

## **NEARLY SEEING II**

He went back to the library; this seems to work. Another diversion to escape: the rain, a bookshop, a technology of sound shop. Find more tomes of the image. At the front, acres of conceptual speak, token emotions, dive into the soul of the image maker, follow the unrest of his country. Why did he? And then what?

Think what you like of images, they are at least there, in front of you, deftly sorted in chronology or in the bucket of genre. Pages and pages of grotesque or beautiful, usually the former. Avedon can do fashion and skid row. Koudelka can do beauty in the Roma but it is harsh, just a fraction of elegance in the front of the shack. Had you been there, she would have smelt of dogs.

And layers of industrial pollution that have a strange beauty: at least to me and to Koudelka. And how do the smudges printing clouds of effluent and concrete waste and oil corrupted water and the odd dead and putrescent bird feel about it?

In crispy, grainy TXP at a high speed. Clouds of lung damage; clouds in misty black and white. Directed to the print in Le Corbusier thirds dead

building to the left, some misty dereliction to the two thirds on the right. And print it to a nice centrefold of the hardback. Crisp and neat and art for us.

The library was filling up. He had been through three coffee table art angst at a total retail price of £130. A fashionista came in with two optically perfect sons, one of whom work a pork pie hat as if the mother had tried a Tom Waits look on her seven year old. They and Mum sprawled on the floor consuming art books.

Enough. He was just about to spew some of his own angst on paper but the little ones were too much. He thought about flapping the pages of Vietnamese napalm victims in a casual way to deter but thought that a discreet return to the shelves a more reasonable act.

Run for the bus, down to the docks. You could say that the ship was huge or quote its length or Thames measurement of cubic displacement. He preferred that the ship was an indiscreet shade of orange. With a rather neat helipad over the bridge. And a giant crane at the stern. Perfect accessory for one's own oilrig. And there was a vast container ship with what looked like a prison block on the stern. Density of clouds

coming towards the deck of the bar. Tugs waiting in vain for something to tug. A misty entrance to the Forth not good for the pilot.

He listed the photographs not taken through the lens but through his observation. Sometimes you could return, sometimes not. At least the image would be there in the brain's library. Or maybe not. As the years kick in the cells go home.

There was another set of shots he would do wherever. The glass, the pack of cigarettes and the distant view. Always on holiday, always as an addition to travel. It was an "I am there" shot just like Koudelka did when he left his country following the invasion of the Russians. He took a picture of his watch in front of the empty boulevards as the tanks kissed the tarmac.

Fix the moment, the time, the place. You could lie or fake but the image should sustain meaning. Because the image is construction, selection, distribution and artifice. The image is what you want to show: the product of your artifice, your innocence, your emotion. Present something however constructed, however imagined, however felt.

You will be asked what it was that moved you/ why/when and what pieces of metal and glass you used. And does it matter? Well you smooth the answers, slide over the technology and say whatever platitudes come to mind. After all the image is a statement whatever the angst etc. Sometimes he really did not know. When a shape or configuration presents itself the job is to record. The picture is a thousand words but you don't need to write a thousand words to take the picture, just do it. On the contacts afterwards you can ascertain, choose, disregard or toot your luck in obtaining a record of that particular observation that you have fixed in silver gelatine. You might have done your job, try harder, fail better, continue.

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