



SIMULTANEOUS REALITY

Essay on the approach to another type of photography

Valentín González Fernández



the most frequently asked question is:

How do you do it?

but the trully important question is:

How do you see it?

Yet nobody asks me this.

It surprises me as this is
more difficult than
showing the final image,
which, in comparison,
is very easy.

Valentín González

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For my daughters, Ivette and Xira

VALENTÍN GONZÁLEZ FERNÁNDEZ

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INTRODUCTION

This essay arises as the result of an inflection in the professional trajectory of the artist Valentín González. The author carries out a re-vision, takes a fresh look with a new way of seeing, of the world of photography and its relationship to art. The intellectual conflict leads him to reflect on the role of photography, its evolution, photographic styles and the denotations and connotations of the photographic image, the ultimate meaning of artistic creation and the function of photography and the artist.

In this work the author not only tries to find meaning to the art of photography, but goes further and proposes creation as a media which shows us our own truth and inner beauty. The search for the artist's identity and for the connection between the creator and the world (the way in which the artist sees reality, turns it into images and offers it to the world for it to interpret them) is a classic preoccupation.

The questions join together in a continuous dialogue with the reader requiring possible answers from them, which turns it into an intellectual salutary lesson. It stimulates one to reconsider from within, to carry out an exercise of introspection, in order to, from the deepest parts, impulse a more creative and more authentic new action. As the author states, quoting the author George Tice: "You can only see

what you are willing to see, what the mind reflects at that special moment”.

From the previously posed questions, Valentín González explains his concerns about reality, its subsequent treatment to endow it with a new appearance by way of fuzzy logic, and lastly, the conversion of the underlying image into a symbol. The multiple readings one image acquires is what lies in what the author calls “simultaneous reality” and which requires of the reader an attentive look and an analytical and vigilant attitude. It asks us to dig deep into the different layers of reality, among multiple simultaneous realities.

In short, the author questions the concept of photography and proposes giving the term a wider meaning in which fit terms such as interpretation, creation and translation of images, where the intellectual act is a reality as much for the transmitter as for the receiver of the proposed forms.

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I want to give thanks to Dimas and Pedro Glez, and to Paz Sáiz, for helping me take my first steps in the world of the image, for helping me to see.

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I wish to thank my friend Santiago García Gago, who made me see the necessity of explaining the concept of simultaneity; this was the definitive impulse.

Lastly, I want to thank those who made an effort to teach me, those who believed in me, and those who encouraged me with their words and affection.

All these people are in my heart and in my thoughts.

Valentín González

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<u>CONTENTS</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
PROLOGUE	19
CHAPTER I The past of photography	29
CHAPTER II On the road to art	51
CHAPTER III Twin worlds	99
CHAPTER IV Equivalent reality	121
CHAPTER V Other realities	143
CHAPTER VI Simultaneity and image	167
EPILOGUE	199

PROLOGUE

"We know many of the properties and applications of light, but we have no idea of its essence" Jaime Balmes, (El Criterio)

It all begins little by little. You know something is happening, but you have not realised what is really happening.

One day you discover that you have fourteen copies of that magazine you subscribe to, piled up with previous issues. But these, different to the others, are still wrapped in their original cellophane. You have not opened them, you have not even looked at them, and neither do you know what articles are in them nor who has written them. You do not know what photos are within, you do not know how it can be possible that fourteen months have passed without even looking at a magazine that you used to wait for impatiently, whose texts you devoured, which set the pace of your life waiting for the next issue. Fourteen months are many months, you cannot justify yourself saying you did not have time, that you were very busy. The truth is something else.

You took your last shots what is also now over a year ago. It would be more accurate to say that for over a year you

have not touched any of your photos, you do not even flick through them, or copy them, so since well over a year ago what you had done before then is not important to you.

You have two books that you have not started to read. They were interesting, very interesting, you thought; deep and dense, but you have not even read a single chapter. It is not so unusual, the book you started months ago – Robert Henri Marie Bénigne de La Sizeranne “La Photographie est-elle un art?” (1899) - is at a standstill on page..., you do not remember precisely where you left off. It continues to gather dust on the shelf under the table by the sofa. To continue with it you’ll have to start again, or pretty much so.

You find your photos again, perfectly kept, tidy, and numbered, with their names, sheathed to protect them. You looked through one of the folders with little interest, a quick look at half a dozen photos and then back to their cover. It cannot be your day, because you found them cold, distant, obvious; you especially found them to be obvious. It was what most surprised and displeased you. They were like a “Good morning”, or worse still, like a “How are you?”, in reality you do not even know what you’re asking, it is mechanical, they are sounds, an automaton, a simple repeated social convention; let’s face it, standard communication. It means you wish to be pleasant, not exactly that you are interested in what you ask. And when you looked for the meaning of your photos, the answer sounded like the echo of hundreds of set phrases said at the same time. They were not yours, but you made them.

A few more months and it is even worse. The distance which opens out before what you see, whether it be your work or that of another, is greater, worse. You no longer subscribe to that magazine, the three books sleep in a box in the storeroom; the same box where you put all the ones

you had on the shelf which you had read a long time ago. The magazines are underneath the books. The shelf is empty. You have not looked at your photos again.

A few more months pass, maybe a year, maybe two, and, one fine day you have a conversation with yourself, a painful chat from Mr. You to yourself; something which could be defined as giving birth.

Perhaps you say something along these lines to yourself: "This began bit by bit, but one day I became sick of it. What can I do if now I am incapable of seeing photography as anything more than the ruins of some ancient civilisation?"

After seeing thousands of ruins I do not want to see any more. I only want to look again if I pass nearby by chance, as though I were bumping into an acquaintance, to explain something, to me or to somebody, but without the interest of wanting to discover something, I have lost this instinct. Between them and me something akin to a glass ice wall has been erected. I do not intend to fight against it, it is happening for a reason, the best thing to do is to let it happen, to come out, to express itself. We'll see where it leads.

But this is not just now, that is what is worrying. It started to show itself a long time ago, years, several, many. It began as though it were nothing, without disturbing and silently, unnoticeably, and it has been growing. Now it is huge, it almost fills everything.

I have had enough! I thought on realising this. With a break it will go and the interest will return. But it has not returned and a lot of time has passed.

My eyes take a stroll through hundreds of photos and collections, through the works of famous and respected photographers, and I get the feeling of seeing what I had already seen. I know I had not seen it before, but I feel it is

something I am seeing for a second time. As though I had created it and taken it out of a drawer again. I had forgotten it, that's all.

I cannot help feeling that what I see is "something", a thing, an object, a representation. Yet I feel it is dead within itself. I feel nothing, I no longer feel anything. Before, some time ago, I felt something, I think. Or was it that I wanted to feel it?

It is as though I were reading short sentences, but not a book. Like what comes written on sugar sachets, almost meaningless sentences which amuse you for a few seconds. I can read maybe twenty, but then I do not want to read any more. I do not want telegrams, I need the complete book, but either it does not exist or I cannot find it. I do not want glasses of water, I want the ocean and to swim in it.

I feel the images are dead, I do not know why. No, it is not that, it is as though... they do not exist. That does not exist, it is a lie, it is false. It is just a pose, a footprint like those of a beetle in the sand on a beach. Only that, nothing more.

I look at them doubtfully, I do not enjoy them.

And I ask of myself moderation in my judgements, and even apologise to the photo. I hide my thoughts, ashamed, hidden so no-one can know. How can I tell anybody that I do not like any photos, that pretty much any exhibition bores me? That I see everything, but as though it were a patterned tile on the wall of a bathroom, one more of many. And I ask myself if I am the only one who feels this.

I try to remember and relive the old feelings, but they do not come back to life, they are only the past.

My look also turns to ice, analytical and distant; like a trial.

I look at books and more books, at photography across the ages. I look for new names and see the same old

images topped off with modern hairstyles. The story repeats itself wearing different clothes, it is like a nightmare, it seems like a curse. Behind each door there is always the same thing, behind hundreds of doors it is always the same.

I went back in time yesterday, to the same old heroes, the great reference points. I came out of that bath more worried and dirty than when I went in.

I looked at one image after another, and saw them as novelties, anecdotal and dry, many compositions with things which seemed to me to be obsolete industrial photos, resemblances, with postures which are by now genetic, it is not necessary to think about them. It is written within.

It has come to be a part of instinct, this happened a long time ago. It is like a mineral, when it is used and melted down you obtain metal, you can do things with the metal, other things; this is using intelligence. When you just play around with the mineral, then the material is nothing more than this, playing with a stone, so it is instinctive. I can no longer be instinctive, I just cannot.

In a photo with a sculpture to one side I see nothing more than the photo of said sculpture; I could not put up a photo like that in my house. All of a sudden everything before me begins to appear like a reproduction, big things like cities or small ones like pictures. I do not see an interpretation of things, but an interpretation of the reproduction of things."

A line of thought not as strange as it may seem.

If it happens to you, perhaps what this situation is telling you is that realism no longer interests you as its own language, it is just that. In which case it is not so bad, it is a good impetus to seek new directions, other paths to express what has been created and has made itself evident through dissatisfaction. It will help you to open your eyes to other viewpoints.

We can assume that if the image which interests you has a specific and distinct language, personal and your own, perhaps its expression through sight can be as hypnotic as submerging yourself in your own thoughts and losing yourself in abstraction.

Maybe a detailed analysis helps to find a way of breaking the photo down into its parameters, to put them back together in a way which corresponds to what does thrill you.

This would be a good start towards moving on to the next stage. A great moment.

In all the arts there have been periods of change, sometimes very radical ones. But with each change, unimaginable and sublime works of art have been produced; works which more than sufficiently justify taking the risk of leaping into the apparent void.

Photography as art has remained very faithful to its beginnings. Over almost two hundred years, with more or less ups and downs, it has continued its path within the whirlpool of its popularisation, sandwiched in the river which swept it forward.

We've reached this point, and it is a good idea to ask ourselves if we have come of our own free will or because we were swept along by the circumstances. It is no less a good idea to be able to answer ourselves as to whether this is the path we wish to follow, each and every one of us, in the future; because, if it is not, there is nothing which justifies immobility. Change, the new cycle, the latest fashion, new ideas, the only thing they will do is give a new lease of life to all we touch.

Weariness is good and even necessary.

Due to the arrival of the digital image, it could be thought that the previous words are a consequence of this event, but it is unrelated. Firstly, because the way in which

photography is shaped as art in the future is independent of all types of platform or media used. Secondly, because a significant amount of what is written here is old enough to be able to say that digital work had not even been thought of.

All that said, if it is photography, whichever may be its birthplace, it is welcome.

CHAPTER I

THE PAST OF PHOTOGRAPHY

*"And you learn that, each day, you learn" Verónica A. Shoffstall
("After a While", Mirrors and other insults ©1971)*

The past of photography

Quite some time ago, a man was born who did not know what chemistry was, and what is more, he could not even begin to formulate the idea that things were anything more than what he saw. He did not know of the existence of physics, his means of communication could barely be called language; he was unable to think of philosophy because that science was yet to be born. Justice, politics, mathematics, astronomy, art..., they were not even concepts, words or sounds to him. I do not know if beauty was important or if he recognised it as such. From what I know, this relative of mine was quite an insecure man; he lived from day to day, was very visceral and had many fears. He was afraid of thunder and lightning, and all his instincts were very basic. He seemed to be a stupid, aggressive being, and maybe nowadays we would have to lock him away for being socially maladapted.

I have some pictures which he painted of himself. These days that relative is very famous, not because his drawings

sell at a high price, no, but because that ignoramus painted things which are priceless, it is that simple.

I have no idea what his name was, nor how tall he was, nor whether he died young or old. I know he did not die in a bed, I also know that he did not have the mental capacity to believe in God, but I do know that he believed in something that for him was similar, because it brought him good luck, and that he also believed in evil, and he could be corrupt, because he tried to buy off those he considered to be greater than him and who could do him harm. He did not know how to make them happy, but he tried the best he could although he did not achieve the best results, and so it was that he lived in fear of the powerful ones who dominated him.

This relative who seems a little stupid was not in the slightest bit stupid. He was the unwitting cause of the discovery of photography. It is not well known how or why, but one fine day, he painted a hand and then a human figure, followed by some horses and some bison, on a wall in his house. Well, it was not all on the same day, but he was the first to do so, the one who "invented" it, or who discovered a gateway to a form of expression and creation we still use to this day. And this was quite some years ago, in the Palaeolithic era.

It seems everything began as a game, as if he sprayed blood from his mouth to the hand on the wall. Who knows why? But as this cousin is quite strange, we are not going to stop to look for the reason. However, he immediately associated this act with the invisible powerful ones he feared, because he did not take long in transforming what he saw with his eyes into images on the wall, to see if he would later see them outside. Something along the lines of his thinking: If what I see outside I put here, what I put here I will see outside. And if at any moment what he had thought did happen, he immediately believed that those pictures were magical, and without knowing it, discovered the "symbol". He painted groups of animals in

order to catch more, and ended up painting his friends hunting them. But he did not only want to hunt, he also wanted to have children, of course, and he returned to the “magic symbol” in order to favour fertility, a thing which he did not understand but he did know what it produced.

In little time horses came to represent something masculine and bison something feminine. Maybe he was not as lacking in imagination and intelligence as was thought at home, although in reality they did not know what these words meant either, but they understood each other. What is likely is that if you attempted to tell him what was going to happen in the future with the game he had begun on the walls of his home, and with the transcendence it would have for his grandchildren, no doubt he would have gone mad, and this time for real. Because his idea spread to other lands and began to take names, and trends, and other meanings, and other missions...

Following the simple sketches of our forefather, the Mesopotamians and the Egyptians turned the paintings into something geometric and defined, but immediately the Greeks wanted to improve it, paying special attention to the representation of the human figure. They did not think of us much, and their technique was not good enough to prevent much, a great deal of what they painted, from disappearing. The Romans did not have a great appreciation of painting; sculpture was of greater interest to them. The Byzantines not only developed art on panels, but they immersed themselves in religious art. How the genius of that first visionary was becoming more complex! There were more and more laws to study and more knowledge to apply. Not much later, in the Gothic period, Giotto, a fresco painter, became concerned with discovering the laws of perspective, and was no more and no less than the first modern painter. Hands were no longer painted on the wall with blood, there were other materials. In Flanders oil was used, and, in the blink of an

eye The Renaissance arrived. What splendour! If only our ancestor could raise his head... Michelangelo achieved the anatomical perfection of the human figure, Rafael transformed the prototype of beauty, marking a milestone despite his premature death, and Leonardo established the laws of perspective, and something of greater importance to the photographic vision: he softened the contours of objects in accordance with the laws of optics.

It was difficult to better them with the same weapons, methods and styles. So, as a distinctive sign, the next generation pushed the importance of colours, bringing with them Venetian colouring and a mannerist fantasy. But the Baroque did not take long to arrive, brilliantly thought up, such simple effects!, it almost seems like publicity, and it could be said that this was the case given the use of painting mainly by monarchs and the Catholic church at that time. Was it no longer our friend who invoked higher powers? Now it appears to be the powers that be who used the discovery made by our ancestor. He must have thought he'd stolen fire from the gods, perhaps even believed himself superior to them were he aware of it.

Only yesterday Velázquez and Rembrandt painted, and Romanticism threw itself into the expression of the overflowing feelings of the artist. With Millet's and Daumier's naturalism, social matters were touched upon, they were like the hunting images, but current; and later, as the first contemporary movement, impressionism arose. But before..., photography.

A short break.

Some lines ago, our ancestor would have stopped listening to and understanding what we're discussing, but we could still tell him that from him came writing, which is no mean feat, and that from his first symbol was born, perhaps thanks to the wish expressed in his paintings, culture, all of it, and that not only painting grew, because from that symbol

were born others to signify words, and from it flowered thought and philosophy. His gesture on the wall was much more than a giant step for humanity.

With the written word, ideas spread out, were recorded, were discussed, were accepted or rejected, and we grew. New discoveries were given new names, new words, new symbols, and new meanings. Different concepts were brought together, painting expressed feelings, literature also did so... What was art? In reality we are able to make complicated what is born simple, but we are also able to put order to something chaotic, this is our intelligence.

At the end of the day, art has been so tied to the history of our world with all its ups and downs, that through it are reflected all the good and bad of our culture. But art has not always been considered to be art, this term is quite recent. In our history it would only have existed a few days, and what is more it has not always meant the same thing. The points of view from which it was seen over time changed its meaning to the point of leaving it almost unrecognisable, and not only this, but almost antagonistic to itself; but this is only human. Were we present at its birth, it was a game, no more, although the second intention, Divine Grace!, was not merely human. It was clear from the first moment that it was far more than a way to procure food or sex. If we were unable to read this between the lines, we would be clearly inferior to the being we believed to be so elementary. He was looking for what moved him inside, whatever this feeling may have been, but he transformed it into matter, the medium of expression, and the medium has its own life.

Interestingly, in the definition of art, basically "all human activity which makes use of specific knowledge which it applies to achieve a goal", the word beauty is not included; and also of interest is that such a technical definition is given to a word to define something which, on

the other hand, breaks all the rules in favour of the creative imagination. Such a definition seems more befitting of a trade than of anything else, and it is not hard to understand the reason why when until almost the XV century painting was considered to be a trade. During the Renaissance, the word art was a synonym of science, and it was not until the mid XVI century when Vasari used "art" in the sense of plastic and graphic arts, so naming a group of specialities or trades whose main purpose was to produce beauty.

It still took some time, until the XVII century, to conclude that the figurative arts, so diverse in appearance each one, shared circumstances which united them over and above what differentiated them, making clear reference to ingenuity, taste and fantasy. Eventually, from Romanticism onwards the meaning of the word art as an aesthetic activity in general has been consolidated. That is to say, almost no progress has been made since the caves. Yet the discussions, although not clarifying anything fundamental about the root of the matter, it is no less true that they opened doors which no-one would have tried to pass through had they not been prohibited or denied. In any case, what was art, or what art was, the direction it should take or not, was still being debated, but its essence remained untouched. It was "aesthetics", a branch of philosophy born to study the meaning of beauty in general, the nature of art and the validity of judgements concerning artistic creation and the appreciation of a work of art, which attempted to define creativity's way of life.

And one step back...

To the Greeks, beauty held a place in metaphysics, and they designated "poetics" as the study of the arts. Plato said that absolute beauty was a celestial grace which, through matter, led us to adore what is beautiful; however, beauty was not in things but in ideas, and when the artist

imitated things in the work of art, they were copying what already was an imitation or reflection of an idea... Art was nothing more than imitation. We already knew that our great grandfather began by imitating nature, so it did not seem as though we had made any progress at all.

Aristotle changed this definition, saying that it wasn't an imitation of material reality but of idealised reality, which did not represent the specific but the universal, and that it had a purifying effect. Plotinus stated that external beauty wasn't comparable to internal beauty. This philosophy was the first to associate art and beauty, but beauty could only be experienced in a state of ecstasy, when it acquired an ephemeral identity with the divine, due to this the seeker of beauty must look within themselves, and not to the visible world outside themselves.

In all this, the transcendental, the magical aspect to the stone age man appears everywhere. It is amazing that this seed was already in the primitive.

Another interesting point, the first to use the word "aesthetic", from "exegesis" -meaning sense in Greek-, Alexander Baumgarten, defined beauty as the wisdom obtained through the senses, and aesthetics was the science of sensitive knowledge, but that artistic perception was an inferior form and confused thought.

In the end, it was Kant, who demonstrated in 1790 that aesthetics was a separate discipline from reason and ethics, but on the same level, and that judgements about beauty could not be considered less valid for not being based on concepts inherent to reason.

When our hero placed his hand on the wall and looked at it in the cave that day, I do not know what went through his mind. He had put his finger, also blood-stained, on the rock on other occasions, and had left traces of his digits, but – Why blow on it? Was he crazy? He was a

lovable lunatic, in that case. He knew nothing of beauty or art, or of multi-million dollar auctions, nor did he know if he was looking inwards or looking out, or whether what he was doing was human or divine, but he did it, and after doing it he stopped to think about what he had done.

We are still thinking.

Maybe humans were thrown out of Paradise because of this trend, but the great grandfather caveman was a genius. There never was nor will there ever be anyone else like him in the whole of the history of painting, because painting is him, and without him there is nothing.

And now we return to photography.

We left off at the first contemporary pictorial movement, impressionism. Until its inception, the premises which governed painting on a scientific level and of conventionalism were the same as Leonardo's, but the arrival of the first photos certainly influenced the change; and also the liking for Japanese art which appeared in that period. What must be taken into account, as a possible influence, is the addition of the particular way of seeing of the city dweller, with his tendency to capture images on first sight, without trying to retain so much information, which caused objects to be recorded in superficial optical sensations. It sounds too photographic, and it must not be forgotten that impressionism was born as an offshoot of realism. Why?

A very brief review of the history of photography will help to see more clearly certain interrelationships with painting which it is useful to bear in mind.

The history of photography is the history of two evolutions which, though they may not run parallel in time, are its basis. The first is the camera obscura, and the second is the setting of the images which appeared in it. The first reference to the camera obscura comes from Al-Hazen (935 – 1038), one of the greatest students of optics of the time,

who used it to study eclipses. The camera consisted of a box where no light could enter, which had a small hole made in it where the light rays entered, which were reflected on the opposite wall, of course this landscape was inverted and upside down. Due to this feature, which was improved by placing a single lens in front of the "eye" of the box, which directed the light beams more precisely, the dark chamber, the camera obscura, was used by painters, above all in the XVIII and XIX centuries. Some were of considerable dimensions, as the painter was inside, and from there comes the name chamber, which means small room or receptacle of small dimensions. Since Al-Hazen the camera has evolved considerably, and in 1636 Swenter changed the single lens which Daniel Barbaro had invented for a lens made up of several, with which he achieved far better images. What is certain is that in the XVII century the camera obscura was so perfected that it had a polished crystal for the focus and was slightly smaller than pocket-sized considering the era, what is more, a mirror inside had the same effect as prisms nowadays and corrected the image.

The body of the camera obscura is, basically, the caveman cousin of current photographic cameras; all that was missing was the chemical side to the affair. Naturally, by this point, the grandchildren of the prehistoric hunter did know what chemistry was, and, in this case, all they needed was to discover and associate a couple of things.

It was in 1727 when Juan Schultz discovered, by accident, that silver nitrate darkened with the effects of light and not due to the effects of air or heat. So in reality he had not discovered anything new, because by 1500 silver nitrate was used to dye hair, and even to darken wood and hides, but what was important was the confirmation that it was light that caused the blackening. However, it was Nicéforo Niepce, who by using bitumen, a type of asphalt

used by engravers, was able to reproduce engravings which were exposed to the light, by contact with a polished surface covered in bitumen and lavender oil; he later developed the copy with lavender oil and petroleum. But the first real photograph was achieved using a camera in 1822, to capture the image of the patio of a house seen from a window. More than eight hours were needed to expose the negative. There is also a still life from the same date, which is debated as to whether or not it was taken before the patio image; either way, from this moment on photography was a reality. Colour appeared in 1867 – 1868, and its parents were, separately, Ducos du Hauron and Carlos Cros. From this point on, what can be added is technical development up to our times, but in the same way that the technique used by our Palaeolithic man is not overly important for this story, even though we can bet on it being basic, it does not seem necessary to follow this road right now, plus it is of greater interest to follow the creative development of photography.

When photography was born, it caused quite a stir amongst those keen to discover every new thing, and in these circles painters were not unusual. Certainly, the leading style seemed to prepare the way for something like photographic reality, and ever since the physicist Arago officially presented the discovery to the Academy of Science on the 7th of January 1837, its expansion and awareness in all social strata was a fact.

The history of painting until the arrival of photography can be analysed from different viewpoints. The interpretation which is made of it to achieve an accurate projection of the future is not exactly the same as is made when from that future you look to the past.

Until the moment when photography publicly demonstrated its abilities to capture images and represent the visible world, painting placed, in the craftsmen's skills

of the painters, amongst other things, the responsibility of being the graphic witnesses of their time, of the events, personalities and all that fell into the hands of photography once this had become minimally popular.

Still a long way from being user-friendly, photography took from the painters' hands, because of its novelty and efficacy, the world of portraits, landscapes, and endless subjects which had previously been theirs. The prestige of painting allowed them to continue working in a world which grew smaller and smaller; but something was changing what had been their natural world, and for a while they faced the new medium with their own arms in a battle they had lost before it started. In those days photography was still in black and white.

To go from painting the images in an imitative way, with or without a dark box, to capturing the images realistically, with almost no effort, miraculously, could not allow things to remain as they had up to that time, and from then on things were never the same.

The reaction in pictorial art could not take long. It could be clearly seen that "reality" went on to be a domain exclusive to photography, and moreover this novel graphic form erupted in all areas, dragging along with it many painters and spurring on numerous creative spirits to express themselves through the new medium.

In less than thirty years after its birth, the portrait was something which pertained to the new reality. The reports of travels, creative research, and the virulent logic of the trend towards the pictorial and its method of treatment, were taken advantage of, surprisingly, in all corners. I do not intend to say that those young images were art, their value is that of "caveman photography", and many of them certainly were not lacking in dashes of genius, but their social implantation seemed far more important than their creativity. Finally,

reality could represent itself, without an intermediary, to somehow define the role of the painter.

It is not surprising that people opened their eyes wide in amazement on seeing photos of the colossus of Abu-Simbel in 1850, or little later, of the Crimean war. Only a few human beings had had the privilege of travelling around the world and seeing what it was now possible to admire in a photograph. In the same way, the portraits showed the "real" image of who had until then been painted, everywhere.

When by 1870 they managed to directly reproduce the photographs in the press, the relationship between the real and the photographic as fact was well-established among the people, were it exact or not.

From the very birth of photography its natural ability for visual reproduction shared, along with the desire to create works of art as though they were paintings, its first intentions. Not only were landscapes, architectural works or models snapped, which painters and sculptors used, it was also used to illustrate, for example, scenes from the Bible, and in the decade of the 'fifties, following the principles of established visual art, tried to demonstrate its capacity of producing works of art. This movement, known as "pictorial photography", rapidly grew. If in painting the imitators were more limited due to the traditional difficulties of the trade, photography offered a more fertile terrain to be imitated, and with the publication of the book by Henry Peach Robinson, "The Pictorial Effect in Photography", in 1869, one of the best books about photographic creation of its time, giving a set of rules on theme selection, composition, etc., which seemed to show that following them the result would be a work of art, the field was fully subscribed to. Naturally, the followers of this young art, also amateurs, accepted as valid that painting, or pictorials, without being the same thing, marked the boundaries of movement for photography, and its visual

comparison was idealised as the objective. It was unavoidable, painting was all culture in images until that point, and it was logical that its influence on taste should channel many of the aesthetic aspirations for those who began to play with the newly born. To this day, this has been a problem with regard to the acceptance of art in photography and its recognition as such among people, and the basis of many of the comparisons between photography and painting for their evaluation; sadly even between representatives of both art forms. The dispute between painters and photographers in those days ended up giving this matter publicity it did not need.

It is still true to say that some of the true masters of pictorials produced works of incredible beauty, using special techniques that brought them close to painting, copying their images to gum bichromate or platinum. In this way, Emile Puyo, Edward Steichen, Clarence White or Demachi, adding their special sensitivity to the required technique, made the subjects they touched genuine works of art, unique, and in many cases, unrepeatable due to the incredible craftwork and personal effort in the copy. Behind them followed a wave of endless imitators, who with almost non-existent variations, and promoted by photography competitions and clubs, drove pictorials to decadence. There remain for posterity almost identical photos of paths to the horizon, bridges over rivers, cemeteries, the old and the young, pastoral scenes, etc. With all artistic media, the problem with its advances or setbacks lies in the people who use them and not in said art.

Few years later, a new group of photographers launched photography, once more forwards, pushing it towards creations more in step with its natural environment. Now we must return to the subject of impressionism to better understand the future paths taken by photography, and especially its more current creative tendencies.

It will not seem that in the time that these photographic events took place painting disappeared, of course not. What is true is that the greater and the lesser painters observed the development of photography with a mixture of curiosity and surprise, as it appeared able to achieve whatever it proposed "pictorially", nevertheless painting was alive, very alive, although perhaps half asleep, or in a period of transition which would prepare it for other more radical ones.

Impressionism was the first purely pictorial reaction to photography. It was not just the colour or texture, but also the desire to reproduce the vibration of the first visual "impression", something which sounds a lot like a snapshot. Maybe impressionism was the first response to photography, interpreting its way of capturing an image and turning the painters' eyes into the shutter.

It is nothing more than the logical consequence of the above and of the photographic fact which led painters to seek something new with which to be able to express themselves within their own trade. Perhaps the best thing that has happened to painting as a creative art is that photography freed it from the slavery of acting as notary to reality, obviously with subtleties. So, someone saw a path filled with hope in the rupture of realist aesthetics, from which derived impressionism, a hope-filled path.

It is not hard to see a fairly photographic way of looking in impressionism, so long as first glance is employed as the camera obscura. The instantaneous impressions which the objects caused in the observer produced realistic but confusing images, with variations in the relationship between the colours, and of considerable importance 'though overlooked, the fact of not having a perfect visual focal point at the beginning. It was not a bad idea to transfer that mental image, produced by an instantaneous impression, to canvas, and certainly some photographer had to be interested in that

type of snapshot, photographically impossible at that time, but nonetheless of interest.

I am also certain of the relationship which this group of artists had with photography, an invention they no doubt viewed with interest, and of the possibility that the first advances which were being made in the new technique would reach them quickly.

The fact that they held their first exhibition in a photographer's studio leads us to believe that the relationship between both worlds was something more than casual.

A well-known Parisian photographer, by the name of Nadar, the first aerial photographer in history, who photographed Paris from an air balloon in 1858, was also the organiser of the first impressionist exhibition. In his studio, in the year 1874, the most important painters of the movement assembled, along with some who were not. From that exhibition arose the name, in those days pejorative, Impressionism, taken from the Monet painting "Impresión soleil levant".

We know that impressionist painters, who painted from life in the open air, were insulted and even had stones thrown at them, being the focal point of the mockery of the established painters of the time. The public's acceptance of impressionism, or likewise of many other artistic trends, has not always been immediate, but in this case this initial rejection did not slow down the development of the new pictorial style.

Later offshoots of impressionism were divisionism and pointillism.

The birth of pointillism after the arrival of the first photos in colour also marked an evolution in painting which could hold its origin in the discoveries which pushed photography towards mass production.

Colour photography was born in 1867. If we examine those first colour photos we can see, depending on the technique of the time, a kind of striped pattern or a cloud of multi-coloured

dots, which from a distance looked like a neat patch of colour. We would see that shapes and colours are made up of a crowded group of spots which, like a tapestry, make up a colour image which can be seen. With a small magnifying glass, the way in which that great splodge of colour was able to form an object and reproduce its light, can be clearly seen. This is, in essence, the basic colouring technique of both impressionist offshoots, which exchanged the patch of colour for dots or stripes, giving a more spectacular light to their creations.

I am not saying that pointillism came about after a painter examined one of the first colour photos with a magnifying glass, but this certainly could have happened; amongst other things, because I am certain those painters were curious, hungry to develop their craft and keen to progress. I certainly would have done so if I were to have had that opportunity. I would have done so to discover the secret life of colour in something so able to capture the "real" reality as does photography, and, were I able to, would have made use of it.

A detailed analysis of the times and the circumstances which could have joined both techniques, distances us from the objective of this work, but it is something which really stimulates the imagination and which without a doubt would be the object of a very interesting thesis.

We mentioned that divisionism had its foundations in the chemist Michel Eugène Chevreul's discovery, who showed that colours do not exist joined together, but in the form of a wide range of luminous radiations, which can be broken down into the basic colours. This technique is known as that of "simultaneous colours". However, the direct observation of the decomposition of the colours, as light, does not show their dotted appearance, not even by projecting and mixing two or more colours, but a perfectly homogenous whole, in contrast to what can be seen in a copy on colour photographic paper. Due to this, and what has been previously stated, it

seems more logical to think that it has been photography which has had a fundamental technical importance in the evolution towards divisionism and pointillism. This does not in the slightest alter the value of both styles, it does however seem to omit the relationship between impressionism and photography at the beginning.

Many later circumstances allow speculation about the photographic coincidences which were able to relate the evolution of painting with mechanical capture. In the public's hands, photography, now in the domain of hobbyists, produced involuntary overexposures or accidental movement of the camera, solarisations and other effects derived from the technique itself, able to produce or open doors to strange images. The use of photography by the surrealists is well known.

Perhaps the first movements searching for the unique, internal language of painting were a result of all this, and out of this enthusiasm which painting reached, spurred on by the advent of photography, was born the abstract and its language. Maybe this is the moment of reflection which marked a new direction for painting on a separate path to photography.

Picasso, in his museum home in Horta de Sant Joan, also left a clue to his research with a camera, taking superimposed shots of an image from various angles. He was developing what would come to be known as cubism. Perhaps he was looking for help from photography – Why not? It was something from his age, and if anything about Picasso were undeniable it would be his interest in trying everything out.

I cannot continue without first asking myself, and without finding the answer, if painting would have been the same or would have evolved in the same way without the birth of photography.

In time, once the creative base which joined it and photography had broken, painting grew towards new ways

of plastic expression, some truly its own and now without a photographic basis, what is more, born of a frame of mind which felt itself to be totally autonomous from past relationships with photographic fact.

Van Gogh showed the way to expressionism, Cezanne heralded cubism, the Fauvists placed colour above everything else paving the way towards the not figurative, Freud moved towards surrealism, Picasso filled everything with his more than 70,000 works... But these interesting stories are outside the scope of our task.

Photography tried to follow painting's footsteps and looked in its trends for far more than was researched on its own paths. But its ability to capture reality made it an indispensable ally in all branches of science and human development, pushing all knowledge much closer to the limit. Without a doubt, it has been something fundamental for humankind.

It is not necessary to take this brief review of the history of photography any further. It would be easy to keep on filling pages with information and facts by surrounding oneself with encyclopaedias and art books, but that was not the objective of this chapter, which was to show the relationship between certain events and lay down some grounds on the synthesis of the same. Nevertheless, looking back at the past is not only useful to reconsider the past, but also to be humble in the present in the historic presence of great giants who are our cornerstones. It also serves to be able to calibrate the weight of enormous responsibility which rests on our shoulders when we talk about, think of, or make art. Not being aware of this detracts from our works without our realising.

Our past also helps to fill ourselves with strength and catapult ourselves towards the reaching of our goal, because from our synthesis of the past comes the line which shows us the way to our future, of each of us, and that is not exactly working.

CHAPTER II

ON THE ROAD TO ART

"I do not know why we live under the illusion that art reviews are a genre which requires no training and that we can decide on the beautiful without the need for knowing anything."

Louis Gillet

On the road to art

From its birth to the present day, photography's evolution has been unstoppable. If we look at its current state we would not stop seeing it everywhere and in all aspects of science and society. Photography, the image, has become an irreplaceable mainstay of the world we live in.

From those first photos to the present, the world of the image is unrecognisable. The development that everything related to photography has undergone was completely unimaginable for those who sat by the cradle of the newborn photographic baby. And following this newborn came cinema, television and networked means of communication... Without a doubt, the development produced has surpassed the calculations of the possibilities of the most optimistic minds.

Shortly after its birth, an important global industry developed to place the possibilities which this medium offered within reach of everyone. Photography was divided into professional and amateur. The shots were counted in their billions; it went from nothing to infinity. Silver media

were replaced by digital media, and then the shots needed even more zeros to be able to count them. The image became something completely accessible to the whole world. Without the need for the slightest technical knowledge on the part of the image consumer, the camera did everything, it made everything easy, it calculated everything and was miraculously right, because the images came out right. Anybody could record their memories and the images they felt like capturing, storing them for the future in a file different to their own memory.

The image, photography, has permeated everything.

But we are talking about art. What we are discussing has little to do with the world which photography has turned into.

There is an industrial world of the image, there is a commercial sector; there are many different areas of use of the photographic image, because photography has become a tool, a medium for infinite trades. Now it is no longer photography, it is the image which has become necessary. Photography is only the means of production of those images destined to be used for other purposes. They are usable, for consumption, necessary in our modern world, simple graphic documents without whose medium life would be more complicated and perhaps impossible if they did not exist; however they have nothing to do with what is referred to as the world of art.

Some of these aspects are related to aesthetics. Many professionally-produced images need to be re-shaped closer to the tastes of the time so as to be able to commercialise them successfully.

Professional photography, in all its forms, is the closest to the public due to its diffusion via mass media and its social function.

Even closer are the actual consumers' domestic photos, in this case more so than ever, but which cannot hold importance in this study unless it is as an anecdote within the creative.

The professional cannot be considered to be art, at most it is a craft, a trade. It is clear that nor does everything photographic come close to being art, there is medical or documentary photography, but given that the professional has been an important shop-front for the photographic to the public, it seems appropriate to include it in this analysis because of its possible educational influence on the tastes of the masses' for a certain type of image. Another matter is whether or not this education has been appropriate or sufficient.

We must assess photography competitions and exhibitions, along with the utility of reviews in the same way.

The spread of the media has led to the mixing of concepts and valuations between worlds which bear no relation to each other and only come close because of being photographic. It is possible that, currently, it would be more important and correct to distinguish between these types of photography than between photography and painting.

Professional photography has evolved in two almost parallel but different directions. One part has been aimed at the image related to people and their actions, society, to record important moments. The other part has been aimed at the world of communication and the commercialisation of products, publicity, fashion, beauty. Images aimed firstly at companies and secondly at the public.

For portraits or reports there are limitations concerning creativity or interpretation which place, with good reason, almost any production beyond the scope of art. Naturally, there are professionals who take the capacity of these fields close to their technical limits or to those of the trade, but the real limit is not within them but in what they face. Firstly, the required degree of commercial attractiveness with regards to the customer limits the photographer's ability to express themselves, due to the fact of being "notary" to a reality which is presented in a more or less obvious way, and, secondly,

the economic conditions do not allow what can be no more than a taste which tends towards the popular, and especially dedicated to serving it, to go any further. A complicated trade, where sacrificing personal taste in accordance with the clients' taste is an unwritten obligation.

Industrial photography has its own limitation in its orientation towards technical representation. However, in all its aspects, advertising photography has tended towards a material attractiveness in its productions, to impact, to get people's attention above everything else. It is the crashing of cymbals in the orchestra. The artisan treatment not only of still lifes but also of fashion and beauty photos shows technical qualities worthy of mention in many cases. Beautified photos to highlight commercial products, embodied in all class of means of communication, show our eyes images which, not having the difference clear, if we only pay attention to the external, would pass for something close to photographic art. This is how it looks for many hobbyists and the general public.

The psychological impact which said images must have as a whole is analysed beforehand by those who manage these campaigns. The final image which must be produced must respond to criteria established from the perspective of the commercial appeal of the product which is the object of the image; be this product an object or a human being. The ultimate objective is to be able to sell what is presented, not to sell the image which represents it.

Everything is so well presented and calculated that the psychological attraction and appeal these images hold has not gone unnoticed in the rest of the commercial, and even in the areas aimed at the amateur, sector of photography. But it must not be forgotten that here, the idea of quality is not guided by the best possible artisanship, but by precisely that craftsmanship which makes possible the premeditated image which has been calculated to produce the desired effect, no

more and no less. Less visual quality in an expensive product is unfavourable, greater visual quality in a cheap product takes away sales.

Without a doubt, this type of calculated photograph has attracted the attention as much of the public as of portrait and illustrated report amateurs and professionals. The commercial influence on the latter is undeniable, you only have to observe the evolution of their work to realise how much they have followed the paths indicated by the advertising images of previous years. These are images which, as one more way of renewing their call for attention or trade, constantly seek new inroads in visual impact, and therefore leave behind them routes prepared to be traversed more easily by professionals who, with the public already prepared for the publication of these images in all kind of media, can imitate them and... sell them as though they were their own personal interpretations. A kind of consumption of fashionable images adapted to different models.

You often see exhibitions of these works, promoted by the same photographers, so as to increase the value of their photos and at the same time get the attention of new clients. There is nothing to criticise in all this, since their commercial intent is manifest, their technique admirable, and on the other hand it is logical they publicise themselves in all media possible, after all it is a job offer. They are also telling the public that what is exhibited represents quality artisanship; in a way they are educating them. They fill their heads with a collection of images which prepare them culturally to accept other more complex and deeper levels of images. A good degree of commercial photographic craftsmanship can be an excellent shop-front for, at a given time, educated spectators to accept or request a greater degree of creativity and take the step into the complex world of photographic art, enjoying images on a deeper intellectual level.

Even amateurs' photos can often be seen with a clear inspiration from advertising images in their works. It is evident that these types of images have had an important influence on people's tastes on an aesthetic level besides visually educating them. These campaigns and permanent media pressure have created fashions and trends of varied tastes or which are aesthetically debatable, but internally enriching for the simplest sectors of the public.

This tendency to imitate commercial images, with regard to art, is a meaningless orientation, as technical virtuosity does not by itself produce works of art. These images could not be anything more than lucky graphic design, not even by adding another virtue, the aesthetic, no matter how perfect their appearance may be. They are works which are the product of the craftsmanship of professionals of a trade, carried out with a specific commissioned objective.

In "Conversations with Goethe", by Juan Pedro Eckermann, volume 3, "Our current talents lie in publicity's platters" can be read. "The critical documents which appear in a hundred different places daily, and the gossip fostered by them among the public, make the appearance of anything healthy impossible.

They who do not know how to stand well clear of this and vehemently isolate themselves are lost. The press, with their critical and negative tendency, most certainly propagate a halfbaked culture among the masses. And for productive talent they are a noxious fog, venomous, a rain which corrupts the creative force of the tree from the verdant attire of its leaves to its deepest roots and most hidden fibres".

I can not begin to imagine what he would say these days in a world of communication where there is more advertising than communication.

The positive side to amateur's imitation of these images is hidden in the fact that it makes them improve their

technical knowledge, it makes them learn to control many parameters necessary to obtaining specific effects. Imitation, or even copying, form a part of the learning process, they are fundamental to setting short-range goals and which are within reach at a stage in which the real me is something far away and even invisible. They are in the artisan stage and follow a good model, pattern, or example. Each objective whether achieved or not, opens their own doors to new levels and by so doing it is an excellent exercise and a reasonable and cheap teacher. It would be better to move to truly artistic images, but with the dispersion which comes from leaving what is good taste in the hands of the masses, educated to consume, it is hard for even the experts not to be mistaken; and let's not mention the dilettantes. A child who learns to write, copies simpler texts, or dictations, looking for mistakes with the object of learning. It is no different in this case.

Craftsmanship has more to do with knowledge of the medium, with know-how, with the quality of the handling, with the experience gained from use. It clearly requires a degree of taste and creativity, but has a great deal of "utility" in its orientation.

Exquisite craftsmanship leaves the viewer lost for words, it produces works which make extremely clear the difference between the expert and those who are not and shows what can be achieved on overcoming the difficulties of handling the medium. This knowledge of the medium is seen as ideal and even necessary for all those who create, as it facilitates achieving their goals and it does not limit them in expressing the subtleties of their language. The best artisanship speaks of the best training and professionalism.

Many of the works of art we have inherited from the past could not have come to life without the best craftsmanship

in the hands of the artist. Craftsmanship is a part of art, without this base art would remain as nothing more than ideas, because artisanship, the trade, is what allows us to make it a reality.

Bad craftsmanship hinders the nuances; it becomes very obvious to expert eyes and limits the quality of the works of art to lower levels. But works which are themselves artisan have an empty argument. The demonstration of the craftsman's ability as a differentiating element of a work can amaze non-expert spectators, but it would be akin to the demonstration of flexibility and strength in a dancer's movements in comparison to the expression and beauty of a ballet.

Artisanship is excellence; art includes the best use of it in each work. Virtuosity is a blessing, but it is only of use to shape the creation, not to create it.

Not all trends which are followed trace the path of imitation of commercial images. The world of amateur photography has moved in unexpected directions, looking for unexplored fields and producing images of great quality on many occasions. The tendency towards quality reproduction in any field has also led to capturing reality, with the same quest for technical excellence, in the field of nature or the city and its world. However, the downside is that it has overcrowded and over-exploited each of the chosen paths, with thousands of images which have become a selective testimony. With variations which are more aesthetic than anything else, our eyes have been presented with photos of cities, citizens and objects from their world, fields, rivers, mountains and animals, country people, cemeteries, gypsies, abandoned remains of "civilisation", processions, dramas, the old, the young, day and night, East and West, North and South, war and peace, walls, stains... all of these either by themselves or combined with anything else previously

mentioned or imaginable. Nor has the human body escaped this fashion. But this time, and not the same as with pictorials, invaded by thousands and millions of images.

It is true to say that one is often attracted by these photographs, it would not be logical to scorn beauty when it is possible to feel it, and sometimes there is more than simple beauty. But it is no less true that the ease which photography places at our disposal to capture images, has allowed thousands of followers to empty of content, through weariness and repetition, of all topics within range of sight. The novelty in the images is pretty much the variation in the content, but its spirit is always the same. There is a clear disjunction between the form and content, and this weed's proliferation, on the one hand assists the visual education of the spectators, and on the other is perceived by people as the subliminal message that it is easy to take photos, that whoever achieves "this" makes art, that in photography there is no more art than this and by doing it one is a good photographer. But also, on being something simple and readily accessible it holds no value, or little. It is as if art had fled from reality.

The last page of the Doris A. Dondis book, "The syntaxes of the image", states that "art will no longer be exclusive to artists but that everyone will be able to make it, since machines facilitate the production of the most complex image".

This is not true.

All that can be mechanically predetermined remains suspiciously far from the frontiers of creation. But this is not the first time in history that there is an attempt to democratise what is by its very nature the heritage of the few. Nor are we all able to do death-defying triple jumps democratised.

Aldous Huxley affirmed: "technical progresses have led to vulgarity... at all times and in all places a considerable

amount of artistic production has been handicapped. Yet nowadays the percentage of waste in the whole of artistic production is greater than ever. The generation of waste is in all the arts greater than before; and so it will continue as long as people continue their disproportionate consumption of reading material, images and sound>>". (Crosière d'hiver en Amérique Centrale, Paris).

This turning the arts into something superficial is a sign of the times, which immediately places beneath the patina of artistic appearance whatever imitates what has already been digested and re-digested since a long, long time ago.

To be in the right place and time which allows the generation of creation, the mind must be working both consciously and subconsciously, steered by the inner soul, to make the pillars which support the new work grow. This means preparing to be able to understand the new and ever subtler messages which reach you from their inner worlds. This part, the internal, and not only the external and its surface games, is what is truly important as it shows the main route, the guide, the tree trunk where the superficial or of scant importance are the branches, the leaves and the fallen leaves.

If these marvellous machines existed, and were able to make even thoughts a physical reality, what they produced still would not be art if the training and depth of mind had not reached the necessary point to distance themselves from what is only appearance. What makes the difference goes much further than what can be seen on a canvas or printed on paper. Machinery could be a substitute for craftsmanship but not of art.

That which motivated others to create the great works of art which can be seen nowadays, is far from being completely represented in the finished work. That end product is only one face of the spirit which made

creating it possible.

The personality a work expresses is not unique or unmistakable. The work itself is alive; it is a factory of sensations and feelings. All these change, they grow and become complete on successive viewings, and even at different ages and life experiences they sometimes show such opposing appearances that they appear to have changed colour.

To limit art to the mechanical process of making a work visible is, especially in the case of photography, one more stone in the sack which sinks it in the river of programmed reproduction.

At times you cannot tell if what is written in favour of photography was penned by its friend or its enemy.

I find it hard to believe that before getting down to bringing a work to life anybody receives in their head every single square millimetre of it, without having had to think many times about how to bring together each of the multiple facets which make it up. Even resolving the doubts regarding a decision which implies not even adding but removing something from said work. Although it would by all appearances be marvellous that this mechanical medium eliminate all doubts, I would prefer to continue to have them, as from these doubts are born the universes where new works are created. Creation is a continuous whole, not an accumulation of unconnected instants.

Taking photos is easy? No. Taking photos is made easy by manufacturers to promote consumerism, "taking" photos is not difficult, "making" photos is very difficult indeed. There is a vast difference between capturing and creating; the problem is that those who do not know its inner workings are not aware of the difference between both concepts when photography is discussed.

Capturing images, as they appear, holds a certain difficulty, sometimes minor, sometimes greater and with

elaborate technical solutions, but trying out slight variations in what we see complicates the situation quite a lot more. Managing to create complex images - not just physically real or simple ideas – is a delicate matter. To go any further than this is not only a question of technical difficulty, but also of internal preparation; the point at which the technical medium is surpassed, and where it only serves as the platform. Here, “making” photos can quite simply be impossible if the internal ability does not exist.

It is like a defence mechanism, we want to believe that we can all do what everyone else can do, but that is not the case. We can try, but it always seems that there is someone better. Nor can we do everything, we are not eternal. And even if we were and could try all possible paths for the human being one after the other, we would still come up against, in each section, there being somebody who has something we do not and which would be of great use to us. We know we cannot do it the same as another person, but if a mechanical medium is used, call it a car or a camera, then we can suppose that with the same mechanical medium we could do it practically the same; with this and with a minimum of practice of course. But that is not true; it is not about pressing a button or a set of buttons in a secret order or in inverse order.

There is not a computer capable of creating a symphony comparable to any of those that thrill us, or capable of putting an opera together. No computer will ever invent the language of the abstract. In order to do all of this it is necessary to feed on emotion and sensibility, something inherent to living beings.

Mechanical media in all branches – tools - are marvellous because they help the artisan to perfect the craftsmanship of their work, but they do not do the work. They do not do it either physically or mentally, and especially

mentally. Any work which intends to be anything more than the simply anecdotal requires, demands, a mental preparation and approximation to its creation which cannot be achieved by clumsily or even expertly manipulating a device, whichever of the two manners it may be.

The dedication necessary raises the resulting work, depending on each person's ability, to different levels.

You do sports three days a week, for an hour, and little by little improve your level until after a few years you realise you are an expert. If you dedicate two hours a day to something you end up doing fantastic things, we will be experts. If we dedicate eight hours a day to the same thing, consciously and as a vocation, the results will be incredible, sublime works. But I am of the opinion that the exceptional is purely a consequence of obsession. Understanding this word not as an illness, but in the sense of our work being the background of the thoughts concerning what moves us.

It is impossible for a superficial approach to a means of expression - whether circumstantial or mechanical - to produce anything more profound in the history of art than the mark of a finger on a rock. From there to the David by Michelangelo there is a long distance, no matter how much mechanical help is used.

What value is looked for in photography as art? The artisan? To be different? To be a unique piece? To be cheap? The only and true value is that it can serve as a means of expression, not only to obtain money. And it is in this expression where we must look, the rest is no more than textbook discussion.

It does not seem, however, that photography is denied this ability for expression, all it can say and what it still has not said is probably sensed, and everybody appears to agree on this.

Photography, which has taken over the representation

of reality from painting and has multiplied the expression of the graphic image across the world, has incessantly embellished this representation, but sometimes you get the feeling that it was an official act which has been reported exquisitely.

The general tendency has been that of the image hunters, where the photographer captures moments of external reality with the intention of reproducing, of recording or recreating, even in carefully tended realities whose aim is to exalt beauty, as could be still lifes, or indoor and outdoor scenes, planned and executed meticulously whether it be for competitions or exhibitions. Sometimes the image seems to have more to do with fidelity to the camera than to photography.

The photographer who hunts for realities looks, from the outset, for topics they can apply their technique to in order to obtain an image because of its beauty. The incredible ease which the medium offers for varying angles and playing with contrast and tones, throughout the whole process up to the original finale, gives the knowledgeable technician the possibility of making almost any take pretty. Also, the understanding of nature has facilitated the mass diffusion of landscapes among the public, produced by legions of beginners who see artistic interpretations of reality in any dramatic landscape of sunsets, sun rises, red suns and brightly coloured backlights. Although this language is certainly photographic, it clearly is not an educated language, it is the language of the creative apprentice, but is not mature enough to place their work in the public eye yet. However, you can often see exhibitions and large-scale works with landscapes which are themselves empty or too basic. The difference is obvious, and needs no further explanation when you find yourself before works of real importance - the outcome of effects which are not easy, and on rare occasions the outcome of chance, but are well

thought out, waited or looked for, these are those it is hard to drag yourself away from which you cannot easily escape. These are works of exquisite refinement and craftsmanship.

The comparison throughout history - and even on limited occasions in the present - of the mass production of this type of landscape which we suffer, makes most of them fade away, destined to be consumed and forgotten. But it is not the fault of those who produce them, certainly not; each inner level produces a type of work which becomes apparent from one rung to the next. Each personal stage unfolds within its own level of communication. What is surprising is that the necessary discrimination before what is shown does not happen adequately. It is fine that the current world of communication allows images to be broadcast by the ton, but in some circles where the images also have the hidden function of educating and taking the spectator to the sublime in photographic art, someone should act as critical censor. I'm not talking about censorship or the elimination of what is not orthodox, the degree of criticism I'm talking about refers to undoubtedly low strata.

Certain images are only suitable for little educated or uneducated palates, they seem to represent the taste of just sugar or salt, and do not form a part of refined cuisine. This comparison which seems so simple goes no further than being a true approximation of the visual reality of these images with regard to the flavour they represent. The dot or the line might seem more appropriate than this comparison with salt or sugar, however their specific gravity is far superior to the simplicity of their symbol, and can create more visual tension on any level than can any of the images we are referring to.

Note that when the word "landscape" is used, not only pastoral landscapes are referred to, but also urban landscapes and scenery of all kinds, including resemblances

and even a trend towards recording people.

I feel that these images, the products of mass growth, are, due to their rejection, an extraordinary impetus for the creative spirit. The saturation of all class of images leaves less and less open roads on our inside and so shows us our own path on fleeing them. Saturated by specific images, trends, styles and effects, we distance ourselves from them and it is unlikely we would return to the same path. We look for different paths, other foods, and sooner or later something personal and internal will be found which satisfies us so as to start out on our own road.

On the other hand, the aware photographer who composes scenes, with or without people, cannot get stuck in the "new" representation of old still lifes or those that are similar to them, that is to say, imitating them, not after so much history, tradition and so many images which have been produced. Nor can scenes with people be extractions of common reality to place them in a more personal reality; that a nicer look or which has more impact can be produced, this objective does not justify a new work, which is born marred by its medium and has no future.

The great spread of photography must not be confused with positive diffusion, as they are different things. As we have said, it is everywhere, but like any hobby, independently of whether it demands high levels of creative ability, the level of those who seek cover in its shade is very diverse, they go from the simple apprentice to the expert, going from average all the way to genius. Naturally, most lovers of this medium are to be found at the more elementary levels, and become less in number as their knowledge becomes more precise, until reaching a small number of individuals to be found on the highest part of the scale. A pure law of nature. For this reason, most images which are produced with artistic intentions are not as good as could be desired.

But more worrying is when this happens at the higher levels, perhaps as a consequence of a commercial ambition wrapped in artistic apparel. The art market also has a level of consumerism which has been developed and which in and of itself has nothing which merits criticism, although it is not the ideal from the most purist point of view. I mean the point where the ability to create has been reached and the depth of the production is voluntarily limited so as to be understood by a wider group of spectators.

Due to this saturation, many competitions or exhibitions for learners are filled with images which are directly produced for the ephemeral, included in fashions or trends which justify the work with a technical or graphic rhetoric which both fools its own creator and confuses who observe it. With splendid technique, at times works appear with postures created little less than theatrically, with feelings expressed in a way more befitting masks, or with well-worn and insincere attitudes. The history of these photos is clearly shown in magazines dedicated to the subject. Here we can also speak of certain photographer's extraordinary vision, but which boil down to a few, who, on opening up a path have seen how it was trampled by innumerable image hunters, who tended towards what has already been done, but with their own personal outlook and generally turning them into simple approximations lacking any other qualities. Moreover, for those who find themselves at that level, said images are a personal achievement, they receive a boost from their joy at seeing their work exhibited or appreciated, and it motivates them to continue delving deeper in their endeavour. Each rung has its reward and its punishment; it is the ambition of those who are lower down and deserves the understanding of those who are higher up, because they also were once at that level.

There is no need to demonstrate that on these roads

resides, in essence, the ability to create works of art, but it seems to be unaware of the meaning of all creation. This problem has not changed much over the length of history, and it has been time which has shown who was wrong. In front of the works of the geniuses who preceded us or of those who we coexist with, it is embarrassing to pick up a camera to create, but it also serves to not lose sight of the need for maximum honesty on doing so.

Immersed in the hurly-burly of the growth of the photographic sector at all levels, and surrounded by images produced from any inner level, there have been those who have seen the need for change and to look for other paths. Some of them have been present from the very birth of photography, urged on by painting's escape into other worlds, but perhaps the effect on the observer has not been the desired one, especially if such works have been reduced to the comprehension of experts and critics. It must be borne in mind that the search for the path to evolution needs to occur in the interior and transcendental and not in the exterior, and what is more, that this road ought to be something specific to a strictly photographic language. If this is the case, the need for some type of pedagogy of the art of photography becomes obvious. Maybe it grew too much and too fast, and has not had enough time to accumulate a group of reasonably trained spectators.

A minimum of teaching about our work is necessary for the messages and creations which are brought from the limits of our creative abilities to reach the viewers more quickly.

No doubt the possible options considered to be ideal for mass culture are neither so ideal nor so possible. At least, according to the obtained results.

Culture and training to appreciate the more refined art are not obligatory. A deep understanding of a culture

requires living it or knowing it in depth intellectually. It may be that one of the best expressionist paintings means nothing to an Amazon Indian, or they may find it impressive. But the general understanding of what is produced in the heart of a culture is especially understood, and without difficulty, within that same culture. The universality of art must be understood within certain parameters.

In any case, even within the limits of comprehension which a culture can encompass geographically or intellectually, the actual individuals of the same find themselves at different levels and cannot always understand an extremely internalised language. The purer the source of the art, the deeper and harder it is to access.

If we want to facilitate access to the spirit of art, a minimum of education about creation is necessary.

Kandinsky said that people would understand inner, spiritual and symbolic language more and more, getting closer to the creator of the work's message.

This being said in 1911 you could think he was a dreamer. You could not be more wrong. The spirit of the times sensed this direction in the development of humanity. Sadly, two world wars, which got in the way, turned this humanistic aspiration into an unforeseeable, at least not with regard to its magnitude, materialistic development. The result is that many of the styles which at the time appeared to herald the future of painting, such as the unique language of the abstract, are to this day far from the bread and butter of the mere mortals. Nevertheless, it is clear that the consequences of his work have borne fruit among those who stuck by it.

The teaching I speak of does not go in the direction of "how to do", but in the sense of "what is looked for". Knowing the direction the quest for art moves in, in some way focuses and helps the spectator to find the path that links them to the work more easily. In this aspect the role of

the author and the critic are absolutely fundamental.

Confrontation with the work takes the author to an inner isolation with it, to a communion in a world which is formed in the process of creation and maintains itself while it lasts. In this world arise the creative sparks which give form to the work, and also the ideas which develop it during the process and which opens doors for subsequent works. This is a completely personal process for each author, but it also evokes the world in which they ate and breathed the work which is presented to the spectator. This work is a living being from a world unknown to everyone else, but real to the author, as they have lived in it, and without this inner world the work would not have arisen.

The role of the critic is not only the application of their criteria to make a rational analysis of what they comment on. The work may or may not please, it can be better or worse, more or less comprehensible, be accessible or distant, but criticism educates and helps the user to get closer to the work more easily in order to be able to make their own decision regarding what they see. It can also help its impact to occur with greater ease.

A critique of the work has an especially pedagogical function for those who are a little further from the front line. Those who live and breathe in the circle closest to art usually know the extreme shifts it moves around in. At times, even for them it is difficult to understand a new approach, but for those who do not live creation's day-to-day, these small jumps can become insurmountable precipices. I have always understood reviews to be the necessary intermediary between the work and the least prepared spectator. The work of the critic, if done well, is favourable to bringing the art closer to the spectator who approaches it with interest.

Without a spectator who is minimally prepared the work is mute, expressionless, or if it does have one it

resounds in a very basic way.

Without the necessary sense developed, our work as something creative presents itself to spectators who do not see. If they have eyes, they have not learnt to see, or they have not been shown how to – like when we are taught to read, to recognise the abstract signs of the language. The best book is meaningless to the illiterate.

If someone can walk away from the contemplation of a work enriched yet is unable to savour it, it is as though the experience reached them too soon. It can even be harsh and unpleasant.

The evaluation of a good wine that a seven-year-old can make without an educated or mature palate can only be negative. But a good wine is still a good wine, and a good work a good work. Without educated spectators, art looks like a game aimed at pleasing the players themselves. What should grow like an explosion turns into an implosion, the art market puts up with it without in the least altering the world it has come out of and for which it was created. Without educated spectators art lives in a closed world.

There are arts which are unknown or not developed for our senses, but without a doubt there are many others for those senses we have not developed. It does not matter that they are physical senses or non-existent.

If the viewers cannot read it is the same as not having viewers. The teaching of art is necessary then, I insist on it. But it is not only necessary for the understanding of art, but because it irreversibly develops the ability for observation, analysis, comprehension, synthesis, creativity and invention of those who enjoy it.

Art is the food of the soul. Education is not just about knowing the names of the great artist's historical milestones, but about the understanding of their work, the only base from where you can go forward. Knowing their names and

not knowing their language only produces a prattle which condemns those who enter the world of creativity to repeat their steps, like going round in circles. Not knowing the language of the artist is exactly the same as erasing it as though it had never existed. If we do not understand the wind's voice – What use is its speech to us?

School, the artist, and critical reviews are the fundamental mainstays in the education of the art viewer. The benefits for the pupil are immensely useful in daily life as they develop their internal ability of abstraction and of the generation of ideas and synthesis.

A person enters a gallery, passes in front of the pictures observing them and jumping from one to the other like someone who listens to five seconds of the beginning of a symphony and then leaves. They have not heard anything which interested them, they think they have seen enough to be able to understand what the works speak of, what they said, what they meant, what style they had. They are already classified on their inside, even graded. The judgement has been delivered: I like them or I do not like them, full stop.

Yet they went out the same as they came in, the value of art has been limited to the superficial role of the decorative. A library is not just something which fills the gaps on two shelves in some part of the home with books which have never been read. What is the difference?

It is true that there are images meant for a quick glance to cause a specific inner effect on us, a short note which awakens specific sensations. But there are also images which require a longer period of observation, and even a very long period of viewing for them to release all of their first emotional load. Later it will be necessary to go back to them to continue the dialogue which such images need or demand.

Just by being snapshots not all are destined to fast visual consumption and a simple recognition of the surface.

On many occasions the background of the images cannot be reduced to a telegram-style communication. It is said that a picture is worth more than a thousand words, yet in five seconds we have not been able to hear the possible five thousand words which lead to deep contemplation. You have to pay attention to the details of the dialogue.

If we were to summarise "Don Quixote" as "a mad skinny guy with a fat servant who attacked windmills", perhaps someone listening to us would know what we were talking about, but nothing of the depth of the book has been drawn. This sign of our times attempts to find a fast meaning instead of a deep meaning, it tries to save time precisely where time should not be saved. Art also appears to be a consumable product, but it only appears so. No matter how many different appearances it is given, true art is untouchable. The costume placed on it does not matter, it will need the same amount of time, emotions, feelings, imagination, intelligence and soul to be created or understood. To feel how it flows, sufficient tranquillity is needed for it to pervade our meditation, or there will be nothing more than background noise. It is like a fruit that needs time to mature or it will be inedible.

A trained observer, even when their taste differs from that of the work, is a break for the creator. It is someone who speaks their language in a distant land. What does it matter that they think differently? Who cares? It is an inhabitant of their world.

The question which remains to be answered while talking of teaching is who art is for. Is it for the spectator or for the author? Is the spectator necessary for the creator? Art is the history of the influences isolated on the inside of a being, which arise digested to feed and influence those who receive them. The influences of the circumstances which surround a being are those which fertilise the subsoil of their creativity. Their social, cultural, and home environment all

mark the origin of their thoughts and ideas.

In the times of scarce social communication among different towns, nations or continents, the influences which reached the creators were limited to areas closest to their physical environment, with little or scant contributions of influences from other latitudes. Even on a cultural level, the arrival of the printing press marked a new frontier in the amount of intellectual influence the human being could receive. This isolation has produced styles and trends which it has been possible to mark on a map as style academies with their own brand. The evolution of communications and the speed at which they convey all types of ideas is the reason for works which offer very similar advances and characteristics, appearing in places with great distances between them, which are not the result of plagiarism or chance. They are works which respond, quite simply, to the effect of temporary influences on aesthetic taste, culture, and in short, communication. The influences have been made universal to a great degree. The recipients of these influences, the creators, react to them according to their individual character, but the creation takes place beneath the light of the same cultural medium.

Art comes from the world, therefore it belongs to the spectator, but it comes to life without their being necessary. With the influence tank full, at a given moment the creator can isolate themselves and produce their works without having contact with anyone else. They can produce works of art for years, giving way to brilliant creations. They can keep them in a room without showing them to anyone and continue with their work without the need for communication or satisfaction on the viewer's part, but they would be producing works which are a consequence of their influences, of those which they have received every day and which became their inner self.

Specific creations belong to specific times. What

an author produces could not be the result of different circumstances at any other time in history. What comes out of them will be conditioned by the past and what experiences they have lived. It will bear the stamp of the generation in whose bosom it was educated.

The result of these creative acts returns to its roots, closing the circle, when it is presented before the spectator. The internal and external spirit of our surroundings, and its influences, is returned to the world it came from synthesised.

Art uses creators to express itself, but they are nothing more than its transcribers, yet at the same time it is so unfathomable that without this creator precisely this aspect of creation would not exist.

Under these circumstances, the ultimate goal of creation is that the spectator feed off it and will continue to embed these visions in their own culture. Without the viewer art is a dead-end street, a siding, a motor running on idle.

The abstract, the smudge, the hyper real, have shown the public images they were not ready to digest – though we must understand: not photographically. Moreover, we should once more ask ourselves if said images were simple aesthetic games or whether they responded to a higher intention. Either way, viewers who were not so specialised did not see the preparatory steps to this elite, they could not adapt, and probably nor did they want to or need to, but this would not justify remaining under the protection of specialised critiques on behalf of the creator, who on many occasions seeks the satisfaction of the critics as confirmation of their work being clearly understood. Certainly, it should never be forgotten that the first observer is the actual creator, and it is they for whom the work must first of all serve as a support for their spiritual development; nevertheless, nor can be omitted, regarding preparatory work, that ultimately these works are also everyone else's property. Art is also a fact of communication, or in other words, a means

of communication derived from received influences.

Creative work also has its slice of training and education. Not considering this part as fundamental makes less educated people not able to grasp the difference between looking and seeing, and, if the way to this is not laid out, nor will they be able to understand a step which is too big aesthetically speaking.

Be warned that the underlying question, the message, remains untouched.

Faced with this lack of comprehension on the part of the viewer with respect to the work, once again photography has been compared to "unreal" painting, and this has caused, as a strange reaction, an appreciation of the old, the combination of the media of painting and photography, and the appraisal of artisan work as a benchmark, amongst other reactions.

Before analysing these guidelines, it must be mentioned that Art is not made to keep it unseen, because this would be the same as not making it, it would not exist.

Regarding the appreciation of old photographs it should be said that, based on reasons which are hard to justify, or due to a retro trend which brings more personality to the past than to the present, we have seen old images blossom which, being of differing quality, taken from all kind of archives, retrieve scenes from the past, aesthetically anodyne almost every time, and of solely documentary interest.

Not only is it a sign of consumerism appropriate to the times, it also says a lot regarding general absent-mindedness. The best that can be said about this fashion is that interesting graphic documents have appeared which were not known about. It is reality which strengthens the memory. Yet even though it may come from opinions as authoritative as those of Susan Sontag, thinking that photography's value increases because of its distance from its past is to compare

it to prehistoric objects found in caves or Roman coins. They could be of interest but this does not make them art, because the same evaluation could be made of a plastic spoon which is found in ten thousand years among the ruins of a city from our present. Obviously, if in place of a painting of Adam and Eve in Paradise we had a photo, it would be priceless. That it would be art is another matter.

Concerning the relationship between photographic and pictorial media, it is doubtlessly based on, from the outside, the demonstrated abilities of graphic abstraction of photography, having shown results similar to certain pictorial movements. Something like affirming that what can be attention grabbing pictorially can also be done with a camera, although not only due to this. In this way, the not real or "strange" because of being incomprehensible have been tarred with the same brush, whichever the working media, becoming almost a consumer product for decoration and not as art. So the value which is given to these works by the public is measured in the amount of artisan work or trade which is gleamed from the work, besides its style, and in this way they tend towards one medium or other; but before certain compositions, because of their apparent simplicity, the observer again becomes mute and unsure... A literary work would not be better or worse evaluated for being written in pencil, fountain pen or pen, these evaluations are absurd but inherent to anything charged with materialism. Here it must be said that the roads, or the road, along which photography and painting walk hand in hand are short and few, the differences which separate them are many more than those which unite them, but this topic belongs to a subsequent chapter.

In any case, it is a falsehood -but above all wrong, due to ignorance-, that painting has more possibilities of nuance or creation than photography. What it has are other types

of nuances, but nor does it have those subtleties inherent to photography. With regard to the rest, for a conscious and complete creation, without room for chance or improvisations, where any idea or study can be carried out successfully, whether natural or artificial, real or unreal, photography puts up no more resistance than the necessary knowledge of the medium's technique, just like painting, sculpture and all the other arts. That may be, within the space it moves around in: a two dimensional plane. Advertising and beauty photography have certainly shown sufficient proof of this ability.

Despite everything, it can be seen that the importance of painting, its traditions and achievements in the creative sphere, have conditioned the freedom of the photographic medium to a great degree, and has been lacking in sufficient research on its own turf. Even so, the training which observers have been able to amass thanks to painting does add its grain of sand to the understanding of those "less real" compositions which can come from the photographic image.

And here we are still only discussing external appearance, not the content.

Along with the teaching of the spectator, it is also possible to show or help a budding author to develop their strengths. In this necessary education, the work of critics, competitions and first exhibitions, as we have already stated, are of vital importance.

Many of tomorrow's possible creators have happily gone to competitions to compare their style and to find out if their message had recipients or was clear. On most occasions, if their works were not accepted or did not win prizes nor did they receive answers to the questions their photos asked on submitting them.

Was not the technique good? Was not the subject interesting? Was not the image alive? - What is wrong with these images? Because if they are prize-winners, even without

answers to these questions, it is as though the piece of art which is getting it right, which is on the right tracks and has been developed correctly, has this communicated through the award - not just that it was the best of the batch.

In this aspect, competitions can be an irreplaceable school, as they are like a permanent exam for those ascending to higher levels, and this educative role should not be forgotten.

For the novice creator, who will have to be tended with care, who attends with interesting ideas although they may not have a perfect technique, it would be better for someone to answer them, telling them the reason for the decision cast. In this way they will be able to understand their level and if they are ready or not to take another step forward. They might also think, were they to be of strong character, that their message was just too excessive for a competition. They may perhaps think that their route is possibly by way of individual exhibitions. Right or wrong, they'd decide on their own career.

Naturally, this made-up story is only this, a story. But from it beneficial conclusions can be drawn should it be desired. Clearly, there are many beginners with techniques and ideas which are too elementary, for whom the objective of true creation remains far away, but it is to be supposed that the judges of a competition, people who have been conveniently trained for their role, would not let a photograph with something unsettling beating in its heart escape their attention, even were it to be hidden by an incorrect method, whether it be in their language or in the photographic technique.

The function of competitions is to motivate creators in their efforts. This role does not end at casting the vote. Photographs with hidden potential should not, without a word, be shoved in an envelope and sent back to their creator. Some words of guidance, opinion or of encouragement

do more, much more than an award does in the educative mission of competitions, and for curious minds it is more important to know that their works are thought-provoking than to feel they are meaningless. This last point, felt at the beginning, can lead to creative death in the author. Not only this - frequently, the initial creative impulse is moved by inner visions and wishes not yet expressed or not fully mature, but that can be seen to sprout over and over again in the history of many authentic creators for whom they are a source of inspiration, perhaps the centre of it, in their artistic life. At times, this raw and imprecise impulse at its outset has been the common denominator of a whole work, and it has been possible to see how it became subtle and beautiful as the expressive ability of the author developed.

The responsibility of competitions is a huge one as a training for art, as the seeds of the future and as a technical school for those who begin by imitating others. It is for all this that competitions should serve.

Once those who attend this type of school are consciously beyond this phase, they should aim for personal and higher aspirations, with regards to the individual in them, to express themselves without the need for judgements. One day a child becomes a youth and then a man. At this stage, to still look for a reward and approval clearly signifies avoiding personal responsibility and navigating the waters of easy art; at this point most certainly so.

There remain the exhibitions, a topic which is also complicated due to its public tendencies. Now it is not an artist who is taught, but the author who guides and teaches the observer. For that reason a far higher responsibility.

At this point when, by breaking many moulds which are not their own, the author bursts in with their personal visions and displays them to the public, they often forget the period of visual adaptation and technical learning which

has carried them to their current approach.

For the inexpert public the technical development of the work is of no interest, and they will only see the work as it is. They will accept the exhibition for what it is and how it is offered to them, they will like it or they will not, and if their ability allows them to and the works are alive, they will get a message. If this happens they will probably become trapped in the discovery of inner beauty, in what they did not believe in or was hidden from them.

If the expert author does not produce living works but rather external aesthetic games, no matter how perfect they may be, the public will see decorative pieces, and so the art will be mere illusion in the message. That "with more or less technical skill anyone can do it", the famous quote. This judgement is nothing more than the consequence of the language applied by photography to reality which is so material, and to the degrees of creation closest to the public, besides the lack of preparation which we have already mentioned.

The endless amount of images made photographically which are self-imitation, derived from others already seen, technical athletics, which "say" little and mean less, and with a minimum of difference amongst them, more than cultivating the observer who approaches with interest, what they do is take advantage of their ignorance and treat them like a sap. This can dazzle with variations, in technique, of scenery, of finish, etc., and produces disinterest long-term. For the author, self-copying causes a loss of their internal reception level.

It cannot be denied that when a photograph managed to "speak" and be understood, the noise of the copies automatically drowned out its music. But the search for a solution to what causes this defect in so much saturation, must lead us to the conclusion that the mistake is not having chosen the wrong path, it is the way it is walked along.

Reality is not wrong, it is the way it is looked at, because it is not seen, there is an attempt to transform it, to show it through a new focus, but it shows itself exactly the same. And when the vision is strange, the game consists of discovering the trick, and when it is unmasked it loses interest. We are still discussing form, not depth.

The consequences of this series of errors are evident. Despite the fact that the number of galleries with a photographic base has increased – How many painting galleries are there and how many photography galleries? How many exhibition halls show photography with certain continuity? Is not it commercial? Are not the public in favour of it? Is it marginalised? Photography is where it has been placed, it is not its fault.

It is not possible to remain silent and follow the same path for the next hundred years. That “reality” will end up devouring the medium’s ability, and it will never have reached its full potential, not by a long shot. It will certainly have left unconnected impressive works, which will make the most aware cry, asking themselves how it can be that something like that did not reach the top, and this must be avoided.

No more run-of-the-mill rhymes or simple school verses, it is about making poetry.

With all their vices and virtues, the role of competitions and exhibitions is fundamental to setting the creative bases for photography. Saturation necessitates a more detailed and specialised search for the images which are truly alive and are the seeds of the future, but none of the errors which may occur from all these setbacks are capable of covering up the advantages which arise from its function. In the end, photography is an imitation of life, with all its pros and cons. The contribution must be positive.

We have mentioned the role of critical reviews, but we have barely tip-toed over the subject. However it is of

vital importance.

Critical reviews have a more important mission than “just” criticising, but in truth, the work of art and criticism means applying criteria, studying, analysing, comparing, giving references and even valuing, even though it is associated more with attacking or emitting unfavourable judgements, but it is not about that. The delicate role of the critic is based on their personal criteria, and this is the frame of reference they apply to value or make their opinion known, so they must be sure of having criteria able to discern and opine judiciously. Whosoever gives their opinion in this way and puts forward these judgements is reviewing and educating.

In an exhibition, criticism is the gateway in, almost as much so as the real thing; it is the presentation, the commentary which helps to open the eyes, the warm-up prior to the sports competition. Criticism prepares us so that our receptiveness is not cold when we contemplate the work. It is not that the work cannot be observed with no other reference than its contemplation, the work is independent and speaks for itself, but nor do we go to the cinema to see any old film, whichever, without knowing the title or what it is about. This does not alter the film’s value, but we like to know what kind of work we are going to see beforehand.

Not everyone needs to see a review prior to an exhibition, clearly the critics or authors do not do it, but I mean a critical review which has a pedagogical factor for those who need this help.

There are, permanently, newly arrived observers to art who are little thought of, for whom it would be of maximum interest that the critics made an analysis including concepts from the past, explaining the evolution, the technique or the theory if deemed convenient, and a careful and methodical explanation of the whys and wherefores. It would mean clarifying the confused or training the new arrival to, in this

way, prepare them to receive the more internal images of the future, or simply of those they have in front of them, because what is future or past does not depend on real time for each person, but on their personal evolution.

An adequate critic, a good critic, is a better eye-opener than many books, especially since they are giving guidelines on precisely what they have before them. It is a golden opportunity to exponentially increase the spectator's interest to see subsequent exhibitions.

If not done this way, when this same keen observer looks in books or reviews for the meaning of art through photography, they will find, firstly, a large number of books devoted to the topic of visual communication, its social function or technique; secondly, they will discover the lack of publications oriented exclusively and in depth towards the sought topic, above all compared with those destined to other media; and ultimately, that by reading reviews in order to get their bearings, they will often obtain as a result of their interest a summary which could be defined as an eloquent sediment, and complicated technical terminology which turn the approach to the inner feeling of art into something which for them is incomprehensible.

I have read extraordinary reviews written by specialists, with excellent commentaries which I am sure were appropriate for in-depth connoisseurs of the subject. Naturally, they deserve nothing less than my approval, there are beautiful reviews which I have enjoyed reading several times, but I have come to think that they should be suitable for intermediate levels, not only high ones, to the benefit of art. In this way, the level of an important group of spectators would be raised and it would be much easier for creators to express themselves and make an impact. As, for the average spectator, the specialist's language is to a great degree incomprehensible, and after reading

a fair few of these commentaries they end up confusing them, they do not say a lot which is comprehensible to someone inexpert, but exhaust and eliminate the desire to go to the "connoisseur" to understand and get closer to this art. The outcome is not only distraction, it can be disinterest. Quite simply, they turn what they see into an exclusivist and non-intuitive art.

We know which works critical reviews are aimed at, but within that scope, a level appropriate to the spectator should be considered.

Yes, reviews have brought their grain of sand to the disorientation and could do much more for photography and for the observers, taking care over the composition they approve and bearing in mind who it is for, that is to say, the spectators, because sometimes only a small change in the composition is necessary in order to make it perfectly accessible... and pedagogical. Nor is what I am saying such a great change.

Photographic criticism of an exhibition should not only be literary art based on visual art, and justifying what can be gleaned from the works with exquisite sentences, because it can be difficult to read one of these reviews and know what it says or what it wants to say, to understand if what is put forward turns to the past or tends towards the future, if it goes in-depth or just scratches the surface. Beautiful literature is welcome, naturally, but the right amount of analysis must not be forgotten. It cannot give the impression that what is said would be valid for a vast number of authors, as though it were written for its use should the need arise, or as if it were the sum product of inspired sentences carefully taken down on a notepad, not for anyone specific, but to be used when the opportunity arise.

Often, the higher you go towards ground-breaking art, the reading of the commentary dissipates into fog, and

if the level is truly distant, the fog shrouds everything.

Nobody wants to risk their "prestige" and be mistaken in a comment about a work, due to this they tend to wait for it to settle and find its place. This shows responsibility and at the same time a certain lack of inner vision or ability to sense the spirit of genius advancing, at its first firing line.

To discern is very complicated, to criticise is a great responsibility, and in all media which create and educate, better or worse trained people are found, but groundbreaking criticism is not only a question of training. There is as much intuition, feeling, communion with the piece, that to review becomes a truly complicated labour. To analyse and give an opinion - and what is more, to be educational - is not exactly an easy task.

The critic should be someone who is especially able and prepared for their role. Expressing my doubts regarding the ability of a scribe or an artist from another speciality to issue a criterion under the circumstances I pose should not be surprising. My long fondness for literature does not allow me, in all conscience, to review a novel by a language academic. But I can say whether I liked it or not.

Despite the sibling relationship which is assigned to photography and painting, my liking for painting does not allow me to make a responsible critique of an exhibition. The opposite must also be valid. That is to say, the training for criticism must be adequate. Clearly, you can find people who are trained for both types of criticism, even for sculpture or film, but it is not something so habitual. The criteria applied to painting cannot be the same as those applied to photography, and vice versa, but nor are those for sculpture or music valid. The language of each medium must be analysed with the right instrument; you do not measure the weight of water in degrees Kelvin.

Although it is not something desirable for our art,

a certain defensiveness in critical commentaries regarding cutting edge works, or which open new mental territories, is only natural. Nor do I think there is anything wrong in the expression of this reservation before the work itself, just as there is nothing wrong in its justification. A critic can have an aesthetic taste different to what is on show, but this does not invalidate their ability to make an analysis. A piece of art cannot allow a badly thought out review to judge it based on when the critic faces it, whether it speak their language or not. From there to school qualification is less than a footstep. But at times the application of criteria from relatively distanced positions from those the author proposes would be positive. The necessary adaptation to emit it is a magnificent way of closing the gaps which were produced during the leap. The critic's mentality must of necessity be very open in order to correctly carry out their role.

There is a book by Balmes, titled "Criteria", which is educative and very interesting to read in this respect.

Of course, there are also critical reviews which seem to be more a spotlight on their presenter than a disposition towards the work, but this supposition merits no more commentary.

In any case, if the observer has not learnt anything, they will fear being tricked because of their doubts and will feel disinterest, which is the death of art. The educative work of critics and authors is therefore necessary if not to say indispensable.

Beyond any doubt it would be fantastic to be able to fully communicate everything we feel, but in order to do this we need others to be able to understand us.

To ask someone what an image tells them is incomplete. Maybe this summary question does not open the viewer's eyes, and perhaps it should be more specific, giving clues in the questions. To ask what is seen inside, if it

is similar to anything, if it reminds them of anything, if they could imagine anything like that... All these "somethings" look much further. They are teaching how to analyse.

When a child learns how to read, after practicing with a paragraph, the teacher asks them to explain what they have read, to avoid what was read being little less than a vocal act, and to make the reading of the symbol and the reception of the meaning become automatic. What is clear is that this is not just a visual game.

This training is aimed at, besides judging the external, the content of the message being what is important. No-one can forget, when they read information about humankind in the world, no matter how beautiful or how horrible the essay may be, that the base is a reality which is independent of the text. Who does not see it this way will neither see that behind a weapon of war there are people dying.

Good, well the need for its explanation is not just a small part of creation. Here we are talking of getting to the bottom of things. How important ample and deep criteria would be in those first steps, in order to approach art with confidence and being well guided!

This leisure society has been focussed towards materialism and consumerism; you do not have to be a visionary to feel it. And the escapism proposed as a way out of so much emptiness and background noise has not been well directed, everything is very superficial, very economic, too instantaneous. Now, when by comparison we are more than ever in a position to walk, is when true art has been most abandoned.

It is not a Utopian daydream to believe that even for those with physically violent and little enriching jobs - who it does not seem are associated with a sensitive spirit - that the relationship with art would be relaxing and what is more liberating.

We have seen, up to this point, the image from a very

external approach, and we already have many different vessels to store liquids. They are all beautiful and they are all almost empty, it is time to fill them; some with perfumes, others with drinks, some with oil, and the others with what belongs in them. Maybe some will stay empty. It is only a jar, after all.

To close this chapter, relating the current saturated world of photography with what could help it to find its own path in the art world; I think we should again take a quick look at the mutual past in order to attempt to foresee its future.

In the previous chapter we said:

- The hidden meaning was not only human.
- Beauty had a place in the metaphysical.
- Absolute beauty was a heavenly grace.
- Art has a purifying effect.
- External beauty is not comparable to internal beauty.
- Beauty is experienced on identifying with the divine.
- The hunter of beauty should look within, and not to, the visible world.

These affirmations were made by Plato, Plotinus, and Aristotle... They were not wrong.

Despite all the circumstances against it, here and there, sensitive souls with similar influences look to take photography, and also deadlocked art, out of its current limitations, with a new language.

Nor do you need to be a prophet to say that change will be radical in the coming years, all you have to do is "see".

This horizon hunter, conscious of what they tend towards, will produce works of dense and sound language. Perhaps at the outset this art will be rejected due to its being different to what came before, but it will be unstoppable by necessity, and will end up establishing itself after the preparatory stage of the observer. The history of art has

shown us many times that this is the case.

The human being gets used to everything in a surprising way. Their ability to adapt is immense. And due to their own inertia it is hard for them to change these habits. In this way they can live alongside what they do not like or do not consider to be close, even with what is harmful to them without radically renouncing it. For this reason, photographs, which because of their new deeper base and their new means of expression, now on their own path, when shown to the world, can seem a little distant, and even incomprehensible, only due to our being unaccustomed to their external power and inner life. There will be those who say that they are strange in comparison to the possible. It may occur that this beauty is not recognised at first, but in the end it will triumph over the former.

Few understand the language of the abstract, even over a hundred years after its creation, but abstract symbolism is permanently present in our lives without anybody noticing, and it seems that everybody accepts and understands it.

“Art” will have the replica of its meaning in reality. This word has resonated too loudly and too many times in the voices of those who so wish. This saying has for many been turned into a word of overuse, but as with all inner and spiritual strength, the sensation the feeling the art causes in us when we come face to face with it leaves us speechless. When a creator finishes a piece of art, as his work, they feel that the piece is more than they are. Later, after empowering themselves with this essence, a new strength will push them forwards, and they will push beyond the limit again. There is no room for playing with the art or for consumerist art in this process. This game is very serious, to be forgotten in time is not its future, because our measurement of it is not there where it is heading towards.

The movement forwards has barely begun, the material

games and those who look for new guides and patterns launch themselves in pursuit of the ones they believe to be the sought after goals. In this way the creator's light remains hidden, yet it is the only one which will stay well-lit and the only one able to jump elsewhere thanks to the power acquired. Meanwhile, those who follow it, despite trying to overtake it in appearance, remain lost and obliged, if they want to keep up, to another change which they were not ready for and of which they do not even know the reasons why.

After walking these paths, producing modern or vanguard images becomes in their eyes a duty you cannot take away from them. Nevertheless, creation is not a duty, it is a necessity, and if you want to use the term "duty" it is because you feel you "must" do it, not because you feel "obliged" to do it. The creative cannot be covered by the mask of "duty" to produce it, it is the need to undress that which is higher than us, and internal, which pushes us on.

To use what is external to us as a testing ground in order to apply our technique, as a trade and as something aesthetic, can be considered a pleasant pastime, there are those who prefer to listen to music, for example, but this is to feel the art, not create it. Once again, this is the application of craftsmanship. It is a material and external game, the repetition of the game which has been played so many times before.

It can be understood that who derives pleasure from the feeling of said art, may feel the impulse of trying to enter in this world from another side: that of they who create it. This desire is plausible, but they must be aware that the road which leads to the objective does not arrive from the outside but starts from within and is full of dark areas. They have to be told that many crossroads on this path take them along easy shortcuts to external reality and its games, which cause confusion, and moreover, to cap it all, do not add anything either to art or humankind. They must know that

this reality is already exhausted as an art form, and that the first step, the domain of photographic craftsmanship is absolutely necessary for the training of the creative capacity. And also they will have to follow a long and enthralling road to themselves, because the road which goes on the outside was lost a long time ago through superficial games.

This is not recent; this road said all it had to say a long time ago, at least as a whole. There still remain subtleties, new approaches, external games, but nothing which seriously affects the root of the question, or which could change it.

The path of the evident, of immediate reality, has become a variation of the primitive: My mummy mothers me, I mother my mummy. Something funny has been discovered! And so you can say: I am mothered by mummy, mummy is mothered by me. Later geniuses have cleared the matter up adding discoveries like: Who mothers me? Or: Is mummy mothered? A malcontent said: There is no mothering for anybody! ...And from there to infinity. It is clear that on this road something such as our Quixote would never be found.

On rebelling against the obstacle which this game of the superficial represented, those who struggled decided to end this relationship and abandon it, and on their rise to other levels, they stood up against everything which supported them materially. The widespread response against the former to bury it, by those who followed them along a wrong path, has shown its Achilles heel from the outset. Against materialism, a posture was adopted which seemed to tend to destroy the material not through the spirit, but in the way the image was handled. The position seems to pose as an answer to the previously sought materialism, the destruction of the real image which supported it, as though it were the guilty party, as if changing the form would also change the content. Something along the lines of: Against materialism,

amaterialism. But this does not mean to say "spirit" in the slightest, if not almost atheism. With a false objective and the wrong form, the cause of the materialistic state of art has been eliminated. Oddly, this same abandoned materialism could drive the spirit, but few have been able to see it. With the revolution of strange shapes, against the "establishment", many of these works have managed to have about as much inner life as a dead planet compared to the Earth. At heart, they are the same thing, but not so.

Moving away from the work's exterior, there remains its interior in raw state, it is this part which speaks for itself without a message which is either looked for or directed. It is left to its own free will. In this game - counter to what is looked for, which was to find content - only the superficial and the physical message count. A new pastime.

There is another game which consists of finding a hidden message, an unexpected content. The same author, in many cases, uses the piece to find messages in it. They even produce works to see what they find searching by chance. But if the piece is not destined to produce or look for a kind of message, of course it does not seem possible that they will be found. Things may be found, but they will be unconnected, or their only connection will be limited by the material game. In a work which has an aim, the message is already implicit, and naturally others may appear, those produced by the actual material game, but it has that something special which gives it its primary content which perfumes the whole piece.

And not everything is said with only what an image represents, as this is leaving the beaten track and looking for a new shape and turning it into an ocular game. In this way, the abstract has lost the expressive ability of the symbol, by turning it into a physical object and not into the catalyst of inner sensations. It has been emptied of its content to a great

degree, since on accepting what appears on the surface as the content, what it represents is accepted without further question. Someone could say that now it is figurative and everything becomes superficial. With the abstract, the Moon has been pointed to, but it has ended up being the finger which is looked at rather than the Moon.

This art which is so external is still everywhere nowadays, so aesthetic, so "itself". Even in that art which looks to chance, or in the open interpretation of each and every one of the things "present" in the piece, because it speaks of "chaos". This is its justification and its support, as well as its aesthetic beauty, because, as intelligent beings we tend to meddle with chaos and tidy up this plot of land. And this art game is an internal game, mechanical and intellectual it may be, but it is internal. The art of chance is support enough to hang on for a while, but no more than this. It is like writing random words or mad notes to see what comes out of it. Deep down, there is nothing behind it but chaos, there is no direction and no future, it is instinct in an animalistic sense. The objective is void and emptied in the actual object, so that its life is limited to a time, "its" time. After, it remains for posterity as what it never stopped being: an external feeling, a technical production.

Those who have followed the path of imitation of those who abandoned it at the previous junction fleeing from the moribund, even worse, from what is mummified and has no soul, have not seen clearly what the point was, nor have they understood that it is not just about technique, that it is a way of feeling inside. Any imitation based on the applied technique would be a dead work before even printing it. What would be missing, most of all, the transmittable, the "what" to be transmitted, would drain it of content, which is bizarre in this case, or it would turn it back into another kind of landscape to be enjoyed through the observation of the

external but with nothing more on the inside.

These ups and downs are our way of making progress. We do not travel in a straight line, and there are always things which hold you back, which makes the climb even harder, but we climb. There are works which justify this entire struggle.

The world does not advance in a zigzag, like certain economic graphs, but as opposing waves where each peak is opposed by its trough, and rises diagonally thanks to the strongest impulses of the conquerors of new intellectual territories. The hope is that, long-term and more and more, the peak of today will be the trough of tomorrow, and so on and upwards.

With this perspective in mind, it is easy to guess that not everything that can be done has been, yet, done in art but that, however much it may appear that it has been done, virtually nothing whatsoever has been. More so when the goal is not our interior or ourselves, it goes beyond that, to before us, to more than we are, to the creative spirit, and it is not just a word; seeing as we are discussing creation, perhaps it is the reflection of our very own. Were this objective to be attained – What does the past matter? It is only a story, but it is worth the effort to know it and not to forget it.

Photography's current situation could not be better to open doors to new paths which have never been set foot upon and to grow. Let us say that little has been done and there is still everything to do. The moment to take the first step towards new territories seems to take so long to arrive that we feel as if time plays with us, delaying it, and turning each second into an eternity.

CHAPTER III

TWIN WORLDS

"On contemplating the work I thought that my spectacles were dirty, what does that material represent?... the painting had no right way up or wrong way up..., Impression!, it certainly causes an impression..., the painted paper in embryonic state was more overdone than this marinade."

Louis Leroy (Critique of the first Impressionist exhibition, 1874)

Twin worlds

To think of high-class painting currently means thinking about art directly. Art, and not reproduction, has been the ultimate goal since it saw itself forced to flee forwards following the birth of its brother, photography. And this escape has taken it along its own path.

Nowadays we see the importance painting holds for art and culture in multiple private collections, in museums around the world – even dedicated to specialities within the painting sector itself, at the back of galleries, in the collections of numerous foundations or at art fairs. Even in the incomprehensible valuations some pieces attain at auctions, whose high prices speak more of the importance they are given than the real value they hold for the language of art. If painting has been important to humankind from the caverns onwards, its development from the birth of photography has made it, possibly, the base art of the 19th and 20th centuries.

And – What was happening to its travel companion, photography, meanwhile?

It simply stepped into the shoes painting slipped out of. With photography came an increase in the work concerning everything based on realism, and when it became possible to reproduce images in the Press in 1870, the world of the presentation of products, advertising, took a giant step forward. Anything which required commercialisation propped itself up on photography. Colour photography and the Press in colour appeared massively not long ago, and in this short space of time there remained nothing which did not transform the world without the use of communication via the photographic image. Of course there was also a branch which grew towards art, but something happened which has impeded photography being considered to be, popularly, at the same level as its sister, painting.

True - it is admitted, accepted, that there is a world filled with art at the heart of photography, yet it is clear that it is considered to be painting's poor cousin, and when it limits itself to the territory of reproducer of reality, then it becomes the ugly sister. This evidence cannot be denied, the reality is steadfast. How many pictorial styles which can be distinguished from realism have arisen since the birth of photography? Let's say that after a period of time painting forged its own path by the side of photography. In this hypothetical race, were we to ask ourselves: Since 1900, how many museums have filled up with paintings of any of the trends which appeared after photography? And also: How many photographs do they have or display? How many museums of solely painting are there, and how many which are exclusively for photography? What economic value do paintings reach and what value do photographs? How many paintings are valued in millions and how many photographs are? And even if these last evaluations are only economic and not artistic, they clearly show the appreciation for one and then the other art form of the spectator who decides to acquire a piece.

Were we to compare, we will accept that photography is currently painting's poor cousin.

There are several reasons for this difference, some are more important than others, and each, in their analysis, will find their own reasons, but it is hard to get over the feeling that its being bound to the reproduction of primitive reality and all its variants, has anchored it to the bottom of the art; the same as happened to painting in its day. The description Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz gives in his book: "The History of Six Ideas", on the evolution of the concept of art and other related matters is most recommendable because of its meticulousness and originality, without leaving gaps, in a substantial and compact book. Its reading allows us to see, through the complexity of the paths art has taken, how it has not always held its position as the future medium of what was more foreseeable or more fitting to the times, instead what has reached us as such has always been "itself".

Photography and painting have been made to walk in parallel worlds, when they have not been tarred with the same brush. The same arguments have been used to analyse both worlds, but in truth they are barely related, or at most it is a relationship forced on them by the situation.

Photography came to substitute painting in its role of witness to reality, because it is clear that in this respect, the workings inherent to the photographic system held a great advantage, due to its precision, simplicity and speed. However, in time, and while painting opened the doors to other worlds and asked other, more transcendental questions concerning its own identity and possibilities, photography evolved with the development of its own medium, and, becoming easier and easier to capture reality, or those magic moments, the madness for multitudinous snapping of memories certified its post as witness to reality and anything photographic was stuck on this shelf.

Pigeonholed in that role of what it had to do, fine art photography also dedicated itself to beautify, or to annotate in various ways, what surrounded it for far longer than was necessary before seeking its own, personal and exclusive path.

Art made painting and photography one universe. And spinning around the sun, painting was a planet and photography its satellite. The gravity of the greater was the support of the minor one but also its chains.

When it was the time for discovering spring, it was spring for everyone; and when it became summer, it was also contagious. The satellite was obligatorily joined to the planet's orbit, with everything that comes from this. Yet even though they are in the same glass, oil and water do not mix.

The solving of problems of light, colour, texture, composition and decomposition, image object and form, which concerned painters, taking them to another level, were not those of photography, it was not its world. Only the part which spoke in general of the spirit of art or its life was valid and something in common, the rest was language specific to painting, and when the topic was discussed, photography had to politely look the other way, because this displayed intimacy was not for it. Of course a philosophical base could be applied to certain approaches, but through the language of the abstract, suprematism and others based on the symbol, parallelism could only be imitation. Language had broken communication. The rupture was inevitable.

I would like to draw attention to some sentences by Kazimir Malevich, the father of suprematism, regarding the object, in a sense our photographic "reality":

"The failure of intermediate elements is inevitable, we realise that it is impossible to deduce the known circumstance of the subjective nature of things, of one sole element and study it objectively. There is nothing which is perceived

by everybody in an identical way, as each appreciable circumstance is either known due to a sharp-witted personality, or the personality itself creates its subjective deduction, or rather, affirms its conclusion through the world.

I foresee the inevitable failure of all the revelations of the elements in general, since they themselves cannot represent anything, and on the other hand, they do not exist until the revelation of the phenomenon, until the full clarity of the idea, when the idea of the object arises."

Certainly, there is a fundamental psychological aspect in each and every image, which tells us more of the reality we perceive than the image itself does. Or at least which distorts our sensations if we do not know the whole truth previously. A parched tree in the desert in Namibia is not the same as a tree in the middle of a forest in Asturias. Not the tree itself, but what it says about the situation. To give a clearer example, let's imagine a photo with the half to the right covered. To the left we see a female breast from the side, oriented towards the centre of the frame. Nothing else is seen, only the breast. We think... A breast, only this. What is this doing here like this, on its own? We discover the covered half and see a baby's mouth, we immediately deduce "maternity", "breast-feeding", "tenderness". Let's suppose that on uncovering the other half we were to see an adult mouth. The supposition would be different, "sensuality", "passion", "sex". Yet the breast, the mammary gland, is the same in all three cases, it has not changed at all. It is the circumstance which changes its representation. In many senses, the analysis made in painting of the role of the object is also applicable to photography, not always, but they do have points of interest in common.

Photographers have joined or tagged on to some pictorial movements however they could, perhaps as proof that the medium was able to move around in these "springs"

or "autumns", but in general photography has been alien to the causes which produced them. Especially if they were not movements based on compatible ideas, because as soon as they had anything to do with the world of the pictorial medium, photography soon showed that what it and painting had in common was actually very little.

Surrealism has left an example of what has been a good idea for both media. Even Man Ray, aerographer, engraver and photographer, participated in the first surrealist exhibition in the Pierre Gallery in Paris in 1925.

To a degree, photography ended up substituting painting in a specific field and has stayed there, in this plot of reality.

Over time, subtleties and interpretations have been looked for in the images, they have been made harsher or softer, sharper or blunter, cutting or tender, darker or clearer, but after millions of reinterpreted images almost everything looks like a new angle on an old take. We continue to show the thousand and one faces of realism.

It is still of interest that a pictorial movement emerged called Hyperrealism, also known as radical or photographic realism, whose approach is to go as far as possible in the imitation of or superseding of photography. This movement, born on the American west coast towards the end of the '60s in the 20th century, copied its works from enlarged photographs, transcribing the photographic effects with a paintbrush, aerograph or any method necessary. There have also been and are artists who work directly from reality; see the work of Cesar Galicia or Antonio López.

Some of the representatives of this pictorial movement tried to show either cold or uninteresting aspects in their images, as though they were a mechanical or programmed capture by a camera, a reflection of a saturated culture or which is tired of throwaway images.

But photography is not actually one of painting's satellites. Photography is another planet in the same universe.

What unites photography and painting is less and more superficial than what separates them. Working on a twodimensional plane unites them, the compositional rules valid for bi-dimensionality, the names of the colours but not their characteristics, many styles... Nevertheless, practically everything else separates them.

The first visual difference, direct consequence of their very materials in both areas, is texture. Painting has a texture which I will call external, so we can understand each other. This texture forms part and parcel of the colours which hold up the image and it is of vital importance for the understanding and assimilation of the painting. The brushstroke, or its line, form a substantial part of the language of the picture, it is tactile. There is no external texture in photography, the texture is internal, it composes an intimate part of what makes up the image, it is a solely visible texture. In analogical images, the visible grain caused by the amplification of the silver molecules or dye couplers which make up the negative, went on to form an integral part of the finished image, being valued as pleasant or not, but their participation being accepted as something necessary. To attain the greatest degree of reality possible, as many methods as were required were used to eliminate this background noise, as perfect reproduction completely eliminates any element which is not a part of the model image. However, the technique makes it possible to alter the texture which composes the image, making it vary the quality, quantity and hue of its expression depending on the inner texture which makes it up. What is called texture in both techniques does not correspond to the same definition.

As a not very academic example, I will try to put into words the appreciation of the same image which one world could have of the other from opposing viewpoints.

Let's imagine a landscape painted in the pointillist style compared to a photograph of the same thing. For pointillism, photography would have a poor yet interesting texture, for the photographer the painting would have a crude yet enriching texture. All this said making a clear abstraction of what surrounds all the rest.

The inner texture of a photograph is considered based on what it needs to express the sought representation. With the arrival of the digital image, the texture in the photographs can be substituted to adapt itself better to its expression.

In the digital, pure colour is no longer textured, it is smooth as dough, it has no grain, it will never again be possible to look for a pointillist approach. What would they find in a photo's colour nowadays? Squares? Nothing! Currently the surface of a colour would not reveal its composition, as it did in an analogical image, where a colour surface showed the grainy texture of the dye couplers it was made up of.

Colours also have different characteristics depending on their use, as photography works as much by reflection as through projection, depending on whether they are dealt with during the take or on printing. The same primary colours on being added together in equal amounts can produce black or white depending on the use made of them, but in painting they only produce black when mixed, as they always act on reflection.

In painting, light must be incorporated, in photography it comes with the raw material. On the other hand, in painting the form is free, and in photography it enters accompanying the object.

In this way we could continue to point out fundamental differences between both media, without having mentioned what is perhaps the main determinant in sentencing photography to reality, that is to say, the camera. This magical filter does not exist in painting.

The camera, necessary device, light manipulation chamber, censor, sanctuary, gateway, and standard measurement, even if it is not, of the language of photography. It is the root of everything good and much that is bad. But it has yet to be proved that it is a handicap to creation.

One by one we could continue peeling away the different facets which unite or separate both worlds, but it is not necessary to keep on giving examples so that, who should so wish would understand that they move on parallel paths but not on the same road. With the importance of the differences which have been pointed out what is hard to understand is that someone could believe they are similar worlds. Just by adding movement we would be talking about film. What similarity is there between painting and film?

I have never heard of a painting which is very cinematographic, but I have heard that a photograph is very pictorial. In some hyperrealist exhibitions you can hear that what is on show is very photographic or that they look like photos, but clearly this was the desired effect, so to say this is a comparison, not a qualification of its art.

Normally, when it is said that a photograph is very pictorial, or that it looks like a painting, it can be a sign of appreciation of the work by the speaker. But the same sentence is also heard when images which distance themselves from the world of the real are seen, because it must be accepted that anything which does not seem possible in an image is similar to painting and the freedom not to use the objects it has to produce forms. So not only what follows the recommendations given by the English photographer H. P. Robinson in photography is pictorial, but also what does not seem photographic, or in other words, the real and acceptable as real.

What is interesting about this pictorial movement, less pictorial and academic than its name might infer, is that it

was criticised because its work did not permit multiple copies by being very elaborate in the printing, even with several negatives and exposures; this made them unrepeatable on many occasions. Nor could their work be considered to be that of notary to reality, as the take was manipulated. And lastly, it was not possible for just anybody to take these images, due to the degree of craftsmanship required in the process up to the copy, which meant that the results were not accessible, popularly speaking. These are principles which seem to be the rules of the game to avoid anything being done which cannot be done by everybody. Perhaps this explains why it is believed that with a camera in hand and a vague idea everyone can do it and obtain the same results.

However the pictorial artists responded that the camera was not what made the image with the author being unimportant, that the take itself was a minor detail, and that a level of craftsmanship far beyond simply sufficient was required so as to be able to turn the author into an artist and the take into a personal image reflected in a copy. This argument is still valid to this day. It may be that the pictorial aesthetic showed a way to get away from the elementary photographs which, in their millions, invaded the world following the appearance of the first instant camera for enthusiasts. The sale of more than two million cameras in a decade, in the United States alone without even including Europe, could lead us to understand the reason for the pictorial escape towards more elaborate images.

It is strange because on the one hand piles of copies were made, and on the other, their finish was so nurtured that making more than one copy was a real effort. But both extremes have had consequences. In reality, artistic production is not in the least helped, at all, by the fact of there being more than one copy made. I cannot think of anybody who considers changing a shade of green

because they are going to make six copies, it would be absurd. The amount of copies is a productive and not a creative matter. Making more copies can help the work's diffusion, but printing it in a widely-circulated magazine would distribute it more. A greater number of copies are an understandable matter of economics, and there will even be many other reasons, but as to the work itself these are unimportant. If the reproduction of the actual original is possible and identical, each person should make their own decisions concerning the copies they produce.

On the other hand, the de-personalisation of these consumer images make any image, any poster, any reproduction be good enough to fill a wall, adding a decorative touch although it may be a little lifeless. Everything is good; there is no selection criterion which is not that of the appetite. Despite how cheap it may be to embellish with images, be they paintings or photos by advanced beginners, and even one-off pieces in exhibitions or competitions, a poster of an artist or a fashionable singer is such a great competitor that it can be preferable to craftsmanship. Yet however, this purchase, possibly of similar economic value if we are speaking of beginners, would help the evolution of art and the budding artist.

But we will return to our subject.

With the qualifier "pictorial" applied to photography, whether they be real or unreal it also shows the ignorance of whoever applies it regarding the possibilities of the medium to create images, because, simply, this is also a part of the photographic sector, its reality and its inner life, even if they do not know it.

True imitation of painting by photography is impossible if it is not in a crude or superficial way. The appearance or style of certain trends can be imitated, but there is no point imitating the language of another medium

with the weapons proper to that which it is different to. To walk like a monkey does not make us a simian and to dress a simian like a person does not make it human. In the same way, when photography expresses itself with its own exclusive language nor can painting imitate it nor reproduce it if it is not as meaningless and superficial in the same way. The method employed makes no difference. Apollinaire wittily said: "When humankind wanted to imitate the action of walking, they invented the wheel, which does not look much like a leg".

There is no need to look for the road which separates both worlds as the creative objective, this would be idiocy and a waste of time, as this art is no more art for being more different to the other, but more for being itself. To look for precisely what separates them is as stupid as living in what unites or united them. The world of what is unique to each medium is so vast that you could navigate it without ever touching its edges. Moreover, once the limits of the medium used as language are intensely and seriously travelled along, the same medium begins to express itself in its own and unrepeatable language with the author's accent.

"The ideal use of the medium with what is exclusively unique to it must be sought". A sentence from the book: "On the Spiritual in Art".

The total freedom to move around in the chaos of art is a cornerstone of any work. If it has not been raised under these conditions the piece could be great craftsmanship, but not a work of art. Of this liberty and the necessary research to create the piece is born the unique and differentiated language of who lives on the cutting edge of art's blade.

In a painting by Aurelio Suárez, reproduced in the book: "Aurelianism", a painted letter can be seen with the following sentence written: "Paint whatever you want and however you want", which translated to our territory is exactly

the same. And when this graphic and mental freedom gets going, this unique language appears all around.

The criteria applied to painting for its analysis are barely valid when there is an attempt to apply them to photography. The fundamental differences which I spoke of at the beginning should not be left aside on analysing a work, because perhaps the positive in one medium is negative in the other.

Photography was included in and lived in parallel to the history of painting, and due to this its own history is still in swaddling clothes, but if it has to be re-written it will be fun.

The history of its events is written, but not of its own life and this is not exactly the same thing.

To accept the continuity of the current timeline means condemning this art to be judged through the eyes of another.

The relationship light-object-shape-content in photography is on the inside different to that of painting. Once this difference is gone into in depth, the separation of both paths is inevitable and, the further you go in this direction the more unique and personal is the inner life of the photographic image.

Photography has also made progress according to the discoveries which pushed on its advance, and there are circumstances still to arrive which could force a historic repetition. The arrival of image capture systems which are more faithful to reality, can do, with current photography, something similar to what it caused in painting after its discovery.

By the speed at which events are taking place in the world of the image, it is to be supposed that, rather sooner than later, graphic systems must appear which permit a superior approximation to the real world; something which has been the heritage of photography since its birth.

We shall pose as a case the arrival of three-dimensional visualisation systems which are both simple and user-friendly for the masses. At the end of the day our vision is not monocular as photography shows us.

The binocular representation technique is old enough to be considered aged. Stereoscopic capture cameras have been manufactured, and were even very popular in the mid 20th century, a specific slide-viewing system which let you see images in their true 3D dimensions with a special viewfinder. This 3D must not be confused with 3D computer-assisted graphic design, I mean analogical photography, with silver chemistry, just so we understand each other. These systems let you see a solid threedimensional image as a true representation, but they did not evolve enough and have virtually disappeared.

Far more developed systems appeared in the 'seventies, with cameras capable of capturing reality through special optics whose diaphragm, and at the same time shutter, moved horizontally on the inside of the lens, to capture what is visible from the position of both eyes, with a little more angle and all the content in-between during the movement. The obtained image had to be stuck to a finely-lined lenticular sheet, in reality prisms, which returned what the camera captured from its position to each eye. This system also permitted turning the resulting image and perceiving its volume, even allowing things hidden behind the edges of the main object to appear. The turn was limited to an angle similar to the movement of the shutter in the optic, but the effect was spectacular.

However nor did this system find its place on the market. There have been other attempts, but they never really had success.

Their handling was more complicated than in normal photography, but colour photography was more

complex than black and white and was a real success. Certainly, the technology to manufacture these lenticular sheets was somewhat more primitive, and therefore more costly than nowadays, but it is more convenient to think that the problem lies elsewhere, as currently digital printing materials and systems make it possible to print directly onto the sheets with the accompanying saving in costs. Even the thickness of the sheets would be reduced to almost nothing and of greater quality. The problem of its implantation is another matter.

What carried photography to the heart of the public was not only the graphic capability of the system, but its use in the Press. It was more the possibility of turning it into a mass media which has put it where it is today. An image multiplied by as many copies as were printed opened up unimaginable possibilities for communication.

The world of the image has navigated this ocean, and it will be hard to accept leaving it through a system, perhaps better, but not as universal; at least for the present. Anyway, threedimensional reproduction is a logical aspiration in communication.

The hope of seeing it in the Press, books or magazines is not a Utopia, and if this were to end up happening, twodimensional photography would be swept out of the world of communication by that of three dimensions, at an incredible speed, and also dethroned as the representative of reality.

What could happen is, even to the concept "Press", there is a radical change and paper is not printed. I'm not trying to say that mass lenticular printing cannot happen. In the end colour printing multiplied the costs with respect to black and white, however, it completely prevailed without anyone being able to, or wanting to, stop it. Something similar happened to the threedimensional image.

The thing is that technical advances permit the implantation of these systems with greater ease thanks to it.

Three-dimensional sight, and any other kind of printing, would eliminate the physical costs of the system, being reproduced on graphics cards where you could see the press and magazines, whose concept would change, with three-dimensional images and even videos. It would not be necessary to manufacture lenticular sheets to restore sight to both eyes. In this case, said lenticular sheet is the actual screen, and the image and the text appear at the same time to become a digital magazine in 3D. Out of this can be inferred new development of mass media whose study is not the objective of these lines.

Normally this advance happens sooner or later. And when it happens it may turn out that two-dimensional photography, no longer present in mass media, ends up relegated to art territory.

Maybe then the process of capturing reality will be repeated and once more millions of images will be produced to substitute the previous ones, until a new system appears which surpasses everything and it starts from scratch again. And so on to infinity, until it is accepted that reality is an inner representation with much to interpret, and which does not just depend on the object which is its image.

Were a movement, similar to what happened in painting when photography took over as "reporter" of the times, to arise, we would see very interesting things.

When the public's appetite for colour devoured black and white, black and white almost wound up reserved to photographic art. The general public appreciated black and white as more "artistic". It was cultured to affirm: "I prefer black and white". And the monochromatic took its place, well – not exactly the monochromatic, more black and white, and sepia, because the other colours were not really successful, I'll say that they were placed on the altar of the exquisite.

Interestingly, this phenomenon did not occur with painting so as to be able to make a social analysis of it. It did not happen in the caves, where they painted with blood, charcoal, and other primitive media. No-one says that only painting with black and white oil paints is more artistic than using colour oil paints. Each person uses the colours they prefer and put the ones they deem to be most useful on their palettes.

Black and white only exists as an intermediate technical stage. No-one has ever considered seeing without colour, except due to an illness in the retinal rods. The closest things to black and white were pencil or charcoal drawings.

With the arrival of photography we have come to know that there are people who dream in black and white and those who dream in colour. It is possible that due to the influence of the media that soon we will be asking who dreams in three dimensions, as there are possibly those who think they only dream in two.

In dreams, people who need to wear glasses even imagine they do not see the scenes of their dreams well as they are not wearing their glasses or cannot find them. It is the reflection of reality in the subconscious, because it is difficult to imagine that the same thing happened back in the caves.

But with regards to black and white, when colour appeared, the monochromatic stood its ground without especially farreaching changes. The change did not mean the same thing for the image as the arrival of photography did for painting.

Painting migrated towards other types of images, styles and worlds; but in photography nothing changed on the arrival of colour.

The move from two to three dimensions will not be the same. The arrival of 3D represents a far more radical

change for photography than the one brought about by the introduction of colour.

A fundamental reason is that two dimensions are the silhouette of the three dimensions on a bi-dimensional plane, just as the hypercube is that of four dimensions on three. The sight for true viewing in three dimensions is not the same as for two dimensions from the same take. And it can be supposed that on losing the title of representation of reality which is now happening to the three dimensions, the old photography could dedicate itself to thinking about obtaining the most out of the twodimensional plane. To dedicate itself to working, as a specific dimension, the capture from two and not three dimensions, a world it moved around in as though it had an extra dimension which it does not. Since, if reality, the object "world", the matter in front of the lens, is thought to be two dimensions, it lacks depth and is flat to us. If this breakthrough is achieved, the turn photography could take freed of the slavery of reality could be the best thing that has happened to it since it was invented.

We are discussing dimensions: two dimensions, three dimensions, four dimensions... In this sense, as a clarification also valid for photography, although written for painting, Malevich said around 1925:

"The flow of painting from the dimensional brook to that of three, or going further, of four, must inevitably clash with the real need to reveal the things found in time with a bi-dimensional fabric. The fabric cannot lead to this reality as the interior of painting has already moved onto tri-dimensionality. The bidimensional fabric does not have the third area, and as a consequence, the vibrations of volume should grow from a bidimensional base in space. Here can be found the main justification for the collage in cubism."

The surprises which can appear handling the world as two dimensions, instead of using it as a transcription of

a third, can represent such important and radical changes for photography as those the capture of the image with a camera did for painting.

Trained creators will walk these unexplored paths and bring back the unexpected.

For greater richness, this game of dimensions is not the only one possible.

Eduardo Galeano said that he wrote for those who could not read him. Perhaps who makes these photos will create them for those who cannot see them with their own eyes.

CHAPTER IV

EQUIVALENT REALITY

*“The art of the future will, by turns, lose and regain imitative theory.
A different matter is if it will faithfully develop this role and how
it will understand fidelity”*

Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz (A History of Six Ideas, 1987)

Equivalent reality

In previous chapters we have read the words realism, reality or truth applied to photography many times, as if they were unfailingly joined to photographic fact.

But with respect to what we apply these words to is another matter which is more complicated than it may seem. It could be regarding the way we see, regarding the object, with respect to the mechanical medium, to what it reveals to our senses, to our inner vision, to what allows us to remember it, to what we find hidden in what we see, to what appears but which we do not see, to what lives on through the passage of time, to what moves, to what can be adapted to certain procedural parameters, to what breaks all the rules, or just a few, truth regarding photons, or their numerical values, to colour-blind reality, to... The list is endless. When there are so many possible truths, more than one truth seems to be a question of probabilities. There is even a truth which exists despite its not being visible. Our truth is only supposition for someone blind at birth, for them it is an act of faith.

We cannot make it real with regard to two dimensions because we see in three, but we live in four, at least.

The possibility of extracting other visions which we cannot foresee should also be included in the host of possible truths assigned to photography.

This reality can be partial or whole, form part of a second reality or be superimposed upon it. It is of no less importance to know whether this truth is displayed with positive light values or only in the difference to black or its negative. Of course, this truth is not the same if captured with precise or mistaken parameters, and even with programmed errors. To finally complete the failure of photographic reality the same and identical reality shows a different face as the answer to each of these questions when it goes on stage. Nevertheless, it is considered to be the notary to reality.

There is no need to analyse all these possibilities and those still unnamed, but it is not a bad idea to remember some factors which must be taken into account in general.

Our way of seeing is the sum of the parts of what is before us. We see an out-of-focus group with a small, central clear part. This part changes on directing sight in another direction and the brain takes note of the sum of these minimal parts, giving us the general idea and making us think that we see everything, whole and complete. We do not only see an important point, but moreover we discriminate by planes. The camera sees a complete plane, all of it in focus, discriminating towards more distant planes rather slowly.

A person's face seen from 60 cm. allows us to see their eyes in focus but with the chin lost in much blurring of the edges. If we look at the eyes, the marks of time on the skin are not seen. Even nearby zones such as the forehead quickly blur due to the effect of our sight system which is so precise. From the same distance a camera will see the whole surface of the face focussed on this plane. In photography

we see the eyes and the skin with all their marks and defects. It is as if the brain has added all the partials to bring them together as one whole.

We had never seen ourselves this way, we see ourselves as older than we believed or had seen. It is the sum of all the spaces we separate with our eyes, but seen together.

The need to touch up the skin or soften its texture is almost an axiom in commercial portraits. Our idea of silken skin is based on our way of seeing, not on reality.

An ultraviolet photograph of the skin would tell us even less aesthetic things about our surface. That is to say, we accept photography as a visual adaptation of our reality, but it does not even correspond to our way of seeing it.

What is more, if we were to create an image reproducing our way of seeing, in a portrait for example, we would think we were looking through a narrow tube which blurs the sides. We would not accept that this is the way we see, because even if this was our visual characteristic, it is lacking an important factor, and this factor is the sum and superposition in time of the images we see in a filing system called the brain.

Perhaps photography is an outcome of the search for truth, but it is full of faces. Besides there being a truth which is not visible to a blind person, this truth also has a face. This reality does not stop being a part of the truth although it is not seen or it has never been seen. What is this experience like? The revelation of this impossible world also forms a part of simultaneous reality.

Photographic reality does not exist as pure fact, were it to exist this literature would be meaningless, since it would be revealed with one sole photo, which is not the case.

The necessary accuracy in many branches of photography and the difficulty of their achievement, note the reproduction of a painting and its colours, gives us the proof

yet again of the distance there is between a photographic shot and reality. What is surprising is the photograph must be manipulated in order for what is obtained to approach reality. Without manipulation the result is false.

What is snapped is used as a barometer, as a standard, on being obtained following specific steps, which is a more or less valid reference, but it is a grave mistake to turn the norm into or confuse it with reality. It is the same example as pointing at the moon and looking at the finger. The standard has been turned into an idol and it is worshipped as though the idol were the god it represents or which it is a symbol and gateway to.

If it is about simulating "recognisable" reality, different variations of the same image can be obtained which would all be accepted as plausible and all made from the same shot. This is because what is or is not reality in a photograph is that which we accept as plausible, not what is reality itself, amongst other things because we do not know what reality is.

Reality is different for our eyes and for photography, even in colour, even the different planes, even contrast, even brightness. Photography makes a parameterised and plausible interpretation of visual reality, but this is far from being the truth it has been accepted to be.

In a way, photography is to reality what writing is to the word, in that it is a means of transmission from a strange world to one that is real. By reading we understand the text without hearing the writer's voice; it is a vehicle for ideas. Photography is a vehicle for representation. Photographic takes are neither the truth, nor reality, nor even momentary reality. They are a possible reality of the absolute fact, although it is possible that what best could define it is to say that it is an equivalent reality.

Light, a cornerstone of the image, is placed in the objects we see and we decide if it is sufficient before

capturing it. Once the light is caught it stops behaving as the ray which illuminates and goes on to be a part of the malleable matter which is our clay. But light, once it is captured, is extinguished as such and is only malleable as coloured brightness within the matter it dissolved into in the take, and therefore it is no longer in and of itself photographic material. From there, matter is as important as light, even the support is as important. It has been the object's developer, yet has gone on to form an integral part of it and no longer exists as such, separate from it.

In the photographic clay we obtain, light is only one part like everything else. Its function has had an importance similar to that of the form, since without one of them nothing would be revealed.

What is more, light reveals the object, not the idea.

The capture of what is accepted as photographic reality is the capture of one sole shade of this reality. The capture of the illuminated is anecdotal, as everything which can be captured, the world, is lit, but it is not essential just by being illuminated, and, in its generic concept, lacks depth in the same sense as not every body or all matter is alive.

The quest for the alive answers the need for the incarnation of the idea, but the idea needs complementary media to express its truth and make itself comprehensible, so light forms a part of this truth but is not in itself everything. It is thanks to this that photography exists. If truth were absolute there would be no need for any kind of culture, not even one single photograph.

In this truth or reality which we try to reveal, each image only unveils a part. A million photos do not reveal the light, but only a part of its hues. Due to this, though it is true that we are able to vary the shades of the sky through our work and imagination, we also have the limitation of handling this truth whose secret we do not possess. This is

because there have been enough days and skies to be able to count them in their billions, and these are too many subtleties. And not even by adding up their shades is the reality of light obtained, but just examples of its effects on the object. In the same way, a living or dead body being equally everything is not reversible, as what is essential are not the shades, not even putting them all together one by one.

It would be hard to capture the truth through photography; it would be like attempting to arrive at the truth of the Sun, from whose centre come the photons which reach us in the form of light rays after an eight minute journey. The truth of light or of photography is a chimera. This reality disappears as soon as we touch it to capture it; it was only there the instant before trapping it.

Light is not seen, same as colours themselves are not seen. They appear as a reflection in something, they show themselves in objects as though through a filter. Light is whole and divisible, it breaks down into colours and the colours recombine it in an endless game. Just as with the chicken and the egg, their beginning is debatable.

Light appears as a reflection of the visible revealed in objects, but what is shown is the same object with form and colour. It is a rebound of both truths which change depending on their circumstances. There is not a true registry of all of them, but a part of all those possible. It is a random physical phenomenon and that there is only one way of capturing it or one path cannot be affirmed.

We should ask ourselves, with so much searching, if it is not because we are unsure that what we see as truth is all the truth.

Millions of people using cameras, hundreds and thousands of professionals, thousands and thousands of image hunters, uncountable reality divers taking photographs... The world has been wrapped in photographic paper and

has not been possible to capture its reality, the whole and complete reality. It will be said that the world is changeable, but were it possible to capture reality at a stroke with a camera, it would only be possible to change the surface, the anecdotal. Our photos would be nothing more than novelties or variables. If the truth were Michelangelo's David, all photography would be a vision of it, a group, a part, a strange angle. They would all be a part of the truth, but none of them would be the whole truth, because, amongst other things, to cover this statue more dimensions would be necessary. It is the representation of itself and can only form a part of something hidden in more dimensions than its own. So – Are we looking for reality or simply playing with the surface and the external subtleties? Were reality to be "one" it would be impossible not to have captured its essence, which leads me to think that, either it is not one, or that the revealed object and the material are being played with.

It cannot be said that something is creative, and is truly able to allow for personal interpretations, if it can be taken as an unalterable standard. To be useful as a creative medium that which is fundamental cannot be converted to the absolute component or it would be immovable.

A metre is a metre; it is a reference, it is a standard and not a creative medium. It can be said that spaces are designed using measurements quantifiable as metres, but in them the metre is a part of the dimensions and concepts which compose it and which cannot be expressed solely based on this reference. In them, the metre is not the absolute component, it is only an indicator which defines the limits of another component called volume and due to this is a reference. But it is not talking about forms, an essential cornerstone in this space. In the same ways that exposure or colour temperature are a fundamental reference, but not absolutes in photography.

Photography produces relative truths, credible lies, interpretations, appearances, but it is not an absolute reference of the real.

This half-truth is also conveyed to the object.

The object is seen focussed, out-of-focus, in decomposed focus, light, dark, with contrast, showing its texture, its stains or as it wishes to show itself at any given time. The knowledge we have of the already seen object comes from our memory, or if it is unknown, from its assimilation to what comes from our experiences applied to what the image shows. In this case it is more imagination than reality, but it allows us a reasonable approximation.

Not all objects are the same nor do they have the same life. The time necessary for their revelation to occur is not the same for everyone, the circumstances of its movement are fundamental or mistakes will be made in its presence.

Before entering into the topic of image manipulation or its treatment, it is already hard to accept that photography is the same as the representation of reality, understood as unique reality. With its manipulation this doubt goes much further than can be accepted as reasonable, but an analysis of the subject is necessary.

This discussion concerning manipulation is also an old topic in painting concerning realism or not realism, and with the arrival of photography the argument did not end, but rather added new battle grounds, because at that time the creative and the visible were like synonyms, and painters called photographers – not without disdain – talentless painters who needed mechanical assistance for their works. They affirmed their convictions even writing public manifestoes against any artistic evaluation which could be granted to a photo. Charles Baudelaire, in 1859, wrote them off as lazy incompetents incapable of completing the learning of the trade, who got back at good, talented painters by trying to humiliate them

using a camera. In all these reactions there was a great deal of fear that photography would put an end to the trade of painter, amongst other things because it intended for art to be aimed towards reality more and more.

The use of the camera as simple reproducer of reality, in the hands of millions of people, filled those who saw possibilities of taking photography further with weariness and boredom, which led them to look for and find one of the first personal paths for photography. The followers of pictorialism rejected this simplicity and they were labelled as being little less than blasphemers of art and photography, accusing them of being unreal, artificial and anti-social - something similar to what occurred with the impressionists.

It is a common error to see pictorial artists as extremist imitators of painting. They searched for a photography which was closer to art, as they understood it, on paths specific to photography and with a considerably more internal viewpoint than seemed right in those times, making it more intellectual and elaborate.

It may be that the comparison of this movement to painting is owed to the not very correct use of the word "picture" translated as "pictorialism", when painting in English is quite literally "painting". It might have been more correct to translate it as "photographism", but new confusions would have arisen with this term. In any case, history cannot be changed.

It is hard to accept that something whose sole purpose is to reproduce or interpret be creative. It may have a point, such as someone who interprets a musical score, but the real creation lies in the hands of who wrote it. As a means of expression photography should be able to show what is within each one of us, if not it would only be a mere interpreter, as virtuoso or artisan as you wish, but an interpreter.

For the purists of the untouched, the embellishment of images must also count as make-up for the truth, and therefore, as manipulation also. This must be borne in mind.

Yet by manipulation it seems that what is understood is anything which is not true to the spirit of reality, although a degree of embellishment be permitted, or of de-beautifying, of the image. And also, with the arrival of the digital image the term manipulation is assigned to that which has distanced itself from the result which can be obtained by the analogical method.

If I change the skin tone in a portrait – Is it no longer a person? Was it if I had not changed it? How much can it be altered? But in many cases the limit of transformation resides in the inner code of the image remaining recognisable, as an extreme angle or black and white is a manipulation, but of acceptable code. This leads one to think that the censor is the content, which makes an image good if the object is recognised and bad if it does not correspond to reality's code.

I do not know if anyone asked themselves how primitive painting was done, if the colour was manipulated or whether the pigments were pure, or if cavemen asked themselves if colours were acceptable to the God of Thunder. Nor do I know what people a thousand years from now who see an image from our times might ask themselves. But given the inaccuracy of photography, I think I did always manipulate in order to manage to get the real right.

In analogical, manipulation was done through the techniques of processing and masking, Farmer's reducing agent, forced developing, solarisations, filters, the paper contrast, the panchromatic, the orthochromatic, slides developed as negatives and hundreds of processes I will not enumerate so as not to bore. What is manipulation and to what degree is beyond me, as I do not understand the exactitude of non-manipulation. However manipulation,

alteration, transformation, variation, the preview, hindsight, etc., are things which are unrelated, and perhaps someone would like to define which of the techniques are acceptable or not. Perhaps all of it can be compared in a sense to what painters call mixed-media.

I get the feeling that in the end this game is not about more or less manipulation. It is simply two different games where one loves to handle photons of any class and the other likes to stick to a norm which could be called "camerography", due to its relationship to the capture.

Once this division is made it becomes very clear what each of these games must stick to. Both are perfect and beautiful, but incompatible, especially as soon as the internal begins to want to make its own way.

To limit oneself to capturing with the camera and a few more or less traditional manipulations in the process of the original and its printing, is a recognised craftsmanship and not so different to that which takes a step further towards the posterior interpretation of the image. If there is anyone who wishes to do it in this way and remain faithful to certain parameters - that's acceptable and fantastic, I'm sure we will see gorgeous images, but for the rest, outside this club and these rules, said impositions do not count.

Purity is not exactly not touching it, but staying within its language. Perhaps Babel was chaos, but through each of the languages born each of the peoples has been able to express themselves and marvels have been recounted or written.

How can you know which photographic language would write the best work? It is better to try to understand and enjoy with all the new voices, ideas and styles which can sprout from a nurtured work and serious intentions.

It is not possible to place doors which are not needed on this field, and nor has it ever been possible to stop anything.

It must not be forgotten that the uniquely photographic exists, freed of the obligation of the obvious - that which it is impossible to create any other way.

The way this image which seduces us is produced is not of the slightest importance to the observer. Even the fact of it coming out of a camera or being wholly produced within the limits of a computerised system is not important to the message.

The subtle difference lies in that what is captured by a camera and is not "manufactured" on purpose has the seal of the "real". What is missing is to say how much reality there is in this image, but even from the point of view of what is created graphically, the image can be very faithful to the inner thought which caused it, and therefore also be real or almost so. It is not always the eyes which do the seeing.

The separation between both media is actually more conceptual than real. Especially as what remains of reality in an image which has been highly manipulated can in fact be scant.

Both roads have a life of their own so long as they remain faithful to their realities, but the mixing of both produces hybrids which are hard to place in one single concept.

If just a generic concept, there is little sense in reproducing a red square instead of directly making it, which is as conceptual.

The basic nature of what is captured by the camera is that it uses the reality of the world which surrounds us as raw material. In this material, or from this material, the internal which is offered to the spectator is projected. Reality is full of reality strata, similar planes, alike, parallel, opposing, negative, etc. - Planes which move in any direction within a three-dimensional structure, and also the factor of time.

To use the take as the gateway to creation means investigating reality and the worlds which live in its womb.

With the camera, the musical score of liberty, photographically speaking, is right before our eyes in nature or in still lives. With the camera we are "capturers", without the camera we are "constructive". Constructors seem more like painters but with different tools or brushes. With the camera we use captured photons, without the camera we create luminous values by way of an imitation of the photons and which we later use as though they had been. Both substances - photons or values, become the same matter able to carry, or not, our emotions.

But to fall back on the help of graphic arts would in no way invalidate the creativity or creation of a work. It would not make sense.

Were we to be that strict we would not be able to touch the takes at all in order to extract what is unique to their interior and what especially moves us. We would have turned the takes into simple photocopies, and this is far from our intentions.

Suffice to say that photography and graphic arts are different but have many points in common which can serve to help both in their inner expression. The point at which you decide to stop the mix is a matter for each person. Sometimes the line they travel along is the same and sometimes they separate to travel parallel or on different lines. They are similar but not the same. The inclination towards one or the other of both possibilities is a personal matter, and the possibility of hopping from one to the other is always open.

To eliminate possible paths is to eliminate questions, to enchain and to crush hopes.

What causes advances is rather more a doubt than a certainty. It is the magic "Why?" which pushes us to know, to try to understand, to find answers and climb one more rung with its own "why" to be solved before continuing the ascent.

These vital doubts - at that moment at least, when viewed long-term, once overcome and once their answers have been assimilated, seem like childish doubts. But then this doubt marks the pace forward with no way back. The necessity of these doubts marks our evolution, as without them it does not exist. So many times the doubts seem absurd once seen from the distance and the security which comes from living many, many steps above them, that we forget the primitive in each one of our basic proposals. Each time a path opens up, today's doubts are the stories of the absurd tomorrow, but without the absurd there is no future.

I imagine that primitive relative who laid the foundations of art and writing as someone filled with curiosity. I can imagine that one day, someone realised that the chest did not move on the body of one of their group who had died, and theirs did move, even when they slept. They called breathing the wind of life. Maybe after they asked why they blinked, and these absurd questions from this imagined reality were the cause of a few seconds later, on a cosmic scale, there being hospitals around the world helping the human being to overcome their physical frailties.

The total conformity to apparent reality is the greatest sofa of resistance to change, but on a creative level it is also the most boring of options.

The ability of photography cannot remain immobile by labelling it as reproducer of reality because that is what it does best. Firstly because what is reality is not as clear-cut as may seem. Secondly because there are or there will be media which at a stroke reproduce this reality for our visual spectrum more precisely.

All these limitations stop photography developing its inner life.

Let's imagine that music is condemned to doing what it does best and that its objective be to reproduce sonar

reality. If we insist, we would find that it reproduces noises from our world very faithfully. It would never reveal its true inner life, a symphony would never be written.

It seems ridiculous to form a band of a hundred musicians with different instruments to reproduce the sound of seven frying pans and two forks falling while the breeze blows in the window. But no doubt that with a little rehearsal time they could do it very well. To understand and accept that sound, controlled noise, music, serve for more than to reproduce the sonar reality which surrounds us, is what wrote the first note of the first musical composition, the first madrigal, the first concert, the first symphony, and also, the syntaxes of written music.

To seriously develop photography's capacity for expression and its inner life, it is necessary to consciously break with the limitation which imposes considering it to be the witness to reality, be that embellished or not.

Possibly what painting did best as a basic application was to colour walls. Nevertheless, it is not a peculiarity which has turned it into something fundamental in our history as humans. It has been reproducing the inner reality, true or imagined, the same as our caveman relative did, which has taken it out of the simple value of being colours.

To accept the "unreal" image does not mean rejecting the realist image, nor can it be thought that an inclination towards an image unrecognisable as reality is an exaggerated reaction to it; this need not be true. Even intermediate states which look for imitations of our reality in recognisable forms in nature – see the work: "Le pays de Revé", by Francois Gillet – are exquisite.

I maintain however that that is not the only reality, that the extreme technique – this does not mean to say manipulation – can enter other simultaneous worlds which have shown themselves. And so open the imagination to

new searches with a real base and its feet on the ground. And so these visions can allow us to transform them to adjust them to our interior or to awaken new emotions. That these new emotions could give way to new styles and points of view, and that these points of view give life to new means of expressing the inner vibration of art. It does not matter so much that it is called purist photography, manipulated, realist or not realist. As long as it feeds, moves, and pushes the observer's spirit forward it will be fulfilling the function of Art.

It seems that photography's punishment for having taken painting's place has been its sentence to realism, to embellished reality, to the accepted lie of the real. In an incredible exercise of abstraction photography has been turned into a one-tree forest. Nor does it suffice to look at the trees on either side, you have to enter the heart of the forest and lose yourself.

We must allow it to be history which chooses what is truly consistent to come out of this journey. The history of today is not the premonition of what will be history seen from the future. Example enough is that various of the paintings which have reached us by Gauguin was thanks to the writer Victor Segalen, at the time a naval doctor, who bought them at a low price, along with the odd sculpture and several manuscripts, from the policeman Claverie, who assessed the value of what remained following the auction of his personal belongings. The rest of his drawings were thrown away. It is lucky that his boat stopped in Hiva-oa, because it seems his works were not important to anyone else.

To conclude, the atom exists and is real but is not visible. There is so little which is true in photography, in the exact sense of the word, that perhaps inner reality, which cannot be seen either, could be a photographic fact of the same exactitude.

The best thing for photography, the foundations of its philosophy and the most positive thought must reside in thinking about how far it is possible to go with it, to look for the doors which can be opened and as yet have not been, the external or internal terrains which have not yet been set foot on and can be, and the physical or the metaphysical which can be revealed. To say where it is not possible to go does not fit in with this philosophy.

There have already been too many prohibitions invented, senseless assimilations, adopted stories and obligatory paths so as to admit that they who see another way or have reached a different reality to that marked by tradition, must continue castrating the visions of their sensibilities or have to opt to migrate to an art form which does not impose conditions to express itself - especially if they have the good fortune of knowing how to do so with this. The first link in the Art chain is the author himself who is the one possessed by what he produces. All culture, education, spirit and absorbed influences make new impulses appear in new creators, and when they know how to express themselves adequately, what would be natural is that they have a consistent evolution towards what for them is current and for everyone else new.

I cannot help feeling that this, this new stage, has just begun, as moreover and as a shock to many, digital places the rejection of the object as reproductive finality on a platter, and now it is only so as a medium, or can be. Beyond this is its rejection as a medium and the apparition of "photographism" (?!). The required object is created according to our needs, or what is captured is only used as material necessary for an objective. Neither photography nor graphic arts. Photony? It will be fun to watch how it evolves and have the privilege of seeing it happen before our very eyes.

The warning is that there are no shortcuts for art. Knowledge of the course of its development from the past is fundamental. It is unthinkable for art to be born with an innate knowledge of Suprematism, for example, and produce first-rate works opening up cutting edge paths without a deep understanding of the previous steps. Many photos, of any level, have been made with artistic intentions, but with little or no assimilation of the past's legacy, which not only shows us paths, but gives us clues as to what has already been discovered on them. Those who came before us were the explorers of our current cultural experiences. The late Christopher Fassnidge said: "Someone without the slightest graphic talent can, nevertheless, feel on taking, for example, a photo of a sunset over a lake, with a few mountains in the background and a gnarled tree in the foreground, that they are satisfying a general criterion of "beauty", in accord with composition rules absorbed by osmosis and intuitively."

This osmosis, of greater or lesser degree and in more or less measure, is the culture we have absorbed thanks to those who came before us, although the author of that landscape may not know it. Nowadays these re-digested images are as much "art", as reality is photography, but naturally on many occasions the advanced technique of the cameras and their basic ease of use, due to obvious commercial reasons, makes it possible for many people to think "I can do that", and they certainly can. In the same way that in the past there were scribes in markets and nowadays writing is a part of our abilities, so we can also write simple things with a degree of ease, even coarse verse, but from there to true poetry there is an incalculable leap that we the nonexperts cannot even begin to imagine. Our crude verses are those empty photographs which reasonable taste dresses in silk, but to make or manufacture something we want to happen photographically - even very poor taste requires much knowledge.

This very superficial approach to real photography leads to the object ending up being played with, instead of exploring what can be done with it. And mass production of "pre-cooked visual food" is the basic reason for the question: "How do you do it?" - Because behind this image which does not correspond to the more immediate reality there is only one trick to be discovered. The question also answers photography's direct assimilation with the camera as the true author of the image. But the truly important question is: "How do you see it?" And nobody asks this.

CHAPTER V

OTHER REALITIES

"Resemblance and reality are two very different things"
Jaime Balmes, (El Criterio)

Other realities

There is another way of understanding reality: accepting that there is not just one reality, that the worlds of this reality do not just follow on from each other but are parallel.

Actual observation of evident reality in a general manner or even in detail turns out to be very complicated and even beyond our capacity for information processing.

Let us think of an autumnal morning with an almost emerald sky to the left, near the horizon, stretching out to the right and becoming yellowish tones. As it rises a purer bluish tone appears, which darkens high up, and behind it, you notice the presence of a navy blue which whitens as it drops to the horizon, as though it were a deteriorated double. All of that peeking between dense clouds high up, but with gaps which let the sky be seen, and below them, grey, cotton-like small groups. Closer to the horizon there are large and light clouds dyed red

by the effect of the rising sun. Hundreds of images and faces appear and disappear quicker than we might wish to be able to appreciate them. This all becomes greater than we are, and in a moment everything is something different. Ten minutes later it is as though it had never existed, nothing of that remains.

To truly assimilate this reality and with absolute immediacy is hard, because it surpasses our memorisation capacity due to the precision it demands. It is impossible to place all the subtleties on a screen in our head and be able to reproduce them without mistakes with regard to the original. We would return something similar but full of information-less gaps or with the wrong information, and that despite its being before our eyes and the parts described being a basic reference.

How then can we clearly perceive the unrealis? There is a manifest inability to do this within us, a lack of development of our inner senses which are not even developed in the same way as the external ones. When not even our external senses are, in many cases, either fine-tuned or even tuned or minimally awakened to capture the more immediate reality, or the one which above all hides behind it. How can we develop our inner ear or inner sight? There must be a way.

Sometimes these splendid skies appear superior to our ability to capture them and represent them in their simple external content, it seems too subtle, however it is more a limitation of space than real, as we have already said, if we could use the whole sky as a support, we could place even more subtleties than those nature gives us, shades to the point of madness. However, it must not be forgotten that the subtlety of our sky, in its natural state, is not designed to be beautiful, it is us who see it as beautiful without this being its intention. Yet nature

has showered us with billions of sunrises and sunsets, an unfathomable immensity to play at placing nuances. As humans we are not superior to nature, but our spirit, for better or worse, is superior in its intentionality.

Photography is a small world within creation, and, even so, it is so big that we can hardly handle it, although it is more manageable and is more within our reach, allowing us to play at being the director of that one-man-band.

We are often attracted by a hearth or by the movement of the sea or the clouds. Perhaps the fire in the hearth, due to its spatial limitation, allows us to concentrate on it more, but the truth is that time can fly whilst our gaze is lost in the flames. It is as if we lose ourselves in its sight, as though it were speaking to us in its language. These forces of nature attract us hypnotically. Deep down we belong to them, and perhaps this clear and common attraction wants to tell us that we can speak to ourselves if we find the power that opens the inner door; and in this case entering via the eyes.

If we could enter through the inner door and harmonise with our sky, what we'd do would be use our inner sense and therefore enrich our spirit.

As is plainly evident, we cannot comprehend the totality of what we perceive, so we capture from the "whole" what influences us and from it summarise the essence, this essence is our memory, which like returning to it just as to a photo brings back the memory of that occasion to us, and therefore a memory with gaps. Later, from this essence which is the work, we again reproduce the feeling which inspired it.

Yet this reproduction does not exactly return the original in its entirety because it is only a summary. And what is missing is where the observer's emotional states

are introduced to make it their own on including their own experiences. So a work has more life than the author originally put into it.

For the author the problem lies in the fact that the essence must give off the most appropriate scents in order for what it inspires to be what inspired it in the first place. The rest – techniques, materials, and styles are just the wrapper, the glass jar which contains it. If a clear message is desired the support must be clear, or – which is the same – the most adequate, the one which least hides or distorts this message. In any case, to an educated observer, even though the glass jar does not correspond to their concept of beauty, if the essence is good, when their senses approach it they will understand that that essence contains a considerable part of their own, that the jar is just the container and they will grasp the importance of its content.

So we agree that the work is like a jar and its beauty is important, above all because it makes it pleasant and attractive, it is an eye-catcher, a powerful call to decipher the inner message or to feel like trying to absorb it. In the end beauty is a human evaluation added to what is only nature itself or to the object, giving it a higher value than that of utility. But if the jar is empty it is only of use to decorate a corner or throw it away. Art is more important and is above the beauty of the empty work, as beauty itself is not value enough to justify the totality of art. This breakdown is in no way an apology for the ugly, not the aesthetic or anti-aesthetic. It is not pretty or ugly, it is not about that, for the author it is just “mine”, the embellishment of a work holds a great degree of technique and language.

Content, language and beauty are parts to bear in mind specifically and wholly.

Were it enough for us to feel, to think or to dream, we would not choose a medium as support, whichever it may be, to express ourselves. All these visions or doors which open momentarily only produce silence if they do not make us notice the images we see through them. There is no point in turning on a light to hide it under a bucket.

But the visionary has nothing to do with the creator. The first is ability, the second an inclination and a synthesis. Also now, the abilities themselves, if they are not made use of, if they are not developed through volition, they will not produce any of the beneficial effects which could be supposed. But the creator discovers with their effort, on developing the idea, unforeseen things. For them it is not enough to think it, they have to do it. Because on doing it they understand that the idea that they had of what they wanted to do was just a vague mental note which develops and grows unexpectedly and extravagantly, as if that idea were just the key to open the chain reaction in their interior.

A new world is born, the idea was just an embryo which has changed considerably regarding the finished work. The idea was a fraction of the whole, but a very important part, as it created its breath of life and the life force for the creator. And when they get down to work, the expressed, the language which is used to communicate the desired comes up against its own problems.

If art is not a language in the way we understand this word, it is true that to get close to it a medium which translates it is necessary, that is to say, a class of language or its substitute. This "intermediary" does not stop being annoying, but also has a calm or convenient side to it. It is a part of what would be called craftsmanship.

Sometimes, an excessively materialistic or superficial art has attempted to eliminate this language as liberation from the material support and therefore of its craftsmanship, but on lacking depth this void becomes even more obvious, and in the end, this break was limited to the interpretation of some symbols which do not stop being the same thing they attempted to avoid, and shortterm, it is the substitution of one language for another, only this. The profound does not appear by freeing oneself of the superficial if it does not exist. What is more, sometimes, small forces which the language could reveal disappear with it by eliminating it and the work completely loses its meaning.

True success is not representing the sky, but retrieving it - something which is far from our abilities. But at present in our works we could say the most marvellous things about the sky and the Earth and discover all the secrets of the universe which, if we do not speak in a language which everyone else understands, the favour we do them and the benefit they obtain will be the same as if we had stayed quiet.

It is obvious that it is necessary to find the best medium to transmit with, but except for the most immediate and obvious reality, reality appears veiled; without discussing inner reality, or the reality behind the inner one. The question: How am I going to represent this reality? – If an inner or multiple existences are referred to, is even more complicated.

Nevertheless, despite every attempt to find a better language being welcome, it must be said that it is not possible to find a direct thread between the beyond and that which is closer to home, since, quite simply, that world does not use our system or our senses to express itself.

If art were able to answer all these parameters which it is attempted to pigeon-hole it in, it would fit the definition of science at the same time, and in this case it would look like an occult science. Currently it seems impossible that art and science were synonyms at one time.

It is so much so that Kandinsky ended up admitting that art did not have an unfailing technique, nor suitable writing that on using it a work of art would be produced, as it has something hidden and mysterious that no theory, whichever it may be, can change.

Also, Kazimir Malevich wrote in the first chapter of "Light and Colour": "There is nothing which can be known, from which it has been possible to construct the machinery of knowledge", "painting is only a strictly professional occupation, a simple trade, but is also the fissure through which it is possible to examine other world phenomena".

The definition of art, even though it can be found in a sanitised form in dictionaries, has changed throughout history, most of all in its evaluation. Yet even keeping any of the possible definitions as valid, in each creator beats a different impulse which pushes them to a specific end, and this goal, the objective of their creation, gives them their own definition of art.

But art is not static, it is not immovable, true art moves on our inside and closer and closer to the most intimate thing which hides itself within us. However, we ourselves are not its objective, it is not our own knowledge, but something which is beyond us, that transcends us, what we are not or perhaps once were. In any case, it will tend more and more towards the strengths of what supports us internally and we are made up of, maybe to our spirit, and it is not just a word. The opposite would

lead to material and superficial games, to a simple craftsmanship no matter how sophisticated this may be, to an entertainment, and definitively – to nothing. To feel this objective in a world so far removed from us makes creation more interesting, and also that the intensity with which its approach is looked for is not diminished.

The arts, literary, musical, graphic, sculptural..., in their totality, have tried to reach that heaven which is art by different routes all of them, and sometimes wanting to come close in concept. But even with all the arts boiling away inside us, this totality continues to be imprecise in its definition. Everything which has been done to take art over and seemingly only the surface has been scratched.

Clearly throughout history creative milestones have been achieved, works of extraordinary beauty and depth, and which moreover are keys to our culture, but the permanent feeling is that together this totality remains untouched. All which is relative to art seems more an approach or a trend than the art itself, and because of our own limitations pure art is only such as intention.

In practice, what are seen are different roads to circulate in this whole, as though it were a sphere. The spirit of art is still in the ball and it looks like what is attempted is to capture the inner images which are seen, as if it were a crystal ball. What remains to be achieved, what is hoped to achieve, seems to be the magic ability to erase the crust and walk on the inside as though there were no barriers. The rupture of this barrier is the permanent aspiration of all artistic creation, and for this there is no specific language or style, because art has its own expression and the search for this Utopia is also the story of necessary dissatisfaction. In this search for paths each person can only travel alone; the first task is finding it.

All this leads to considering art as the trend towards the spirit, the interior or the spiritual, not the material or physical. But the ultimate goal is unattainable due to our very nature. We approach it and the more our ability grows the further it distances itself from us, as the more we know, the more we know we do not know. Once more it places itself at the exact proportional distance as to that at which our interior has grown, and continues acting like the spotlight of the door which attracts us and is the hidden guide in the nocturnal mist. We continue in this way in pursuit of an unattainable promise and we are only conscious of what it has given us when, stood still at the end of the traversed route, we look back and see how much our inner ability has grown.

To create is to bring to life. All creation lights up what did not exist before. It may pulsate or not, something new exists which previously had no form. Our ultimate aspiration follows the road towards that which created us, what makes us ourselves, the return to creation in its purest state, as our instinct is a reflection of what is life-giving and on this road art is like the banister which guides us towards the most profound and each work is a step on the staircase. Art is human; it is our aspiration and can only be human.

This anxiety, this intense desire speaks of capturing pieces of that great power which made us into matter and which we are capable, through intuition, of turning into art. And there is still more. It is through it that we manage to feel the inner force which moves us and we can imagine the power of free self even with material ties. It is the best excuse for searching deeper within ourselves.

Coming from a world full of inner power, our limitation in the material and human world can only be a cause for dissatisfaction. Speaking of art, this

dissatisfaction is dispelled when we feel we overcome this limitation with our creations, on realising that the finished image fills us and shows the life we can breathe into our works. To bring a work to life replenishes us with its very essence, as when it is completed it seems to acquire a life of its own.

It could well be that we come from something which is not material and with less limitations, the physical ones, but we live in a reality full of lights and darks, doubts and certainties, joys and sadness, and all of them with imprecise limits. To come out of this world, choosing the positive, growing and tending towards the light is a logical wish, and for this real art is a great help.

Humankind needs to satisfy this desire, it is no great discovery, we need to satisfy and develop our mental side, or spiritual if we so prefer, which is the support for our other dimensions and gives us the ability to use them. In this game art feeds itself through us at the same time as it develops us, because the residue left over, the work, is still a memory of the "spirit", something powerful ripped from our interior and brought into the light.

In this struggle against the filter of our materialism to gain strength from ourselves we always come away winning. In it is reflected the effort of who trains to overcome a record, or their own limitation, in a strengthening fight against an impossible. In the same way, with each work carried out we increase our power. We do not leave a part of ourselves in each work, it is not past, to the contrary, we recover something hidden, it is future.

And on approaching the horizon we have our hopes set on, we take the limit of our ability and our keenness even further, and, with this effort, at the same time as we break through our limits we travel with our imagination through worlds previously unknown to us and

which are our own. Personal worlds, which give us partial visions of existences perhaps only possible on our inside, but no less real because of this. A momentarily forbidden universe if one is lacking sufficient inner preparation, but on invading it shows us unknown images, perhaps not even human, which speak of future worlds, or perhaps present ones, which we come to know through this struggle which shows us development possibilities, and which gives us the hope of eventually making real what today is imagination or aspiration, vision or prophecy.

It would seem at times that it is about reaching the edge of madness or chaos and staying there to later return to tell of all that was seen, like a notary of the intangible. A dangerous game where the risk is run of not getting back on time and staying there or halfway, on losing the return tickets. And this is why too many times the role of creator has been associated with that of lunatic. And nor is this last one that strange since not everything which art represents has to be rational, known or have a name. And what is true is that, through the door which opens for us, appear images of existences not pertaining to this one, unreal lives which we take part in. A door which opens other dimensions to us, and which, perhaps, fully opens on being truly very close to that world.

When someone attempts to explain through their work what life is all about, which they have discovered, like preparing us to be in contact with it, their art does not stop being prophetic, and for down-to-earth people, unprepared for assimilating art's teachings, this Utopia often feels like un-reality, crazy fantasies or a living in the clouds of who has made it.

Due to this, the evolution towards the internal which distances the owners of these visions from everyone else,

at the same time turns them into occupants of a privileged position because of their special ability and also at times into eccentric people for those around them. Maybe it cannot be any other way for they who act impelled not only by the most elementary material conditioning, but by inner impulses which mix themselves with each action in their life. It is normal that they provoke attraction in some and rejection in others. Examples of this characteristic have been left to us by some of the most admired authors of all times.

Nor is it less true that their appeal holds more value for who aspire to the recognition of what they represent with their work, which is why "strangers" could lead to their isolation.

And this characteristic applied to creators classified as geniuses, eccentrics, strange, loners, without a sense of proportion, extensive, etc., in times of confusion is looked for most frequently by people who attempt to live in the empty game between the real and the apparent. It is easy to understand why this has little or nothing to do with the meaning of art, but for the actor this falsity is recompensed with spiritual unhappiness.

The struggle on the road towards the objective can become a fight against ourselves, our limitations or our comfort, but through our eagerness, our ability, our impulse and will, searching further than is necessary, things can be brought to this material world which do not belong here and we can climb perception levels to push our threshold further.

Art must be at the frontier, if not it is digesting the already digested. Who makes the work tends towards their own spirit, who copies it - towards the material, who is inspired by it looks for their own door. They who feed themselves generate leftovers, who feeds themselves with these leftovers – What do they generate?

It has been said that art is unnecessary, and from the most absolute materialism this statement might make sense. Without an inner base the art game does not stop being a silly game, a pastime, a solitaire. However, it must not be forgotten that certain "partners" necessary to art have preceded a large number of technical ideas and genuine achievements, which have given humanity experiences which previously belonged to the world of dreams.

Everything humankind has aspired to, or has set itself as a goal, has first been imagined, and in many cases not as a feasible invention, but simply and purely as art.

Long, long before humankind went to the Moon someone wrote: "From the Earth to the Moon". It was also our imagination which first made, very first, "20,000 Leagues under the Sea". Why go on? He was called Jules Verne. But he has not been the only one.

Today they are our dreams, tomorrow the reality. Who can say that what art looks for today will not be our bread and butter of tomorrow, or at least the bread which feeds our inner ability.

With this thought in mind it is not a triviality to affirm the importance which setting a goal or a horizon holds, even placing it on the edge of the impossible, as everything which makes progress on this path is a human achievement, and I would even go further, an achievement for humanity which, drinking from this fountain, will continue the path. Art without an objective is dispersed, it is a catch-22, it is dead in itself. Yet in the expression of art our emotions beat, all of them, not just the ones which have a name, and in each of their folds is hidden what moves and guides each of our impulses.

There are specific ways of feeling, which are a consequence of our education, but the majority of them are a product of our inner nature. And inner nature does not, in this case, make reference to our innards but to what creates us. From here on there is little left to say, except for what could bring us closer, depending on personal experience, to the gateway to our dreams.

The difficulty of transmitting the intangible sometimes reminds me of the sentence by Heraclitus when he said: "I speak for who understand me".

It is easy to think that, among the different meanings which have been sought for art, the superhuman beats permanently. When a creation is art it surpasses who created it, perhaps here beats the ecstasy Plotinus spoke of.

What is looked for in each work is what we are creating, that which we carefully prepare so that its reading has a language adapted to the momentary need for the expression of this image, and obtains the reflection as an echo of the finished image on our interior.

When the image settles in our interior and feels comfortable, it seems like it has met up with its subconscious twin in some recess of our mind. It gives the feeling of our only being able to see and produce those images which we are prepared for. Depending on our inner and visual evolutionary level, the worlds we are able to see in the same reality are different and with the passage of time appear other, newer ones. Those which have already been brought to life continue to be seen as they were created, but the feeling of being outdated, even within the best of sensations, is obvious. It seems that the utility of what we see or find only goes on to become a part of our world if we understand or sense its function. I am incapable of imagining that someone could find a meaning, or a function, for something called "microprocessor" if they

were to find it on a street corner in 1850. In the same way we see or recognise the images which are useful to us, which we can use in our processes, when they are able to resonate on our inside.

The images which are our own seek their inner resonance in our soul like that of the words in our mouth. And it is this resonance which tells us, when it happens, that we are on the right track.

What happens quite frequently is that this echo is able to travel through space and settle in a spectator. The observer makes it their own, they accept it as their own and the sought connection is closed. What has happened is that some of the basic things in common of both personalities have been shared, the inner resonance of the creator has been turned into an echo, and a twinning has taken place.

The spectator must also have acquired a minimum development to manage to understand these images and be fed by them. Nevertheless, the level of required vibration is of a different intensity for creating or for understanding, in the same way it is for writing a novel or enjoying its reading.

No doubt for the author too this resonance always sounds different to what the spectator can come to feel, in the same way that our voice sounds different to us than it does to who listens to us, and we recognise with surprise that the sound of our voice is the one we can hear in a recording. Yet although it sounds different on our inside, the message our voice transmits does not change, whichever its resonance may be. This effect is the same between the message and the inner echo of a work of art.

The author has made a synthesis of the elements precisely necessary for their expression and they reach the spectator ready for a summarised assimilation.

The creative universe is a chaos wherein the creator goes in with his tools for him to make order of it, guided by his inspiration, and in this way obtain a new work. Works of dreamed of worlds which exist if we think of them, or, being photography, if we are able to capture them.

At different moments in life different works will be drawn. Individual maturity and aesthetic evolution will obtain different images from the same chaos.

From this same chaos each creator distils different works and perhaps the sum of them all gives us an idea of the wealth hidden in this bottomless world.

Each of the art movements, each style, each concept, has served to extract new works from this chaos using the new tools which were its own. These different points of view have enriched our inner ability for comprehension, helping us to overcome some of our limitations.

One day, when all this has educated us sufficiently and we are ready to look into a deeper interior, the reality which they tell us about so much, and that we come from as photographers, soon sounds distorted and unable to harmonise with what we feel. The reality we live in and the reality art lives in do not appear to be the same even though they are contemporary, and when the "me" or what is unique to oneself takes control of our ability, an inner world opens which can only be withstood in the personal universe. For this universe there exists nothing else but itself, and then it can create.

At this moment, influences, experiences, assessments, limitations or determinants, are not accepted and do not exist. They spread out and disappear before an inner state able to produce a new work, in abstraction from that which surrounds it and even what has caused it. The transcription of the internal permeates everything.

It is a moment where the history of art, culture and all other art forms are not present and are worthless. They left their value at the author's door a moment ago and will recuperate it later, when they come out of the ecstasy of their creation. What is alien, or the external, matters little at that moment. Assessments, comparisons have disappeared into obscurity like broken toys; the social function does not matter, or the value as memory which photography may or may not hold, they do not count right now.

Abstraction is made of what is real or not, whether it is natural or supernatural, true or imaginary; let it be whatever it wants to be, while it occupies our thought and opens its doors.

Perhaps photography needs to be seen in relation to other forms of graphic expression, but at this magic moment when art is working, this is someone else's problem and lacks importance. All the truths about photography are also lies. The only and absolute reference, and reality, the only truth, is the one which is inside. No limitation is acceptable, it is not art for art's sake, but it is free to follow the direction it wants and anything which castrates it destroys it; as at this moment anything more than what is sought cannot be seen or found.

Maybe it is not common or evident reality which appears, but it would be hard for art to answer explaining what reality is or what it is like, because history has taken charge of recounting it in thousands of different ways, and on this subject photography can tell us things which to date it has not been possible to say and no-one has seen.

For someone who intensely lives in the realist world in which photography was raised and grew historically, the pursuing of and permanent vision of this established

pattern, 'though with different shades, can be a cause for saturation. When something begins to be annoying it is best to give it a rest, or the music will become noise and a caress, torture. When the reality, embellished or raw, partial or general, of photography saturates or royally bores, either a way out must be found or it will end up feeling like a sick obsession or pornography of reality for those who practice it.

And this also obliges you to open new doors and cross the threshold. It does not matter what anyone says that must be done. Whosoever feels they must act so, will; and it will be the future which decides if their work was good or bad, right or wrong. You can be certain that what beats in these works will be photography, even if it is time has not yet arrived.

Photography as art is not open-heart surgery, it does not hold that risk or that responsibility; it is sweet when it gets it wrong and very sweet when it gets it right, and on its roads the accidents are not deadly. Under these circumstances to take a risk is not an act of bravery, but not to do so is an act of cowardice.

For whom this obvious reality is worn-out or surpassed, the world as photographic object is still full of other paradises, filled with invisible realities, undiscovered ones, unseen ones, and not looked at ones, because, I repeat, you can only see what can be seen.

This sensation is also described by George Tice: "As I advanced in my project it became more and more obvious that in fact it did not really matter much where I chose to photograph. The place only gave me an excuse to produce a work. You can only see what you are willing to see, what the mind reflects at that special moment".

When one is ready, inner reality is found without looking for it, it appears and reveals itself, making us feel

the nausea of the encounter with hidden life which Jean Paul Sartre spoke of so beautifully and sensitively.

“And suddenly, at a stroke the veil comes undone, I understood, I saw.

The nausea has not left me and I do not think it will abandon me so soon; but I cannot stand it, now it is not an illness or a fleeting access: It is me.

Well, a while ago I was in the municipal park. The root of the chestnut tree sank into the ground, right under my bench. I no longer remembered what a root was... I was sitting down, a little hunched up, head down, only before that black knotted mass, completely raw and which scared me. It was then I had this enlightenment.

It took my breath away. I had never felt, prior to these days, what “exist” meant. I was like everyone else, like those who stroll by the seashore in their spring suits. I used to say like they do: “the sea is green”, “that white dot up there is a seagull”, but I never felt that it existed, that the seagull was an “existent seagull”; existence hides itself from the common. It is there, around us, in us, it is us, you cannot utter two words without speaking of it, and, in the end, it remains untouched. One must convince oneself that, when I thought I believed in it, I thought of nothing, my head was empty or more precisely I had one word in my mind, the word “be”. Or so I thought... How can it be said? I thought of belonging, it told me that the sea belonged to the class of green objects or that the green formed a part of the sea’s attributes. Even looking at things I was light years from thinking they existed: they appeared to me as a set. I took them in my hands, they served as instruments, I foresaw their endurance. But all that took place on the surface. If I had been asked what existence was, I would have answered in good faith that it was nothing,

precisely an empty shape which is added to things from outside, without modifying its nature. And suddenly it was there as clear as day: existence was discovered out of the blue. It had lost its inoffensive appearance of abstract category; it was the same matter as all things, that root was kneaded into existence. Or better still, the root, the garden fences, the sparse lawn, everything had faded; the diversity of things, their individuality were only an appearance, a varnish. This varnish had melted, there remained monstrous and soft masses, disordered, naked, with a terrible and obscene nudity." Jean Paul Sartre, taken from his novel: "Nausea".

These incredible sentences seem to anticipate the vision I speak of and the state which transmits its presence.

Then we discover that obvious reality which we considered to be unique becomes multiple and has layers as an onion does, parallel layers, simultaneous lives and realities. They all appear at the same time and you can look at and search in them, in few or many, and decide which to stay in once you learn the path which joins them. It is a bigger and more personal world to explore than this world we know and which we have portrayed to the death. A world which is accessed without the yokes of the past mattering, which each person arrives at with the vision which belongs to them, with the style and aesthetic which are their own, and with a strange key which opens the door if besides looking we have learnt to see, or it will stay shut. But if it opens, a new path will give way to an existence which demands looking for it intensely, and the time and the dedication to recognise it. This discovered life is the simultaneous reality which hides itself in the object of our search, to play with us. It is good to know that simultaneity is beautiful and full of surprises, because it is unexpected and authentic.

Simultaneity shows itself to be full of life no sooner
you begin to walk through it.

The obvious is only reality's mask.

CHAPTER VI

SIMULTANY AND IMAGE

"Life imitates art far more than art imitates life"
Oscar Wilde (*Intentions*, 1891)

Simultany and image

We have synthesised many of the things we normally use. Our ability to synthesise is enormous. We represent our concepts and ideas with symbols. Without them we would have to magic away many of the creations which are useful to us.

The Highway Code makes us learn signs which symbolise obligations, recommendations or prohibitions, and which have become everyday images for many other functions; such as the "forbidden" sign. But our life is filled with functions based on all kinds of symbols. Chemistry is formulated using the element's symbols, mathematics calculates thanks to them, all science needs them, and it is they who allow it.

Music and reading require symbols in order to stay alive. We have spent so long living alongside them that they no longer appear strange to us. We have developed a great ability to coexist with symbols, even to play with them. They have contributed towards developing our abstract ability,

we see faces in the clouds, our eyes and brain now do much more than see.

We have the peace sign, of love, of victory; beliefs have symbols, the cross, the crescent, the Star of David... Symbols of war, patriotism, culture, politic, sports...

The symbol is the comprehensible representation of an idea which can be assimilated by society. It is also one step from what we see to its abstract representation.

Our thought is based on images, in which case the symbol, as representation of concepts and ideas, has gone on to become a natural part of our internal language.

Cave paintings were symbols. With more or less evolved shapes, 'though very simple, the symbols of other peoples have passed, via not very literate cultures, down to our times.

A society is more symbolic the more advanced and also the more primitive it is.

Symbolism has acquired so much importance that there is a science dedicated to its study: semiotics.

Even animals respond to the language of signs if they are trained to do so, some even learn the gestural ones without the need for training.

The sign is unique to the culture which produces it, and, if that culture were to completely disappear, its translation can be impossible.

The Rosetta Stone serves as an example, thanks to which Jean François Champollion was able to understand the language of the Egyptian hieroglyphic symbols.

Symbols are a consequence of our needs, evolution and abstract way of thinking. Things mean much more to us than their image represents. With it we have an element of union between logical and illogical thought. We are very abstract, but this abstraction instils life into the object.

We can interpret what we see.

Hand gestures can place accents on our expressions. Likewise do the movements of the body; they affirm or negate, insinuate, distance or seduce, and many other things. The body expresses itself. The eyes do too. Eyebrows express doubts, anger, they laugh; eyes are not only of use to see, they are not simple organs which read photons.

We see and we interpret, but we also perceive.

Two people talking close to us express themselves in such a way, that without listening to their words, we could say what is being communicated through their gestures. Doubts, agreement, discrepancy, impatience, annoyance, all this is perceived; it even seems you can see them think and even lie, dream or avoid the conversation. Intuition is susceptible to error, depending on the amount of observation time. But when we "look", we do not only look, we in fact "see". And we do not only see uncut, we do not only make topographical maps of reality, what is before us are not only lifeless objects which we make synthetic descriptions of. We differentiate shapes, and also their internal characteristics. A "human" object is intrinsically different to a "rock" object, as although the human may not move, what we see separates what we discern into living or inert. Vision is a living thing: it feels, it does not just analyse objects. In the same way as the music we listen to produces sentiments, not just noise. Our senses are warning tools, but also emotion transmission tools.

If what we see is not only a reality exercise or lesson – Why is what is seen incessantly represented as though there were no other possibilities? There are: made-up reality, raw reality, industrial reality, modern or post-modern reality, the tender or the scatological, previous reality, male or female reality, natural, the aquatic or terrestrial reality. It seems more a permanent report than a form of expression. Why this simplification? Its streamlining is of exhausting simplicity.

There are more dimensions to eliminate or translate, times to interpret, movements to dominate, different speeds for things; we "see" thoughts, we "perceive" gestures, and we "feel" what does not exist. Fear in the middle of the void or darkness expresses itself in us unquestionably, children cry, we look back searching for the cause of the discomfort, fear makes a familiar feeling run down our spinal column. And how does reality represent this?

We do not eat everything raw, we cook foods and transform them. We make digestible what is not in its natural state. Thanks to this we can feed ourselves with inedible things, enjoying the taste of what was forbidden to us. We even cook what we can eat raw, sometimes just to vary the flavour. The taste of things has become even more important than their ability to aliment; the reality of the food has been transformed. Currently, the taste of foodstuffs is more in the mind of who goes to a restaurant to try a dish of nouvelle cuisine than the quality of its hydrates or proteins. We have to admit that the taste of a raw potato is incomparable to that of a boiled or fried one.

Someone decided one day not to eat raw. All homes have a kitchen. It is a badly put together syllogism, but true.

Photography also has the ability to cook crude reality. The only thing it has to understand is what its food is made up of.

For example, it must understand its symbols.

There are not faces in the clouds, they are caused by the visual compression of planes. The shapes they show are rough, their contours are cut and between them lack the diffusion at the edges we are used to. Nor are our faces flat, they seem so on seeing them printed in two dimensions. It is our memory which returns the illusion of three dimensions to us. Nor are the edges of our

face blurred, they look it in a photograph due to optical conversion; it is that diffusion which Leonardo used and which was mentioned in the first chapter. The blurring is recognised visually due to the de-focussing caused by our natural vision, which we spoke of previously.

It is also our memory which tells us that there is a face in the cloud.

There are features which make the face a recognisable symbol. The symbol is schematic, simple, elemental, and minimal.

Two dots are eyes.

The symbol gives us back the illusion of the object. Once recognised it does not lose its concept. There is nothing there, but it has taken form in us.

The symbol has made, using the motor of the memory, a valid and viable representation of a known object. In this case it would be better to say recognisable, acceptable or analogous.

All the features are not necessary, only those are needed which take us to the symbol. Nor are all the lines of the symbol necessary. If partially they still return the analogy, it will still be acceptable after being recognised. An incomplete symbol can be enough, depending on which visual or internal conditions, to recompose the object without its having been previously recognised.

Let's say that a real face, part-hidden behind a wall, shows us an eye, the nose and almost all the mouth. The other eye is missing, but the edge of half of the face remains visible. It is symbol enough to recognise it. It is, so long as, the concept "face" is in our mind just at the moment of seeing it.

We recognise the symbol if it is very obvious, if we play at finding symbols, or should the inner circumstance arise which permits our "suddenly" recognising something.

This "suddenly" does not mean chance.

It can be easy to see something which is very out of place, but it is harder to see it among similar things. When this happens it is because a relationship is established between the external symbols, which we would reject under other circumstances, or, simply, we would not see due to it not being in our mind, and the internal language of our thoughts and their particular symbolism.

In this "flash" encounter unexpected symbols are recognised.

We could say that it is by "chance", but for this chance to happen when our concentration is elsewhere, a superimposition between the mirror images of our thought and the outside world has to take place. This superimposition can be positive or negative, regarding what is missing or what is surplus, even opposing. The mechanism by which it happens must awaken our recognition memory, or inform us, of the presence of the symbol. It is a subconscious process. Without our thought this assimilation of the symbol will not occur. It is causality not chance.

The analogy offers objects as matter which are neither expected, nor are they really the object they supplant or substitute. They are only so for our inner life. But if we replace the real object with the analogous symbol, we are also making a parable of the image, telling an example story, a substitute for the original. Not only this, we are de-personalising the original object. We are using only the representation of the same thing. It no longer has personality and only reunites the general characteristics associated with it, but none in particular, except for those we want to assign for our needs or because of them. It is the case of the face extracted from the cloud.

So, the object is something known on our inside as the equivalent to the real thing, in an image completely

assimilated to it, even though the object itself cannot be recognised in its entirety; but the partiality taken on is image enough of itself to allow its thought.

The inner object has the ability to produce a schematic summary of it which we call symbol. The symbol in its totality or partiality can rebuild the idea of the object. The object's symbol can be recognised in the analogous representation of another object, 'though unrelated, which produces an equivalent imitation of it.

This representation assumes the whole - rather than the specific - of what is represented, on being only a generic concept of the object. The specific can be incorporated to the object later.

The acceptance of the symbol as reason enough for the representation also permits looking for the abstract the symbol generates without an object playing a part. It can be just a strange or different shape which brings about the formation of the symbol. This is a later stage, but full of possibilities.

We had said that there are no faces in the clouds. They are found or looked for. If they are especially obvious, many observers can discover them at the same time. A single look can cause, by indication, that many recognise it.

A different matter is deliberately and consciously looking for them. Then, if the circumstances are right, the encounters multiply. The symbol is discovered not only in cases of greatly differentiating opposition, but also even among similar or very similar cases.

The eye hones itself, our ability to integrate grows with each minute, and you can quickly and easily find an indeterminate number of symbols, and behind them, objects. Objects which are looked for.

The most easily recognised symbols are the most elementary ones, basic images. The more complex ones stay in the shade.

The search for an object causes encounters with it, rarely with another. The inner focus towards a search considerably blurs the possibility for other encounters. They can happen, but to a minimal degree. Let's focus our mind.

The search for symbols without a prior mental image causes encounters which, easily, divert all immediate searches in that direction. They serve as inspiration, but if a precise object is needed, only the search for it allows it to be found, generally speaking. That is to say in time and opportunity, of course.

For the time being we speak of the symbol which appears on first sight, that's all.

Let's continue with the example of the cloud.

The symbol meant that we recognised the object "face". But once absorbed, its representation is somewhat crude. The object needs an approximation to inner reality to be able to substitute the original, or it will only be accepted as an obvious trick or a game.

There are various techniques for this approach.

Before continuing, I think it would be useful to introduce an opposite example which will allow a better understanding of the use of techniques to vary the object's capacity for representation, and the reason for them. For this I'll begin by using a real example, not an impersonation of it as in the case of the cloud.

If what is wanted is to obtain an image able to represent the general, the first step to make progress in the photographic vision resides in avoiding relating the represented with the actual actor, that is to say, separate the "what" or the "who" is present from the whole set of the work, or it will lose universal value.

Let's imagine a landscape.

There is a beach with three or four people, morning light which causes long shadows and warm tones. Some

stones counterpoint the geometrical composition. It is all very clear and with extraordinary definition. It could be pleasant and relaxing. Each should imagine a scene, similar to this, which they like.

A question arises – Do we recognise anyone? We suddenly realise that we know one of the people, or so we think, but we are not sure. We look in more detail, even paying attention to the other people, in case they reaffirm this belief. It possibly is someone I know. It is. What a coincidence! It is not. I was wrong!

But – Where did the photograph go? It has moved into the background. The actor's value has cancelled out the possibility of entering the work beyond what is possible in a superficial glance. In the same way, a portrait loses its value in the portrayed person, except for curiosities. And this limitation is so important that it deserves to be considered. Take the anecdote of the beach as a simple example of the value of the actor by counterpoising them against the photographic work. But this example will still be useful to us.

If the people can be recognised, their image represents them and them alone. The part of the image which represents the individual has become "noise" which has to be turned off before seeing it, or it will turn into "another" image. Each observer who thinks they can recognise someone will feel this noise inside. The image has immediately become a memory. "Bustling beach" becomes "bustling beach with possible acquaintances". Curiosity has destroyed the concept and the image.

For the first concept to be valid and to hold up, the personal representation of the subjects, their portrayal, must be cancelled. "This is Juan and this is Marta" should not be possible. All the "person" objects in the composition should be like impersonal lines which help the composition of the

image and reinforce the sought concept. They must belong to the concept, not distract from it.

The general features which make "human being" understood are what we want to keep, not "Juan the human being".

Let us go back to the landscape and remove only one factor from it. We maintain the clarity but eliminate the definition; we drastically reduce the acuteness. In this way, the subject is recognised as a whole but is impersonal. We will continue to have exactly the same thing, except for the possibility of recognising the people, seeing as all the other elements will continue to be recognised as a concept, even the people, but not as specific individuals. Now they only represent the general concept of "humans on the beach".

On having eliminated the negative weight of the actor and coming face to face with the work, it is the whole thing which is valued; and what the people do is add their whole part to the group which is represented. They no longer disturb.

In the same way, a portrait, even if not clearly realist, limits its interest to its quality and the person portrayed. Its universality remains limited to the passage of time, to the physical distance from its place of origin or the acknowledgement of the value of the person captured. This is referring to their value as an individual, not to the value as portrait.

The portrait goodness is very limited by the person portrayed, to the point of limiting its message.

In a portrait the subject is itself, as well as a human being. Observation of the portrait assumes the basic role of "human being" with no need for further explanation. What we see is, directly, the human represented in a specific way. So the general representation immediately disappears and

even does so beforehand, because "portrait" includes the concept of "unique". It especially happens in photography as it has been assigned the role of "real". The exact vision of the person portrayed can impede the viewing of the whole; and in fact it also impedes it. Everything which surrounds the subject is an accessory and functions as such.

In the landscape, once the effect of the "authentic and real" of what is represented is cancelled out, the people equalise their value to that of the rocks or the waves. Nobody feels represented by them, nor attempts to recognise them. The impossibility is blatant from the outset. These people no longer form a part as individuals in the photograph, they also are the photograph. They can only be analysed aesthetically, independently from the whole; in all the rest they are a part of equal importance - which is just what we were looking for.

Is it possible to disguise the actor?

In the example set, the circumstance is posed where an image with less information allows us a greater approximation to its interior than if it carries excessive precision in the details.

Let's suggest an elementary technique in order to understand a means of controlling this amount of information.

In the case of the beach we will use a wide-angle lens. Its logical focus point is situated in infinity, but we will make a change. We will set only 1.5 metres, so the image is lost and very out-of-focus. We will get back as much information as is possible by fully closing the diaphragm, so it will be the depth of field which restores the image. We will adjust the exposure time with the speed and we shoot. It is an understandable and simple example.

We are getting the sought data from within a group filled with information, which holds much more than necessary, and from which what is needed should be extracted. We

are working with a strange concept of image where from its diffuse information we get its generic concept with more precision. The message ends up being more precise by not being exact.

We can disguise the actor. Perhaps we could also change the mask as from here.

A door has been opened to the search for a hidden reality. The disintegration of the image into circles of confusion and its integration are not the same as the hoped for image.

What is happening?

What is happening has something to do with, albeit remotely, fuzzy logic.

The first time I came into contact with this theory I was surprised by some sentences as they appeared to have been taken out of a photography book, and conceptually, they seemed to be prepared to answer some of the problems I was wrestling with in my personal work. Each of their proposals, even in their imprecision, seemed wonderful to me.

Plato had spoken of degrees of level, or belonging, between the true and the false. I was convinced of the inclination of photography towards the "true", but it went against its physical reality and my inner feelings.

The degree of belonging to change the representation of what most concerned me at that time, "the individual factor", was just a philosophical concept. There was no solution. Everything I wanted to do did not inspire me, it saturated me with reality. I could not find ways out which were not vulgar manipulations, and which took me right to the place I wanted to flee from; I could not see beyond this.

When I was able to assimilate what lay behind the surprising philosophy of the Azerbaijani-Iranian, Lofti Asker Zadeh, ways of progressing began to occur to me.

Zadeh explained his conclusions in the mid seventies, on joining "logic" and "groups", giving them degrees of belonging.

Clearly, it sounded like my photographic disillusion, so curiosity got me interested in the subject and to continue reading.

It is known in English as "Fuzzy logic", and this name was taken from the same word used in photography to refer to an out-of-focus photo, as the edges are not clearly marked, they are not clear or precise. These are the circles of confusion.

They also used the word "grain", or granularity, which was valued the same as in analogical photography – it must be remembered that digital did not exist at the time, where the grain can be appreciated more in the black than in the white. And there was a variable scale of intermediate tones. That is to say, from yes and not binaries, the zero and the one, you go to, so we understand each other, a hundred; so different values of greys can be made.

The idea was to apply fuzzy logic to complex processes which did not have an exact or mathematical solution. They worked with imprecision, the indefinite, creating a degree of confusion, of vagueness to what was analysed or was attempted to be measured.

One of the great sentences said that it tried to solve the scarce or void ability of traditional logic to be expressive or creative.

The suggested mathematical formulas seemed too complex to me, their comprehension remaining a good way off from my knowledge of calculation. But the approach which gave the formula life was clear. The experts say that their concepts and algorithms are simple, although only the first ones reached me with clarity.

At last I had found something which placed more importance on the approach to the concept than to its precision. If it was a camera I would have already bought one, but we know that such a thing as this does not exist.

Among the examples read were things along the lines of: A tall man! We all understand it, but – How much is “tall”? How tall is he? A fuzzy concept.

It is hot! Okay, but how much? – Enough! Hot enough to turn on the air conditioning? How high shall we put it? How much is enough? Another fuzzy concept.

Between hot and cold there is moderate. Moderate enough is something relative, it is not precise, it is confusing or Fuzzy.

With fuzzy logic, similar to our imprecise way of thinking, seeing and creating, air conditioning devices, camera auto-focus, and even the search for cancerous cells among normal cells are handled.

To make it simple I’ll say that fuzzy calculation has three basic steps, which are:

1st. Fuzzification: Turn true values into “diffuse” values.

2nd. Inference: Generate the calculations using the “determinants”.

3rd. De-fuzzification: Turn the resultant values into “focussed” values.

It sounds really photographic.

I decided to look for a way to apply these truly simple concepts to my work, and I designed the first tests. I looked for the zero and one points as the limit, and calculated the minimum working distance possible for a fully-closed diaphragm for a specific optic; using the depth of field as area control. This value was my first reference and I moved via it.

So the first images began to take shape which opened the door to the diffuse image, to the allegory and simultaneity; each work or collection taking me to the next.

Saturation, contrast, light, etc., are values susceptible to calculation, besides many other mixes and variations.

Said values mark differences between object and content; and in their intervals you find information which can be used creatively.

Pre-meditated mistakes - in reality, searches - allow you to come across unexpected images, which open up fantastic roads which carry the solution to their particular problem in hand. For example, there is no reason for re-focussing everything which can be re-focused; maybe we need the image formed to have more "confusion" than its complete reconstruction could return. The degree of use is a part of the toolkit.

This "diffuse concept", which has nothing to do with an out-of-focus or soft-focus image, is one of the many which should be employed to be able to give the desired representation to the images which come from the same reality, without being realist. This basic idea has been explained due to its having been the answer to a specific problem, one which posed itself every time I tried to capture landscapes with people: The specific locked my access to the general. It is obvious that deep down I was already trying to find another way to use the object. But at that time, coming up against the object would not have been overcome and I could not use the symbol without omitting the author.

A man running, seen from the "diffuse concept", is not "that" man running, but the representation of any man running, or none in specific. It is the act of a man who is running. We begin to be able to write an indefinite phrase as a part of a photographic text.

The depersonalisation of the actors does not tell the whole story in the landscape photograph. What happens if we take the people out of the landscape and only leave what is not human? Does the concept of diffusion lose its value? Why not treat everything visible in the same way? What is more – What would happen by treating the symbolic as a fuzzy concept? What would the symbol turn into? In a second phase, maybe this concept would not even permit eliminating the protagonist, making the symbolic appear via pure forms, now freed of their own weight.

Without the protagonist in the image the objects are also altered. Things which previously lost their value, hidden behind the layer of realism photography wiped them out with as though a sin, now take on a value all of their own. Colours hold the image up, they are not just limited to filling it in. The lines change their energy; the movement loses its precision, to show the general. Can the image allow more to be imagined?

We add more technique to the concept and try forcing the possibilities of its limits. As with each new technique tried out, the known is only a break before what is not yet known.

The landscape, which has allowed us to enter it in another way and “imagine” the imprecise, becomes more than an object and comes to life; it establishes a relationship of give and take, it now speaks of a new creation method.

What is beyond reality?

The use of the concept of fuzzy image opens up paths to use with a “musical score” and achieve a goal, which previously were themselves limited to research of the medium, call it colour, movement, etc.

The fuzzy concept can represent anything which does not have a physical image with far superior fidelity, so long as the protagonist who sustains it distracts from what

is represented and trivialises it. And there is more, given that the actor ends up turning into the image of what is represented and that, sometimes, the internal and its feelings have been expressed based on what caused it or of the moment when said feeling was produced – as, for example, a mother breast-feeding in relation to tenderness – the result is still intellectually comical, if you consider that an “angel” is someone blonde with ringlets, with perfect light skin, girlish features and white-blue dove wings which are about to open or are almost closed... Other examples could be given in the same way, although all of them based on a physical and limited representation but with a known language, and accepted, as imitation of the real.

If what is wanted is to awaken the inner vibration of something so barely real, perhaps “represent” would not be enough. Maybe the most intense image arrives via the imagination and inner, not rational and direct, thought. The real detracts power from the sensitive and is, in this case, where the fuzzy concept of the image has everything to say; amongst other things because from the outset it eliminates the weight of the true representation in exchange for its appearance. Even the appearance is based on the actual imagination, so one more step is taken towards the internal.

The disintegration of the image into circles of confusion and its integration is not the same as the expected image. This is just a door, a beginning; it is of great help to free oneself from dependency on the real image, but it cannot read our minds. The image does not appear just because, it must be put together, illuminated, its contrast found, its matter played with, compensated, decisions taken; in short: make it. It is not enough to shove a camera in a face and shoot, I’m afraid it is not that simple, no matter how good the camera is and how efficient its software’s technique.

Other similar techniques, on all levels, to the one described, allow the "crude face" object of the cloud to acquire an acceptable representation, not associated with the object which produces it. Something which it is not, it hides itself to show what we want it to be. The final image will be recognised only by the object it looks like, independent of what it was made up of. The case of the cloud is not precisely the opposite step to the beach photograph we used in the previous example. We want to turn something into a face which is not one, we recognise a symbol which tells us that there is a false face there and we want to use it as a substitute object. On the beach we want the faces to maintain their appearance but that they are not recognised. Here we also want to change one representation for another, but moreover it is about the face that figures in the cloud being able to impersonate an imaginary, but real, face. It does not have to be human, but it can be something similar or recognisable like an expression on a figurative face. That is to say, besides smoothing out the rough in it, it must be separated from the background as an independent being. It is a different challenge with a basic point in common.

The symbol or the object can and must be looked for in various ways. Once the search model has been learnt, the process of "constructing" the object required for the representation is learnt.

On a technical level there are various concepts which must be handled to make the image correspond to what is wanted. Sometimes the starting point must be a concept in order to end the use of another, and at times it can be precisely the other way round. This is not an exact science nor can it be programmed. What at times is perfect can be a disaster in the subsequent image; what is

needed is a fun and meticulous contact and dialogue with the capricious element we are creating. It seems to have a personality of its own. In reality they all have personality, and the cloud is no different.

Sometimes the symbol does not appear in an exact way so as to inspire the object, but, with practice, the symbol which is not evident is perceived.

The face in the cloud, as is to be imagined, does not have smooth skin, it also has no cheeks, so we decide that we have to soften its edges.

If what is wanted is to do the softening during the take, it has to be done conveniently de-focussing and reintegrating the image to be captured. Clearly, the amount assigned must be learnt and tested until achieving mastery, but success is possible through calculation.

The reconstruction of the object, using the required techniques, is correct, and its representation sufficient.

The necessary degree of de-focussing in order for the reconstruction of an object to be appropriate needs an explanation. All the image's information can be found in it whether it is in focus or out-of-focus. A different matter is our being able to process this information, or that this information is adequate. Clearly, we are not talking about all the information possible, but about specific and selected information. We are only speaking of that we wish to extract, the same as we did in the elementary example of the beach; an image wherein it was desired that a part of the information be lost.

In the case of the degree of focus, anything which does not respond to maximum definition expresses its difference in the size of the circles of confusion. As these become bigger, the information they contain expands within them; it is not lost but is diffused. It will be more diffused the greater the circle of confusion produced.

The way in which this circle is formed with regard to the point of extreme clarity, corresponds to a conical shape, precisely that of an inverted double cone whose spikes are touching. The cones are not equal. The one closest to the camera is shorter and its base widens quicker. The size and difference between these cones depends on the optic used and on the distance to the point in focus.

This characteristic allows you to calculate and select the point where we must place the focus, which can be in the image to capture, that is to say, on the object, or outside it; in other words, before it or after it. You can focus to such a short distance that it is placed before the first object which appears in the selected area. In this way all the image can be placed in one single cone, the first or the posterior one, or mixing the two to a greater or lesser degree. The resulting difference is that, if they are only in the same cone, all the circles of confusion grow in the same direction and with identical rules. If they are in two cones, the circles grow towards the camera quicker than towards the background, with respect to the focal point; which means that to change the focal point changes the way in which the information is shown in the image, and as a consequence allows its manipulation.

It is clear that we are talking of two dimensions. The calculation is done to lose one of three and the best way of doing it.

Here we are discussing circles of confusion formed during the capture, not after it.

There is the possibility of looking for these circles after the capture, by de-focussing the obtained image, but in this case the circles of confusion grow in a circular way, not as spheres, throughout the image and at the same time, as the whole image has been summarised on one sole plane. The cone effect does not exist.

Previously, we made the clarification “not as spheres”, as the de-focussing on a plane obtained with a camera is not the same as that obtained de-focussing the already captured image either. The optic used in the capture produces a specific defocussing and which is different to another optic with a different construction.

We constantly speak of “circles” of confusion. It would be convenient to make a clarification about them.

These rounded shapes which appear in the out-of-focus brightness of the photographs, mainly in the distant backgrounds with respect to the foreground in focus, answer something specific.

When an unexpected flash of light enters the camera, it appears in the photo as a ray of light which at times displays a geometric image – a pentagon or a hexagon, usually. This figure reproduces the shape of the iris of the diaphragm in the lens. The circles of confusion reproduce this shape in the out-of-focus points. In reality they can reproduce any shape which is directly before the lens. If we cut out a piece of black paper with, let’s say triangular spikes, leaving a hole in the middle, and we place them so as to make them appear a little at the edges of the lens, the circles of confusion show spikes going inwards. So the circle’s shape can be altered and their conversion will be different. The effect is more apparent with a telephoto lens.

Other effects, like the invasion of dark tones by light ones, have differentiating characteristics with respect to the take, so that’s another tool to bear in mind.

Both ways of working with the diffuse image can be used under specific circumstances to get different results. It can even be used in the same image.

The de-focussing introduced in certain images causes a mixing of the circles of confusion on different planes, which means that an image which is not flat comes to be integrated

forming a part of the same object. This object only appears within the capture of this calculated simultaneous reality. It is like the shadow of three dimensions in two. We play with the way in which we see the cube in order to draw its lines on a plane.

Simultaneity is caused, and found, in many ways. It is clear that it can be produced, or looked for, as much in true threedimensional reality as in still lives. Of course, it can be provoked as in a calculated studio take, so the required object reunites the desired characteristics for the whole image.

Simultaneity sometimes appears in differentiated planes highlighted by the light, which at one moment show the image and at the next hide, deform, or simply make it disappear.

It also appears composed only of colours, or by image lines. These lines are generally easier to differentiate than the colours, but it is a simple exercise which leads to a reasonable search in the patches of colour.

In order for the desired image to appear the reflection of objects can be used, be they mirrors, glass or metals with a greater or lesser degree of reflection. In the case of metals, different levels of polishing or texture will cause a change in the influence between colour and line.

Transparency or semi-transparency permits the creation of objects which are made-to-measure for our needs.

The combination of reflection and transparency alongside solid images, as much outdoor as in a studio, can help to produce almost any image desired, added to unrelated objects or symbols.

On many occasions the symbol is found before our eyes naturally in two dimensions. The cited photographs of the collection by François Gillet, "Le pays du rêve", and also "Beyond Mystery Bay", are an exquisite example of

this affirmation. The symbol found can be absorbed as a reproduction of the obvious. It is the object.

In our example of the cloud, the face is not flat, it may appear so due to the distance which separates us from the cloud, but it is actually full of reliefs. We will understand it better with the example of a closer and complex object: let's imagine a tree. Let's say that at a certain distance from it we also distinguish a face, but this could be formed by branches at the front and the back at the same time, even by branches of different trees; it could also be the sum of the rocks and branches in distanced planes. For this, the diffuse effect in three dimensions is used in the image, to be able to use it in simultaneity as a whole group. Let's integrate the object.

Although in normal conditions the take happens in a vectorial manner towards the front, the inclusion of reflections or semi-transparencies at an angle add to the bi-dimensional image obtained, un aligned vectors, as in a third dimension, which are affected by the fuzzy factor in the same conditions as the rest of the image.

Simultaneity of images occurs naturally around us, but once its inner system of functioning is understood, it is easy to handle and reproduce at will; which permits the creation of images with as much complexity as is desired.

Restoring contrast to an image between the edges poses no difficulty. Different well-known techniques restore what had been removed from the outline, but reconstructed for the new object.

We have spoken of focus as that which reveals the object, but it is not the only element. Saturation, polarisation, elimination of one colour to the benefit of another, or its simple transformation, are all of great importance when obtaining images which would be impossible without its use. The take itself must not be forgotten.

The importance of the take is not only so based on correct exposure, but based on what it is for the later need of use of what the material will be turned into. Different light captures produce different materials of differing malleability. Light behaves as one dimension more, maybe the fifth, which seems lost in the object or which is perceived through it.

Light in realism is of great importance in the transmission of sensations and in the personality applied to the object. In simultaneity it is even more so, if not because of the embellishment of the object, but due to its revelation. Said object can be full of light in itself and often is, even with more than one light, depending on its planes and the texture of each one. This value increases depending on whether the object comes out of black or white.

With simultaneity the true object loses its meaning based on another new one, whose representation does not answer anything in particular, but is accepted as a generalisation. This way of handling the object can lead to another step, which consists of the formation of new objects lacking a symbol. They are not recognisable because they do not exist. That is to say, with the image which appears in simultaneity you can create new appearances.

By working simultaneous reality in this way, representations of well-known objects are obtained, but deformed, varied, sterilised or altered. Nevertheless, if you can still read a "code" in them which permits accepting the image, comparing it to the real thing – as we said in a previous chapter, they will be accepted as a simulated reality or an equivalent. So, it will also be accepted as a representation to express a scene from the real world which cannot be reproduced; it will be accepted as the carrier of a message.

This way of handling the photographic image breaks many of the moulds it is usually pigeon-holed in.

In the different steps of transformation of the object, it can come to be completely unreal. It can maintain the basic symbols which define it or only a part, but even symbols can be transformed, or integrated into an object they do not belong to and which turn it into something else. The alteration of the shape is not a minor possibility, and with the rest of the options, the object becomes very malleable; altering the image group to the point of not being recognisable as an image, seen within photography's line of thought. Yet it is totally photographic.

Even at the first stages, effects can be produced which break free of the roles assigned to photography.

Following some of the first tests I carried out using landscapes as a model, I prepared some which I ended up calling "watercolours". The name came about due to a bit of helpful deception.

Real watercolours are graphic designs based on a picture, although patches of colour can also be used as an elementary principle thanks to its transparency. There is no similarity to a traditional photograph.

I had obtained some photographic images which had nothing to do with standard landscape photographs; the people who appeared were unrecognisable, the colours were pastel, oddly flat and with clear but imprecise edges. The blacks hardly appeared as I had over-exposed them. It was the first step in the research which I deemed convenient to show to a friend.

On seeing them my friend said he could not look at the photos, that they made him dizzy, that they were sort of out-of-focus or that the people could not be clearly seen. Then, I led him to believe that they were not photos, but reproductions of watercolours by a painter. The result was simply incredible. After an "Ohhh, right!" he looked in detail at the "watercolours"; they seemed good 'though strange to him,

he even chose some which were more beautiful than others. When he had finished looking at the ones he had to hand I told him that they were really photos, but his ability to see, and to accept, had already been educated for this photographic form which he previously had not accepted; which was as surprising as it was agreeable to him. Subsequent photographs I showed him – I will no longer say “watercolours” - needed no adaptation; the debate was purely about beauty, or the specific characteristics of each chosen corner.

The fact of its not appearing to be a “typical” photograph will be accepted popularly quicker as more images of simultaneity are shown.

It is clear that in this way impossible images can be shown in equivalent reality. Simultaneity is the first step to use said reality as an object “store”, as inspiration, or simply, as a search ground; everything is possible, in this respect there is no difference in it to photography considered to be normal.

Consequences of the various techniques which can be used to specify the image are the possibility of separating colour and form and using them independently. Once separated they can work together or be substituted by other different ones, in which case the modification of the image can be radical.

What is more, the shape can be obtained alone and reused as though it were the whole object. With a minimum of care the representation will be acceptable. The same can be said for the colour alone.

New proof comes to light: the object can be annulled, leaving only the form, the form itself allows a quicker creation of the possible symbol, and the symbol, the line, is the direct step towards an image distanced from all representation which makes it possible to recognise a code.

With minimum effort, simultaneity leads to the substitution of the object by the symbol.

A clarification must be made concerning the change the word "object" has here.

Under the light of real photography, or equivalent, the object retained a series of features which brought to mind, supposedly, the entirety of its characteristics. In the case of the simultaneous object, this only retained those which made its relating, linking, or equivalence to the object which "did" represent reality possible; and therefore to reality itself.

If this assimilation to the intermediate object were not to exist, simultaneity would give rise to an unknown object; acceptable as what it may be, but impossible to link to equivalent reality.

When we speak of the loss of the object, substituted by the symbol, we are going further than intended in these lines, but the temptation to study it is great. Abstraction appears, in a very appealing way, on a close horizon behind this door; but in a completely calculated and controllable way.

All this is possible.

It already exists.

Simultaneity, as a concept, allows an analysis of reality with a refreshed gaze, but, especially, it brings with it a key to open the door to a world to obtain images from, as it allows you to use intuition as a stage, which goes beyond the photographic process. It is not an aesthetic or a technique, it is more a theory of the composition of the real image, and therefore of the ability to decompose it to get the part of it we're interested in, we feel like, or we are able to show.

Total reality is the sum of all the realities which are taking place at the same time at that moment. Some layers of reality are as different to each other as water and fire. Between these layers or realities arise unexpected elements which allow the union of both and they appear together. Between humankind and the air appears an element like

wings which allow them to fly or float in it, uniting them with the impossible. We could say that it is simultaneity.

If we integrate the image of what surrounds us, everything is something else. The objects are a part of another group of things which makes them into another entity. They could be defined as metaphysical if we pay extremely close attention to this idea, but nothing is completely itself. These images cause feelings and thoughts which could only be awakened with the joint combination of the elements which breathed life into it, plus the formal selection of them by their creator. It is something so unusual that it makes you think that the possibility of repeating this magic moment is infinitesimal. It is the combination of inspiration and that lucky moment in order to capture it.

Perhaps this world only exists within its representation, which is already fantastic as in this case one is truly creating. But the problem in photography is that the "object" is found within, as a reflection of what causes thought from the outside. It would mean, then, getting the external object - which causes the appearance of the internal one - to make a reproduction of it possible which is the inspiration for the same allegory - or also of the thrill of the clashing of the two forces, so long as they do not tend towards either of the two parts.

Without all this physical, mechanical, technical or biological set, the inner object is no more than a forgotten dream. But if the object can be shown or seen, if it can be made patent and observable, then it becomes a seed of and inspiration for another way of thinking.

Simultaneity is a way of enriching our vision.

You have to open the door to it and let it enter.

It looks like the future.

EPILOGUE

"Beauty is a blind ally. It is like a mountain peak which once reached leads nowhere"
Somerset Maugham, *(Cakes and Ale, XI)*

In a brief trip we have gone from the caves to a possible future. In-between, as though it had hardly happened, we have left behind events which have taken far longer to digest than they themselves lived. It is very easy to do it when this time has already passed, but not all of it has stayed there.

Over a hundred and fifty years later, various kinds of photography which have nothing in common between them –except for the fact of using a camera as artefact– are still tarred with the same brush. It is, to say the least, surprising. It is so because they continue to apply qualifiers to a kind of photography which are only valid for another, so they debase the actual characteristics of each one, making a correct analysis impossible with such mistaken foundations. It is generalised by presenting something which is unviable on all occasions as a matter of faith. And all this only because a box with a piece of glass at the front is used. But, in what field? Because

speaking about photography is like talking about the wheel. It is used for everything, but not everything is the same nor is it valued the same way, nor is it lumped together. It is so obvious!

The puppy named "camera" unites nothing between photojournalism and infra-red copy photography or art. It is one thing more in the paraphernalia needed to enter the craftsmanship of photography. That's all, full stop. If any basic element is missing from the whole process necessary to handle the photographic material, there is no photography – just as there was not when all the elements were known, but had not been put together. It is not just the camera which unites with photography. Neither is there a union between the brush which paints a room and the one which gives colour to a Bosch painting.

It is distressing to hear how the act of creating is compared to the robotic mechanics of a camera with a timer, all over the place. It is, but it is equally sad to understand that all the "art" which is allotted to "photography" is the "ability" to choose the opportune moment and point of view. If it were not so damaging, we'd have to laugh. A plot worthy of a film, where the "how the camera sees it" and "how I see it" would be compared, it has come to this.

Thousands of millions of photographs are shot each year; if all the inhabitants of the world took photos ceaselessly, we would easily accomplish the expectation from a specific point of view, they would even be kept to hold value as an antiquity in, let's say, a hundred years. With the right technique all the images would have the whole tonal range possible, the maximum saturation, or what would be perfect saturation. Nothing would escape the gaze of the global eye which is all-seeing. But in place of art we would have sober boredom, a book of coincidences, interesting as an article perhaps, but no more than: anecdotes.

No doubt the dialogue established with the world around us is not the most appropriate to evolve towards a more internal viewpoint.

It is more the dialogue of: "What do I see with or through the camera?" than: "What do I or can I do with the camera?" which differentiates one possibility from the other. The second proposition includes the first, but not the other way round. The first is restrictive, the second is open. The second also includes the question: What do I want to do with the camera? The answer is given as much by the camera as by whoever uses it: If you know the way you'll do whatever you want! Yet this "knowing the way" is not exactly the "how" to do it. As we have seen with the introduction to simultaneity, not all the process is physical. To "see" is essential. It seems the chain has broken.

On many occasions, the dialogue held with the artefact is revealing, because they have a way of expressing themselves, or better said, they are able to answer some questions, but not others - or they'd answer them incorrectly. I will allow myself to give a simple example: photometers of incident or of reflected light do not share the same language. The first tells you: for mid grey to be mid grey you need to use this diaphragm and speed. The second tells you: this will be mid grey if you use this diaphragm and speed. The one has nothing to do with the other!

If we change the dialogue we ruin the photograph; what we want to know through the artefact has its own means of expression. The camera does too.

Is there anyone who does not communicate with the scene?

Perhaps what has happened is that the camera has been considered to be an oracle, or maybe a lecturer, and that only it can speak. So it is reverently asked permission in order for its grace the magic box to grant us some memorable

moment with a little assistance on our side. But it turns out that the magic box is crazy because someone is telling it that now they are going to do whatever they feel like, no arguments; and they go and do it.

The camera is utterly useless. To trust in its solving a problem of ours is too naive; it has never solved a single one, it is dead. We are the ones who are alive.

And so – Why is taking photos so appealing? Because it is creative from the very outset! And that's addictive. Even on an elementary level you perceive how that thing of just pressing a button is not only pressing a button, it is like the device has a life of its own and from time to time does whatever it feels like, or almost always. And the results can be manipulated at will when you know how to do more than pressing a button; and if you know much more, then it is more manipulable. But there is an unwritten rule which states: Manipulable, yes; but do not alter it beyond this point! As obedient as sheep, the rule is respected which decided that the world is flat and that, beyond the horizon there is a precipice guarded by dragons which leads directly to Hell. Well, this was the Earth when it was said it was flat, but it turned out to be round and there was America.

The camera is there to be used for our own benefit, with the rules we want, face-to-face with what we see, inside or outside, just as our visions inspire us; not how they inspire us through the magic device.

The camera limits far less than the two-dimensional plane upon which we have decided to cast our inner world. Should anyone decide that they do not like reality just as they see it or are able to show what the rest cannot see, they must forget any old-fashioned conventions regarding the photographic object and the "objective" of photography in the world or the dictionary and go their own way. The camera is irrelevant, it is the world we have before us which

matters, the visible world we use to express ourselves and from which we take what we need to create, whatever way we do so. It is our object, but it is not rigid, or solid, or immovable, or inalterable, nor is it untouchable. What is magic is not the camera but the object. If you're unable to create without a camera, nor will you be able to do so with one; it is not a magic wand or the key to creativity. This should exist prior to and independently of the medium or after there will be nothing to show.

At the moment of working when maximum importance is conceded to the use of the object; when the object can be turned into transformable matter, and in fact it does become this, it is as though the rules disappear or are different.

On breaking the direct relationship of the camera with the recognisable object, a fundamental part of the medium's story is altered. I use the word "recognisable" because the camera is the object's door, be this any representation required for achievement in a precise way.

When the object becomes nothing and there is no longer any trace of it in the visible image, the spectator is left defenceless, who faces the photographic work without the basic reference which they have enjoyed since its inception. They end up open-mouthed and speechless. They are unable to recognise what they see, they have gone to having to recognise what is wanted that they see, but not in the sense of external representation – it is no longer something as "physical" as a tree – if not in that of the inner object; something which seems to go against what was considered to be photography's genetic code. All of a sudden it must be asked: What is this or where is it come from? Something they are not used to and they will have to do by force, against their own principles.

The norm is that the object be changed to a degree and without touching it, as at a distance, with the light

or the viewpoint, maybe with a black and white process or a similar manipulation, but always leaving its code recognisable. If this does not happen, and the object is transformed with respect to how it is recognised or what is attributed to it, then supposedly there is a trick or a reproduction of another kind of art, even something mixed, but not solely photography. It is so because the observer is the censor and judge of all photographic images which they are shown, and if they cannot carry out this role, the actual definition of the photographic game comes into question, even its existence: "This is not photography!" It will be necessary to look in the dictionary for the definition of photography and change it before anyone notices the mistake, which has been made for over almost two hundred years. The, more than just a, possibility must not be forgotten that in this definition, the object completely disappears and only traces of it remain.

Suddenly, who sees has to "interpret", it is no longer just about recognising, the spectator must "translate", it is no longer their own language, they must "understand", it is no longer direct, elemental vision. Photography stops being that which is immediate, obvious and equivalent. It is a mental effort which many are not willing to undertake.

Yet the spectator is anecdotal to photography, they are so as individuals. They who arrive and look add their own experience, culture, influences, life force, disposition and willingness to the visual vibration they are offered. They fill the gaps in their memory and obtain a message and a specific connection. Tomorrow their feeling could be different. The next spectator will bear no similarity to the previous one. Of course they will see the fundamental which is offered to them, let us put the case of the "country house", but they will feel pleasure or solitude, distance from or harmony with the colours, relaxation or anguish, interest or

boredom. Anything is possible, and moreover, changeable for each spectator. What a problem! What is the message? The sum total of all the visions?

Presumably the author has conveniently adjusted the language used to limit, or delimit, the edges of the message, besides its quality and quantity, but within these margins the spectator will move as much as they want and, should they not understand what they see, will break them or remain outside them. Photography is independent of the spectator, it acquires true life with the people who do connect with its main artery, but it does so for them and them alone, because this communication is an individual matter. Photography as a phenomenon is universal, but as a reality it is individual; it is even so when there is a clear connection between the author and spectator. Both have a point of contact from distant positions: the ones which give each of them their specific place in the memory itself.

Analyses of "how it was done" or "where it came from" are not pertinent to the photographic object, to date. They are rather questions related to the process. It is so "novel" to relate it to the object, the message's support, that it is hard to link it to photography, in the sense that the direct line between what is seen and what is recognised has been resounding. When the object is not evident it is as though we were reinventing photography, it seems like everything must be explained once again; the spectator ends up out of place, without knowing what to say, do or feel. They need a period of assimilation before beginning to "see"; once they accept what is before them, once they've understood what a different photographic work is and not just a photographic work which employs direct code, the waters return to their bed. It is that simple.

They will accept that the camera is no longer obvious in the capture, as it is in all realist conceptions. Its shadow

appears to lack importance, the point of view is an angle which is created and allotted at will; it cannot be precisely known where it comes from. The whole scene is creation.

We will continue to read and hear simple relationships of photography, as art, to anything which has something to do with a box with a lens at the front; but I feel sufficiently satisfied when a minimum of common sense reaches me from any corner of this paradise.

Having reached this point, what remains is to remember the past in order to immediately forget it each time we take a step towards the future. The past is our support, but it must not be what holds us back.

The history of photography is written every day, but it also starts again/from scratch every day.

Some time ago, with a painting on the wall of his cavehouse, some distant great-grandfather got us into the whirlpool of the image, helping us to come out of ignorance and placed the first cornerstone of culture.

With each step we take imitating his action, his children's children are coming out of our own cave.

Everything we have developed internally thanks to our visual synthesis must open the doors to new intellectual territories for us. It is not about looking, registering or observing, but about coming to "see".

Which will be our traces on the walls? The images of these visions!

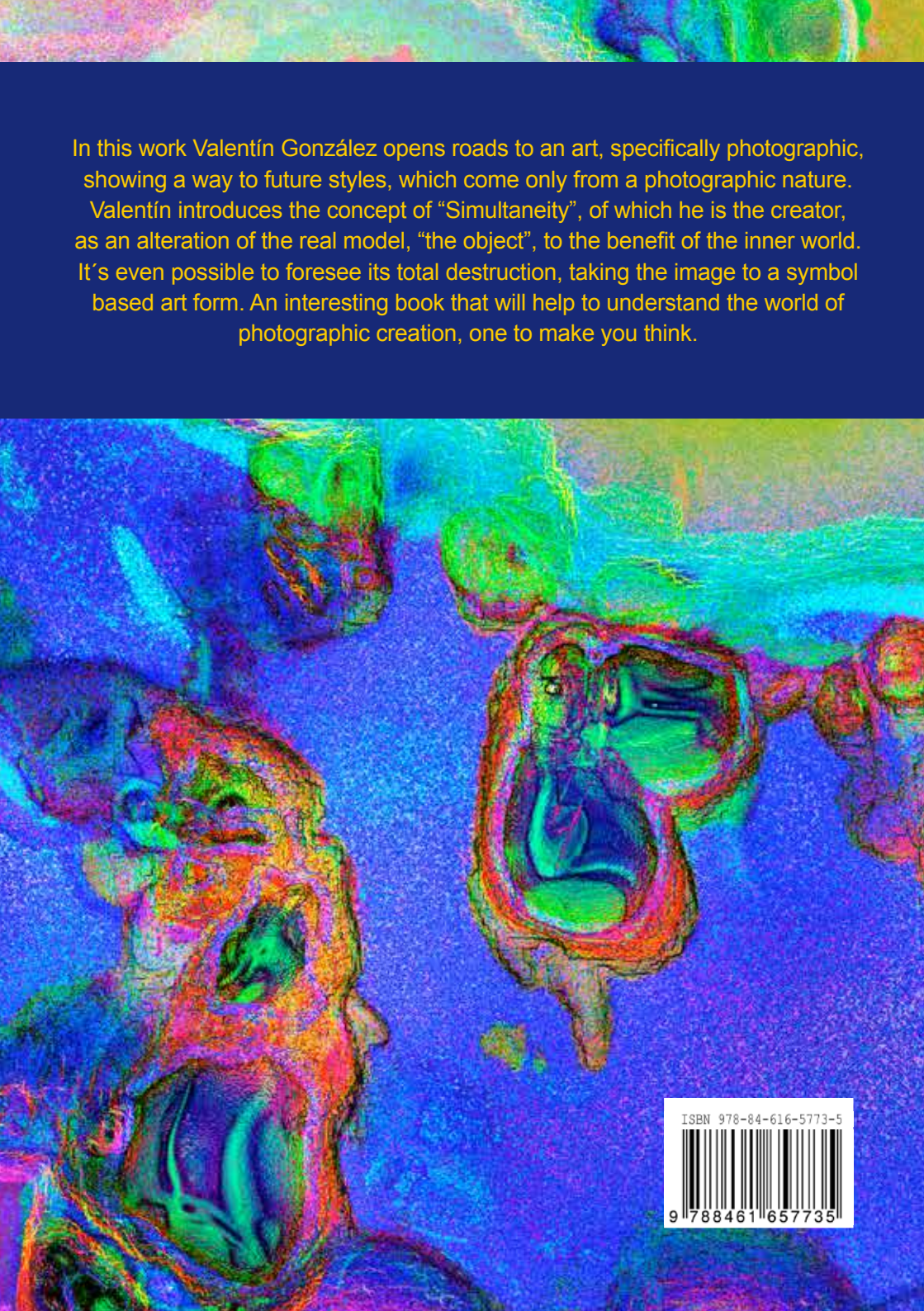
Let nothing close our eyes!

This is a photographic book, yet without images and no reference to technique, but it is full of photographic spirit and breathes art.

It makes an analysis on today's photographic art, how it is now, the circumstances that led to this moment and the future possibilities.

It reveals to creators an alternative way to the realism, with which photography had been associated from its birth, making a breakthrough into the worlds and abilities of expression that had been left hidden linking photography with the representation of that evidence, since for the author, "evidence is only the mask of reality".

EDICIONES
FERRAMULÍN, S.L.



In this work Valentín González opens roads to an art, specifically photographic, showing a way to future styles, which come only from a photographic nature. Valentín introduces the concept of “Simultaneity”, of which he is the creator, as an alteration of the real model, “the object”, to the benefit of the inner world. It’s even possible to foresee its total destruction, taking the image to a symbol based art form. An interesting book that will help to understand the world of photographic creation, one to make you think.

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