

9 to 29 December 1977  
KUNSTSZENE ZURICH 1977 Exhibition at the Züsphallen  
STEFF GRUBER Hall 7, Place 67

## **Reproducing the subjective perception**

*A conversation between publicist Rene Grossenbacher and Steff Gruber*

*RG: 1974 you worked as a photographer and filmmaker in the USA. What consequences did this stay have for your future work?*

SG: While there I worked very intensively. But more important were the personal and professional working relationships I developed with other filmmakers and photographers who were essential to my further work. For example, my friendship with James A. Herbert, with whom I spent many evenings discussing experimental film making and photography. I also assisted him with his films.

*RG: What were the concrete results of these encounters?*

SG: I became aware of the importance of experimenting with visual communication. I did so above all because I began to realize that conventional viewing habits had to be changed. It also seemed important to me to get away from traditional photography and thus from my role models Henri Cartier-Bresson and Lee Friedlander.

*RG: Did you experiment with instant photography back then?*

SG: Yes, I did. I got to know Silver Thin, one of the editors of Andy Warhol's Interview. We had exciting discussions about Polaroid photography. Soon I started making test images with Polaroid. More and more the Polaroid camera became an indispensable tool for me. Above all because the images in my kind of experimental photography are constantly changing.

*RG: You work not only as a photographer, but also as a filmmaker. How do you reconcile these two media? Where do you see the differences, where the parallels and differences?*

SG: In film, technically speaking, the two elements of movement and sound are added. But for me the essential differences lie on a different level. The film conveys content in a different dimension than the photographed image. Lebovici once said: "Film is a dream that makes you dream". This means that the viewer falls into a dream-like state while watching a film. The effect on the viewer is thus different. While film in general is perceived subconsciously, photography can be viewed from a greater distance.

*RG: And the similarities?*

SG: What both have in common is the form of production (staging, shooting, editing). It is very important for me that I can research new possibilities of visual expression in both fields - film and photography.

*RG: So, you think that current photography and film have to change. What do you think needs to be changed and how?*

SG: I assume that content and form represent an inseparable unity. So we have to change the whole. And this can only happen if you don't follow the established schemes. So we can't keep photographing backlit naked women for another ten years.

*RG: You are taking part in the exhibition „Kunstszene Zurich 77“ this year. You are showing a series of color Polaroid pictures. How did this series come about?*

SG: I'm currently working on a process I named Diatypie. This process is essentially an alienation of my existing photographs, which I then reproduce with the Polaroid camera. The exhibited series is the first result of this work.

*RG: What are you interested in starting from existing material and alienating it?*

SG: In the moment of taking a photograph, I feel, due to the uniqueness of a shooting situation, a number of feelings that can be described by the term "erotic tension". It is my intention to integrate this impression into the picture. With the conventional method I have only partially succeeded in doing this. Through the alienation I have the possibility to reproduce my subjective perception.

*Zurich, December 1977*