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### **What you see is what you get. The fatalistic landscape photography of Jordi Bernadó.**

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Unlike CSI agents, the English painter John Constable (1776-1837) loved to alter the scene of the crime. In his particular case, it was not the scene of the crime but the scene of beauty. This was the concept that he chased after with those landscapes that drove his admirers crazy when they went out in search of that exact spot chosen by the artist.

It did not take long to discover that it was impossible to find these Constable landscapes, simply because they did not exist. This lover of beauty, to whom we can attribute a certain British eccentricity, created these landscapes by taking a meadow here and an elm tree there, a pond way out in the middle of nowhere and then taking a castle that was three counties over from the meadow, the elms and the pond. In this way, he improved the work of both humankind and nature, fabricating the perfect landscape that, until its creation, only existed in his aesthetic soul.

Contrary to Constable, Jordi Bernadó makes use of what he finds, which is often horrible, sad, ridiculous or all of these at the same time. The artist does not try to improve what nature or humans do, but limits himself to giving evidence of what there truly is without even minimally altering the scene of the crime. But as does any good photographer, Bernadó sees things that the *hoi polloi* may not even notice or even if we see them, we do not register them in our memory or in writing. We have all seen couples kissing but only Cartier-Bresson had the capability of immortalising that perfect kiss.

I just said that Jordi Bernadó is a good photographer but it would be more correct to say that he is a great observer. The architect who wanted to be a writer ended up in photography through a combination of coincidence and narrowing down his other options. Being allergic to the abomination that we know as artistic photography, which, as far as I am concerned is the entrance to hell (hell being artistic ceramics), Bernadó has one camera and one lens. You'll never see him dragging around machines, backdrops and umbrellas. What he cannot capture with his usual camera and his usual lens was simply not supposed to be photographed.

In this sense, since he is more interested in what he shows as opposed to how he shows it, I think that Jordi Bernadó is more of a narrator than a photographer. It is not a coincidence that one of his photographs was unconsciously and unintentionally copied a few years later by David Byrne, another sharp sighted individual who does not care much about technique and an artist who, with our friend Bernadó, shares a certain fatalist attitude in view of our existence. It is clearly demonstrated in his songs, his photographs and in the film *True Stories*, where simpletons and brutes were treated with admirable humanity and compassion.

We fatalists recognise one another and we know that we are easily misinterpreted. We are often accused of being pessimists when in fact we are bored by the obvious and irritating subjects they are. Although we are never confused with optimists, there are those who consider us to be too soft, too tolerant and too accommodating to the horrors that surround us. Anyway, we already know that in this world whoever ends up standing in the middle of things is the one who gets hit. Or, if I can say this, it is the one who gets used to always being right because he is reluctant to believe that things can only be black or white.

Jordi Bernadó's landscapes feed only on reality, a reality that he does not try to don with some sort of moral. His point of view is that of someone who confronts life in the most perceptive way possible. This perception is the astonishment one feels from such strange, absurd and ridiculous things that mankind is capable of doing to the planet on which it lives.

Because of this, our artist's photographs are so rich in pathetic material, a material that is, on the other hand, assimilated by the artist without any kind of complex or moral resistance. If a whore house advertises next to a cemetery, it seems that Bernadó is telling us that there must be a reason for this.

It is not necessary to waste time searching for answers to questions that probably do not have answers anyway, even if it is impossible for us to ask them. ¿What is a juice ad doing in a graveyard? What was that dim-wit thinking when he stuck Snow White in his garden with eight dwarves when everyone knows the story of Snow White and the seven dwarves? Where is that piece of armour whose disappearance reveals a shabby sock that blemishes the memory of the knight who sported it in the days of old? What is that nuclear power plant worker doing outside the plant, dressed up as a character in a low-budget horror film? Why does a living man pose by his future tomb, with his name already engraved on it? Who was the idiot who had the idea of erecting a replica of the Eiffel Tower in Paris, Texas and then crowning it with a cowboy hat? Where did the well-meaning illiterate fellow who wrote Welcome to Espaiñ on the wall come from? Whose brilliant idea was it to decorate a Majorcan bordello like some sort of erotic recreation area for NASA pilots?

And so the questions continue, for the landscapes of Jordi Bernadó arouse inevitable questions and they make us participate in the astonishment that they generated, an astonishment that obviously isn't enough to achieve the optimum result; for an optimum result, we have to add a sense of humour that is somewhat twisted, something between Rafael Azcona and the Coen brothers, that emphasises the desired tragi-comic reach of the proposal.

In the same way that films like *El Verdugo* or *Fargo* are able to reflect on the human condition but avoid turning into a sermon for sermons we already have Oliver Stone or Ken Loach, the landscapes of Jordi Bernadó show and accept the existing without the need to emphasise a censoring attitude or show the way to redemption, most likely because the image speaks for itself and is brutally eloquent. Every time I see one of Mr. Bernadó's photographs, I think "This is what we are; this is what there is." And it never occurs to me, as it never occurs to the artist, to scorn what I see, what we are, what there is. I simply thank him for pointing out things that I had not noticed, things that help me to understand the society that I live in, or survive in, a little better.

Without a doubt, John Constable's landscapes are more beautiful than those of Jordi Bernadó, but you cannot deny that Bernadó's are more real. In contrast to those laborious scenes of the English painter, the scenes of this Catalan observer are at anyone's reach. The fact that only he manages to immortalise them obeys that enigma of the view of the artist that we have always known. In this case, it is the view of an artist that hardly considers himself an artist, even though there are few as skilled as he is at capturing this vision of the atrocious, grotesque and often hilarious world that we get to live in.

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