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About the Project “Beethoven – Metamorphosis”

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to describe the theoretical assumptions and the effects of the realisation of the project entitled “Beethoven – metamorphosis”. The project was the practical part of the PhD program and seems to be a good example of an author’s creation of reality.

Key words

photography, art, metamorphosis, L. van Beethoven

Film is an art of *thinking images*. The stress, however, will always be laid on the category of thinking first. For it is thinking which is essentially our activity here, always on the critical run, in a dialogue, continuously debating. While acquiring knowledge, thinking still retains the courage to question the reliability of its results, because it does not apply easy solutions and simplifications, nor does it yield to the dangerous confidence in the obviousness of formulated truths¹.

– this is what Professor Jerzy Łukaszewicz, a highly regarded director, screenwriter and cameraman wrote in his article on cinema.

And what about photography? Well, the images of events, people and landscapes captured and processed by the artist’s shutter also cease to simply register reality. They become art. And this is also an art form –

¹ J. Łukaszewicz, *Krytyka myślenia artystycznego*, “Estetyka i Krytyka” nr 28 (1/2013), p. 262 [trans. M. Bregiel-Benedyk].

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according to professor Łukaszewicz – revealing the hidden order of the world, and not merely “reflecting the empirical being, [...] mirroring the surrounding reality”².

My project titled “Beethoven – metamorphosis” seems to be a good example of such an auteur creation of reality.

Beethoven pretty as a picture

I shall begin with a short introduction to the guidelines of the project. This will facilitate the readers to follow the detailed analysis of the artistic creation.

“Beethoven – metamorphosis” project was the practical part of my Ph.D. program carried out in the Faculty of Radio and Television of the University of Silesia. However, it went beyond just a formal demonstration of photographic skills or pure esthetics. The series of images exhibited during the opening of the Ludwig van Beethoven Easter Festival in March 2012 was something more: an attempt to say a few words about Beethoven through the medium of photography. It was an innovative attempt; thanks to the achievements of the most recent techniques I was trying to create an image – a portrait of the composer – based on the narrative esthetics of the genre painting of the 18th century and referring to the works of such artists as William Hogarth, Boucheron or Johann Zoffany.

An anonymous model chosen in a casting and not associated with any photographic or film production became Ludwig van Beethoven. The project aims at the maximum authenticity, hence the actor – physically resembling Beethoven, wearing clothes from the period and with makeup applied to his face – is placed in the background of an accurately restored decoration from the turn of the 19th century.

His metamorphosis was to be completed in eight images being a joint result of makeup, photographic techniques and painterly light. I wanted them to tell a tale of creating a lookalike of the hero while at the same time building an illusion of participation. In this way “there and then” became “here and now”.

Photography does not tolerate falsity. Every element of the photographic image aims at reflecting reality. And this was also the very essence

² Ibidem, p. 264.

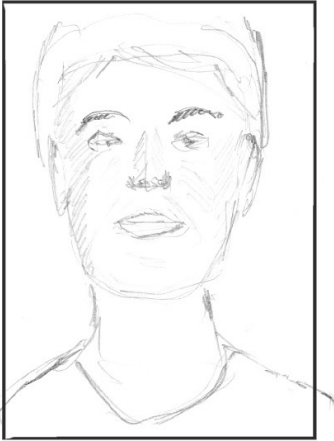
of the project: to capture the genius composer in the final photograph as if it were a frame of him posing to a portrait.

Less importantly, but still interestingly, “Beethoven – metamorphosis” highlighted the similarities between the art of film production and photography. All the crucial preparatory elements – the casting, the test makeup, researching the costume – became part of the artistic resources familiar to every practitioner and theoretician of cinema.

Eminent specialists were engaged in this project. Jola Słoma and Mirek Trybulak, well known fashion designers possessing huge knowledge and experience in designing historical outfits, took care of the costumes. Set design was produced by Marek Piotrowski, who has worked with me for many years, and a makeup artist Pola Gruzlińska who specialises in historical productions (she worked, among others, on Jerzy Hoffman’s “1920 Bitwa Warszawska”) was responsible for the makeup.

Eight steps to illusion

An attempt to create a hyper realistic illusion which could at the same time narrate the creative process and the power of photographic creation required preparation of a detailed screenplay of the shoot.



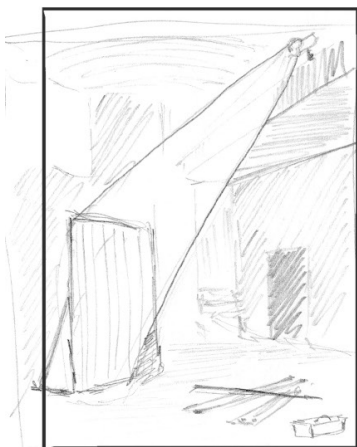
The first photograph is a portrait of the subject in a white T-shirt, a non-emotional image resembling Richard Avedon's white background photographs.



The second photograph depicts our space – the site of the metamorphosis to happen. The actor is sitting in the foreground, his back to the camera.



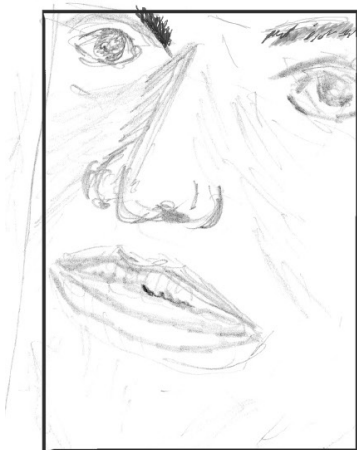
The third photograph captures the beginning of the metamorphosis. The image shows the actor from above. He is wearing a wig and a mask on his face.



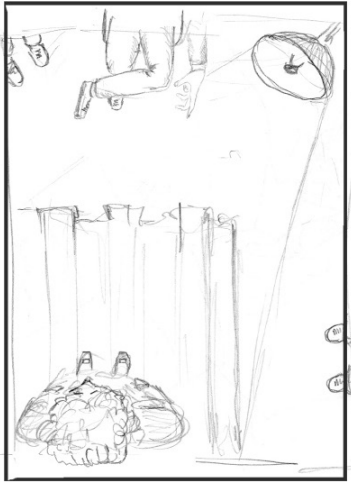
The fourth image: the first part of the decoration appears. Light changes. From this moment the process of creating the photographic reality starts to run.



In the fifth photograph the model is placed in the background of the decoration, like a marionette. His silhouette is visible. He is already dressed in a historical costume, but only some of its elements can be seen.



The sixth photograph brings an extreme close-up of the face. The actor is no longer the person from the first frame: he begins to resemble Beethoven.



The seventh image is again a view from above. The actor is wearing a wig and a costume and the set decoration is complete. The feet of the persons giving instructions to the actor are visible in the frame. The colour of the image and its light resemble those of William Hogarth's paintings.



The eighth photograph (the finale of the metamorphosis): we are introduced to the most likely countenance of Ludwig van Beethoven.

(DRAWINGS BY PIOTR KUCIA)

Each photograph is now going to be enlarged to a 100 x 140 cm format. As a result the obtained picture will acquire a perfect legibility of detail; the images will be of such high resolution that they will seem three-dimensional.

A work results from thinking

It is time to introduce the process – both creative and technological – which resulted in the artistic work as a whole.

All photographs tell us: *memento mori*. As Susan Sontag wrote: by taking a picture we encounter the other person's death, fragility, fleetingness³.

For Roland Barthes photography produces death to preserve life⁴; it speaks of death in the future tense. Looking at an image of a person we never know if they are still alive. Before the era of photography the only testimony of someone's death was a monument, the only such close to reality image of a person.

But can photography raise someone from the dead? Can an image of a person be created using the newest photographic techniques? “Beethoven – metamorphosis” was also an attempt at tackling the idea of a photographic image of a person. A unique photographic session of the most likely countenance of the composer. The certainty of photography lies in – as Barthes wrote – establishing that this is how things really were⁵. My project assumed an inversion of that certainty. Firstly: something exists in my consciousness. Secondly: it will become and is becoming.

The idea of a photograph is born beyond the rational thinking of an artisan-artist. It appears unexpectedly. His experience and the effort of his intellect allow him to get acquainted with the subject. Images are created in his mind first. His goal is to create photographic works that would be identical with the ideas of the mind.

Leonardo da Vinci wrote that a painter who does not doubt will never achieve much⁶. It is true. The longer one photographs the fewer images one takes. Before taking up any production many questions need to be answered. Is the topic good enough? What choice of lighting would be most suitable for this topic? What way of framing would serve this story best?

An experienced photographer will reason instantly and formulate a clear opinion. But will the idea be interesting and surprising enough to arouse the audience's interest?

³ S. Sontag, *O fotografii*, tłum. S. Magala, Kraków 2009, p. 23 [trans. M. Bregiel-Benedyk].

⁴ R. Barthes, *Światło obrazu. Uwagi o fotografii*, tłum. J. Trznadel, Warszawa 2008, p. 189.

⁵ Ibidem, p. 189.

⁶ M. Rzepińska, *Leonardo da Vinci Traktat o malarstwie*, Gdańsk 2008, p. 152.

Here we touch on the essence of photography. Learning about the world through images requires one to consider a phenomenon which Husserl termed a *natural standpoint*. It is a result of human experience and it assumes that an individual consciousness of the perceiving subject exists and is able to reach the particular phenomena of the surrounding world. As an idea fertilises the mind of an artist, the process of depiction in his head begins. Husserl calls it the *sphere of ownness*, i.e. creating the subject through thinking.

In the following analysis I will be using the terms coined by Professor Prot Jarnuszkiewicz who divided the process of creating a photographic image into three phases: previsualisation, exhibition and publication⁷.

For me, previsualisation is the moment of the mind analysing the idea. It is the ovule of a new idea. At the beginning its appearance is quite blurry, but the trend to be followed has been set. The first concept of a photograph is ready.

While looking at images, Roland Barthes searches for two aspects: the *studium* and the *punctum*⁸. Both words come from Latin because Barthes was not able to find any suitable equivalents for them in French. The *studium* means human interest, curiosity, commitment to something, a certain kind of involvement. The *punctum* means stinging, a moment of "something" running out of the image and hitting the spectator like an arrow. The term also refers to the word "dot". Dots in the images can indicate sensitive points strongly affecting our imagination.

Searching for *studium* and *punctum* in the concept of my project, I begin to analyse its goal and possibilities. The world of contemporary art is not much different from the past one. Both the painters and the composers have always struggled with the matters of everyday existence. Who will support the artist? Who will pay for the work created? When first invented, photography was available to the most affluent only. For Fox Talbot, John Herschel or Thomas Wedgewood, who were the English *amateurs scientists*, registering images was a noble passion to which they could devote themselves thanks to their financial means.

It has been 170 years since a photographic project was first undertaken and Fox Talbot patented his method called calotype, but the financial concerns are still the same. Contemporary digital photography em-

⁷ P. Jarnuszkiewicz, *Trwanie czasu, trwanie przestrzeni a prawda w fotografii*, Ph.D. dissertation, 2006, p. 6.

⁸ R. Barthes, op. cit., p. 50.

loys technologies I call *hi-res instant*, which allow obtaining the highest quality images at the very moment of pressing the shutter button, and yet it still generates some costs. In creative photography I construct an illusion of reality. I expect myself and the image to be fully involved and aim at making every single detail work towards its goal. What it means is that finances are the main of not only limits to my ideas. And when I analyse the possibilities and the goals I have to take money into account disregarding at the same time the financial aspect if I want to be able to focus on finding the *punctum*. Without *studium* and *punctum* the idea simply fails.

Everybody knows him, but is he real?

Why Beethoven? The presented project is a perfect example of combining an artistic idea with an analysis of its goals and potential. The potential means finding a patron and a merchant; the goal is to prepare an exhibition of the highest possible exhibitional level.

I thought of Ludwig van Beethoven for the first time some years ago, when I reflected on his image while listening to music during the Beethoven Festival. The great composer had given inspiration for feature films twice already. His unusual character fascinated me to the extent that I decided to get acquainted with him myself.

Beethoven's image is well known to general public. His mouth tight, his hair blowing, his fixing glance. It is an image that remains under the eyelids. But actually, it is an illusion of the mind, an attempt on imagining the impossible. None of the living ever saw him. He is just a copy of an image in our mind. A genius known from drawings, etchings and paintings has always been nothing more than a vision of the artist, not a mirror reflection of the person. And thus the idea. I will photograph Beethoven.

The only almost perfect image of the composer is a plaster mask made by Franz Klein in 1812. In the same year, the piano workshop of Andreas Streicher opened a House of St. Florian housing among others an exhibition of musical instruments and a concert hall decorated with the busts of famous musicians. Klein got a commission from Streicher to create Beethoven's bust. He was a sculptor, famous for making plaster jackets for scientific purposes for Franz Joseph Gall, the father of phrenology whose followers believed in the authentic character of an individual imprinted in the plaster casts.

Thanks to this scientific approach I can now look at the real image of Beethoven as in 1812, even though Klein's mask is not perfect. Known for his difficult character, Beethoven could not stand to wear the wet plaster mask for too long. While the cast was being made he only had two little pipes in his nostrils to breathe through; his eyes, nose and hair was all covered in plaster. Because of his claustrophobia and lack of patience the mask could not be successfully finished despite two attempts to do it. As Benedetta Saglietti writes in her work *Beethoven, Portraits and Images: An Iconographical Study*⁹, Klein finally completed the mask joining the pieces of two separate casts. The main features of the portrait are: a square head, a distinct, broad but not very high forehead, a flattened nose, a substantial vertical groove below the nose, and wide nostrils.

And so, the mask and the bust based on it will provide crucial information on the appearance of the composer. Now, before our eyes, a contemporary man looking like Beethoven will become Beethoven himself.

The main purpose of the project "Beethoven – metamorphosis" is – using the terms of phenomenology – to reverse the intellectual process. According to Edmund Husserl phenomenology attempts to recognise a phenomenon, which is a thing-in-itself, deprived of its materiality¹⁰. However, photography refers to the materiality of the depicted object. My purpose is thus not to search for a phenomenon in the existing works, but to turn the phenomenon that appeared in my imagination (here the image of the "real" Beethoven under my eyelids) into a real object, and in this way to create the most faithful portrait of Beethoven with the use of a photographic medium.

There is also an intermediary purpose to it: I want to support and confirm the hypothesis formulated by Susan Sontag¹¹ that a photograph is not only an image, an interpretation of reality, but also a trace, something reflecting directly from the world, like a footprint or a death mask.

Thus, as it seems, previsualisation with its blurry images turning into ideas to be yet implemented borders on possibility. For an idea to become real it needs to be "sold" first. My idea caught interest of the Association of Ludwig van Beethoven¹². The project was accepted as the only exhi-

⁹ B. Saglietti, *Beethoven, ritratti e immagini. Uno studio sull'iconografia*, Torino 2010. p. 51.

¹⁰ E. Husserl, *Idea fenomenologii*, tłum. J. Sidorek, Warszawa 2008.

¹¹ S. Sontag, op. cit., p. 162.

¹² [Online] <http://www.beethoven.org.pl/> [access: 14.05.2014].

bition accompanying the 16th Beethoven Easter Festival in Warsaw. This *carte blanche* is, on the one hand a great privilege and an opportunity for a complete, unimpeded realization of my ideas, on the other hand, however, it is a great responsibility. Responsibility to myself (is the project mature enough to be materialised?), but above all it is responsibility to the huge audience (what if my Beethoven turns out to be ridiculous? Can I trust my creative intuition to that extent?). The first phase of the project consisting of possibilities and goals is now complete. Now it is time to make my Beethoven as real as the works of Franz Klein.

Carte blanche

The first step is to find the right model. If his face is not compatible with Klein's plaster mask, the entire project might be jeopardised. I did not plan to create my Beethoven using computer animation or alter the model's face with the silicone masks. My project assumed finding a person who could become a perfect model with the help of suitable lighting, a costume and so called soft make-up – changing the skin tone, applying chiaroscuro, aging the face.

At the same time, I preferred an unknown person, so that the transmission would remain undisturbed. I tried to avoid resemblance to the film images, in which Beethoven was played by Gary Oldman and Ed Harris. Those characteristic actors were unconvincing to me. Even under the cover of make-up they remained themselves. My project assumed creating the real Beethoven, that would resemble the mask produced by Klein.

After the casting it turned out that someone I knew, a costume studies expert, was actually perfect for the role of Beethoven. His physical traits perfectly matched Benedetta Saglietti's descriptions.

I met the future Beethoven in October 2011 for the first time. He had never worked as a model before. I asked him to grow his hair and beard for three months. I believed that it would help to reconstruct Beethoven's hairstyle and facial hair for the shoot.

The next step was preparation of the equipment and working out the best formal way to carry out my project. Many issues needed to be decided: the number of images, the final format, the frame (vertical or horizontal), the lighting of the ground (with continuous light or flash light), the choice of a camera (analogue or digital), the post production or lack of it, enlarging the images (the traditional way on photographic paper or

on the photorealistic prints). All the answers had to be known long before starting the shoot, since creating conscious and well thought-out images should be the main goal of the author. It was a world that was created in my mind, so I am responsible for every detail of the images. Every *punctum* in every picture is responsible for something. I have to be prepared to defend every inch of these images. On the other hand, time was on my side and I could use it unlike many photographers specialising in reportage or documentary photography and working within certain limits only.

How to create a perfect illusion

The crucial issue for me was the format. I knew in what space the images would be exhibited. They could not be too small, or they would have disappeared in the hall of the Warsaw Philharmonics. At the same time, the maximum possible format was limited by the technological range of the camera. The digital back I ultimately chose because of its resolution (65 mln pixels, highest in the market) was Phase One P65+ and it limited the height to 140 cm.

The choice of a digital back was dictated by the need to keep the images as realistic as possible. I wanted to obtain enlargement of a maximum resolution with no quality loss; the problem of prints in many exhibitions is that a bend of the structure occurs, such as visible pixels or straight brick-like lines. I needed high enough resolution for the enlarged picture to avoid any digital deformation even when watched at a distance of a few centimeters. The picture itself was to give an impression of three-dimensionality, to be achieved thanks to its resolution and depth of colour. Why did I choose the digital technology rather than the analogue? The reason was trivial: I wanted to have full control over the final result and I was unable to find a Polish laboratory which would work on the 4 x 5 inches negatives and be in possession of active enlargers for large-format enlargements. Berlin and Paris were out of the question for the reasons of time and financial limitations. And even if they had not been, I would have needed to take test pictures and check the entire technological line to see if the final images reflected those I imagined.

A digital back ensures a comfortable workflow and allows an immediate analysis of a "*hi-res instant*" image through a view of the ready made full-resolution image. It is almost like working with a Polaroid, only the results are more impressive, since the digital image reproduces a huge

amount of detail. An image comes alive as soon as it is transferred on a computer. But there is one significant disadvantage of the digital back as comparing to the colour negative film. The tonal capacity of the digital image is significantly lower than that of the colour negative film. The problem concerns mainly the details of highlight. In the case of a digital image at a particular point (depending on the camera) the details of white lose their clarity already at +4 EV¹³. The effect of so called burn-out white can be noticed in the sharp line dividing the printed image from the blank photographic paper. With the right development and enlarging or scanning the image with a drum scanner, a negative film transfers approx. 6–7 EV towards the white from a properly exposed gray card of 18%. There is no sharp division between the last details of white and the image of a clear transparent negative film. The border is the wiped out structure of the negative film grain. The image from the negative film has more quality tonal transitions in white, and significantly more plastic than mechanical structure. However, these limitations of a digital back are only a minor challenge for a photographer. The knowledge and experience acquired throughout the years allow a successful implementation of any photographic idea. The choice of a digital workflow becomes nothing more than a calculation which of the “black boxes” will be the most suitable for the given project.

It may be worthwhile to provide some technical data closely related to the creative process and the reception of the work – no doubt the quality of a photograph influences the possibility of its exposition in any space, as well as its reception. The resolution of the P65+ back is 8984 times 6732 pixels, or 57 x 76 cm with the resolution of 300 dpi¹⁴. The works were printed on an Epson 9900 of 360 dpi resolution. Printing a photograph in the original size of 57 x 76 cm and 300 dpi I would have obtained an image of an incredible sharpness of detail, therefore I decided to

¹³ Altering the exposition of an image by 1 EV means extending or shortening the exposure time twice or changing the value of the aperture by one degree, e.g. +4EV is 4 aperture.

¹⁴ Dpi (*dots per inch*) is a number of spots falling to one inch in a high resolution standard. A resolution of 300 dpi means that in any square inch of an image there are 90 000 pixels (300 points per inch vertically and 300 horizontally). Where does the 300 dpi value come from? While watching a photographic print in over 350 dpi from a distance of approx. 25 cm, a human eye would not be able to see any difference in the quality. Therefore it is accepted to print poligraphic materials in 300 dpi. In case of larger prints watched from larger distance even 100 dpi should suffice.

prepare it in 180 dpi¹⁵. Using a photo processing software I could obtain approx. 160 dpi for a size of 110 x 140 cm. After numerous calculations in which obtaining the highest quality prints with no loss to their expositional legibility in the Philharmonics hall was a priority, this very format was confirmed. I followed the recommendations of Jean-Marc Lalier, a photographer-conceptualist, who creates fiction in photography and documents his creative process. According to him, the audience watching large format prints experience “photographic reality”. They no longer control the photograph, but it is the photograph which imposes itself upon them including them in its reality.

The results of the aforesaid tests allowed me to increase the eventual resolution to 180 dpi with no quality loss. The prints could be watched from a distance of 25 cm without detecting any signs of quality and resolution interventions.

The final result was perfect – the works could be watched both from very close and further away, when looked at closely, important details of the project could be spotted, and when watched from a distance, the work could be read and perceived at a different, more emotional level.

A picture from two centuries ago

I allow myself to write extensively on the technical aspects of this project and the respective stages of the work because the whole creative process – its intellectual and artistic aspect – was as important as the final work itself. That is one reason. Another one is obvious: the more perfect the workshop, the better the image and its impact on the audience. The pursuit of excellence leads to the absolutisation of knowledge. An outstanding photographer and musician Ansel Adams said that “photography does not happen by chance. It is a concept. Therefore for a photographer the creative process means first of all putting things in order, calculating and projecting”¹⁶.

Such an approach applies directly to my project. As I already said “Beethoven – metamorphosis” was not merely about a model becoming the

¹⁵ To obtain a perfect image on any large format device, it is best to use the multiples of the basic resolution, e.g. for Epson 9900 it is 360 dpi, therefore dividing it by 2, we receive 180 dpi. Such resolution prevents the occurrence of any mistakes resulting from the miscalculations of the given resolution in respect of the resolution of the device.

¹⁶ S. Sontag, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

composer. Equally important was to build the relation between fiction and reality in a way that the staging endeavours are visible to the audience. In this way the author remains radically honest with his audience. Interestingly, already after the first presentation of the complete work, I realised that the project had yet another dimension. I noticed that the clear and limpid image of fiction and reality as well as the process of transition from one to the other got distorted when only some of the photographs were seen. Deprived of the context, they acquired a different, individual character. It became clear to me during a break in between concerts, when the audience had some time to get acquainted with the project. If someone entered the foyer and went straight to the main hall, the first three photographs could be easily missed and if that was the case, whoever came in would immediately look at and see a painting of Beethoven. Indeed, from a distance the framed images resembled paintings. Many visitors admitted later that they could not resist the feeling of looking at painted portraits from the period.

This was a typical way of decoding a message through linking it to the environment and the situation. “Here and now” overlapped with my project. The venue – in this case the Philharmonics – and the way of exhibiting works there, became the rightful elements of the “Beethoven – metamorphosis” project.

For the audience of a classical music abode prepared to encounter a work of art equally classical in the form and origin, the message was clear: it is a painted portrait of the composer. Only on a second glance were they able to discover the entire message.

Behind the scenes

However, there is much more to prove that the guidelines of the metamorphosis (including playing with the audience) have been fulfilled. The main goal – to show how fiction becomes reality – was achieved beyond expectations. The contemporary space began to evolve with the model.

The audience who looked at all the eight photographs could actually experience the photographic illusion. Under their eyes I was altering the character of the images through light. A good example was provided by the third image, in which I employed the technique called *sfumato*. It comes from oil painting and consists in gentle, misty, fume-like (“fumo” means the fume) passages from dark to bright parts. It was not easy since

the digital back registers a rather contrasting image. I succeeded with the help of a large softbox (a modifier of the studio light) with a Rosco filter of the Cosmetic series. The portrait gained three-dimensionality, the skin tone of the model changed with respect to the first image, and the colours were closer to what I eventually wanted to obtain.

Equally important for the reception of the project is image No. 7. It allows the spectator to take a short break before moving to the next level of the game. Engaged in the world of perfect illusion and gripped by the impression of looking at the paintings, spectators are surprised by the picture “from behind the picture”, namely a *backstage* image (revealing the backstage of a photographic session, a film or a performance, such a photograph presents the entire technical equipment, the lamps, the cameras, the crew). Once again, this image reminds the spectator that there is a game being played here, while at the same time suggesting what photographic means are used to obtain the final results.

The last photograph depicts Beethoven standing by his instrument, posing as if he was in a hurry. I deliberately chose this pose, since this is what Beethoven really was like. Had photography been invented by that time, he would have for sure preferred to be photographed than cast in plaster, and the picture would have caught his impetuous character. The same idea accompanied picture No. 5. It shows Beethoven composing, the score of the *Trio* of 1811 in his hand.

This image is as realistic as possible – the score is identical to the original made available to me by the Jagiellonian Library. A true copy of the original, it looked equally old, all yellowed, with various handmade annotations. During postproduction I removed all the annotations which were not made by the composer himself and removed the yellowish shade from the paper. Such “refreshed”, the score was printed on handmade paper used in the times of Beethoven in Vienna. Thanks to these measures, the paper we get to see in the pictures looks exactly like the original, with not only the format, but also the texture of it reproduced.

A perfect trial

At the beginning, when writing about the eight images, I used the expression “was to be completed”. I did it deliberately. Indeed, the plan and the script included eight photographs. However, in the process of completing the project a problem occurred. Picture No. 1, presenting the application

of makeup did not match the first two images artistically. It did not add anything to the story. Therefore, I decided to move straight to the “right after” effect, and shoot an intense, clear portrait with a bandage to be used in the further makeup. The result was surprising: there was tension being built here, growing gradually.

I also gave up the original fifth image; when the set was arranged it became clear that the image lacks the *punctum*, and is uninteresting, revealing too fast all that which I wanted to open to the audience only gradually. However, at that time I was also preparing the “working” image, documenting that stage of the project where the decorations, the costume and makeup are almost ready. The model begins to live the life of Beethoven. Eventually that image became the fifth photograph, even though it came to existence somewhat accidentally. The results were beyond any expectation: soon, the image became the strongest in the series.

However, it was not a pleasant surprise. Creating a project, the author usually takes into account certain modifications of the set, but when a genius photograph appears so suddenly in the process of making, but not yet finalising the project, it becomes difficult to decide how to proceed with the story. Still, I decided to include this image in the series.

The picture became a masterpiece in itself. It was honored in the all-Polish Photographic Contest PORTRET 2012 as well as the International Photographic Contest in Argentina. Similarly, only this picture was (in-competingly) qualified for the exhibition of the International Photographic Contest in Luxemburg.

But if the results were so interesting, then why is this image not the ultimate one for me? Well, the portrait is exceptionally realistic, but some of the elements still remain unchanged. Beethoven – almost ready – sits with his manuscripts dressed in... jeans. This contemporary element was kept on purpose, as part of playing with the audience and creating illusion. It proved successful – Beethoven’s face was characteristic enough, caught in the aura of the past, and none of the spectators or members of the jury paid any attention to this contemporary detail.

There is no fidelity without psychology

The last photograph is a classic portrait modeled after Gilbert Stuart’s paintings. He was the author of the famous Washington portrait, interested only in counterfeits. In his works he struggled for the “photographic”

likeness. He cared not only for the resemblance of features, but also for the psychological truth. I tried to follow in his footsteps: my portrait of Beethoven retains the traits of the objective vision of my consciousness.

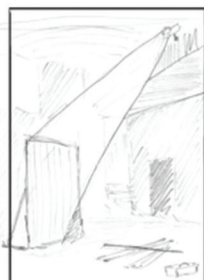
This is how the seven images were created. It appeared that they constituted a whole and did not require any additional photographs. I tried, basing on my drafts, to shoot the eighth image, but none of the attempts has added anything to the story. They were merely a duplication of the form or substance. Even more, they would simply weaken the whole project. Having analysed the first seven images, I decided that the series would have a stronger impact in the form it had at that time.

This is, however, a photographer's opinion. An artist can attribute various meanings to his project and read various messages into it, but at the end of the day all his assumptions and interpretations will be verified by the audience. The response of my audience proved that I have managed to give my project a meaning. "Beethoven – metamorphosis" did more than only meet my expectations. It acquired new meanings and merged into the walls of the Philharmonics, taking on patina and looking as if it was created 200 years ago.

Translated by Marta Bręgiel-Benedyk

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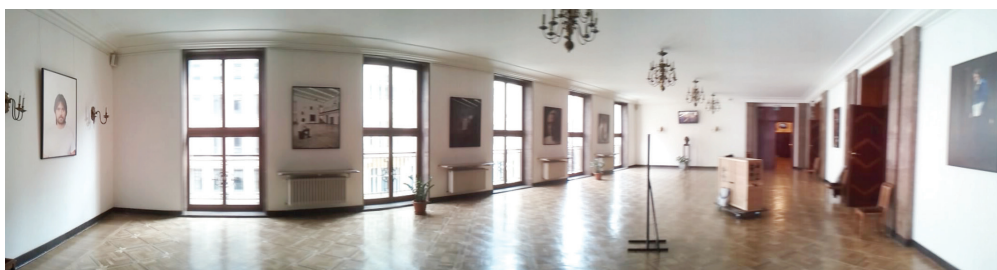
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