Massimiliano Fusari, PhD

ma s s i **m e d i a**
digital production multimedia storytelling

AESTHETICS AS STORYTELLING

The monograph *Aesthetics As Storytelling* explores my practice as a photojournalist researching socio-political issues in the Muslim world. It assesses the extent to which today's aesthetics affects digital communication and storytelling dynamics. By doing so, I have sought to finalise the Meta-Image as my tool for the analysis and production of visual-led communication on digital media.

I use the Hawzas, the Muslim Shi'a seminaries of Syria and Bahrain, as my case study to bridge both academic research and industry concerns. By questioning my own fieldwork practice in relation to the visual signification of the Hawzas, I consistently reconnect the pre-production and post-production phase, endeavouring to encompass, within a shared outlook, issues of both the 'real' and the 'represented.'

I address the photograph as a stand-alone communicative device, which is - *at the very same time* - part of a wider multimedia landscape in communicative relation to the verbal, as a caption, and to the visual, in montage. In this framework, I distinguish a phenomenological approach of analysis. I consequently urge a radical rethinking of personal and social agencies, and suggest the notion of communicative hubs for today's globalised identities.

My explicit aim is to promote a practical appreciation of aesthetics for today's new digital forms and formats of communication. Arguably, this is particularly troubling within photography and in visual journalism specifically. In fact, post-production has become both widespread and undetectable. With this in mind, how should audiences interpret the realness of an image? How should they trust visual representations and the indexical quality of photojournalism specifically? Is aesthetics the right tool for the job in hand?

By evincing the extent to which the digital is reshaping forms of visual-led and multimedia production, knowledge distribution and media consumption, I set out my developing notion of the Meta-Image. Specifically, the Meta-Image is an enhanced digital format expanding and complementing the communicative qualities of the photograph. Through its actable multimedia layers, the Meta-Image becomes a tool for visual literacy as much as a communicative format for today's visual-led digital cultures.