

INTERVIEW for „Culture of Culture“

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<http://cult-cult.ru/claudia-henzler-an-austrian-photo-artist/>

Ekaterina Shapinskaya, Moscow / Russia lead the interview with
Claudia Henzler, Salzburg / Austria

What would you like to express in your work? What human message do they carry?

I always express first and foremost myself. What you experience and view through my work always gives a glimpse into my soul. I share my focus, my point of view, my experiences of the inner and outer world. Since over 10 years I do that professionally through talks and especially through photography and art.

Your exhibition „Wohin“ in Vienna is taking place in the Centre called „Quo Vadis?“. Does this name reflect the ideas of your works?

Yes. „Quo Vadis“ is latin and stands for the quest. „Where to go?“. The center „Quo Vadis“ is there as a meeting place in the heart of Vienna. It addresses people in their search for answers to the essential questions: „where do we come from? What are we here for? What is the purpose of life? Where does the road lead us to and what way do we choose to take?“ And in this way, the center „Quo Vadis“ is a perfect place, to show my exhibition „wohin“ (which is a synonym for Quo Vadis / „where to“).

Through my photography , my video installations and workshops, I offer a place of encounter. A place where dialogue may happen. A dialogue with your own inner self. With art. With the „other“.

Of course every exhibition and work of mine offers a different approach and a different subject.

A red thread within my works is my focus. I highlight „atmosphere and emotions“. You can also say, I capture the essence and spirit of a place, of a person... That is my mission, to find out „what is special? What is unique? What is beautiful?“... And I do not only mean outer beauty, when I speak of beauty. Beauty is something, that is inherent in creation. It may be a ray of light that shines in the darkness, which makes even a dusty road seem mysterious and special. What ever is there: I am looking for the magnificence, for that, what is eternal. That what seemingly can't be captured. But what eventually shines beyond and through what may be obvious to everyone. Those who have eyes to see, will see. And those that let themselves be touched, will be touched.

Some works of mine create smiles, others may bring up tears and again others shake you and give you goose bumps. I call these captured moments „encounters with that what is timeless. With that what is real. With the essence. The essence of your being.“ This „encounter“ may – or may not – happen, through art. And my art is the art of being, the art of photography and visual storytelling . It's a process of course. An adventure. And I am delighted about the manifold unique encounters that happen on that winding road of life.

You worked at Salzburg Festival, watched the artists and the public.

I photograph small and big events around the world. Some of them take only a few hours. Others take days. Among those events I also captured some of the great moments of the operas and plays of the Salzburg Festival.

Do these events of the Salzburg Festival help the advancement of classical music?

I am not sure. I am not an expert on classical music. However, I am sure that every event and every meeting offers you – as the visitor or partaker – a possibility to go deeper, to learn more, to broaden your horizon. However, it is also very much up to every individual how much they open themselves to that possibility. Meaning: it is both, a present and gift that is offered (in the case of the Salzburg Festival it is „great music and plays“ which are performed by some of the best performers on earth) and it is a chance to receive that gift. But you can also deny it (or not realize the full potential that lies in front of you and which the given moment offers you) and thus, stay on the surface.

Sure, at the Salzburg Festival there are lots of famous and „wanna be famous“ people that you can meet and see. And that is ok. For whoever wants to, you can dive even deeper. The outer glamour can hint at the „more hidden“ jewels and diamonds. Those outer diamonds and treasure can lead you to the source of that what the plays and the music offer. Not everyone is searching for that. And not everyone is ready for that. Everything has its time and its place. But I am sure, even those that some would define as „superficial“, will not be untouched by the beauty that underlies the plays and music which are performed there. Of course, the purer and more in tune the vessel and the channel is (be it the composer, be it the conductor, the singer, the light-technician or their instruments. and tools...), the easier it is for the observer and listener to get in touch with that (eternal) source.

... I hope what I said makes some sense. Well, how to speak of something, that is beyond words. That is a mystery. I believe that is one of the reasons why we have art.

For me, every art is a mystery and not it only touches the divine but springs from it in its essence.

As a photographer, it is the camera, as a musician it may be the guitar, as a singer the voice which is the tool to unveil or at least to hint at that eternal source. To get ever anew in touch with that eternal source, that is my aim. And to make it visible in one or another way for others.

Some people say culture is in crisis these days. Do you agree or not?

I wonder if that is true? I think culture is something that stretches from the past to the present and into the future. Even if people would want to neglect culture, I do not think that that is really possible. We are all influenced by the culture we are surrounded with. And some of us – a little minority – is setting new *impulses* through their way of life and through their artistic expression. Some may call that culture, others won't.

What do you think is the position of classical art heritage in the modern world? Do strategies of mass culture ruin classical art or do they help it, making it more understandable for people?

I think classical art influences us, no matter if we are aware of it or not. Even those that claim that they don't like classical art, are raised in a surrounding that has a fundament which is based on a history that knows of - or even still displays - classical art (as one of the periods of time).

I personally would not say that classical art and heritage can be fully substituted by modern art and devices nor can it be explained or understood fully if we would only use modern tools to teach about classical art.

To give an example: Just recently I saw a little picture – an old painting – maybe 10x15cm on copper. It showed the face of a very old person. A minute later I heard that that painting is the *most valuable* of the whole – huge – museum. A Rembrandt.

Just across from that very small painting was a super big multimedia display. It showed the same little painting, but in big. You could touch the display to enlarge the little painting and watch every detail of it. You could see every dot and inch. And you could say „wow, so much better. I see everything more clearly. Why should I even go to see the original?“. However, if you once more would look at the little original, you would by no doubt find out, that there is something, which it transmits, which is lost through the copying process (even if done with the most modern technical tools and advanced camera). I personally would say, that the „meta-plane“ was lost in that „advanced process“. The dimension of the divine does not come across in the big advanced multimedia copy. But that is exactly, what makes it so valuable.

The value is not in seeing every dot and inch. The value is not in defining each color tone. But the gift for you – the observer – is to let yourself be touched by the essence of that piece. Which for me, is perfectly reflected in the very little painting. On top, it does not reveal a young beautiful lady, but a very old face with missing teeth. It is called „an Homage to Age“. It shines from inside out. From beyond into the here and now.

Coming to an end – to close the metaphorical circle – this is, what I – Claudia Henzler - am looking for. To search, find and reflect that which is the essence. The timeless. The real. The source. That what was, what is and what will be.

Can modern or even classical art and tools ever transmit that to its full extent?

Maybe not. Probably not. But why not aim at finding ever new ways to unveil the beauty and vastness and depth and uniqueness of the ever new, infinite essence?

Until I'll know better, I'll use photography and art as my tool, as my searchlight and as my gift to share and communicate what I have experienced and discovered.

Through photography, installations, exhibitions and workshops I will continue to offer my gifts as a source for reflexion and inspiration - to be taken along, on your own unique road „home“. To the source.

Claudia Henzler lives in Salzburg, Austria and takes on assignments for photo shootings, exhibitions and installations around the globe. Her photographic works are shipped world wide. Contact her: office@henzlerworks.com & www.henzlerworks.com