

Sofie,

Once I began to read the manuscript of what was to become your book, I was immediately reassured. The title is the name of a place, Asnoix, and at the beginning of the book is a map of the area : an ancient map -that turns the narrative (the narrative of your images) into a tale.

*Three years ago, I went to see a friend in Yaak (Montana, USA). He is a geologist who became a writer. To help me find his home, he made me a sketch of all the little roads through the woods, with the names of all the places, hills and lakes. He had put a cross near the way that lead to his house. He also indicated the date and time for us to meet and I thought that that was the essence of the portrait I was going to make and of any I had made previously. It was just that: the precise coordinates of time and place, of hour and moment, light or dark, that result in all portraits, photography, and poetry.*

Do you recall Pliny the Elder's account of the origin of the first image? The daughter of a Corinthian potter drew on a wall, lit by a lantern, the silhouette of her beloved before he went off to war and his death?

It is the first trace identical to a photogram ; and from the outset, there was an intuition that an image was linked to absence, death, disappearance, or at least to an ability to affect us induced by showing what was soon to be erased and lost.

What a good idea it was to entrust the invention of painting to a young woman, and to think that it was with one simple, rough pencil line that she preserved the contours of her lover's face. (*The Pencil of Nature* is the title William Henry Fox Talbot gave to his first photographic book, in 1844.)

*When I was little, I was often very happy to find myself back in places that were not too familiar to me: a room in the house of my grandparents or a clearing in the woods nearby; as if, once I left the place, it would disappear for ever, along with the hours and emotions that accompanied my presence.*

*I haven't changed much since, so each time I find myself back in a city, a certain railway station, a hotel, and in that hotel a certain room, a strange mixture of excitement and fear takes hold of me ("gripped by the throat") because I know that all those places continue to exist without me, (have they forgotten me?), or that the past has 'passed' altogether and that I won't recognize anything.*

But I know, I have read this somewhere, that the space that surrounds us never stops to open itself, so that by juxtaposition new bodies, each different and each particular, can coexist as they do in time, but by succession in that case.

At the same place, an uncountable series of bodies, events, things have occurred, like a stanza, to quickly be forgotten. Of all that took place there, maybe only the trees or fields or lakes could remember. And sometimes, to testify, we find images.

*In one of his books, my friend in Montana, Rick Bass, tells the story of a larch cut down and lying on the grass near his home, to dry. The trunk stayed there for a few seasons before finally being sawed into planks. But when the first snow flakes fell, the ones that do not stick to the ground, the trunk of the larch reappeared, or at least its dark shadow did, in the middle of the whitened landscape.*

*Its lying there for such a long time had modified somehow the texture of the soil, allowing it to more easily absorb the first, thin, melting snow. During the following years, the ground regained its original structure and the exceptional phenomenon ceased.*

*It didn't really matter : the larch had had its days. The dark form in the middle of this white landscape makes me think of a film which, once developed, becomes transparent, the world negative, irradiated and x-rayed and ghostly.*

Your series on the little deer, where one suspects the finish, can be seen as a fairy tale with a sad ending. Wild animals are fearful and hide from human beings, so when one of them makes an appearance and touches our life for a short time, it's real magic!

My perception of art is similar: a celebration and farewell at the same time.

*I returned to the Yaak River Valley to visit my friend again at the beginning of winter and the hunting season. After tracking a deer for an entire day, my friend was able to shoot it. Because it was late and darkness had begun to set in, he emptied the body and covered the cadaver with his coat, to pick it up the next morning. He knew that the human smell of his coat would keep other animals at bay.*

*Next morning I accompanied him into the mountain foothills to collect the corpse. It was a difficult walk; more than an hour through deep snow that reached our knees. I was wondering how in these vast plains it would be possible to find the dead body, but all of a sudden Rick spotted an eagle circling the area right above us. We knew then that that would be the place to find the animal. And so we did.*

*A carnivore, probably a wild dog, had taken a part of the leg, but luckily the bears, who were not yet hibernating, had not touched it. So we cut the meat into pieces and put it in sacks to carry over our shoulders, but beforehand Rick recomposed the animal's features, with its crane and feet and the empty skin. This is the custom in the area, he told me, to offer respect and pay tribute. Then we hastened back home before night set in.*

I am not a hunter myself but I remember this event mainly because of the contrast between the vast wild areas we traversed and the concentration and density of man's imprint on the landscape here ; as if under occupation, by civilized men or worse, by trackers.

When one loves a place (as you do the woods and fields of Asnoix) and one dedicates a poem or a portrait to it, one lifts it to a higher power. It is transformed into a particular, separate entity, contrary to the universality of common ground.

This is art as the stepping stone to a wider, endless space and the leaving of the larval cocoon of introspection.

Amities,

Marc Trivier

