

PhotoBook Journal

The Contemporary Photobook Magazine

Antoine Seiter & Marc Faysse – J & A



Review by Gerhard Clausing •

This photobook presents the coming-of-age process of two people, a young woman and a young

man, each in a different world. The former is presented as a series of photographs, while the latter is a short story in French, bound into the middle of the book. The photographer Antoine Seiter followed his sister Julia around for a number of years, from childhood all the way into her twenties, while the writer Marc Faysse traces the progress of a fellow named Achilles as he acknowledges who he is and finds more confidence in relation to others. Hence the title, *J & A*. There are a lot of parallels that one can find between the two parts of this book.

There are many subtleties of the process that the viewer/reader can observe. Our late childhood and early adulthood are marked by both optimism and uncertainty, as well as a certain level of vulnerability, as there is a somewhat adversarial relationship between being expected to conform and developing your own norms and principles. When we look at some of the pictures documenting the life of Julia, we notice a gradual movement toward greater maturity (and a preponderance of black and white photography), while at the same time the simple humor and joys of childhood have not been lost. She overcomes some difficulties, including an accident; gradually she acquires more confidence, even as life makes additional demands, as she moves into her role of a working adult. In a similar way, the fictional character Achilles acquires increasing confidence as he approaches and gets to know a group of other young people and finds one of them for more than friendship, an intriguing story of self-actualization. These young adults have to deal with the fact that societies have a difficult time with those in the minority, and hair color and sexual orientation are only two examples.

Both the photographer and the writer show similar sensitivity and understanding of the plight of these young people. While the photographer makes his points through a series of observations expressed in images, the writer describes his character's innermost thoughts, along with the external events as the story progresses, shown only through words. The viewer/reader needs to muster different parts of the imagination. While we see Julia in many situations and can guess her moods from what we see, we don't know much else about the events of her life. We never see Achilles, but we know his thoughts in detail and must imagine what his environment and the other friends that he meets look like. At the end of the book and at the end of the short story both protagonists are shown to have made progress in structuring their encounters with others and in dealing with the vagaries of daily events and possibilities as given.

This work by Seiter and Faysse is a successful juxtaposition and presentation of parallels between two quite different protagonists, as they show similar stages of progress. A further enhancement would be an idiomatic English translation of the short story, which would provide access to an even wider audience.

Gerhard Clausing, *PBJ* Associate Editor, is an author and photographer from Southern California.

Antoine Seiter & Marc Faysse – *J & A*

Photographer: Antoine Seiter (born in Blois, France; lives and works in Paris)

Fiction Author: Marc Faysse (born in Rennes, France; lives and works in Montreuil)

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Photobook Designers: Sébastien Riollier, Antoine Seiter



















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Antoine Seiter, coming of age, development, documentary photography, fiction, Marc Faysse, minorities, visual narration, Visual storytelling

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