

| Review by Corine Hamel, photo editor at *Marie Claire*, Paris

Barbara Egin's photo series represents a self-contained work that can be read as a unitary whole. On the one hand, the work reveals itself to be a reportage on everyday life, passers-by dressed for summer in the city. But at the same time it is also a pictorial work where every captured scene is a picture, in a sense a transfiguration.

The photographs leave no doubt that Barbara Egin is also a painter.

The attraction of the series arises through its opposites, the banality of the city against the feelings of the individuals captured in the photographs.

The subject is deliberately chosen. Especially in the era of the snapshot, Barbara Egin could have satisfied herself with a simple record. Like the couple in one of her photos, whom we can just imagine admiring the results of their pose through the droplets on their smartphone.

But Barbara Egin goes further, deepening the insight and taking us with her beyond the first step of mere interpretation. To show us what she sees, she has selected a clear frame and stuck with it. Repeated consistently in all the photos, it turns the people into figures. Through this repetitive effect we become onlookers, passers-by among passers-by.

Barbara Egin has chosen this particular view as her perspective, without becoming distracted by other possible angles. This way she avoids any hint of stylistic artefact, which would have overloaded the scene.

Her objective was not overload, but its opposite: restriction. This included the choice of a blurred background, reduced to plain grey tones, to signalise the urban environment and to anchor the motifs in a familiar everyday setting. We have all trodden these paths.

Barbara Egin avoids getting distracted by the water-spraying machine itself. In some of the photos it is not to be seen at all. Only its effect is visible, in the contrast between wet and dry paving.

It would have been too obvious just to use the effects of light on water. But that would have distracted from the central theme of the series and dispelled the magic of the scene.

Only one thing was important for Barbara Egin: to show us humanity of these random individuals, the almost ecstatic state of these involuntary actors and actresses. That is exactly what is so conspicuous in this series: the smile on the lips, the physical attitude, as if frozen in ecstatic pleasure. Yet in the banal setting of a summer city pavement.

The bright colours of her protagonists' clothing was also important. Colours that stand out from the grey setting and the other people. Children, completely absorbed in their sensations, also provoked her interest, more than the entirety of the surroundings.

It is that particular focus that sets Barbara Egin's work apart from the usual journalistic features. The way she emphasises the expressions of individual people, whose visible physical presence embodies the joy and emotion of the moment against the backdrop of the banal urban setting.

The selected format is crucial to understanding the series. Scenes with a single figure alternate with others showing several: two little girls whose gesture tells us so much; the young woman alone. I suddenly find myself wondering whether it might have been more interesting to have shown only single figures. But no, that would have been an artificial effect, too constructed, and would have led quite elsewhere. The great strength of this work consists in its quiet portrayal of emotions that take us back to our basic human feelings: humanity in its relationship to water, as one of the vital elements.

"C'est beau la vie" is the work of an artist who takes pleasure in sharing her experience of the world around her, in all the simplicity of the moment. What this series expresses in its own intelligent way is – all of our lives.