

Going through

The starting point of photography is the opacity of matter, and its capacity to reflect light. Xavier Lucchesi was a photographer for advertising agencies, but he decided, fifteen years ago, to work as an artist with the image as his medium of expression, but with no camera.

To achieve his aim, he decided to work with other devices that make it possible to produce images, but images of another kind. By using X rays and the most efficient scanners, Xavier Lucchesi creates images through a gesture which is not habitually linked with the production of images – the gesture of going through matter.

This does not mean making a hole in matter but really going through it. It is a well-known fact that X rays can go through everything, and when they hit an adequate surface placed behind the object, they seem to have carried away with them the shadow of the real. That is what they show us: ghosts. And, of course, with ghosts, they can reveal some secrets.

Going through matter does not mean reaching the other side, because, in that case, we could only see that side. And that would still be the same reality.

What is at stake here is that the gesture of going through matter makes it possible to see through and into matter. It is a human gesture, but it can only be made mentally if we are visionaries, or with the help of a special device. It is the gesture of the seer when he looks at you straight in the eyes and sees your soul. It is the gesture of X rays machines that look at matter and see what it conceals inside.

When Xavier Lucchesi works on pre-existing images, masterpieces, such as Picasso's paintings, he does not reveal to us the other side of things but the very drama of vision. The eye cannot go through matter, except when it invents what it could see in it. We are no longer believers, but Xavier Lucchesi's pieces give us back a little of the magical power of the visionary gaze. His images meet, in the viewer's mind, the pure inventions of the brain.

The complex power of going through the visible is at stake here. There is a convergence between the power of technology and the brain's (often hidden) power of simulation that enables it to construct what it does not know yet, and what it does not see yet.

Xavier Lucchesi's work is in a state of tension between these two poles, which seem to repel, and even exclude, each other. However, it reveals the possibility of their convergence in the psyche. It concerns memory, and discloses strata in memory that were unsuspected both in us and in history. Going through matter is a technical and mental gesture that puts oblivion and the present time on the same level, and makes it possible for them to illuminate each other.

Jean-Louis Poitevin, Paris 2009 English translation by Gérard Mélis