

The Eyes of War

“World War 1 (1914-1918) was the first conflict to enter the era of communication and information”

During WW1, the techniques of photo engraving and printing in newspapers, magazines or books were in their early stages. Their development actually occurred after the conflict and thus launched the creation of a genuine media-library system in the 1920s. Created during the preceding century, relief prints were not a process intended to cohabit with text. Their sole goal was to entertain readers.

Because of their hyperrealism, relief images are difficult to touch-up. The hyperrealism of relief images was not really suited to touch-ups. Close to reality, and often to the horrors of war, relief images faithfully reproduce bodies or landscapes, and expose tragically possible situations. By over-emphasizing depth and mimicry, the impact is hard, different from simple, flat images, *without relief*.

Many people disappeared or were never buried. The only traces left by the beloved departed were in fact letters. Pictures were only another form of testimonial, delivering a message of peace (« never again »), building the immediate memory of the conflict, making it accessible, to perceive a remote war, to echo the contents of a letter, to release the words of war survivors or dead soldiers, to take in the information and mourn, to revive memories, to picture heroism and testify to victory.

There are thousands of images of the Great War and its many battles. They were originally sold in boxes of captioned series and were only rarely dated and authenticated by historians. Viewing the Great War in relief, is therefore akin to reinterpreting the images, reinventing new forms of ownership and reporting. Renewing memory. Endowing the images of the 1920s with new scope. Facilitating our contemporary reading through their original approach, far from our usual conceptions of photography and images of war. Nowadays, such images are circulated to the public with tact, at a time when all images are fit to print.

Replacing the individual and intimate stereoscopic experience with a more collective and intense viewing, delivering the same immersive and simultaneous vision under conditions similar to the post-war period: is this not doing more? In other words, using the latest technologies to restore the original techniques of relief image capture... giving the keys. More than uncontrollable images, the continued availability of relief prints makes them impossible to classify.

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« *A côté de la plaque* » revoir la Grand Guerre en relief in : "*Verdun, la guerre en relief*", éditions Serpenoise, 2006.