



Barbara Probst
12 Moments

Barbara Probst
12 Moments

Hartmann books

This book is dedicated to
Christoph, David, Dominique, Laura, and Stefan,
the protagonists of the *12 Moments*.

Essay by Robert Hobbs p. 51

Biographies ■. 63

Robert Hobbs

Noted art historian Robert Hobbs has written widely on modern and contemporary art, including extended essays on David Altmejd, Keith Haring, Jonathan Lasker, Sterling Ruby, Yinka Shonibare, Frank Stella, Kara Walker, Kelley Walker, John Wesley, and Kehinde Wiley, among others. His monographs have focused on such artists as Alice Aycock, Edward Hopper, Lee Krasner, Mark Lombardi, Robert Motherwell, and Robert Smithson.

Hobbs has served as curator for the American and Bahamas Pavilions at the Venice Biennale and for the American Representation at the São Paulo Bienal. In addition, he has curated numerous exhibitions at major international museums and has been a professor at Cornell University, Yale University, and Virginia Commonwealth University.

Barbara Probst

Barbara Probst was born in 1964 in Munich, Germany, and studied at the Akademie der Bildende Künste, Munich, and the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. She has exhibited widely in Europe and the US. Her work was shown in *New Photography* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 2006. She has had solo exhibitions at CentrePasquArt, Biel, Switzerland; Domaine de Kerguehenec, Bignan, France; Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago; National Museum of Photography, Copenhagen; Stills Gallery, Edinburgh; Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, Madison, Wisconsin; Oldenburg Kunstverein, Germany; and the Rudolfinum, Prague.

Her work is represented in numerous public collections, including Folkwang Museum, Essen; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich; Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

Barbara Probst lives and works in New York and Munich.

Barbara Probst: 12 Moments

Copyediting: Tas Skorupa

Graphic design and typesetting: Silke Fahnert, Uwe Koch, Cologne

Typefaces: Akkurat

Reproductions: Perfect Image, Ostfildern

Printing: Offsetdruckerei Karl Grammlich GmbH, Pliezhausen

Paper: Profimatt, 170g/m²

Binding: Buchbinderei Lachenmaier GmbH, Reutlingen

© 2016 Hartmann Projects, Stuttgart

© 2016 for the essay: Robert Hobbs

© 2016 for the reproduced works

by Barbara Probst: VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any other information storage and retrieval system, without prior written permission from the publisher.

Published by

Hartmann Books

Rulfingerstrasse 18

70567 Stuttgart

Germany

www.hartmannprojects.com

Hartmann Books is the publishing arm of Hartmann Projects, a company promoting artists, curating and organizing exhibitions, and publishing books.

First edition, September 2016

Published in conjunction with shows in 2016/2017 at

Lars Bohman Gallery, Stockholm

Monica De Cardenas, Zuoz

Galerie Kuckei + Kuckei, Berlin

Hartmann Books are available internationally at selected bookstores.

For further information, please visit our homepage:

www.hartmannprojects.com

ISBN 978-3-96070-005-0

Printed in Germany

Barbara Probst: Moment as Multiplicity

Robert Hobbs

Of all the means of expression, photography is the only one that fixes forever the precise and transitory instant.

Henri Cartier-Bresson,
The Decisive Moment, 1952

All photographs are memento mori. To take a photograph is to participate in another person's (or thing's) mortality, vulnerability, mutability. Precisely by slicing out this moment and freezing it, all photographs testify to time's relentless melt.

Susan Sontag,
On Photography, 1973

In the Photograph, Time's immobilization assumes only an excessive, monstrous mode: Time is engorged. . . . That the Photograph is "modern," mingled with our noisiest everyday life, does not keep it from having an enigmatic point of inactuality, a strange stasis, the stasis of an *arrest*

The *noeme* [meaning] of Photography is simple, banal; no depth: "that has been." . . . The Photograph then becomes a bizarre *medium*, a . . . *shared* hallucination (on the one hand "it is not there," on the other "but it has indeed been"): a mad image, chafed by reality.

Roland Barthes,
Camera Lucida, 1981

Going against the still prevailing tendency to view photographs as decisive and frozen moments, notably located in the past perfect "that has been," theorized by French semiotician Roland Barthes (1915–1980),¹ the New York City-based German photographer Barbara Probst (b. 1964) has restructured the all-important fraction of a second when the camera's shutter clicks and a single picture is taken in her *Exposures*, which she initiated in 2000. Her goal in this series is for several cameras' shutter-release buttons to be simultaneously triggered through a radio-wave transmitter, thereby exploding photography's formerly heralded climatic instant to reveal a host of divergent and often radically different perspectives. As this essay intends to demonstrate, Probst's *Exposures* represent concerted and thoughtful re-readings of photography as not only a medium and genre but also a system that was initially used in her work to represent and then participate in her early sculpture. Subsequently she employed photography to make consciously articulated self-contained and layered images—a situation that can be characterized by the term *mise en abyme*. Later, she re-framed the idea of nested imagery in the simultaneously taken photographs constituting the *Exposures*, which I will contend work in concert with the theoretical lens of French theorist Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995), with the resultant works becoming engaging reconfigurations of his theories in terms of photography. Most recently in *12 Moments* Probst has inverted her approach so that she begins not with situations that she then explodes in her work but instead with still haunting memory or dream images that she investigates, and these works also appear to rely on certain Deleuzian concepts.

In the nineties Probst discussed Deleuze's theories with fellow artists in Munich. Of particular importance to artists

are his ontological views of life as an ongoing (and definitely not static) process of never-ending *becoming*. This approach seemed particularly timely in the mid-nineties with the first widespread use of the Internet. At this time Probst was reading Deleuze's two volumes on cinema. Since these tomes rely on this thinker and philosophic historian's prior work, including his notable co-authored publications with psychotherapist and fellow philosopher Pierre-Félix Guattari (1930–1992), particularly the concept of the Body without Organs used to dramatize the effects of ongoing forces and intensities on life itself, some of these other publications will be considered pertinent to her project.

Before focusing on the Deleuzian connection, which I believe to be crucially important for the *Exposures*, it helps to look at Probst's early work as a sculptor and maturing photographer—experiences that one might also view as working in accord with Deleuze's ideas before considering this early work as a logical step in her overall artistic development. With the exception of Probst's commendable self-published group of five catalogues on her art, which she had created in the nineties, plus an additional museum publication on her work, the critical and art historical literature on her art has not referenced her all-important formative years in sculpture and photography.² The daughter of Munich sculptor Georg Probst, known for his monumental works in stone, wood, bronze, and ceramics for the Catholic Church, Barbara Probst began learning about making sculpture by interning at age nineteen at the local Munich Herbig Foundry, which had developed a reputation for its monumental bronzes. She worked there for six months before entering the Akademie der Bildenden Künste München in 1984. At Herbig she spent six weeks in each of its departments in order to gain first-hand knowledge of the entire bronze casting process. Once Probst was enrolled in the academy, she participated each morning during her first three years at this school working in a three-hour class where she would work on life-size clay figures of nude models, positioned on a platform that was turned every ten to fifteen minutes, so that she and her fellow students would learn to consider the human body from distinctly different perspectives—a thoroughly ingrained lesson later critically important for the *Exposures*.

After her third year at the Munich Academy Probst was sufficiently excited by her studies to move to Düsseldorf in

order to study at its famous Kunstakademie where she created wood sculptures with a chainsaw under the direction of the group Zero artist Günther Uecker (b. 1930) and also studied photography under the guidance of conceptual photographer Bernd Becher (1931–2007). In addition, she worked on occasion with Becher and his wife, Hilla (1934–2015), who have been honored not only for their groundbreaking, extended series of straightforward images documenting superannuated pieces of industrial architecture but also for teaching and influencing such noted photographers as Andreas Gursky (b. 1955), Candida Höfer (b. 1944), Thomas Ruff (b. 1958), and Thomas Struth (b. 1954). Probst assisted Bernd Becher on scouting expeditions in the post-industrial neighborhoods of Bielefeld, Dortmund, and Essen, in addition to helping Hilla Becher in the darkroom, often being invited after a day's work to join the couple for dinner. Thus, she gained valuable insights into their work and lives as well as a first-hand view of one of the truly significant chapters of recent photographic history. In addition to these formative experiences, Probst believes one of the great benefits of her Düsseldorf schooling was learning how its art students were involved in recent art, new theoretical ideas, and the types of art galleries that might represent them.³

After one year in Düsseldorf, Probst returned to Munich with a greater sense of the significant interconnections comprising the contemporary Euro-American art world. At the time she was particularly intrigued with the art of Dan Graham, Jeff Koons, Alan McCollum, and a number of eighties painters. She did not consider the professors at the Munich Academy to be as important for her development as her fellow students, who would frequently meet to discuss recent French theory. At this point Probst began to think about sculpture and photography less as media and more as structures to invoke and develop:

From the beginning of my involvement with photography I was drawn to use the medium to figure out what a photograph actually is and how it functions. Basically, I was able to think about it by using it. I looked at all the elements of the "system."⁴

Although she continued to make sculpture, Probst began incorporating photography as an integral component in this work, a noteworthy example being the three-dimensional

wooden armatures of cubes she constructed and then filled illusionistically with photographs of stones or gravel. For her 1990 diploma exhibition she decided not to show her actual sculptures but instead to make small-scale models of them, which she photographed straightforwardly like the Bechers, and then to enlarge and paste images of them on the gallery walls, so that they functioned as ads for themselves. According to Probst, "the works are showing what they are, and by doing that, they are advertising themselves," thereby becoming two steps removed from reality and indirect acknowledgments of such appropriation artists as Mike Bidlo and Sherrie Levine, whose works were then important for her.

In this thesis show Probst was already beginning to think of art as a container for an idea when she constructed an open cube and "filled" its interior with photographs of gravel, thereby setting up the basic conditions for many of her nineties pieces that then multiply the number of containers in individual works of art, thus becoming nested or *mise-en-abyme* images. Since there has been little critical assessment of Probst's early work, as noted earlier, the term *mise en abyme* has not been employed as an interpretative tool for looking at her art. In his acclaimed book *Mirror in the Text*, the Swiss Romance-language specialist Lucien Dällenbach analyzes this trope, beginning with its origination with the French writer André Gide in 1893 and continuing with works of both the visual and literary arts that were created centuries before this date as well as those coming after it.⁵ While there are approximations of the *mise en abyme* in Jan van Eyck's *Arnolfini Wedding Portrait* (1430), where the painter together with a witness are reflected in the bull's-eye mirror located on the back wall of the room depicted in this painting, probably the most direct example is found in heraldry where the interior of the work at times contains within it a smaller duplicate of the overall heraldic emblem.⁶ As Dällenbach astutely observes, a *mise en abyme* is a remarkable form of mirroring whereby the interior of the work can reflect its exterior conditions, resulting in condensation as well as displacement that can paradoxically limit as well as expand a given work's meaning,⁷ thereby commenting on itself and even critically assessing itself in the process. Particularly important for visual works of art is a *mise en abyme*'s ability to set the terms of inherently dynamic situations that mirror a given work's former state so that it in turn cites its former self within itself, even as it anticipates being the subject of

yet another such transformative reflection.⁸ Thus, through its external and internal mirrored likenesses, this device functions as a shifter or hinge, moving back and forth conceptually between reproduction and model as well as enclosed and enclosing sign. In Probst's work, its use might be understood as anticipating Deleuze's *in-medias-res* condition of *becoming* so important for the *Exposures*, even though in her early work of the nineties Probst is playing with iterations of similar elements rather than the concept of *becoming different* so crucial to Deleuze's overall philosophic views and her *Exposures*.

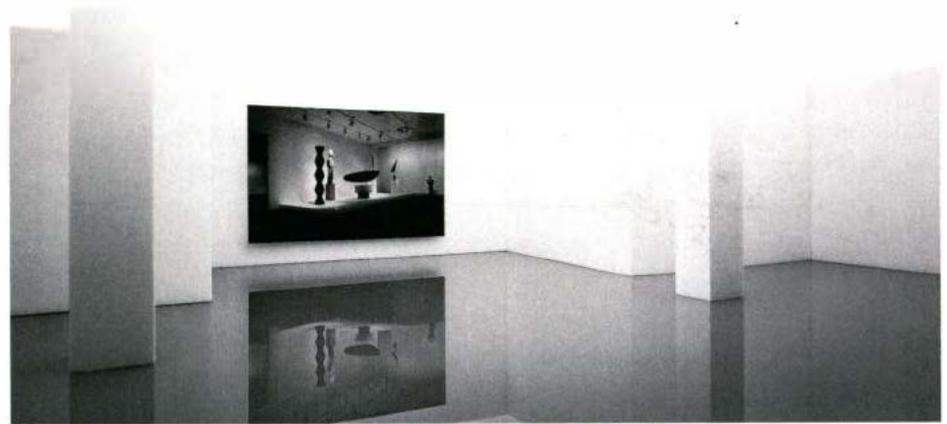
Probst initiated in 1994 the process of nested imagery in the series *My Museum* in which she made use of her photographs of Roman sculptures found on view at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, Brancusi sculptures and a Matisse painting from MoMA, in addition to a diorama of birds from the American Museum of Natural History. In order to create this work, she constructed small architectural models of an imaginary museum with Plexiglas floors and glass ceilings in which she installed these images before photographing them again when housed in these stage-like containers. She then enlarged the resultant photographs and mounted them on Plexiglas in order to exhibit them in gallery spaces, which she then photographed and reproduced in the catalogue *My Museum* as well as in the subsequent publication *Inexpectation*, where they were one among several groups of works being included in the exhibition this catalogue documents.

The next year (1995) Probst created a small architectural model of her apartment for the show called *Welcome*, which she then displayed on a tabletop supported by two sawhorses, double the size of a similar one in her living quarters. This ensemble was strategically placed in the center of the Frankfurt Kunstverein's gallery space. On the walls surrounding this central installation, Probst arranged, at floor height, a group of large photographs of her apartment, all taken from a ladder in order to mimic the aerial view of looking into a doll's house, so that the overall exhibition of architectural model and photographs both contracted and expanded her living space through the various views of it the exhibition permitted. Already considering photography in this exhibition as not only an interaction between photographer and camera but also between audiences and completed photographs, Probst provided enough contrasting situations and viewing



BARBARA PROBST
FOTOGENI WERKE

Detail of *Barbara Probst: Fotogene Werke*
Photogenic Works, 1990



My Museum (Brancusi), 1994



Installation view of *Welcome*, 1995



Through the Looking Glass, 1995

angles so that visitors to the exhibition were encouraged to arrive at their own individually achieved mental concepts, i.e., their own conceptual photographs of the overall work. This viewer's response is thus already an important phenomenon for Probst, which she later attributes, in the following statement, to her *Exposures*:

All these perspectives then coincide in the eye of the viewer, which puts him in the awkward situation of having to make sense of them. Either he takes on the challenge or he does not. If he does, he will perhaps try to find out where he actually stands, perhaps he will try to figure out and reconstruct the different perspectives that converge in his viewpoint; perhaps he will then connect the images by virtue of their inherent relations. And maybe he will be able to image a sort of three-dimensional reconstruction of the situation Or he can view the spatially reconstructed scene in his mind from all angles, like a sculpture.⁹

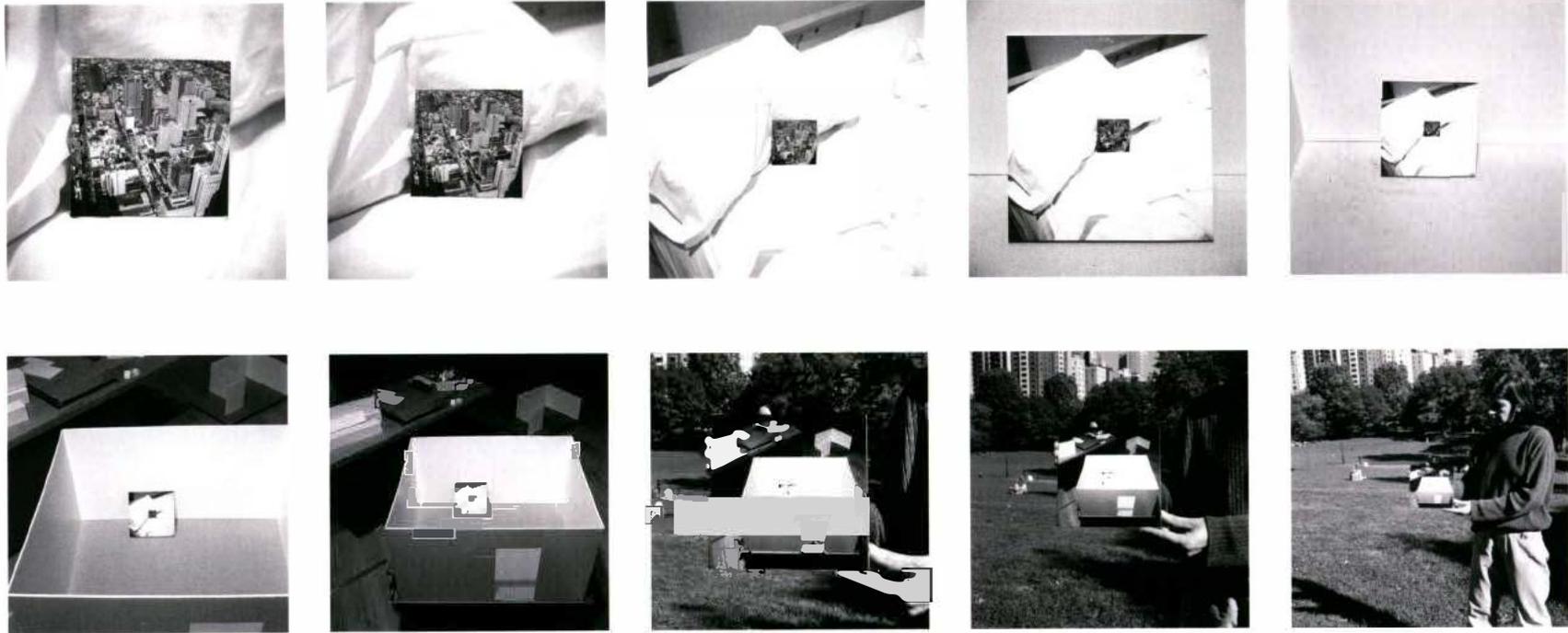
That same year (1995) Probst was invited to create an installation in a group exhibition in Anhaltinische Gemäldesammlung, Schloss Georgium, a castle-turned-contemporary art space, in Dessau. One of the more remarkable aspects of Probst's carefully constructed portion of the exhibition was the large photographed mirror view of the studio in her apartment, including a prominently placed camera directed toward it that had been created by first photographing a large mirror positioned in a constructed box in this room before hanging the resulting image in one of two galleries making up her section of the exhibition. Probst's multi-layered strategy literalizes the idea of the *mise en abyme* as if it were a group of transparent Russian *matryoshka* (or nesting) dolls, at the same time that this highly constructed image breaks down barriers between the artist's world and that of the art gallery where her work was being shown. In consideration of the leading role that both the camera and mirror play in this absurdly brilliant work, aptly entitled *Through the Looking Glass* after the 1871 novel by Lewis Carroll, it is tempting to consider yet another form of reflection this work figuratively alludes to in terms of camera's traditional role as a mirroring device, which on occasion has even incorporated actual mirrors, as is the case with reflex cameras, even though the camera Probst used for this specific photograph does not include mirrors.

Emboldened with the idea of *how* photography can be used to open up ever-larger worlds, Probst embarked in 1997 on creating as a single work *Was Wirklich Geschah* (What Really Went On), a title taken from Orson Welles's last film *F for Fake*, documenting art forger Elmyr de Hory's renditions of Matisse's and Picasso's works and Clifford Irving's fraudulent autobiography. Probst's investigative piece assumes the form of eighty-one nested images, comprising an overall narrative that demonstrates how photographs can both contract into ever smaller spaces and also contradictorily expand into ever larger worlds as they move recursively into vastly different environments, both built and natural, before ending up, like M. C. Escher's *Print Gallery* (1956), at the same point at which they began. According to the artist:

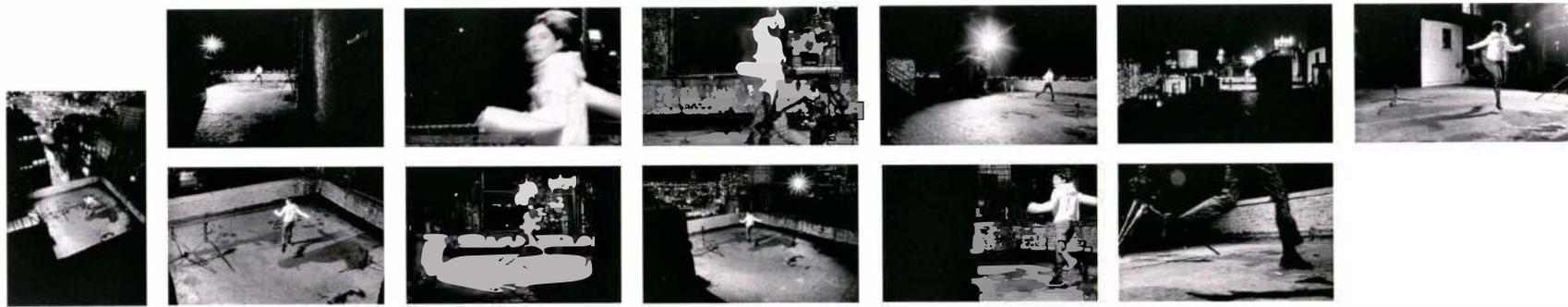
Was Wirklich Geschah as an endless loop of images in images suggests that reality is man-made. I was interested in the tension between the title *Was Wirklich Geschah*, which promises a possible disclosure of reality and the work itself, which illuminates the impossibility of this endeavor.¹⁰

The narrative of this photographic excursion features a number of hoaxes predicated on images purporting actually to be what they depict, rather than photographed scenes of buildings, landscapes, stores, and interiors, etc., which becomes apparent in the piece.

I maintain that the overall photographic trek comprising *Was Wirklich Geschah* accords with Deleuze's view of images as flowing matter expounded in *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, which Probst had read in German and discussed, as noted earlier, with her former classmates at the Munich Academy. Although Deleuze does not use the term *mise en abyme*, his view of cinema as a reflection or refraction of the rest of the world accords with this concept, as everything is ultimately connected, so that a slice of the world is one part of the universe's perpetually flowing and transforming matter, a condition he equates with *cinema*. Thus, one can essentially pick a flower from a garden, collect a rock on a hike, and be *doing cinema* as long as one recognizes the ways these activities reflect a temporary state of *becoming* that is part of a much larger, dynamic, and ever-changing world, so that their chance, individual actions are only its momentary occurrences. In a similar manner, Probst can be viewed as



Detail of *Was Wirklich Geschah*, 1997-98



Exposure #1: N.Y.C., 545 8th Avenue, 01.07.00, 10:37 p.m., 2000

creating nested images with layered still photographs referencing one another and still be *doing cinema*, since each and every one is a different slice of the universe that refers back to the cosmos as continually differing from itself, in other words, as consisting of distinct singularities. This view of cinema works in tandem with the late nineteenth-century German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche's theory of the eternal return, which he pondered in his unpublished notebooks, as not reoccurrences of the same but instead continued reappearances of new, diverse, and never-ending singularities.

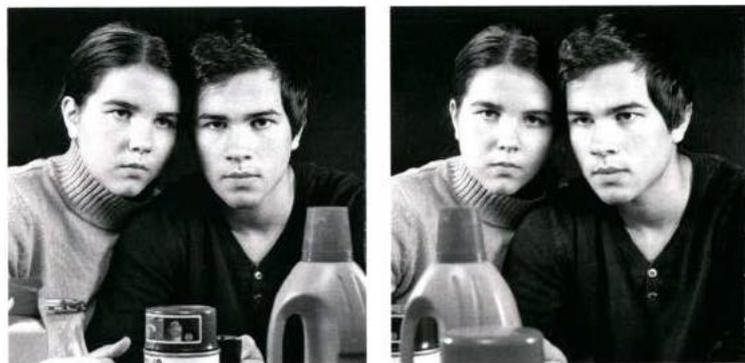
Moving from the perpetual conundrum of *Was Wirklich Geschah* to *Exposure #1*, the very first work in this series, which was made on January 7, 2000, may have seemed at the time like a giant step in a new and totally uncharted direction, even though, in retrospect, it appears to be a logical and inevitable development. Although Probst had tried the year before to make multiple exposures of the head of her niece while in Munich, she envisaged a much more ambitious project with her first *Exposure* when she decided to rent ten cameras and tripods and use them together with the two belonging to her in order to create a new work. At this point, Probst was using neither digital cameras nor a radio transmitter to ensure that all the cameras' shutters clicked simultaneously. Instead, working late one night on the rooftop of her twenty-fifth-floor New York apartment building, she opened the lens of each of the twelve carefully positioned cameras, all on the same rooftop, and then employed a strobe light to register her action of leaping into the air before closing the lens of each camera.

When studying this first *Exposure* and later works in the series, Probst has recalled an accident she had as a fifteen-year-old gymnast when she failed to reach the bar and experienced her life flash before her as she fell to the floor. She has since wondered about the connections between this past event and the later *Exposures*, and such a stirring and memorable incident could well be a personal motivation for the series, whereby even a single instant can become rife with possibilities. However, the appeal of these works for viewers might be more closely affiliated with Deleuze's concept of *becoming*, since the *Exposures*, with their many permutations, offering diverse ways to interpret a single instant, appear to epitomize his understanding of *difference*, as well as his theory of *time crystals*, which he explored in *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*. In this type of image, predicated on time,

dissimilar aspects of the reflected and refracted moment, much like a crystal, become so mixed up and intertwined that reality and virtuality are understood as a dizzying assemblage of possibilities, and no single view is privileged as the actual and definitive one. Instead of settling for a static scene, this art puts viewers in the position of examining the world as a plane of immanence, that is, in terms of the remarkable flows and forces that hold it together, even as these dynamic elements provide opportunities for life to move in ever-changing singular directions. In many ways Probst's work manages to center on a dynamic field of possibilities as her art moves from static tree-of-life metaphors to embrace the idea of rhizomatic lines of flight that potentially de-territorialize the pregnant moments she so carefully constructs. It is my contention that the *Exposures* take the major form of photography's decisive moment, referred to in the first epigraph for this essay by Cartier-Bresson (1908–2004), and make it *minoritarian*, to use Deleuze and Guattari's apt phrase, referring to the capability of certain works of art to function like viruses working from within given artistic or literary traditions, thereby destabilizing their accepted conventions and redirecting them to compellingly new aesthetic ends.¹¹ Within the parameters of the *Exposures*, which are predicated on a host of dichotomous relays without any digital enhancement, Probst has discovered the means to create resonances in her art with such well-known genres as advertising (featuring prominent commercial products), film noir (where ambiguity is foregrounded), tableaux vivants (in which stationary models have been obviously posed), and performance work (where active movement prevails). In addition, she has enjoyed including in her *Exposures* a range of backdrops, ranging from film stills taken from Michelangelo Antonioni's 1966 film *Blow-Up*, with its narrative focused on a mysterious murder with evidence for it secreted in a series of still photographs, to shots of the actor Daniel Craig, the current James Bond, as well as easily identified picture-postcard-like scenes of the Alps. Among the *Exposures*, there are close ups of individuals, panoramic street scenes, views of cameras, photographers at work, and detailed still-life compositions, making this series extremely diverse, even though the artist has gone on record as wanting her images to be "easy to pigeonhole,"¹² so that viewers will not spend time figuring out the subject matter but instead will focus on "how we see."¹³ She would like for percipients of her work to note,



Exposure #87: N.Y.C., 401 Broadway, 03.15.11, 4:22 p.m., 2011



Exposure #109: Munich Studio, 09.19.13, 5:31 p.m., 2013

moreover, the traditional “restriction[s]” to “our field of vision,”¹⁴ which has been photography’s traditional legacy, a condition her *Exposures* aim to extend in compellingly new ways. Probst has conjectured that the all-important ensuing spaces between individual components in the *Exposures* may be their most important feature:

The substance of the series exists not in the individual image but rather in the interrelations between the images. So, instead of judging the individual images, the viewer is invited to travel through the space they mark out, to take on different points of view and to see him- or herself looking. The space between the images is the space of this journey. Sometimes I think that the space between the images is the most important part of my work.¹⁵

As noted earlier, this type of in-between looking can be analogized as a form of conceptual photography when each observer constructs his or her emotional and/or intellectual gestalt, representing his or her conclusive view of the artwork’s meaning. One might conjecture that the viewers’ interpretations enter into a dialogue with the work’s inherent *mise-en-abyme* structure to become yet other nested images, albeit abstract and intangible ones.

One of Probst’s favored similes for photography considers the camera to be like “an eyewitness and a photograph . . . like a witness’s account.”¹⁶ It is an approach conducive to the *Exposures* where the numbers of observation points, serving as substantially different observed accounts of the same event, end up making seemingly related views of the same scene appear to be in conflict. In her recent series, *12 Moments* (created from June through December of 2015), Probst has challenged herself to start each of these works from a dissimilar and much more unwieldy set of sources than the bystander simile she customarily assumes. In this new series she initiated each pair with a single actual dream image or memory of an experience and then proceeded to find a second picture to accompany it. Thus, instead of relying on carefully and divergently positioned cameras to create different accounts of a given situation, she has reconfigured her generative eyewitness analogy so that the camera now serves as a highly personal and emotional seismograph for recording her own highly cathected images. Therefore, rather

than starting with the question of how to break up and reconfigure a scene so that the different perspectives comprising a given *Exposure* then reframes it, leaving viewers an open-ended situation to resolve, Probst begins each of the *12 Moments* with a personal mystery—her own film noir, so to speak, that she hopes the individual diptychs will help her settle. In this group of works viewers are not made privy to Probst’s private recollections; instead they are presented with visual enigmas that the artist considers universal enough to resonate with a wide range of percipients. While a couple of the pairs of photographs making up *12 Moments* are distinctly related, such as the young girl in the back seat of a car and the woman dressed in a black-and-white checked coat, others only appear at first to be indissolubly connected. However, with concentrated looking, the links between the pairs comprising the remaining ten works begin to break apart, even though the artist has utilized such special effects as smoke, fire, and scenes shot with an underwater camera in order to tie them together.

When discussing these works, Probst has emphasized her personal need to respond to an image that has haunted her over the years and then to work backwards to envision a second image before shooting the two simultaneously. The subtle gap between the ensuing pairs making up the ten combined images might be considered analogous to a cinematic *jump cut* in these works that are even more attuned to film than the *Exposures*, making the two images comprising each set both coalescing and rivaling vectors that serve as hinges, which alternatively unify and separate each segment. These ongoing conjunctions and disjunctions endow each of the works with a contrapuntal force, bestowing on them the semblance of vitality. Part of the power of *12 Moments* comes from their paradoxical familiarity, making them appear ubiquitous, even though the precision and delicate sensitivity with which they have been composed militates against instant recognizability. In addition, the ease with which one can identify these scenes conflicts with the aligned and divergent forces they either embody or reflect, and the resultant energies in these works, in my opinion, is reminiscent of one of Deleuze and Guattari’s famous terms, the “Body without Organs.” Although this enigmatic designation, often abbreviated as “BwO,” may have had a source in Antonin Artaud’s 1947 poem “To Have Done with the Judgment of God” and his own bouts with mental illness,

this term became a way for these two theorists to characterize the conjunction of different energies working either in tandem or at odds with one another to create both organic and nonorganic assemblages.¹⁷ Thus one might utilize this concept as appropriate means for characterizing the dynamic energies formative for Probst's art.

If one were to summarize the grand and truly significant tradition of modern and contemporary German photography over the past century, one would need to start with August Sander (1876–1964) and his remarkable efforts to photograph markedly distinct types of workers. Sander might be followed by the austere yet beautiful black-and-white photographs created by the Bechers, who, as noted earlier, documented a range of industrial types of structures in the Ruhr Valley rust belt, and also taught many of the most important German photographers of the next generation, including Gursky, Höfer, Ruff, and Struth, who took monumental color photography to new heights in works that coupled commercial polish and brashness with the fine-art tradition of history painting. Representing the next and most contemporary segment of this grand historic tradition, Barbara Probst has plumbed photography's all-important decisive or frozen moment and rethought it in terms of either diachronic or synchronic nested instants that break up this technical medium's assumed static views, so that they can be seen as participating in Deleuze's ongoing dynamism of *becoming* as a means for continually *becoming different*. In this way her work can be understood as deconstructing actual moments by transposing them into virtual ones, replete with possibilities, creating highly optimistic opportunities for appreciating the extraordinary opportunity a split second offers for potentially *becoming different*, thereby demonstrating how even life's a ltt-too-brief moments can be productively rethought and redirected.

Notes:

- ¹ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), p. 115.
- ² The six catalogues were all self-published with print runs of one thousand copies except for *Through the Looking Glass*, which was limited to half that number. They include Michael Hofstetter, *Barbara Probst* (Munich, 1990), documenting an exhibition in the gallery space, located in a subway station near the Munich Academy; Thomas Dreher, *Inexpectation* (Munich, 1994), an exhibition for Binder & Rid Gallery, Munich; Thomas Dreher, *Welcome* (Munich, 1995), a project focusing on the artist's apartment for the Frankfurt Kunstverein; Thomas Dreher, *Through the Looking Glass* (Munich, 1995), documenting a project at the Anhaltinische Gemäldesammlung, Schloss Georgium, in Dessau; Thomas Dreher and Michael Schultze, *Was Wirklich Geschoh* (Munich, 1998). In order to realize all these catalogues on a very tight budget that would have totaled in euros less than 10,000 US dollars, Probst did all the work herself, including the designing and editing, so that she could maximize the size of the print run.
A sixth catalogue is Barbara Probst, *My Museum* (Munich, 1994), an exhibition for the Kulturreferat der Landeshauptstadt München, which is also the publisher.
- ³ Barbara Probst, interviews with author, New York City, February 29 and March 1, 2016. In both of these all-day interviews, Probst was wonderfully forthcoming. Material from these interviews is interwoven throughout this essay.
- ⁴ Frédéric Paul, "In conversation with Barbara Probst," conducted via e-mail, March 20 – April 30, 2013. in Felicity Lunn, Jeans Erdman Rasmussen, and Lynne Tillman, *Barbara Probst* (Osfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2014), p. 142.
- ⁵ Lucien Dällenbach, *The Mirror in the Text*, trans. Jeremy Whiteley and Emma Hughes (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 121 and vii.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 56 and 59.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 70.
- ⁹ "Conversation: Barbara Probst and Johannes Meinhardt, July 27, 2006," in Karen Irvine, David Bate, Johannes Meinhardt, *Barbara Probst: Exposures* (Göttingen, Germany: Steidl, 2007), n. p.
- ¹⁰ Barbara Probst, e-mail to author, June 1, 2016.
- ¹¹ Cf. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan, *Theory and History of Literature* 30 (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1986) and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (London and New York: Continuum, 2004).
- ¹² "Conversation: Barbara Probst and Johannes Meinhardt, July 27, 2006," in *Barbara Probst Exposures* (see note 9), p. 146.
- ¹³ *Ibid.* p. 147.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 144.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 145.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 142.
- ¹⁷ Cf. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (New York: Viking Press, 1977) and *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). The term "Body without Organs" is an important component in both these books.

The author gratefully acknowledges the help of Ashley Duhrkoop, the Rhoda Thalheimer Research Assistant, Department of Art History, VCU.