



Out in the Street

Street Photography as an Artistic Process

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ABSTRACT

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In the written part of this bachelor's thesis, the history and the work of two renowned street photographers were presented, and their methods, points of view and contribution to photography were analysed. Also, the author presented and analysed his own background, methods of making photographs, approach to street photography as well as his own artistic process when creating the artwork *Inner City Daydreams*, that was produced for the final graduation show *Atomic Jungle* and exhibited in 2020.

This thesis aims to analyse and discuss the artistic process of different photographers, including the author's own process, and to explore the diversity of methods and perspectives that exists in artworks of different photographers. From that, it seeks to find the most important elements that are relevant for photographers when developing their own artworks and methods in the street photography and documentary genre.

Key words: photography, art, photographers, street photography, artistic process

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1 INTRODUCTION

As a student, photographer and as an artist, I am constantly developing my own practices when making photos and creating artistic projects. Also, I am very interested in understanding my own artistic and creative process, as well as the process of other photographers and artists. I am interested in how each photographer has their own artistic and personal background and own methods when creating artworks and how each photographer has their own rules and definitions about the medium. Many photographers try to create and impose definitions and rules on photography. For me, it's rather a mistake to impose definitions, as photography is one of the most flexible and adaptable from all artistic mediums.

Since the American entrepreneur George Eastman (1854 – 1932) introduced the first Kodak camera in 1888, photography became available and affordable for the general public. Since then, its presence in the everyday life has only increased. (Fineman 2004.) Through history, the photographic practices were divided in several different genres and categories. And with that, different practices required different methods and approaches to the medium. The Hungarian – French photographer and artist Gyula Halász (1899 – 1984), also known as Brassai, was one of the first photographers to turn his camera to the streets and public places of Paris and to focus on the night life of the 1930s (Picture 1) (Dickie, 2010, 98-99). Since then a new genre started to be developed and a new kind of photographer appeared in the urban centres: the street photographer.

The street photographer is a photographer who walks through public places, observes everything with acute eyes and tries to register, with a camera, the mundane everyday life or a specific aspect of it. After the 35mm film and small cameras such as Leica were introduced in the market, this kind of photographer gained a new mobility that didn't exist before. With small cameras, the photographer could roam around and take photographs with more speed than with larger cameras, and without being noticed. That was what amazed the French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson (1908 – 2004) and motivated him and other photographers to go out in the streets and pursue candid moments. But with that practice, they also discovered that beyond the act of registering

moments, the photographs which they made also reflected themselves and their vision. So, for these photographers, the act of taking pictures became a way to express themselves and their relationship with the subjects which they photographed. Also, photographers started to develop their own relationship with the medium and to create new definitions for photography, as they did different experiments with the medium. All of that contributed to the idea of the photographer as an author.



PICTURE 1. Lovers in a small cafe, Paris, France (Brassai, 1932)

In this thesis I will present and analyse the history, background, methods and photographs of the photographers Henri Cartier-Bresson and Vivian Maier. Both of these photographers were extremely important for street photography. Still, they had very distinct personal backgrounds and were extremely different in their practices and in their relationship with the medium. Bresson was a photographer who was very successful in his career and had a huge influence both in history and in photography. Maier, in other hand, wasn't recognised in her life, and only in 2007 her work started to be discovered. Still, both of them pointed their cameras to similar subjects, photographed during similar moments in history and had a big impact on what is known today as street photography. By analysing the work of these two photographers, I seek to have better understanding of their artistic process and their contribution to photography.

Also, I will present my own artistic process as a photographer, when creating the art series *Inner City Daydreams*, that was exhibited in the final graduation show *Atomic Jungle* at Himmelblau Gallery in Tampere, Finland in November 2020. In this analysis I will try to explore and present my own methods when making photographs and building a long-term art project.

By analysing the artistic process of these two photographers and my own process, I seek to explore the diversity and differences of methods and approaches that exists in artworks from different photographers. And with that I seek to find out what are the most important and relevant elements for photographers and artists when making photographs and developing long term projects inside the street photography and documentary genre.

2 HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON

2.1 Bresson's early years

One of the pioneers of street photography was the French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson (1908 – 2004). Born in Paris, Bresson started to make paintings as a teenager and continued to paint through his youth, influenced by modernist and surrealist painters, whom he used to socialise with in Paris. After a love affair that ended in a heartbreak, Bresson decided to go away from the European world and travelled to Africa. There, he took a few photographs, but he didn't call himself a photographer yet. He survived by shooting animals and selling the meat to the locals. It was in 1931, when Bresson was deeply moved by a photograph made in Africa by the Hungarian photographer Martin Munkácsi (1896 – 1963), titled *Three Boys at Lake Tanganyika* (Picture 2), and visualised a new potential that drawn him to the streets: the decisive moment. He saw in this image the power of photography in capturing a frame of a second, a movement, an emotion and a moment, that can be frozen in time. Later on, Bresson would describe this specific moment, which the photographer presses the button of the camera, as the “decisive moment”. (Wheatley 1998.)



PICTURE 2. Three Boys at Lake Tanganyika, Liberia (Munkácsi ca. 1930)

After that, Bresson bought a camera and went out in the streets to take photographs. From 1932 until 1935 he lived in Spain, Italy and Mexico, and travelled to different countries taking photographs wherever he went, creating images that some acknowledge to be his best work (Picture 3 & 4), and in 1936 he went to Spain and photographed the Spanish Civil War. One of his first cameras was a Leica with a 50mm lens attached to it, and during his whole life as a photographer, Bresson used only the 50mm focal length. For him this was the lens that was the closest to how the human eye sees and had less distortion. (Henri Cartier-Bresson Foundation, N.d..)



PICTURE 3. A man rides his bike through the Var department, Hyères, France (Bresson 1932)



PICTURE 4. Salerno, Italy (Bresson 1933)

On May 12, 1937, Bresson photographed the coronation of King George VI and Queen Elisabeth in London. It was the first big event to be broadcasted in television, by the BBC, and it was watched all over the world. While many cameras were pointed at the royal family, Bresson's photographs reveal a different approach to that event. He pointed his camera to the crowd, instead, showing a very unique perspective of the event and which focuses more on the common people who gathered outside of the Westminster Abbey church (Picture 5). This humanistic approach to history is something that will define not only Bresson's photography, but the course in which photography and photojournalism would follow later through the years. (Wheatley 1998.)



PICTURE 5. Members of the police and spectators at the coronation of King George VI and Queen Elisabeth, London, England (Bresson 1937)

During the World War II, Bresson joined the *Film and Photography* unit of the French Army in 1940. He was captured by the German army and spent three years as a war prisoner doing forced labour. He managed to escape, in 1943, after two escape attempts. After that, he worked secretly to help other prisoners to escape and to cover the occupation and liberation of France. In 1945 he directed the documentary *The Return* (*La retour*, in French), about French soldiers who returned to France after they were detained during the war. He also began to work a series of portraits. (Wheatley 1998.)

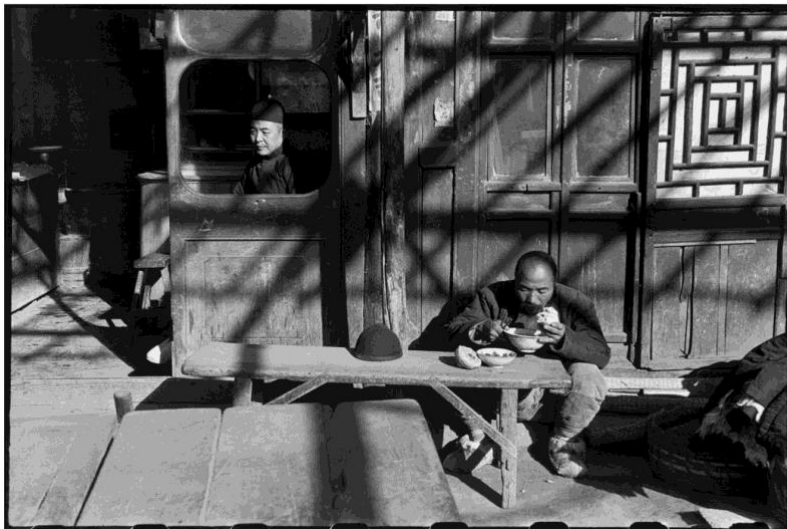
2.2 The Magnum Agency

In 1947, Henri Cartier-Bresson founded the Magnum Agency together with photographers Robert Capa (1913 – 1954), David Seymour (1911 – 1956) and George Rodger (1908 – 1995). These photographers were excited about what was going to happen in the world after the end of the second world war, and they wanted to be independent photographers and journalists, choosing their own stories and making photos in their own way. The Magnum Agency was, and still is until today, a reference for a type of photography that represents the intersection between art and journalism. These photographers wanted to photograph the big events of the world but also the stories that didn't appear in the mainstream media. They wanted to have freedom to photograph on their own way and valued the photographer as an author and an artist, who has their own vision and point of view. (Magnum Photos, N.d..)



PICTURE 6. Railway station, St. Louis, USA (Bresson 1957)

Together, these photographers from Magnum Agency divided the assignments among themselves, and each one of them was responsible for a different part of the world. Bresson was responsible for East Asia, and in 1948 he photographed the last days of Gandhi and his funeral. In 1949 he photographed the end of the Chinese Civil War and the beginning of the People's Republic (Picture 7). The photographs he took of these events were published in Life Magazine and all around the world and gave Bresson and Magnum an important recognition. (Magnum Photos, N.d.)



PICTURE 7. A peasant, whose market has closed down and came Beijing to sell his vegetables, sits to eat his provisions, Beijing, China (Bresson 1948)

2.3 Portraits

In the 1940s, Bresson started to dedicate himself to make portraits. He believed that a photographer must try to capture a person in their own environment, doing what they would usually do in their routine, respecting their atmosphere and not taking away the person from their world or adding different elements or equipment to the scene (Picture 8). In that way, the ones who are being photographed will eventually forget about the photographer and the camera and their true self will be allowed to come out. (Ch eroux 2014.) In the past, people would often pose for a photographer, dress up with special clothes or bring new elements to a scene. So, his portraits were very different from the way portraits were traditionally made and are still today a reference on portrait photography. (Wheatley 1998.)



PICTURE 8: French painter Henri Matisse at his home, Vence, France (Bresson 1944)

2.4 The Decisive Moment

In 1952, Henri Cartier-Bresson published the book *The Decisive Moment*, which contained 126 photographs made by him and an essay, with the same title, where he describes what he calls “the decisive moment”. On his essay, Bresson wrote “To me, photography is the simultaneous recognition, in a fraction of a second, of the significance of an event as well as of a precise organization of forms which gave that event its proper expression.” (Bresson 1952).

For him, the camera was an extension of his eye, and his photographs were notes in his sketchbook. For him, “To take a photograph is to align the head, the eye and the heart. It’s a way of life” (Bresson 1952). For example, the photograph that Bresson took in 1954 at the Rue Mouffetard, Paris, of a child smiling while carrying two bottles of wine, is one of the many examples of the decisive moment (Picture 9).

In a more simplified way, for him the decisive moment it is the moment when the photographer captures the whole essence of a certain situation in a single photograph that will be able to tell the whole story by itself.



PICTURE 9. Rue Mouffetard, Paris, France (Bresson 1954)

In Bresson's *The Decisive Moment* essay from 1952, he understands that the photographer is often looking at situations that are constantly vanishing, so they must be precise when taking the photo, for those moments won't happen again. Differently than in other types of art, the photographer must process and record the moments almost simultaneously as they are happening and try to find the right moment when to press the shutter button of the camera (Picture 10).

According to him, the photographer must be unobtrusive to the situation and walk in the tip or their toes. In the documentary *Pen, Brush and Camera, 1998*, it is possible to see moving images of Bresson in action, while he is taking photographs. In these videos, Bresson walks around with his camera, observing everything like a hunter, going around his subjects almost like he is dancing and taking photos without being noticed and quickly moving to the next subject.

For him, the photographs and the work of a photographer will always be based on the relationship that the photographer establishes with the people and the subjects which they approach. And if, for example, that relationship is fake, it will be visible in the photographs. He was also against any kind of manipulation of the reality or the manipulation of the photographs in the darkroom in order to achieve certain results. For him, the uncertainty and spontaneity of the situations are part of the process and the result. (Bresson 1952.)

As an artist, Bresson explored his deep and personal relationship with photography. On *The Decisive Moment* essay, his intention is not to define all the photographic practices, but to appropriate himself of the medium and to define his own practices. For him, photography and his own personal life were one. His practice as photographer and as an artist was a way of discovering more about himself and the world. In this essay, he wrote:

I believe that, through the act of living, the discovery of oneself is made concurrently with the discovery of the world around us, which can mould us, but which can also be affected by us. A balance must be established between these two worlds – the one inside us and the one outside us. As a result of a constant reciprocal process, both these worlds come to form a single one. And it is in this world that we must communicate. (Bresson 1954)

In this quote it is possible to analyse one central aspect of his work, which it's that in his photographs there is a constant balance, harmony and relationship between humans and the environment around them. And that, is necessarily the area where Bresson is trying to capture in his images. The specific point where humans and the world around them became one, both affecting and being affected by each other.

Also, beyond the connection between the people who appear in his photos and the environment that lies around them, Bresson is also talking about his own connection between what exists inside him and the outside world, and how his way of taking photographs is also a way of externalising his own balance between him and the world.



PICTURE 10. Cyclades, Greece (Bresson 1961)

2.5 The humanistic point of view

After analysing Bresson's work, I can affirm that he captured people in a very humanistic way. With his camera, not only he captured a moment in the life of one or more individuals, but he dignified them, brought meaning and placed together what is usually distant. He tried to capture every moment in its totality, and with that, the person in the moment in their totality at that moment. That is a very big and challenging task for a photographer, but Bresson took that challenge as his style. For him, the streets were a constant challenge. Anywhere he went, he tried to find some kind of harmony, balance or equilibrium, so he can show us, the viewers, that in the middle of all the chaos of life, there is something interesting, amazing and exciting about the lives of the common people. He shows us that there are stories everywhere, that are worth being told.

For example, during the coronation of King George VI and Queen Elisabeth in 1937, Bresson is trying to tell us something when he decided to point his camera at the crowd of people who were watching as the royal family passed by (Picture 11), instead of pointing it to the royal family, who are the ones who stand above all the rest of the society and are presented as being dignified by God (Wheatley 1998). He is trying to tell us that the common people, can actually be more interesting than those in power, and therefore, can be seen as a more interesting

subjects than King George VI and Queen Elisabeth. He is subverting the order of which things are presented to us by society, with his photographs. He is trying to say that it isn't the church who decides who has dignity and who has not. It all up to us. And he, as an artist, decided that the crowd of people were more important and deserved more attention.

For a photographer that relies his whole work on the spontaneity of the world, it's understandable that he didn't find interest in the British royal family and a ceremony that was completely choreographed and followed rigid protocols from beginning to end. In that occasion, Bresson saw in the crowd a much more interesting subject.



PICTURE 11. Coronation of King George VI, Trafalgar Square, London, England (Bresson 1937)



PICTURE 12. Coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, London, England (BBC 1937)

That is also a good example where we can understand that is not the camera that does the work, but the photographer and how they make the camera to work in their own definition of how the camera should work, what it should capture and in which moment the photograph should be captured. Still, it's interesting to compare the photographs made by Bresson and the images made by the BBC,

captured in video, of the royal family arriving at the Westminster Abbey for the coronation (Picture 12). In that sense, those cameras, and the images which they produced, if compared, can reveal the nature of the subjects. On one side, the royals, that can hardly be seen by the cameras and are distant from the crowd, as a symbol of a superior class of people. On the other side, the regular people, who are photographed at a close range by Bresson, whose faces and emotions can be seen. It's also good to notice that, by choosing to work only with a 50mm lens during this event, and for his whole life, Bresson is also following a human approach (Wheatley 1998). He is almost setting a rule, that if something can't be photographed at close range by his lens, then it can't be photographed at all.

It's not by chance that Bresson was called "the eye of the century" by the French writer Pierre Assouline (Marlowe 2014). His contribution to photography was unmeasurable and he inspired different generations of photographers to travel around the world in the search for images and stories to be told. For me, Bresson was way ahead of his time and his photographs are not only staggering and beautiful, but they are revolutionary. He showed a humanistic approach that was still yet to be seen in modern society. He placed common individuals, people from all backgrounds and ethnics, and their lives, at the centre of the image, and with that, he made us see that we matter, as humans. Not by creating something new, but by showing us something that was already there.

3 VIVIAN MAIER

3.1 A brief story of Maier's life

Vivian Dorothy Maier (1926 – 2009), was born in the Bronx neighbourhood of New York City, USA in the 1920s. Her mother was French, her father Austrian and she spent most of her youth in France. In 1951 she returned to the USA and started to work as a nanny and caretaker, a profession which she did for the rest of her life. She lived in New York City until 1956, when she moved to Chicago, where she was employed by a family with three boys, whom she took care of, and were the closest people she ever had in her life, as she never got married or had any children. In the 80s and 90s, Maier had financial struggles and was helped by one of the families whom she worked with. Eventually much of her photographic work was left on a storage and was auctioned by a company in 2007. (Maloof Collection N.d..)

3.1.1 As a photographer and an artist

Vivian started taking photographs in 1949 with “toy cameras”, such as the Kodak Brownie box camera, and in 1952 she bought a Rolleiflex camera and started making photographs in square format, capturing the life in the street and making portraits of strangers, as well as self-portraits (Picture 13) and pictures of the ones who were close to her, such as the families which she worked with. It seems that 1952 was the year when Maier's photography was defined, and she developed a style of her own. Around 1956 she also started to use 35mm colour films, a Leica III camera and several German Cameras. In 1957 she travelled to South America and in 1959 and 1960 she travelled for about eight months in Asia, Middle East and Europe. She always travelled alone but carried a camera with her and took pictures whenever she went (Picture 14). (Maloof Collection N.d..) Beyond taking photographs, Maier also made several videos, recorded audios where she interviews people, some of which were people she knew, but also people in the street who probably were also photographed by her (Encyclopaedia Britannica N.d.).



PICTURE 13 Self-Portrait (Maier 1955)



PICTURE 14. Somewhere in Asia (Maier 1959)

3.2 The discovery

In 2007, the real estate agent John Maloof was writing a history book and was searching for photographs of the city of Chicago. He purchased a box full of negatives for 380 dollars with photographs made by Vivian Maier. At that time, Maier was completely unknown as a photographer. At some point Maloof started to scan the negatives and found out that images were really interesting, as they showed candid portraits of people and street life. After that, Maloof searched for more information about Maier, to discover that she has been a nanny through her whole life. He found and purchased more boxes containing her personal belongings and about 100.000 negatives, thousands of undeveloped film and

different film and audio recordings. He contacted museums asking for help to deal with the archive of photographs, but he was turned down and decided to deal with the archive by himself. It was only after he promoted an exhibition at the Chicago Cultural Centre in Chicago, Michigan, USA in 2011, that the media and the art community started to pay attention at Maier's work, to recognize her as a great photographer and most important, to be interested in her story, of a nanny who happened to be a great photographer but kept her work as a secret through her life. (Maloolf & Siskel 2013.)



PICTURE 15. New York City, USA (Maier 1959)



PICTURE 16. New York City, USA (Maier, Undated)

3.3 The dilemma

It's stunning to see Vivian Maier's photographs and realise that they were made by someone who didn't have a formal artistic or photographic education or was part of the art world. Differently than many great photographers of her era, Maier worked almost her whole life as a nanny. She was a woman and part of the North American working class. (Maloof Collection N.d..)

Nowadays, there are many ways that someone can become an artist or a photographer. It's still difficult, but surely is incomparable to the challenges that a person would face decades ago. In the past, the majority of the people who could develop a stable career as a photographer or an artist, were those who had an artistic background or were born in a wealthy family. Maier had none of those influences in her life and kept her photographic work and her artistic personality almost as a secret identity. She kept on working as a nanny, taking care of children and doing house services. But apparently, her passion for photography and for registering moments was so great that she kept on doing it, even while she was on duty. Many of the families she worked with, recall that she always carried a camera with her, but most of them didn't know or were interested in knowing the content the photographs. So many of Maier's photographs were made while she was taking care of children or during her everyday life (Picture 17). It seems like she found in her job, appointments and everyday paths, the source for her photographs. And even though she wasn't commissioned to do these photos, or there wasn't any intention from her of publishing them, she kept on doing it with the discipline and preciseness of a professional photographer.



PICTURE 17. New York City, USA
(Maier, Undated)

Maier's dilemma can be seen as a very recurring one in the art field and present still today. As an artist who, in one hand, is driven by the will of making artworks and wants to produce their work. But in another hand, has to deal with the reality that the working class faces all around the world, which is the need to do a certain work in order to survive, that will likely occupy most of the free time in the artist's life and will place them in a social position that will difficult their artistic development and success. Her story it's an extreme example of an artist that didn't get to be recognised by their work, but it's still a reality that many artists had to face in the past and still have to face today. (Maloof & Siskel 2013.)



PICTURE 18. Chicago, USA (Maier 1956)

3.4 Relationship with subjects

Vivian Maier was a very active photographer, who photographed different kinds of subjects in the streets. It's possible to see through her photographs that she was very aware of politics and what was going on in society at the time. She photographed all kinds of people, but it seems that she focused more on photographing the poor and less fortunate. Even though many of the people she photographed were complete strangers to her, her photos look very personal, almost like she knew those people and was trying to capture their stories (Picture 18).

One possible way to analyse some of her work, it's that it might have reflected Maier's own struggles, of a working-class immigrant who was trying to survive in the United States. And probably this is why she felt more compelled to make photos from others who also had struggles in their lives.

On her photographs, it's possible to observe how Maier got physically close to her subjects (Picture 19 & 20), with a certain proximity and intimacy that not so many photographers manage to achieve. It could be that the fact that she was a nanny and someone who look like just another passer-by, gave her the perfect disguise in order for her to not be seem, and because of that, people allowed her to get so close to them. Still, even though she worked as a nanny for most of her life, Maier's contribution to photography and history is an unmeasurable, and some already consider her to be among the best and most important photographers of the 20th century.



PICTURE 19. Somewhere in the USA (Maier 1956)



PICTURE 20. *New York City, USA* (Maier, Undated)

4 MY ARTISTIC PROCESS

4.1 Background and methods

When producing my own art series titled *Inner City Daydreams*, I came to experience, document and look back at my own background and artistic processes as a photographer and artist. In this chapter, my own path as a photographer will be presented and also my methods, discoveries in the process and elements that are important for my work. Also, my own process will be analysed when creating the series *Inner City Daydreams* that was exhibited in the *Atomic Jungle* degree show in 2020 at the Himmelblau Gallery in Finland.

4.1.1 Discovering photography

As someone who grew up in a large and populous city like Sao Paulo, I took my camera to the streets since I started to be interested in photography, in 2009. For quite some time, I didn't have an aim or a project in mind, and I was only interested in photographing and experimenting with the possibilities of the medium. After a short time taking photos, I noticed that my eyes were drawn to create photographs with geometric forms and light. Somehow the geometry of the city attracted me, and I created many photos with a vanishing point, which is still one of the characteristics of my photos. At that time, I took photos with little action or movement inside the frame (Picture 21), as it took me some time to think about the composition in the way that I wanted.



PICTURE 21. Tiago Mazza: Buildings, Sao Paulo, Brazil, 2010, digital photo

4.1.2 Photojournalism and developing style

In 2013 I started to work as an independent photojournalist, covering different news stories such as protests, politics and different kinds of events (Picture 22). In that job I was obligated to pay attention to other elements rather than the geometry of the composition. When working as photojournalist, I had to capture a story, while it was still developing, and most important, I had to photograph people and to pay attention to movement and timing. This need for a new kind of image pushed me to act in a faster speed, in situations when it was not always possible to spend a lot of time thinking about the composition or aligning the subjects with a good harmony, and also situations where it wasn't so important to think about these elements.

I discovered that in photojournalism, what sets the shape of a photograph is the subject and what kind of action is happening, and each new situation imposes new problems and requires new solutions from the photographer. From that I started to develop more my skills to work fast and find photographic solutions in a matter of seconds. Still, I noticed that even though I wouldn't pay too much attention to the geometric forms in the compositions, they would appear anyway. That showed me that as I developed my skills as a photographer, many of the things I tried and learned, would become internalised, and I would no longer need to pay so much attention to those elements, as I would bring them into my photographs almost in a subconscious way. With that, many of the photos I took started to have similarities among each other and I started to see more differences between photographs taken by me and other photographers. For me, I see that process as the start of the development of my own style.



PICTURE 22. Tiago Mazza: A woman celebrates the results of the presidential elections, Sao Paulo, Brazil, 2014, digital photo

4.1.3 Street photography

Beside photographing news events, I also continued to take photos of people in the streets, without the need of a story or assignment behind that. And the fact that I often had my camera with me, helped me to photograph quite often. At the beginning it was very unclear to me, what exactly those photos meant, what purpose they could have or the idea or connection between the photographs. Maybe the influence of the type of photojournalism that I was working with, made me think in a way that I saw each photo as a unique story, as it wasn't conceivable to me the idea of creating a series from different photos made in different places and dates, since each one of those photos belonged to a different event in a different day. Also, it wasn't clear to me the connection between these photos. Still, I kept on taking photos as I felt that the photographs that I was creating could one day become part of a larger body of work and I would manage to find a connection between these photos, even though at that moment I couldn't quite see what it was.

Somehow that became my way of working and I started to introduce photography more into my life, and to wander with my camera, following my instincts, so that later I could try to figure out the potential in my photos. Still today, I have been working in a way that I go out to shoot, without having a project in mind. I trust that at some point my own photographs will give me an idea of where I should go and what kind of project I can develop. For me, I can only know for sure precisely what a project is about, once it's finished. That gives me freedom to change things, to explore subjects with freedom and to bring new elements and new ideas into my projects

Nowadays, in each project that I do, I am becoming more aware of where my work is going to. Still, when I am out making photographs, I am focusing on that moment, that day and that reality and I let myself to be led by my feelings and intuitions. The process of bringing photos together only happens later, during the editing process. And that is a very different moment, which requires a different mindset then when I am shooting.

4.1.4 Personal connection

Another element which acquired more importance through the years in my artworks is to have a personal connection with these works. The more I develop myself as a photographer and an artist, the more I understand the need to make my work personal and as authorial as possible. For me, that brings a deep meaning and truth to it and I feel much more involved and motivated to create the work, as I find it rather difficult to work on a project that I am not involved in, unless in a commissioned project.

In a commissioned project, someone or a company is paying me to do a specific work. In this kind of project, I will try to be involved with it in a personal level, but it's usually the kind of work that I wouldn't do out of my own motivation if I wasn't going to be paid for it. And that is what differs a commissioned work from the work that I do with my own motivations.

In a capitalist society we all need to obtain some kind of financial gain from some kind of work. Still, that is not the motivation why I create my artworks. I do it because I feel a deep motivation or an urge to do it. That gives me the freedom to do my work exactly how I want to do, and that freedom and joy that art gives me, is sacred for me. So, in this kind of work, I can let myself to be as personal as possible with my photographs and express my ideas through this work. Often, I question myself: If I am not going to express myself and do things the way I want to through the art that I am making, where else will I?

4.2 Producing the Inner City Daydreams series

When creating the *Inner City Daydreams*, the process was no different than the way I was used to. For this work I composed a series with photographs that I made from 2014 until 2019 in three different countries: Finland, Brazil and the Netherlands. The reason why I have photos made in these three countries is simply because these are the countries that I have lived in.

This was one of the first projects which I created where I visualised a body of work with photographs from different years and made in different countries. Apart from these differences, I found a connection between these photographs, in the subjects, which is urban life, in the style which I took those photos and the way I portrayed the people and places which appear in these photos (Picture 23 & 24).



PICTURE 23. Tiago Mazza:
From the series *Inner City Daydreams*: Woman with a Baby, Tampere, Finland, 2016, digital photo



PICTURE 24. Tiago Mazza:
From the series *Inner City Daydreams*: Winter light at the Rotterdam train station, Netherlands, 2019, scanned film

In a way, I see the photos in this project as a crossing point between a few elements and types of photography that I have been doing through the years: the geometry of the urban spaces, people in movement, use of natural light and personal experiences combined in the same moment and captured in my own style. Through the years I have been focusing on those elements in separate ways, but in those photographs, I can see that these elements are combined together and are portrayed in a way that I consider to be my own style of taking photos. For this project, I choose only photos which had a personal meaning to me, which I wanted to show as my own.

4.2.1 Concept

The idea of this work is about the relationship between people and the urban areas that surround them. It's about this relationship between humans and their environment, with the focus on cities, and in all the photographs from these series, both people and the environment can be seen (Picture 25).

As someone who grew up inside a large urban centre, some of the questions that influence my work, from a sociological point of view, are: why people migrate and end up living in big cities? What drew them to migrate to urban centres in the past and nowadays? And how the cities affect and transforms the people who live in them, and how the cities are affected and transformed by their habitants? Those are not easy questions to be answered and neither my artwork intends to answer them. Still those questions are part of what intrigues me and pulls me to take photographs and to make this kind of work, so maybe through my work, I can try to understand these topics and find some answers to my questions.



PICTURE 25. Tiago Mazza: From the series *Inner City Daydreams*: Reflections at the market square, Groningen, Netherlands, 2019, scanned film

For me there is always an ongoing relationship between people and the environment around them. On a physical level, the different types of buildings, roads and all kinds of constructions that are present in a city, often have a deep impact in the life and mood of its habitants, for good or bad. So, this artwork is about the crossing point where humans and their surrounds meet.

4.2.2 Relationship with the subjects

As a photographer, I am used to walk around different places actively observing the surroundings around me. But the habit of observing started before I discovered photography. Before being a photographer, I was already a “wanderer”. Specially, when living in Sao Paulo, many times when I was walking somewhere in the city or sitting inside a bus or a train, my mind was partly there. Many times, I would pay a lot of attention to my surroundings and other times my attention would be on somewhere else, or on something else that I was thinking. I would often get myself daydreaming, which is defined as “the activity of thinking about pleasant things that you would like to do or have happen to you, instead of thinking about what is happening now” (Cambridge dictionary, N.d.).



PICTURE. 26. Tiago Mazza: From the series *Inner City Daydreams*: A woman and a man stands in a subway platform, Sao Paulo, Brazil, 2015, digital photo

Having experienced situations of daydreaming in my own life, I was drawn to observe it on others as well, and to see the act of daydreaming as something that became part of the urban life. As people go around in their daily routines, it seems that many of them are not totally present or paying attention to their surroundings. This constantly daydreaming can also be seen like an effect of the discontent from people with the city where they live or with their daily routines. So as a photographer I intend to register people who somehow seem to be caught in their routine, being partially present and partially daydreaming (Picture 26 & 27).



PICTURE 27. Tiago Mazza: From the series *Inner City Daydreams: Woman and duck in the autumn light*, Tampere, Finland, 2019, scanned film

4.2.3 Technical aspects, printing and exhibiting

In the photographs that compose this series, I used both film and digital cameras and both colour and black and white film. The only lenses that I used to take these photographs were a 35mm and a 40mm lens. So, to take them, I had to get really close to the subjects that I photographed (Picture 28). For the film photos, I used a scanner to digitalize the images so I could process them digitally.

After the long process and editing the work, which consists in choosing the right photos that will be part of the series and doing all the post processing in the images, it comes the moment to print the work and place it on an exhibition space. Even though seven out of eleven photographs were taken with a film camera and only three of them were taken with a digital one, all the photos were processed digitally and then printed with an inkjet printer on a Hahnemühle Photo Rag Baryta paper, which is 100% cotton and 315 grams and has a museum quality that ensures that the prints will last for many years before starting to show signs of aging. I choose this specific paper because of its quality and also because my photographs have a high contrast and many dark areas, and the baryta paper is known to bring the best out of photographs with those characteristics.

I had plenty of space to install the photos at the Himmelblau Gallery, so I decided to print them in a large scale with about 110 cm on the larger side. As there were eleven photographs to be exhibited and they were all very big, I decided to mount them without any frame. For me, the framing in this kind of work is not totally necessary. As the work reflects the life in the street, I found that the way the work should be presented is as simple as possible and without any decorating elements like frames (Picture 29).



PICTURE 28. Tiago Mazza: From the series *Inner City Daydreams*: Autumn light, Tampere, Finland, 2019, scanned film



PICTURE 29. Tiago Mazza: Photo prints from the *Inner City Daydreams* series exhibited at the Himmelblau Gallery in Tampere, Finland, 2020, digital photo

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

After analysing the backgrounds, artworks and the artistic process from Henri Cartier-Bresson, Vivian Maier and my own, it became clear to me that there are many differences between the way every photographer sees photography and creates their work. So therefore, in the artistic process of creating street photographs, there is no specific technique or equation that can be applied to all the photographers. In another hand, I found that many artworks are created by photographers who decide to make their own path and develop their own style and focus on the elements that are more important to them. And for example, the background and personal history of each person will play an important role on the photographer's work.

Another element to be considered is the relationship that each photographer has with the subjects which are being photographed by them. Street photography, as documentary photography, are not genres that resolves around photography itself. They are genres that are also about the subjects, about real people, real places and their stories, and also about the way the photographer chooses to portray these subjects and tell these stories. So, the way that the photographer sees and thinks about the subjects are important elements that are going to define how those stories are told and the way that the photographs will look. And it's very important for a photographer to pay attention to the relationship which they establish with the subjects and to try to connect with the world which they are photographing on a personal level. When the relationship and connection that the photographer feels are real, the work becomes richer and more interesting. It also creates a new kind of motivation for the photographer that is necessary when creating long term projects.

Also, it's important for the photographer to have freedom to create their photographs in the way they want to. That artistic freedom will eventually lead the photographer to develop their own style and to choose to photograph subjects that are relevant for them. In the capitalistic world, a certain logic of product and demand is often followed, and some photographers end up not exploring the most of what can be done in photography, as they don't allow themselves to create or

develop long-term photographic projects that are driven by personal interests, if specific guidelines and briefings are not given and a monetary gain is not guaranteed. That is a logic that a photographer must set themselves free from, if they want to create works that are meaningful and personal and want to push the boundaries of the photographic medium. When a photographer develops an artwork that is motivated by personal means and manages to express themselves through photography, there are no limitations set and they can have freedom to create their artwork in any way they want and define their own guidelines and rules for their projects. Obviously, a photographer, as an artist, needs to have monetary gain in order to live and to fund their own projects. But that gain should come as a result from their work, and the photographer should try to avoid or balance that influence inside the artistic process, when the work is still being created.

After writing this thesis, one main word that comes to my mind, when I think about photography and art, it's diversity. That is a key element for photographers to understand that each person can develop their own artistic process, and also a key element for them to start developing their own and use this medium as a tool, that is flexible and will be adapt and behave however the photographer wishes. As the Hungarian photographer and painter Laszlo Moholy-Nagy (1895 – 1946) wrote in the article *From Pigment to Light* (Moholy-Nagy, 1936): "In photography we must learn to seek, not the "picture", not the aesthetic of tradition, but the ideal instrument of expression, the self-sufficient vehicle for education".

For me, art it's a field of possibilities and there is an inherent connection between making photographs in your own way and developing meaningful artworks and your own style. It seems that the photographers who manage to create meaningful works, to push the boundaries of photography and present a new way of seeing things and portraying society, are usually those who have a personal connection with their works, who set their own rules and guidelines, and who establish their own relationship with their subjects, and with that, end up finding their own style and expression, which for some photographers, it's the only way to do it.

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