



# FOTONOSTRUM

MAGAZINE

Issue 1 | April 30, 2020

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# FOTONOSTRUM

## MAGAZINE

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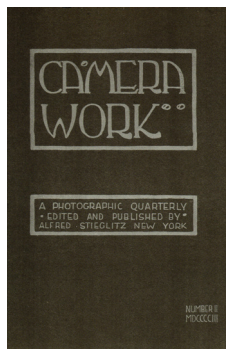
For the time being and until we return to normality, the magazine will be released online in Issuu.  
A printed version will be evaluated once the pandemic is over.

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Cover image: Horizon, 2018, by Maria Svarbova

## LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

### Dedicated to Camera Work



Dear Readers,

In some ways and due to the internet, starting a magazine today is easier than ever. But nowadays, during this incredible lockdown, it can be more difficult. We began without even developing a business plan. But we had a mission, a reason why our magazine should exist. After fostering a strong community during the last ten years, we realized that it would be nonsense not to be in constant contact during these strange days of isolation and social distance. The thousands of photographers that have exhibited with us in the five editions of the Biennial of Fine Art & Documentary Photography and our group exhibitions provided us with inspiration and direction. Beyond the pages of our magazine, you will find the spirit of our photographers' community. And this was enough reason to launch a magazine. Issue #0 was quite a success reaching a readership of 7,963 impressions and 5,096 readers in 12 days, with an average read time of 7:45 minutes.

A friend of mine emailed me the other day after reading issue #0. *'What prompted you to start a magazine, Julio? In the editorial you say you will be publishing it fortnightly, every two weeks. Is that true?'* Honestly, his question worried me a little. As you can imagine, making a magazine, especially ours that contains interviews with all artists showcased, is a heady endeavor, especially in these days of isolation, that can't and shouldn't be undertaken alone. But we're a team of four each working from home, and we divided our workload to prevent burnout and deliver faster, better results. And we're proud to introduce you this second volume, our issue #1, hoping that you will enjoy it as we assume you have enjoyed the first one, as we have enjoyed doing it.

We want to dedicate this issue to Alfred Stieglitz. One hundred and seventeen years ago, he launched Camera Work. It was known as *"by far the most beautiful of all photographic magazines,"* as written by Stieglitz's biographer, Richard Whelan, and *"a portrait of an age in which the artistic sensibility of the nineteenth century was transformed into the artistic awareness of the present day,"* by Jonathan Green.

In this issue, we started a new section, 'Spotlight', where photographers will be able to advertise their work. Ads from brands related to the world of photography will also be accepted in the inner pages.

If you wish to receive our issues, twice a month, in your inbox, please fill out this form: <https://form.jotform.com/201195152239350>.

We will appreciate it if you can forward the link to our magazine, <https://fotonostrummag.com>, to your friends and fellows.

As you have now realized, our magazine is free and relies only on advertising and donations. Your support will help to further our mission through the appraisal of photography in this troubled time.

Please click here to donate: <https://www.fotonostrummag.com/donate>, and enjoy reading this issue of FotoNostrum Magazine.

Stay safe.  
All the best,

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Above: Georgia O'Keeffe, Hands, 1918 by Alfred Stieglitz



# BÉNÉDICTE VANDERREYDT

## The Construction of Female Identity

**T**hroughout her series of photographs Bénédicte Vanderreydt explores different layers in the construction of female identity. From adolescence to adulthood, she shows the successive roles that women are able to embody : child, wife, mother, mistress, etc. Each of her projects meets a singular aesthetic where the place of the staging is strong, revisiting with cinematic images that will haunt the viewer for a long time. She questions and challenges the permanence of certain ancestral rites of passage in our contemporary society like the Carnival in her series *I never told anyone*. Social networks, family mythology and factual research are the starting point of her photographic reflection, but as a photographer she is not limited to the transcription of a reality but is constantly seeking to sublimate and interpret it. With her theatrical training her photographic work highlights the illusionistic power of masks, either on social media or those who adopt a mask at a carnival, (as the series of photographs *I never told anyone* exposes). Being masked allows a character to become a silent link which is reminiscent of the paintings of Paul Delvaux.

- Heloise Conesa - Director of engravings, and  
Photography Department - BNF (Bibliothèque  
François Mitterrand, Paris).

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All images © Bénédicte Vanderreydt



**What is the place of female identity in your work?**

I am searching for ‘that’ place. This is exactly the Big question I ask myself each time I am starting a project. And that’s THE question I am hoping people ask themselves when they look at my work. In *FORCLORE (I Never Told Anyone)*, a naked girl is standing in front of 13 men from my family. It was tough for her. She felt humiliated. And men were not laughing anymore! They were uncomfortable. We (the photo crew) were astonished by the reality of the scene. At first, the naked girl took a submissive posture. That’s how we are educated; I would have done the same.

Then I had to find the words to help her to find the right posture: HER PLACE. I told her to resist. The photograph was done!

**How does painter Paul Delvaux influence your photography?**

Heloise Conesa (Director of engravings, and Photography Department, BNF, Paris) indeed saw that in my work. The place of staging is strong. As I am Belgian, I guess I am playing (unconsciously) with the semiology I have known since I was a child. In Paul Delvaux’s paintings, I like the characters who seem to have been waiting for something for years... Between life and death.







In your series *I Never told Anyone* you explore the oppression and objectification of women by a male dominated society. How much of your personal experience have you put in this series?

A few years ago, I discovered two hidden personal diaries written by my far-related cousins Jacqueline and X, who are 75 years old now. I started exploring the secrets of these women, their scars, and their strength and with this – my own identity.

I realized they were not understood. These women in my family are divine powers who transmit the wilderness, freedom and passion at the cost of being out of the social sphere, ruling in a closed and silent “between women” world.

Subsequently, most of the people in the photographs are my relatives. Fusing fact and fiction, I re-create melancholic scenes, revealing stories of my family’s troubled past. When I first started the project (Go back to Binche and make an inquiry), I wrote that ‘poem’:

*These women around me do not always tell the truth.*

*Like a scream in the night, they once arose in my dreams and asked me to release them.*

*They undressed in front of me but kept their masks on.*

*They whispered words wrapped in Ostrich feathers, in confetti and white laces.*

*They invited me to magical and chilling places.*







Above, left: *Héritage* from the series *I Never Told Anyone*, 2015

Above, right: *Post Coitum* from the series *I Never Told Anyone*, 2015



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"Fusing fact and fiction, I re-create  
melancholic scenes  
Besides the personal stories, my  
work also addresses a symbolic  
oppression".

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**The location of your narratives is important. How did the Carnaval of Binche give you an opening into the theme of misogyny and what is your personal relationship with it?**

Besides the personal stories, my work also addresses a symbolic oppression. Binche is rooted in Northern European folklore: its Carnival is one of Europe's oldest surviving carnivals, listed by UNESCO in the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Also part of our family's tradition, the Carnival has been

held by men for the past 500 years. In ancient mythology the woman has no voice. Excluded from the ritual she is reduced to a sexual and mysterious object. That's where it all started. I was born on Fat Tuesday, Mardi Gras. The men in my family cherish this tradition wearing carnival costumes and repeating all the genuine rituals generation after generation: My mother and cousins dress up my uncles, grandfather, putting straw under their jackets. Only men can be part of the carnival parade. Men are in the spotlight, women are

Above: Non Grata from the series *I Never Told Anyone*, 2015  
Following spread: Captive(s) from the series *I Never Told Anyone*, 2015



behind, in the shadows. They are not allowed to wear the mask. We all enter in a state of trance, at that moment we are in accord. When I started reading about the mythology of the Carnival of Binche, I discovered amazing things: this carnival is very similar to the traditional celebrations of the Dogon tribe in Western Africa. And we have similar dances as in Serbia. Knowing this, I started to understand the power of my tradition and also the problem of being a woman in all these different mythologies.

**Your photography is very cinematic. Can you explain how you get this effect and how you use it to enhance your message?**

This presentation is a 'once upon a time' tale, displaying a fiction. I work with continuous light and steam machines used in cinema which creates an effect that is called sfumato in painting. Despite this heavy cinematic implementation, the choice of the still image is clear, determined by its power and also by its ability for reminiscences.





