

Atelier

Prague, Czech Republic

"The Photographic Line of Bill Davis"

Journal Article by Michal Janata
translation by Katka Dohnalova

The work of any genuine photographer is a partial answer to the question "What is a photograph?" A photographic answer is a specific pointing out of some composition-creating elements at the cost of the other elements. The exhibition of an American photographer Bill Davis (b. 1970) in the Mlada Gallerie of Sportelna in Kladno has presented photography as an environment of a sheer line. This line helps Bill Davis introduce us to the richness of the world of shapes and forms. Contour line and dimensional line are not at home only in drawing. A camera lens, the light on the light-active film layer respectively, can draw as well, which is a well-known fact. Davis creates body silhouettes and object surfaces parallels and unites them in a composition. Sheerness of his dimensional lines bares a resemblance to the photographic purism of Arnold Newmann.

A place, which a dimensional line fills in Davis' photography, is apparent from the way he works with shadows. Whilst shadows usually play an illusional role of dimension creating, Davis includes the shadows in a play of lines. Light and shadow does not serve as third dimension stimulation, on the contrary – it serves to point out the linearity, two-dimensionality of the entire composition. In this manner, Davis points out the fact that photography is a two dimensional surface onto which a photographer transfers a three dimensional reality. Both objects and human bodies gain dimensionality by mutual demarcation by a dimensional line. It is a contour line, which provides bodies, faces and objects with their identity within a photograph. The line however does not merely have this optical role in Davis' photography, but is also the main bearer of visual dynamism. A hand billowing against the grand piano in the already mentioned photo "The Piano" stirs the calmness of the photographic composition.

His photos gain a rhythmical quality by the forms being accentuated by their contour line demarcation. Dimension as a shape-creating element is replaced with a dynamic line, which brings an internal visual movement into his photography. A group of its own is his portrait series. Contours and lines fall into the shade. Lines as a composition-creating element are a part of other visual expressions. However, the lines do act as dominant in some of his portraits. For example a shadow, from which the faces of a daughter of Pavel Banka and a creative artist Jindra Vikova pop out, acts as an initial chaos from which you can eventually make out the lines of a nose, face, chin. Here the shadow does not have an illusionary function of dimension-creating, it serves more like a background, which brings the facial shape into maximum precision and expression; it points out the 2- D aspect of the portrait by turning it into a movement of dimensional lines.

Finally, a brief note on Bills Davis work. Bill Davis, an American Photographer, is at the moment an assistant of a Czech photographer and FAMU professor Pavel Banka. Bill focuses on lines; Pavel on colour, however both is existent in the works of each other. By

accentuating lines photography does not lose its colour, by focusing on colour the photos don't lose a certain, even though sometimes merely latent, linearity.