

MAX ESTRELLA



AITOR ORTIZ
LINK PROJECT

Max Estrella is pleased to present Aitor Ortiz's (Bilbao, 1971) most recent work. With the title "Link Project", this is the sixth exhibition by the Basque photographer in the gallery. Literally appropriating the floor of the now-gone ship chain factory VICINAY, it comes across as a natural consequence in a trajectory defined by an intimate relationship with architecture. Space that served as object, it becomes medium now, and therefore a trace of the place's memory. "Link Project is the image as footprint, the footprint as image", Ortiz affirms.

The show presents steel square fragments selected by the artist from the original floor of the plant. Deformations and wrinkles are visible in all of them. These were caused by the impact of thousands of tons of chains during more than sixty years. They are witnesses of the legacy of decades of production to local urban landscape.

In a formal aspect, this process speaks about photography. It connects steel with silver bromide, years of industrial activity with seconds of shutter speed, and tons of chains with the impact of millions of photons. This body of work has a sculptural appearance and yet reveals a photographic nature; it turns steel into photosensitive film. As if it were a long-exposure shot, steel captures six decades of links molding their surfaces and surrounding urban landscape.

Capture what has ceased to be and turn it into memory is a concern that was also shared by Eugene Atget. After twenty years cataloguing the streets of old Paris he said the following, "I can confirm that I possess the entirety of old Paris". Link Project is the photograph of the time that's passed, it's the confirmation of a reality turned into memory.

Mise-en-scene as a tool to question the exercise of perception has always been present in Ortiz's work. Decontextualization helps his photography walk the limits of the medium, and take distance from the purely documental raising visual dilemmas. Here, it is articulated from absence, and reflects on the importance this place has had building of its own emotional identity.

Roland Barthes in his seminal book "Camera Lucida" reflects on the capacity of photography to transcend its function as a register of reality. He uses the example of a picture of his mother that furthermore than capturing a moment in time, it encapsulates her essence, as well as the grief he felt for her death. "It was indeed essential, it achieved for me, utopically, the impossible science of the unique being."

Beyond the strictly objective, the French philosopher points giving proof of essence out as the ultimate aspiration of photography. Keeping in mind its unique nature for every individual, place, or object, it is true identity that emerges, and channels perception into singular and unrepeatable imprints. Ortiz, who's perfectly aligned with Barthe's reflection, turns each of these steel plates into portions of the soul of Vicinay, a unique being.

Aiming to cause a greater impact, Link Project is exhibited concurrently with two other shows featuring Aitor Ortiz's work in Galería Senda in Barcelona and Springer Galerie in Berlin. It is worth mentioning that Ortiz will be showing documentation about the dismantling of the ship chain factory VICINAY at Proyectos Estrella's exhibiting space. The gallery will release a brief publication about this.

Aitor Ortiz lives and works in Bilbao. He has had solo exhibitions at the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao (2011), Fotografiska (Swedish Museum of Photography, Stockholm, 2012), and the Community of Madrid exhibition hall Sala Canal Isabel II (2012). His work is in the permanent collections of MNCARS (Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid), Fundación la Caixa, ARTIUM, CAB, IVAM, AXXA, Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, MACUF, Foto Colectania, Fundación Telefónica, Fundació Es Baluard, among others.

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Mon-Fri: 10:30 am - 7:30 pm. Sat: 11 am - 2 pm.

Opening: Thursday, September 12th at 8 pm. Until November 8th, 2019.