

THE CHALLENGE OF THE METHOD  
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I remember some of Gianfranco Foschino's works on the landscapes of extreme parts of this land. Landscapes are cultural creations that transform land into a country. Especially in the vast desert expanses of Antarctic ice, where setting down a tripod and a (video)camera expresses an act of sovereignty, through which photography reveals itself as a privileged form of technology for colonial prospection of collective visual imagination.

One of the fascinating things about my country, Chile, is that the start of mining exploration in the great North coincided with the arrival and settling of photographic technology, as a correlate of plundering colonial enterprise, destined to fix the appropriation of land and produce landscapes through the perverse reversion which makes recording technology capture not the instant, but the modification of the surface. Photography becomes the vector of exhibiting the monumentality of machinery intended to exploit and produce degradation of the landscape. Man, photographed alongside the machines, only serves as a witness to convey the scale of technical investment. In its maniac-depressive phase, photography becomes a device for conserving and storing plunder: as such, inversely, so-called objective photography is simply a symptom of the triumph of the Marshall Plan in politics for images of "democratic destitution".

In the antipodes, in Sao Paulo, Foschino sets down the recording device as though it were an artefact of evidence collection for capturing the instant that breaks the continuity created by human work. Scenes watching over a square where workers repair underground cables or perform tasks high above a construction site merely reproduce images of the slow usury of time, over the surface of bodies transformed into minimal theatrical units (*théâtre-trouvé*).

However, Foschino leaves the megalopolis and heads for the southern tip of the South American continent, where he conducts the opposite operation: recording the absence of human theatre and capturing the instant when the balance of things fails, especially when he reproduces the sudden movement of a monumental block of ice that experiences violent changes of position resulting from minimal alterations of its density.

Here, both operations are connected, because the method employed for urban recording and extreme landscape recording reproduces similar conditions of location, but in a different sense: as a "challenge" set by the unpredictability of images, since everything relating to human commerce is predictable. Technology — maniac-depressive, as I have said — creates the image of a falsely objectivist documentalism configured to reproduce a "zero degree" image, questioning the ideology of transparency which sustains the "non-interventionist gaze" where reality (supposedly) displays itself.

Setting the camera down somewhere is already an intervention. There is no redemption through images; rather, the dejected fatality of a camera montage that cannot accept the shame of having to depend on a regressive pictorial tradition. This is certainly the case when Gianfranco Foschino frames observation of a country road in Tenerife (Canary Islands), where it is only possible to register the barely-perceptible movement of the mist.

It would appear, then, that Foschino wished to recompose a landscape theory by solely recording the duration of apparently-stable situations, such as clouds, half-way between the wet dream of a rising daydream and sublimated desertification in the fall to reality.