



Edgar Zippel, Davide, Sardinia, Italy, 2011, photo

I'm Not Afraid of Anything

Edgar Zippel at Galerie M - Berlin Marzahn, Germany

By Christopher Hart Chambers

Photographer Edgar Zippel's, exhibition of portraits shown in a gallery in a low rent housing project in East Berlin was titled, *I'm Not Afraid of Anything*. It left me choked and speechless. Eighty quasi-willing young strangers were stopped in the streets of at least half a dozen European countries, beseeched to hold still in whatever language Zippel, a West German, or his guide could muster, photographed frontally out of doors almost always, and answered a questionnaire of three queries:

1. *What do you want to do?*
2. *What are you looking forward to?*
3. *What are you afraid of?*

Their answers are starkly similar. The most common answer to the last question is the title of the exhibition. Their portraits: it is difficult if not impossible to discern where these photos were taken, and unless wearing a burqa, equally difficult to tell where these young people are from. The format of the portraits is always the same; the percentage of body mass to anonymous background, the struck

poses; the hopes, dreams and desires. It is heartbreaking yet somehow uplifting. Zippel's selection of subjects is specific to youths between the ages of 18-24, when their personalities are formed, but their future is yet unclear, or at least untested. They come from all walks of life and heritage. Some were among the one million Syrian refugees adopted by Germany this past year on the grounds of political terror, others are affluent locals. They each have character that for one reason or another attracted Zippel. He does not have a blind eye. Trans-racial, they include immigrants and indigenous Europeans, those on sojourns of all sorts, immigrants, from the middle East, Latin America, Africa, around the corner Italy, Yugoslavia. On holiday, new careers, you name it. The comingling commonality of hope, promise, tragedy, sexuality, insecurity emblazoned upon their proud, frail, antagonistic, defensive, countenances – it is the human condition and very clearly documents the future of mankind without condensation to cheap prediction or sooth saying. It is pretty obvious when something is well done, be it Kung Fu or shoe making. What is perhaps not quite so clear is when that artist or artisan has a particularly personal “touch” that transcends the medium. Couple that with an even more specific ability for editing and that magic when an image or object speaks to us beyond the utilitarian; that is to say, when it is art. It should be specifically noted that Zippel practices old school photography using film, or “analog” techniques as it is termed nowadays. That is not to make any sort of statement. He simply likes it better that way. Film captures that certain something that digital devices do not. One is told the same thing about vinyl recordings recently. Personally, I dunno, but it moves me. It would be really great if he could locate the group in fifty years and re-photograph them all. It is an ongoing project and Edgar Zippel intends its continuance until he has visited every country within the European agenda.



*Edgae Zippel, (top left) Ana, Portugal, 2011, photo
(above left) Nick, Germany, 2013, photo*

*Edgae Zippel, (top right) Maria, Iceland, 2013, photo
(above right) Hiba, Great Britain, 2011, photo*