

Carlos Cánovas

Motive and pretext

On Rafael Moneo.

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Within the Festival OFF, PhotoEspaña 2024

"In 2012, the María Forcada Foundation, based in Tudela, requested that I undertake an interesting photographic project. The idea was to present the Tudela-born architect Rafael Moneo, on his seventy-fifth birthday, with some photographs of his works. I was asked to visit his architectural works in Spain and to produce only one photograph from each location. In total, there were about twenty images, under the title "Between Lights," that were exhibited that year at the aforementioned Foundation.

The commission was both attractive and risky. I admire Rafael Moneo's balance and sensibility, but I wanted to avoid any type of praise or criticism. I have never considered myself an "architecture photographer," even if I might appear to be one. Furthermore, condensing each of those architectural works into a single image is a chimerical endeavor. The truth is, I gladly accepted the invitation. There is enough routine for easy tasks if such things exist. I found myself exploring those buildings, seeking something I knew was very unlikely to achieve, but the photographic endeavor also involved the attempt to reach the unattainable.

At the end of that exhibition, I decided to continue on my own. A self-assigned project. The reason became a pretext. Since then, whenever I have the opportunity, I wander through those buildings again and again. No one should think there is a frustrated architect within me. I enjoy looking at the natural rhythm of a photographer, which is that of walking, or strolling. I am slowly completing itineraries, reaching places I had not been to before, and revisiting others that are already familiar to me. Places sometimes close, sometimes far. Always to return from time to time, with the latent idea of not closing anything, of not finishing anything.

I read that the word pretext belongs to the etymological family of weaving (prae-texere), meaning to intertwine, to create a fabric. So, it is not only an excuse/pretext but also the act of weaving, image by image, a collection capable of forming a body. An endless fabric, with its breaks and

sutures. As a photographer, I often oppose concentration with digression, which seems very much a characteristic of photography: I am in "that" place, but looking towards "another" direction. Light, the passage of time, a sound, or a small personal discovery led me down unforeseen paths. Then pretext and context tend to merge. They determine – and this is what this exhibition is about – a promising body of work, but always insufficient, unfinished, ungraspable. ”.

Carlos Cánovas

Carlos Cánovas born in Hellín (Albacete). Lives in Pamplona since 1951. He is the author of several books that collect his personal work, including "Deriva de la ría: paisaje sin retorno" (Fundación BBK, Bilbao, 1994), "Paisajes Fugaces" (IVAM, Valencia, 1997), "Paisaje Anónimo" and "Séptimo cielo" (Ayuntamiento de Pamplona, 2002 and 2011), "En el tiempo" (Museo Universidad de Navarra-Museo ICO, Pamplona, 2017) and "Estratos. Fotografía y palabras" (Publications, Government of Navarra, Pamplona, 2022). He has also published several titles about the history of photography, such as "Miguel Goicoechea, un pictorialista marginal" (Ikeder, Bilbao, 1994) and "Navarra: Fotografía" (Gobierno de Navarra, Pamplona, Pamplona, 2012). He was a member of the Navarre Council of Culture (1983-86), and advisor to the contemporary art collection of the MAC (A Coruña) between 2007 and 2017. In 2020 he was awarded the Premio Príncipe de Viana de la Cultura. Since 2000 and until 2015 he has been a photography professor hired by the Public University of Navarra. He has taught several courses on theory, technique, and history of photography and published images and texts in books, specialized magazines, and different media. He has held a large number of solo and group exhibitions in Spain and other countries. His work can be found in numerous museums, art centers, and universities, as well as in private collections.