

1972

R. & A.



There, in the dark archive, stored on a shelf according to their year of origin-1972-was a series of photographs depicting the life of R. and A.

When looking at an image you tend to believe what you see. But, often believing is a matter of what you are able to see. If you do not have a word for an object, an idea, or a phenomenon, you are more prone to not cognitively perceive, and as a second step understand it. In a society, the political conditions of the world inhabited defines the level of possible comprehension.

Simultaneously, memory works like a distorted photograph. Every time you look into the past you rewrite it with current information and update it with recent or new experiences. Your memory is not like a video camera. It reframes and edits events to create a story that fits in the current world.

R. and A.'s world feels strange. Their presence seems to not belong; a rupture of the familiar. Like the Chuppah at their wedding, a sacred Jewish symbol upon the territory of the shona people, so the surreally fast aging of their children, or the year itself which is symbolic of Rhodesia's troubled colonial history. 1972, seven years after the Declaration Of Independence from Great Britain, marked the beginning of a seven year guerilla war between black nationalists and the Rhodesian security forces. This all appears weird, decontextualised, alien.

Is the carefreeness of this young, apparently "colorblind" family, their attempt to build a home, and their unabashed freedom of mobility inappropriate, if not provoking?

Maybe this is what it is all about. R. and A.'s narrative lies outside the established frames of perception. Together, empowered by the vastness of their shared life, they transcend the limitations of reality. A reality which was always indeterminate by nature.

Yet, a photograph is never just a representation of the past. The couple perforates the past, producing a black hole, a rupture in time and space. The homage evokes a constant NOW, where past, present and future are all the same, and the confinements of anthropocentric time perception are suspended. Futurism and nostalgia are inextricably intertwined: The three women eating at the wedding, the little girl looking timidly into the camera behind the bride, the piercing gaze of R. in the Chisipite Highlands; they all seem to carry memories of the future. A time where the nostalgia for the past has been replaced by a nostalgia for the present because everything is never enough.

R. and A. take possession of a space. It might be a utopian space, but real at the same time. Utopian when seen from the past, but real if seen from the present. In the realm of a Simulacrum nothing is original anymore - and truth lies in the eyes of the beholder.

If truth is stranger than fiction, how strange can fiction be? And what is real anyway? Did R. and A. really stand at Lake Chivero? Are they actually happy? And if not, were

they forced to smile to serve the colonial agenda of the ruling white minority, to demonstrate the power of image control? And what about the landscape, the wedding cake, the water slide that reaches for the sky? Are they as neutral as they seem? Can they be harmless objects in a zone of political oppression?

R. and A. are ahead of their own future. They might live in their own world, but they make it available for everybody. It is a world in which everything is, was, and will be possible. Where black and white makes no difference, and where, what you call home, is no longer determined by the place you are born or raised.

But what if this is all a performance? And if so, does it really matter? Maybe. Art is not for the archives. It gravitates. It makes you explore the limits of the thinkable. If a person defines a situation as real, it is real in its consequences. And as the future is as indeterminate as your memory, it is able to constitute what is central to everybody's life: a realm of possibility.

TEXT BY: PHILIPP RHENSIUS