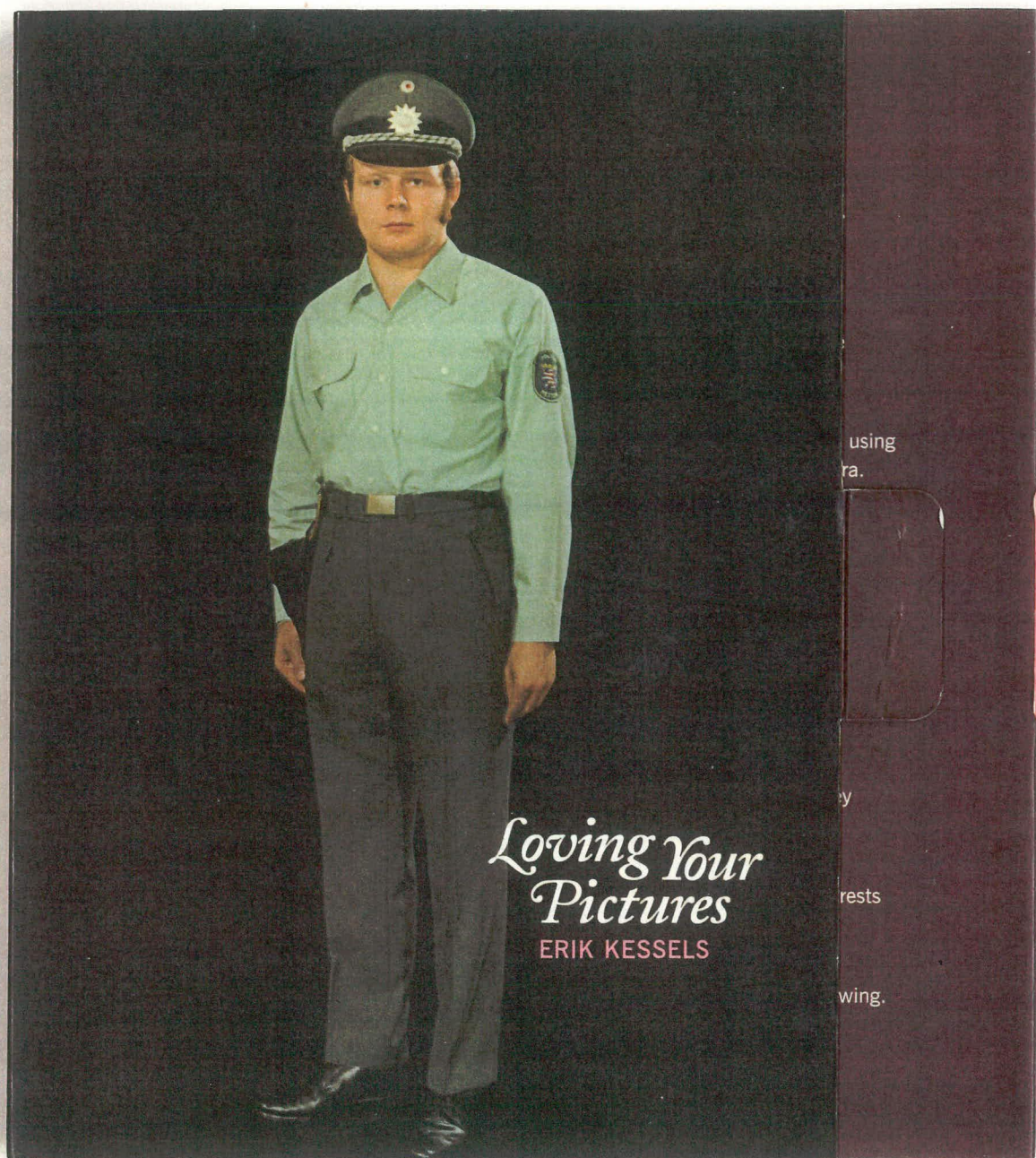




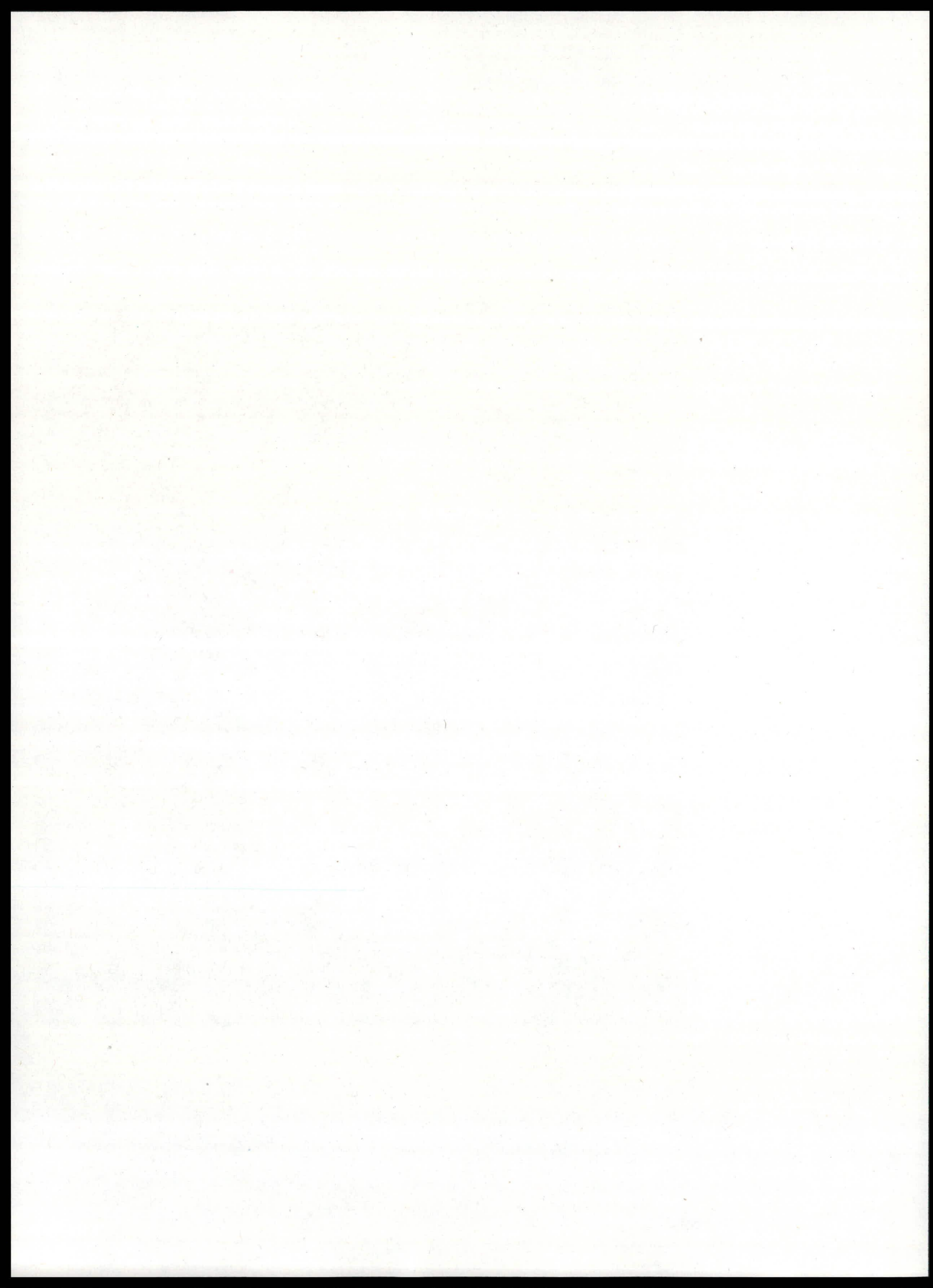
*Loving Your
Pictures*
ERIK KESSELS

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In almost every picture #1 – 2001

Photographs of a woman taken by her husband over the course of their life together in almost every picture.

In almost every picture #2 – 2003

Photographs taken by a taxi driver of his taxi and his one passenger as they travel throughout Europe.

In almost every picture #3 – 2004

Portraits taken of deer and other wildlife during the night using a motion sensor to activate the shutter of a hidden camera.

In almost every picture #4 – 2006

Photographs of sororal twins taken by many different photographers on the promenade and other locations during the time of World War II.

Strangers in my photoalbum – 2003

Isolated images of people who randomly and accidentally join and participate in a photograph by appearing in the background or at its edges.

Models – 2004

A collection of 132 German police uniforms and how they should be worn.

Photoblogs – 2006

Photography collections and series of many different interests and themes posted Online for the world to see.

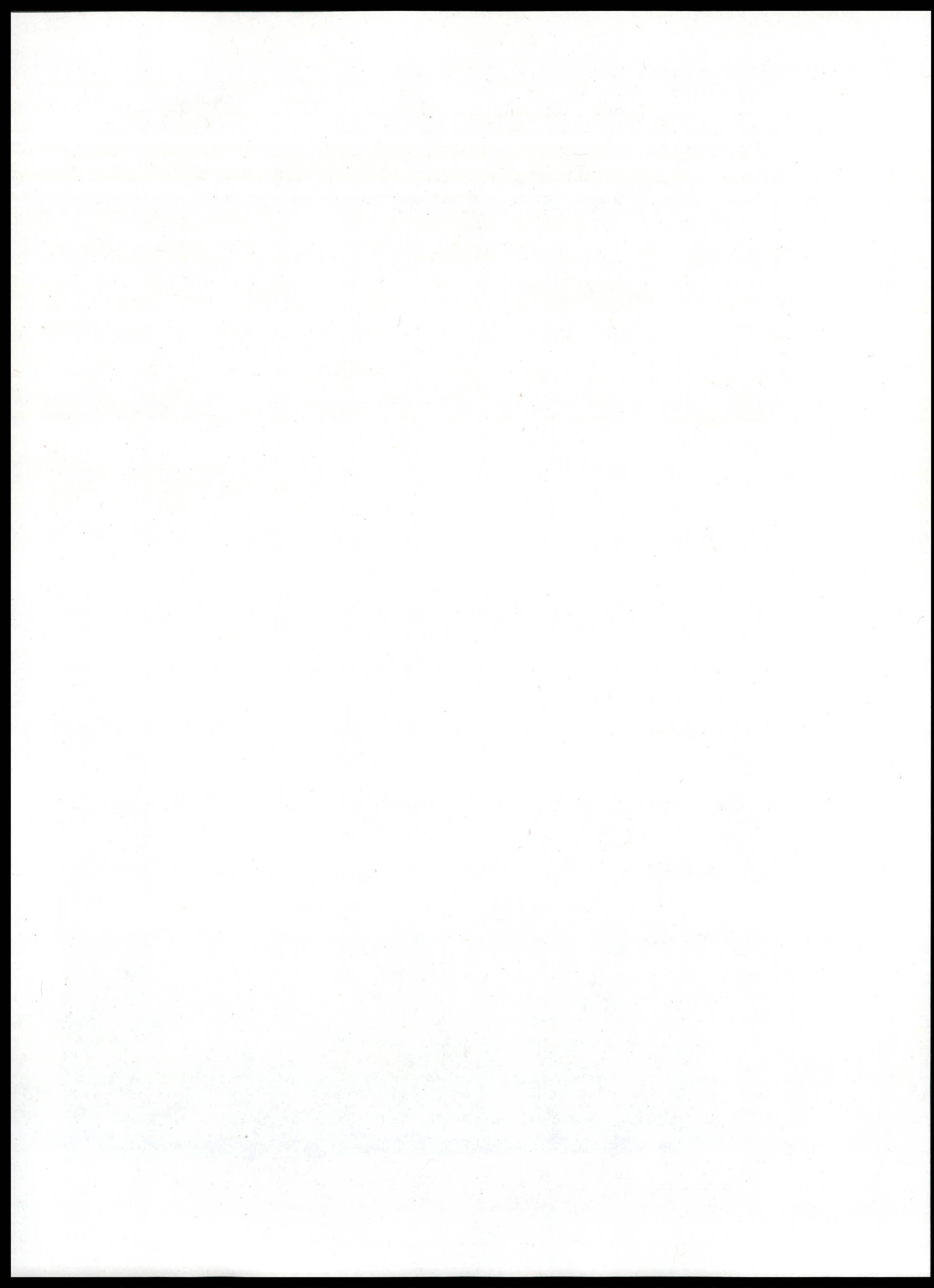
Wonder – 2006

A huge collection of rejected photographs rescued for viewing.



Leaving Your Pictures ERIK KESSELS

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visual material than the other in a quantity that exceeds the accompanying texts by a factor of five.

The photographs compiled here are trying to slow down the speed of this cycle. They ask for a moment of contemplation, for quietness. They are always about life and death, while every photo is ultimately linked with these extremes (Roland Barthes taught us that what once existed can stir life because it once was *there* in front of that lens). That is what makes this preserved photography so fascinating. To be confronted with these thoughts rarely happens these days, thanks to the digital revolution. (Reprinting old photographs is even becoming a problem because regular photography paper can hardly be found anymore). Digital photography is therefore unsettling the past for a number of reasons. It makes 'found' and redesignated photography, like these works of Erik Kessels, all the more special: it celebrates life.

Special thanks to Print and Display in Kontich, Belgium.

and placed in a museum environment. It is an environment in which the vulnerable, women, animals, are often linked to a higher ideal, to absolute beauty or religious idolatry. In these photographs, they are at least stripped of this aura. The beauty can sooner be found in the ordinary, the idolatry of dealing respectfully with everything belonging to the entourage of all these people and animals.

This series of photographs compiled by Erik Kessels gives the public an opportunity to do what they enjoy doing most: creating order from chaos or reconstructing a story from snippets of information. They challenge you to play along and look at your own photos with new eyes. 'With love,' as Kessels did himself. These pictures provoke that feeling.

This collected work is reason to discuss questions such as authenticity, originality, authorship and the role of image culture. It does this in an environment in which, on the one hand, glamour photography and, on the other hand, commercial photography dominate on a scale never witnessed before. Everyone is constantly taking pictures of each other with their mobile gadgets, (and not only while on vacation any more), and magazine racks in shops are at bursting point, each containing more impressive

Loving Your Pictures

ERIK KESSELS

Everyday, the camera population grows rapidly. After all, this need is deeply placed within our instinct to record our lives in a multitude of ways. Some of us write diaries. Others use video or motion picture cameras. Some let their memories do the work or rely on group experience, newspapers, books and magazines. But more and more of us nowadays make lasting evidence with our cameras. We shoot with a purpose. A vacation is a great occasion for taking photographs. So is a birthday, reunion, graduation, or recurring theme in one's own life or in that of another. If the concept of the collective consciousness exists, we are all linked biologically and metaphysically with the camera as an extension of our eyes. Its product can mean

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one thing to the creator and something completely different to the viewer. Photographs are items that attract continual interpretation beyond their first intended purpose and can evolve in significance as their lifespan increases. With the changing of contexts, a meaning can be heightened, changed or made more emotionally charged. *Leaving Your Pictures* is a look at the everyday occurrence of photography and what new ideas and insights arise when it is isolated and examined.

There are several levels to any photograph. There is the purpose for taking the photograph, the physical existence of the image, the memory attached to the photograph, the perceived beauty and the subjective judgment of its success. Multiply all this by the number of people who see the photograph and the amount of meanings can be overwhelming.

Never did the photographers of the deer and wildlife who move about the forest in the middle of the night imagine that their images would appear in a museum for visitors to inspect. The images were not made for their beauty. In fact, the pictures were taken with camouflaged cameras that were set off by motion detector, an almost invasive or treacherous way of photographing. The purpose was to

viewers will not know the people depicted nor will they have someone related to them to explain them. What was intended to be study material for the civil servants in Germany who were entrusted with the gear of peace-loving upholders of order (who were no longer allowed, in any way whatsoever, to look like the army that terrorized Europe half a century ago) can now be freely interpreted by anyone; although their particular past will inevitably play its part. What was essentially intended to be information for North American hunters, 'the deer pass here at 4 AM,' can now be exposed to eyes that have also seen Bambi.

What was intended to be a casual joke by a Japanese woman for a small community, namely the people who consult a few, select weblogs every day, is now eternally recorded online as the story of the life and death of a pet rabbit, also an icon from (children's) literature.

This puts Erik Kessels in the tradition of conceptual artists who often give 'objets trouvés' a different function. From Marcel Duchamp to Damien Hirst, we have witnessed how vehement responses can be when what are essentially simple objects, or objects fabricated for entirely different purposes, are connected with an idea; especially when they are isolated

Loving Your Pictures

PHOTOS BY ERIK KESSELS

PAULINE TERREEHORST

The phrase above, 'photos by Erik Kessels,' gives the impression that these photographs were taken by Erik Kessels. This is not the case. The photographs in *Loving Your Pictures* are 'objets trouvés.' They were found by Kessels and they have been re-used by him in an entirely new context. Because of his transforming them into something new, they can, in fact, be attributed to him or described as being written, 'by him.' At any rate, by placing them in a new environment, he has given them new meaning.

What was intended to be a private report for intimate friends or as a photo album to be brought out on special occasions, is now shown for 'everyone' to see. Now, most

locate deer at certain hours of the day and night. The resulting beauty of the images when taken apart from their function is enchanting especially when we consider that each one is technically a self-portrait. The animals themselves trigger the shutter. They look with curiosity into the lens caught off-guard, captured wandering and snapped by a blazing, blinding flash of curiosity immortalizing a world we seldom see.

When these portraits are borrowed from their makers, another perspective is possible. We are able to see from a distance different patterns that form, different themes that develop or techniques that are used intentionally or accidentally. The husband who photographed his wife over the period of several years documenting their life together is a pure photographic expression of love. We marvel at his steady expertise. He makes the portrait in a rather professional way even though photography is not his profession. But then, perhaps photography is potentially everyone's profession.

Just as we are all, for the most part, able to remember or to write or to record, we are all more and more capable of making photographs. Each year, camera manufacturers

strive to provide better camera quality and ease of use. Amateurs at any high school graduation are wielding professional-grade, digital cameras or highly advanced film cameras with massive telephoto lenses. Who is the professional? More and more we can see where the line blurs and the definition widens.

Professional photography often carries a certain amount of baggage. Commercial photography, such as the kind used in advertising or magazine editorial, usually demands a certain criteria. It is usually slick, well-lit, expensive and meticulously made both in the camera and out of the camera. There are expensive sets, models, lights and retouching. The quality of the image is smooth, clean and lacks any imperfection. In a way, this type of photography creates imaginary worlds that are extremely familiar. We know a commercial or professional photograph when we see one and this familiarity can in some cases become mundane.

Similarly, we know a photojournalist photograph when we see one. It's black and white. It's dramatic. It's gritty. It's exotic. And although this is a sweeping generalization, most photojournalism falls under this criteria because that

recognize the stories that connect us and keep us in touch through what we see and how we see it. Every photograph has a life of its own and, similar to a person, effects us in different ways over time and through different contexts. *Loving Your Pictures* is a chance to see how some of us are looking, recording and using photography as a more and more common extension of ourselves. We, therefore, are able to see through eyes we never knew we had.

at different times in their lives. Then we are pulled further by a story that is told through the images. At the edges of this small natural miracle caught on film is the tragedy and horror of World War II. We see hints of its effects at the edges. Young men wear uniforms. And then as if caught by the tragedy, despite our best efforts to prevent it from happening, one of the sisters disappears. In this one series or oeuvre of photographs, we get the switch from joy to sadness. And as we look at the remaining sister in the subsequent images, we feel that we too have lost someone. We even see the space she leaves for her twin by her own location in the photographs.

Just as modern painters and writers left the high-brow worlds of their classical and ornamental tradition to find new meanings and insights into the human condition, so too have those curious about the everyday phenomena of vernacular photography. By looking into the visual culture of the people, of the real day-to-day love affairs, failures, celebrations, travels, self portraits, adventures and relationships, we can see a more intense chronicling of the times. We get to know more about each other, our differences and our similarities. We begin to translate ourselves into different circumstances and different discourses. We can

is what we have come to expect. The photographs of soldiers in Iraq or of earthquake victims in Pakistan or of rioters in France are not well-lit or staged. They have the grit of reality as they carry the flash of news and events. So, here, the photojournalist professional works within these prescribed conditions and often fulfills these visual expectations.

When it comes to photographs that never make it into a photo album because they fail to meet the photographer's expectations, the qualities and techniques enter a wider range. We never truly know what we will get. The camera in the hands of a non-professional can create art, tell a story, record a history or provide a telling insight into how we see and how we wish to preserve what we see. This area of photography gives us the miracle of an entire holiday trip photographed 36 times but captured in a single frame because the film in the camera never advanced. Similarly, we are given three separate moments of a story in one photograph because of multiple exposures or the bizarre empty shots of carpeting, blurred images, badly-cropped heads or the intense close-up of the inside of a pocket. This type of photography is not planned, but provides us with another, perhaps surprising, way of seeing daily life.

The technique of an amateur can even mimic the professional as in the recording of different police uniforms from all the provinces of Germany in the 1970s. The desire to organize and archive a wide variety of police fashion initiated a project to photograph the entire range of German police uniforms and how they should be worn. This gave a photographer a massive undertaking. But whoever he or she was, this photographer had plenty of reference. Policemen and women were enlisted as models. The poses are functional and reminiscent of any H&M catalogue. One has to wonder if, indeed, the models themselves might have, for a moment, considered themselves models. How far did this somewhat naive, yet determined fashion photo shoot go? In one group shot we even see fans of the models looking out of the windows of a police station as the models are photographed. There is something dreamy and amazing about this series of photographs. It allows us to see the potential of a camera in anyone's hands. The traditions of professional and commercial photography have a strong way of influencing how we see and give some self-expectation with our own use of the camera.

Sometimes called Vernacular Photography, or Useful Photography or The People's Camera, this everyday

photography reveals a great deal about ourselves, our cultures and the realities or visions of the people around us. It's a further step away from the academy or salon of photography or art. It is the new modern. Here, we don't celebrate an anorexic girl in leather boots and underwear, we celebrate a taxi with a female passenger and the amazing places where they travel together. We never worry about the look of a \$600 pair of jeans, just the way an official raincoat should be worn in the appropriate weather. Nor do we worry about the beauty of a highlight on a still life or the make-up on a lip. We merely want to record, show, sell, explain and have readily available in our hands: our memories.

The vernacular gives us spontaneous wonder. We are able to see one particular event or phenomenon through a multitude of cameras. An example of this is found with the twins who walk together dressed identically in almost every picture. At a certain time of day, people in Spanish cities take walks on the promenade with their families. These sisters, although not identical, are twins. They try to fulfil some unconscious expectation and in between photographs they arrange wardrobes and hairstyles that match and make them more alike than they are. We see this story through many different photographers who happen upon the sisters

*Loving Your
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ERIK KESSELS

the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are aged 65 and over has increased by 1.5 million (1990–1999) (Office of National Statistics 2000).

There is a growing awareness of the need to address the needs of older people in the community. The Department of Health (1999) has published a strategy for older people, which sets out the government's commitment to older people and the actions that will be taken to improve their lives. The strategy is based on the principle that older people should be able to live independently and actively in the community. To achieve this, the government has set out a number of key objectives, including: to improve the health and well-being of older people; to ensure that older people have access to the services and facilities they need; and to promote the participation of older people in society.

The strategy also sets out a number of key actions that will be taken to achieve these objectives. These include: to improve the health and well-being of older people by promoting healthy living and preventing illness; to ensure that older people have access to the services and facilities they need by improving the availability and quality of services; and to promote the participation of older people in society by encouraging them to get involved in community activities.

The strategy is a key document in the development of policy for older people in the UK. It sets out the government's commitment to older people and the actions that will be taken to improve their lives. It is a key document for all those who are involved in the care and support of older people, including health professionals, social workers, and community organizations.

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September 1960 / Barcelona / IN ALMOST EVERY PICTURE #1



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July 1959 / Camp de Mar / IN ALMOST EVERY PICTURE #1



Loving Your Pictures / ERIK KESSELS

June 1957 / Badalona / IN ALMOST EVERY PICTURE #1



Loving Your Pictures / ERIK KESSELS

July 1959 / *Formentor* / IN ALMOST EVERY PICTURE #1



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October 17, 1940 / Madrid / IN ALMOST EVERY PICTURE #4



Loving Your Pictures / ERIK KESSELS

January 18, 1940 / Barcelona / IN ALMOST EVERY PICTURE #4



Loving Your Pictures / ERIK KESSELS

November 11, 1940 / Madrid / IN ALMOST EVERY PICTURE #4



Loving Your Pictures / ERIK KESSELS

June 08, 1940 / Barcelona / IN ALMOST EVERY PICTURE #4



Loving Your Pictures / ERIK KESSELS

IN ALMOST EVERY PICTURE #3



Loving Your Pictures / ERIK KESSELS

IN ALMOST EVERY PICTURE #3



Loving Your Pictures / ERIK KESSELS

IN ALMOST EVERY PICTURE #3

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IN ALMOST EVERY PICTURE #3



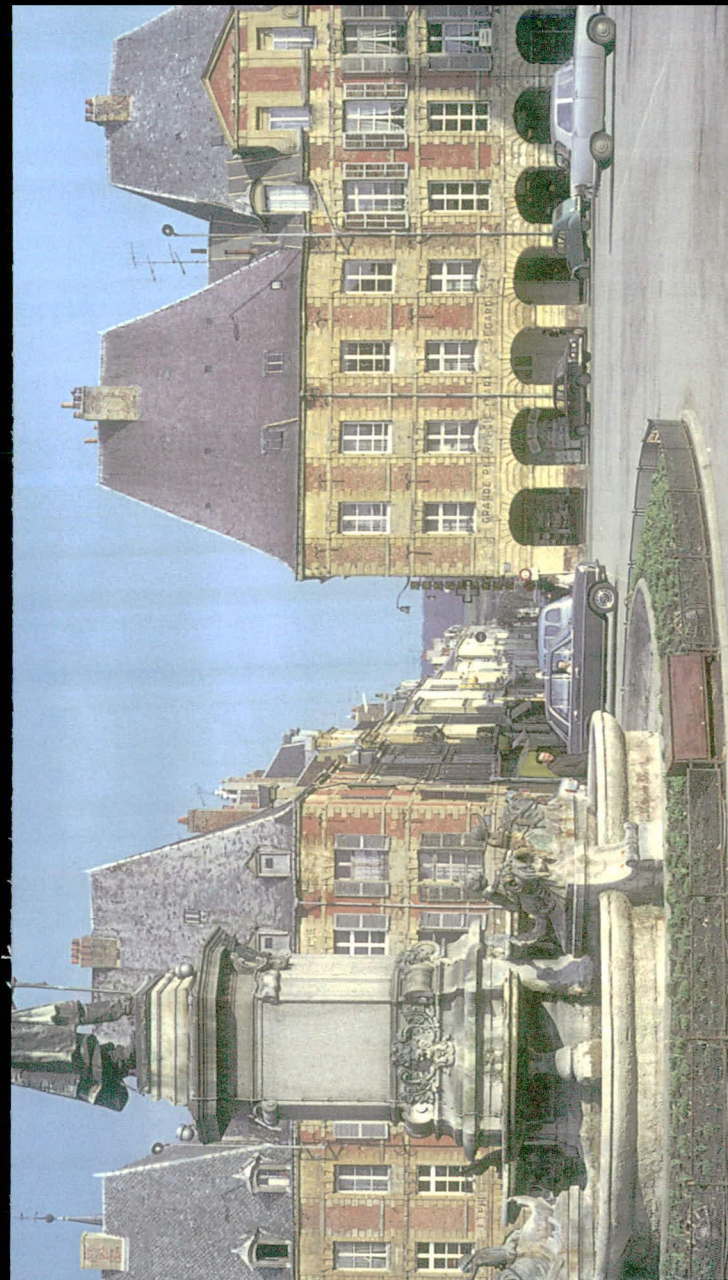
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10334 km / IN ALMOST EVERY PICTURE #2



Loving Your Pictures / ERIK KESSELS

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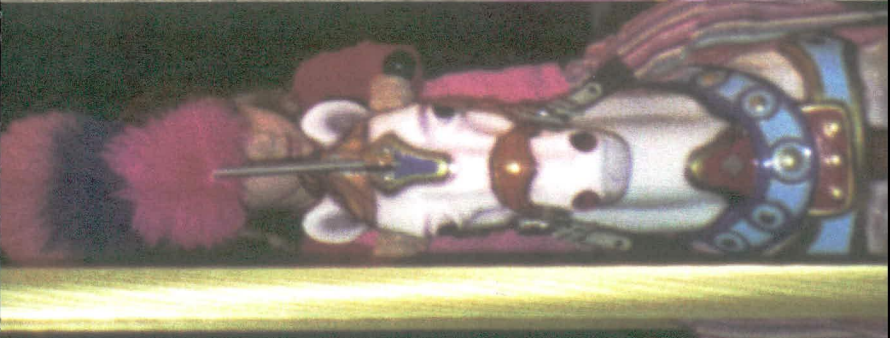
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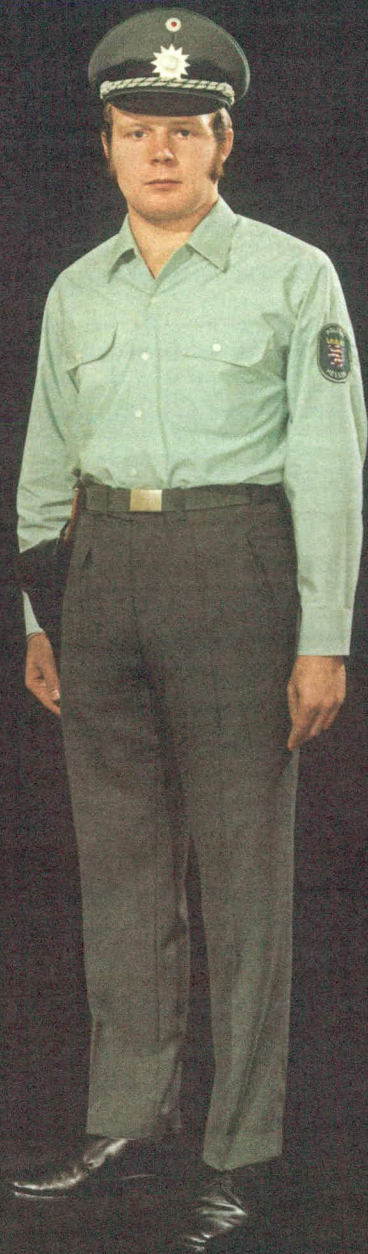
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STRANGERS IN MY PHOTO ALBUM



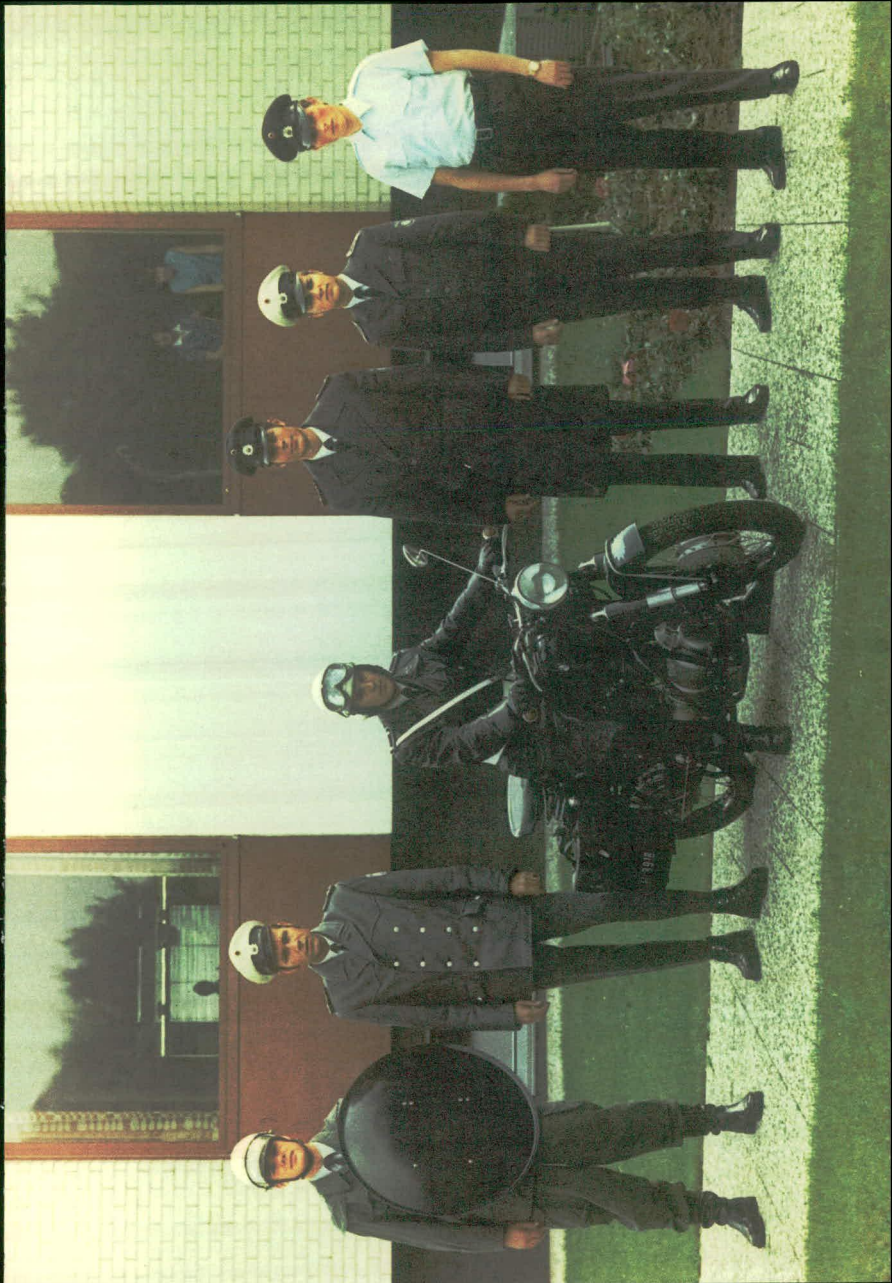
Loving Your Pictures / ERIK KESSELS

Bremen / MODELS



Loving Your Pictures / ERIK KESSELS

Hessen / Service Uniform for Warm Days / MODELS



Loving Your Pictures / ERIK KESSELS

Niedersachsen / MODELS



Loving Your Pictures / ERIK KESSELS

Bundesgrenzschutz / *Service Uniform Summer* / MODELS



Loving Your Pictures / ERIK KESSELS

Oolong / PHOTO BLOGS



Loving Your Pictures / ERIK KESSELS

Oolong / PHOTO BLOGS



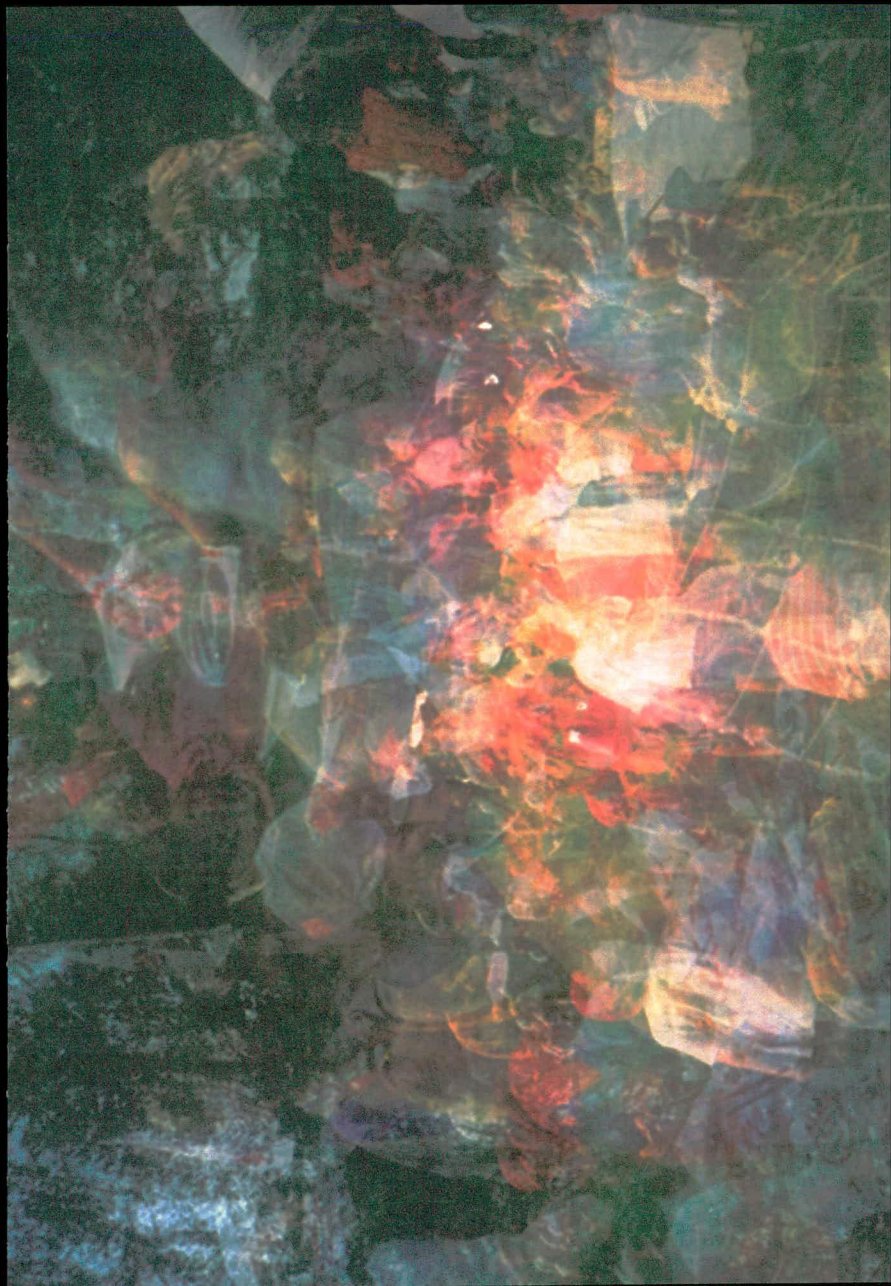
Loving Your Pictures / ERIK KESSELS

Tattoo Portraits / PHOTO BLOGS



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