INTRODUCTION: POST-PHOTOGRAPHIC TRUTHS: POETICS VS POLITICS

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ABSTRACT

Devoted to contemporary photography artistic practices, under the motto "Post-Photographic Truths: poetics vs politics", this text aims to question and discuss the drifts of contemporary photographic practices in our post-truth era. Rooted in the historiography of the medium, the poetics and the political are hypothetical boundaries that prevail in current photographic artistic practices. The reoccurrence of the poetics beautiful image could be understood as a counter-reaction to the vulnerability of the *myth of representation*. Hence, the exhaustion of the mechanisms of representation, and the political stance, could be correlated with the photographic endeavour to represent the complexity of the outer world. The invited authors' essays, reviewed papers and visual essays published on this issue aim to contribute to the critical discussion of these hypothetical quarrels, merging the notions of poetics and politics, while reaffirming the polysemy of photographs.

Keywords: Post-photography; History; Post-truth; Poetics and politics; Contemporary art practice.

INTRODUCTION

The current issue of JSTA edited by Carlos Lobo and Paulo Catrica is devoted to contemporary photography artistic practices, under the motto *Photographs post-truths: private poetics vs political claims?* In our *post-truth* era, the drifts of contemporary photographic practices operate on a global scale, transcending local and specific cultural settings. Rooted in a plurality of historical genres (e.g. documentary, conceptual, street photography, post-modern, or 'fine art'), these visual paradigms are instinctively used without claiming any critical stance.

The predominance of these artistic practices sustains an autobiographical stance, through which the artists view the world *from their porch* as a self-portrait. Assuming a fragmentary and poetic imaginary, these visual essays of the inner world somehow embrace a return to the modern 'beautiful photograph', relocating the work within the domain of the author. As an opposing point of view the depiction of the *outer world*, embraced by other artists, asserts a critical stance, holding the belief that photographs can address and discuss collective issues that map the awkward current political situation.

While this debate on the subject may be perceived as over-simplistic, it recovers John Schott's 1975 aphorism: 'what a picture is of and what it is about'? Rooted in the historiography of the medium, the poetics and the political, are hypothetical boundaries difficult to debate? Indeed, the current uses of photographs within the immense array of the web, a rarefaction of the allegorical and the metaphoric abilities of the photographic image. The reoccurrence of the poetics beautiful image could be understood as a counter-reaction to the vulnerability of the *myth of representation*. Hence, the exhaustion of the mechanisms of representation, and the political stance, could be correlated with the photographic endeavour to represent the complexity of the outer world.

Taken together, the invited authors' essays, reviewed papers and visual essays published on this issue, aim to contribute to the critical discussion of these hypothetical quarrels, merging the notions of poetics and politics, while reaffirming the polysemy of photographs.