

Árnyékutazó Shanghaiban
ShadowTraveler in Shanghai
在上海旅行的影子

Tourists... I've always watched with interest as people from different parts of the world are standing in front of fantastic buildings, breathtaking spaces, and how most of them almost immediately begin to take pictures. They try to take possession of something that they cannot really take with them, and, in the meantime, they are taking pictures of themselves or having their photos taken, in order to prove that they were at the given place.

As I was looking at the tourists in New York, in one of the centers of the world, the idea came for entering the pictures of strangers visiting the city, so that I can 'travel' with them through the photos to various parts of the world.

The action, that is, the way I stand beside an unknown family while they are photographing each other before the sights, was captured by a friend. After the photos were taken, I walked up to the tourists and asked for their names and their places of origin, so that I could find out with whom and where I was traveling. Everyone was agreeable. They did not perceive my action as an intrusion to their private spheres or as an entry into their family story; although, even if not directly but through my image, I did become a part of their future, in which they would remember the moments of the past. My action can be understood as a form of playful invasion, blurring the boundaries between the private and the public spheres.

In 2017, 15 years after *ShadowTraveler*, I went to Shanghai, where the requests of the locals called for the continuation of the *ShadowTraveler* project: in this metropolis in the Far East, I became "the Other," the spectacle. Chinese tourists who visited and photographed the sights of the city would have liked to have a picture with me, so the original project got transformed and the journey of secret invasion became that of an invitation. Here too I asked for the names and origins of the picture-takers, in order to learn where I was invited. With the help of the photograph as a medium, I had, again, 'visited' many places.

ShadowTraveler (2002) is made up of black-and-white, analog pictures, which I exhibited in 9x13 cm size. At the time, not only were my photos taken with analog technique, but also the tourists shot on film, while today almost everyone is using a digital camera, and tourists typically take pictures – mostly selfies - with their phones. In these pictures, the background becomes almost irrelevant, the images could be taken anywhere. The recognition of the location is further complicated by the use of filters, which are very popular and frequently applied in China.

In Shanghai, Chinese tourists mostly had selfies taken with me, and, even if it wasn't a selfie, they always used their phones as the picture-taking device. In these selfies, I became the background, that is, the shadow traveler stepped out from the background to become the background itself. The picture-takers often retouched these images with the help of a very popular application at the moment of their creation: they were modifying themselves to be more like some ideals they imagined or longed for, and the subjects of the photos, in this case they and myself, were transformed into kitties, bunnies, or other characters. In this virtual reality that they created, we were able to show ourselves in the pictures in a variety of different shapes and forms through the various figures, and we became part of each other's world by creating an illusion.

For the post-production of my own pictures, I used the same application as the tourists because I wanted to travel in the same virtual reality.