

# Photomonitor:

Listings / Reviews / Interviews / Essays / Portfolio  
Auctions / Collections / [Books](#) / Talks

## Photographic Treatment

---



Winner of the 2018 Rencontres d'Arles Author Book Award, Laurence Aëgerter's *Photographic Treatment* is published in 5 volumes by Dewi Lewis.

### Photographic Treatment

By Laurence Aëgerter

Hardback, 5 volumes

ISBN (see entry)

Published by Dewi Lewis Publishing

£12.99 each (£50 for set of 5)

Reviewed by **Patricia Baker-Cassidy**

Laurence Aëgerter's *Photographic Treatment* brought a moment of reading serendipity. This past summer I was haunted by Jeff Sandoz' essay in the excellent *Photography Changes Everything* (Aperture 2012). Sandoz describes a doctor who, aware of the onset of his own dementia, used photography to create a family tree which he annotated and updated, AND notebooks, with maps, and journal jottings, lists, and more photos. His notes and photographs helped him to navigate his life and to resist decline. Reading this, I experienced a vivid craving – I so coveted a glimpse of those books, the stuck-down photos, the scrawls of handwriting, the crossings-out... Those pages (unseen by me) must surely map the active space between consciousness and the experienced world, and so should be thought of as art works. Of course, there was no trail to follow, no web links, no archive or museum reference.

So, when I opened Laurence Aëgerter's *Photographic Treatment* I recognised the territory. The doctor's notebooks are congruent with the interactive nature of Aëgerter's work. Each of the five volumes offers pairs of images, thus forming a triangular system of linkages – the viewers' responses creating the third side of the triangle... And, inevitably, we are led to think about the purposes of photography. That this work was awarded the Author Book Award at Arles this year (2018) is a remarkable homage to the wide and humane frontiers of photography.

Or, perhaps, there are no frontiers. Digital technology has brought the power of image capture to everyone, and digital archiving offers both simultaneity and total retrieval. We can admire and embrace everything from Nicéphore Niépce's foundational images to a friend's next Instagram post. From sublime art to the most banal trivia, photography, like writing, is an inclusive universal resource.

And *Photographic Treatment* is, radiantly, a gesture of inclusion, which works through the images themselves, diverse, emblematic and multi-cultural; through the authorship (found photographs), and through reader engagement. Aëgerter has selected photographs that resonate across a diverse world: countryside and towns, art objects, faces and gestures, household items, animals, plants. Probably because of the therapeutic context, darker sides of life are omitted; there are no wounds, shell craters or torn frontiers. Trauma is excluded; this is "recollected in tranquillity." Carefully produced to look homogeneous, these books made me to re-think my prejudice against "found" photographs – as the digital world is a simultaneous world, past and present become equal; maybe "found" is the wrong word since, now, no image need ever be lost... The sense of the image pairs is formed by the readers' involvement.

And these image pairings certainly draw us in. The main strategy is visual punning: pips on playing cards echo a peacock's crest, curves of two ice dancers match the curve of an alpine ridge, and many more. Textures are compared – gushing flames and flowing hair, the curls of a fern frond and curls of hair in a marble bust – and people are often juxtaposed with animals, like a child balancing on a scooter compared to a small white bird on a roost. Entertainingly, Aëgerter includes references that nod to the cultural context of the people using her book. So, Michelangelo's David is paired with a meerkat which seems to gaze at the statue with amusement; Vermeer's *Girl With A Pearl Earring* is beautifully juxtaposed with a moon-sky image. There are jokes too: a shower of twenty pence coins is matched by the head of a man smiling with alert interest towards the coins, and a rear-view shot of a man peering through stage curtains faces a photograph of pretty legs demurely crossed! Some of Aëgerter's connections are readily understood, like the curve of a playground slide compared to a swan's neck, others are more complex, or even provocative, such as the pairing of the Mona Lisa with a decorated Christmas tree. Though she created the book for Alzheimer's patients and their carers, this web of connection and allusion is hugely engaging for us all.

In contemporary photographic practice, experimentation, self-expression, psychological exploration and journalling form a modern discourse; *Photographic Treatment* has no element of ego, and is free of self-expression. Aëgerter offers no personal traces, yet her work suggests generosity. Communal well-being is a main concern, rather than personal introspection, and these five books enlist photography to illuminate that goal.

– reviewed for Photomonitor by [Patricia Baker-Cassidy](#)

---

For further reading:

*Photographic Treatment* by Laurence Aëgerter, published by and available from [Dewi Lewis Publishing](#) in five volumes: