

PHOTO ELYSEE OPEN BOOKS

PHOTO ELYSEE ×
EPFL+ECAL LAB



Combining image, typography and text, photography books offer numerous creative possibilities. By their physical aspect, they offer a tactile and intimate means of embracing a subject. While social media now carry millions of shared images every day, a photobook allows the reader to immerse themselves, taking time to appreciate the images and narrative. A succession of images, materials, graphic designs and formats unveils stories, climates, clues – becoming the means by which the work is related.

Here, in collaboration with EPFL+ECAL Lab, Photo Elysée presents a selection of its library of books devoted to photography, inviting visitors to thumb through the works and plunge into the images. The large library stages sequences in open books, organised according to criteria such as the colour, light or regularity of the images. Anyone can come and consult the works. It results in an installation founded on two years' research in the field of interaction design at EPFL+ECAL Lab. Calling on a number of different technologies, and in particular artificial intelligence, the installation examines photobooks from a new perspective. It identifies essential visual elements such as colour, blurring and the presence of objects and highlights their similarities. These visual elements form bridges between the sequences and the books. They enable us to explore the collection by following unusual pathways.

At the end of the library, Carmen Winant (1983) presents *The Fall of The Modern Empire*. Known for her collage pieces and her work focussing on the representation of women, the artist has printed photographs of childbirth on newspapers. She unravels the sequences to make new ones, using the printed page as both an inspiration and a medium. She also completes the library with a selection of feminist books.

Certain images contained in *The Fall Of The Modern Empire* may shock the sensibilities of the public.

12 SEQUENCES (PROJECTION)

These emblematic double-page sequences have been taken from the museum's library. The change from one sequence to another briefly reveals a specific visual characteristic.

- **Stephan Banz, A shot away some flowers: video works 1997-1999**
Patrick Frey, 1999
- **Unheimlich, uncanny**
Fotomuseum Winterthur, 1999
- **Arnold Odermatt, Meine Welt: Photographien 1939-1993**
Benteli Verlag, 1993
- **Gilles Caron, le conflit intérieur**
Musée de l'Elysée, 2013
- **Walter Pfeiffer, Night and day**
Codax Publisher, 2007
- **Nicole Zachmann, Fish of Hope: Photographs 1984-1989**
Patrick Frey, 2010
- **David Goldblatt, Südafrikanische Fotografien 1952-2006**
Christoph Merian Verlag/
Fotomuseum Winterthur, 2007
- **Evelyn Hofer, photographs**
Musée de l'Elysée, 1994
- **Nobuyoshi Araki, Skyscapes**
Codax Publisher, 1999
- **Stefan Banz, I built this garden for us: photographic works 1992-1999**
Patrick Frey, 1999
- **Hans Finsler, Neue Wege der Photographie**
Benteli Verlag, 1991
- **Kurt Blum au milieu des artistes**
Ides et Calendes, 1994

THE PATHWAY OF THE SEQUENCES 1 COLOR

Color defines the ambience of a work and conveys feelings. Its distribution across the pages sets a tempo and creates ties between the images and graphic elements. Colors set the tone in the blink of an eye. The open books present an emblematic colour sequence.

THE PATHWAY OF THE SEQUENCES 2 LIGHT

Light is a key element when composing a photograph. The author places great importance on it in defining succession of images. It influences where our attention lies, encourages us to observe certain details or, on the contrary, blinds us. The open books present an emblematic light sequence.

THE PATHWAY OF THE SEQUENCES 3 REGULARITY

Regularity is difficult to qualify in a single word. It reflects the visual and graphic organization of the pages in a book. Some are organised according to a highly regular pattern while others are more frantic, even chaotic. Regularity has an impact on our emotions. The open books present an emblematic regularity sequence.

DIGITAL EXPLORATION 50,000 PAGES AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

The fruit of two years' research at EPFL+ECAL Lab, the experimental installation, Open Books, offers you an original means of plunging into the books and sequences of images. For this presentation, it brings together almost 400 digitised works, all published in Switzerland. The interface makes it possible to select a title and to move through the content of the book. On the central controller, simply select one of the analysis parameters for the screens to present a new perspective of the sequences displayed. Thanks to the system of recommendations, you can switch to another book displaying a similar sequence for this parameter.

COLOR

Color shows the colours that are predominant on the pages of a book, it displays up to 12 shades on a double page.

LIGHT

Light presents the light and dark zones of the pages, based on light intensity.

CONTENT

Content examines the composition, or more precisely the distribution between text and image on the pages.

SUBJECTS

Subjects highlight living beings (humans and animals) and objects, indicating their position on the pages.

BLUR

Blur displays the proportion of sharp and blurred areas in a book. Text is generally seen as being sharply defined.

REGULARITY

Regularity measures the graphic regularity of the pages, it distinguishes visually regular surfaces from those which are more frantic, or even chaotic.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE SUPPORTING CULTURE AND HUMANS

The *Open Books* exhibition is the fruit of a partnership between Photo Elysée and EPFL+ECAL Lab. This design research project has explored how to express the wealth of a collection of photobooks by offering an original perspective that complements traditional library search interfaces. The interactive installation incorporates over 50,000 pages and images, making millions of comparisons to identify similarities. It thus creates an almost infinite network of relations between the books, which act as bridges to help visitors explore the works by moving from one sequence of images to another. It also made it possible to identify the sequences at the entrance, as well as various associations between the open books in the bookshelf. The research work therefore uses artificial intelligence – essential to such a performance – to the benefit of a vision of the collection. Computers do not replace humans: the intention, topic, choice of works and factors are determined by the exhibition curator. The research carried out by the EPFL+ECAL Lab also involves analyses of visitors' perceptions: what do they understand? What do they feel? The results make it possible to identify the principles that can foster an understanding of and feel for the works. They provide the foundations for projects in numerous other museums and libraries.

PHOTO ELYSÉE LIBRARY

Comprising over 25,000 works, the museum's library is entirely devoted to photobooks. It covers every era and tells the story of photography through books and has a considerable collection of precious books. It comprises books that have become rare, original editions, fragile books, artists' books, signed books and collector's editions accompanied by photographic prints.

For several years, in line with its primary missions of conservation and transmission, Photo Elysée has digitised the works in its library, page by page, thanks to an automatic scanner. These digital copies, that can be compared to PDF files, are at the heart of the research project conducted with EPFL+ECAL Lab.

Having recently moved to Plateforme 10, the library is not yet accessible to the public. It has joined the libraries of the mudac and the MCBA, thereby creating a reference heritage unparalleled in the fields of photography, design and the fine arts.

CARMEN WINANT **THE FALL OF THE MODERN EMPIRE**

***The Fall of the Modern Empire* (2019) alludes to the fall of existing structures, and in particular imperialist and patriarchal structures. For this series, Carmen Winant has selected photographs of women giving birth and printed them directly onto the pages of *The New York Times*. The images mix with one another, intermingling with the articles and blending together on a single plane. For each image, Carmen Winant has picked out specific content, news items and stories that create confusion through superposition. There are necrology pages, articles on women's unions, state power or on nuclear war. The artist seeks out interesting congruities, political and/or aesthetic. These amalgamations supersede hierarchies and place women in the foreground, leaving only the relationships between the images.**

Carmen Winant (USA, 1983) works from collected images and the printed pages founded in books. that she assembles in collages. With strong political commitment, her installations and publications question the dynamics of feminist modes of survival and revolt. The Roy Lichtenstein Chair of Studio Art at Ohio State University, Carmen Winant has published numerous reference works such as *My Birth* (2018), *Notes on Fundamental Joy* (2019) and *Arrangements* (2022), for which she received the Prix du Livre Images Vevey 2021/2022.

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