

Here and elsewhere

Sabine Delcour investigates the unique relationship of body and territory, of speech and sharing, of image and reality. Her photography is never indifferent to contact and encounter. She stands at the center of where human beings and their surroundings coincide, at the core of a tension that catches the force of elementary signs unawares. Taking photos consists in occupying a "here", a direct and insistent presence to which an "elsewhere" is linked, something outside of the frame which makes the frame more complex. "Here" is first of all the initial operation that purports to name things and ventures to impose a center. "Elsewhere" is the indispensable periphery, at once both opaque and transparent, that gives the center life. "Here" and "elsewhere", center and periphery participate in the same exchange, though without ever merging; and this exchange must never come to a stop or make do with the meager action it seems to imply. Photography mustn't fall into the trap of the forms it takes on and their constraints, but rather open itself up to other solicitations from all around like the active principles of a necessary overflow.

The series of photos entitled "Around Us" was made during a residency in Japan, in Ibaraki prefecture, and revolves around the emergence of residential zones and individual buildings. These houses, shown during their construction, appear in an intermediary state where the border between composition and decomposition remains permeable. They are fragilized by scaffolding and temporary casings but impose a wooden framework which is perfectly recognizable, stable and structured according to certain practical and cultural rules. The gaze penetrates them, performing an autopsy of their future intimacy. Everything boils down to the same obvious fact: an inside which as of yet has nothing to protect it from the outside. These homes don't try to resist the immediate space in which they're located, and they accept the marks whose meanings are given up to the mode of questioning. They look like strange insects mustering their antennae, legs and mandibles after being frozen to a halt by the good fortune of a prey or chance encounter with a predator. Like them, these houses await an "after". And this impression of waiting is reinforced by the fact the shot is framed from right on the ground, which repositions the houses in a kind of distant proximity for us, as if, while exposing themselves in a stark nakedness, the structures absent themselves in an elusive depth.

The photos are accompanied by various comments extracted from answers to a questionnaire aiming to define the possibility of a link between a house's structure and the way it roots a private life. Thus, an indeterminate number of voices are heard which, like scattered pieces of a puzzle we must try to fit back together, strive to relate the desires, dreams, memories and trajectories of lives from which the idea of a "home" is built. These voices interpenetrate, bounce back and forth incessantly, come apart or join together in a dizzying swirl of words. We become both listeners and voyeurs. We forge ahead in this multi-leveled conversation, subjected to a process of infinite rupture that consumes the energy and details of individual secrets and stories, where it becomes impossible to distinguish between the participants. We observe and witness a daily atmosphere that both escapes and fascinates us, leading us to systematically examine all the clues we are given. What we make out from one textual fragment to the next, from one image to the next, is the complexity of the assertion, since it aims to simultaneously designate and hint at, shed light on and foster a mystery. How are these two extremes taken into account? How do we confront the contradiction which opposes a search for readability and visibility to the need for clarity, for a smooth surface that doesn't slip away? One of Sabine Delcour's qualities in this series of photos is that she doesn't take that step, doesn't make a choice, and thus keeps us suspended in a curiously fertile indeterminacy.

Building is also a concern of deciding a "here". The house is a private project. In this, it implicates something which precedes it, a set of incidents, decisions and elements of personal history which it simultaneously interprets, most often to create matter or material (forms, colors, images). Its appearance represents the event of a life to be shared and its meaning. This event begins in the "elsewhere", the moment of speech and desire which lays the groundwork for the project, specifies the intention. How do we differentiate between the entwined threads of sinking roots and the event itself? How is what remains discerned from what changes? Sabine Delcour knows how difficult this is to do and doesn't pretend to offer a solution. What she strives to capture is a situation where everything is still under construction, a kind of edge where the individual and the collective, memory and the present, inside and outside, territory and viewpoint are balanced: a situation of image and speech that forces us to invent what comes after and the experience of it coming to pass.

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