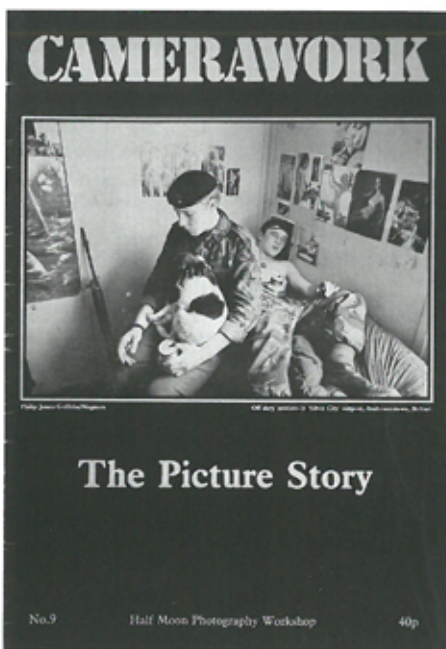


lection of photographs, however, there is little textual information accompanying the individual images, which means that the complex relations between photographic aesthetics and sociopolitical structures are predominately mediated through general explanations provided by the room texts and less through one's own viewing experience. This is especially apparent in the third section of the exhibition, where documentary photographs are presented that correspond to the social movements arising around 1968. Here, the revolutionary potential shifted from workers' issues to struggles related to urban spaces and structures—one of the results of converting industrial states to postindustrial societies.

The exhibition, with its composition and the excellently written exhibition texts, makes an important contribution to the rewriting of the history of photography. This is accomplished by, for



Cover *Camerawork*, No. 9 (1978). Magazine. Courtesy: Centro de Documentación, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía. Photo: Joaquín Cortés / Román Lores.

the first time, exploring the aesthetic practices of the time while considering the aspect of documentary representational approaches. To date, lesser-known works of documentary photography are rarely shown, such as works from new workers' photography, the anti-psychiatry movement, or conflicts related to urban design. The present exhibition taps into the same temporal distance with which the documentary traditions of the 1930s were subjected to a critical revision during the 1970s, so as to process the reconception of the documentary in postmodernism. And it, too, rediscovers revolutionary elements that have been neglected by photographic historiography and were met with renewed interest in times where the social movements of late capitalism were being reconfigured. Yet this interest is now originating with the museum and, with this show, musicalizes documentations not only produced for the art context, but also works conceived for differently constituted publics.

Translation from German: Dawn Michelle d' Atri

1 First published in 1978 and reprinted as: Allan Sekula, *Dismal Science: Photo Works 1972–1996* (Normal, IL: University Galleries of Illinois State University, 1999), pp. 118–38.

Les Lieux des Sans pouvoir (Places of the Powerless)

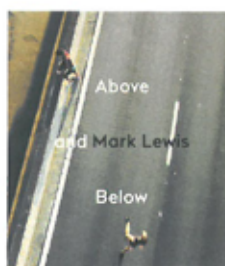
Mark Lewis: Above and Below

Le Bal, Paris, 5. 2. – 17. 5. 2015

by Michèle Cohen-Hadria

Ever since the twentieth-century avant-gardes, we have known that there is an ultra-fine line between the issues of contemporary art and those of experimental film, both deriving from intense visual investigation. In the 1960s, the emergence of video complexified this relationship, encouraging incursions by artists and film-makers into each other's respective fields. Acknowledging the debt that art owes to experimental film, Mark Lewis gladly makes use of its processes and techniques, screening his videos in cinema theatre format or adjusting the length of his films to the standard length of a film reel. However, in "Cigarette Smoker at the Cafe Grazyńska Warsaw" (2010), this length corresponds to the time that a worker takes to smoke his cigarette, thereby giving a social dimension to a filmic corpus that one could firstly perceive as essentially kinetic. The artist also takes inspiration from the dawn of documentary cinema that is "La Sortie de l'Usine Lumière à Lyon" (Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory, 1895) for the class relationships that are present in this emerging industrial sphere, and because he found that spontaneous cinema—which had not yet taken on the identity that history was to assign to it—seemed to resist definition or even to be "unknowable".¹ Eluding the arcane theories and dogmas of conventional cinema, he has only borrowed from its sophisticated techniques to direct the camera boom or the paluche (an easily handled, ergonomically designed mini-camera that can be used like an extension of the arms or fingers) with a slowness neighbouring on a form of suspension. In the anti-spectacular and post-industrial *non-places*² that he prefers, therefore, the viewer experiences powerful levitations. In "Forte!" (2010), his camera flies like an omniscient drone over snowy peaks and then dives down towards the Napoleonic fort of Bard located in the Aosta Valley in Italy to survey minimal human activity. Additional figures suddenly leave the fort's enclosure to tumble down a winding road, like rolling coloured balls. The artist suggests both the powerlessness and the latent potential of these derisory silhouettes faced with the imperial fortress (which is now a tourist attraction).

In "Hendon F.C." (2009), the lens is first aimed at a derelict football stadium, then skirts



Mark Lewis: Above and Below.

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round a camp of Romanies, before moving away to the margins of a leafy nature that is observed all too rarely. Of the mini-camera's specific features, Lewis only exploits its oscillating capacity, rather than any possible anecdote, preferring the emptied fields and these scenes that are *idle*, in a manner of speaking. Skimming low over the ground, his mini-camera then parts curtains of grass on its way. The exploration comes to an end without much happening, apart from courses in the form of algorithmic curves that sharpen our perception of the blind spots of a hybrid landscape.



Mark Lewis, stills from: *Forte!*, 2010. Colour, 6'. Courtesy: the artist; Associazione Forte di Bard; Daniel Faria Gallery, Toronto.

In "Above and Below the Minhocão" (2014), with its plunging views of a São Paulo motorway dating from the 1960s that is condemned to demolition, Lewis avoids all dramatisation of the multitudes, which is supposed to be one of the prerogatives of the camera boom, to survey anti-heroes strolling in the immense area that is open to walkers at the weekend. In Brazil's disenchanted post-ideological society, this symbol of modernism, which São Paulo was long considered to gloriously embody, is now seen as a dated, obsolete infrastructure. Only the whirring of the video projector accompanies this work, as if to exclude any predictive commentary. However, since 1990, considering Lewis's interest in the ideology of communist statuary that strongly marked the history of the twentieth century, would the artist not see in these walkers, preceded by long cast shadows in the summer, a form of "intangible heritage" that outlines the modelling of potentially powerful civil societies?

Translation from French: Peter McCavana

1 "Trying Not to Make Films That Are too Long", interview with Mark Lewis by Jérôme Sans, in Steven Bode (ed.), *Mark Lewis: Films 1995–2000* (London: Film & Video Umbrella, 2000), p. 237.
 2 Marc Augé, *Non-Lieux: Introduction à une anthropologie de la Surmodernité* (Paris: Les Éditions de Seuil, 1992).