

# Biography

Hans Georg Berger is a photographer and writer. He was born in 1951 in Trier, Germany, and he presently divides his time between Italy, Germany, Iran, Bangkok and Luang Prabang, Laos. Berger studied comparative religion and drama in Germany and the United States. In 1975 he collaborated for the first time with the German artist Joseph Beuys, whose art and political ideas would greatly influence his conception of photography. Another important artistic influence was the French writer, photographer and film-maker Hervé Guibert whom he photographed for 12 years.

Since 1988, Hans Georg Berger produced a series of long-term photography projects involving world religions, including Theravada Buddhism in Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos as well as Shi'ite Islam in Iran. These projects embody his conception of "community involvement": the photographer, who is an outsider, seeks to blend in with the community he seeks to portray inviting the community to teach him where to look, what to portray, and how to portray it.

In addition to his ongoing work on Buddhism (Sacred Ceremonies of Laos; Meditation; Ritual and Life of Theravada monks and nuns) and on Islam (forms and methods of study in selected theological universities of Iran) there is work on Taoism in China and Vietnam, on Zoroastrian communities and on ancient Christian Churches of the Orient.

From 2004 to 2005, Hans Georg Berger participated in The Quiet in the Land , an art and education project held in Luang Prabang by a group of artists and scholars from all over the world. His exhibition The Floating Buddha on the revival of Vipassana meditation in Laos is installed at the Luang Prabang National Museum in a permanent way.

With his photographs, Berger produced two schoolbooks for the use of Lao students: one on Sacred Ceremonies and Ritual (in 1997, now in its fourth edition), one on Vipassana meditation (in 2006). Hans Georg Berger was the director of the Munich Theater Festival from 1977 to 1983 and the co-founder of the Münchner Biennale music theatre festival. With Ariane Mnouchkine and Patrice Chéreau, he is co-founder of A.I.D.A., an international human rights watch group for artists.

Since 1977, he has been involved in the rebuilding of the Eremo di Santa Caterina, a former Franciscan monastery on the Island of Elba, Italy, which he has developed into a place that links contemporary art, writing, botany and archaeology. During these years, he photographed his friends and fellow artists with a small Rollei 35 camera; these photographs from the 1980s have been presented for the first time in a large exhibition organized by the Institut Français de Munich in 2005.

On the Island of Elba, Italy, he founded in 1997 a Botanical Garden dedicated to the conservation and study of the spontaneous flora of the Tuscan Arcipelago, and created a garden of ancient roses near the Hermitage of Santa Caterina.

Hans Berger lectures on photography and his concept of "community involvement" in France, Germany, Italy, Iran, Korea and Japan. From 1998 to 2004, he taught photography at Silpakorn University in Bangkok, Thailand, as a docent of DAAD, the German Academic Exchange Service. In 2009, he became guest professor at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris, France, and lectured at the École Française d'Extrême-Orient.

From 2006 to 2011, Hans Berger, following a solicitation by Phra Khamchan Virachitta Maha Thera, created the Buddhist Archive of Photography, Luang Prabang and directed two major research projects there: for the British Library's Endangered Archives Programme, research and digitization of the collections of historic photographs of the monasteries of Luang Prabang; for the National Library of Laos and the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, research on the collections of Buddhist Art preserved at Vat Saen Sukharam.

Since 2010, Hans Berger advises a project of conservation and digitization of important Thai Royal photographs created by Chulalongkorn University, Faculty of Art, and the Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Foundation.

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