

15.05.2018 | 23.06.2018
MIGUEL REFRESCO

TRACE

"A photograph is not only an image (as a painting is an image), and interpretation of the real, it is also a trace, something directly stencilled off the real, like a footprint or a death mask".

Susan Sontag

The power of photography resides in its ability to fix the appearance of a particular event, through the camera. According to John Berger, unlike memory, photography does not preserve a meaning in itself nor does it offer a narrative. If we put aside the photograph that belongs to our private sphere, it becomes a dead object and a target for arbitrary uses and interpretations. It is an image built by the person who makes it, an interpretation of the real and at the same time an evidence of the existence of something or someone.

This is how we should look at the work of the artist Miguel Refresco. The images shown here represent "traces" of territories, people and objects. They are vestiges, evidences, marks that the artist has captured following diverse interests and experiences. There is a connection between his work and the American street photography in which images emerge following intuition and instinct as the artist goes through physical space. It is walking without destination with the camera being an integral and constant part of his daily life. This spontaneity and improvisation are contrary to the idea of narrative, an idea that does not exist in the work of Miguel Refresco, since it limits him and withdraws power from the very images that he builds.

The set of images presented here belong to several series that the artist has been adding to his body of work. They relate to travels to places like Italy, Spain, Croatia, Montenegro or Greece, following his curiosity and willingness to learn about what surrounds him. The images are characterized by their pictorial plasticity, in resistance to any possibility of narrative or social commentary. They are spontaneous choices from a world as it is presented to us, in a line that runs through romanticism and realism. In his images there is also an interaction between the natural and the built environment, as in the case of the work depicting one of the fjords in Montenegro, interrupted by what

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appears to be a soccer field goal. Others show discontinuous and heterogeneous elements that do not belong to the same world. This is the case of one image where we see some nuns walking along graffiti walls; the same duality that attracted Roland Barthes when confronted with the images of Koen Wessing. Or the image of the man on his back as a symbol of the romantic experience of nature, alone on the heights, looking toward the horizon to an unattainable point. An almost sublime image if it were not the strangeness of the great tattoo he wears.

Colour is also a fundamental part of Miguel Refresco's work, as is abstraction, especially when he closely photographs isolated objects such as the truck canvas, the ceiling lamp, a simple palm tree, or even a cover. They are traces, fragments, small details that, disconnected from the visual characteristics that resemble their referent, turn into polysemic images.

In addition to photography work, a video by the same artist is presented, in which the narrative focuses on the dismantling of everyday life through a childish logic, in which protocol and conventions are discussed; the question of the napkin in the lap, the toilet covers that do not hold still, and even the cords that should or should not be tightened. It is the wandering about the gesture, the vestige and those things which do or do not make sense. A kind of absurd discussion about urbanity.

This exhibition brings us, therefore, to the world of images made by Miguel Refresco.

A world that is closely linked to the artist's time, because it is not possible to photograph what has already been or what will be. Without the pretentiousness of the narrative, his time also becomes ours.

Susana Rodrigues
Exhibition curator