

*Frédéric Pollet,
An aesthetic of inversion*

"Photography drains the living to turn them into ghosts"

Edgar Morin

Because photography supposedly offers unquestionable guarantees of objectivity, numerous charlatans resorted to it to prove the existence of ghosts or ectoplasms and fool the more naïve spectators. On many pictures, alleged action shots taken in houses that were said to be haunted, it is indeed possible to discern generally whitish nebulous forms and vague figures, as if the film had kept the indisputable, definitive print of fleeting apparitions christened ghosts.

If Frédéric Pollet's work has got something to do with spectres – since it's what he calls his latest works –, if his photographs own a certain *aura*, this is not owing to an easy soft-focus effect, a camera shake, or any other manipulation of this kind. It is not altogether certain that he deliberately sought the strange atmosphere that pervades his images. It is on top of the rest, and in any case, it is totally disconnected from the subterfuges of the above-mentioned impostors.

The starting point is always real, as Pollet never makes up or rigs the real world in order to astound the spectator; his posture is quite the opposite, and his defiance towards ready-made categories – his rejection of labels – causes a change of scene that can be disorienting to the uninitiated. Frédéric Pollet takes the short cuts proper to the look, he comes near things, with a lot of respect, pictures them just as they are, candidly, point-blank, as if he meant to make their portraits, and it is indeed this proximity with matter and its contours that covers the tracks and produces an "effect of unreal". What Alain Robbe-Grillet writes about the objects that mark out the stories told by Franz Kafka would conveniently describe those that are scattered along Frédéric Pollet's artistic career: "the hallucination stems from their extraordinary distinctness, and not from wavering or mist. Nothing is, *in fine*, more fantastic than precision." (*Pour un nouveau roman*, "Du réalisme à la réalité" [1955], Éditions de Minuit, 1979, p. 142 [personal translation]). Be it metal, stone or water that he pictures, or banal industrial objects, tools or even weapons, it never is the name of these things that first comes to mind when you look at his images.

Gilbert Pons

(Translated from the French by Charlotte Borie,
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