

on (women) photographers MICHELE ABELES

interview by MAURIZIO CATTELAN

and MARTA PAPINI

PORTRAIT BY JEREMY LIEBMAN

MAURIZIO CATTELAN – Do you mind being called a photographer?
MICHELE ABELES – Why would I mind? Do you know why I really don't like that question? It can be interpreted a few ways: one is in relation to the antiquated question of whether photography is art. And a worse question: are you an artist or an artist who uses a camera?

MAURIZIO CATTELAN – Do you remember your first picture?
MICHELE ABELES – I don't.

MAURIZIO CATTELAN – How does a photo get started for you?
MICHELE ABELES – Initially, I think about communication because communication is what's in between, right? I think to go between is the only way to go to the people. The pages of this magazine are what's in between myself and the reader – it's because of that we can talk. I use an image like a train to go from one station to another. I think the images are like the train, not the station.

MAURIZIO CATTELAN – Is there anything that helps the creative process?
MICHELE ABELES – Mistakes and self-deception.

MAURIZIO CATTELAN – Is inspiration for your images a matter of distraction or of being focused?
MICHELE ABELES – I'd say both. I've been told it looks like my camera got loose in the middle of a conversation.

MAURIZIO CATTELAN – How long does it take to get the picture you have in mind?
MICHELE ABELES – My work isn't fully preconceived. Freedom for me means playing. It does not mean being in a void and making crazy moves. It means playing with your own rules.

MAURIZIO CATTELAN – Do you title your photos? How do you decide?
MICHELE ABELES – The thing with titles is I wish they were words that are only read and not something one says out loud.

MAURIZIO CATTELAN – Is narration part of your work?
MICHELE ABELES – It's just the way I perceive the world. I have a kind of nervousness that leads to rapid juxtapositions. It's not so different from punk rock. You scream, but you modulate a little.

MAURIZIO CATTELAN – What is your relationship with technology?
MICHELE ABELES – It's a wedge between my sense of time and space.

Mistakes and self-deception.

MAURIZIO CATTELAN – Is photography without a camera possible nowadays?
MICHELE ABELES – I think of photographs as lens-based images, which logically would mean photography without a camera is not possible. However, there can be images made without a lens that are still photographic.

MAURIZIO CATTELAN – Is it true that today everyone can become a photographer?
MICHELE ABELES – Everyone is a photographer.

MAURIZIO CATTELAN – Is your work about creativity or about being a good observer?
MICHELE ABELES – Creativity is a way of having control of situations. Situations may not be happy, but I have control of them, so it's different. I don't know if what I do is creative or just reconstructing life.



MAURIZIO CATTELAN – Is fake the newest version of reality?
MICHELE ABELES – Mirrors should reflect before sending an image.

MAURIZIO CATTELAN – Is there any difference between a picture and a painting?
MICHELE ABELES – Painting is like the senile grandmother in the family, right? She has been crazy for a long time. She urinates and defecates, but everyone in her family knows how to treat her, how to talk to her. No one is surprised at what she does.

MAURIZIO CATTELAN – Who lies more, a photographer or a painter?
MICHELE ABELES – This is a strange question. Since there is no such thing as absolute rightness and truth, we always pursue the artificial, leading, human truth.

MAURIZIO CATTELAN – Do you feel comfortable in front of a camera?
MICHELE ABELES – Yes.

MAURIZIO CATTELAN – Would you agree to shoot fashion?
MICHELE ABELES – I would, but it seems like too much work and too many cooks in the kitchen.

MAURIZIO CATTELAN – Have you ever regretted something that you shot?
MICHELE ABELES – Not at all. I tend to regret things I have not shot.

MAURIZIO CATTELAN – Isn't every picture that you take part of a disguised self-portrait?
MICHELE ABELES – The point of art is to acknowledge the presence, within the I itself, of a realm of irreducible otherness, of absolute contingency and incomprehensibility.

MAURIZIO CATTELAN – Where does light come from?
MICHELE ABELES – Things are luminous by themselves without anything illuminating them.

MAURIZIO CATTELAN – What will your last picture be?
MICHELE ABELES – There are three different ways I could answer this question, and which way depends on the day. Today I choose not to answer this question.



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