

JOSÉ GUERRERO

CONCERNING LANDSCAPE

Unless otherwise specified, all works are colour prints on cotton rag paper and have the same title as the series to which they belong.

For more than twenty years, the work of José Guerrero (Granada, 1979) has explored the landscape as an active, dynamic entity in which the socio-political, the cultural and the social imaginary intersect. The stratification of time and memory and the visible signs of transculturation are among the artist's constant concerns.

For José Guerrero, as for many artists of his generation, to photograph a territory, a landscape or a place is to evoke the relations of proximity, alterations and tensions inscribed upon them, thereby banishing the modern notion of landscape as something non-artificial that exists outside of us.

In general, Guerrero's oeuvre is meticulously arranged in series, constructed like a fluid mosaic of meanings. Each image in a series simultaneously separates and connects the images that precede or follow it, like a visual score. The use of serialism in Guerrero's polyptychs has less to do with repetition and more with exalting the reiteration of difference—in other words, constructing an idea of the landscape as a character which is both intervening and intervened.

In some of his series, the intentional use of certain conventional features of natural and architectural landscapes inherited from modern photography—such as sharply defined horizons, dramatic skies and clouds, the saturation of certain colours or tones, or granting nature a seemingly idyllic quality—gives viewers a feeling of fascination and comfort in the redundancy of the allegedly familiar. Once this space of recognition has been established, the underlying challenge is to decipher the author's deliberate trade-offs between truth and fiction, intended to prompt a regeneration of the gaze that goes beyond mere contemplation.

This exhibition is organised as a narrative itinerary defined by several series and themes that serve as incessantly folding and unfolding leitmotifs: from representation to experimentation, from light to shadow, from transparency to opacity, from the document to abstraction. The show also includes a new work produced with the support of Fundación MAPFRE which the artist created in the streets of the medina of Fez, Morocco.

Marta Gili, curator

HORIZONS

This exhibition opens with several series in which the horizon, that imaginary line not found on any map, marks the divide not only between heaven and earth but also between silence and the void.

We see this in Guerrero's photographs of vast expanses of cultivated fields stretching to the horizon (*La Mancha* series, 2009–2012), tinged with different ochre hues that evoke the temporalities of crops; and in the sheds, huts and small makeshift structures that recall the significant, living ties of interdependence between nature and human beings. The fences, boundaries and walls that divide land into forms of ownership and neighbourhood suggest that the organisation of the landscape is an ecological, economic, social and political issue of the utmost importance.

Indeed, in *Efímeros* [Ephemeral] (2003–2006), José Guerrero takes an interest in the visual analysis of the processes of sedimentation and stratification of the human structures that define how certain urban landscapes are organised, from centre to outskirts and from past to present.

CARRARA

For centuries, the Carrara quarries in the Italian region of Tuscany have been famed for their excellent white marble, but they are also an example of the mass exploitation of natural resources.

In *Carrara* (2016), José Guerrero explores geological sedimentations and their historical evocations. The opacity and majestic vertical presence of the quarry walls suggest the oppression of excavating the depths of the abyss. Far from the crystalline whiteness traditionally associated with marble, the photographs in this series are steeped in poignancy and mystery, as if the quarry's smooth, polished walls could tell the secrets of the past and present that they guard. When Guerrero photographed the Carrara quarry, neither the whiteness of the marble nor its myriad crystalline glints were captured in his images: all we can glimpse is the darkness of the subsoil.

ROMA 3 VARIAZIONI

One of the centrepieces of the exhibition itinerary is the screening of *Roma 3 Variazioni* (2017), an audiovisual piece that Guerrero created with the composer Antonio Blanco (Jerez de la Frontera, 1979) during his residency at the Academia de España in Rome. Shot inside the subterranean Aqua Claudia or Claudian aqueduct, in the current of a tributary of the River Tiber, and in a grotto on the Mediterranean coast of southern Italy, the film presents a journey of mysterious sounds and images which, in the authors' words, "weave a dramaturgy in three acts whose sequence is metaphorically related to the ideas of origin, transit and end or rebirth".

From frenzied speed to the serene contemplation of light, the originality of *Roma 3 Variazioni* resides in the simultaneously smooth and thunderous wanderings of time, sound and imagery, which plunge spectators into a magical, evocative abyss.

BREACHES

Formally connected to *Roma 3 Variazioni* and *Carrara*, the *Brechas* [Breaches] photography series (2020–in progress) dovetails perfectly with the artist's investigation into the limits of perception of the landscape by means of a vertical composition, in which a certain horizon is glimpsed as a possible promise of light. José Guerrero began this series by taking photographs in a limestone quarry between Huéscar and Castril, in the province of Granada, and continued the project—specifically for this exhibition—on the narrow streets of the medina of Fez, Morocco. With exaggerated framing, geometries and precise scales, Guerrero charted each territory from the ground to the sky, outlining the constant metamorphosis of a light capable of revealing the real and the imaginary in a single flash.

BRG

In 2017 and 2018, the artist made two trips to Mexico where he admiringly discovered the work of Mexican architect Luis Barragán (1902–1988). The photographs *Barragán #01* and *Barragán #02* were taken at the swimming pool of Casa Gilardi and in the stairwell of Barragán's own studio and residence, respectively, both designed and built by the architect. Seduced by the abstract, graphic result of these two images, José Guerrero decided to take a significant turn in his oeuvre and embark on a new photographic series titled *BRG* featuring images of scale models which the artist himself constructed, inspired by Barragán's architectural work and by the metaphysical painting of Giorgio de Chirico.

In this way, he introduced a new theme in his body of work: the question of critical mistrust of the veracity of photography and the tricks of perception, highlighting the outlines and borders that delimit a fictitious yet plausible architecture.

GFK

The trajectory of José Guerrero's oeuvre, between document and abstraction, runs throughout this entire exhibition. One of his most recent series, *GFK* (2024-in progress), printed as large-format hangings or canvases, is based on arbitrary coding errors in the digital file at the moment of taking a photograph. Careful inspection of the actual texture of these works reveals the absence of a landscape, which is intuited in its own opacity.