

Pictures

1. No picture, whether moving or still, whether private or shown, is of any person, place or thing. Every picture is (not is of) combined persons, places, and things, or a combined person, place and thing.
2. Every picture, whether moving or still, is waiting to do be depicted, often waiting forever. There are no depictions, only pictures.
3. Some might say a picture contains secrets, but the secret is a misleading and confusing concept; one we would probably better do better without it. There are no clearly definable things called secrets that are not also places and persons, and few or none that cannot better be called depictions. Therefore, there are no things alone called secrets, only persons, places and things combined called pictures.
4. Some pictures lead to the kind if transition that has been referred to as human sacrifice. Not only are there no pictures of human sacrifice, there are no pictures of humans, or sacrifice. Take any picture of Jesus on the cross. It is not a picture of a human sacrifice. It is Jesus and it is sacrifice. There is no real getting around this.
5. If a picture “is me,” (as we say) then what of “my body?” Clearly, my body (as we say) “is me” in the same sense that a picture is me. As a person, place and thing (for my body can be nothing else) my body (including clothing, accessories and cosmetics) changes constantly, and cannot truly be fixed. There are no pictures of my body, no or me. There is only pictures that are me.
6. Note here too that “my fingerprints” and “my DNA” are “my body.” They are not of my body.
7. Note also that the disassociation between myself and my body in states like delirium, intoxication or withdrawal are not exceptions but rather glimpses of a rule that should not be acknowledged. This kind of disassociation leads to the kind of transition called human sacrifice. One seems to have a kind of picture of one’s body, but this is not the case. There are no pictures of bodies, rather just bodies that are the combined person-place-things we call pictures.
8. Do I change or is it the picture that changes? Who can truly say?
9. Nearly all pictures by Gabriel Embeha have an assigned number. In each of these numbered works the level of specificity is dependent on understanding. This understood level of specificity is a level for sufficient play, allowing humans to get on, get along, help, love, hurt, threaten, or otherwise put themselves and others in play.
10. For example, consider the moving picture made of footage from the first minutes of Embeha’s Masks in the Sun. This moving picture can be called “g1.3g1.17g1.5g2.15g1.32” or “Pinka_Jean”John” Birken_Jean Birken’s House.” Two more persons, places, things are involved g1.3g1.1g2.15g1.32.
11. The numbers have to do with Embeha, their author. Each of these persons, places, and things are about Embeha. They have to do with his artistic work and thinking that is a part of

the artwork or writing he does. Each is an abbreviation, as many persons, places and things are not yet numbered. The numbering is most likely limitless. Storytelling and art are in certain senses autobiographical, and art history is often simultaneously a kind of biographical research and writing, as well as (oddly enough) a critique of autobiographies. Being so makes art history a kind of anthropology and socio-psycho-analysis that has the state and humanity as its main subject of inquiry.

11. Embeha's work is not in conversation with scholars, but with the state, with humanity. One hope within in it all is to make his work a sacrifice to storytelling, to give it up to others. These stories can become the stories of persons, places, and things other than Gabriel Embeha. True stories belong to the person telling or retelling them, and all the rest is money-making and brand protection.

13. *Masks in the Sun* is quite unusual for a two-and-a-half-hour film, in that it was conceptualized, written, casted, directed, sound engineered, light engineered, photographed and edited by Gabriel Embeha alone.)

14. What, whom, or where is a moving picture, such as *Masks in the Sun* “a picture of?”

15. There are no true pictures of anything, anyone, anywhere. A picture is (not is of) a person, place, or thing, all combined. Pictures are one before the state (courts, police, or what have you). A picture is not simply a thing, alone, nor is it “of” this or that person, place, or thing alone.

16. One of the greatest depicting behaviors we each engage in (dreaming) demonstrates this to be true. In dreaming persons, places and things do not have the fixity (via telling or otherwise depicting) we are compelled to give them in waking life (and we forget dream persons, places, and things too).

19. Dream and dreamlike persons, places and things are the rule and not the exception. One of the biggest questions about humanity yet to be answered is not why we dream, but why we sleep and dream so relatively little.

17. A picture does not truly fix the combined person, place and thing “in it,” yet there are elements in play (called familykers) that a fixing. While we say a picture is “of” a person, place, and thing, a picture is always of all three at once, and therefore of nothing.

18. In fact, depictions are never of a person, place, or thing as they always were and will be either. One can picture persons one may not have seen for decades, although they may now be dead, or look very different, hard for one to recognize face-to-face.

19. If the person is dead, is his or her picture “a picture of” a dead person? No.

20. Even if a camera were placed in a buried casket, the picture of the person, place and thing in it would not “be a picture of” “the dead person.” Even the grave does not really fix us.

21. One can draw, paint, imagine, impersonate, dream, or otherwise depict what would be called non-existent, imaginary or fictional persons, places, or things. But, as in dreams (or dementia), is it correct to say these persons, places and things do not exist, and so on? Are

they not composites or modifications, juxtapositions of pictures, associated with “real persons, places, and things?”

22. These persons, places and things are actually persons, places and things as the rule, rather than as the exception.

23. When a person with dementia looks at you in the odd, composite, indeterminate, unfixed and so-deemed incorrect way they do, are they dealing with you? Yes.

24. When a stranger looks at you as someone oddly familiar, are they dealing with you? Yes.

25. When someone looks at you in a so-deemed enthralled, lustful, pitying, amused, racist, sexist, ageist, or envious way are they dealing with you? Yes.

26. When someone dreams of me, or is “thinking about” me, are they dealing with me? How can I honestly say they are not?

27. So, there are no true, fixed persons, places, or things (or pictures) to be “pictures of.” Each would-be true person, place, or thing is but a still or moving picture (or sound pattern), and this still or moving picture, or sound pattern, is itself a person, place and thing.

28. We do not love, avoid, bid, get on with, or fight with true others. Without the *familykers* compelling us to admit to and be treated as true persons (i.e., identified, located, fixed, picture-persons), and without most of our collectively willing consent to be so, and without being such persons we need to be to avoid the violence of the state (its algorithmic logistics, mathematics, etc.), we are the hugging, playing, sleeping, dreaming, fighting, getting along, apes we have always been.

29. Returning to *Masks in the Sun*, we can ask again “What, whom, or where is a moving picture, such as this, “a picture of?””

30. One could answer this in terms of the story of the film, a version of Charles Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol*, yet, this is also a part of the story, screenplay, film *Masks in the Sun* in which an old man with dementia named Gene Carter is being financially exploited. Yet again, it is of a private investigator and actor Jean Birken who in this short film is seen acting along with a woman named Pam Welles, who is also likely to be known elsewhere in Embeha’s work as someone else. Beyond this, it is also a series of persons, places and things written, being directed, and edited by a man named Doug Walters. Finally, but not in conclusion, are pictures of Berlin’s *Landwehrkanal* related a figure who was killed and dumped into it many years ago.

31. It is important here to realize that while persons Embeha is calling Jean, Pam and other names are acting, Jean, Pam and the others are not the characters they are playing. There is a list of these actors, all local actors and not celebrities, whose names scroll at the end of the film *Masks in the Sun*.

31. In *Masks in the Sun* we are witnessing play, and nothing more.

33. In *Masks in the Sun* the characters being played by Pam, Jean and others (like those named Mike Brannigan, Lisa Brannigan, Gene Carter, Nick Carter, Allison Carter, Tammy

Carter, and Brian Weller) are nothing—they are nowhere, nobody, basically meaningless; they cannot be kissed, or killed, or lied to, or flattered, or any such thing. The only story is that of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* mixed with the screenplay and its filming, and not any stories of “the actors themselves.” This story is Embeha's own, of the film as a written, casted, directed, photographed, and edited work of art, anthropological thinking, and socio-psycho-analysis. This is one way to explain what makes it unnerving for some. Some want the story to be (almost legally, ethically, and even patriotically) real, to be involving local Americans, and they become lost and anxious in not being able to say who, what, where and why people are who, what, where and why they are. Within the dark theater they begin to become figuratively demented and want to flee back into the real America, the real human world.

34. One could say “This is a fun, artistic way of looking at pictures, but it is different in reality, or everyday life.” But this would be wrong. Present, living stories somehow relying on pictures, whether visible by others or only by ourselves, whether told or left untold, are all we (as humans, and state actors) actually possess. In fact, our very defense of our own dignity may consist of little more.

35. Embeha used to reject mental images as pictures. His idea was that they were only pictures metaphorically. Now he is willing to turn it around and say mental images are not simply metaphorical but images period, pictures period. There should be no difference between the two.

36. Are there “real people” in *Masks in the Sun*? One could say there are unknown actors, and that these are the real people but, to a certain extent, the persons acting in *Masks in the Sun* are characters, in that their personal lives are unknown. They are not celebrated persons and thus do not continually call for a suspension of disbelief when we see them on screen acting as if they are fathers, mothers, sons, lovers, postal clerks and so on.

37. In the end, the “reality” of the persons we see in *Masks in the Sun* has, once again, more to do with Embeha's artistic work and thinking. These persons, as far as viewers of the film are concerned, are autobiographical. The history of the film is art history, a kind of biographical research and writing, as well as a critique of autobiographies. To discuss or critique the film is a kind of anthropology and socio-psycho-analysis (whose true focus is on the state).

38. Is biography actually avoidable in art history? History and anthropology have shown to fit well together. My anthropology and take on pictures you are reading is art-driven. It does not stem from historical, social or cultural critique and their appropriation of philosophy and literary theory.

39. To be clear, Embeha does not pretend to know any truths about any of the actors in his film. The numbers assigned to their characters are numbers assigned to his own artistic work and his own thinking, to a combined who, what and where “he was” as he was writing, casting, directing, photographing, and editing the film. He is trying to relate as much as he knows about this via the anthropology, socio-psycho-analysis and philosophical rumination employed in knowing why he himself did or do this or that. You have the right to your own take, your own numbers, on this as well.