

# From the window of Niépce

José Luis Bravo

Are we just the memories of someone who is forgetting us?

This idea proposed by Salvador Elizondo in one of his stories made a deep impact on me, and made me feel that, before such fragility, only photography, discipline unmistakably linked to the notion of time (kept, apprehended, represented time), would let me save all that which I don't want to let go into the sphere of oblivion; oblivion, understood as the doors to disappearance.

Working with a hand crafted camera which combines two moments of the technical-technological development of image seizing (a lens recovered from an old large format camera and a recent generation scanner) not only allowed me to keep the memory of my transit through Barcelona, but it also raised several questions about the very nature of the tool (the camera), about the representation of the world through photography and to think about the possible image or aesthetics of time.

Taking as starting point the image that Niepce achieved to fix on paper in 1826 (point de vue pris d'une fenetre du Gras) and the recurrent exploration of the world from the window with Daguerre and Fox Talbot, among others, and following the impulse of the first traveler photographers that in the mid 19th century abandoned the safety of their studios to explore the world, I resolved a metaphorical return to the beginnings of photography as the best way to experiment with this new camera. I used this tool to capture what I saw from my window, and so I generated a personal cartography of the new surrounding's as this started to expand. The fascination that I have always felt for the architectonic spaces in which I move, and especially for those that in my perception are capable of keeping an "aura" or "latency" of other moments, became the main selection criteria for my photographed subjects.

These necessity of using the camera to capture the surrounding's obviously refers to the phenomenon that occurred when the French government gave the discovery of photography as a "gift" to the world in 1839: the proliferation of images of Paris. Under this anxiety to take on the world, underlies the intention, I think, of being able for the first time to capture time, to use Daguerre's "mirror with memory" and inscribe into the sphere of remembrances a world which is already understood as ephemeral.

Another significant aspect in the beginnings of photography becomes fundamental to the development of the project: long exposure times required on the daguerreotype process make architectonic subjects the best able ones to use the new invention. The camera I used, which is kind of a "camera obscura" with a digital capture system, has no exposure times but capture times, which extend depending on the resolution of the image; the captured "instant" expands on time producing photography's which are the sum of many instants, where the "tracks of moving objects through time" appear.

If we look at early photography we can find the passing of time on the photographed subjects (if we compare them now days) as on the medium on which they where fixed. Therefore the notion of aesthetics of the "antique" would be easily assimilated to subjects and materials that show the passing of time.

The images that set up this project can be interpreted as old photography's made in b/w or veered although they are recently made and generated by digital media. This is principally due to the subjects I chose to photograph and the aesthetics of the project, resulting from the particularities of the camera: all the images are in color (RGB), but because of a "defect" of the camera most frequencies (colors) are lost, leaving only a few tones. The 100% digital nature of the images can become even

less evident when they leave their natural media (the monitor) and are printed on cotton papers which add they're material and aesthetic qualities to this "old" appearance.

In light of the above, could we say that all that which is close to the field of the "old looks" can be seen or considered as old if we only have an aesthetic confrontation with the work, ignoring all its context and references?

Finally, Vilem Flusser's approach to the idea of forcing the tool to follow different patterns of use than the original to obtain different results and expand the creative space is also a determinant in sol-bcn

This project opened a unique space where to reflect around the phenomenon of creation, lecture and consumption of images generated by technological media. A space of research and knowledge of the media, the tool and its incidence in the final result, which collects my interests about the medium I chose as the base and support of my whole work: photography.

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Barcelona 2007

Published in:  
[ESPACIO] Arte Contemporáneo No. 6 (Contemporary Art magazine)  
Editorial Diamantina  
Mexico City, 2008  
ISSN: 1870-1744  
<http://www.revistaespacio.com/>