

Argumenta

Please do not show my face

I'm tired
I look older than I really am
when I call my family
I tell that everything is fine

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Descrivere è ora tutto. Non ha più senso raccontare, non continuo;
oppure continuo a raccontare, però non lo mostro.

Mostrare è mostruoso.

Tell, don't show.

Giuseppe Genna, *La vita umana sul pianeta terra*

Le jeu du golf n'est pas plus indigne que la photographie.

*Le joueur de golf veut aussi cadrer une forme géométrique
(le trou) et la cibler avec une balle.*

Parfois de très loin, parfois de très près.

turning all of us
into foreign readers

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PROLEGOMENA

Sébastien Louis is an history and sociology teacher at European School in Luxembourg and two years ago he invites me to join his educational trip to Dunkerque and Calais. You could shoot some portraits, he says.

Portraits? Migrants' faces?

Why am I here?

I used to live few steps away from Jaurès metro station, an area where afghan migrants camp and to live, on their way to England. It is the same area where Philippe Bazin have worked to his project *Dans Paris*. Many times I thought that I could set my *Global Portrait Factory* (a free photo studio in public places) on the Rotonde de Jaurès and maybe also offer a portrait to migrants. Was I that naïf to think that a portrait could have been useful for a migrant? Was I searching for a fast way to add political value to my work?

I don't know. Anyway, never done.

Sébastien aims to make his pupils think about migration by bringing them on one of most crowded migration routes in Europe. But in fact they already come from a migration site. Their parents, as well as half of Luxembourg inhabitants, have moved there to find an employment in European institutions or in one of the innumerable private companies. But they barely represent themselves as migrants. They are just European people catching job opportunities.

Why am I here? Portraits?

My work is to write biography and go beyond thresholds. And I am also a migrant. I am not in the place I am supposed to be, I'm writing in a language I am not supposed to know.

And I am now writing in English because I'm a foreign reader.

This work was born in English. English is the most common language used by successful European migrants. Pupils involved in this school trip, bilingual or even trilingual in most of the cases, usually use English as vehicular language. Eventually, English is the language we spoke with people we met in Calais and Dunquerke. Young and not so young people coming from different countries outside Europe dominate a quite fluent English, good enough not to be that alien people in Europe. English is the most democratic language, as Mariavita Cambria would say. But English is also the tip of the iceberg of migrants' stories: under the English language you will find Italian, Greek, Turkish and so many other languages spoken in countries where migrants passed by during their journey. This personal linguistic archive is the perfect mirror of every migrant's personal archive containing a story (with pictures) that I could never tell.

Please do not show my face I'm tired I look older than I really am when I call my family I tell that everything is fine n'est pas une série sur la migration, sur les migrants, sur Calais ou Dunkerque, des choses, toutes, dont finalement je sais assez peu. Je voudrais plutôt que ce soit une réflexion sur la notion de regard, sur ce que cela pourrait vouloir dire connaître quelque chose, la raconter, la représenter par la photographie, se référer au genre documentaire.

Je voudrais que ce soit un une manière de juger (*to proceed*, comme en informatique) mon propre regard, ma propre capacité d'établir une relation avec le réel. Je ne vois finalement que des formes, je ne sais pas faire autre chose que cadrer des formes dans une autre forme, celle du viseur. Exactement comme un joueur de golf (je fais référence au golf à cause de cette photographie prise par un photographe espagnol, José Palazón, et qui est devenue rapidement une icône de la photographie néo-humaniste. Le Courrier International, le 23/108/2014, écrit: Melilla : la grille de la honte. L'image diffusée le 22 octobre d'une golfeuse poursuivant son jeu alors qu'une dizaine de migrants sont accrochés à la clôture frontalière qui longe le terrain provoque l'indignation, et suscite le débat quant à l'emplacement de ce luxueux club de golf. - *Et le photographe poursuivant son jeu alors qu'une dizaine de migrants sont accrochés à la clôture frontalière qui longe le terrain? Pour quelle raison il est meilleur que la golfeuse?*)

Peut-on raconter, avec les images, quelque chose? Pouvons-nous archiver un monde qui n'est pas le notre? Peut-on dignement parler au nom de quelqu'un d'autre? Y a-t-il autre chose qu'une obsession formelle devant la douleur des autres?

C sont toujours les autres qui jouent au golf.

Je voudrais que cette série ne soit pas stable. Je voudrais qu'elle augmente à chaque nouvelle fois que je participerai à ce voyage scolaire. Je voudrais qu'elle ne soit pas séparée du processus qui l'a engendrée, qui est justement ce voyage.

Le titre est d'ailleurs une phrase qui m'a véritablement été adressée lors d'une discussion dans un des camps visités: il m'a donc explicitement été demandé de ne pas graver le corps du migrant qui, en tant que tel, est normalement objet de représentation. Je voudrais que la lecture de cette série comporte l'idée que les images ont macéré plus de deux ans dans un dossier dans l'ordinateur avant que je puisse les regarder. La matière électronique est incorruptible en apparence, mais il s'agit d'une matière quand même, et en tant que telle, elle subit des modifications. Même le regard la modifie. Je voudrais que les images, leur disposition, leur séquence, leur existence même, puissent être le moteur constant d'un processus discussion, de travail, de mise en relation, de modification, de réécriture. Même de re-traitement.

Comme toujours, malgré mes intentions, les images peuvent peut-être révéler des choses, des empreintes, des traces, des ruines, des espaces. Je pousse à l'extrême la possibilité technique de mettre en valeur des détails, utilisant la fonction CLARTÉ du laboratoire numérique.

Mais il est possible que finalement on ne voie rien, et qu'il ne reste que l'obsession formelle qui s'ajoute à sa propre trace biographique.

Si sta come
d'autunno
sugli alberi
le foglie

Please do not show my face I'm tired I look older than I really am when I call my family I tell that everything is fine is not a work about migration or migrants, or about Calais and Dunquerque. I still do not know that much about all these things. I rather think about it as a way of thinking about the idea of how to look at things. Starting from documentary photography practice I would like to ask: to know something, to tell about it, to depict it in photography, what all that could mean?

I would like to process (like in ITC) my own gaze, my ability to establish a relationship with reality. Eventually, I'm not able to see more than shapes, I'm not able to do more than framing a shape in another shape, the viewfinder's one. Exactly like a golf player (I'm referring here to golf because of the iconic photo by José Palazón, in Melilla. Why a photographer is morally better than a golf player?).

Are we able to tell about something using images? How to archive a world that isn't ours? Can we speak with any dignity on behalf of someone else? Is there anything other than a formal obsession when confronted with someone else's suffering?

Please do not show my face should be a not stable and not complete series. I would like to modify it any time I will get involved in the school trip that has generated it.

The title is exactly what I have been told during a talk with a young migrant in Calais. I have been clearly told to not record migrants' body. His ontological status of "object of depiction" has been refused.

Any reading of this series should contain the idea that I let the images steep more than two years in a file in the computer before looking at them. The electronic matter is seemingly incorruptible, but it is in fact a matter and as such, it undergoes modifications. Even the look modifies it. All pictures, their arrangement, their sequence, their existence, should be the constant engine of a process of discussion, of work, of modificatio and rewriting. Even of reprocessing of postproduction.

As usual, in spite of my intentions, the images can maybe reveal things, imprints, tracks, ruins and spaces. I take fully advantage of the technical possibility of emphasizing details, using the function "clarity" of the digital laboratory. But, probably, eventually anything is visible, and there is only a formal obsession combined with my own biographical track.

Chapters

1.

This is also Europe.

New living districts, car parks, disused industrial sites.

2.

It is all about thresholds and borders.

People's faces are thresholds. We trespass on borders.

3.

Spaces.

4.

I am obsessed by shapes. Why? Why should I see design in every thing?

5.

Archaeology. Through the camps.

People. Transitional shelters. Tracks, trails, footprints, marks.

6.

Post photography: an obvious question arises, could the processing of low-key outdoor photographs be simplified and streamlined? An elegantly executed clarity adjustment, not only corrects the perceptual contrast issues, but can be used as a powerful agent to achieve an interesting and intriguing look, very often enhancing the overall drama of the image. Finally, Clarity combined with contrast adjustment can be used as a creative mean to turn a flat and dull image, into a dramatic fine art composition.

do not cross
ne pas franchir

ghosts
behind
bushes

di defilarsi, di incrociare le braccia, di lasciar cadere il vecchio mondo, di destituirlo. Di rimanere anche, finalmente, muti. Oppure di pronunciare frasi incomprensibili alle orecchie dei più. Una babele operaia, oggi, è tutto questo. È una radura con delle capsule e delle cucine improvvisate ai margini delle megalopoli - la spiaggia di Calais, ad esempio - uno sciopero selvaggio dei lavoratori migranti cinesi, una piazza di una città occidentale, occupata da tende, canzoni e sorrisi, piena di rovine del passato, in cui ogni cosa potrà cominciare.

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