Arnaud Rodriguez
A Place of Absence

Self-introduction

I'm a self taught photographer practicing the art since 2003. I have more than fifteen solo and group exhibitions to my credit.

The images I collect are accumulated in my online journal. Over time, I curate my work and represent them under various themes and series showcasing the deeper meaning and perspectives they offer. From 2011 to 2017, Japan became a rich photographic ground to practice and deepen my art. I then explored other places paving the way for numerous photographic directions.

Besides photography, I like to multiply creative experiences alone or with other artists. I mainly love writing and I appreciate mixing texts and images in my projects. In 2024, my first book, *Présence*, which explores the delicate tension between what is said and unsaid, was published by Labyrinthes Editions.

Selected exhibitions

Rose is... (Group Exhibition)
2024 // Campus Condorcet, Aubervilliers
> Curator: Kévin Bideaux

Ce lieu de l'absence de nous
2023 // Maison Bourbon, Bordeaux

Le Temps d'un souffle
2022 // La Machine à Lire, Bordeaux

Japan in Architecture (Group Exhibition)
2018 // Mori Art Museum, Tokyo
> Collaboration with Christian Merlhiot

#Home
2017 // Nishinoyama House, Kyoto

Every Day
2016 // Totousha, Kyoto
> As part of the festival KG+

Hikari
2016 // Musée d'Aquitaine, Bordeaux
> Duo exhibition with Ferrante Ferranti

Les Heures latentes (Group Exhibition)
2013 // Galerie Vivoequidem, Paris
> Curator: Fabien Danesi

Creative motivation

What drives me most in photography — and in my other artistic endeavors — is the act of searching. What I search for is shaped by a constant drift in my perspective and approach. This drift, after 20 years of photography, has resulted in a rich diversity of works and paths explored.

For a long time, I sought to capture nothingness in the insignificant, overlooked, and fleeting moments of our transient lives. I still chase this "nothingness"— what it might convey, how it might move us, or how it might remain utterly silent.

Japan moved to a rhythm different from my own. I pushed myself to follow strangers, and I returned again and again, persistent, patient, to explore the quiet nights, playgrounds or facades.

Over time, my journal and images took on a new, more intimate shape. With pictures I captured, I sought to uncover stories: the weight of the past, the sorrow of lost loves.

More recently, my drift has led me toward portraiture and the naked form. In these images, I found myself confronting my own reflections. I also experimented with censorship, introducing graphic elements into nude compositions.

Today, my creative joy lies in the impossible convergence of all these scattered explorations. My photography exists somewhere between chance and purpose, between what it shows, what it seeks to say — sometimes nothing — and the places it comes from. I don’t know where it’s going, and that, for me, is its greatest allure.

Photo series: *A Place of Absence*

On September 21, 2017, I arrived in Chile for a month. The main reason for my stay was a writing project about my paternal grandfather, who fled Spain in 1939 and who passed away before I was born. One part of this book diverges from reality, imagining what might have happened if he had moved to Chile: I was there to write this story.

Most of my time was spent in Arica, a port city of 240,000 people located in the driest region on Earth. In 1939, this city became the first stop for the *Winnipeg*, a ship chartered by Pablo Neruda to transport Spanish refugees. Twenty-four of them disembarked there before the *Winnipeg* continued to Valparaíso. Arica is a place of exile, a place where I imagined exile.

But writing collided with this city facing the desert: photography took over. I looked at this city that could have been his, that could have been mine, yet I couldn't see myself in its streets. My grandfather and I could not exist there together: there was no "us."

Upon my return to France, I came across Georges Perec's expression "a place of absence of place", used in reference to Ellis Island, which hosted an immigrant reception center in New York from 1892 to 1954. Arica then transformed in my mind into "a place of the absence of us"... and ultimately, a place of absence. Absence of rain, of course. Absence of us, of me.

This series, beyond its desert landscapes and its colourful facades, questions photography: can it be a place of absence, or a place born out of absence?

Personal information

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