Indelible: Exhibition of Valuable Photographs and Documents Kept in the Bulgarian News Agency

The Bulgarian News Agency, BTA, partly opened its archives to the public on the occasion of its 115th anniversary. The exhibition of carefully selected unpublished photographs and documents was held from 4 to 9 March 2013 in the National Art Gallery in Sofia.

The items were ordered chronologically in a way that reflected crucial events in the history not just of the Agency but also of the Bulgarian state, as seen by several generations of reporters. That is why the oldest shots were taken about 20 years before the establishment of the news bureau and reflect important scenes related to the Liberation from the Turks (1876) and the first Bulgarian Constitution (1878). In addition, the curator of the exhibition, Ivo Hadzhimishev, decided to present at times some modern photographs next to the old ones, to give a temporal perspective to the events. Apart from the wars, revolts, natural disasters, and major political changes (up to EU membership), achievements related to culture and sport were also shown.

One could see the journalists’ view of some unjustly sentenced people and their personal tragedy (e.g. the case against Sergei Antonov in the 1980s or the Bulgarian nurses affair at the turn of the 21st century), the student protests against the government (at the beginning of the 20th century and at its end), the important figures in our political (e.g. Tsar Boris III) and cultural (e.g. Jordan Jovkov) lives. One of the pictures most touching for any Bulgarian heart was the photo of Vasil Levski’s relatives at the opening in Sofia in 1895 of the monument dedicated to him.

As far as BTA is concerned, its first newsletter was also present (in the form of a facsimile) at the exhibition – from 16th February 1898, handwritten by the director of the agency, Oscar Iskander, to inform about breaking news of the time in Vienna, Athens, and Istanbul. There was also one picture awarded a prize by World Press Photo in 1973 – Stefan Tikhov’s photograph of a Vietnamese pilot taken captive after his plane was shot down.

The exhibits, shown for only five days, were highly varied but were just a handful of the rich treasures of the BTA, whose complete collection contains over 4 million photos and more than half a million other documents. It was now that some of the declassified secret papers of the socialist era were shown for the first time.

Ekaterina Dikova, NAISF Project Manager

All Our Yesterdays (1839 – 1939). Life Through the Lens of Europe’s First Photographers

As one of the most successful outcomes of the Europeana Photography project, All Our Yesterdays (1839 – 1939). Life Through the Lens of Europe’s First Photographers is the great multimedia and photographic exhibition about early photography which offers to the European citizens an occasion to see how life was in Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries. The new born medium of photography framed faces and life in a period of great change, where horses and agriculture made way for machines and industrialization, where work and life were harder than nowadays, and where no videogames and TV could entertain during free time; a period in which there was war but also tech-
The contemporary twist of the exhibition, which is based on the most advanced technologies of digitisation and print, and which features also a free App for a virtual tour of the rooms, enhances the astonishing quality and value (both cultural and artistic) of the photographic masterpieces that the 19 partners of the Europeana Photography project chose as “best of their best”.

Details & Results of the Pisa exhibition

From 11th April to 2nd June 2014, Europeana Photography’s exhibition *All Our Yesterdays (1839 – 1939). Life through the Lens of Europe’s First Photographers* was presented for the first time in the magnificent framework of patrician Palazzo Lanfranchi, an ancient building on the riverbanks of the Arno and seat of Pisa’s Museum of Graphics. With the camera as a time machine - framing the present, documenting the past and showing a glimpse of the future - men (and women!) have, throughout the history of photography, captured their world from its most beautiful angles as well as its darkest side. To rebuild these stories through a kaleidoscope of early photographic masterpieces, a collection has been compiled from the holdings of important European archives. These exquisite - and often unseen - images of a world in change showcase the mastery and art of the world’s very first photographers.

The flux of visitors at Palazzo Lanfranchi was more or less continuous since the opening, but a boom of visits was registered on 17th May 2014 during the European Night of the Museums. On this occasion the exhibition was open...
enthusiastic response from the citizens to this initiative, and a selection of them was included in a smaller (80 photos) exhibition with a more local flavour, held in December 2014, once again in Palazzo Lanfranchi, under the flags of All Our Yesterdays and Europeana Photography.

The second edition of All Our Yesterdays will take place from February 1st to March 15th, 2015, in Campus Library Arenberg - Heverlee and Tweebronnen Library - Leuven (BE). While, for the greater part, this exhibition will reproduce the first run of All Our Yesterdays, its Belgian flavour will be enhanced by including photographs from the Leuven City Archives. At the Heverlee site, traces of local citizens’ “Yesterdays” will figure side by side with those of their international counterparts, as a new but integrated part of the original All Our Yesterdays-setup.

In Leuven’s city centre, the public library will host an additional exhibition chapter, dedicated to Trading Spaces / Changing Places: how have the city and its rural surroundings interacted throughout the years and what remains of this? Which century-old street views are bound to draw up a stir when compared to today’s cityscape? To what degree or by what means have people tried to adapt their living environment to something more comfortable
or more agreeable to the eye…? From lost landscapes to stunning portraits and fascinating shots-in-action, Trading Spaces / Changing Places seizes the most compelling images from Leuven’s past, to make for a powerful injection into present-day city dynamics.

Photo courtesy of Europeana Photography partner IMAGNO.

**Milestone marker**

The opening of the Leuven exhibition coincides with the ultimate days of Europeana Photography’s project term. Small wonder that a project plenary meeting and a scientific conference have been aligned with the official vernissage.

After a day (28 January) of dotting the i’s and crossing the t’s, reviewing the results of the consortium’s endeavours, and discussing its future plans as the association PHOTOCONSORTIUM, the conference on 29 and 30 January will be devoted to *The Impact of Digitization on Photographic Heritage: Memories Reframed*. Hosted by CS Digital (KU Leuven) and the Lieven Gevaert Centre for Photography in the Campus Library Arenberg, this event aims at assembling scholars from the field of photography and professionals from photo archives, in order to develop an understanding of responsible archival practices towards photographic heritage in the context of the promotion of public access through digital portals. Topics to be addressed: archival practices for photographic heritage, digitisation and preservation, Europeana, public exposure and the archival mission. Confirmed keynote speakers at present are Elizabeth Edwards (De Montfort University, Leicester - UK) and Simon Tanner (King’s College, London - UK). Next to their contributions, the program includes collection pitches by all content providers involved in EuropeanaPhotography, presentations from “befriended” Europeana-projects and a roundtable on IPR chaired by Charlotte Waelde (University of Exeter - UK).

About the exhibition:

- [www.earlyphotography.eu](http://www.earlyphotography.eu)

Further information on the Pisa event:

- [Digitalmeetsculture as media partner published several articles about All Our Yesterdays, with more photos and videos:](http://www.digitalmeetsculture.net/article/all-our-yesterdays-welcome-to-pisa/)
- [http://www.digitalmeetsculture.net/article/all-our-yesterdays-europeana-photography-exhibition/](http://www.digitalmeetsculture.net/article/all-our-yesterdays-europeana-photography-exhibition/)

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