

Francesca Piqueras **in fine** April 24th - June 9th 2018

Galerie de l'Europe, 55 rue de Seine - 75006 Paris



The Galerie de l'Europe has the pleasure to present the newest series of Francesca Piqueras, a fine art photographer whose work on abandoned marine structures and naval architectures was the focus of a highly remarked [retrospective](#) this fall within the « Art Now » program in the Palazzo Ducale in Massa (Italy), curated by Mauro Daniele Lucchesi : « *There are many ways to see what remains when functionality stops, when the assigned mission is over. It is the most symbolic aspect that captures Francesca Piqueras' photographs, wrote novelist and editorialist Carmen Pellgrino in [Corriere della Sera](#). When our creations cease being objects, then starts a surge of clandestine life. They become covered with seaweeds, mosses, rust and want to talk to us. In this precise frame and space, which is where life belongs, they answer whoever questions them* ».

It is precisely this work of questioning that drove Francesca Piqueras to Siberia, after having previously done it in Bangladesh, Mauritania, Peru, Argentina, Cape Verde or the D-Day beaches. The new series she presents at the Galerie de l'Europe is entitled « in fine », which one should take in the literal meaning of "in" : "inside". Therefore, it is not "the end" that Francesca Piqueras invites us to watch, but rather "inside the end", in the depth of the process of destruction leading to the total decomposition of the wrecks which are her favourite subject.

This project, to which she is devoted with a remarkable consistency for several years, led her to a very different universe compared to those she already explored: the shores of Lake Baikal and Petropavlovsk, in the Far East of Russia (Kamchatka peninsula). Here, no more blue or green waves slashing the dilapidated hulls. At these latitudes, ocean turns into ice, grasping in a motionless flow – white as a



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shroud – the abandoned ships. Powerful machines, slaves of steel now useless, they are condemned to rot in the cold , under the toxic fumes belched by factory chimneys dating back from the Soviet era.

They die slowly under the windows of Brejnevian projects whose pastel colors cannot enliven their walls. On this shore where all extremes congregate, History and histories collide – West and East, communism and capitalism -, Francesca Piqueras photographs follow the steps of Hans Jonas' "Unchained Prometheus", who considers the world as a simple resources retainer, producing more waste than riches to feed a technological power, who destroys more than he builds, crushing those who faithfully served him.

Mirror of our collective destinies, Francesca Piqueras' wrecks also recall our most intimate experiences, such as the feeling of abandonment, a childhood terror inscribed in us since the separation from the maternal womb. She defines her work as an « aesthetism of abandonment ». Her photographs then speak of the suffering of those who were abandoned, but also of the comforting feeling of abandoning oneself to the elements. But the power of her photographs and the surprising metaphorical power that emerge from them is her ability to merge and balance the different faces of Time. The fatal one of Chronos, who crushes relentlessly those iron carcasses. Then Kairos, the « instant » who is captured by the photographer in her artistic act. And finally Aïon, the eternal cosmic motion dear to Heraclitus « child who plays at jacks», and who transmutes those rusted skeletons into living sculptures, engulfing them in the perpetual cycle of metamorphosis: the essence of art itself. *William Lambert*

in fine

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Tuesday - saturday : 10:30 am - 1 pm & 2 pm - 7 pm

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Francesca Piqueras **interview**

You have been working for several years on marine architectures (shipwrecks, oil rigs, military forts) that you photograph mostly in their derelict state. How did you get started on this approach?

A friend of mine went searching for the remnants of the ocean liner « France », on which he did a trip that was important to him. This quest led him to India, in the shipbreaking yards. When he told me about his journey, I immediately felt an echo inside me. But it was no longer possible to go to India, because Greenpeace campaigned against the pollution of these shipbreaking yards, where the working conditions are appalling. They were bunkerized, closed to the any outsider's glance. So I went to Bangladesh where – on 25 kilometers of coastline bathed in a blackish water -, ships are voluntarily run aground to be taken apart. I was constantly followed, supervised, and forbidden to photograph workers, which was not my subject anyway. What I was interested in was these carcasses of abandoned, mistreated ships, the absolute lack of concern for the surrounding nature, the irresponsibility... It was a world where I could find a strong echo of my personal history. This is where I did my first series on

marine structures, « Architecture of absence », and I decided then to follow a thread. I am not done with it, and will follow it till its end.

Your photographs have a very strong metaphorical strength and one can spontaneously project into them reflections on industrial civilization, environment degradation, struggle between man and nature. Do you really have this will to achieve a work of art that is metaphorical?

Metaphorical is a word that suits me.. My work is underlined by an obvious aesthetical quest, but this cannot be self-sufficient, otherwise it would be insufficient, superficial and would not match my intention. Although I am not at all into documentary photography, my photographs witness the drama of a nature which will no longer be externally able to digest the mass of produced waste and these gigantic structures are a symbol of this. That said, as the title of this exhibition implies – in fine – what fascinates me when it comes to these man made derelict structures is the whole process of their desintegration, which is a slow transformation. It is within this space-time, which starts with their abandonment and continues until their complete decomposition,



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that I lay my work. An aesthetics of abandonment ! In that timelapse during which these wrecks are digested by nature, they fight physically with the elements and go through infinite metamorphosis, taking a multitude of shapes. It is a violent, painful process, of an incredible vitality and deliciously aesthetic! If I chose the ocean, it is to better capture the strength of this struggle. For this, I work like a sculptor with these materials – water, iron, rust and of course light. Shipwrecks and oil rigs appear like cold objects in the distance. In my photographs, I strive to give them life, to catch the long spasms evolving very slowly in order to get as fast as possible to the end and the oblivion, a tension between creative power and destruction, even self-destructiveness. Therefore I feel very close to the Viennese Actionism artists (Otto Muehl, Hermann Nitsch, Günter Bruce...) who were as fascinated as I am by this destruction-creation process.

Why is there no human presence in your photographs?

It is a self imposed rule, as I do not wish to shift towards reportage. My photographs evoke man through abandoned structures witnessing his ingenuity, his creativity, bearing traces of collective histories, adventures, travels and also speak of our own individuality. If I photographed persons, they would draw too much attention and would stop the viewer to project himself or herself within the image, to identify himself or herself, to tell his or her own story. The human being in my photographs is the one who looks at them.

You compare your work to the approach of a sculptor. One recalls that in 1990, the Venice Biennale Sculpture award went to photographers, Bernd and Hilda Becher, the initiators of a photography trend known as the Dusseldorf School of Photography. How do you position yourself compared to that artistic movement?

This German artist couple became known in photographing in a cold, frontal and systematic way grain silos, in a documentary approach, a mapping of the mutations taking shape in the German countryside. I really appreciate this work, but mine does not relate much to it. Myself, I try to create a dramaturgy,

I project myself inside my photographs, physically and mentally. It is the inside that brings me to the outside, the objective echoing the subjective. Each of my photographs then possess its own aesthetics, contrary to the Dusseldorf School of Photography, where aesthetism arise from repetition. This does not stop me to look for a certain neutrality when I am facing a subject. I do approach frontally the structures I photograph, without artifice or framing effect... I do not use wide angle lenses, I always work with a 70-200 mm lens. Framing is sharp, perspective is flattened, backdrop is very present, something very pictorial. I voluntarily underexpose and during the processing, I look for light. For a number of photographers, this is an heresy, and true, this process generates some noise on my images. But it is through this that I achieve the result I seek. Let us say this is my signature.

Your latest series was done in Siberia. What were the conditions of your trip?

Before I start a project, I inquire about the presence of shipwrecks which I research on the internet, then I do my first survey with Google Map. Of course, when I am on location, I often have surprises and nothing happens as planned! In Petropavlovsk, a harbour on the Kamchatka peninsula, I found a contact, a bear hunter around sixty speaking only Russian (and I do not speak Russian!). He showed me the bay in his 4WD, but when I was showing him a shipwreck I wanted to approach, he invariably said « Niet » and made me understand it was forbidden. So I decided to go alone, walking on ice, despite the local fishermen trying to dissuade me because it was dangerous. Then finally, whilst I was pacing in town, I came across a shop organizing trips, and there was even a young man who spoke a little English! I gave him an appointment, and the next day he came with a snowmobile. He took me everywhere I wanted to go, till the mouth of the bay which opens on the Pacific ocean. He was afraid of nothing, and I could work like I intended to.



BIOGRAPHY

« As a child, I lived in an iron house drawn by Gustave Eiffel and built by one of his students », confides Francesca Piqueras, who often was left alone in this strange metal vessel laid in the middle of the fields. Some will see here her interest for the metal giants abandoned to rust, which she photographs

with consistency since 2009.

At age ten, the artist of italian-peruvian descent gets her first camera from her parents – both artists, friends with Duchamp, Man Ray, Dali. If she started a career in the movies industry as a film editor, she never departs from her passion for photography and decides to fully dedicate herself to it in the early 2000s. From 2007, she starts to exhibit black and white series centered on urban environment.

In 2009, she switches to colour and initiate her project on abandoned marine structures with « Architecture of Absence », a series shot on the dismantling of freighters and tankers in Bangladesh. It will then be « Architecture of Silence », on the cargo ships voluntarily run aground on the Mauritanian beaches, « Inner Architecture » on the North Sea oil rigs, « Fort », on the military forts abandoned offshore the Thames estuary, « Panic Point », a series which confronts the power of the waves on the Peruvian beaches to the oil platforms at sea, « Phoenix », on the remnants of the artificial harbour built in Arromanches for the D-Day landing, « After the end », on the ships wrecked in Patagonia, at the extreme South of Argentina. The first retrospective of her work happened in 2017, at the Palazzo Ducale in Massa (Italy)

Exhibitions

Passaggio dell'umanità
6th Mostra "Art Now"
(Rétrospective)
Massa, Italie
Avril - décembre 2017

Printemps de la photographie
Romorantin, France
Du 20 mai au 5 juin 2017

Après la fin
Galerie de l'Europe, Paris, 2016

Photo Beijing
Pékin, Chine, 2016

Phoenix
Galerie de l'Europe, Paris, 2016

Panic Point
Galerie de l'Europe, Paris, 2015

Architectures
Galerie BOA, Paris, 2014

Fort
Galerie de l'Europe, Paris, 2014

L'Architecture intérieure
Galerie de l'Exil, Paris, 2013

L'Architecture du silence
Galerie de l'Europe, Paris, 2012

Festival Photo St-Germain-des-Prés,
Paris, 2011

L'Architecture de l'absence
Galerie de l'Europe, Paris, 2011

Gange, et la vie suit son cours Mai-
son de l'Inde, Paris, 2010

Paysage clair pour jours sombres
Galerie de l'Europe, Paris, 2010



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