



Where Does Anything Actually Begin?

Christer Strömholm is one of Sweden's most well-known and appreciated photographers. His breakthrough during the 1950s with his pictures from Paris, not least the portraits of transsexuals at Place Blanche. In *Where Does Anything Actually Begin?* the focus is instead on parts of his other production. Different lines and traces within his rich pictorial world are reflected through internationally strong artistry: Annika von Elisabeth Hausswolff, Aziz Hazara, Gosetta Lubondo, Eric Magassa and Eiko Otake. Connections between the works in the exhibition emerge in different ways; new tracks, new lines link the past and the present.

"Am I done? Yes, I'm done."

"Are you pleased with it? Have you included everything you wanted to?"

"Yes," I say, yet I think I may have missed something. But I've put in incredible effort to get all the details of the two-room apartment in the floor plan. It feels solid. Maybe even a little fussy, actually, but finished. I put my pen down and push the sheet of paper across the table, including the instructions I received without understanding why.

"You forgot the bedroom," Christer says.

My mind is rushing. The ground is swaying. Cold, warm, echoingly empty. How?

It was my first meeting with Christer Strömholm. I had been photographing since I was 12, and thanks to photography magazines, I understood what was out there. I had to get out there, be challenged. I contacted Christer and in college, interned with him as a junior. That's how it can begin.

I worked with Christer for six years—in the evenings and in all my free time. There were several of us, who would sort and page through the binders of negatives, searching for new pictures, printing copies in the darkroom, and mounting storage shelves. Sometimes in exchange for a bun or a pizza from nearby Nytorget. We copied the exhibition *9 Seconds of My Life* for Moderna Museet in 1986. This was for real.

A few years later, postmodernism rolled in. One truth became infinitely many. At the Academy for Photography at Konstfack, University College of Arts, Crafts and Design, we were cocky, challenged the laws of photography— "the decisive moment," the authentic, the medium itself. We took chances, exhibited our work, and tried to find our way. One morning at 7:00 am, the phone in my dorm room rang and Christer said: "Have you seen the culture section of today's newspaper? The front page shows one of your sculptures. I'm proud to be your friend."

I know I still haven't completely understood everything Christer gave. But I'm getting there. He constantly challenged the unambiguous. Nothing was what it seemed to be. Or was it? You work and work and work, and then you start over. Do you get any closer? Not often, at all. But you try again. You want to understand, a little bit more. And you want to give, to share.

Christer Strömholm is without a doubt most known for his pictures of the friends from Place Blanche, transsexuals who weren't allowed to exist in 1960s Paris and who saved up to get to Casablanca in order to put their bodies right and become themselves. Of course, also for images of children and the street and bar life of Paris.

The exhibition *Where Does Something Actually Begin?* focuses on parts of Strömholm's other production. Some of his early pictures where bodies, surface, light, and movement create abstract forms or choreographic moments. Others are voids, bags, or textiles, allowing you to tell the story. Children behind bars, a frustrated animal, Hiroshima's second generation. The pictures are central but live in the margins, between the well-known series. They simultaneously connect and complicate the images that have become iconic.

The exhibition is an attempt to manage Christer's world of images, and to bring it into the present context. Photography today moves freely on the art scene. Earlier doctrines have been tossed, modified, and reincorporated in a time that, in spite of everything, both tolerates a great deal and attempts to establish what had previously been displaced. Leica and Tri-X are no longer all that's important—there are so many paths to choose. Many use the camera, in some form or another, to tell many different things, in many different ways. It is like a brush, a pen, or choreography.

The exhibition is also an attempt to link the present day to what has come before. The exhibition connects strong international artistic practices from different generations to Strömholm's various lines. In photographic/graphic collage, children play under bombers. A body moves choreographically in the architectonically nuclear remains of Fukushima. We encounter snapshots of abandoned, forgotten items and the remains of the marginalized activities, in what appears to be West Africa but could also be Detroit or Alingsås. In a series of staged photographs from a forgotten train set, real individuals from the present-day travel alongside imaginary ones from the past. A film shows young boys who defy the violent wind on the cliffs above Kabul and sound the alarm about the horrors of the city.

All of these pictures connect, in a sometimes straight, sometimes crooked manner, to Christer's fascination, passion, alienation, duplicity, sorrow, and pain. But just as many connections arise between the pictures themselves: singular, double, or multiple. Back and forth. Here and there.

It's up to you to create order.

Now and then, you miss a room.

That's where the light gets in.

It's okay.

Mattias Givell, Development Director Wanås Konst