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VISUAL ESSAY

## THE SEARCH FOR A HYPOTHESIS-IMAGE

FERNANDO MARANTE



Movement, duration and accumulation are manifestations of time. Time flows voraciously, unravelling an endless line of perpetual “nows”. It’s a powerful abstraction and yet we feel it in every aspect of our lives and thoughts. We may consider it a constant (modern physics doesn’t) but our psychological perception allows us to slow it down or speed it up. Cutting a long story short, photography is often presented as a time slicing device, a solution that could domesticate the flow. Finally, the battle against the ever-escaping present could be won but, as always, things turn out to be more complicated. The first emulsions weren’t sensible enough to freeze movement. The results were images of streets without people, blurred portraits, or simply unrecognisable scenes. The photographic apparatus, a victim of its limitations, was offering images of accumulation. And that was new.

This brings us to what drives my work. If we experience time as an uninterrupted fugue and know that the photographic device allows us, in a certain degree, to capture that movement, then how can we use it to reveal the lingering of things around us? In other words, what do we do to find the images that we suppose to exist in-between the thin slices of existence offered to us by snapshots? This is an unending task that aims to solve an unsolvable problem: creating a visual manifestation of an idea, by transferring a speculation born out of language into a medium that belongs to the world of the senses. To bridge the two realities, every series I create starts with a possibility: What happens if I subject a certain object to a certain time-related reaction? For the process to start, I build temporary devices to induce movement to pieces of paper, plastic, glass, metal cables or lights, using electrical motors, wind fans or my own body. I often dance while manipulating the



objects, changing with it the exposure times (or multiple stroboscopic exposures).

The process often becomes self-sufficient, carving its own way. Like a spectator, my task is to wait for an image to happen, fishing for results. Not surprisingly, those results tend to be something other than expected. It's a very unstable operation, a territory of error and unpredictability. This machine, fed by uncontrollable variables, generates what I call hypothesis-images, possible answers to the questions I pose throughout my body of work about the manifestations of time.

Most of the images in this visual essay show the middle stages of the process. They still disclose the devices that I usually erase from the final photographs, but they don't yet show the interventions made after the shooting, either handcrafted (like printing in hand painted papers) or digitally drawn over the images. I'm interested in creating in the eyes of the viewer the perception that there is a process. In the end, each image is a map of the decisions I took while creating them and that is the only narrative I allow in my photographs.

As in most of the experimental photographic practices, the subject of my work is the process itself. My series are about the semantics and the syntax of the images and how they become necessarily contaminated by my private formal obsessions with repetition, variations, distention and accumulation. For me, rather than a destination, the photographic device is a tool, like a pencil or a chisel. I'm not worried if the images I create look like photographs and I do not have a fetishism with the medium. Thanks to post-photography, that seems no longer to be a problem. What drives me is approaching the possibilities of the materials, questioning the mechanics of visibility while exploring what remains between the possible and the desired.















































