



A key to grasp Barbara Probst's photographic intention can be found in her Instagram account, planted among attractive banalities and parsimonious behind the scenes posts. It's a screenshot from Jean-Luc Godard's "La Chinoise", published on April 1 2017, on which a sentence is stretched out over an entire wall section: "vague ideas must be confronted with clear ideas". For her image series which associate from 2 to 10 photos, potentially more, oftentimes Barbara Probst doesn't even try to hide the image capture device she is using, placing it there, highly noticeable, in order to attract and destabilize the gaze. Thus, it is not rare to see in her pictures the wires of camera triggers lying around or even to see the photographers capturing the scene, in turn, on each of the series' pictures. Like a gallery of characters playing out a 'mise en abyme' under the amused eye of the stage director who is careful not to appear.

Probst was born in Munich in the 60s. Her compositions depict subjects shot from several angles at the same time, from different and concomitant perspectives. Thus, a young man crossing the street guiding his bike with one hand will appear in a three-quarter shot and a low-angle shot in one picture is then shot on the 6th floor of a building in another, making the scene appear in a broader context. The subject of the center of the first image is now no more than a passer-by among many others in the second shot. A way of calling into question our perception of what matters and of breaking visual logic. In another series, it's a wooden boat that drifts on a lake, shot from the depths, it coexists with the portrait of a young man lying down in the same boat,

asleep under the sunrays. Like in a Punch and Judy show, Barbara Probst creates connivance with the person looking at her pictures by entrusting them with a secret and taking them by the hand to show them the making of what is unfurled on glossy paper.

The photographer seems to claim the status of an omniscient narrator who would tell a story with pictures, picking up at ground level an element which interests her, then another aloft, at the same second. Showing a boat from above with its languid passenger, then looking at it from below, like an architect examining a building in three dimensions, making it spin on her computer screen to better grasp it and understand its inner workings. Unlike the stagings of a Jeff Walls where each detail contributes in creating dramatic tension, Barbara Probst's images do not seem able to tell a story, and they seem barely able to suggest a moment like another, these instants that make up life without ever taking over. Nevertheless, there is tension stuck to the shots, a suspended expectation which is irritating without being worrying, the feeling of witnessing an illusionist's show. An experience which is reminiscent of graphic novelist Marc-Antoine Mathieu's masterpiece, 3 seconds, in which he takes the reader from reflection to reflection, always further into an image that does not seem able to stop being reborn.

If there is an impression of spontaneity emanating from these images, Barbara Probst leaves no chance to fate, creating 3D models of her series herself before shooting them. The more the number of involved cameras, the longer the preparations, as each camera must take a shot that will become an element of the puzzle, while remaining itself an element thereof by appearing on some pictures, shot by other cameras installed in the visual field. Images that bounce, objects which aren't objects anymore and that become subjects in turn. As if to reassure the absent-minded spectator and give a frame at the same time as a gesture of good faith, each series comes with very precise geographical and temporal indications, right to the minute. "Do photos tell more about the person looking through the viewfinder or what is shown in that instant?", wondered Barbara Probst in an interview in 2010. A question which influences the diptychs gathered in the book "12 Moments" published by Xavier Barral, allowing our subjectivity to sway from one shot to another without being able to hold onto it, in the midst of petrified bodies and haunted scenery.

*Recommended reading:* Barbara Probst, "12 Moments," Xavier Barral, 2017.