

Tartu Art College
Department of Photography

Performative photography “See you”
Bachelor’s Thesis

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INTRODUCTION

I did not make these photos for my thesis, I made the thesis, because of these photos. We went for a walk with Robin and took photos, I took a few of him and he got to try my analogue camera. After finding out about his pet guinea pig's death, I asked him what he thinks about where the pet is now or what happens after death. He said that the pet is in heaven, up there with all the other animals. We both shared the wish to get to that place after death. It is a beautiful and comforting idea about what could be after death. It made me wonder what it gives to people to know that the end of life is near.

With my thesis work I want to emphasise the knowledge of death as *in memento mori*, which means “Remember that you die” in Latin and the knowledge that few people have, that their death is near. These people with a special knowledge would be, for example, terminally ill people, when their treatment may not help or when premature death is not ruled out while being treated for intensive periods of time or when a disease is progressive and untreated.

We should think about death, before it is here, because it most certainly will come. It is going to happen to all of us and cannot be avoided. Death should start being a topic when it is still far away and less frightening. It may give you the courage to live and to be aware of the time of our existence. I will examine how death, dying, terminal illnesses and departure have been portrayed and addressed in photography. Why have these subjects been photographed and why some do not consider it appropriate.

With my thesis I raise the question whether a photograph is still considered a photograph when it is not permanently fixed with chemical treatment, nor is it made visible for longevity. When does it cease to be a photograph? “See you” is a work about paradoxical and continuous exchange between presence and absence. The way in which I performatively present death and loss with my photos, has not been shown in this way in photography before. Experiencing it is for you to be in a state in which you are confronted with a sense of mortality and the beautiful intensity of life. For me this work is my way to present and respect death and the dead. And for you to get closer to accepting and reconciling with the finality of life.

1. IT BEGINS WITH FEAR

As you look at a photograph you assume that it will remain like any other photo, you have no reason to doubt that and if needed you can return to look at it any time you wish. Seeing a photograph disappear could be surprising and confusing to a viewer as we normally perceive photographs as permanent. In many cases photographs are seen as evidence and truth; moments fixed forever in time. How do you react when you will not be able to view a photo again or when you will not be able to view a photo at all?

I am not afraid of death; rather, I am worried about how I am going to die. What I am even more afraid of is that someone close to me would get a terminal diagnosis and lose themselves to it, turning the person to a shadow of their former selves. Mortality and death are painful subjects, but it does not mean that they should not be talked about. On the contrary, they need to be addressed, and the feelings they raise, must be worked with. Talking about death and suffering from terminal diagnosis is still a taboo subject in Estonia and I think there is a possibility for a healthier attitude from society towards death, coping with it and sharing one's thoughts and feelings about it. If we talk about it, our thoughts come clearer and our needs will more likely be met when they are addressed.

Fear comes from ignorance on how to accept and reconcile with the finality of life. However, knowledge may not always alleviate fear. By thinking about your own mortality, it may give you the courage to live. One of the few definite things in our lives is that one day this life will end and something you are always in control of is how you react to it.

The topic of this thesis is not new. People start to wonder about death from an early age and it is something we will all encounter at some point of our lives. Dealing with sickness, death, loss, and mourning is not to be avoided, but should be encountered and overcome. Our society shall have conversations about how it will affect people around us and our own wishes surrounding all of these. There is a necessity for openness, honesty, and acceptance from all parties – the patient, their family, friends and even society as a whole. Many people feel the need to put off the issues and questions until we are forced to face them. We avoid thinking and discussing about death, but it is inevitable that each of us will have to face it eventually.

1.1 Art That Makes You Think

I was inspired by William Basinski's method that he used when creating his musical album "The Disintegration Loops". He recorded the process on how he took music reels and looped them around as long as they started to fall apart and disintegrate while playing the remaining sound. It reminded me of how everything is breaking down, decaying, or decomposing, and how nothing is permanent. And the way he approached it and executed it makes it clear how life can be uncontrollable, evermoving and how much beauty is in it.

This left me with a powerful desire to create something impermanent. In this material, consumeristic world, there is a constant need to consume and to own things and have control over people. People are scared to lose but nothing in this world is everliving. Everything rots, moulds, dies and decays. We cannot hold on, we should not hold on, it is natural. And if we know the ultimate outcome, then why are we afraid of it or why do we ignore it?

Many people do not want to think about death, nor do they want to talk about it. Some do not want to be around sick people either and find it hard to speak with them, to find the right words, and are scared to make them cry. Being sick makes people around you helpless and it can sometimes even drive people away.

What can help individual growth and strength to deal with difficult issues is to be with people who are sick, old or dying. While being ill ourselves it may be a suitable time to think about our own conditions regarding death and dying, regardless of if we get well with extension on life or get nearer to the end of life.

When examining thoughts that arise about these issues, it will be easier to express feelings. After facing one's fears, the feeling of hopelessness will be subsided with courage and the anxiety will dissolve. This gives strength to show up for the sick person. Giving thought helps to be mindful of one's mortality and gives strength to live and share life that is meaningful.

1.2 The Disappearance

These three photos in archival boxes hold symbolism. The quantity of three can be interpreted, as in past, present and future or mind, body and soul, as well as birth, life and death, all come in threes. The decision on placing the photos in archival boxes was at first a practical one for keeping out the light but it also holds the storage of information, factual and/or visual information left behind, and the inevitable connection with a casket. (Image 1)

The boxes will be opened to be viewed one at a time. Starting with the past, the memory that is left behind, all that has been. It will be remembered differently by everyone who has had the honour of meeting the person in the photos. (Image 2)

“Photography can be understood as a device that mechanically freeze-frames virtual chunks of a time that is, in reality, always moving on”. (Baer, 2002: 4) The second photo represents the present, the intangible moving of time. The disappearance of life and physical existence. The photo starts to darken quite immediately as soon as the cover has been taken away to reveal the photo. Within seconds, the image will disappear almost completely. It is not only necessary to look at the photo, but to observe what is happening to it. Even though the photo will disappear and become darker, there is still a little information left. When a person dies, there is always some information left behind: the memory of them, their physical traces left in the world and documentation of their existence. And not to mention all the photos taken of the person.

And lastly the future, that is not there and will never be lived by them. There was a chemically unfixed photo that got exposed to light before it was presented to the viewers. They will never see the image, but it was, and is, still there. The photo has been exposed to light without a fixer on the photographic paper, it was a photo, and it still is a photo, though it is not. As ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus has said, “Into the same rivers we step and do not step, we are and are not”. (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2019) (Image 3)

The act of disappearance is also to question your preconceived notions of photography. Would you still consider it a photograph when you can't see the visual information anymore, but you have been informed it was there? Do you perceive it more as a photo if you experience the disappearance of the visuality of it? Is it still considered a photograph when

it is not fixed onto the photographic paper and when the absorbance of the light continues, when it overdevelops to the point that the image is not visible anymore? If we cannot see it, is it still there? It is a paradoxical and continuous exchange between presence and absence.

When the photo disappears, it is something you do not have any control of – all you can do is surrender and accept. People who did not witness the image, will never see it and that is okay. They can imagine everything and everyone on the black photographic paper. Letting go of what was, is an effective way to let you be with what is. And those who got the opportunity to see the visible image should not be sad that it is gone, they should be happy for the chance to have seen it.

You do not see death directly in my photos, it is conveyed through symbolism and the disappearance. Two of the photos in the project will have disappeared. You can let go of them. What is important is to be thankful for being there and having seen them. Cherish what you have at the moment.

With these two photos made with the knowledge that they will disappear; it is to indicate that pictures are not eternal either. Nothing is forever and everything fades, just like humans. You assume that these photos will be preserved as any other photos, and this is also what you assume when you part ways with a person. You say “see you” and assume that there will be a next time you meet and see them again. But it is not granted. Life is unpredictable and transient. Therefore, do not take anyone’s presence for granted.

These thesis photos may make you think about the permanence of photos, especially in the times where physical prints are not made that often any more for family albums. You can also permanently lose all your photo files if your external hard drive gets corrupted.

Myself and the family of Robin, the person who was portrayed, have the information that two of the images will disappear. By keeping it a secret from the viewers as much as I could, I also underline the knowledge of early death. We, who know what is going to happen, will react differently than the ones who do not have this knowledge.

1.3 Death in Every Photographic Format

“Based on an examination of several thousand photographs, death-related images are found from the beginning of photography until today in all photographic formats-daguerreotypes, ambrotypes, tintypes, cartes de visite, cabinet cards, stereographs, postcards, snapshots, Polaroids and 35mm colour slides as wallet-sized snapshots, life-sized enlargements made to be hung on the wall, cards mounted in albums, attached to memorial cards and tombstones, and placed in jewellery.” (Ruby, 1995: 163)

Though the subject is not new, the way I present it to the viewer is. With the knowledge I have gained in the photography department, I can create an artistic experience with the available resources which cannot be done with other mediums. Such a theatrical effect can only be created with film and chemicals. With my thesis project, I want to highlight the peculiarities, uniqueness, and versatility of this medium. I use my professional skills ingeniously, bringing the forgotten possibilities of analogue photography to the viewers.

Photography and especially analogue techniques are the most suitable means to portray the idea and the concept of death in this way. Analog photography is not needed to produce photographs in this age of rapidly evolving technologies and it has had its own decaying way. The process is precisely the thing that enables me to make it all disappear. The chemical process is what lets the image develop until there is nothing to be seen anymore.

2. ENCOUNTERING THE DEAD

The first time I saw a deceased person was when I attended a relative's funeral with my family. I was around three years old. In the line to pay respects and bid farewell to the deceased, everybody placed their hand on top of the hands lying across the chest of the person in the coffin. As a child I did not know that I did not have to follow suit, but I did as every other and felt the cold hard hands in the coffin. I was not scared of the dead; I was scared that he would come back to life.

Like Elisabeth Kübler-Ross wrote in the book "On Death and Dying" in 1969, three-to-five-year-olds do not see death as a permanent fact, rather it is for them as temporary as a flower coming up from the soil in the spring, when the bulb of it was buried there the previous fall. (Kübler-Ross, 1969: 185)

I was eight years old when I saw a dead person for the second time. She looked nothing like when she was alive due to her illness and for that reason the coffin remained closed for the mourners and for the deceased's young schoolmates – so that they could remember how she looked when she was alive and healthy. We as family friends were allowed to see her and pay our respects and leave drawings or notes in the coffin. While understanding death differently than when I was three years old, and knowing that she would not come back alive, there was nothing scary in seeing her, though she looked different. It was difficult, but I feel thankful for seeing her like that, the possibility of an unhidden reality with its calm presence. After these early age encounters I have been to several other funerals. I find that these experiences and the possibility to view dead people has made me more accepting of death. In Estonian culture, it is encouraged to touch the deceased and view them at their end of life. When saying goodbye to Robin at his funeral last summer, I was surprised how cold he was in the coffin. It is like the coldness of winter, it is expected, but still difficult to get used to.

Children get comfort from shared mourning and a feeling that they are not alone in the grief when they are included in discussions and fears. It helps them grow and mature by preparing them gradually. Children are often excluded from discussions relating to death, but when it is not allowed to deal with loss, it results in unresolved grief, and they may view death and loss as a frightening and mysterious thing that happens. (Kübler-Ross, 1969: 19)

2.1. Why Have Death and Sickness Been Photographed

Life is remembered and seen through photographs that are reliable and lasting, why shouldn't death be captured for the same reasons? (Ruby, 1995: 1)

The reasons and meanings of post-mortem portraits have been commissioned in the nineteenth century vary according to personal loss or by different circumstances, but there is little information on the context or clarification that would explain the reasons, meaning and significance for the grieving. (Linkman, 2011: 14)

In nineteenth-century America, post-mortem photography was socially accepted and recognized. Post-mortem portraits were regularly commissioned from professional photographers, who advertised their service in newspapers. Before the 1900s, pictures portraying death were trying to deny its presence by displaying the body as if asleep. Some even tried to give the illusion of the deceased being still alive. Later the emphasis was on the social event of the funeral, with the deceased displayed in the casket rather than portraying solely the deceased person. Families take their own photos and share them privately within the family or with close relatives and friends. Therefore, many believe that this custom has been abandoned. (Ruby, 1995: 110)

“Darrah (1981) states that, "Portraits of dead persons, especially of young children, were often the only pictures of the individual the family could possess." Elevated levels of infant mortality may account for the post-mortem photos' popularity in the nineteenth century. (Ruby, 1995: 179)

Photographs present a substitute and reminder of the loss for a grieving person and for society because it creates a visual object that resembles the dead person. It seems that photos give an opportunity to remember the lost loved ones and to accept the finality of life. (Ruby, 1995: 7)

In 1986, British photographer Jo Spence published a book called “Putting Myself in the Picture: A Political, Personal and Photographical Autobiography”, in which she shows her own fight against breast cancer. She later found that the photos she had taken in the hospital had played an important therapeutic role in supporting her health and relieving depression.

She worked with others to continue to explore the therapeutic potential of photography. (Linkman, 2011: 163)

2.2. To Fear Death

“As the living distanced themselves from the dead and disengaged from any practical involvement with dying and disposal, death and everything connected with it began to appear alien and frightening. Interest in the dead came to be regarded as morbid. In the absence of any sympathetic understanding of the experiences, attitudes and values of earlier generations, post-mortem portraits came to be considered macabre and shocking. (Linkman, 2011: 76)

The scientific development of medicine has brought the possibility of significantly extending life expectancy. From a traditional point of view, it goes well beyond the reasonable limits. Old beliefs and practices that explain and support death are increasingly being pushed aside by the dominance of the scientific worldview and youth-centred mass culture. Scientific worldview does not offer very satisfactory solutions to the problem of existential death. Thus, death has become more inconvenient, foreign and problematic. Modern culture in Estonia is mainly focused towards enjoying life, entertainment and death is often only part of business. (Arukask, 2019)

Sick people were usually cared for at home by family, female relatives, and neighbours in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the Western world. Bringing emotional and physical care and support for the dying. By seeing and acknowledging death, it could have supplied meaningful lessons and comfort for the living. Post-mortem portraits might have offered some consolation for those who could not attend to the dying, by showing that they were cared for. (Linkman, 2011: 16)

Nowadays people mostly stay far away from sick people and death. Medical staff and morticians do all the work. After death, the body is taken directly to the morgue where they are washed, dressed, and beautified with makeup, when all this used to be done at home by people who knew the deceased.

When experiencing death up close and discovering that the body of your loved one does not become something monstrous or scary, but beautiful and serene, you get comfortable with death; you may even want to take photos to share how this experience is not something to be scared of. The impulses to photograph nowadays are the same as it was for the Victorians. It is done to show that they were present for the dying in the end, documenting that they have been loved both in life and in death.

People with terminal illnesses and cancer patients have used photography and video to show their suffering and to show what is considered off limits on mediums like blogs and TikTok. And wish that the posting would be continued by family and friends when the patient can no longer do it themselves. Sharing it all pushes the visual and emotional limits way out of the comfort zone. (Frank Priscilla, 2015)

3. DEATH IN PHOTOGRAPHY

Post-mortem pictures of infants may have helped to remember them and to have a proof of their existence, no matter how brief. (Linkman, 2011: 18) From the late 1970s it was encouraged to produce post-mortem portraits of stillborn and neonatal infants for parents in the belief that these would help to recover from the loss of their child. (Linkman, 2011: 80-81)

In the early decades of the twentieth century, portraits featuring both the living and dead were often found in East European countries, though it was less common in the western Europe. (Linkman, 2011: 54)

The 1980s were the beginning of photographic projects about people living with life-threatening illnesses like cancer and aids. Focusing on the nature and effects of the treatments being sometimes more aggressive and mutilating than the illness itself. Critical issues were raised through their series, like identity, sexual identity, control, and confrontation with individual mortality. (Linkman, 2011: 162)

Considering the seemingly clear connection between photography and memory on the one hand, and the connection between memory and grief on the other, images of a lost loved one seem to be a natural remedy for the mourner who has difficulties coping with grief. (Ruby, 1995: 9)

By the second half of the twentieth century in the West the attitudes towards post-mortem photographs were influenced by the taboo against death. When people lost the meaning for post-mortem portraits and stopped commissioning them by the second half of the twentieth century, the opinion on the portraits grew unfavourable and even hostile. (Linkman, 2011: 75-76)

In the twentieth century, the amount of photographs taken during a person's lifetime is the highest. People want to celebrate the life lived by the deceased by remembering them as they were, rather than mourning their loss. That may result in total avoidance by some, of viewing the dead body. (Linkman, 2011: 148)

Some may wish not to be viewed after death, but to be remembered as they were alive. Others find it wonderful and freeing not to be worrying about how they will look when dead.

How will one be remembered after their death? No one knows you the same way you know yourself. Maybe there are acts, mistakes or misimpressions that should disappear with you. There are moments and photos that are meant to be viewed and or experienced in personal relations, between two people or with oneself.

3.1 Early Photos of Sickness

In the nineteenth century, many people were killed by tuberculosis, which gave early warnings of imminent fate and therefore pre-mortem portraits could be taken in anticipation of approaching death. There are documented details indicating that there are pre-mortem portraits, however, there may be many portraits taken for the same reasons but are unidentified for lack of contextual evidence. (Linkman, 2011: 129)

Henry Peach Robinson was considered as one of the first fine art photographers in the 19th century. He staged and put together a photograph named “Fading Away” from five different negatives depicting a young girl dying of tuberculosis. (Britannica, 2022)



Image 4. Fading Away (Henry Peach Robinson, 1858)

3.2 Sickness, Death and Dying in Photography

These photos, books and series may be difficult to view for some people, as death and illnesses are not light subjects to see and deal with in pictures. Anxiety, frustration, powerlessness, experiencing all these feelings there is always room for hope, even for a glimmer.

Nancy Borowick photographed her parents as they were both dying. One year after her mother's cancer had returned for the third time, Nancy's father was diagnosed with inoperable pancreatic cancer. "One of the best gifts my parents gave us was not only this awareness of time but what they did with that time. And having that awareness of time is a very special kind of perspective. It shapes my every day." (Dillinger: 2017)



Image 5. On the Bathroom Floor (Nancy Borowick, 2017)

In the photo, named „On the Bathroom Floor”, her parents were getting a call from the doctor about their scan results. When Nancy was waiting for the results and information, she saw her mother crying. The information received was positive for

both parents- the tumours were shrinking. But she also wondered what if one of them would have had bad news and the other good ones.

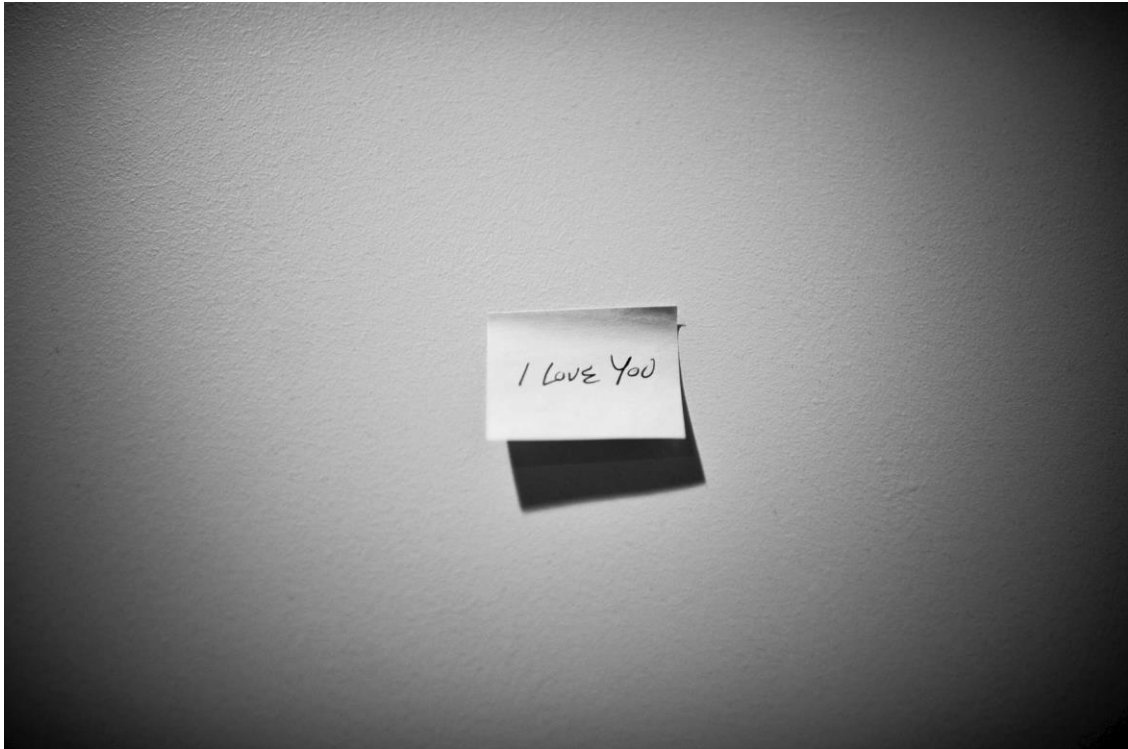


Image 6. I Love You (Nancy Borowick, 2017)

The photo “I Love You” with a handwritten note is a message left by the father for his wife. It was written when the mothers’ cancer had reoccurred for the first time. Nancy wanted to capture her parents’ nature and strength in such a trivial time as to preserve their memory. Her parents allowed her to tell their story — a love story and a story about their family. As well as their legacy, which they have left. They did it all for their kids. (Borowick, 2017)



Image 7. Forever Fortresses (Wolfgang Tillmans, 1997)



Image 8. 17 Years Supply (Wolfgang Tillmans, 2014)

Both selected photos “Forever Fortresses” and “17 Years Supply” by Wolfgang Tillmans portray sickness, but in quite separate ways. He is showing where they are situated but implying it delicately. “17-year supply” is taken 17 years after Tillmans' boyfriend died of Aids-related complications in 1997. Though Tillmans is HIV-positive, he says in an interview with Lou Stoppard in 2017, that: “AIDS has always been in my life and now it has featured in my work. I am aware of the fragility of life,”

Henrik Malmström captured photos from November 2007 of his older sister's battle with cancer. He took photos until the death of Maija in April 2008, when she was under 30 years old. These black and white photos combined into a book called ‘On borrowed time’ have captured Maija’s loved ones surrounding her, taking care of her, and giving affectionate, loving touch. (Weckman n.d) Images nine, ten and eleven show that Malmström was not afraid to get near or to be present, he gave us intimate and loving sight of the ending time they spent together. By photographing these moments, it was his way to process the loss and document his sister’s existence and their familial bond. The sickness, fading and termination of a young person's life may seem unfair when life is interrupted and, in a way, unfinished.



Image 9, 10. On Borrowed Time (Henrik Malmström, 2010)



Image 11. On Borrowed Time (Henrik Malmström, 2010)

Sally Mann took photos of decaying and decomposing bodies at the “body farm” in Knoxville, USA. These bodies are on the grounds of the University of Tennessee's anthropological facility where they study scientifically human decomposition. Photos “Untitled (Body Farm)” and “Untitled (Body farm #7)” are taken at that place. Mann felt sorry for the people as you are in a vulnerable position when dead. They had pride and privacy when alive, but now they would die out of shame if they knew they were being photographed without being able to comb their hair or put their teeth in. Mann described her decisions on how to portray the subjects: “All these people had signed release forms. I have done the same now, donated my body for research. I decided to keep the subjects anonymous. I did not want to aestheticize them, either. It was important to treat them with respect.” (Blake Morrison, 2010)



Image 12. Untitled (Body farm) (Sally Mann, 2000)



Image 13. Untitled (Body Farm #7)
(Sally Mann, 2000)

Journalist Beate Lakotta and photographer Walter Schels photographed black and white squares of twenty-four terminally ill people showing close-up faces before and after their death. Because of Schels being afraid of death he decided it was time to face his fears. Subjects' willingness to be part of this project was often driven by the feeling of loneliness they experienced because of the living's refusal to accept the reality of their situation. Both

the photographer and the journalist found it shocking that this reaction came from the people that the patients wanted to feel connected to the most. (Linkman, 2011: 164-165)

These photos were shown in the Wellcome Collection Museum in London 2008 and for many it was the first time they could see closely people in death and dying. (Stylianou Elaena, Stylianou-Lamberts Theopisti, 2017: 245)

Schels did face his fears head on and at first, he found it scary. As he said: "I was filled with terror. Sometimes when I was taking pictures of a body, I would be loading my camera and I'd keep looking at their face out of the corner of my eye, making sure they really were dead". But after the fear started to fade away, he had the opportunity to see closely the real, unpretentious people he was photographing. He felt that when you are facing the end you are the most real you have been and will ever be. (Moorhead, 2008)

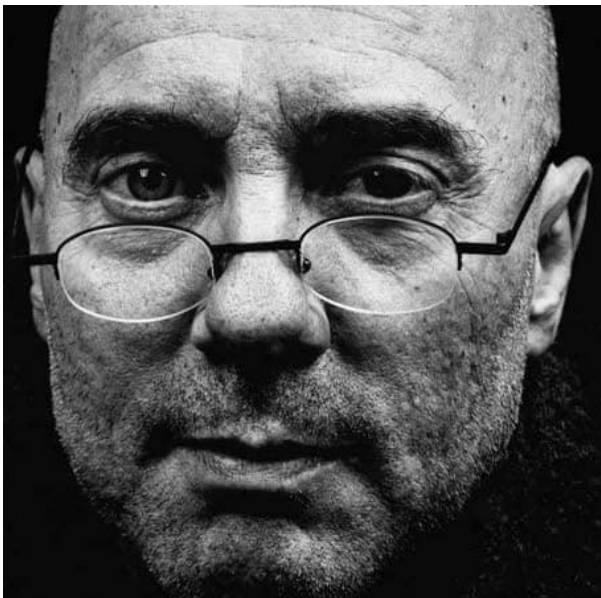


Image 14. Heiner Schmitz, 52 First Portrait: November 19, 2003

(Walter Schels, Wellcome Collection)

The text accompanying the photo "Heiner Schmitz, 52 First Portrait: November 19, 2003" states that "Heiner was a fast talker, highly articulate, quick-witted, but not without depth. He worked in advertising. When he saw the affected area on MRI scan of his brain he had grasped the situation very quickly: he had realised he did not have much time left". (Life Before Death, 2008)



Image 15. Second Portrait: December 14, 2003

(Walter Schels/ Wellcome Collection)

The text that follows the second photo “Second Portrait: December 14, 2003” says that Heiner’s friends clearly did not want him to be sad and were trying to take his mind off things. They watched football with him just like they used to do. They brought in beers, cigarettes, and had a bit of a party in the room. “Some of them even say 'get well soon' as they are leaving; “Hope you are soon back on track, mate!” says Heiner, wryly. “But no one asks me how I feel. Don’t they get it? I am going to die!”” (Life Before Death, 2008)

It would be wrong to tell someone who is terminally ill not to be sad, because there is immense amount of sadness in losing one beloved person, but the person who is dying is losing everybody they love, they won’t have the opportunity to keep on living and to see and experience the future of everyone they care about.

SUMMARY

Photographs from these topics as in terminal illnesses, dying and death have been made for variable reasons and in many different photographic formats. In the beginning of photography there may have not been photos taken in the person's lifetime as post-mortem photos were all they could possess, but nowadays people have loads of photos, there may not be quality in those quantities, but there sure is some information of their existence. Life is remembered through photos, so is death and it may help to accept the finality of life. The reasons for photographing the dead nowadays are the same as for it is to commemorate and honour their life and to show that they were cared for and loved.

Sharing of these photos vary from personal photography to sharing them on social media. They may have been made to be shared with relatives or friends who cannot attend at the end of life or the funeral.

There is great therapeutic value for the patient, their family members, or a loved one to take photos and to view and capture their struggles and joys. Taking photos is like taking mementos of love to cherish or help to cope with the situation. It may also be beneficial in processing the loss, grief and to help to achieve acceptance.

It is good to discuss death and loss, to prepare oneself mentally. Children should be included in discussions as death does not have to be frightening or mystical. Creating a safe space to allow one to speak, listen and to be present while allowing any kinds of emotions to arise would be beneficial to all that are coping with terminal illnesses or mourning. Giving thought helps to be mindful of one's mortality and gives strength to live and share life that is meaningful.

RESÜMEE

Performatiivne fotograafia “Näeme”

Oma lõputööga ma rõhutan teadmist surmast, nagu seda on „Memento mori“, mis tähendab ladina keeles “Pea meeles, et sa sured”, ja teadmist, mida vähesed inimesed omavad, et nende elutee lõpeb peatselt. Need spetsiifilise teadmise inimesed on näiteks terminaalset haiget, keda ravi ei pruugi aidata, või kui intensiivse ravi ajal ei ole välistatud enneaegne surm, või kui haigus on progresseeruv ja ravi puudub.

Surres elu kustub või lakkab, aga millal lakkab foto olemast foto? Oma lõputööga tõstatan küsimuse, kas fotosid peetakse ikka fotodeks, kui need ei ole keemilise töötusega püsivalt fikseeritud ega loodud kestma. “Näeme” on teosed, mis illustreerivad paradoksaalset ja pidevat vahetust olemasolu ja puudumise vahel. Need pildid representeerivad seda, kui füüsilisest olekust on saanud mälestus, etendades visuaalselt surma ja kaduvust, meenutamaks vaatajat omaenese surelikkusest.

Minu jaoks on see lõputöö viis, kuidas esitada ja austada surma ja surnuid. Loodan, et see töö aitab vaatajal jõuda lähemale surma aktsepteerimiseni ja leppida elu lõplikkusega. Me peaksime mõtlema surmale enne, kui see on hetk on käes, sest see juhtub meie kõigiga ja seda ei saa vältida. Minu lõputöö käsitleb surmaga lõppevaid haigusi, suremisest ja kuidas neid teemasid on fotograafias käsitletud. Nendel teemadel on tehtud fotosid erinevatel põhjustel ja paljudes eri formaatides. Põhjused, miks haigeid ja surnuid pildistatakse tänapäeval on paljuski samad, mis nad olid aastasadu tagasi, nagu näiteks surnute mälestamiseks, ning näitamaks, et nad eksisteerisid, nendest hooliti ja et nad olid armastatud.

Patsiendi, tema pereliikmete või lähedaste jaoks võib fotode tegemisel olla terapeutiline väärtus, jäädvustades nii võitlusi kui ka rõõme. Pildistamine ja fotode vaatamine võib olla ka abiks kaotuse ja leinaga toime tulemisel ning aidata aktsepteerida olukorda. Surma ja kaotuse üle mõtlemine võib anda meile julgust elada ja olla teadlik olemasolevast ajast, et jagada oma elu lähedastega, mis oleks tähendusrikas.

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Images

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Image 4. Fading Away (Henry Peach Robinson, 1858) George Eastman House Collection. Retrieved from https://web.archive.org/web/20080511190431/http://www.geh.org/taschen/htmlsrc6/m197601160001_ful.html#topofimage

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Image 7. Forever Fortresses (Wolfgang Tillmans, 1997) Courtesy Maureen Paley. Retrieved from <https://www.ft.com/content/18398928-86c2-11e9-a028-86cea8523dc2>

Image 8. 17 Years Supply (Wolfgang Tillmans, 2014) Courtesy Maureen Paley. Retrieved from <https://www.ft.com/content/18398928-86c2-11e9-a028-86cea8523dc2>

Image 9/ 10. On Borrowed Time (Henrik Malmström, 2010) Retrieved from https://henrikmalmstrom.com/downloads/084_093_Dummy33_Schwester.pdf

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Image 14. Heiner Schmitz, 52 First portrait (Walter Schels, November 19, 2003) Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/gallery/2008/mar/31/lifebeforedeath>

Image 15. Second portrait (Walter Schels, December 14, 2003) Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/gallery/2008/mar/31/lifebeforedeath>

ATTACHMENTS

Image 1.



Image 2.



Image 3.

