

## **#MyNeighborMonVoisinMeinNachbar**

*#MyNeighborMonVoisinMeinNachbar* is a long-term photographic documentation of a precise urban location, which Google Maps identifies as: 48°49'46.2"N 2°23'00.3"E. This space is located in a major European city next to a busy thoroughfare running parallel to the industrialized quay of a river. The location is often empty but sometimes occupied, not only by passers-by but by those without domicile or shelter.

This is an observational study, not a sociological one. It is without story, without interpretation, without judgment. Images are silent, reticent. What can one know of or from an image, or even from the data gleaned from a long series of images?

The process of the project is as follows. Images are made several times of day over a period of many months. Their initial site of publication is the Instagram page, “studiobauleute”. There is no commentary apart from file number, date and time of capture, a record of basic weather conditions (temperature, wind speed and direction, humidity, barometric pressure, and general description), image metadata (f-stop, focal length, shutter speed, and ISO), and the hashtag, “#MyNeighborMonVoisinMeinNachbar.”

The image is always framed from the same angle and distance; the focal length of the lens is fixed, and the camera is set for automatic exposure. Stark repetition over time is in continuous tension with randomly produced time-based contextual variations:

- The space is occupied, or not.
- Random actions and events are captured both within the frame and at its edges.
- The camera is always handheld, which introduces haphazardly slight variations of framing.
- Weather and light conditions change diurnally and seasonally.
- The camera’s algorithms for automatically setting exposure and shutter speed continually vary color, contrast, and light registrations in the image.

The accumulation and observation of small differences across and along a long series of images unfolding in time is therefore important.

Instagram’s basic parameters also inflect process in specific ways.

- The aspect ratio of the published images is restricted to the Instagram standard.
- Images are displayed online as a vertical scroll in reverse chronological order— newly uploaded images are always at the top of the column, the present pressing the past off-screen.
- Images may also be displayed as a grid, though again, in reverse chronological order.

One might think of this study as a daybook without a stable subject. There may or not be a neighbor, whose comings and goings are often unpredictable. There is an

operator, whose presence and absence are marked by the record of days and times, or their absence, in the series. There may be temporal gaps in series of images and data. What did the operator forget? Why are they absent? Why is the operator routinely present at some days and times and not others? (One might say the same of the neighbor(s).) Ellipses and gaps in the data also record the history of an absent subject, and sometimes their mistakes or failures of discipline.

One might also be inclined to ask: What are the operator's intentions? But then again, only those who are looking for a story or an interpretation, or who want to pass judgment on the images or the operator, will be asking these questions.

What then do these images want from viewers? Commitment. Attentive looking, attending with care. To not impose sense or meaning on the image(s), or to take away from them any more information than an image can offer in its silent presence.

[#MyNeighborMonVoisinMeinNachbar](#) is currently viewable only on Instagram at [studiobauleute](#), where its routine collection of images and data was unfolding from January 7 through June 26, 2018. Now that the process of image collection is concluded, the images will be printed as a series of grids three columns wide and four columns high on a white background in exact reverse chronological order. In other words, the design of the printed grids will conform to Instagram's typical aspect ratio and design parameters. It is likely that the project will conclude with around 385 images and 32 panels of 3x4 grids.

The installation version of the project also includes:

- An enlarged print of the spreadsheet where all data was precisely recorded.
- A video assembled from the completed series of images, but now arranged in chronological order and animated through a process that introduces new temporal complications of overlay, repetition, and retrogression.
- A large format book that includes in chronological order all 385 images with their Instagram captions.

[Studio Bauleute](#) is the author of this work.