

# JOAN FONTCUBERTA

## *Trauma*

26 November 2016 > 03 February 2017

Opening: Saturday 26 November – 12h

àngels barcelona presents *Trauma*, Joan Fontcuberta's 4th solo show at the gallery. With his new project Fontcuberta wonders what happens when a photograph abandons its image; when it is "freed from its soul"? What's left when a photograph doesn't point towards a reality outside itself and only points at its substrate, its residue in the shape of some light-sensitive chemicals?



Faced with the irremediable dematerialization of the digital image, and after having searched in photo archives (including in the author's own) looking for *patients* in a traumatic state, with *Trauma*, Fontcuberta creates an ode to the remaining materiality in chemical photography, while, at the same time, it incites the debate around authorship and, in the face of the enormous production and monotonous repetition of digital images so present nowadays, sees recycling as a creative act.

In the line of previous projects (such as *Blow Up Blow Up*, 2009 and *Gastropoda*, 2013), which were based on the semiotic inquiry of the photographic image, Joan Fontcuberta's new work arises from the hypothesis that the images undergo an organic metabolism: they are born, they grow, they reproduce and die to restart again the cycle of life. For this reason, Fontcuberta is interested in the archives, since they contain sick and agonizing images, images that, as a consequence of the transformative biology of time and chemistry, suffer from some type of disorder that disturbs their documentary function and disables them to continue "living" in the archive. These same images, whether they've been produced by himself or searched in photographic collections, are subject to a state of trauma. A trauma that, according to Fontcuberta, "brings us to the elegy for what remains of the materiality of chemical photography, an ode to its remains and excrescences."

In short, *Trauma* aims to go beyond appearances and make us reflect on the threshold of recognition or intelligibility that *sick* pictures carry with them and to make of photographic recycling a creative act through which the image, metabolized by time, allows the viewer to search for that which has already disappeared. What happens when the only reference left to a photograph is the photograph itself? When an image, the soul - the information - leaves the body - the support - it becomes its ghost. Usually, the ghost-images that inhabit the bastions of memory are the archives.

(\*) *Trauma* is a project of visual archaeology undertaken at Barcelona's Photographic Archive (AFB). The author is grateful for all the facilities granted by its staff members which helped him to go ghost-hunting.

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Joan Fontcuberta (Barcelona, 1955) is a renowned conceptual photographer, as well as being an author, editor, curator and teacher, who has played a significant role in gaining international recognition within the history Spanish photography.

Among the most important spaces where he has had solo shows we find: Zabriskie Gallery (New York), The Hermitage Museum (StPetersburg), the Science Museum (London), La Maison Européenne de la Photographie (Paris), Harvard University, MOMA (New York), Les Rencontres de la Photographie (Arles), The Australian Center for Photography (Sidney), the Banco de la República Museum (Bogotá), MACBA (Barcelona), La Virreina Center de la Imatge, CCCB (Barcelona), MNAC (Barcelona), Reina Sofía National Art Center Museum (Madrid) or the Sala Canal de Isabel II (Madrid). In 1994 he was ordained Knight of the Arts and Letters by the French Ministry of Culture, in 1998 he received the National Photography Prize, awarded by the Ministry of Culture. In 2011 he was awarded the Spanish National Essay Prize and in 2013 he received the prestigious Hasselblad Award.

Most recently, his book 'Die Traumadeutung' (Trauma) has been awarded by PhotoEspaña 2016 as the Best National Photography Book.

His last publication on post-photography "La furia de las imágenes" (The fury of images) has just been published in Spanish by Galaxia Gutenberg on September 2016.

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