

## Inhabit Life

### The visual dissection of the world in the photographs of Yepo

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They talked about everything except themselves. They were naked, Ricardo let his hand pass over Elaine's belly, her fingers combed his lank hair, and they spoke of intentions and projects, convinced, as only new lovers can be, that saying what a person wants is like saying who he is.

Juan Gabriel Vásquez  
*El ruido de las cosas al caer*

*Everything that is solid is pure desire.*

Thomas Hartford  
*Des-variaciones*

This is the account of how all was in suspense, all calm, in silence;

Popol Vuh  
*Chapter 1st*

I found the elements needed to understand *Habitáculos Visuales* (Visual Dwellings), the recent photographic work of Raúl Yépez "Yepo", photographer and architect, in an exchange of ideas about jazz with the theorist and literary critic Michael Handelsmann. The reading that Handelsmann makes of Miles Davis' autobiography, and the appeal that Davis makes in it to the musician Charlie "Bird" Parker who defended the right to follow impulse at the expense of script, give us the key to investigate in the visual sense this series of photographs which are assembled from two or even three images.

Just as Charlie "Bird" Parker was able to blow up jazz with experimentalism between 1935 and 1955, Yepo's *Habitáculos Visuales* project risks from a complex (re)assembly, the bringing together of that which, in principle, cannot be combined, owing to a naturalized law in the regime of representation that would suggest a rigid taxonomy which separates and classifies the world into materials, textures, colors, bodies, forms, gestures and

sizes that would exclude each one from the other. Yepo informs us of such boundaries to stare boldly into them and overcome them through countless poetic gestures that bring bodies to the light, desire to the shade and space to the vacuum.

The first phase of the project comes to us through the photographer's calculated move through different territories, urban and natural. His travels are not just simple transits, which seek to know and portray the world; his is a strategy that breaks down the world and its infinity of unsuspecting edges into precise segments. The result is an extensive series of detailed visual planes that Yepo subsequently puts together from the stillness of his work desk, gathering up or confronting flows and movements, colors and contrasts, vectors and points, absences and names, wishes and memories, gestures and saturations, textures and temperatures,...

For this, his battlefield moves into the frame in which a refined and thoughtful composition reorders the world into its infinitesimal combination of tiny geometric, chromatic, psychological and dreamlike details. And it's not that Yepo is recreating the world. He doesn't even register it. His is a meticulous measurement that discovers inch by inch the tiny circular, triangular, trapezoidal, molecular structures, keystrokes that make up life and the spaces we have built in order to inhabit them in the most carnal and passionate sense of the term.

Yepo's strategy to reinvent the world involves appropriating the visual montage technique, a cinematographic strategy that consists in managing the order and duration of the various planes of which the cameraman has portrayed multiple facets of reality. Following Sergei Eisenstein, the legendary master of film editing, the final union of two planes on the assembly table does not imply a total summation, but, and almost unexpectedly, suggests something new that profoundly challenges reality. However, the fictional character of his work does not make the representation impossible.

The exact and precise merging of the various components, which are removed from the world, appear like a puzzle whose pieces have been dispersed by a Borgian labyrinth. The line through the combination of planes is not just a line that unites different points with a certain curvature, but the sharp and accurate projection of a sensitive eye on the world of objects and desires,

forms and impulses. Such stitching, powerful and invisible at the same time, brings together the edge of a shadow with the edge of a body, the unfinished space with the desire for the sea or sky or both. It is a magical gesture that suggests a complex interweaving with which to rethink the world.

Face/Light/Shadow/Sossusvlei/Desert/Namibia/Africa.  
Reflection/Extension/Twilight/Salar/Uyuni/Bolivia.  
Dune/Daybreak/Wind/Sossusvlei/Namibia/África.  
Woman/Buying and selling/Nakedness/Exhibit/Offer/Hide.  
Desire/Discern/Yearning/Green/To float.

This strategy extends to the key words with which Yepo names his montages. The phrases, built with the same precision as that which beveled the images, propose a sensitive tissue composed of visual/architectural/intellectual references (Cláudio Naves/Oscar Niemeyer/Hubert van Doorne/Dom Bosco/ ...), all kinds of places (desert/center/national park / museum / ...) in different regions of a world traveled and listened to (Brazil/Ecuador/Namibia/Bolivia/Panama/ ...), verbs of transit and rest (lie/dwell/hide/float/ ...), attributes that describe different moods and states of the soul (supplication/sensuality/curiosity/ ...) and concepts that explain the world's geometry (winding/curvy/gothic/solid/outline/symmetry/ ...).

The two edges (picture/word) that Yepo builds over the world of the sensitive and fragile are reminiscent of what Charlie Parker preaches from over half a century ago when he says "play what is not there" (Davis 243). This exhortation for the experimental, for a reconnection with the most sensitive part of seeing, feeling, remembering, of loving, not only seeks to accuse the absences, but to turn them into places of construction from where it is possible for life to be what it should be: life, inhabited in all its breadth. The series *Habitáculos Visuales* asks us to stop representing the world as we think it is, and to reinvent it as we feel it should be. It is quite possible that many of Yepo's dwellings do not exist, but that does not mean that they cannot or should not.

## References

Davis, Miles y Quincy Troupe. *Miles. The Autobiography*, New York: Simon and Schuster, Paperbacks, 1989.

Handelsman, Michael, Placing Charlie "Bird" Parker between Julio Cortázar and Juan Montaña. A reading on belongings, University of Tennessee, digital document, 2015.