

Réalités éphémères

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Abstract. These "RÉALITÉS ÉPHÉMÈRES" are not just the result of a photographer's work; they are the fruit of a process of reflection that gradually took shape over the course of the photographs taken. It began with an aesthetic search and ended with a questioning of the consequences of grafting a multifactorial parergon, both natural and human, onto a simple advertising poster. Why, or in what way are these factors more questioning than others about our hyperconsumerist tendencies? What impact do these RÉALITÉS ÉPHÉMÈRES have on our economic, social, philosophical or artistic awareness of the world we live in? That's what Jean-Philippe Ritz is trying to answer.

1 How did these "Réalités éphémères" come about?

These "Réalités éphémères" (ephemeral realities) were born out of a decade of urban wandering. I was looking for advertising posters and graffiti degraded by harsh exposure conditions that released aesthetic emotions in me. These materials, the product of a consumerist, individualistic society, left me skeptical, to say the least. How could these glued, wet, discolored, torn papers, which had lost their original lustre, once again offer themselves to artistic astonishment? Why did this worn, stained graffiti metamorphose into a reinvented urban language? These remnants were distorting their original messages and achieving a more expressive quality. Touched by their new-found beauty, I decided to photograph them.

2 What is the creative process?

An exchange takes place between the image and my eye. It's a more or less conscious moment, but a necessary one.

When the image/photographer agreement is reached, time stands still. But not before. The photographic gesture gives these posters and graffiti a second-chance aesthetic.

This approach is based on a chronology that is the opposite of that used by some artists, who create a body. These remnants were distorting their original messages and achieving a more expressive quality. Touched by their new-found beauty, I decided to photograph them. of work destined to rub up against time, without a

precise stop date. For me, time is first and foremost at work, and I intervene by stopping its action.

3 What's the link between aesthetics and chance?

Like Jackson Pollock, who said "to express one's feelings, rather than to illustrate them", my artistic approach aims to capture this chance, these accidental images, without any staging other than the framing of my emotion, without post-processing or other artificial editing. I have a fully-fledged partner (time, weather...) who unravels these layers of posters, who transcends these graffiti, until I freeze them in these "Ephemeral Realities". Chance works in the shadows, mute, creating the object. My role is to reveal its aesthetic value: I find, therefore I am.

4 Doesn't this second-chance aesthetic also reflect a certain skepticism about consumer society?

I only discovered the work of poster artists Raymond Hains, Jacques Mahé de la Villeglé and François Dufrêne at the end of my collection of images. I share the same basic material provided by the street and associate myself with their denunciations of the consumer society, since aggravated by hyperconsumerism.

My work differs in the selection and processing of images. I don't intervene in any way other than by placing my gaze on these "optical objects", unlike the "Affichistes", who picked them, tore them up, lacerated them and made inclusions in them.

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I'm interested above all in the thickness of the strata and the state of disintegration, which must have reached its peak. This accumulation of advertising messages sounds like an inaudible bludgeoning, whose ephemeral nature underlines its indigence.

5 Portraits or women's souls?

What does a damaged poster say about its original subject? What remains of the consumer muse when her face superimposes another symbolic universe on this initial advertising identity? An ambivalence is born, stripping away the veneer of the first discourse, but revealing other messages.

Whereas the idealized beauty of advertising acted as a narcissistic seduction, consecrating the triumph of appearances, the same face, damaged by its exposure to the street, reveals its soul.

5.1 Urban Mona Lisa

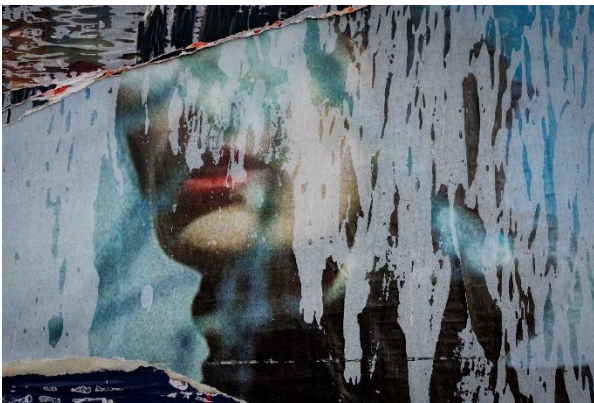


Fig. 1. Urban Mona Lisa

In the famous third of the photo, a face emerges from an academic construction, or, more disturbingly, a kissing red mouth. It's this mouth that draws us into the picture, giving it a soft, sensual connotation. A well-structured lower face also appears. Do these two elements belong to the realm of the real, like a face we come across, or to the realm of dreams?

As soon as we leave this stage of the identifiable, the tangle, whose colors are warm, we enter a universe of cold colors - blues, greens - or contrasting colors - browns, gray-whites.

And we move from a figurative representation to an abstract work, made of drips and reflections that take us into the world of the imagination. Does this lady emerge from the waves? Is she an undine, a water genie, or a drowned corpse already in the process of decomposition? Her blood-red lips tell us she's alive.

Let's take a closer look at her mouth. It's half-open. Is she smiling, like the Mona Lisa, or talking to us? As we gaze at her vermilion lips, our field of vision reveals a diagonal orange line above her face, the only chromatic echo of her mouth.

Discontinuous, this demarcation is born of accumulated layers of paper that a tear has uncovered. It is this tearing

that is the act of creation of this photo thus revealed, offering a breath of air, a new life, to the one we now identify as a mannequin.

The weather has blurred and partially distorted her face, transforming her into a fallen woman, or rather a priestess of the present day. Her mouth would tell us of seductive advertising, while her blind eyes would warn us of the illusion of consumerism.

5.2 Elixir of Youth



Fig. 2. Elixir of Youth

This elegant hatted woman came to meet me, emerging in her three-dimensionality from a wall where she'd been plastered. Sacralized by her white headdress, softened by the rosy hue of her bodice, she had the tanned complexion of those who deserve a vacation. She had matched her terra cotta lipstick to her outfit, in a perfection full of soft harmonies.

Why had she suddenly turned her face towards me? I searched for her identity, in a few black letters that seemed to designate her at the bottom of the picture. All I could make out was "ON". Indefinite pronoun.

Then, raising my eyes, I followed a long black furrow that led me to the other part of her face, which I hadn't seen at first glance. A wide, dark burn had reduced her flesh and led me to a glassy, puffy eye.

Her skin had lost its youthfulness, in a multitude of folds that in cosmetic parlance are called wrinkles. In her

withered flesh, she suddenly reminded me of Rodin's terrible work "Celle qui fut la Belle Heaulmière".

And to my lips came these words (adapted) from Alain Souchon:

"When I'm knocked out/Down from the photo sets. / Pushed down/By those more beautiful and stronger than me /Will you still love me/ In this little death

When I'm an apple / In memories and albums / Will you leave / Your hand like this / Will you still love me / In this little death / "

The magic virtue of tenderness...

5.3 The target woman



Fig. 3. The target woman

If the art of photography is a hunt, this partially concealed woman is the target. Her head, perfectly centered, throws itself back, supported by a deployed throat that opens up to sensuality. Don't you just want to place a kiss on it?

Her color has the eroticism of flesh, a soft ochre envelope. She's dressed in a camel knit that, at first glance, is mistaken for a naked body, offered to pleasure. In perfect framing, her shoulders, in profile, hollow out the depth.

But suddenly this body in perspective instills doubt and changes the reading of the image into a feminine "Ecce

homo". Is this lover a woman in the sweetness of an embrace, or in the pain of a Way of the Cross? Is her abandonment passion or Passion? Is she a fulfilled woman or an abused one, doomed to the torments of the body trade? The ambivalence of the feminine condition.

All around her, a grid of gray characters suggests a message delivered, but erased. A logorrhea from which finally emerges a clue, lettering of the kind Picasso left in his fragmented cubist paintings: PARIS, written in capital letters. In a swift back-and-forth, we return to the city of Love, attaching ourselves to this joyous proof, which we could well see confirmed in the fresh blue and green colors that illuminate the top of the image, drawing an Île de la Cité, inserted into the two arms of the Seine.

Scene of happiness.