



FEATURED TEXTS OR PROJECTS

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Abstract

Negative Space and Electric Traces examines the photographic negative both as a technical process and as a broader cultural metaphor. Inverting tone and colour, the negative evokes ideas from mathematics, physics, psychoanalysis, and philosophy, resonating strongly within the visual arts. Bruna Sirgado's work explores this inversion by transforming images of nature—plants, textures, landscapes—into luminous, otherworldly forms that suggest hidden energies and invite new perspectives on the natural world. Janine Oliveira's *Revive the Electricity* focuses on abandoned industrial sites between Tomar and Leiria, employing the "American night" technique to isolate objects once central to electrical power. Her harshly lit images metaphorically revive these forgotten spaces, casting electricity as both memory and life force.

Keywords: Negative Space, Electric Traces, Photography, Photographic film, Emotions

Biography

Duarte Amaral Netto is a photographer exhibiting his work for more than 20 years. He has shown his work around Europe but also in North and South America. In 2003 he won the Grand Prix of the 48ème Salon de Montrouge in Paris, was nominated for the 2012 BES Photo award (with shows at the Berardo Museum – CCB in Lisbon, and Pinacoteca de São Paulo, Brazil) and received a Kodak grant and an IED Madrid scholarship to participate in the Master in European Fine Art Photography. He also represented Portugal in "100 Photos pour l'Europe" (Paris, 2006), and in Arles "European Night" (2006). Duarte is also a photography teacher, with over 20 years of experience at BA and MA level. He is co-founder of Hélice, a non-profit organization that promotes and produces photography related activities, among them the Propeller publication. Recently he did his first short movie – *Raquel* (2021) – that was screened at Indie Brazil and IndieLisboa.

Marta Sicurella is a photographer who has exhibited her work in Portugal, France and Italy. After completing her training at Ar.Co., she was in residence at the ENSP in Arles and took part in the Gulbenkian Foundation's Creativity and Artistic Creation programme. In 2004, she won the CPF's Pedro Miguel Frade prize. She has been a lecturer on the IPT Photography degree programme since 2009, and has also collaborated with CEAC – V.N. Barquinha.

Essay

A photographic negative is an inverted image in terms of tone and colour obtained when photographic film is exposed to light and subsequently developed. In black and white film, the lighter areas of the image appear dark on the negative and vice versa. In colour film, the colours of the negative are complementary to the actual colours of the scene, creating a dreamlike image when viewed in this way. The negative is also a concept with different meanings and connotations, which extends to maths (negative numbers), physics (electrical charges), medicine (examinations and diagnoses), and economics (deficit), among other areas. Some of the areas that remain to be mentioned – Psychology (emotions), Psychoanalysis (repression) and Philosophy (Hegel's *Dialectic and Existentialism*) – are possibly the areas with the most significant impact on the field of visual arts, without, of course, neglecting the influence of the others.

In Bruna Sirgado's work, the negative, i.e. the inversion of the positive, is the method she uses to create this universe that seems to be from another galaxy but which has identifiable referents. According to the author, the inverted images 'work like an x-ray, showing that everything around us has life, shines, has its internal light source'. The images are exclusively records of nature (plants, landscapes, textures) in order to place the human gaze in another perspective on the natural and thereby establish new connections, most of them positive.

Throughout the course, Janine Oliveira looked for inspiration and materials for her work in the various abandoned industrial sites found in the area between Tomar and Leiria. In the series '*Revive the Electricity*', she focuses on objects related to damaged and non-functional electricity, photographing them using the 'American night' technique. The technique, named after Truffaut's 1973 film of the same name, not only creates darkness around the photographed subject, isolating it but also projects a harsh light that adds sculptural value.

The technical choice is not merely aesthetic: Janine uses the flash to open up a gap in the night of oblivion to which these sites are consigned. Electricity was at the heart of these sites; boxes, frames, levers, all contained within them life and death.

Aby Warburg compared the snake used in the Hopi Indian dances to the lightning that brings rain, the source of life and regeneration; by taking the form of lightning, the snake gives the natives the power to control one of the most fearsome forces in nature. One of the snake's qualities is that it performs a life cycle from the deepest sleep (death) to the most intense and powerful form of life. In the same way, the lightning of the flash, with its electric shock, aims to infuse new life into what has been forgotten.

Bruna Sirgado

Light Source

