Yves Chatap

This proposal is a mise en image [a staging through images] of the organisation of space and the interpenetration of the real and imaginary territorial borders of metropolises. This unstable equilibrium between present reality and possible or imagined reality influences the dynamic of the dialogue between the artwork and the spectator.

Often presented as the site of all pollution and insecurity – whether physical or moral – the city is perceived as epitomising the ailment of civilisation. Nevertheless, it is the locus for creativity due to its incredible cultural diversity and capacity to readily establish links between individuals.

The contemporary city is constituted of great heterogeneity. The bodies of work submitted to the Brighton Photo Fringe Open '11 tell the story of the city. Here and elsewhere, that is undeniably one of the strengths of photography. By experimenting with the mechanical eye, these artists fully express their individuality and question their orientation and status within cities, within these urban societies which are enrolled in multiple temporalities.

By working with urbanisation, photographer Alina Kisina interweaves spaces with temporalities. From her photographic situations arise the juxtaposition of diverse architectural forms . Kisina's city appears through voids and planes and in the relationships between volumes. Through this movement comes the photographic work that questions urban spaces as 'non-places'[1] These transitory passages, of 'worrying strangeness', transcribe a kind of suspension of human presence which can be felt[2] and somehow it is still there. These zones of imagined passage aptly translate the permanent mutations experienced by modern cities.

The migratory movements of populations give rhythm to these city mutations. These successive rhythms of life leave traces rather like in the debris of industrial wastelands. What do we retain from these places with no function and of a bygone time? What do we transform into souvenirs of the past? Melanie Menard interrogates this very subject. With realism, this photographer shows atmospheres, traces, and thus she reveals (with a certain detachment) the way of life of society. Of this 'supermodernity'[3], imagined by Jean Baudrillard[4] or Guy Debord in their time, what remains of individuality now? If the spectator remains free to invent his/her own story through the

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[1] Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, Verso (1995). Places of transience that do not hold enough significance to be regarded as "places".

[2] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Vintage (1980).

[3] *Marc Augé, Non-Places*: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity, Verso (1995). Term used by the anthropologist to designate the excesses of contemporary societies in a new era after postmodernism.

[4] Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*, Sage Publications (1970).

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abandoned territories that have become commonplace in the urban environment, the pictorial simplicity of the images and the constant poetic subjectivity of the images all contribute to the documentary value of this proposition.

Melanie Menard's work, like that of Mark Burton, speaks of this curious degradation of architecture and contemporary urbanity. The notion of "territory" often implies the exclusion of the other or a defining of what is outside. The industrial culture that gave a cohesion to popular zones in cities has been replaced by situations of social fragility, the affirmation of new ethnic and religious groups and the concentration of the immigrant populations. Mark Burton lists cosmopolitan situations that can uphold these new forms of territoriality and, which add to the cultural complexities of great metropolises. By making a portrait of these populations, the photographer attempts to highlight contemporary social experiences, which are constantly being reinvented.

With this form of essentially humanist photography, one can imagine the city as a place of sociability, social and cultural mixings, as a space which brings individuals together. It is also the place that expresses the difficulties of co-existance and the exoticisation of our close-at-hand "others". Photographically toing and froing between North and South, as I choose to construct this text, is symptomatic of the migratory flows and the transversality of exchanges experienced in contemporary societies. I don't pretend to articulate an issue of such weight solely based on these proposals but I do see this selection of photographic projects as an invitation to rethink the city, society and citizenship.

Every city has its own rhythm and its own realities. John Perkins and David Creedon propose the discovery of other urban temporalities: those of Havana and Cairo.
Their photographs emphasise human emotion and experience through the underlining of looks and poignant gestures. Their uses of colour and the immediacy of the representation of texture give the viewer a direct impression of the intimacy and daily existence of the inhabitants of their chosen cities. Cairo and Havana are also close to our collective consciousness because of the economic realities of globalisation.

The city, as a space defining a common future, is also seeking new principles of citizenship. The Arab revolutions have been the echo of these socio-political questions. John Perkins's reportage photography tackles the seriousness of the situation in Egypt, the population's long wait and above all the social fracture that was at the origin of the Egyptian revolution. Beyond their testimony, this representation of the 'Arab Spring' is the vector of the language of a society in perpetual reconstruction. Is it not the role of the artist to show that his immersion in these Arab indignations is a vector of a certain reality? Conjuring up souvenirs, these images reveal the city as a space for meanderings where the collective memory of a place is mingled with people's lived experience.

Open'11

Translated from the French by Caroline Hancock

2011

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City of Home 35, Alina Kisina, 2009

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Ghost House III, Melanie Menard, 2009

Mike & Kathy, Mark Burton, 2010

Mugama 10, John Perkins, 2011

Ollantay, Docker - La Habana, David Creeden, 2011

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