

## Hans-Jürgen Raabe

### Istanbul Photography Museum

#### *Istanbul*

Though they filled almost all the galleries in this city's elegant photography museum, the 320 images by Hans-Jürgen Raabe on view represented only the first installment of a vast work in progress titled "990 Faces," intended to offer an encyclopedic view of humankind. The German artist will spend a decade visiting 33 locations worldwide, making 30 portraits at each site. All of the eight segments of the project completed so far were accompanied, as a kind of prologue, by ten "stills" of resonant details that caught the photographer's eye—melted candles, a basket filled with glasses, a graffiti-smearred wall. Viewed individually, any of these large-format digital prints might seem banal, but collectively they made an eloquent ensemble. It is not just Raabe's activities as "roving reporter" that gives his work universality, however. He often seeks locations where he will inevitably cross paths with travelers from other cultures, pilgrimage sites such as Lourdes or Myanmar. Art pilgrims have their day, too, in portraits taken at the last Documenta, while international partygoers were captured at Munich's Oktoberfest and cultural tourists at the Eiffel Tower. Meanwhile, in photos taken aboard an Istanbul ferry plying between Europe and Asia, the ever-present theme of journeying took a concrete form.

Edward Steichen's celebrated thematic exhibition "The Family of Man," which Raabe greatly admires, is an obvious antecedent to "990 Faces." But Raabe embraces a different approach, rooted in the vernacular snapshot aesthetic that began with Kodak's introduction of the Brownie in 1900. His subjects never have time to strike poses but are captured at the moment they become aware of a camera directed toward them. "In that instant there seems to be a connection between us," Raabe remarked in a recent interview. The results of that unstructured collaboration are fresh and immediate, if decidedly unspectacular, and the resulting portraits themselves are never retouched or in any way manipulated. Their authenticity lends the whole global project a touching air of familiarity.

—David Galloway



Hans-Jürgen Raabe, *Face 110/Marrakech*, 2012, fine art pigment print on Hahnemuehle paper, 19% x 23%. Istanbul Photography Museum.