JOAN FONTCUBERTA

Musée de l'hôtel-Dieu
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Pour ses séries, qui se composent invariablement de photographies et de textes, Joan Fontcuberta utilise des codes d'énonciation sérieux (ceux de la science ou du reportage), au sein desquels iljecte un contenu qui, dès le départ, mais à l'insu du lecteur-spectateur, relève de la fiction. Les paysages d'Orogenèse, splendides et étonnants (lacs, montagnes, déserts, pierres), sont présentés comme l'œuvre d'un photographe, auteur également d'une relation de voyage où il est question d'histoire et d'exploration. En réalité, aucun explorateur ne foulera jamais ces paysages, produits par des logiciels téléchargeables sur Internet. Ces outils, utilisés par les militaires, permettent de visualiser en trois dimensions un terrain dont on possède seulement des données fournies par satellite. Mais Fontcuberta, en guise de données réelles, leur a fait transcrire des informations narrant des mémories de peuples qui vivaient à une certaine époque. Pourtant, Fontcuberta sème un mystère dans le texte (enfantant une fiction). Le contenu du récit et l'authenticité des photographies se conjuguent d'une façon un peu troublante. Les œuvres de l'artiste sont présentées comme l'œuvre d'un photographe, mais au piège de la métaphore cinématographique. Les images du cosmos de la série Constellations sont d'abord parsemées d'une fine poussière d'étoiles, mais la lumière se transforme graduellement en giclures et traînées louches : tout s'explique quand on apprend que les espaces infinis sont un parc, contenant des spectacles malhonnêtes. Généralement, une surprise, ou le catalogue de l'exposition, dévoile le dessous des choses. D'un autre côté, des détails langagières humoristiques s'insérent dans les récits, nous invitant à interpréter et déchiffrer. Pourtant, Fontcuberta n'aime pas nous donner des indications. Il veut que nous reprenions les détails et que nous cherchions des réponses. Pour les artistes, l'important est de nous faire douter de ce qu'on voit. Les images du cosmos de la série Constellations sont d'abord parsemées d'une fine poussière d'étoiles, mais la lumière se transforme graduellement en giclures et traînées louches : tout s'explique quand on apprend que les espaces infinis sont un parc, contenant des spectacles malhonnêtes. Généralement, une surprise, ou le catalogue de l'exposition, dévoile le dessous des choses. D'un autre côté, des détails langagières humoristiques s'insérent dans les récits, nous invitant à interpréter et déchiffrer. Pourtant, Fontcuberta n'aime pas nous donner des indications. Il veut que nous reprenions les détails et que nous cherchions des réponses. Pour les artistes, l'important est de nous faire douter de ce qu'on voit.
ted by the power structure (political, economic and media) can fool us. In each and every case, the content of the narrative and the photos themselves (in other words, their authenticity in relation to the reality described in the narrative) are a hoax. The decoding of the mystification involved is a part of the piece itself, but we are always caught in the trap, at least initially, even though Fontcuberta invariably supplies us with plenty of clues. For instance, the display of his photos follows a subtle progression in which we begin to doubt our own eyes. In the series Constellations, the images of the cosmos are strewn with a fine Stardust, but the luminescent mist gradually resolves into spray nozzles and slimy trails. Everything becomes clear when we learn that these infinitely spangled spaces are really just a windshield covered with squished insects. Usually a wall sign or a note in the catalogue explains what's going on. But the pastiche involved is also revealed by word-play details he inserts into the narratives. "This is a long-tailed monkey endowed with large wings, which makes it an eminently flighty animal" (from the Fauna series).

What is also revealed, by the sheer spectacle of Fontcuberta's work at least as much as the digital manipulation, are our own penchants—in the fiction Herbarium, a certain propensity to let ourselves be swayed by the charm of old-fashioned taxonomies handwritten on yellowing paper. The layout of the show at the Hôtel-Dieu (curated by Nathalie Pariente) takes advantage of the bucolic qualities to accentuate this effect by locating the various series in small rooms as if they were wonder cabinets. Finally, even if we recognize the artifice, the fiction embodied in the work is undeniably more attractive than the information we finally get about what's behind it. By the same token, if we recognize the artifice, what's behind it, By the same token, the pastiche involved is also revealed by word-play details he inserts into the narratives. "This is a long-tailed monkey endowed with large wings, which makes it an eminently flighty animal" (from the Fauna series).

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