

Géométrie de l'espoir

Jean Guy Lathuilière

For a visual artist, taking the decision to declare them the primary subject of the image, or its sole principal subject, restores to figures and numbers the honour they had lost in the cogs and wheels of frenzied, harassing machines, in attempts to standardise them for a society that has become essentially mercantile.

On a less secular level, are they also meant to be rooted in the sacred?

Do numbers contain a void, a much-feared vacuum for the evidence of doubt that creeps into the fragile interstices of time?

I'm not (a) mathematician, I don't have that posture, and I feel far removed from the rigour that, although I can't understand it, I revere so much. It seemed fairer to me, in the sense of more comfortable, to turn to an extreme opposite, a kind of antidote to my mathematical limitations, an easy return to arithmos, to arithmetikê tekhnê, and thus to be able to play at adding, subtracting, dividing or multiplying according to the 4 basic arithmetical operations.

The photographic act is in itself a vital function, a programmed survival reflex: immersed in the particular sphere of the subject discovered by chance, fully awake, and above all entirely available to act on the proposal. Nothing disturbs this suddenly visible whole, and from that moment on, I fall into a total symbiosis with the elements revealed by the light of a particular moment, a rare scent or a divine breath descended there, at the exact spot where the frame of the image works its magic.

Because I 'm aware that when I photograph, I'm involved in a process akin to magic (let's not forget that in French, the anagram of the word "image" is "magie"). From then on, this practice gives rise to a series of small, automatic and derisory actions, one after the other, which will give rise to a definitive image, cut out of reality.

I am photographically interested in a wide range of themes; in the heart of these series the informative intention and the aesthetic dimension overlap and combine. They reflect a desire to tell stories from an unexpected point of view. My main aim is to present a photographic object produced with the intention of recreating a pseudo-reality, or rather a shifted reality. This is the choice I have made for the 'Numbers' series. This approach is contemplative, aiming to evoke a sense of peace and tranquility, in a way an inner vision or a vision to inside, creating a meditative area where viewers can be reassured by the silent nature of these photographs.

About twenty-thirty years ago, I was asked to write a text to be placed at the entrance to my exhibition; I wrote the following lines to describe this devotion in more detail, and to explain its scope and power:

"After a long period of passionate relationship with the image, I now know more clearly why and how this idyll came about, and how intensely the spell lasted, holding me captive for so long, deprived of any desire to break this freely consented dependence.

I had discovered quite early on the truths of etymology and the obviously logical reasons for creating a word to designate a new science or a new practice. This revelation, the true meaning of the word photography, plunged me into a deep reverie: photography, the art of writing with light...

Is there no more beautiful ink than light? Is there no stranger paradox than that which describes the mutation of a limpid, dazzling wave into an obscure flux, secretly, magically deposited on the sensitive sheet, then etched in platinum or silver salts?

The reverie persisted and I became a photographer".



It's essential to me that photography should evoke the passing of time, not only for the sake of reporting a strictly cold chronological history but above all to represent the length and flow of time: the eye is caught, the gaze is turned on for a brief instant, a picture is born from that fleeting fortuitous combination and, most of the time, it is a heaven-sent coincidence.

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