It Bangs Like a Drum

The streets of Tbilisi are superior to any other street in any other place. Walking around feels like thinking, in the sense that the character of the act is not something intensional but something that happens, like weather does.

What we do with thoughts is an act, and we can call that act something that we make, but the thought occurring is an event as random as a dog barking in the distance.

I walked in the rain the other day for twenty five minutes. It felt like being on a channel. We used to call it zapping.

The streets are dark, patchy, and difficult to handle. One has to look down to make sure they don't fall in the water but there are not enough street lights to guide one's gaze. One has to simply surrender and hope for the best. It feels like home.

I keep thinking about the drains. Most of them are installed more than two meters above the street, creating spurs of water everywhere, like traps for pedestrians to get wet. One can walk under them like one would do under a waterfall. Just on the street that I am staying, I must have counted over thirty waterfalls.

The rain in Tbilisi, it bangs like a drum.

Coming to Tbilisi with my works from Basel felt like going on a trip to some place i've never been to with a book I've read at least once before. In the case of Tbilisi, it's Camera Lucida by Roland Barthes.

There are a few reasons why this is the book I brought. First of all, all the books I had at home and wanted to read were too big and heavy to put in my backpack. I knew I wouldn't read much anyway and then it would have felt like a mistake and a miscalculation. I've only read Camera Lucida once, and it's a conveniently thin and light book. I have been in Tbilisi for six days now and I haven't even opened it.

Another reason I chose to bring this book is because I wanted to focus on photography while being here. I brought four cameras with me, which is an exaggeration by all accounts, but I didn't want to choose because I usually cannot. I'd rather carry a big weight than experience regret.

I have never been here before, so my desire was to make something out of it. I couldn't bring a lot of material and I wouldn't stay here too long to make a painting or a group of drawings anyway, so I chose to focus on photographs instead. I would have brought my cameras anyway. I thought that reading Camera Lucida alongside taking photographs around Tbilisi would help to make this intentional and meaningful but as I already said, I haven't opened the book yet and I don't know if I will.

I talk about this book as something I carry around and there is meaning in what it is and that's why I mention its title but I feel now that that can be enough as to the point of why this is the book that is here with me. I guess it's strange to talk about something that is meant to be read, yet I am not doing it and I don't know if I will because I am not sure I even want to, and it feels interesting to talk about it like this instead of forcing myself to read it again and go through it, so there is a point to the whole thing. I mean, I am going to open it at some point because I am curious to see if it will help with taking photographs or focusing the gaze. It probably won't.

I am not entering the book the way I am not fully entering the city but as long as that remains something conscious, it can be fine or meaningful.

I shot a roll of film with my Mamiya yesterday while I was with Ana. She wanted to take me to see a building at the Dezerter Market, she is writing a book about that building. It was really impressive in the sense of its architecture, but the thing that has stayed with me since yesterday was its silence.

It took me exactly five days to start having an intensional photographic gaze around the city. One has to really decide what they want to make an image of. I was taking photographs every day with my other cameras, but the reasons were different. Fifty percent of that was memories. It's the small cameras, the point and shoot and the digital one, so snaps.

My medium format camera is heavy, I would assume a kilo and a half, and I can only take 12 images per roll so I don't want to do it senseless. I want to do it right. In order to do it right, I need to spend time doing a considerable amount of thinking and looking first, and then taking. I guess it's also a bit vain to think about it as, doing it in a meaningful way, taking images that make of an interesting way of looking at the city, as if I am able to give anyone a new way of understanding this place. I don't think I do it more interestingly or more uniquely than the next person.

I think it's less about feeling special in the way that I see and more about… If I can't do it in at least a semi new way, then what is the point of filling this world with more images? Making meaning is such a struggle. I think I go to bed and I wake up with these thoughts in my head and it never gets any better, but I think this is also the point of sincerity, to also be humble in front of something.

Being in Tbilisi has felt more like looking at an image than being inside a space. I don't mean as a person. As a person I feel in it, but as an artist, it takes longer, it is slow. I hope that changes soon. At the moment I feel like a perceiver. What I want to be is both the perceiver and the teller. Going through the tunnel of experience and coming out of it with a new idea.

Last night it rained non stop for about four hours straight. I feel asleep after that, so probably it kept raining until the morning.