Medeiros, M. (Ed.) (2016). *Fotogramas. Ensaios sobre fotografia.* Lisbon: Sistema Solar.

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Fotogramas, published in 2016 by Sistema Solar, brings together studies on photography, archive and memory, resulting from the colloquium *Photography in the Post-Photography Era,* held at Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas of Universidade Nova de Lisboa, in 2012. Between media history, cultural critique and media archaeology, *Fotogramas* intends to illuminate photographic media forgotten pasts while, at the same time, providing an alternative to encyclopedic and generalist studies of photography, mostly focused on historiographical and official uses of the medium. Margarida Medeiros, author and organizer of the book, has published a vast, rigorous and accessible corpus of studies on the photographic, between communication sciences and art history.

Fotogramas constitutes an important positioning of Portuguese visual archaeology in the international research landscape. Its objects of study are not only artistic images, but scientific, technical, clinical, vernacular archives (Medeiros, 2016, p.8), whose "exhibition value" contrasts sharply with those of the images traditionally studied by art history and theory.

Another important aspect of this publication lies in its stated intention to consider its thematic and methodological dispersion, contradiction and fragmentation beneficial. Furthermore, it makes clear the extent to which these are in fact scientific advantages.

As a whole, *Fotogramas* consists of an update of the *Camera Lucida* (Barthes, 1981) reception tradition, in the broader context of Visual and Cultural Studies, after Batchen (2009), articulating it with a resistance to the representative and semiotic paradigms that sometimes dominate reflections on indiciality. The cultural approach to photographic media is, in general, quite different here from the nostalgias or apologias of image transparency that still stand in many other contexts of photography and communication studies.

Also worthy of mention is the translation of Siegfried Kracauer's essential *Photography* essay from 1927, which anticipates important theoretical questions of the relation between photography and memory.

For economical reasons, I will comment on the book chapters that go further in the effort to think the real as constellations of the visible, producing a critique of visual culture. I will be less concerned with summarizing these chapters, but rather with capturing their most enlightening aspects or the touchstones of the reflections they offer.

In the introductory theoretical framework, Margarida Medeiros presents a definition of archive as material time deposit, as the life of images. Medeiros stresses the important Hal Foster idea according to which the recent archive fevers are essentially

ways of certifying that the objects contained in them "can remain in the present" (Foster quoted in Medeiros, 2016, p. 12). As a result, stems the important distinction between archive (as potency of disorder) and ruin (as decay of order).

Opening the individual chapters, Maria Irene Aparício discusses the relation between photography and memory crises, between past and truth, in the post-photographic, as political problems. She begins by establishing that memory and evidence are concepts of a more representative and idealistic understanding of history (rather than a constructive one), in which history is seen as the result of a process of mediation of "primordial events" (Aparício, 2016, p. 27). Maria Irene Aparício stresses the possibility, in contemporary times, to take advantage of the ruin of the paradigm of indiciality in order to control the fictionalization of history and the making of "images of spaces and times that only the future may uncover" (Aparício, 2016, p. 28).

Maria Augusta Babo considers the effects of subjectivity and the deconstruction of identity by technical images such as mirrors, photography, and other image recording devices. In this context, she discusses the unfolding or externalization of the self, made a sign, in relation to the Other, with authors such as Derrida, Barthes, Lacoue-Labarthe and Didi-Huberman. This leads to a problematization of virtual images, in which contiguity or reference are seen as obstructions to meaning.

Maria João Baltazar and Fátima Pombo present an analysis of the desire for the neutral in Barthes. They show that Barthes' unease with interpretative and valorative uses of photography, commonly associated with *Camera Lucida*, is also manifest in other contexts, taking different implications. According to the authors, Barthes expresses the desire to escape the paradigms of reception in language, wishing for an access without form, that doesn't entail a "sign sadly charged with its meaning", while keeping "innumerable senses that pop, crackle, blaze" (Barthes quoted in Baltazar & Pombo, 2016, p. 67). Given the impossibility of representation in photographic recording, which don't allow for social and significance meaning, resisting language, the authors suggest managing this paradox with recourse to the notion of neutral, by giving up fears of the indicial image while, at the same, controlling infatuations with the index.

Susana Lourenço Marques writes on the genre of book photography. Around 1970s, photography entered the tradition of the literary medium, with archival, authorial and editorial consequences. Studying exhibitions, editions, re-editions and recontextualizations in the press, over the years, of the book *Lisboa, Cidade Triste e Alegre* by Victor Palla and Costa Martins, she reflects on the reinvention of the photographic archive. Marques (2016) presents an in-depth analysis of the relations between image, text and context that successively transform the resonances of this series, from the perspective of one of its photographs' reproduction and circulation. She isolates gestures capable of theoretically illuminating the issue of the image "exhibition value" and produces a genealogy of technical, cultural, semiotic and institutional processes that frame the general distribution of photographic media in the last decades.

Teresa Castro conducts a rigorous study of the visual culture of the scientific Atlas as a classification and disposition epistemological device – one of the first means of

replying to the "archival drive". This study highlights the aggregative nature of the Atlas strategy in the production of world views, in a "cumulative and analytical logic that leads the reader from global vision to partial images, from meditation on the universal to the contemplation of details" (Castro, 2016, p. 124). In this context, the opposition between the epistemological models of description and comparison broadly corresponds to the opposition between (a more classificatory) anthropology and (a more descriptive) ethnography. The Atlases appear as problematic objects: at stake here is the ethnological poverty of anthropometric uses of photographic media. The author describes cycles of trust and distrust of this instrument. Photography's seriality, platitude and sharpness are linked to the "ideas of accuracy and clarity" as bases of systematic cataloging, which facilitates comparative studies. On the other hand, the photographic detail becomes excessive for the typological comparative model. The "thousand differences" (Castro, 2016, p. 125) visible in photography lead to its "placing at the service of ethnographic descriptions" (Castro, 2016, p. 125).

Susana Martins elaborates, from the works of Joachim Schmid (whom Fontcuberta calls the image predator) a "critique of the notions of genius, style and canon" (Martins, 2016, p. 153) in the photographic artistic practices. Topics such as chance, aleatory, counter-intentionality and re-contextualization serve the analysis of the photographic *objet trouvé* , as a creative and curatorial problem. Joachim Schmid allows for a comparison of these same practices in the analogic era and in the age of digital of networks. The "disappearance of the objective and physical element of photography" (Castro, 2016, p. 149) does not prevent the artist from continuing the practice of accidentally finding photos by others. The online snapshot culture has proved promising for this type of practice, as demonstrated by his "contemporary popular photography library" (Castro, 2016, p. 152), for instance in the work *Other people's photographs, 2008-2011.* Here we can see that the digital era merely sees an intensification of a photographic culture that was already in formation during the end of the (exclusively) analogical period.

Victor dos Reis has been conducting an important and singular study of Francisco Afonso Chaves, a naturalist photographer. The work of this photographer includes experimental practices, questioning the modern concepts of body and space, through double exposure and cinematic exercises in steroescopic photography (which is intriguing in the historical and epistemological context of this production). At stake are the ambivalence between transparency and opacity; the dissolution of forms; the contrast between reality and fiction or virtuality; the immateriality or instability of the body. Any of these aspects is revealing of the photographer's deep reflection on the medium.

Victor Flores reviews some of the most significant contributions of media archeology – with authors such as Ernst, Huhtamo, Kittler, Crary, Gunning – in the context of a survey and criticism of the visual culture of Portuguese stereoscopy, a parallel study of stereoscopic practices and the discourses around them. This study is all the more relevant as the erasure of this medium in official histories of photography is starker. In the Portuguese context as elsewhere, the practice of stereoscopy consists in a discontinuity *tout court* in the face of the crystallization of the supposedly linear, bidimensional and transparent photographic media.

In the context of a large series of important studies by the author on the visual culture of medicine in Portugal, António Fernando Cascais analyzes here the psychiatric photography archive of the Miguel Bombarda Hospital. It is a critique of visual culture of medicine that really stands beyond a mere "History of Medicine in Pictures". Methodologically, it encompasses the analysis of any "medical use" of images and "of the worlds of meaning that made them necessary, productive, functional and intelligible" (Cascais, 2016, p. 180). In this study of the visual culture of medicine, we find the reflection on the Miguel Bombarda panopticon – a architectural device with the double valence of observatory and laboratory; the analysis of the archive's photographic corpus in the context of the practice of medical photography in Portugal; a history of medical truth as a process of visibility and describability of pathological phenomena; and the analysis of the discourses at the base of this visual culture. Antonio Fernando Cascais offers an important contribution to the understanding of the uses of the image in the general context of modern experimental medicine – a biopolitical project of "tanatopolitical consequences" (Cascais, 2016, p. 190) – based on the belief in "a sensory, perceptive competence (...) which allows [the psychiatrist] to see and unveil" (Cascais, 2016, p. 198) madness or crime, coalescing in so many cases.

In conclusion, it should be noted that, despite the aforementioned fragmentation and almost indiscipline of methods and themes aimed by this book, *Fotogramas* constitutes, on the one hand, a coherent and illuminating symptom of the crisis of the representative and semiotic paradigms, in the context of post-photography and, on the other, a comprehensive positioning of Portuguese research on photography in the vast collection of media archeology and visual studies that are still gaining prominence and impact in the communication sciences at an international level. ✎

Translated by Joana Bicacro

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