

El Balletero, 1992 - La Huesera, mayo del 722

Given that the object of history, as a theoretical image, is that which has taken place (detached from both the present and the future), time belongs, in any event, to the most decisive constituent parts of its concept.

Georg Simmel¹

Prior to the *Campos de batalla* [Battle Fields] series, María Bleda and José María Rosa carried out another series, devoted to *Campos de fútbol* [Football Pitches]. Familiarity with this first series is not a prerequisite for taking pleasure in the magnificent views of landscapes/passages of history we are offered in the battles, yet they do form part of a common project which is enriched by the comparison, without losing its conceptual and thematic individuality.

Both series propose reflections on Time in the unique space of history, and remind us of Walter Benjamin's concept of **now**, as defined by Gurméndez: "Time is not what has already occurred, nor what still remains, it is our location in itself, which contains the past and, in its present, prefigures the future."² The images conceived by Bleda and Rosa are not representations but reconstructions of reality, in another time, which in turn are brought up to date by the individual time of the glance of various spectators. In this way they are able to overcome the anecdotal "decisive moment", which seems to be intended for photography, whose present can only exist as an image of a past.

For the comprehension of these images does not derive from what one sees, but from what one does not see yet presumes is there; Time, as continuity of daily occurrence and of the oneness of historical events suggested by the names of the battles.

As their authors have noted, both series evince the presence of absence. Bleda and Rosa previously identify the places of the game and of the war, rendering the feeling of action in distance, in solitudes. The adolescent clamour and the row of the fighting cease, to give way to calmness and silence. They are not interested in the scene's individual subjects, more appropriate to a pictorial practice of a commemorative nature, but rather in the repose that enables a better appreciation of the traces of the process of development. They have emptied the *fields* in the way theatre stages are emptied after each performance, giving way to the silent moment, the pause in which a new future unrolls.

All the images are enlivened by a strictly geometrical method of composition, although one which serves two different glances. The basic structures of the goals are thrown into relief above a horizon that acts as a frame, transforming them into the portrayed motif concentrating the first glance. In the panoramic images of the battle fields, both the duplication of the "scene" in one single structure, and the sharp lines of the horizon uniting the principal volumes, direct an expanded glance that concentrates slowly on the details that rest upon the volumes.

The intimate feeling for the subjective ordinary time of the football pitches gives way to an epic feeling for the historic time of the battles, despite the apparent contradiction of the former being photographed in very toned-down yet smooth black and white, and the latter in colour with

occasional wounding contrasts of light and shadow. Perhaps an ultimate proof of the independence of photographic images in relation to the photographed world.

The goals of the football pitches, grounds which are almost always situated on the outskirts of built-up areas - borders between the "civilized" and the "wild" - assume an iconic nature as examples of an anonymous archaeology. Converted into symbols of deterioration, facing the smoky profiles of urban shanty towns, their wooden or metal structures are only one part of an unfinished landscape, in continual transformation. The artists have recognised Bernd and Hilla Becher as referents in this first work, and as the Germans used water deposits, cooling towers or grain silos, Bleda and Rosa compose images for an archive of a past that is disappearing before the disproportionate activity of the present. Omitted presences in a world inhabited by realities of no duration, which seem to carry the seed of their obsolescence from the time of birth.

The delimitation of the sites and their identification in the *Battle Fields* series are also expressed in images of a historic continuum, for the landscape remains while the human action taking place in it is the only variable factor.

As in the previous grounds of play, the sites of war - transformed into roads, dams or fields of crops - function as allegories of a social landscape in which we are all depicted.

Seeing, for Bleda and Rosa, is a way of feeling. In their landscapes the epic comes close to the ordinary, the social is confused with the pictorial, nature exists side by side with art, details converse with the horizon and memory is constructed with past and future imprints.

Based, composition-wise, on a formal minimalism, their images constitute **expressive spaces** that surpass the quality of objects placed in the world, spaces whose reality - Time - is not exhausted in its visual relationship with the spectator. They do not speak to the eye-as-machine, but rather to the eye-as-body of he/she who speaks, fights, walks, remembers, desires and above all, feels time not in a homogeneous empty way but as **now-time**, ready to renew itself each second.

Nuria Enguita

¹Simmel, G: *El problema del tiempo histórico*, EL INDIVIDUO Y LA LIBERTAD. Ensayos de crítica de la cultura, Ediciones Península, March 1986, p. 77.

²Gurméndez, C: *Dialéctica del presente*, EL PAÍS, 4th November 1996, p. 16.