or where you go. From this amnesia is it to invent life? Her thoughts were still echoing the chilling and unusually quiet café.

12.30h Grand Palais

I am here as a newsman. I am still feeling nauseous, however, I have to enter the majestic glass roof of the Grand Palais, to switch mood and celebrate the 20th-anniversary edition of ParisPhoto, which has been critically acclaimed by collectors, cultural institutions, photographers from all over the world.

Today is a real roller-coaster of emotions.

November has been previously dedicated to Mois de la Photo, the biannual celebration of photography that brought together major galleries, cultural institutions to stage exhibitions

across the city. This will now take place next March. Paris Photo is an artistic platform for discoveries and encounters, presenting the best in the market in photography and offering the largest panorama of the diverse practices of the medium. Unlike in previous years, ParisPhoto moved away from curated exhibitions giving special focus to particular countries and regions. “We don’t want to give it a theme anymore. We think variety is important”.

I was first ushered into the Salon d’Honneur, to PRISMES, situated on the first floor, an area given over to emerging artists and specially commissioned, large-scale presentations, initiated by Florence Bourgeois, Paris Photo Director and Christoph Wiesner, Artistic Director.

Amongst many galleries Les Filles du Calvaire presented Les Mécaniques 1, a triptych by Noémie Goudal and Untilthen Gallery the giant disruption of perception, a collage wallpaper of Reflux by Douglas Gordon.

Under the same roof, ParisPhoto’s associate partners also presented their installations. Pernod Ricard gave the carte blanche to Mindset in festive African compositions with the gallery Magnin-A, presenting the audacious adventures pictures of the Senegalese photographer, Omar Victor Diop.

Huawei through #OO Gallery presented 8 renowned artists working exclusively with Huawei P9, co-engineered with Leica.

Leica, for the first time, presented the Leica Newcomer and Oskar Barnack Awards with the outstanding work of Mectoub of Scarlett Coten, photographing men in Arab countries.

J.P. Morgan launched two exhibitions, Pencil of Culture in which Centre Pompidou presented highlights of their 10 years of acquisitions and Photoplay Picture-in-Picture. BMW announced the support of young talents with BMW Residency at Musée Nicéphore Niepce.

Meanwhile, a series of book signings and other talks were hosted by The Platform, a forum to encourage debates according to topics such as Photography beyond the image.



(PHOTO-Leica- Scarlett Coten) 17.30h Mini Palais

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A superb café-restaurant inside the Grand Palais with an opulent terrace.

ParisPhoto's programme is rich and heavy, hardly enough time to visit everything. Although the opening has not started yet, I am already exhausted. A double espresso and let's go ...

While walking through the flamboyantly dressed crowd, an urging question imposes ... How do we or should we look at contemporary photography today? What is our perception? What do we expect? To be conceptual and influential or simply aesthetic and fashionable decorative? Should we trust our instincts or follow the ever-shifting trends?

It is a drastically transformed perception of the medium in an age when we are saturated with an omnivorous barrage of distracting and singular imagery, however, there is still a role in trying to capture a deeper and more narrative sense of life. Yet photography has never been greater. Images conceived by committed photographers are working passionately to itinerate on and further develop the traditions of storytelling and draw attention to their subject matter through new powerful, innovative and resourceful methods.

This role was beautifully fulfilled at Catharine Clark gallery, debuting from San Francisco, presenting one of the most intriguing and powerful bodies of work by Nina Katchadourian's Lavatory Self-Portraits in Flemish style, photographed during a long-haul flight and the, Under Pressure, a two-channel video installation created for SFMOMA's grand opening.



(PHOTO-Catharine Clark Gallery- Nina Katchadourian)

Sex sells. A large stand was dedicated to Juergen Teller and porn star Koby Keller presented by Suzanne Tarasieve.

Sensuality also sells, especially when it is next to a typewriter.

School Gallery presented the fascinating work of Sacha Goldberger. Secret Eden is a futuristic, erotic tale by the Grimm brothers, set in the 70's at a service station. Eroticism often takes us on a path of the imagination, to a bourgeois party, people with their pants dropped, on imitation leather benches, against a wall or under a table. Goldberg plays hide and seek, quite violence and makes us perfect confidant partners without options.



(PHOTO-School Gallery-Sacha Goldberger)

Fraenkel, one of the most established galleries from San Francisco launched FraenkelLab earlier this year for adventurous work for any medium. During the fair, the gallery presented works from Hiroshi Sugimoto Paramount Theater, Richard Learoyd Shark and a series from Sophie Calle Collateral Damage.

Hamiltons from London always masters their installation with low-lit, erotic spaces. There's work from Araki, Irving Penn, Herb Ritts, Ervin Olaf.

Flowers gallery, also from London, equally present in New York, was a breath of fresh air, presenting Edward Burtynsky's large-scale prints, Little Rann of Kutch from India, exploration of industrialized landscapes of salt pans and Boomoon from Skogar, Iceland, reflecting his obsession with nature, coldness, and solitude. Off-record, the gallery organised a one-on-one meeting for me with Shen Wei, a Chinese-American multidisciplinary artist based in New York, known for his complex work that intertwines intimacy and provocative self-portraits.



(PHOTO-Flowers Gallery-Edward Burtynsky)

Nathalie Obadia's gallery, equally present in Paris and Brussels, shown both emerging and established international artists, such as Andres Serrano, Seidou Keïta and the Egyptian Youssef Nabil is known for his exquisite hand painted photographs .



(Photo “Magnin-A Gallery - Omar Victor Diop)

Simultaneously, there were many satellite exhibitions in the city and it would have been a shame to miss any of them ... Fotofever, a smaller contemporary photography fair at the Carrousel du Louvre, Maurizio Cattelan's installation at the Monnaies de Paris and two additional exhibitions of Andres Serrano at the Gallery Nathalie Obadia and at the Maison Europeene de la Photographie.

21.30h LouLou

An elegant, frivolous restaurant in laid back 70's style, inside the Musée des Arts Décoratifs.

On that note, the first day is over, time to relax with friends, champagne, and RDV tomorrow morning ...

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