

JOAN FONTCUBERTA

Portfolio of selected projects | 2023



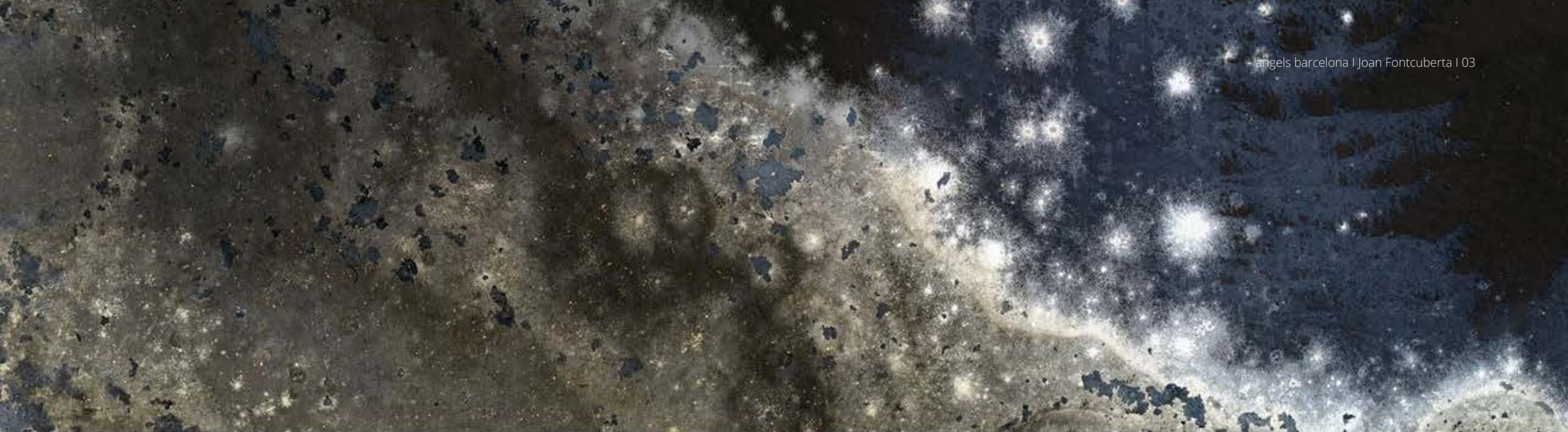
JOAN FONTCUBERTA (Barcelona, 1955)

Joan Fontcuberta, a distinguished conceptual photographer, writer, editor, curator, and educator, has played a significant role in attaining international recognition for the history of Spanish photography. His body of work can be placed in the space between the realms of "reality" and "fiction", manufacturing photographic illusions freely inspired by "the real". He manages to create a visual universe in which the concepts of truth and fiction are closely intertwined. In many ways, Fontcuberta's work not only anticipates but also seamlessly incorporates the profound impact of digital manipulation in the realm of contemporary photographic practice.

Among the most representative institutions where his work has been exhibited, we find MACBA (Barcelona), Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (Madrid), CCCB (Barcelona), MNAC (Barcelona), Zabriskie Gallery (New York), the Hermitage Museum (St. Petersburg), Harvard University (USA), MOMA (New York), the Maison Européenne de la Photographie (Paris), Fukui Fine Arts Museum (Japan) and many more. In 1994, he was granted the title of Knight of Arts and Letters by the French Ministry of Culture. In 2011 he attained the National Essay Prize in Spain, followed by the prestigious Hasselblad Photography Award in 2013. He received the Ciutat de Barcelona Prize in 2016 for his contribution to "the theoretical reflection on the role of images in contemporary culture" with his publication "The Fury of Images. Notes on post-photography". Furthermore, his works can be found in outstanding collections such as the Pompidou Center (Paris), the MOMA (New York), the San Francisco Museum of Art, Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam), Reina Sofia Museum (Madrid), MACBA (Barcelona), among others.



Series: *Élevage de Poussière (Dust Breeding)*, 2023.
View from the 'Dust Gardens' exhibition at àngels barcelona gallery, 2023





2 µm
EHT = 15.00 kV
WD = 13.5 mm
Signal A = SE1
Mag = 5.00 K X

File Name = A4_06.tif

Élevage de Poussière (Dust Breeding) 2023

The garden is a place of reunion with nature. The dust garden is a place of reunion with memory. Dust is linked to time and abandonment, to the origin and to the end: everything is born from dust, everything is returned to dust. Dust is a cloak that blurs vision and fades memory. With *Élevage de poussière* (1920), Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray paved the way to make dust a privileged poetic and conceptual substance.

In the *Élevage de Poussière* series, Fontcuberta uncovers damaged photographic documents that had been degraded into mould and dust by microorganisms, in order to later "portray" these microorganisms causing the decay using an electric microscope. The images that are now the subject of this dramatic deterioration were originally majestic alpine landscapes captured between 1902 and 1904 by Prince Francesco Chigi Albani della Rovere, whose collection is kept in the Italian national archives (ICCD), where Fontcuberta worked as an artist in residence during the pandemic.

Élevage de poussière 2, 2023

Digital giclée print with UltraChrome inks on 350 g Hahnemühle Museum etching paper.
84 x 120 cm



Series: ***De Rerum Natura***, 2023.
View from the '*Dust Gardens*' exhibition at àngels barcelona gallery,
2023



De Rerum Natura 2023

The series De Rerum Natura represents natural forms and landscapes, devoid of memory or history, which are the result of the generative processing of algorithms. These visual artifices are the consequence of another type of dust: the infinitesimal graphic repositories, that is, the enormous contingent of pre-existing images that the A.I. cannibalizes in order to give light to new images. This project serves as a continuation of a broader series of investigations and reflections concerning the natural world that Fontcuberta started with his iconic series "Herbarium" (1983) forty years ago.

Fungus viridis, 2023

giclée digital print with UltraChrome inks on 350 g
Hahnemühle Museum etching paper
40 x 40 cm



Series *Trauma*, 2016

View from the 'Monstres' exhibition at Villa Pérochon Centre d'Art Photographique d'Intérêt National, Niort, 2023

Photograph by Didier Goudal



Trauma, 2016, view from the '*Trauma i les imatges-fantasmes*' exhibition at àngels barcelona, 2016



Trauma

2016-2021

With this project, Fontcuberta explores the concept of what happens when a photograph abandons its visual identity when it is 'freed from its soul.' What remains when a photograph no longer represents an external reality but instead points solely to its physical substrate, composed of light-sensitive chemicals? The project delves into the field of visual archaeology conducted in both local and international photography archives.

Faced with the inevitable dematerialization of the digital image, and after an extensive search in various photo archives, including the author's own, for images that convey a sense of trauma. The series seeks to move beyond surface appearances and incites the debate around authorship. Despite the enormous production and monotonous repetition of digital images that are so prevalent today, it transforms photographic recycling into a creative act. Through this process, the image, changed by the passage of time, invites the viewer to search for what has already vanished.

Trauma #0528, 2021

hotography. High resolution printing, UV ink 1mm translucent polyester material siliconed with 2mm anti-reflective methacrylate, with LED light box (with integrated power supply and dimmer) and wooden frame

150 x 100 cm

153,5 x 103 x 10 cm (framed)



Series: **Orogénesis**, 2006
View from the 'Stranger than fiction' exhibition at Science Museum, London, 2014



Eugene Atget, *Saint-Cloud*, 1926
Arrowroot Print. 17,8 x 22,4 cm
MoMA, New York



Orogénesis: Atget, 2004,
Selenium toned silver gelatin print.
75 x 100 cm.



Series: **Googlegrams**, 2005-2008,
view from 'De facto. Joan Fontcuberta. 1982-2008' exhibition a La Virreina - Centre de la Imatge, Barcelona, 2008-2009



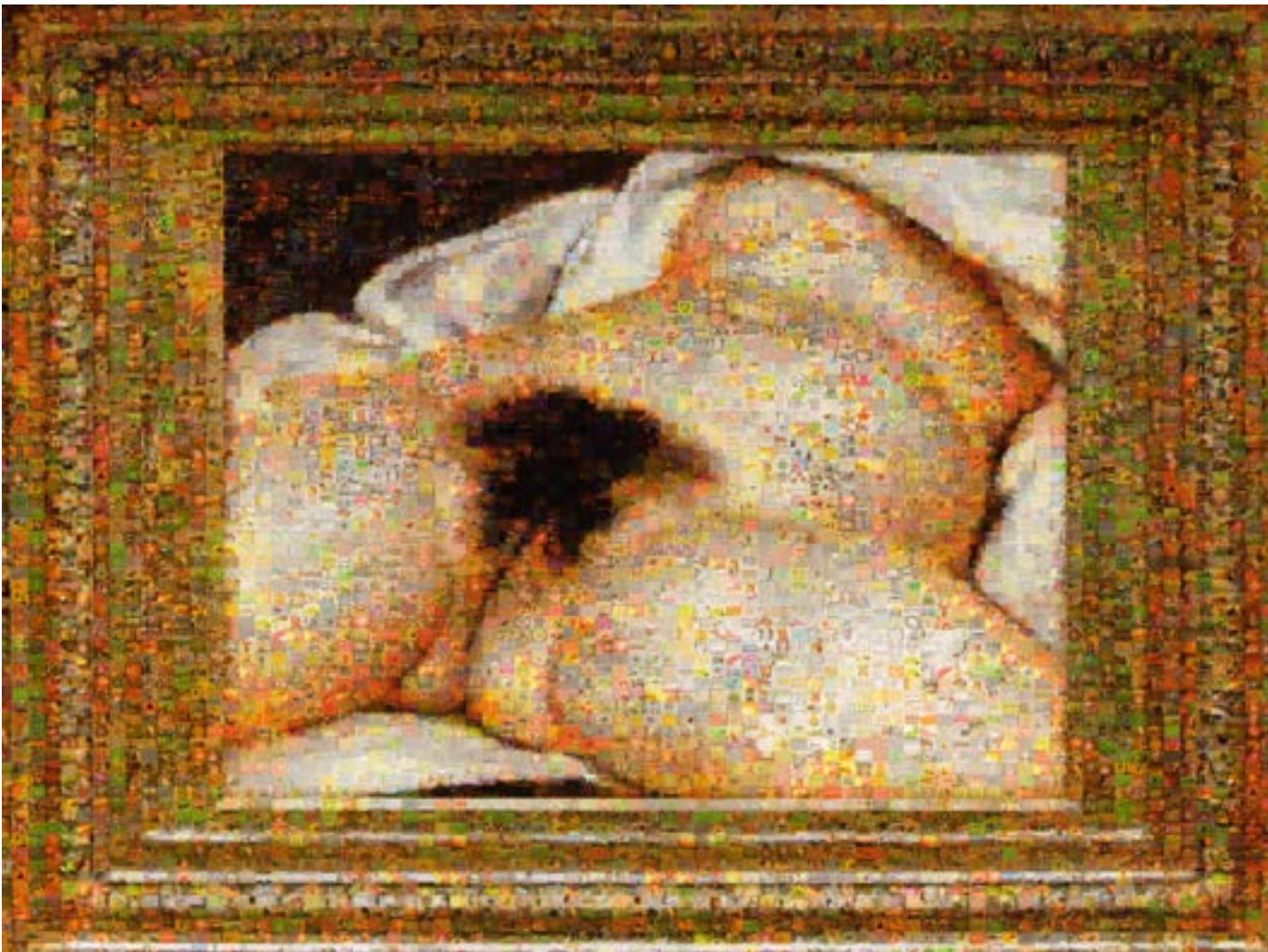
Salvador Dalí,
Geopoliticus Child Watching the Birth of the New Man, 1943
Oil on canvas,
45,7x52
Salvador Dalí Museum, St. Petersburg, United States

Orogénesis 2006

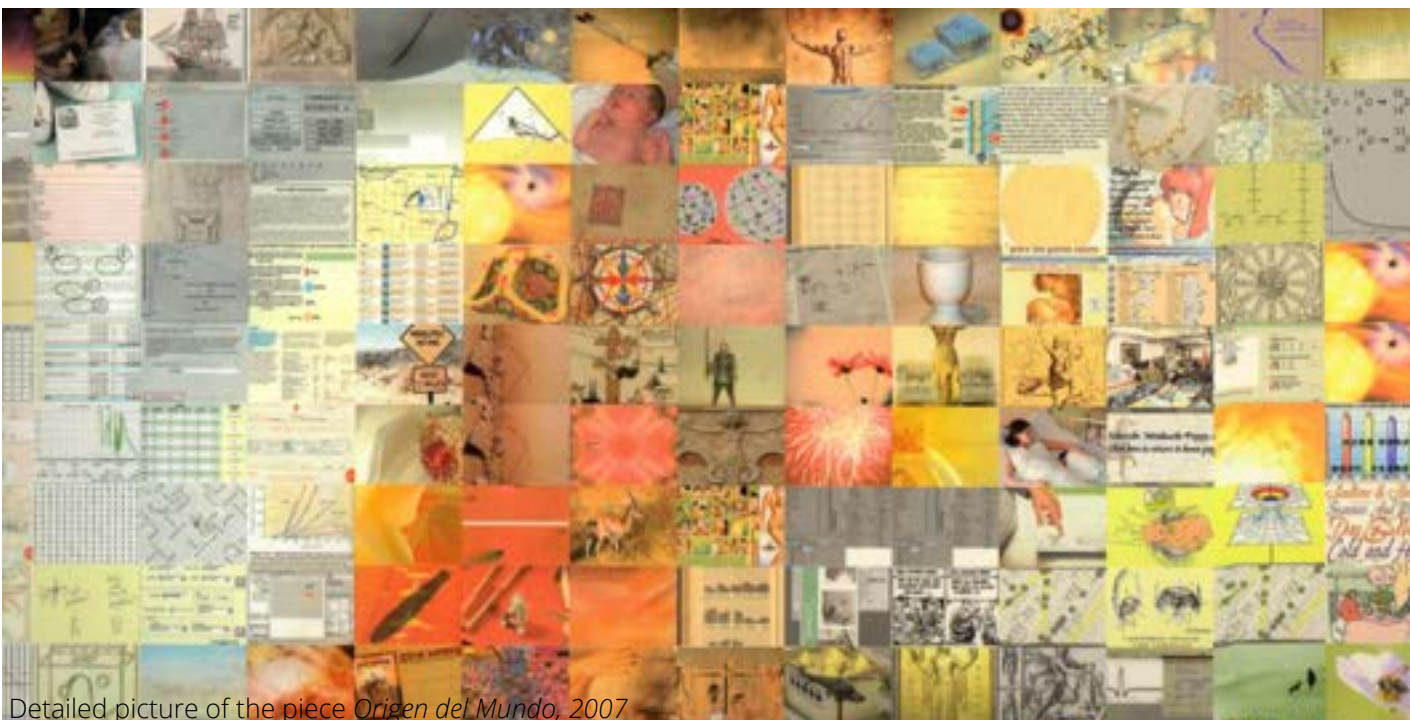
Orogeny is a branch of physical geography that explores how our planet shapes its terrain, forging mountains and valleys. In this project, we witness a clear transformation of the actual landscape, paralleling a more complex shift: the use of coding for representation. These landscapes are the result of a simulation program that converts two-dimensional maps, containing coded abstractions derived from cartographic data (including contour lines and topographic information). Fontcuberta employs image processing software to interpret data from paintings or reproductions of works by renowned photographers such as Eugene Atget and Ansel Adams, among others. This process creates a 'realistic' landscape that exists solely within the realm of art, with no counterpart in actual geography.

Landscapes of *Orogénesis* emerge from the interplay of photographic composition and development techniques, exploring the essence of photography as a medium for conveying truth. The result is a distinct fusion of landscapes, blurring traditional and digital photography, nature and artifice, and old and new horizons.

Orogénesis: Dalí (Geopoliticus), 2003
Chromogenic type-C print mounted on aluminum
118 x 178 cm
123 x 183 cm with frame



The Gustav Courbet image was reconstructed using a freeware photomosaic program connected online to the Google search engine. The following words were entered into Google as search criteria: big bang, black hole and dark matter.



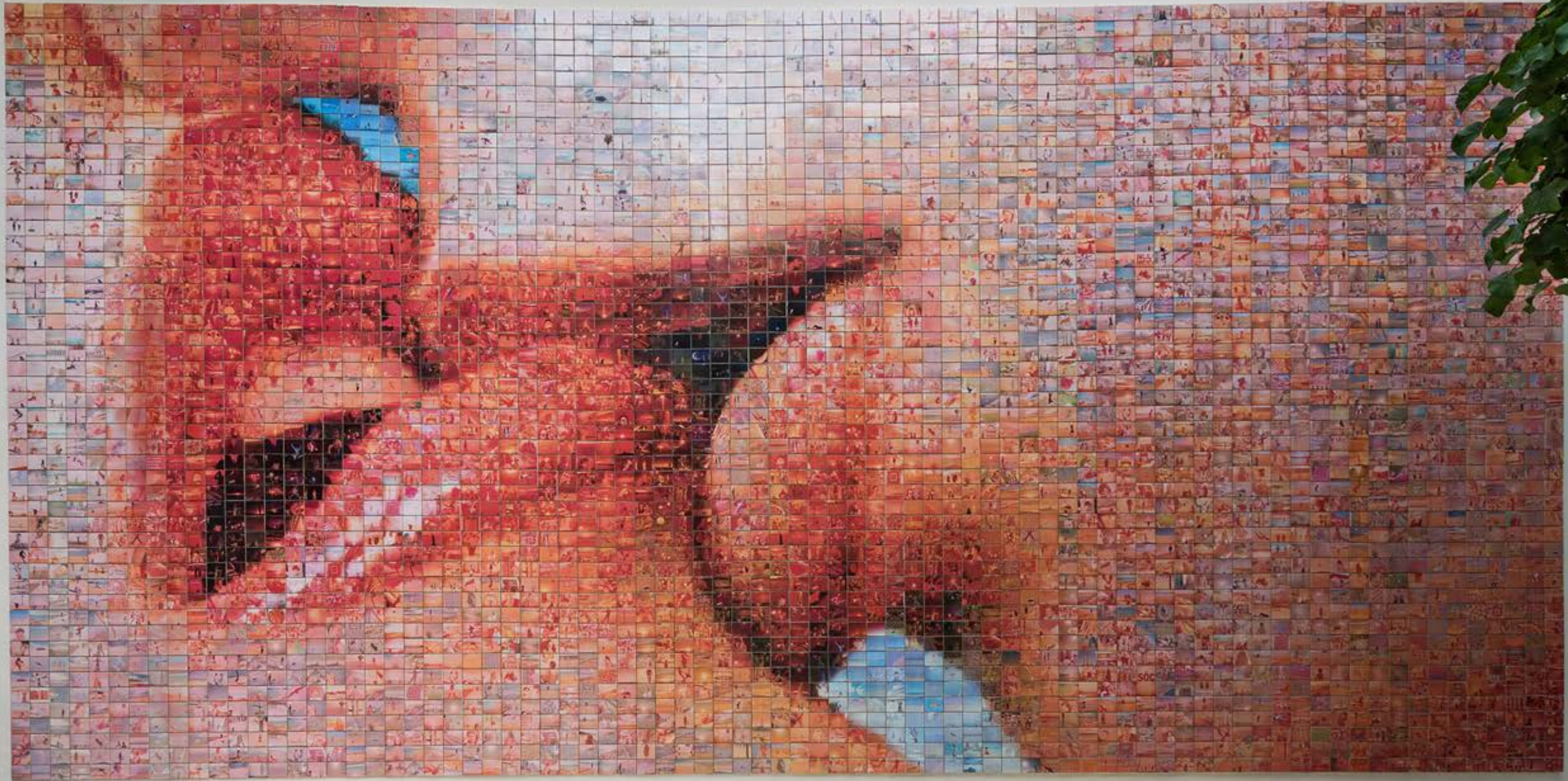
Detailed picture of the piece *Origen del Mundo*, 2007

Googlegrams 2004-2010

Inspired by the photogram and taking it as a starting point, Fontcuberta creates a series of photographic images made without a camera. These images serve as a critique of both the system of production and circulation of digital images, as well as the culture of information technologies. They are easily recognizable from a certain distance, but they create perceptual illusions that fade away as the viewer approaches them and discovers what is truly hidden within. For the creation of these images, Fontcuberta uses photomosaic freeware linked to Google's Image search function, reusing the images he finds available on the internet database that has led to a new organization of knowledge. The final result is a composite of multiple thousands of images that respond to certain words as search criteria, which are indicated at the bottom of each work. As a result, the Googlegram becomes a clear representation of the immense image flow in the media and the contemporary culture.

***Origen del mundo*, 2007**

C-Print,
120 x 160 cm



El món neix en cada besada, 2014
Ceramic photomosaic mural
3.8 x 8 m



The World Begins With Every Kiss 2014
(El món neix en cada besada)

Also referred to as "The Kiss Mural" or the "Kiss of Freedom," this photomosaic is located in the center of Barcelona, in the Plaza de Isidre Nonell. It was inaugurated to commemorate the tercentenary of 1714 in Barcelona. Similar to Googlegrams, the mural consists of four thousand different photographs. However, these images were contributed by the readers of the Catalan newspaper, *Periodico*. Citizens photographed moments representing their freedom. Fontcuberta's intention with this work was to capture the spirit of the Tricentenary, encapsulated by the motto 'Living Free,' from a positive perspective. Instead of presenting a wall of lamentations, he aimed to construct a wall of joy, offering an optimistic proposal for the future.



Curiosa Meravigliosa 2022

Created in partnership with the ceramic tile industry Marezzi, this photomosaic is a public artwork permanently situated in Reggio Emilia, Italy. Titled 'Curiosa Meravigliosa,' it's a testament to the rich heritage of knowledge, curiosity, and wonder found in Reggio Emilia's museums. Comprising 12,000 public-contributed photos, this collaborative piece represents the role of photography in the region. 'Curiosa Meravigliosa' serves as a consolidated representation, of the Vallisneri collection's peacock at the museum.

More about the art work and process of "Curiosa Meravigliosa" at Merazzi's website:
<https://www.marazzigroup.com/blog/joan-fontcuberta-public-art-and-ceramics/>

Curiosa Meravigliosa, 2022
Ceramic Photomosaic mural
16 x 6m
Reggio Emilia, Italy



Series: **Constellations**, 1994
view from the 'Camouflages' exhibition at the Museo Universidad de Navarra, Pamplona, 2016



Constel·lacions 1994

This series features enlarged photogrammetric reproductions of car windshields bearing the marks of collisions with mosquitoes and other insects. These chance encounters create organic landscapes on the glass, revealing a series of dramatic yet transformative events that have reshaped organic matter.

In today's world, the meaning of an image is heavily influenced by the intentions behind it. The artist explains, "While driving on the freeway in summertime, I collected the remains of insects on my windshield. What you're seeing isn't a traditional photograph but a visual record of a segment of the insect-stained windshield captured on photosensitive paper."

'MN 792: LEPUS (NGC 1904)
AR 05h 24,5 min. / D-24° 33',
1994
Photosensitive paper,
112 x 80 cm



Series: **Sputnik**, 1997
view from 'De Facto, Joan Fontcuberta 1982-2008' exhibition at La Virreina Centre de la Imatge, Barcelona, 2008-09



Series: *Sputnik*, 1997
Installation view at Yonaho Photo Festival, Japan, 1998.



The book: **Joan Fontcuberta: Sputnik**,
Editorial: Madrid, Fundación Arte y Tecnología, 1997
First edition, cloth binding, illustrated cover
H. 23.3 cm - W. 17 cm

source: <https://www.iberlibro.com/primer-edicion/joan-fontcuberta-sputnik-fundacion-arte-tecnologia/1696890440/bd>



Sputnik 1997

This project serves as a parody, an act of informative intoxication that highlights the perils of credulity. In this context, the artist assumes the role of a journalist to narrate the purported history of the initial venture of the Foundation Sputnik—an organization established for the rehabilitation of historical memory and the dissemination of the Soviet space program. The narrative revolves around the tragic fate of the astronaut Ivan Istochnikov (a Russian translation akin to Joan Fontcuberta), who was purportedly lost in space under mysterious circumstances. To lend authenticity to the story, the artist integrates a plethora of historical documents.

This endeavor once again challenges the authority of the artistic medium, compelling an exploration of the subjectivity of truth and perception. The artist questions not only the dogma of their own craft but also delves into realms such as media, technology, religion, medicine, government, academia, the art world, and science, as exemplified in works like *'Fauna'*.



Series: *The artist and the photography*,
view of exhibition at the VOX Centre de l'image contemporain , Montréal, 1998



Serie: *The artist and the photography*, 1995
view of exhibition at Fundació Joan Miró, 1995



The artist and the photography 1995

The visual culture of the 20th century was predominantly shaped by cinema, television, and the Internet, all of which, in one way or another, have their roots in photography. It's logical to assume that the camera's perspective contributed to the formation of modern sensibility. But what traces has it left in the works of the great masters of painting? This exploration delves into the dialogue between the brush and the camera, with a focus on four influential Spanish painters who left a significant mark on the international art scene: Picasso, Miró, Dalí, and Tàpies.

For this selection, unknown pieces of great plasticity were recovered, often preparatory sketches or inconclusive tests, but which anticipate numerous aesthetic successes and help to understand the process of creative work. Using direct photographs as well as photograms, photocollages and other manipulations of the photographic image, Fontcuberta pedagogically illustrates the extent to which it vivifies the painter's creativity and becomes a support that generates new expressive experiences.

Esbós per a Paisatge de Sant Anton, 1961, 1994

Serie: The artist and the photography (Miró)

Gouache and Chinese ink on gelatin silver (paper art classic)

60 x 50 cm



Fauna (1989), view from 'The Photography of Nature/ The Nature of Photography' exhibition at Hasselblad Center, the Gothenburg Museum of Art, Sweden, 2013



Fauna (1989), view from 'The Photography of Nature/ The Nature of Photography' exhibition at Hasselblad Center, the Gothenburg Museum of Art, Sweden, 2013

Tupimachen haben diese Namen
dargest in die Brasilian Uygayth
Eingez gefunden. So nennt man
eine Commen. Wie eine
Kutgthia kommen.

Leitendich heißt der Ceropithecus
ein schwarzer. Sein brasilian
Name sehr viele aus einzelnen
Buchstaben der Landbuchstaben
zusammen in einem Namen
verwahrt. Auch verkommt. Es lebt
hauptsächlich in Waldern, in
den Bergen und aus Seen

Die wilde Jagd
Der Ceropithecus kommt
häufig streichen den Händen
mit kalten auf, die in
Waldern und Bergen wohnen
wollen. Er frisst nicht, ihnen
eine Dankstellung verpassen
zu können

Tupimachen
hat der Fuchs.
durch den
Ceropithecus ganz
Arbeit geleistet
Alle Ceropithecus
hat mit gefiederten
Flügeln dargestellt
Wie die Fuchs
Flügel stellen erinnern
an die Fuchs
allen Zeiten

lange Zeit werden sie eine eiferst
verdrückten mit gelandeten Gendern

Es wird sehr dabei um
ein der letzten Tiere
geleitet haben,
den noch Ceropithecus
beruht

Hier ein Ceropithecus
Exemplar
der mongolische
Misch, im Jahre 1941
entdeckt wurde
Bannanien

Neue Zoologie Cont. 772-4761-94



Cercopithecus Icarocornu, 1989



Fauna 1985-1990

The series was collaboratively created with the esteemed Catalanian photographer Pere Formiguera. With whom they often examined the unclear lines between what's real and made up, exploring the differences between the natural world and imaginary realms. In the installation the artists retrieve the "supposed" fieldwork from an unknown German naturalist and teratologist Peter Amesienhaufen and his assistant, Hans von Kubert, who had discovered new animal species.

However, the work is composed of documentation of phantasmagorical photographs of invented animals such as the *Cercopithecus*. The project plays with the fact that Natural Sciences are still an abandoned territory for the invention of stories, given that we only know a partial part of the natural world. *Fauna* challenged some truths about science and photography. Aiming to question the long-established cliché of the truthfulness of the photographic document. The creation of this work was motivated by a deliberate intent to engage with misunderstandings, provoking the cause the viewer's prejudice.

***Cercopithecus Icarocornu*, 1989**

Silver gelatine print
22 × 25.4 cm



Herbarium, 1983.

30 photographs in b/w silver bromide gelatine with selenium etching, 40 x 30 cm. (framed)

View from the '*Dans monstres et des prodiges*' exhibition at Musée-Château Annecy, 2008



Herbarium, 1983

View from the 'Stranger than fiction' exhibition at Science Museum, London, 2014



Herbarium 1982-1985

The series stylistically imitates Karl Blossfeldt's formal photographs of plants of the 20s and 30s entitled *Urformen der Kunst* (1928) and *Wundergarten der Natur* (1932). Fontcuberta elaborates on a botanist's work, analyzing through conventional methodology a series of found objects. *Herbarium* is a collection of so-called pseudoplants: small ephemeral assemblages constructed with industrial detritus, pieces of plastic, bones, plant and animal parts of a diverse sort, that Fontcuberta collected from the outskirts of Barcelona. Through Latin classification, these pseudoplants are transformed into reality, and photography no longer serves as mere documentation, but instead becomes metadocumentation. The camera encourages contemplation on the document production process and its underlying ideologies. Consequently, the viewer is pushed to question his own credibility regarding the photographic document.

***Cornus impatiens*, 1983**

silver gelatine process

paper baritat

Silver gelatine on paper baritat

26 x 22 cm

àngels barcelona

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