

AVENTURAS CON TIO CESAR

This project was conceived in 1993 about ten years after my father had given me a box with various pictures and negatives from pictures taken by Cesar Porcari his older brother. Cesar had traveled to Berlin in 1935 to study medicine and took various vacation pictures in the four years he was in Germany: the Berlin zoo, the beaches - in Spain perhaps? Paris, hiking in the countryside somewhere I didn't recognize.

In 1939 he, along with many others, were evicted from the country as undesirable aliens. My uncle went on a boat trip to New York where he stopped to see the worlds fair. Boats were overfull because of the massive number of refugees and younger men often had to sleep on deck and on the boat from New York to Lima he contracted tuberculosis. He started to study again in Lima but his health deteriorated. A year later he died from peritonitis.

I think that the melancholia that I saw in the older members of my family in the fifties was due to that death. It was one of those things that families never recover from. They survive it as people - but it becomes a different family. Things are never the same again.

It took me ten years to figure out what to do with the pictures but I finally hit on the idea of finding corresponding images of mine to put next to his and find some emotional, thematic and formal relation that would set in motion narrative possibilities - that remain possibilities - for this seemed to me to be where the pictures were at. They were full of possibility and they just stopped. It's possible to read into the black and white images a great deal of history - particularly with regard to the war and the destruction of Europe - that we all now more or less understand - but the pictures also resist this summation, these summarizing truths of hindsight. I wanted to delve into all of that and also have some adventures with my uncle with images. At first it bothered me that I had the upper hand - I got to have all the fun making choices - but then as time passed I realized the images that my uncle took had more life in them than mine. Mine were - as Sylvere Lotrenger so well put it - wrapped in cellophane with no air. They were unevenly matched but it wasn't me that had the upper hand at all. I stopped that work and shelved it as I couldn't see where I was going with it.

In 2009 Chris Kraus saw this body of work and was very enthusiastic about it. I took a second look and realized I needed to finish it - thinking in terms of resolution was a mistake. I made eight more collages - now using a computer - and finished at number 22 - the image is of my uncle sitting on the deck of a ship. Aventuras Con Tio Cesar is - as the title implies - an adventure story that remains immanent with possibilities and correspondences. In the two images in each work there are now two pasts that are in some sort of dialogue - and just what that dialogue might be about remains an open question.