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ONE PICTURE MANIFESTO

Maija Tammi

Harri Pälviranta

Marja Pirilä

Maija Annikki Savolainen

PLEASE, RETURN!

How did the One Picture Manifesto get its start?

TAMMI The most important factor was a critical inspection of seriality: could a work be only one picture? In the field of art photography it is a common practise to insist on seriality, to require 10-15 pictures from the same work. What if the artist has created a different entirety, a smaller series or a single photograph, that does not conform to those standards? Challenging our own authorship is at the core of our project.

PÄLVIRANTA A single image is highly conflicting and difficult for me. I've always work in series. And as Maija said, we wanted to challenge the standards and parameters of photographic narration, the specific definitions of photography itself. Instead of one picture, I often ponder a single work. Seriality for me has meant that a pile of fragments becomes a single piece. Now that I'm tasked with creating just a single artwork, it's very hard for me.

TAMMI In a way this is a manifesto about challenging oneself.

PÄLVIRANTA At the same time we are challenging the act of viewing a photograph. I consider is difficult to observe a single work of photography, unless I'm looking at something like a **Delacroix** painting.

TAMMI It's also worth considering whether seriality has lead to disinterest.

PÄLVIRANTA Certainly each era has its own performative cultures and trends of expression.

TAMMI Not many people stop in front of a single image anymore. I myself breeze through a single photographic exhibition to get the bigger picture, after which I seldom actually stop in front of any individual picture.

PIRILÄ I've always worked with serials, you might say it's my "natural way" of creating art. The process itself is important to me, and during long-running camera obscura projects many pictures come to be, many dead ends and surprises arise. When I was asked to join I immediately started wondering what this single image might be. I also found myself re-analyzing my old series and seeing them in a new light.

SAVOLAINEN I have been the doubting Thomas of this project. My method is different from those of the others in the group and our discussions have been interesting: I agree that the photography scene is quite constrained and attached to tradition. I've had a hard time finding a place for myself within it or a way to describe what I do. I'm interested in the image creation process and the behavior of light. When I exhibit my work, I often consider the exhibition space and the spatial experience of the viewer. The end result is a single work, an installation. I also produce massive amounts of material for my enormous archives, to which I sometimes return. I might be drawn to a neighboring photo instead of my original choice. I also always consider whether the photographs work on their own; would I be happy just for this one photo, 20 years from now, hanging on my wall. I aid this thought process by keeping my pictures visible and available.

Did you limit Maija Savolainen's work somehow?

PÄLVIRANTA Of course not; the intention is for each artist to create an original work on their own terms. Each author gets a space of their own in the exhibition, a wall for their single work.

TAMMI The floor is free game as well.

SAVOLAINEN I'm interested in the spatial experiences that the other works create and how I can bring in more or comment on them.

What is a single image to you?

SAVOLAINEN It can mean many different things to me. I often think of a picture as an instant of seeing or a moment when light shifts, which in human temporal awareness can be a long time.

PÄLVIRANTA My approach is very conservative: a single work, framed, that is composed of various elements.

PIRILÄ It's interesting that you say "framed", Harri. To me pictures are immaterial messages above all. They just usually need to be protected with wood and glass in exhibition.

TAMMI The shared element in our work is the manifesto we wrote.

PÄLVIRANTA That text is kind of like a prism that illuminates everything. Each of us is trying to produce singular artworks, but in the end we have four. It's interesting to see how they will spill into each other; that's something we cannot control.

TAMMI The premise of the project was that each artist will produce a new work that has never been shown before. But before that we produced the text, our manifesto. We edited the document heavily and debated the content. We ended up with six sentences. We've also discussed definitions, and what discourses we want to involve ourselves in or not. *One picture manifesto*: the "picture" is the physical phenomenon that is displayed, whereas an "image" is formed inside one's head. The Finnish word *kuva* does not differentiate between these concepts.

PÄLVIRANTA First we tried to write a declaration that would explain everything. The manifesto was an attempt to grasp the idea of a single, self-contained picture, but that is impossible. The text is a provocative series of assertions meant to make everyone conform to

the concept. But even I am personally conflicted, and there are four of us. In the end the manifesto became quite political.

Do you consider this state of affairs a consequence of digitalization, meaning that the tools have enabled the production of vast amounts of pictures and brought about a resurgence in serialization?

SAVOLAINEN We want to address the massive abundance of pictures all around us in this age. We pass through a surging, turbo-charged typhoon of messages in our everyday lives. Could there be a moment of peace amidst this chaos?

PÄLVIRANTA Yes; a contemplative moment.

What do you think about artists who have a clearly recognizable "universe of images" but who produce singular artworks not necessarily part of any series? Can individual works in such a universe fulfill the ideals of the one picture manifesto?

PÄLVIRANTA Basically yes. On the other hand a photographer's repertoire is not displayed one at a time, but as a plurality. The principles of the world of photography suggest seriality.

Does the one picture manifesto serve the logic of commercial art?

SAVOLAINEN Hard to say. The commercial aspects don't seem like a relevant premise.

PÄLVIRANTA I'd say the art market is so manifold that all types of logic may be applied to collation.

What do you want this project to inspire in the viewer?

TAMMI To see in a new way.

PIRILÄ I can remember the 1980s well, when photography was not considered an art and photographers weren't accepted into the exhibitions of museums and commercial galleries. In those days even societies for photography only featured a single picture from each artist. Seriality and a personal style were what differentiated photographic artists from amateurs. Many of the visitors to this single-picture show will look with amazement at what we've done.

TAMMI Amazement is a good word!

PÄLVIRANTA In our image-saturated time we try to make images ourselves through resistance. I'm intrigued by the idea of boiling things down, like how individual pictures become larger when each artist only showcases a single work. There is more time to look at just one picture, and the photos begin to talk with you when you take that time. But I'm annoyed expressions such as "a picture is worth a thousand words".

SAVOLAINEN For me it goes back to the spatial experience and the moment of observation. I disagree on the impact of a certain crucial moment, because I feel it isn't present in the picture between a dynamic or composition between objects, but as something that feels crucial and touching.

PIRILÄ The composition of a crucial moment is certainly an effective way to make people stop to observe a picture. At best those pictures have multiple cultural-historical levels, such as in your photograph, Harri.

PÄLVIRANTA That's true, but I have trouble following discussions that revolve around finding a good picture. When you've read up on photography a bit, it makes observing pictures as ends in themselves difficult. Context is important, too; a museum environment and the context of contemporary art affects the images. Must we always

interpret pictures through their heavy infrastructure?

Marja in her comment referred to camera societies and the exhibitions they've held, which always include just one piece per artist. In the 1980s the resurgence of photographic art and the differentiation between pro and amateur happened via serialization or a person style. What do you think of this? The birth of seriality was also spurred by photojournalism.

TAMMI Art movements can be seen to be in a perpetual pendulum motion, and each movement will inevitably spawn a counter-movement.

SAVOLAINEN I feel that seriality or serial narratives are natural for certain types of content. Photojournalism is a good example of this. If we're speaking of photographic art and exhibitions as a medium, our goal is to give a single picture space both physically/spatially and conceptually.

Could you speak a little on the ways in which you have worked on the pieces that are to be featured in the exhibition?

TAMMI This project grew from self-challenging and from the notion that exhibiting a single photograph is somehow problematic. This one little manifesto has changed practically everything about how I work; I've had to rethink my whole artistic practice.

SAVOLAINEN My process doesn't yet exist, as it will take place over the summer. I've always worked by actualizing my art everywhere. I don't think I even want to seek any special challenge in creating this one piece, getting by on an artist's salary is hard enough as it is.

TAMMI My picture has gone through three versions.

PÄLVIRANTA I've made three separate pieces about three different themes. The motif I chose is a by-product of my other work. Otherwise I wouldn't have touched the theme, but with this.

PIRILÄ Working on the piece has been fascinating, challenging, and even difficult. I haven't been sure what it is that I'm creating, but that's what makes it interesting. I've also tinkered around with the topic for a long time. I've already discarded one frame and thrown out the glass, but maybe they'll be back.

TAMMI Everyone is working on their own piece, but this project could not have happened without the whole group. Our manifesto can open many great conversations, none of which can necessarily fully explain all the manifesto's aspects.

INTERVIEWERS

Reetta Haarajoki and Tiina Rauhala
Finnish Museum of Photography