

Andrea Robbins & Max Becher

The bonding of people, cultures, and places today has fallen into extreme disarray. Despite globalization and digitalization, one still would like to assume that culture has a location: a place where it came into being and where it is experienced and shaped by people. History knows of many, often conflicting processes in which, in one place, one culture is projected onto the screen of another, from processes of bilateral dialogue or one-sided influence right up to obliteration of one by the other.

The cases that Robbins and Becher focus on have a historic dimension, in light of the recent, desperate migration to Europe, whose impacts on different cultures no one can foresee, but its political explosiveness is no less because of that.

Robbins and Becher draw on research, travel, and the camera. They set their “close reading” against the official historical narrative and platitudes – and therein lies the emancipatory power of their work. When we, the public, see the photo series in museums and publications, we are astonished at the direct, objective, but never journalistic pictures whose details draw us in. We see the photographs of Robbins and Becher, and we instantly activate our imaginary image archive, which often contradicts the subject. Viewing the photographs thus becomes a self-reflecting process that requires us to take a position.

Robbins and Becher are dedicated to the individual case. Cultural theories provide an accompanying dialogue, but never push into the foreground. What interests them, above all, is the uniqueness of cultural practice, in which individual dignity and resilience are expressed.

Eva Schmidt