

5 Ann Deckers

Foreword

6 Tamara Berghmans

Introduction

The 19th Century

1900—1965

Congo

Word / Image

Belgitude

Explorers

Artist's Book

Contemporary

13 Steven F. Joseph

The 19th Century

51 Pool Andries

The 20th Century up to 1965

97 Sandrine Colard

The Congo Photobook: 75 Years of Imaging the Colonial Bond

137 Jan Baetens

Words and Images

Emmanuel d'Autreppe

163

...To Stop the Waves

- Or How to Centre a Marginal Country on the Page

199 Johan De Vos

The Big World Seen from Belgium

245 Johan Pas

Photobook to Artist's Book: The Conceptual Turn in Belgium

275 Stefan Vanthuyne

Thinking in Books

347 Selective Bibliography

About the Authors

348 Index of Names

350 Index of Books

352 Acknowledgements

Credits

Colophon



Bruxelles photographique
Brussels photographic

Guillaume Claine (1811-1869)

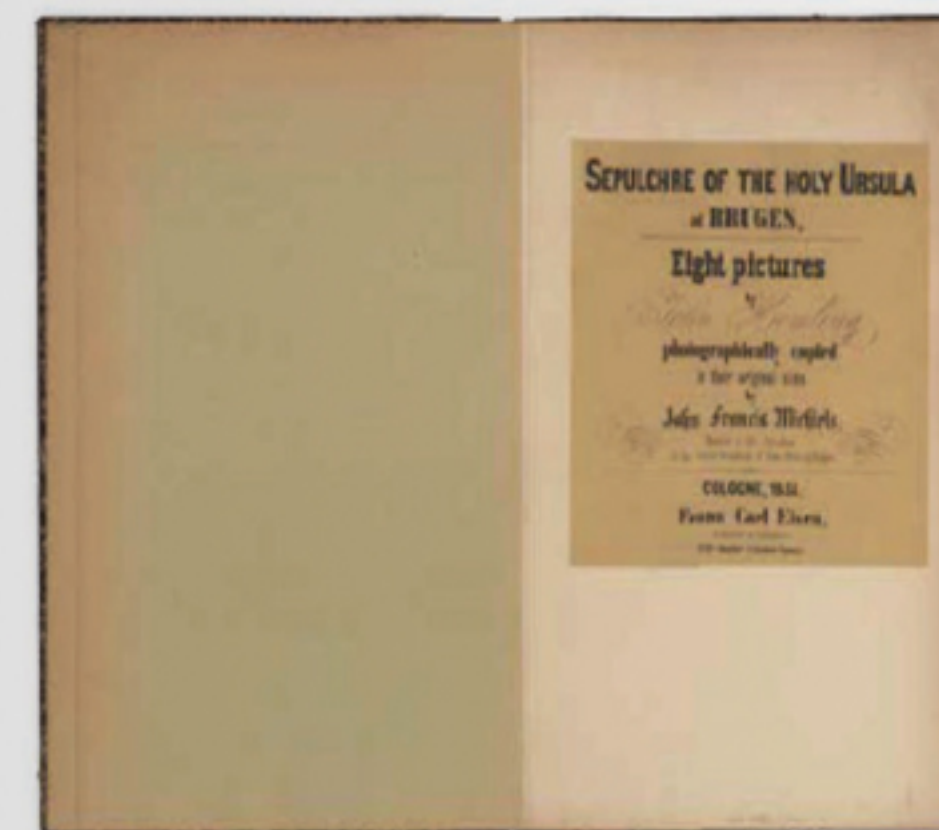
This series, Guillaume Claine's only published work, represents the culmination of his pioneering topographical photography. A former journalist and court stenographer living in Brussels, Claine devoted his leisure time to photography on paper (calotype) from 1847. In a period when the metal daguerreotype process reigned supreme in Belgium, he made prints from paper negatives: views of historical landmarks in Bruges, Ghent and Brussels, and the Royal Palace at Laeken. Late in 1849 he solicited the Belgian government for a subsidy; the Ministry of the Interior granted Claine 1,250 francs, part of which he spent on a more efficient lens in Paris. Initiated there into Abel Niépce de Saint-Victor's albumen-on-glass process by the inventor himself, Claine declared in a letter: 'Throw photography on paper on to the fire! Glass has triumphed.'

Claine then completed photographic commissions on behalf of the Ministry of the Interior in 1851 and for the city of Brussels in 1852. The latter included prints in double-plate format, the same size as the work examined here. These constituted the first public commissions granted to a photographer for drawing up an inventory of Belgium's architectural heritage.

It was a natural fit for Claine to seek a commercial outlet via Louis Désiré Blanquart-Evrard's photographic printing works in Lille. Claine's selection of subjects was limited to the best-known landmarks of the Grand-Place, the Cathedral and the upper town centred on the Royal Palace. No source has survived to shed light on the relationship between Claine and his publisher. The cryptic phrase printed on the mounts, 'Negative by Claine, photographed and published by Blanquart-Evrard', implies that the photographer could well have transferred copy plates or prints while retaining his original negatives. The word 'photographed' would thus mean 'rephotographed and printed'. Whatever the case, by virtue of their exceptional size, these prints were the most expensive of Blanquart-Evrard's output, selling at 10 francs per print, at least twice the usual price. The rarity of *Bruxelles photographique* attests to its commercial failure: apart from the complete copy from Blanquart-Evrard's own archive, just a handful of individual prints are known.

This work was Claine's swansong. Not long afterwards, disillusioned, he abandoned photography and ended his days as a clerk and caretaker, his pioneering photography quite forgotten. S.F.J.

Published by Louis Désiré Blanquart-Evrard, Lille, c.1854
Folio oblong, 550 x 720 mm, issued as loose plates, each captioned:
'Négatif de Claine, photographié et édité par Blanquart-Evrard'
10 salt prints, between 324 x 449 mm and 356 x 471 mm on mounts 550 x 720 mm
Printed by Louis Désiré Blanquart-Evrard
Reference copy bound in volume together with series *La Belgique* by Eugène Desplanques,
titled on backstrip BLANQUART-EVRARD / Recueil de photograph[ies] / La Belgique



Sepulchre of the Holy Ursula at Bruges.
Eight pictures by John Hemling, photographically copied in their original sizes by John Francis Michiels, Member of the Direction of the Royal Academy of Fine-Arts at Bruges

Jan-Frans Michiels (1823-1887)

Jan-Frans Michiels' publication typifies the culture of international exchange that sustained much of early photographic practice and commerce. A wood carver and creator of liturgical furniture in his native Bruges, Michiels moved to Cologne around 1852. There he gained a fine reputation as an architectural photographer, thanks to his close collaboration with the publisher Franz Carl Eisen between 1852 and 1857. Michiels is chiefly remembered for recording the construction of Cologne Cathedral.

Sepulchre of the Holy Ursula at Bruges, his large-format album of reproductions of the shrine of St Ursula, appeared under the Eisen imprint in 1854. The shrine, a high point of Renaissance Flemish art, resembles a jewel casket in the shape of a Gothic chapel. The exterior features minutely detailed pictorial panels painted by Hans Memling. The saint's relics were solemnly placed in the shrine on 21 November 1489, since when it has been housed in St John's Hospice in Bruges.

The hospice authorities approved Michiels' request to photograph the shrine on receipt of a letter of recommendation penned by the bishop of Bruges, Jean-Baptiste Malou, in 1851, in which he emphasised that photographs could be excellent publicity for both Christian art and the city of Bruges. Significantly, the album has a trilingual presentation: the title

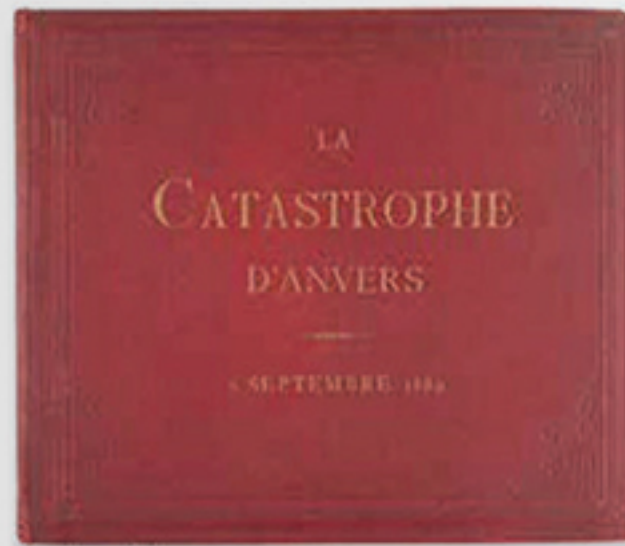
page is in English or German while the individual captions, in opulent gilt lettering, are in both French and German, thereby demonstrating a clear intention to reach an international public.

The album is structured in a logical sequence: it opens with a full view of the reliquary in situ, taken at an angle to emphasise its solidity and architectural qualities. There follows a study of the casket's other face, depicting the Virgin and Child, and then six prints of the lateral panels, depicting individual scenes of the life and martyrdom of St Ursula. Michiels is careful to include in each instance the carved niche in which the panels are embedded, thus reproducing the original sense of depth.

This was not the earliest publication to feature the shrine. The first series issued from the Blanquart-Evrard printing works in Lille, *L'Album photographique de l'artiste et de l'amateur*, included two panels that were undoubtedly taken from Michiels' negatives. Later, in 1862, Edmond Fierlants displayed a three-dimensional reproduction of the shrine at the International Exhibition in London. S.F.J.

Published by Franz Carl Eisen, Cologne, 1854
Folio, 600 x 420 mm, lithographed title page and plates
8 albumen prints, between 208 x 280 mm and 227 x 310 mm
Unknown binding - reference copy has been subsequently rebound

Copies must have been issued with a German title page:
Der Reliquenschrein der heiligen Ursula zu Brügge.
Nach den Originalgemälden von Johann Hemling.
There may be copies dated 1856



La Catastrophe d'Anvers. 6 septembre 1889. Album contenant 18 planches. Au profit des victimes
The Antwerp Catastrophe. 6 September 1889. Album containing 18 plates. For the benefit of the victims

Albert Achten, Louis Bellemans, Jules Bouvart, Henri Colon, Georges Dero, Alberic Lunden (1840-1899), Henri Schleussner (1846-1891), Victor Selb (1838-1914), Louis Van Neck (1853-1917)

Published by Section anversoise de l'Association belge de Photographie / Jos. Maes, Éditeur, 10 rue Gramaye, Anvers, 1889
Oblong, 243 x 320 mm, 19 pp
Two printings, of 400 and 600 copies
18 collotypes printed by Joseph Maes from negatives taken by various photographers in cloth or printed wrappers



Catastrophe d'Anvers du 6 septembre 1889. Explosion de la cartoucherie Corvilain
The Antwerp Catastrophe. 6 September 1889. Explosion of the Corvilain munitions company

Joseph Maes

Published in 1889
Oblong, 265 x 370 mm
22 albumen prints
Bound in cloth boards



'La Catastrophe d'Anvers' occurred at 2.14pm on 6 September 1889 at the Kattendijkdok, one of the docks to the north of Antwerp. Munitions company Corvilain had purchased 56 million bullet cases filled with explosives to recycle the lead and copper. However, at a certain point, something went wrong with the extraction of the gunpowder. The factory exploded and several petroleum companies in the immediate vicinity burst into fire. The outcome: 95 dead and 62 missing. The physical damage to buildings and infrastructure was also enormous.

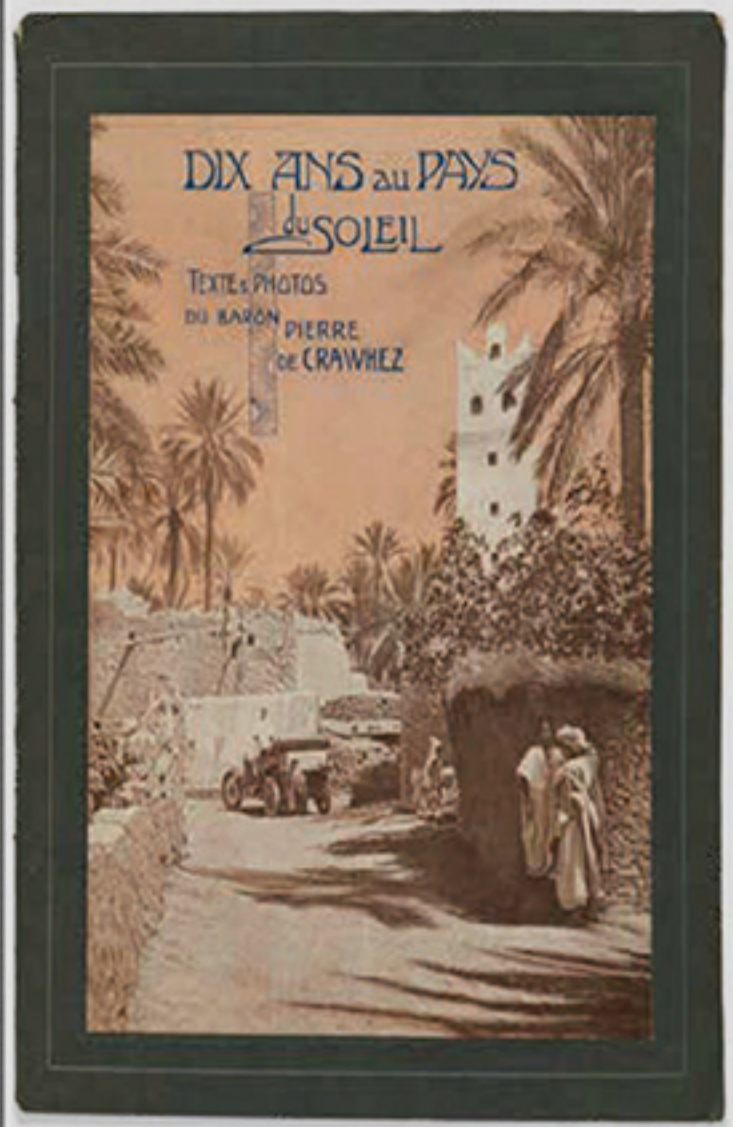
Immediately after the disaster, photographers from the Antwerp section of the Association belge de Photographie went on site. Possibly on the initiative of Joseph Maes, not only the chairman of the association, but also the owner of a workshop for photomechanical reproduction, 18 of these photographs were assembled in a loose-leaf publication that was placed on sale for the benefit of the victims.

Each folio of the album *La Catastrophe d'Anvers* contains an almost full-page photograph with, at the bottom, the name of the photographer and a short legend. Plate 1, by Jules Bouvart, is iconic, showing only a large plume of smoke, without further context. The image is similar to photographs of US nuclear tests half a century later. The other photographs show the serious devastation in a more documentary fashion.

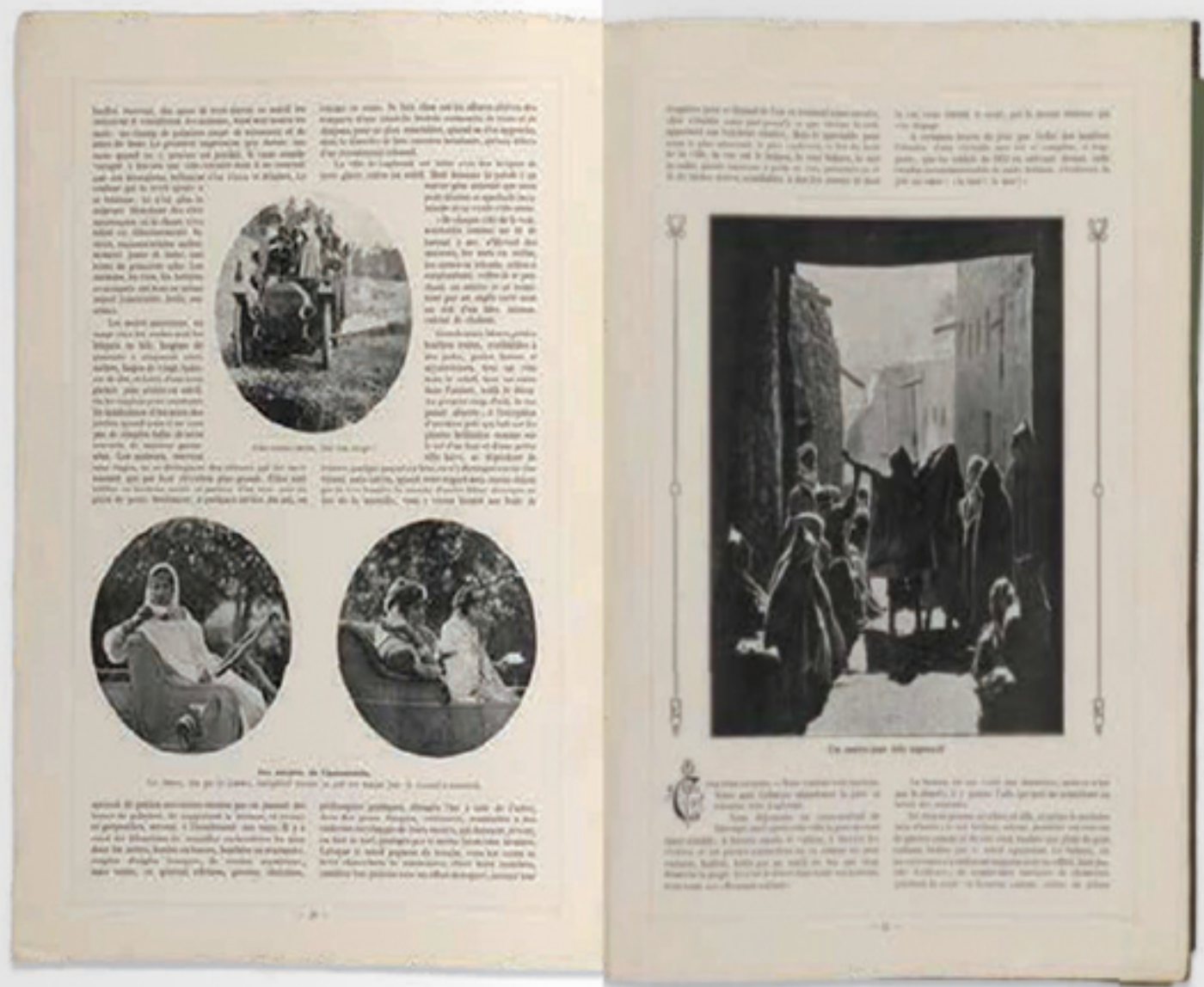
Was this project undertaken solely for charitable purposes? Possibly Maes also hoped for a promotional effect, both for the photography association and for his business. This may explain the fact that two versions of the publication appeared. Their content is identical, but one lists the publisher as 'Section anversoise de l'Association belge de Photographie, Anvers', the other as 'Jos. Maes, Éditeur, 10 rue Gramaye, Anvers'. Apart from its documentary value, the album is also an early example of the impact of improved photomechanical reproduction techniques on the photographic reporting of current events.

Curiously, this edition does not contain any photographs by Maes himself. However, we know that he too was at the scene of the disaster. FOMU – Fotomuseum Antwerp has an album of his containing 22 glued-in albumen prints, entitled *Catastrophe d'Anvers du 6 Septembre 1889. Explosion de la cartoucherie Corvilain*. These photos also provide a picture of the devastation, both at the site itself and over a wider area. P.A.





60



Published by La Revue Sportive Illustrée, Brussels, 1908
 350 x 260 mm, 32 pp
 86 images and 6 loose plates, in relief half-tone
 Text by Baron Pierre de Crawhez
 Printed by Jos. Frimat, Brussels
 Softcover, saddle stitched

1900-1965



Dix ans au pays du Soleil.
 Texte & Photos du Baron Pierre de Crawhez
 Ten years in the country of the Sun.
 Text and photos by Baron Pierre de Crawhez

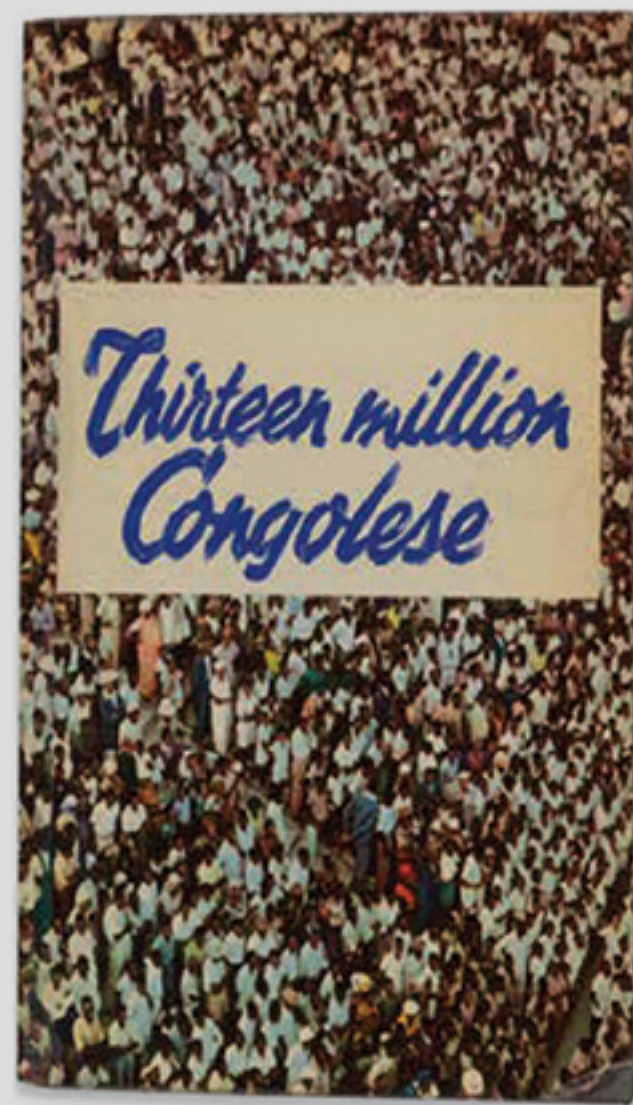
Baron Pierre de Crawhez (1874-1925)

Baron Pierre de Crawhez was crazy about fast cars and played an important role in the history of motor sport in Belgium. As a pilot, he participated in numerous motor races at home and abroad. He was chairman of the Automobile Club de Belgique and co-creator of the 'Circuit automobile des Ardennes' in 1902, a road race that, unusually, required the roads to be closed off for safety reasons. This was at a time when most motor-racing competitions were still held on public roads. He was also chairman of the Automobile Club de Spa. His brother, Joseph de Crawhez, mayor of Spa at the time, was involved in the creation of the Spa-Francorchamps motor-racing circuit in 1920.

In 1901, Pierre de Crawhez made a lengthy journey by car through North Africa, a popular destination in aristocratic circles. He travelled as far as Laghouat and Ghardaïa in the Algerian Sahara. *Dix ans au pays du Soleil* recounts his exploits in word and image.

The album was published by a sports newspaper. It should be remembered that before the First World War, unlike today, interest and also participation in sport were the preserve of a wealthy élite, a social group that also dominated amateur photography. The publication was designed in a format and style typical of the photographically illustrated magazines of the day. The cover, with a graphical illustration in multicolour printing, is striking and undoubtedly intended to attract. The internal layout is very dense on some pages, very simple on others. In some places, the illustrations, both graphic and photographic, have a blue-green supporting colour. The six separately enclosed plates are particularly notable. These are half-tones on plain paper, glued on to heavy paper of different colours, each with a black border and lettering. Certain plates even have a coating of coloured varnish to further enhance the exotic character of the images. Indeed, exoticism is the prevailing tone: whether depicting cities, villages, landscapes, objects or people, everything is drenched in an orientalist atmosphere. The result is an aestheticised and idealised view that, admittedly, radiates a great harmony but also testifies to a somewhat patronising Western outlook. P.A.

61



Thirteen Million Congolese

Joseph Makula (b. 1929) and other photographers from InforCongo

On 13 January 1959, in a historic speech, King Baudouin of Belgium pleaded for reforms that would ultimately lead to the independence of the Congo. At the time, however, Belgium was still under the spell of the triumphalistic image of its own success, firmly promoted by InforCongo, the official Belgian colonial photo agency. In this context, InforCongo produced the publication *Thirteen Million Congolese*, in which frantic efforts were made to boost the then stubbornly negative image of the Belgian colonial undertaking at home and abroad. Five chapters, supported by figures and tables, report on performance in the fields of social security, education, medical care and democratisation. In this way, *Thirteen Million Congolese* constructs an ideal image of a modern Congo populated by satisfied, urban, assimilated citizens who live in harmony, work with the Europeans and contribute to the future.

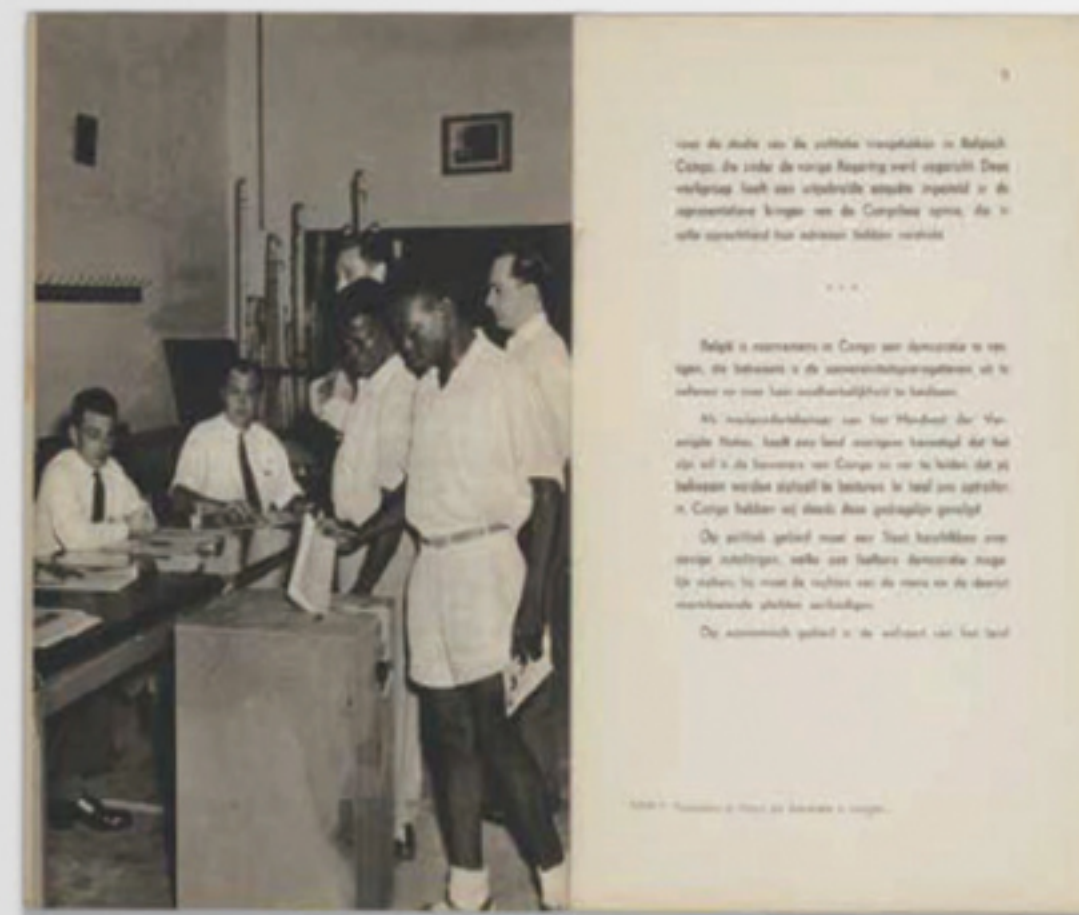
Every left-hand page contains a full-bleed black and white photograph, with a caption and text on the right-hand page that confirms the improved standard of living of the Congolese. The photographers of Congopresse, the branch of InforCongo in Léopoldville (today Kinshasa), supplied the image material. Because the photographers worked in the public service, their images were the property of InforCongo, which determined how, where and in which context the photos were published. The photographers worked within strict frameworks and their relatively loose reporting style was imposed from above. In this way, InforCongo hoped to



give greater authenticity and force of evidence to the images, which differed from the exploratory, static, ethnographic style of the past.

The main subject of the photographs in the brochure are the *évolués*, the new urban élite of educated Congolese who were open to the values and achievements of Western civilisation. However, less than 1% of the country's 13 million inhabitants belonged to this upper layer of society, as a result of which the publication paints a very one-sided picture of the colony. Congopresse's only native Congolese photographer, Joseph Makula, belonged to the *évolués* class, and he was the main supplier of images of the Congolese middle class. There's no doubt that his pictures were used in *Thirteen Million Congolese*, but the number is unknown, since InforCongo, as owner, reserved the right to publish photographs without credits. **a. k.**

Published by InforCongo, Brussels, 1959 (second edition)
240 x 160 mm, 80 pp
36 b&w photographs
Printed by C. van Cortenberg, Brussels
Softcover, thread sewn, flat spine
Dutch edition: *De 13 miljoen Congolezen*

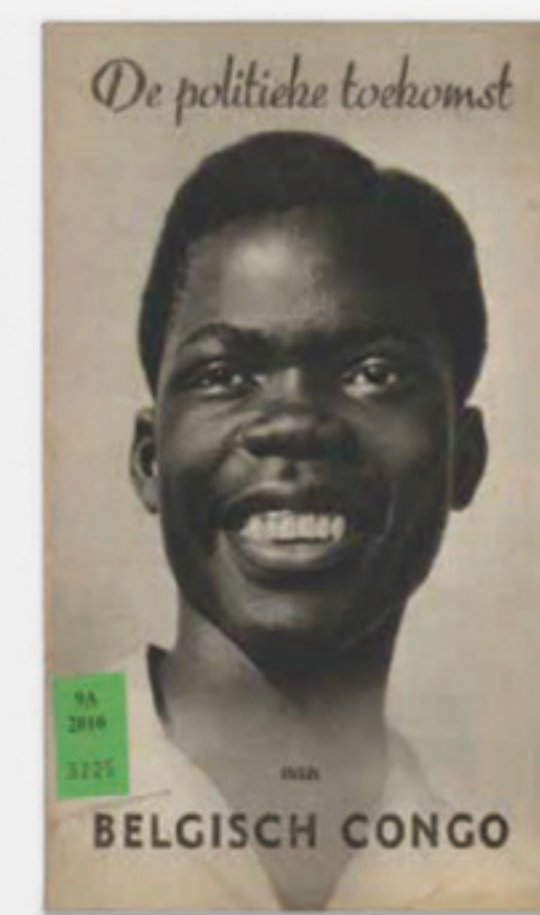


De politieke toekomst van Belgisch Congo: de Koninklijke boodschap en de regeringsverklaring van de 13de januari 1959
The political future of the Belgian Congo: the royal message and the government declaration of 13 January 1959

Henri Goldstein (1920–2014), Carlo Lamote (b. 1928), Jean Mulders (1913–unknown) and other photographers from InforCongo

On 4 January 1959, riots broke out in Léopoldville. Dozens lay dead and hundreds wounded in the streets of the Belgian Congo's capital. Insiders had long been aware of the dissatisfaction among the Congolese population and the growing demand for equality and self-government, but colonial ears remained deaf to their complaints. When the political demonstration held on 4 January ended in violence, Brussels was taken totally by surprise and decided to change course. The fact that the colony had become a loss-maker for the Belgian state was also a persuasive factor. On 13 January 1959, King Baudouin of Belgium gave a speech on the radio throwing open the road to independence. He praised the work of his ancestors, 'preparing these backward areas for European civilisation', but promised self-determination for the Congolese, 'without delay but also without rash over-haste'. Another speech, by the Belgian government, followed the same day, mapping out a path to independence in collaboration with Belgians both at home and in the colony. Maintaining a favourable context in the Congo for Belgian and foreign investors was key. Exactly one year after the two statements, on 13 January 1960, the political representatives of the Congolese people assembled in Brussels to discuss the practicalities. Six months later, on 30 June, after a rushed process, the Congo became independent.

Congo



De politieke toekomst van Belgisch Congo contains both speeches of 13 January 1959. It was published by InforCongo, the official information department and the de facto promotion body of the Belgian Ministry of Colonies. Tasked with highlighting the benefits of colonisation, InforCongo commissioned professional photographers such as Henri Goldstein, Carlo Lamote and Jean Mulders. Given their client's intentions, we get an often very rose-tinted version of the facts and the photos tend to look staged. The photographs in this booklet fit seamlessly with the vision of monarch and government on colonial work, on the transition to autonomy and on the post-colonial Congo. In all the photos, the white man or his 'civilisation work' remain explicitly present. The intention is that the Belgians should continue to play an important and patronising role, albeit on a more equal footing between white and black than before. **J.R.**

Published by InforCongo, Brussels, 1959
235 x 160 mm, 30 pp
10 b&w photographs
Printed by C. Van Cortenberg, Brussels
Softcover
French edition: *L'avenir politique du Congo belge: message royal et déclaration gouvernementale du 13 janvier 1959*



Made in Belgium

Harry Gruyaert (b. 1941)

Magnum Photos photographer Harry Gruyaert rediscovered his home country after spending many years away. *Made in Belgium* is the unusual portrait of Belgium he created with the famous Flemish writer Hugo Claus. The pictures, taken between 1975 and 1990, put the emphasis on the dual nature of his native land: the weight of tradition and its rapid Americanisation. The resulting portrait is very ambivalent, making fun of the Belgians while also showing a lot of empathy.

Although Gruyaert started to photograph Belgian parades and processions in black and white, he quickly turned to colour because it allowed him to show the beauty that lies in banality. Despite the bright and baroque colours, the general impression is a *fin de soirée* atmosphere. The pictures taken in Brussels at the Foire du Midi funfair, in the red-light district or inside cafés, and the numerous photos of deserted places, seem to present Belgium as a sad party, at the end of the night, with too-bright lights shining on the whole depressing scene.

The empty sea resort at the end of the summer, which appears on the back cover, is metaphorical of the 'hell' that Hugo Claus evokes in the very last line of his text. The lively dimension of the book takes on a more caustic tone when you read the very literary captions the writer wrote in short verses. He often starts with descriptions and gradually leans towards mythology or symbolism: 'The buildings in the light. The song of the sand. The rocking buoy. The bellowing of gods. In the surf.' Claus imagines the lives of people in the pictures and sometimes addresses them: 'Go home, go home', he writes in front of a kid contemplating a painting in a store.

By different means, Gruyaert and Claus both seem to be in search of the truth about their own country. Instead of monuments, Gruyaert shows people, but they are in unexpected postures, photographed from the back or reflected in windows. This sideways glance at the Belgian people meets some bitter statements by Hugo Claus about, for instance, the Belgian countryside: *Made in Belgium* is a very unusual depiction of a country that is not praised for its beauty. A.R.

180



Belgitude

Published by Delpire Editeur, Paris, 2000
 213 x 298 mm, 96 pp (edition of 2,000 copies)
 73 colour photographs
 Text by Hugo Claus
 Printed by Gajani Press, Milan
 Cloth hardcover with dust jacket, thread sewn, flat spine
 Dutch/French edition



Ou Menya
At my home



Published by Lannoo, Telt, 2011
320 x 237 mm, 128 pp
58 colour photographs
Text by Paul Demets
Design by Mevis & Van Deursen
Printed by die Keure, Bruges
Softcover with flaps, thread sewer, flat spine
Dutch/English/French edition



As It May Be

Bieke Depoorter (b. 1986)

Bieke Depoorter, in 2012 the youngest ever nominee reporter of the renowned photo collective Magnum Photos and since 2016 a full member, presents in a documentary style the personal lives of people she meets while travelling.

Ou Menya, which translates literally as 'at my home', was Depoorter's graduation project at the KASK School of Arts in Ghent. In 2009, she travelled from Moscow to Vladivostok on the Trans-Siberian Express, ending up in little villages where she gained a glimpse into the private worlds of several Russian families. Using a handwritten note in Russian, she asks them for a place to sleep for one night. Chance encounters occur, which she records. Given the brevity of these encounters, the intimacy that speaks from the images is surprising. We see grainy images

Published by Hannibal, Veurne, 2017
268 x 284 mm, 65 pp with text insert
47 colour photographs with 3 drawings
Text by Ruth Vandewalle
Design by Bieke Depoorter and Mevis & Van Deursen
Printed by die Keure, Bruges
Padded hardcover, perfect binding, flat spine, with Japanese binding
English/Arabic edition (Aperture, 2017), French/Arabic edition (Éditions Xavier Barral, 2017)

of bedrooms, an old woman in her nightdress, someone washing himself, a man smoking... The book is divided into almost invisible chapters, with a double-page photograph of each bedroom or sleeping area used by Depoorter forming the dividing line. Printed on thin paper, it forms a wrapper around the pages containing photos of that bedroom's house and occupants.

Her second photobook, *I Am About to Call it a Day* (Edition Patrick Frey and Hannibal, 2014), is similar, but this time she captures encounters in America.

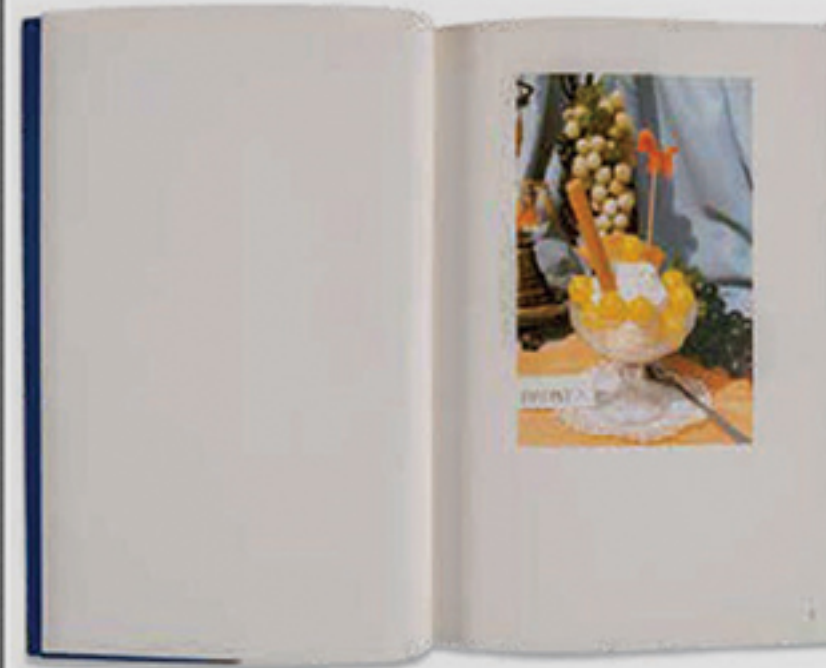
With her third publication, *As It May Be*, something changed in her approach to her subjects. In 2011, Depoorter travelled to Egypt in the middle of the Arab Spring, trying to win people's trust in an environment where private life is often



shielded. Here too chance encounters determined where she slept for the night. She returned to Egypt seven times, but taking photos became more and more difficult; in the tumultuous aftermath of the revolution, suspicion of outsiders increased rapidly. In 2016, Depoorter made a dummy of the book and while doing so became very aware of her role in the story. Despite her commitment, she was once again, as in previous projects, a Western visitor who comes to photograph 'the other'. Postponing the book's publication, she resolved to return to Egypt one last time in an attempt to capture the complexity of the region. While travelling once more through the country she asked Egyptians for their opinions on the photos she had taken. The result is a written dialogue between Egyptians of different social, cultural

and religious backgrounds. They wrote in Arabic directly on to the images in the dummy. In this way, people who would never allow themselves to be photographed also get a voice in the book. The conversations meander over the role of the image, religion, politics and the social fabric.

As It May Be is an exact reproduction of the original dummy. It comes with a padded hardcover, similar to a cover on an old-fashioned family photo album, with Japanese binding and colour photographs. The accompanying text mimics the layout, without the images but with translations of all the Arabic comments. The fact that the book has been published in three different languages by renowned publishers shows that Depoorter's career is moving fast in an international direction. ۱۵



An Intro to Creative Visualization

Guillaume Bijl (b. 1946)

In 1989, Guillaume Bijl, post-conceptual artist and installation specialist, participated in a group exhibition called *Passages*. Presented at JCI Waregem Gaverland, it was curated by Roland Patteeuw and publisher Stichting Kunst & Projecten. Instead of a traditional exhibition catalogue, each participating artist was invited to make an artist's book that included the works they were exhibiting. Only the format of the book was fixed and hence the same for each participant.

Bijl's book uses a traditional design. The photographs are set on the right opposite a blank page. It is a set of amateur photographs. These found images form *An Intro to Creative Visualization*. The book is divided into several parts. The first is entitled 'Become a Connoisseur'. It consists of two colour photographs of ice-cream. The second, 'The Thrill of Asia', is made up of a series of black and white photographs of a young Asian woman trying on clothes in front of a mirror in a shop. The third part, 'Meet & Mix', contains colour photos of banal scenes such as a dinner, a car, a suburb or a brass band. There do not seem to be any links between these amateur photos. The last section is called 'Party Partners'. It includes a man posing in front of a car damaged in an accident, people at a party, a girl in a bathing costume and also a man with toothache.

This collection of found images participates in an empiric and implicit manner in the construction of vernacular photographic aesthetics. Bijl's work echoes *The Photographic Eye* (1966) by John Szarkowski, while concentrating on vernacular photography.

When addressing an amateur photograph, Bijl also initiates sociological reflection on the production of images. His intention – indeed, found in his work – is to show a photographic archaeology of his time. The artist takes the position of witness of uncontrolled production and seeks to order it or possibly give it meaning. F.M.

Published by Stichting Kunst en Projecten v.z.w., Zedelgem, 1989, as part of the series 'Passages'
210 x 150 mm, 64 pp (edition of 500 copies, including 150 numbered and signed)
14 b&w and 11 colour photographs
Text by Guillaume Bijl
Softcover with flaps, thread sewn, flat spine
English/Dutch edition



Wir haben die Kunst damit wir nicht an die Wahrheit zugrunde gehen We have art in order not to perish from the truth

Marie-Jo Lafontaine (b. 1950)

A series of seven booklets, conceived and composed by different artists, appeared in 1989 to accompany an exhibition called *Passages*. The exhibition was curated by Roland Patteeuw (one of the pioneers of contemporary art in Belgium, who was active as a writer and the driving force behind the Kunsthalle in Lophem for many years) and organised by JCI Waregem Gaverland. This booklet, by Antwerp photographer and video artist Marie-Jo Lafontaine, is the third in the series. The others were by Guillaume Bijl, Leo Copers, Ria Pacquée, Susana Solano, Patrick Van Caekenberg and Jacques Vieille.

Wir haben die Kunst damit wir nicht an die Wahrheit zugrunde gehen can be read on the cover. This well-known aphorism by Friedrich Nietzsche sets the tone for the work's contents, conceived as a visual essay in which text fragments and images from different sources are placed next to and opposite each other.

Quotes from poets and thinkers (including Jorge Luis Borges, Rainer Maria Rilke, Georges Bataille, Peter Handke and Bernard-Marie Koltès) are interwoven with Lafontaine's own images and those of other artists, including Robert

Published by Stichting Kunst en Projecten v.z.w., Zedelgem, 1989, as part of the series 'Passages'
210 x 148 mm, 68 pp (edition of 500 copies, including 150 numbered and signed)
51 b&w and 3 colour photographs
Text by various authors
Design by Marie-Jo Lafontaine
Softcover with flaps, thread sewn, flat spine
German/French/Spanish/Dutch edition

Mapplethorpe, Man Ray and Edward Weston. The diverse source material (diary fragments, sheet music, archival photos, theatre texts, installation shots) is mixed together in an intriguing way, creating a poetic picture-story in which one page interconnects with the next. It is reminiscent of a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, and it's probably no coincidence that a photo of Lafontaine as a 12-year-old appears alongside a quote from Richard Wagner.

With *Passages*, Marie-Jo Lafontaine, known worldwide for her often monumental video installations and photographic portraits, makes a connection between her own oeuvre and her literary and philosophical sources of inspiration. The book considers existential themes that are often found in her work: beauty, alienation, melancholy, identity, passion and so on. The pictorial language plays with the tension between Eros and Thanatos and navigates between tradition and the avant-garde. Or, to stay with Nietzsche: it explores the opposition between the Dionysian (the emotional, subjective) and the Apollonian (the rational, objective). M.S.



300

Dirk Braeckman

Dirk Braeckman (b. 1958)

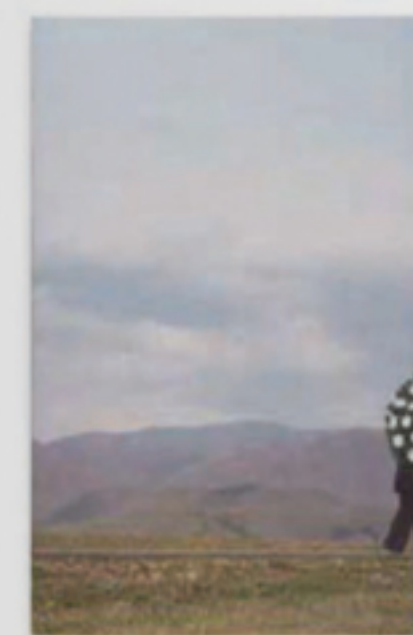
'A book postulates something, sets things out in black and white, while I want to keep my work as transient and open as possible. Then there is the physical impact of the work. Size, tonality, texture, tactility – they barely come across in reproduction. Every image should stand alone, unlimited in relation to other images. A book, however, establishes an order, a viewing direction, combinations and, thus, associations. I prefer to keep all options open so that the viewer can decide how he wishes to approach my work.'

Reading this, it comes as no surprise then that Dirk Braeckman, known for his particularly impressive prints, was for a long time reluctant to see his work published in book form. For these reasons, it has always been important for Braeckman that the publications he makes are conceived as artists' books, instruments that stand completely independent, separate from the works that hang on the wall. That was the case with *z.Z(t)*. (Ludion, 1998) and *z.Z(t). Volume II* (Ludion, 2001), as well as *Chiaroscuro* (Toothsmi, 2003), the well-defined project commissioned by Queen Paola.

The monograph *Dirk Braeckman*, published in 2011 on the occasion of his major retrospective exhibition at M-Museum Leuven (and the source of the above quotation), lifts Braeckman's work in book form to a new and higher level. A surprising level too, because for the first time it uses images never printed before elsewhere. Since these negatives had not yet been represented in a defined way, new and untranslated versions of images suddenly became possible.

Despite its stately format and large size, the book, in which each individual image is given the necessary space, presents an intimate experience of the artist's muted universe; an experience that takes place at the level of the ambiguous and sensual image itself. The excellent print quality – a crucial condition in Braeckman's work – ensures that the photographs retain their essential depth. All these factors make this publication, which according to the artist himself lies somewhere between an artist's book and a survey publication, probably the most comprehensive Braeckman book to date. American photographer and Magnum Photos member Alec Soth counted it among his 2011 favourites, calling it 'a terrific summation of his mysterious and distinctive world'. s.v.

Published by Roma Publications, Amsterdam, 2011
290 × 250 mm, 384 pp (edition of 2,500 copies)
278 b&w and 6 colour photographs
Text by Marlin Germann, Dirk Lauwert and Dirk Braeckman
Design by Kim Beirnaert
Printed by die Keure, Bruges
Hardcover, thread sewn, flat spine
English/Dutch edition
Second edition in 2012 of 2,000 copies



Four years, three deaths, sweaty armpits and a fetus

Sarah Carlier (b. 1981)

In *Four years, three deaths, sweaty armpits and a fetus*, Sarah Carlier follows the ups and downs of the Fuliash family in Romania for around ten months. The focus is on the two women in the family, mother Florica and daughter Ioanna. In just four years, Florica had a great deal of loss to cope with: not only her parents' deaths, but also that of her husband in a tragic car accident. At the same time, there is love and new life, in the form of Ioanna's marriage and the birth of her child. The result is a personal and sensitive documentary, occasionally flavoured with an airy, affable humour.

In total, the project *Four years...* consists of four videos, a photo and a book. For exhibition purposes, they are all presented together as an installation. The book is the actual work for Carlier, because of the content and emotional intimacy of the story. In it she succeeds wonderfully in bringing together both the different storylines and the different media.

The book opens with a portrait of the whole family at Ioanna's wedding party. Carlier weaves the videos (*The family portrait*, *The silent march*, *The last song* and *Let's dance*), all of which concern traditions and rituals, as small intermezzos throughout. Stills from the videos appear in rhythmic sequences of 16 pages each, on thinner paper, with each image printed across the entire spread and in full-bleed. The effect is a change of pace, and therefore a different experience.

In a similarly thoughtful way, the confrontational photo of the crashed red Dacia – the direct reason for the book and also the only photoprint in the installation – is printed on both sides of a separate piece of thick card. In this way, it cannot be avoided. Carlier places it as a loose bookmark in the middle of the book, between serene portraits of the pregnant daughter cradling a bunch of grapes and the dignified mother, both dressed in black.

Apart from a publication in her student days (*Inima ca punct central*, 2004), this is, for the time being, Carlier's only photobook. Since then she has worked mainly with film and video. s.v.

Contemporary



301



Self-published, The Hague, 2011
300 × 230 mm, 102 pp (edition of 500 copies, special edition of 50 copies)
125 colour photographs
Text by Sarah Carlier
Design by Karin Merijes
Printed by Albarr, The Hague
Softcover with flap, thread sewn, flat spine
English/Dutch edition