

LEARNING TO LOOK, LEARNING TO BE SILENT

(English translation: Karel Clapshaw)

wave after wave
step after step
day after day

grains of sand

The large window in my room in Carrer Nàpols, very near Passeig de Pujades, offers an exceptional view of the Tower in which Hotel Arts is located, emerging majestically on the seafront beyond Ciutadella Park. The sea, imminent but invisible, is implicit in its light.

I took all the photographs between 13 March 2011 and 12 March 2012, without restrictions concerning time of day, at moments when I was attracted by the sight of the Tower. A latent sight which, I now find, has revealed itself after over thirteen years of seeing it without looking at it.

This series, therefore, shows the complete solar cycle of the four seasons with the Tower as a permanent visual reference and presence, a focus of endlessly mutating light and colour, of birds passing overhead in the sky, of clouds, aeroplanes and helicopters, sun and moon ...

The Tower suddenly became my Rouen Cathedral. Although the memory of Monet was almost inevitable from the start, it was soon joined by the recollection of Morandi (because of the restriction of combinations, like his table). I have often thought of them.

After accumulating four thousand shots, all taken with a Canon G11 camera, the resulting series of one hundred and sixty photographs – I sometimes prefer to call them photo haikus – is the outcome of a meticulous selection, without altering the original digital images in any case.

This work has changed my perception of the space in which I live. Or, rather, it has made me perceive my city apartment in its natural setting in a very spatial way. It has transformed it into a hut in a clearing in the wood, where the capturer of skies dwells.

The architecture of my cycle of poems *Euràsia / Transeurasia / Antarctique* (1978–2008) is a construction and a conquest of poetic silence. The Tower, the sight of which has offered itself to me when I have been capable of looking and being silent, rises up as its mutating post scriptum.

It is well known that the arrival of photography produced an upheaval in painting and, similarly, the arrival of moving pictures produced an upheaval in the theatre. However, although the impact of films on the novel is admitted, the impact of photography on poetry is still ignored: a lyrical supplantation?

Does the static presence of the Tower stand in contrast to travel? Or does the inexhaustible sight of it constitute a ceaseless cyclical journey? I took the photographs without a tripod, simply holding the camera or resting it on the windowsill. An action, therefore, that was visual and manual – corporal.

The Tower as a permanent presence in a particular space, seen with a zoom from a viewpoint in a particular window, my favourite window for Seeing; as a reference for events, understood as the succession of visual states that pass over it. The Tower permanent.

There are a few shots taken from other viewpoints, but always in the same building: the next window (on the right), the balcony (on the left) or the roof terrace. Exceptions that prove the rule, which is: my hands compose the picture at the same window.

I am the Tower. Rimbaud's Chanson de la plus haute tour. The tower struck by lightning in the tarot: the House of God. The staircase of heaven. The Tower of Babel? Dante's Vita nuova: Beatrice. The body of love. Beatriz de la Torre. Enlightened receptiveness. Miró.

The Tower as learning. Learning to look at the scenes around us with respect in order to enliven the backcloth of our daily life. Helping to make the Tower an act of seeing, an attitude of constant initiation into what is happening. A state of resonance and grace.

The writer's fascination with the incontrovertible fullness of the photograph, stripped of words, sufficient in itself, projected onto an endless present without past or future. Each picture is a "now, here, like this". Existentialism and Zen in an attitude made new: seeing.

It is exceedingly difficult to appraise what has been photographed, to select what has been captured. The work requires hours and hours of revision. It is a path of humble, patient perfection in which the pictures interact, adjusting to their surroundings, gradually articulating a coherent corpus.

I consider myself someone who catches images with a more or less cultivated eye; a poet who sees, a cloud capturer captured by photography. I have ended up in its nets almost without intending to; it happened ascending stairs of silence through constellations without a handrail.

Ramon Dachs

Barcelona, 12 March 2012