

Campos de Batalla

Space was treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile.

Time, on the contrary, was richness, fecundity, life, dialectic.

Michel Foucault

History is usually treated as a succession of facts and events linked in time. A date and the name of a place become lodged in the collective memory, appropriating and coming to symbolise the geographical space and the event itself. Meanwhile the actual site or terrain, crucial stage for the passage of events, remains still, hidden.

Approaching landscape from the point of view of experience, considering it whilst bringing to mind what happened there, allows us - interpreting traces embedded at the site and in our memory - to develop and build our own way of seeing it. *Battlefields* involves an encounter with places marked by History, where thousands of people clashed and died violently. Divided into three sections, ***Spain, Europe and Overseas***, the project sets out to explore through the landscape the complex relationships existing historically between the different European countries, from the time of their birth as nations to the conquest and eventual independence of the New World colonies.

Taking the pictoric representation of battles as an aesthetic and conceptual point of departure, the scope of our project is defined by the first written accounts of war and the first photographs taken to document it.

Spain

The painting *The battle of Almansa* was commissioned in 1709 by Philip V, in the midst of the War of the Spanish Succession, and illustrates the unfolding and outcome of the confrontation barely two years earlier. As all commemorative painting, it is both document and propaganda. Not for nothing did monarchs frequently commission such work which, alongside engravings and written accounts, established the desired reading of events and ensured they would be remembered thus. A panoramic view, the canvas showed a scene rich in topographic detail, with the different regiments drawn up neatly in ordered fashion, the whole completed by a long and descriptive legend.

The representation of the landscape and the idea of the journey are consistent elements in our work. Taking the Iberian Peninsula as a geographical, social and political framework, we began to look afresh at the land that we had travelled through so many times. Immersed in their everyday reality, bare hillsides, broad plains or simple fields of crops make up the contemporary terrain of what was once the battlefield, where traces of the past are hardly to be seen. Following the lead of the painted battle scenes, we use a panoramic view and colour to (re)present the landscape; identifying the event and the historical moment which the photograph refers to by the insertion of a short text at the foot of the image.

Europe

Waterloo is not a battle, it is a change of front on the part of the Universe.

Les Misérables. Víctor Hugo.

Napoleon's imperialist dreams were shattered, once and for all, on the battlefield. This was nothing new, the same ambitions had been crushed before in the same way. The idea of "imperium mundi" is integral to the history of a continent woven by war and devastation.

After the decisive battle at Waterloo, William I ordered the construction of a great monument to symbolize the victory of the European monarchy over the Napoleonic empire, creating an enormous mound of earth on the site – as if a tumulus – crowned by a mighty lion cast in bronze. The material to build this extraordinary construction was taken from the battlefield, completely altering

its elevation: the process of monumentalisation destroyed the very aspects of the site which had been decisive in battle.

Marathon, Trafalgar, Hastings and Waterloo are all names associated in memory with the particular landscapes they evoke. Arenas for the evolution of European geography, where confrontations took place as its different nations tried to push the boundaries of their territory, or struggled to defend their independence. Revisiting the great sites of European history we discovered how, in an attempt to recall the past, the landscape becomes a monument. Places of pilgrimage where space is the monument and where time seems to have been put on hold.

Overseas

Men travelled; but with them also went their goods, cultural artefacts both of everyday usage and more unexpected. These move constantly, alongside man.

Fernand Braudel

With the birth of modern Europe came the first Atlantic explorations. These early expeditions, at first of a commercial nature, quickly developed into the invasion and conquest of the native lands of the New World, beginning a process of colonial expansion that would profoundly transform the old continent. This shift of world order would culminate in the late 18th century with the spread of Enlightenment ideas and the burgeoning of revolutionary movements. As men travelled, so did their ideas. Ideas that came from Europe and against her will, filled the air with the scent of independence.

This last section of work dedicated to the lands ‘Overseas’ tackles the complex task of retracing and representing the vast American landscape. With the battlefields as theme, we visited places where history had been staged. The way we see the American landscape is heavily influenced by the way it has been represented, particularly via photography and its relationship with the idea of the journey. As mentioned earlier, the journey has been a consistent and very important thread in the development of our work. In an effort to see the various landscapes of our memory, our history, afresh, we physically traversed geographical space - from the closest and best known, to the most distant places. From the fields of Castile to the lands *Overseas*.