



— *You made a decision to stop working commercially. Wasn't it difficult to make a living as a private photographer?*

— That went up and down. When I was in the prison photographing for three years, it was difficult. Sometimes I even slept in my car outside the prison wall, it was really rough, I had no money at all and I tried to support myself as best as I could. Some collectors in France and Germany started to buy pictures from me, entirely unexpected, and I understood that a market existed, not in Sweden but abroad.

In 1977 in Arles there was a French publishing company, Contre Jour and a German one, Schirmel/Mosel. They liked *Lehmitz* and published books of the work made in 1978 in Germany, 1979 in France and in 1982 the book was published by ETC. in Sweden. The book *Prison* came after in 1984. I decided to do an institutional trilogy about closed institutions like the prison. I did service in a house for old people and in a mental hospital. I don't work with such ideas anymore, but more freely. When you set yourself within a circuit like a prison or a nursing home the world becomes smaller at once.

Behind those walls, behind the prison walls, and the mental hospital walls everything functions approximately as if there was a magnifying glass held over the society so that everything is repeated, but it becomes more evident and legible.

When I came to the prison (Österåker), I was not interested in describing how a prison was. I was rather more interested in the feeling of being locked up, the feeling of the locked eroticism and that time is locked. One is used to speak about the feeling of freedom, but the word "freedom" does not exist. Within the mental hospital walls or in a nursing home freedom has a concrete meaning. If you live outside these walls of different degrees the idea of freedom doesn't exist; it's a bluff, just like the objective reality is a bluff.

— *What gives you the right to photograph people?*

— The right is by my side as long as I am aware of my deeds coming directly from me, and that I can take responsibility of them. I take responsibility of myself and by doing so I can also take responsibility of the people I photograph.

I give away photographs all the time. I never pay for ...

— *That's good.*

— I don't know if it's good but it is my way, I do not set any evaluation on it, it's just my way. I give away what I take but nothing else. I take advantage of people.

— *Advantage?*

— The word "advantage" is important. It is an inflamed word in this kind of photography which has to do with meeting people; an important thing to accept and to respect is that the advantage-taking doesn't become one-sided but it's mutual.

I can understand that the word "advantage" is infected, but from the moment we are born, we start to use it, we start to take advantage. To take advantage in different ways is part of our life.

— *Balance...to take advantage. Something no-one talks about... There is a border where one's life and work melt together. Can you draw a border between photography and life itself?*

— Absolutely. I will try to find an example. I'm asking you, you see a woman 90 years of age in a lot of pain. You see it clearly in her body, the way she is walking. She will climb up the stairs and you look at her and I ask you "how will you take this picture?"