

What's remains before the disaster...
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Being confronted or playing with time is one of the principles inherent to photography. Its own and almost exclusive adventure:

- One always knows afterwards what one has seen before.

- And what one sees afterwards, in the form of an image or a photographic strip, did indeed truly exist, at least that's what we actually believe. Which explains our marvelling, our fascination, our sadness, too, our emotion and all the stories that accompany these feelings. "Whoever is barely able to see is also barely unable to relate," wrote Jean de La Fontaine before adding: "I will say: I was there, something happened to me, you will believe it if you will." Thus the fable.

Believing in pictures and stories to remember or even invent souvenirs that one maybe never had, such are the challenges of photographic recording: it is so, we say, because it might have been so.

If pictures are made, if they are as loved as they are, it is because they are the proof of the existence of time that fashions our world, our history.

The case is settled. But obvious facts are like definitions. They can be muddled and turn against themselves.

If pictures send us back to ancient times, why not envisage them not only as the reoccurrence of a past serving a single present, but as representations of time to come, pictures destined for a future and, more so, a future nobody would want to see occurring? Pictures note what could happen, and that, in fact, has happened, in prevision of what one will have to confront one day.

The matter is complex. Even vertiginous. And this is what we come across in the work of Marina Gadonneix: a slow, meticulous recording of events whose existence is crossed by those insane times that present the actual current event of a frightful future.

These photographs have been taken in peculiar places known as "fire houses", spaces where firemen are trained or where scientific experts study the effects of fire, its damage, and the consequences of fire in habitations. These are simulators for fire training that offer a large number of scenarios of what could happen with objects such as gas cylinders, gas counters, shelves, electric wire covering, different types of ceilings, windows and staircases. Or a kitchen, a sofa, a garage, a car in a garage.

The list is endless, because these fire houses allow for a vast number of different simulations such as fire from a bed propagating to part of the wall, or the effects of smoke and the trouble created to the whole place in a blaze.

"Firemen", or "fire soldiers" as they are often called in France, use these training sessions to guard against all the eventualities of what could happen if such an event took place.

Marina Gadonneix intervenes just after the sessions, dressing an inventory of what remains after the fictive fire has taken place in these places that replay catastrophes.

The series is called "The House that Burns Everyday". Indeed, furniture is burnt several times a day without deteriorating, meaning without being consumed: sofas, beds, desks, computers, cars...

Blackness, layers and layers of black, grey, silver ash cover these carbonized elements as well as the dark surrounding space:

Black sofa, grey in black and grey living room.

Black, silvery car in a sparkling black garage.

In Marina Gadonneix's very descriptive photographs, everything seems calm and orderly. The places and objects are familiar to us: an office, a chair, a double door, a kitchen, kitchen items, an "entirely equipped" living room, a bedroom. The views are like still lives, speechless, restful, like the black remains of the Pompeii Museum. The only difference is that the actual catastrophe hasn't happened yet. Future dark presences.

Which is why the spectator feels so dizzy, wondering what could have happened to come to such a result.

The fright he feels when the only answer he has is realizing that what he sees will happen later on, the actual past of what will be real one day if people aren't careful enough.

Each picture is a dramatized scene with its rectitude of lines, straight forwardness, excess of sharpness and the sombre light of representation.

Every scene comes forward like an admirably composed little photographic theatre.

Every spectacle is the proof each time it is played that the scenarios fire fighters write every day, just like the photographer and with the same patience, the same meticulousness, will bring order to the upcoming catastrophe's disorder.