



The idea

“The goal I’m pursuing is to create a visual experience, to record both the quality and aesthetics of the visual in an unprecedented way. I want to relieve stories from their volatility, to capture time, to turn pictures into pieces of art and to let them appear real, eternal and immortal.”

(Kurt Moser)





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The principle

In 1850, Frederick Scott Archer developed the ambrotype. He drew the name for this technique from Greek: Ambrotos means immortal. In this photographic process, noble black glass plates are coated with collodion emulsion, sensitised in a silver bath and exposed in a large-size folding camera. In a darkroom, while still moist, they are developed, fixed and sealed with fragrant lavender oil and sandarac resin.

The light-sensitive emulsion, all chemicals and substances are processed by the artist and blended according to very old formulas. Not least because of the hazardousness of some of the used ingredients, this is a challenge for body, mind and senses, always a venture, an experiment.

To some extent, the work on ambrotypes takes an artist back to the beginning of photography. It faces him with challenges and difficulties that unlike digital photography demand deep reverence for the feasible. Since a great part of the used materials is manufactured by the artist himself, this technique requires lots of handcraft, patience and skill. However, the effort is worthwhile, as no contemporary technique in the world allows to artistically materialise ideas of images in such a creative manner and to depict them in such an intensive visual language.

In order to adopt the principle also outside of the studio, Kurt Moser defied the conventions of traditional photography: As vehicle, camera and darkroom serves him a customised Russian army truck. Inside this truck, that is, almost inside his camera, he will work and live.



The project will be realised with two camera systems:

Camera 1 – main camera

The original Russian Ural truck is converted into an enormous camera and darkroom. An object lens will be placed in a hole in the aluminium cabin situated in the back of the truck. Inside, in complete darkness, there will be a film plane mounted on rails that can hold glass plates up to a maximum format of 120 by 150 cm.



Camera 2 – studio and special camera

This aesthetically gorgeous wooden camera from 1907, measuring almost two metres, is a veritable lucky discovery and the heart of the project. It will be used for portraits taken inside the studio and is mounted on a special box wagon. Thus, it is mobile to some degree and can be taken to areas that are not reachable with the Ural truck. With this camera it is possible to cast on glass ambrotypes up to a maximum format of 50 by 60 cm.





The silvery shimmering glass plates are positives and therefore single pieces. An image created with ambrotype can be neither copied or reproduced, nor minimised or aggrandised. Every single glass plate is an unrepeatable unique – even if two plates are exposed one after another, they will never be the same.

The reaction of the chemical components is unpredictable and always different, image deviations are unavoidable. Thus, the pictures are aesthetically unique, similar to human fingerprints.

The handling of the glass plates requires maximum concentration. Just a tiny mistake either by chemical contamination or due to changes of movement or rhythm during the coating may turn the expected masterpiece into a pile of broken glass.

Ambrotypes virtually lack structure. They have no pixels or grids but they reveal clear, almost tridimensional quality.

In the end though, every image originated from this process is a unique precious original – a visual experience made of silver and light, for ever cast on glass with warm colour shades, protected by a varnish of sandarac resin and noble lavender oil.



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The motifs

The ambrotype is particularly suitable for fine art landscape, sensitive portraits, images of architecture as well as for art photography, giving these images their unique character.



The artist

For 30 years, the photographer and cameraman Kurt Moser, born in South Tyrol and after many years abroad now again living in Kaltern, has been working for the most important international television broadcasters with the main focus on documentaries and reporting.

A professional globetrotter, at home in the whole world, over and over again on his way in Afghanistan and Iran, in Israel or Australia. Somebody who knows the savanna of West Africa just as well as Patagonia and the Strait of Magellan. Who saw the atrocities of the Yugoslav wars, who crawled into the gold seekers' earth holes in the Sahara and had been on the hunt of drug cartels in Columbia. Who portrayed not only statesmen and movie stars but also guerilleros and gangsters in his own manner. His camera caught the fear in the eyes of sponge divers in the Aegean and the elation of pearl hunters in the South Sea – and again and again faces. Portraits of people, one can tell they are his artistical passion.

As a contrast to the transience of broadcast television images, with his project he tries to look behind the scenes of the medium photography, to go back to the roots, to take his time for the essential and to portray and immortalis this in uniuques that cannot be reproduced – in impressively large "fine art photos".

Kurt Moser is fascinated by his mountains, the South Tyrolean Dolomites, and by the people living there.

"I would like to put the Dolomites in their true light. For a longtime, I have been searching for a technique that would allow to depict the mountains the way I see them and feel them. The colodium process provides this very subtle, smooth visual language, the depiction on noble glass and the haptic experience linked to it.

Not less than by the Dolomites am I fascinated by the generation of the mountain farmers that may not survive for much longer. Faces that will not anymore exist like this in the future. Marked by hard work, deprivation and grim environments, sincere faces with true stories."



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The realisation

Needless to say, such projects cannot be accomplished as an artistical-financial solo-effort. Already the basic expenses for the Russian Ural truck, that is, the main camera, for the "small" wooden camera as well as for the brass object lenses were substantial, just as were the costs for the non-recurring adaptations of the technical instruments and vehicles. Not less considerable is the procuration of the liquid and difficult to obtain substances necessary for the ambrotype technique, as well as of the prima materia: the exceptional black glass plates and the pure silver.

Individually customised options for cooperation should inspire financial supporters as well as sponsors for material and equipment to take part in the project and to contribute to its goal to render a part of history unique and immortal.

Media interest for Kurt Moser's project is certain – not least because of his international networks and his longlasting collaboration with well-known media institutions and television broadcasters. The line knows him as an expert who works with uttermost precision. There have already been various confirmations by television stations, publishing companies and radio stations. In addition to the shooting, updates on the project's progress will be regularly delivered to the press. Upon completion of a considerable number of exhibits, expositions in the inland and abroad shall take place – first conversations on this already occurred. In order to round off the project's presentation and notification, a high-

gloss book shall document the origination of the first pieces of art.

Last but not least, the Ural truck itself, being a rolling camera and a "mobile event" will provide suitable attention.

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