



FRINGE PHENOMENA

ANDRÉ THIJSSSEN

Parallel worlds

If there is such a thing in photography as a 'decisive moment', the term coined by Henri Cartier-Bresson, then there must also be the opposite – the casual, complete non-event, the way the artist André Thijssen creates it. Such an 'un-decisive moment' provides an absurd image that you could regard as a kind of alienation. But then one without political or cultural ulterior motives. After all, the creator does not demand of his viewers that his images whip us up into fomenting some revolution or other. It's enough just to look.

Thanks to their concrete nature and the realisation that a person consciously takes them, photographs are seldom without obligations. Yet we like to guess, via the maker, the meaning of that realistic and yet unfathomable image. Thijssen lauds the kind of spectator he feels 'gets' his photography, one that doesn't require the kind of explanation he wouldn't offer anyway. He limits himself to stating place and time. Thanks to their layers, the images retain their autonomy. That's why they are well-suited to being juxtaposed as independent images with a text or another of his images.

In this capacity, the images interpret a synchronised opinion that, as a discourse, creates space for further thought about the subject.

André Thijssen's realistic scenes, as they are included in the 'twin book', could form the backdrop for the short stories of Raymond Carver, Kevin Cantry or Richard Ford. Kitchen-sink realism. Slices of life, apparently without significance, telling compilations of insignificant details. Circumstances coming together into a pregnant momentum.

The more abstract photos in this book – the director's cut – come from the same source and

were taken with the same intention. We see almost anonymous images of reality, textures of truths.

The viewer wonders: are they reflections of something larger, something offscreen?

Think of the 'indisputable truth' of the Mexican garage-owner who points out the form of the Virgin Mary in the oil stains under a leaky Pontiac Catalina. The code of the universe, found in the melted cheddar cheese on a pizza. They are messages from a parallel world.

This concept that came originally from quantum physics questions the alleged uniqueness of our observation. The Argentine novelist/poet Jorge Luis Borges describe the phenomenon as a garden with its branching paths where events take place simultaneously.

The photographs by André Thijssen provide access to parallel worlds, of which we are occasionally also aware. However, we prefer to ignore these 'chance events', these unfathomable moments in time.

Apparently it's too threatening to wonder whether an unknown doppelgänger leads a life opposite to our own with choices that we never ever made and hence are not even aware that wrong choices exist.

The artist does not provide any answers for these philosophical reflections. His images leave words in second place. André Thijssen records what he finds in the parallel worlds – or in one of the many. And he shows them, so that 'it' won't be left unnoticed.

Chris Reinewald