

Physis

We are walking, talking minerals.

Vladimir Vernadsky

When humanity has become accustomed to dominating nature, manipulating it as a means to obtain certain ends, it has forgotten itself. And that "amnesia" remains to this day as a symbol of the anthropocentric violence exerted on the planet. If on the other side of the mirror, or in the unconscious, there is still a trace of the primordial communion with the cosmos, the metaphysics of both the divine and the transcendental successfully multiplied on this side, while the *physis* slowly lost its innermost power of Being, to connote itself only with the tangible matter of the natural world. At the heart of this duality, and of the almost eternal distinction between soul and world, between subject and object, or between matter and energy, a whole warlike ontology of the (too human) human being has been engineered.

This entire ideological burden accumulated over the centuries and poured into the humanist hierarchy now confronts us with a planetary anomaly. Nevertheless, beyond the current ecological urgency, it is necessary to decolonize the crystallized image of the subjugation of nature that is instilled in us from an early age by the ideology of mass consumption.

In this set of photographs that make up the **Physis**, Carina Martins distances us from the daytime regime determined by modern instrumental reason (ocularcentrism), favouring a digression of the senses beyond the immediately visible and leading us to a certain geography of shadows, night and gloom. The linear perspective of the cognitive (daytime) gaze loses its frontality, vision becomes peripheral, and rationality gives way to affection. Whereas in previous projects, the photographic appurtenant was limited to the vegetable kingdom and daylight, **Physis** now draws us closer to the mineral kingdom, searching under the twinkling of the night for the vibrant matter that constitutes all substances. Under these circumstances, the absence of sunlight summons the magic of shadow and the spectral presence of things becomes sensitive in photographs. Between the urban and civilizational threshold of the Anthropocene and the immense territory of the biosphere, the photographer conducts a visual investigation into the epicentre of nocturnal light environments, praising the shadow of places inhabited by a myriad of mineral organisms, plants and animals.

The desire to approach nature itself is reflected in the act of photographing, seen as a possibility of diving into the fragile complexity of the interdependence of life and, consequently, into the immanence of an aesthetic anchored in the ecological dimension of artistic consciousness. However, if we want to adopt a perspective that is intrinsic to deep ecology, namely, if we want to approach the '*natura naturans*', a pictorial representation (*picture*) of nature is of little use. We are thus confronted with a paradoxical aporia or disbelief: how to produce a photograph of the "thing itself" or of "that which cannot be represented"? That is not confined to the mere figuration of an object, and offers the observer the possibility of its confrontation with another being, i.e., from subject to subject.

In the confrontation between our gaze and these images of **Physis**, as well as in our relationship with nature, something must change and happen at the level of the perception and its affective-cognitive modulations. It is no longer a question of seeing as in the ancient regime of pre-technological vision, but of poetically accessing another sensitive sphere, unlearning the rigid ideas of what a forest, a tree, or a mountain might be and look like.

Rui Ibañez Matoso

(Researcher in the science of image and post-media visuality)

September 2019, Lisbon