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Creativity and Color

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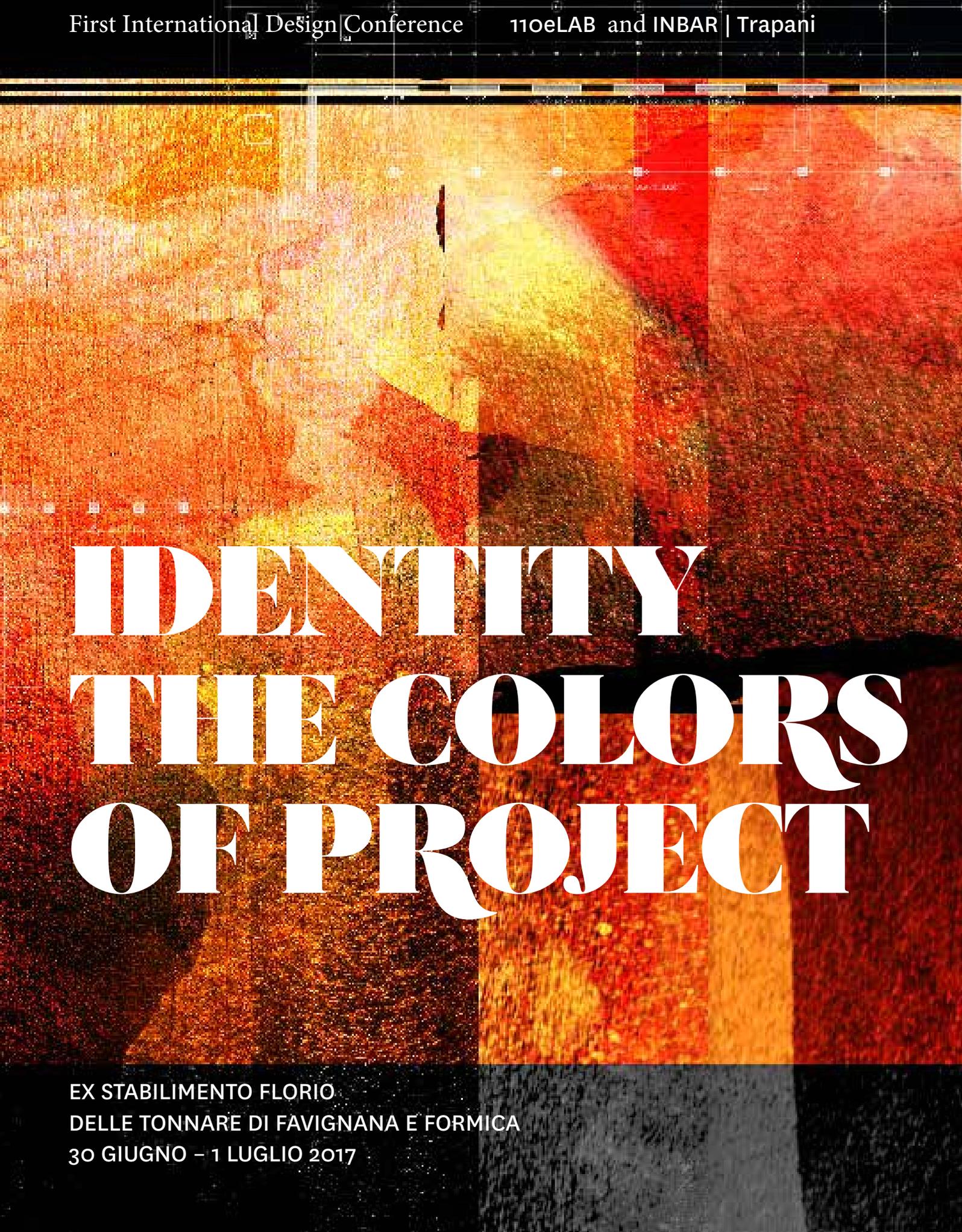
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The background is a complex, abstract composition of warm, textured colors. It features a palette of oranges, yellows, and reds, with a prominent dark silhouette of a person's head and shoulders in the center. The overall effect is one of depth and artistic expression.

IDENTITY THE COLORS OF PROJECT

EX STABILIMENTO FLORIO
DELLE TONNARE DI FAVIGNANA E FORMICA
30 GIUGNO - 1 LUGLIO 2017

Abstract

Creativity and originality of style are key elements to affirm themselves in an increasingly crowded and competitive world of advertising photography. Some photographers challenge conventions to assert their innovative ideas. Dealing with extremely delicate social issues and using them effectively in the advertising world is a very rare and difficult task.

Oliviero Toscani and David LaChapelle marked an era in advertising photography using similar content but with totally different technique and style. They have written and started a new phase of fashion photography, inventing a revolutionary approach to business, communication and public relations. There are many similarities in the two photographers work, but a big difference in the implementation and execution of the photographic project.

The following article aims to highlight resemblances and differences between two artists considered among the most important and influential photographers of the 20th century.

Creativity and color

The differentiation and the creation of an original style are crucial to succeed in an increasingly competitive and fast changing world.

Photographers cannot limit himself to the realization of images of good quality but must also be able to develop a strong creative sense to stand out.

The exasperated technology applied to the latest cameras makes easy taking technically valid photos even if used by a chimpanzee or human beings with few notions of photography. All this reminds us that one of the most important aspects for those who want to communicate through images are the concept and a good dose of creativity.

Many insist that creativity is a natural, innate gift and therefore cannot be easily developed.

In other cases, we tend to conceive creativity as something that can be improved and developed, a capacity for innovation, in other words the ability to find original solutions not only in the artistic field but in all the disciplines.

To confirm this, one of the most interesting definitions of creativity come from a mathematician, Henry Poincare 'who says:

"Creativity is combining existing elements with new connections that are useful". The new and useful categories explain the essence of the creative act: to overcome the rules (the new) to establish a better shared rule (profit). In short, Poincaré establishes a simple and general rule - it is something that mathematicians know do very well - which brings back the multiform of the creative gestures possible to the formula $C = n \cdot u$. In essence creativity is the product of a quantity of "new" and of a quantity of "useful" ...

... Inventing is discerning, it is choosing [...] among all the combinations that can be chosen, the most fruitful will be those made up of elements drawn from very distant sectors. I do not mean that to invent it is enough to put together as many disparate objects as possible: most of the combinations that would form in this way would be completely sterile. But some of these, very rare, are the most fruitful of them.

[...] What is most striking is the phenomenon of these sudden illuminations, a manifest sign of a long unconscious previous work [...] about the conditions in which the unconscious work takes place, there is another observation to do: it is impossible, and in any case remains sterile, if it is not preceded and followed by a period of conscious work.

It is quite evident that the creative moment is not a fortuitous casual moment that occurs thanks to a "supreme gift" as Paolo Legrenzi, professor of cognitive psychology, reminds us, with reference to the artistic work:

"By adopting the energetic metaphor, derived from the physical sciences of the time, artistic creation was conceived as the result of a shift of forces in the field of desire, that is, in the unconscious. This was the gasoline that fed the artistic creation ... even a failed work or that of an inept amateur could be generated by the same forces of the unconscious as hypothesized for a masterpiece".

So not only discipline but also the forces of the unconscious contribute to generate an idea. Elements such as imagination and inspiration play an important part in facilitating the work flow, Paul Arden, in fact, reminds us that:

"The most common idea of what creativity is and has to do with the arts. Absurd. Creativity is imagination and imagination is for everyone "and adds:" To be original, we need to look for inspiration from unusual sources".

According to some, the photographic act is direct and realistic. Without manipulations or filters. To confirm this: "

In what is considered a very important cornerstone, the essay by Roland Barthes entitled "The photographic message", of 1961, clearly states that the deep and somewhat mysterious fascination of photography, is its condition of analogy with respect to the real, derive directly from the fact of being a "message without code", and for this reason is without cultural intervention".

The work of a photographer is based on a continuous process of problem-solving, selection and choices, both technical and creative, often dictated or filtered by his cultural background. It is not enough to be technically perfect but it is important to communicate effectively, generating and conveying emotions.

Even Anne Geddes remarked this when she says: "I think the emotional content in an image is a very important element, regardless of the photographic technique.

Most of the images I see lack emotional impact to cause a reaction of those are watching them, or to keep them in their hearts "

So let's see what may be the important ingredients for creating a winning image. A good idea above all, excellent technique, creativity, courage to experiment and risk, and also a good knowledge of human psychology. To these I would add a last variable that is often decisive, the use of color.

The color or use that if neither does, is a key factor for reading an image. The appropriate use of color completely changes the visual impact of the image. An attentive photographer makes a wise use of it to highlight or minimize some elements of his image.

At this point I find interesting to observe how two of the most influential contemporary photographers relate to the use of color for the realization of images characterized by a strong social content.

The first is Oliviero Toscani author of some of the most provocative advertising images of all time.

Oliviero Toscani is an Italian photographer, born in 1942, in Milan. He is the genius mind author of some of the most successful advertising campaign for brands and magazines worldwide, such as Diesel, Chanel, Fiorucci, Benetton and more. He studied design and photography in Zurich from 1961 to 1965. He became famous for his controversial commercial campaign created for Benetton, between 1982 to 2000.

Toscani expresses himself with regard to creativity: "Creativity is genesis, birth, divine strength, energy, imagination, pain, commitment, faith, generosity. It must be visionary, subversive, disturbing ". And then he criticizes the bureaucratic censors and the "non-creative" by saying: "It's a huge army: a crowd of bureaucrats who, thanks to the position of power they hold, claim the right to block creative processes. They are there to level to mediocrity any idea that is not stupid enough to make everyone agree: so the newspapers are all the same, the cars all look alike, the television programs are interchangeable, the clothing brands design the same style ". In one of his books he reiterates his absolute contempt for conformity by stating that: "creativity is something unusual, scaring, confusing. It is subversive. Be careful of what you see and hear. Doubt to doubt. It acts even if it is wrong. Penetrate preconceived notions. It disconcerts established certainties. He unceasingly invents new paths, new languages. It causes and changes points of view. "

His aversion to this superficial and leveled way of working towards mediocrity leads him to attack the system by stating that:

"Artists should have the power to finally free themselves from their fears. The future needs to allow the artist, real power and responsibility in the world of communication. Creatives should break this circle, destroy these codes and help revive free thinking. "

His break with the status quo is extreme and can be found in his images. So much so that for him has created the neologism of "Shockvertising" that is a combination of the word "shock", traumatize and the word "advertising", advertising. It all began when Toscani started working for the Benetton company.

"Under the gaze of Toscani, Benetton's advertising in the 80s, in a crescendo evolves from photos of models of different races to social issues. In 1990 Benetton's advertising became even more controversial and often without showing the company's products, instead focusing on shocking images, like a priest kissing a nun or a black woman nursing a white baby boy. "

On the Benetton website, Toscani defends his images by stating: "I'm not here to sell sweaters, but to promote a corporate image". The owner Luciano Benetton supports him saying:

"The purpose of advertising is not set to sell more but it is to advertise" institutional, which aims to communicate the values of the company ".

Toscani supports the primacy of photography from the point of view of the message, placing it in a strategic position in the world of communication. "I believe that being a photographer is the most beautiful profession in the world: it is writing with light. Like God ... "And he adds, to emphasize this challenging role: "In front of the photograph we engage our conscience. When you look at one image, it start the relationship with what you see in relation to your culture, conscience, morality, and your ethics. Motionlessness is the value of photography, not a limit.

You have to interpret the photographs, with a premise and a conclusion, for this reason are often the still images that put society in crisis.

Walter Binder, teacher of Toscani in Zurich, recounts: "[...] once, out of the blue, he ruled that political philosophy should also be part of advertising, because billboards on the streets are a place and a time more than opportune to show our beliefs. For him it was important to spread his message, his purpose was to arouse discussion and to challenge the public".

Let's see now how Toscani applies his ideas, and how he chooses to create his images from a technical point of view.

We know that Oliviero Toscani attended the Swiss school in Zurich, that was strongly influenced by the ideas of Gropius and the Bauhaus to unify art, craftsmanship and architecture.

Photography was introduced into the Swiss school by Laszlo Moholy-Nagy and therefore his approach was also applied in the photographic field.

The Bauhaus affirms the simplicity and clarity of the lines. This style characterizes a lot of the production of Toscani, with the use of a white backdrop, to not distract the viewer and to give more emphasis to his subjects. Initially his subjects were the colorful Benetton sweaters worn by the models, but soon the photographer, with the support of Luciano Benetton, one of the owners of the Venetian company, decided that the clothes should no longer be the main subject of his advertising images, because the public already identified the product with the brand.

"Through the use of images from the photojournalistic field, chosen to deal with difficult subjects such as death or sex, Toscani's images continually skip the boundary line of advertising, occupying an area that until then was limited to art or information"

One of the images that caused the most controversy among the various Benetton campaigns is the photo of Theresa Frare portraying a young American, David Kirby, dying of HIV in the arms of his loved ones, in Ohio. This photo was defined by the weekly "Time", the photo that changed the perception of the HIV problem in public opinion.

The photo has a very strong impact and shows on the one hand the tragedy and the suffering of a terminally ill and on the other hand, the pain and the tragic beauty of this family that helplessly assists the death of the beloved child with an almost mystical serenity. The emotional force of this image is so devastating that it has aroused the protests of the Church that saw it as an attempt to copy the classic image of the Virgin Mary embracing the body of Christ after his crucifixion.

To make it even more pictorial, Toscani digitally colors the photo that is originally in black and white.

"When I saw Theresa's image in LIFE, I said: 'That's the picture'. [David] looks like Jesus Christ but he's dying of AIDS. It's like a painting," said Toscani. "The only problem was, it was in black and white and I wanted them to be realistic – color is realistic."

It is all too clear that the objective of Toscani is to provoke to change the mindset of the public through emotional shock. The provocation generates passion and leads to change.

The innovative approach of Toscani marked the passage of an era, it is thanks to people like him that today advertising offers more courageous, sometimes intelligent and intellectually stimulating messages. It is interesting to see how other advertising photographers have ventured into the field of provocation and the use of social themes for artistic and advertising purposes.

Another extremely controversial artist, considered one of the most striking for provocation and innovation is David LaChapelle, who, like Toscani, uses social themes for advertising purposes but creating images with a totally different technique and style.

David LaChapelle born in 1963 in Hartford, Connecticut, is an American commercial photographer, and film director. Andy Warhol, hired him as a photographer for Interview. He worked for some of the most popular magazine as fashion photographer such as GQ, The New York Times Magazine, Rolling Stone, Vanity Fair and Vogue.

He is best known for his photography, which often references art history and sometimes conveys social messages. His photographic style has been described as "hyper-real and slyly subversive" and as "kitsch pop surrealism". Once called the Fellini of photography, LaChapelle has worked for international publications and has had his work exhibited commercial galleries and institutions around the world.

The photos of LaChapelle are hyper colored, surreal, chromatically violent and very ironic.

The use of religious iconography in a modern, pop, key is frequent and irreverent. His style is perhaps a tribute to Andy Warhol who first gave him a photo shoot assignment for his magazine "Interview", later he worked for numerous international magazines such as Rolling Stone and Vanity Fair. His 1996 book "LaChapelle Land" consecrates him as one of the most original and creative photographers of our time and with his book "Hotel La Chapelle" he becomes also the photographer of famous singers and Hollywood celebrities and therefore one of the most paid photographers in the world. His style is unique, visually noisy, often excessively redundant in color, accessories and number of subjects portrayed. His images of social themes are like Toscani extremely provocative and with strong emotional impact, but the style is very different, with blinding colors, almost unreal, bizarre locations and surreal subjects, often pointing to religious themes or strongly erotic images or irreverently showing the obsessions of the American society. He is theatrical and able to combine the history of art with pop culture. Able to mix Leonardo da Vinci with Andy Warhol as in the case of the opera "The Last Supper" in which the apostles are visibly tattooed and with baseball caps and golf, more like Detroit rappers than gentlemen of the Lord's word. For this eclectic quirk, was defined the Federico Fellini of photography.

His style, which is extremely pivotal in pop culture, is also aggressively criticized and blamed. But we must recognize that La Chapelle as well as Oliviero Toscani characterized an era by inventing an absolutely original style mixing different eras in a hyper-visual dynamic way, that result extremely effective and engaging.

The turning point of his career from the creative point of view was his trip to Rome in 2006, and in particular the visit to the Sistine Chapel.

The shocking vision of Michelangelo's work overwhelms the senses of the fashion photographer and directs him towards a new approach to photography, he moves away from fashion and reinvent himself as a fine art photographer, and turn to a different audience with different purposes. Begins the monumental series entitled "The Deluge" with which La Chapelle criticizes the loss of universal values such as goodness and understanding, replaced by men with a growing desire for material goods and futile things. In his photos there are men, women and children who are desperate to save themselves from an apocalyptic universal flood. In this creative phase he

draws inspiration from the history of art, religious themes but always characterizing his images with a strong appeal to Pop culture. He intends to become an artist that can be viewed mainly in art galleries and museums, and then begins a conceptually different production that comments as follows: "I have reintroduced my personal ideas of transfiguration, conquest of Paradise, and the concept of life after death".

The purpose of La Chapelle is therefore to reach the soul of those who observe His images, touching them in the depths of the heart and generating an inner debate to bring to the reflection on the evils of our time the weaknesses of men, prejudices, stereotypes, respect for nature and spiritual regeneration. Beyond the aim that the photographer sets for himself when creating an image, it is clear that the role of photography, even the commercial one, is extremely important and always takes on relevant aspects. Advertising is a creative form of communication that built messages to attract potential buyers. But not only, in fact Grzegorzcyk recall us that:

Advertising aims at generating brand awareness in its every receiver, in order to create an influence which will affect customer's purchases and will guarantee that the product will not be forgotten. It also develops brand awareness among general public and causes that the commercial company gains more popularity in the market of prospective customers. (Grzegorzcyk 2010, 137; KnowThis.com 2012.)

It is important not to underestimate this persuasive power of advertising and the role played in raising awareness on specific topics. We received a warning almost a century ago, by Edward Bernays, advertiser, he admitted in his book "Propaganda" (Edward L. Bernays, Propaganda, Horace Liveright, New York, 1928): "Those who have this mechanism in hand [...] constitute [...] the true executive power of the Country. We are dominated, our mind shaped, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, by people we have never heard of. [...] They are the ones who maneuver the wires ...".

Photography in its various applications has always been a powerful weapon to create a sensation or attract attention to specific themes. Photography is not reality, but the representation of it from the point of view of the photographer or of the commissioner.

"The numerous controversies associated with photography through its history, highlights the diversity of possible interpretations and the insoluble paradox of freedom and constraint of photography itself".

It is all a question of how images are interpreted and of the meaning attributed to them ... A photograph is interpreted in relation to the cultural conventions associated with its creation or distribution. Reading an image is something that each individual makes in tune with his own moral or philosophical conviction. It is also something that society does with regard to the laws and ethics that form the foundations of that culture in particular. "

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"As far as the accusations of being cynical, I look at it in a different way. I don't think it's possible to use human dramas to sell a product. On the contrary, I think you can use a product to focus on certain social problems. Regarding provocations as a way of communicating. Yes, it's still very important. You need to provoke interest. Provocation is, in my opinion, a new aesthetic dimension."