

Lisa Dotzauer
KurzGeschichten
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Do you get this warm feeling that seems to surround you on some winter evenings? The feeling that makes you wrap yourself up in a warm blanket, have tonnes of warm drinks and wear woolly socks? I'm really looking forward to this, even though I completely love this time of the year, don't get me wrong, but I almost felt this "winter-cuddling-sensation" this weekend. I even bought a nice new and extra huge mug and saucer in advance and anticipation. Well, there must be something to look forward to once this really freaky final year fully kicks in... Scary...! But back to the present day: I am currently in the final stages of a project called windowroomfurniture, due in about a week. I am not a great fan of deadlines; they usually have that clinging smell of panic and sweat attached to them, but I can work towards them and finish in enough time to sit back and enjoy the sense of completion afterwards. That said, I prefer that afterglow you get once you finished something that you really wanted to do just for yourself and not anyone else. Just yourself – no deadlines or tightly clutching attempts of accomplishment.

Recently, I unpacked my Lensbaby again. A lens I kept far too long on the shelves. To be honest, I never really got into using it, even though I've always enjoyed using it – I like the results.

I had one of these "I like photography and I want to tell you why"-conversations with a few people. Those conversation are usually joined by least one person who has "their one and only opinion" and nothing can bring them anywhere near a few more (or just even a second) though(s). One of my favourite discussions usually involves the old digital vs. film dilemma. I do have an opinion, and you're more than welcome to read up on it: Yeah, go ahead, I'll be waiting here, you can finish this post once you read the other posts. Try Chasing the Light – Finding Silhouettes [<http://wp.me/pn5Ty-tv>] and Boxes – the How-to of Cardboard Evacuation [<http://wp.me/pn5Ty-ur>]. Go on, I dare ya'!;-)

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KurzGeschichten
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Oh cool, you're back. Hope you enjoyed the little diversion. While you were reading, I was actually browsing my thoughts and remembered a fantastic comment, that both sums up my recent Friday Night Talk about the art of photography as well as the most annoying questions I tend to get asked when I'm out shooting with one of my "not-so-professional-looking" cameras: "Does it take good photos?" (I am ignoring the amusement before, during and after the questioning here, but bear in mind that people really wonder whether or not I'm just kidding them by "pretending" my Holga or Diana is actually a fully functional medium format camera – *I wonder why?!*)

"Saying a camera takes nice pictures is like saying a guitar plays nice melodies."

(Angelino Pan y Vino)[i]

I thought I let you in on this one, take it or leave it, it is up to you. My first thought was: What if I like nice melodies? , but again, that is me and I wouldn't dream of imposing my thoughts onto you...you will need to judge for yourself what you read into it.

Well, I'm getting to grips with my Lensbaby now. I actually shot an eighteen hour documentation, called "A Day in the Life of ... (my Lensbaby)" last Friday. (My "I like photography and I want to tell you why"-conversation actually started out of the

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amusement and excitement [for the bendy thing, but that's a different story to tell – should come around to write it down one day)

Chances are high, that when you see me, I have a camera with me, but that tends to be a smaller digital compact and not a DSLR. So spending a day carrying the Pentax around was quite "refreshing". After completing the documentary and looking at the results the next day, I began to wonder how I actually felt each hour. Each photo reflects a "snapshot" of my life during that day, and I can highly relate to it (Obviously because I have taken the images, but there are other reasons as well) but how would others see it? What do you interpret into a photograph you see?

Let's take "a – is [for apple]" [from the Photographic Dictionary on Touching Wet Paint [<http://bit.ly/redapple>] – what do you read into it? Let's investigate (I am going through this in a checklist-kind-of-form, or a hierarchy, but actually all these assessment-points will be dealt with in a more cloud-like-all-at-the-same-time-form, or synchrony):

(1) Aha, it is called "a – is [for apple]".

I see an apple (slightly odd selective focus, but still an apple.) I based this on my knowledge of an apple – how it is supposed to look like, how I "was conditioned" to recognise an apple. I drew tons of them as a kid; I have eaten gazillion of them,... Let's say, I've got a working knowledge of an apple and this image (how odd it might be!) fits into my categories of 'an apple'. Plus the title is kind of a dead-easy give-away (if viewed with the image), but only because I learned what an apple is and recognised it.

Assessment through recognition

(2) Like I mentioned, I recognised the apple because I have a prior 'knowledge pool' I can rely on, including my interactions with such a fruit (drawings, eating it, touching it, ...) We had an apple tree in our garden back home, my friends had apple trees, now, I have an apple tree in the garden. Let's say that apple trees are fairly common fruit trees. Nevertheless, all those trees bear different varieties of the fruit. "Apple" is just the main category, a summery if you like of all the different kinds of apple. Yet still, I identify the red round thing on the photo as an apple. If it had been a green thing, or a yellow-green thing,

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KurzGeschichten
October 2009

or any other colour variation, I probably would still have recognised it – I have (previous) knowledge that helps me.

Assessment through knowledge

(3) I take another look at the blog post and realise "Hmmm, there is also a small description with the photo. Let's read this and find out." (Make sure you imagine this thought in a really surprised (inner) voice) I read the text and now I'm aware of the definition of an apple. The post doesn't say where the definition was taken from, so I'm unsure whether it is a trustworthy source or not, but I believe the description belong to the photograph, it seems to make sense. I could now feed my curiosity and actually get a dictionary out (a paper-based or electronic version) and look into it further.

Assessment through curiosity

(4) I notice that the photo is titled "a – is for apple" and identify the picture as an apple. If the title would have contained "Apfel" or "appel", "pomme" or "manzana", or even "epl", I would have recognised it, well apart from the obvious visual cue, the actual photograph, let's leave that aside for the moment, because I have an awareness of the words; either through previous encounters, through hours of revision or through deduction.

Assessment through language

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There are many factors that I can see and read into the photograph.

What would happen if I now tell you that the image has a religious background...? ...

Depending on whether you have some sort of believe-system within any religion, or you don't, you will start to "read" into the image.

It is the apple that Eve gave to Adam – It is the Apple from the Tree of Knowledge – It is the Forbidden Fruit from the Forbidden Tree – It is a sin – It is still just an apple – ...

Another layer has automatically been added to the assessment of the photograph, and all my consideration-points are being fired up again, against a new and wider canvas of happenings.

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Well, were does it leave me now with my documentary...? I guess I will need to put it to the test, so to speak and let you have a look. Head over to Touching Wet Paint [<http://bit.ly/09-10-09>] and read the photographs. You can always come back and let me know what you read into it?

[End of Part I]

[i] Read more: <http://bit.ly/byMhq>