

**SZABÓ Dezső****EXPOSED**

9 September – 2 October 2016

The 'Exposed' series consists of works that not only draw on, but also continue, the image theory research begun in the 'Black & White' series. These works are even more reduced, however, questioning the most fundamental properties of the image. The series seeks the ultimate limits of the concept of the image – and the photographed image – through the means of traditional photography.

The word 'exposed' here refers to the technical process whereby a light-sensitive surface is photographically developed, or exposed to light. Synonyms of exposed include: open, unearthed, unsheltered, displayed, and discernable. In the more abstract sense of the word, it can also refer to something that is uncovered, unprotected and stripped of its defences.

Upon perceiving an image, we experience the medial and mental contents of the image as a unified whole. Our mind, however, undetectably oscillates between these two domains. We can only distinguish between these two, different pieces of information through our faculty of reason. One of the fundamental characteristics of the photographic image is that, in a similar fashion to the human eye, it creates an image – in accordance with the laws of physics – on what is usually a flat surface. It is for this reason that photography appears to 'copy' the world in an objective manner; because of these recognizable similarities between the process and objective elements of image creation. This, however, is only a myth and an illusion. The image is not identical to the world. A picture, regardless of its origin, only carries reduced information; it is, in other words, an abstraction. Medial images have the function of carrying and relaying special information. The brain constantly interprets and reinterprets the world, even in the absence of new information. Thus, mental images received through the sensory organs and structured by the mind cannot be considered accurate or reliable either.

My interest in the 'Black & White' series stemmed from the characteristic properties of the photogram. In the case of the 'Exposed' series, the basic tenet is that, thinking further on this, we can leave behind the visual representation of the object as well. Thus, we are left with light, the photo paper, and the two chemicals: the developer and the fixer. In this situation – which reflects not on the outside world, but on itself – the elemental properties of the medial image (in this case, the photograph and the painting) become amplified. These include the shape of the image, the physical and chemical properties of the surface or substrate – in other words, of the analogue black and white photograph – as well as, because of the use of liquid chemicals, painterly elements. These works can be thought of as photo-events or chemical paintings. At the same time, the series also carries conceptual and minimalist contents.

In case of the photogram, a print-like image results from the shape and cast shadow of the object, placed on the two-dimensional surface of the photo paper. The shape that is thus produced renders visible the principle of image formation, while also guiding the viewer's attention toward a possible (unique) form/theme. It is this which makes the acts of perception and interpretation so complex. In the general sense, the image, as such, only exists in theory; we can only point to individual images as one-off snap shots or instances. 'This is a picture.' In the interest of an even more reduced examination of the workings of the analogue photographic image – or, to be more precise, the photosensitive photo paper as object – I abandoned mediality, or the recording of information gained from another object. The character of the picture is determined by the photo paper and how the chemicals behave on its surface. In this way, form is created by events taking place on the image plane. This form is not a reference to anything: it is identical to itself. In contrast to painting (e.g. action painting), the 'image' comes into existence not on – but in – the surface, in the photo emulsion (silver-gelatine print), through a physicochemical process. In the interest of rendering the problem more comprehensible, I employed the tools of painting only to a minimal extent. There are no visible traces left behind by such tools or painterly gestures, nor did I rely on any means other than the effect of gravitation in applying the photo chemicals.

The fundamental question is how the image represents itself in this objectlessness and absence of representation. Abstract painting cannot break free from the system of visual representation. (Even geometric or amorphous forms belong within the system of visual representation regardless of whether they can be seen as corresponding to some recognizable object or phenomenon.) In radical/monochrome painting, the painting becomes an image-object. (The painting is an object covered in paint.) Monochrome painting takes for its subject the examination of the basic visual tools of painting. Not even this reduced form, however, can elude the domain of associations completely.

In a photo-painting, the method/technique of painting itself becomes the element of representation. The basic visual elements of painting emerge, simultaneously concealing and revealing the ways in which the concept of photosensitivity itself manifests in the image. (This act of uncovering is simultaneously a kind of covering up. Existence reveals – and conceals – itself in that which exists.) In extreme cases, the white and black rectangles are the starting point and the end point, which conventionally constitute the 'place' (white canvas, black board) of the image (information).

Analogue – or chemically-based – photography is primarily based on the photosensitive properties of silver halides (silver iodide, bromide and chloride) and possesses unique physical characteristics. Through this series, I research possible interpretations of the somewhat poetic term 'latent image' and experiment with the explicit representation of silver, as information carrier, on the image surface – thereby pointing to the fundamental medial properties of the analogue photographic image.