

## Rites of Passage (1)

By Ariel Authier (2)

All societies have their own rituals; they are organized around them. These are activities that put together gestures and objects with specific places in situations that are staged under a more or less previously conceived order. From the radical aspects of the human sacrifices made by native Mesoamericans, to the contemporary moderation of shaking hands when greeting someone, formalism, symbolism and repetition have always been the fundamental characteristics of a ritual. Repetitions that the camera managed to neatly represent after the development of the ability to reproduce and fix images in surfaces, back in the distant nineteenth century.

During the beginning of our twenty-first century, in a culture overflowed by image-generation devices, photographic representations that are not captured by “cameras” – there is no empty space inside a cellular phone – but in a way are caught inside screens, Gonzalo Gutiérrez decides to stage a ritual of the habitual. He imposes to himself a program, almost a diet: During a period of one year, he programs his cellphone’s alarm to go off every afternoon at four o’clock and immediately he uses the phone’s camera to take a picture wherever he’s found at that moment. Thus, he becomes a kind of operator while his photographer’s gaze is constrained by a previous gesture, creating an abysmally duplicated protocol. A trace of time that, besides its pseudo-biographical disguise with a calendar-type view, only gives the spectator very little, encrypted information on the maker.

Walking almost always in between over-visibility and concealment, Gutiérrez doubles its bet to the increasingly ubiquitous institutional urban surveillance and control systems, the mechanisms that are producers of images hardly even watched. That is the case when he uses the trail of his cellphone GPS’ signal, recovers the trace of his movements on the map of the City of Buenos Aires, and retrieves just the – many times repeated – line of his daily path. The results, that show themselves as digital gestures of abstractions, resemble the ideograms of an escape that unavoidable returns to the same place. Traces of an absence displayed on photographic paper.

Timeless rituals of accumulation, that search for losing themselves just to cross and to be lost again in an unlimited abyss of images.

Notes:

- (1) Text written for the “2956 paces a day” exhibition catalogue in June 2016.
- (2) Argentine artist, educator and curator.