

Stories often gain importance only when they are told

In former times, stories which contained fairy-tale elements, were often told by using images. This way of bringing stories to the people stands in a vast contrast to the, today usual, way of reporting stories and tales literally.

Due to my work as an editor of a daily newspaper, I have to create texts which are accompanied by photographs but with my

project „Red shoes“, I may create texts to underline the meaning of my photographs.

The texts are written spontaneously and even during the process of selecting



screaming and squealing ladies got stuck in the hot asphalt; after only a few hours, restaurants ran out of food and the water fountains out of water due to a strike of craftsmen.“

These lines appeared in the German newspaper „Die Welt“ in February 2005. „Pumps“ are part of history.

Do red „pumps“ symbolize the female side, do they stand for screaming women? Red „pumps“ are, not only in the western world, a symbol of

female sexuality. These red shoes, which are the protagonists of my pictures, represent even more. For me, they symbolize the strength and the self-confidence of one woman: my mother. She bought these shoes together with a red dress about 45 years ago, in order to leave her boyfriend afterwards. She then got to know my father..

What kind of stories would some objects tell us if they had the opportunity to communicate with us? For already 45 years, this pair of shoes discovers new places all over the world, meets many different people and starts communication.

With a friend of mine, I was sitting on an alpine pasture in Switzerland, with the great panoramic view of the „Eiger, Mönch und Jungfrau“ in front of us. I had taken off my sandals, put the bag with the camera in front of them and after having taken the picture of the red „pumps“, I put them down next to me. Unfortunately, I could not see the shocked and surprised expressions in the face of an elderly woman, who could not stop to look at me and then back at the shoes while walking down the path behind me.

In central London, I took a picture of the „pumps“ at a bus station, until I realized that the bus did not leave the station after having loaded its passengers. My wife Lydia was chatting with the bus driver so that he got to know the intention of my behavior. He stayed and risked a traffic jam only for giving me the chance to bring my work to a good ending.

While the photo shooting in Hyde Park,

Speaker's corner, people immediately stood in front of me and the shoes, waiting for a statement or an explanation.

The pictures in the British Museum turned out well only because some friends were distracting the guard from his work and because Lydia had placed the shoes in front of the Egyptian Queen.

The fingers of the British customs officer, who took the „pumps“ out of my bag and asked me if they were mine, are not comparable to her facial expressions.

The sister of a friend photographer wanted to try on the „pumps“ but had to conclude that she would never be able to walk in them.

Each picture tells and carries tales and stories. On the one hand, the story of the object and on the other hand the story of the moment the picture was taken.

And certainly every photograph contains the story of the photographer itself and its viewer.

and arranging the photos, the form and the content of the image had a very deep impact on the writing.

All in one, I am telling stories with my pictures; I transport them with images and with my texts, I give directions to better understand the meaning. Those essays should not be understood as an interpretation of my art work but they find their origin in my subconscious.

The automatism of writing on my pictures, during the creating process of the project as a whole, constitutes the spiritual element in my work. In contrast to this element stands the consciously created arrangement of the shoes at the places of the photo shooting, the time of releasing the camera, the tonal value and the exposure, which can be regarded as a concrete element and as a conscious decision-making process.

Therefore, the stories that my pictures and texts carry within them, are mainly depending on the individual and its socialisation.

„The opening of Walt Disney's fairy world's adventure park in Anaheim, CA was a disaster. In the afternoon of July 17, 1955, the traffic was stacked up to ten kilometers. 28 000 people with false tickets added up to 6000 invited guests. Many heads of



Ralf Schäfer
+born Dec. 1, 1961 in Wuppertal
+study of Arts, German literature, Educational sciences and Psychology at the university of Münster
+group exhibitions in Münster and Senden: „Photography“, „Nude Photograph and Countryside“
+photo project „Human being and Cloth“ in cooperation with Felix Hüscher-Waligura
+school project „Pictures and History“ www.stummer-schrei.de
+single exhibitions „Farm pictures“ (paintings)
+Work as an editor of the „Münstersche Zeitung“ in Münster, Nottuln and Senden
+editor of the „Ruhr Nachrichten“ in Bochum and liberal artist with studio in Senden