

On the borders of transposing  
experience in  
Quentin De Wispelaere's  
photography series  
"Raw Coverage"

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Quentin De Wispelaere's fashion photography series *Raw Coverage* instantly breathes out unrefined crudity. Captured moment astonishes the viewer with its authentic liveliness and unexpectedly uplifting image saturation. Photographer explains his particular choice of title by referring to the expression used in media for unaltered pictures that report news and events as they truly are. Inducing this idea both conceptually and practically, Quentin De Wispelaere shakes the foundations of how we perceive the elements that surround us fundamentally. By projecting the structure of vision on the sense of touch, photographer opens up phenomenological question of how and why we experience his photographs the way we do. The phenomenon of transposing experience comes to surface in order to contemplate our phenomenological being-in-the world in the reflection of De Wispelaere's challenging world of fashion photography.



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Photographs reflect ruthlessly distorted space and its subjects that disorient the viewer towards the place of unfamiliar, ethereal realm. The loss of three dimensional space and destruction of initial context in *Raw Coverage* subverts any prior expectation for common apprehension of fashion photography. Unlike most of it that resides on the semiotic ground and its signifying units - variants of potential symbolic configuration, such as precise clothing garment, model's posture, generalized mood; this language of definition and recognition is inherently missing in Quentin De Wispelaere's photography series. Furthermore, all these signifiers of fashion medium that carry brand identity related and disciplined meaning are constructed through the means of perception and the dialectics of visible and touchable.

While mixing antagonistic aesthetical points, such as raw and polished, factual reality and optical illusion, visual distraction and pleasure of looking at photograph, exhausting visual fragmentation and playful disturbance, De Wispelaere's photographs acquires subliminal force, which Edmund Burke

in his *Philosophical Inquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) explained as a certain experience that supplies a kind of thrill or shudder of perverse pleasure, mixing fear and delight<sup>1</sup>. These are the main elements dwelling beyond Quentin De Wispelaere's photography.

Artist rediscovers the image of "adequate" postmodern eccentricity and frees himself from homogenizing factuality of objects and subjects. From a point of historical perspective, artist telescopically employs collected material as he consciously steps out of the fashion circuit of commerce - "that is", according to Walter Benjamin, "once it becomes passé – it can be viewed through telescope eyes"<sup>2</sup>. Reaching for infinite and ethereal is therefore not a gesture of subordinate passivity but a conscious artist's decision to confront current ethics of instant production and immediate consumerism by relying on spiritual values and excellence of his artistic craftsmanship.

Therefore, *Raw Coverage* offers a glimpse into the Quentin De Wispelaere's world of honesty and the realness of photographer's work process where all pictures are real and shot as they are and where retouching remains insignificant part of it. Instead of that, photographer employs specific framing, high performance telephoto lenses, lighting, particular technologies (for e.g. LCD monitor), reflective surfaces. This very limited realization of post-production becomes core in creating what artist himself calls "photographic hallucinations". This unique approach enables De Wispelaere to control and subvert the subjects in his pictures by interpreting them, in most cases emphasising the surrounding details rather than happening fashion show and its necessary elements – model, clothes, catwalk. Photographs direct the viewer's eyes to otherwise unnoticeable fragments, such as a single patch of garment, or to the view of audience reflected in one of many corner cameras. Consequently, photographs reflect the feeling which accompanies a fashion show and thus carries a strong emotional force of being-within-environment.

<sup>1</sup> Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) Part II, Sections I–II; ed. Adam Phillips (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp.53–4.

<sup>2</sup> Alex Coles, ed., *The Optic of Walter Benjamin*, (London: Black Dog, 1999), p.73.

A fashion photograph is no longer a mere documentation of the factual moment which engraves the fleeting trace of fashion show. The raw effect of photographic hallucinating offers the viewer to acknowledge and emotionally experience Quentin De Wispelaere's extreme sensitivity to surroundings, whether it is light, sound or their complete absence. This overpowering sensitivity to initial conditions in *Raw Coverage* series suggests a non-linear model in both producing and perceiving the images. Moreover, it reflects the patterns of chaos theory as it recaptures the study of "sensible qualities" and "expressive modes" which were forsaken early in science's development for the sake solely of "intelligibility"<sup>3</sup>. In a similar way, the integral complexity of phenomena in De Wispelaere's pictures manifest linearity as a trap. As mathematical theorist Ian Stewart suggested "the behaviour of linear equations [...] – is far from typical"<sup>4</sup>. Therefore, initial disorders at first glance in Quentin De Wispelaere's images subsequently occur to be symptomatic, instinctive and almost tangible.

*Raw Coverage* illustrates Quentin De Wispelaere's unusual vision of photography which poses an eternal question of possibility of another kind of human experience which challenges our perception of the world and what is around us. Such experience surpasses cliché frontiers of ordinary fashion photography and steps into ultimate ground of transposing experience. Due to the fact that images themselves form complex systems of visual and physical, they demand the viewer for profound mutual interaction.

By posing a ground-breaking inquiry of what is our phenomenological experience residing within the realm of *Raw Coverage*, De Wispelaere leaves a meaningful mark in the history of contemporary fashion photography. The essential mark that re-interprets established horizons of art historical heritage.

<sup>3</sup> Gleisk (1987: 6), Clifford (1988: 5), Levi Strauss (1988: 111-112) as quoted in *The Order of Chaos: Social Anthropology and the Science of Chaos*, Ed. by Mark S. Mosko and Frederick H. Damon, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), p.8

<sup>4</sup> Ian Stewart (1998: 84) as quoted in *The Order of Chaos: Social Anthropology and the Science of Chaos*, Ed. by Mark S. Mosko and Frederick H. Damon, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), p.11.