
by Andrea Tinterri

GIANO

Two small recesses oriented towards the road, protected by a portico facing Via Emilia. These are the places of the narrative incipit of SUBSTRATUM, **Gonzalo Borondo's** exhibition. Places that contain two images, stratified photographs showing a rotating face. The portrait is that of photographer Nadar, who, in 1865, captured himself in a series of shots that returned his own face in a three hundred and sixty degree rotation. **Borondo** makes the French photographer's fatigue his own, but he does so refusing the single shot static nature; he superimposes the photographs to create a complete portrait in which the face recognition diminishes in a convulsion of concurrent frames. Every quote and every reference to the history of photography has a specific weight and addresses the exhibition narrative.

Borondo opens the exhibition with images of one of the most important portraitists of all times, whose aim was to reach that *intimate resemblance* that corresponds with *the moral intelligence of your subject*. But this *resemblance* is denied in **Borondo**, in fact, it is purposefully erased in favour of a persistent superimposition; the photograph is not a trace that captures the instant, it contaminates Time. Indeed the exhibition is presented as a superimposition of planes in which photography is confounded and blended neutralising the recognition of the subject. Because what emerges is a million years old present, one that is not susceptible to history solicitation or passing trends, but is rooted in an archaic image, of idols that follow one another and transform, their own totemic function unaltered. And the portrait acts as adhesive, the photographs of Nadar possess a perfect correspondence with two large self-portraits of **Borondo** that appear within the cloister of the exhibiting space. A window wide open onto a tree tunnel in perspective and statues of ancient heroes placed on high pedestals are superimposed on the nape and face of the artist, respectively, suggesting an eternal landscape that absorbs every image, every photograph, every gaze transit.

Giano who looks at the past and at the future, the artist who turns idol in a syncretism that welcomes and collects the memory of the whole humanity; the gate is a threshold that implies a crossing not necessarily into the new.

The portrait maintains an ambiguous relationship with the time of the story, it converses with the heroic torment statuary, rather it contains it in order to highlight a perpetual present and an ahistorical cyclic nature.

Although indirectly, Nadar research is kept under the radar, a constant dialectic between past and future that in the French photographer is declared through an alternation of high and low, sky and subsoil that cuts across the portrait.

Gaspard-Félix Tournachon (Nadar's real name), who was passionate about aeronautics, was the first to photograph Paris from above, thanks to a hot-air balloon, and the first to capture the catacombs and sewers of the French capital, thanks to the use of artificial light. In doing so, he signals a perhaps symbolic correspondence, proposing a total portrait of the city. This ductility appears to, with an imaginative effort, support **Borondo's** research, the subterranean of the story emerges to the surface and into the present. It is not a coincidence that Nadar wanted to photograph Paris beyond the limit of the street, because it is in the unreachable that the *intimate resemblance* essential to the portrait is found.

And **Borondo** clarifies this passage in the title itself; SUBSTRATUM refers to an erosion of the apparent, an act of coring of time and accumulation of memory, in which the portrait, or self-portrait, combines the seeming distance between a before and an after, between the sky and the subsoil. **Borondo's** photography is an open image that absorbs and becomes identity, it is a porous surface, permeable to the myths of history.





Gonzalo Borondo (Valladolid, 1989) is a multimedia visual artist, one of the most talented of his generation.

He grew up in Segovia and studied in Madrid, where he deepened the technique of figurative painting; since 2003 he has engaged with the underground art scene, standing out for the originality of his murals in unauthorized spaces, powerful inspirations that activate a dialogue between the subject and the space in which he places it.

In 2011 he moved to Rome, where he attended the Academy of Fine Arts and bonded with the art scene of the city, the first to consecrate him as a protagonist on the international urban art scene. Borondo's pictorial poetics is expressionist, intimist and humanist: he investigates feelings, the fragility of the psyche, moods, restlessness and the movements of conscience; the work is imbued with spirituality and nature. In his imagery, the physical and psychological context intertwine in a continuous dialogue characterized by the experimentation of techniques, by the choice of unconventional supports and by a trait that is personal, aware, full of energy and identity that transforms the artistic dimension into an immersive experience. Borondo has painted dozens of murals in the main capitals of the world, has staged numerous solo shows and has been invited to exhibit his works in many museums and institutions.

*The most recent projects include the installation at the Urban Nation Contemporary Art Museum (Berlin, 2016), the intervention in the temple of Charteons acquired by the CAPC (Bordeaux, 2019), the installation **Non plus ultra** at the Macro (Rome, 2019) and the solo exhibition at the Esteban Vicente Museum of Contemporary Art (Segovia, 2021).*

*He was awarded the **Arte Laguna** prize in Venice in 2018 and the **Golden Street Art** award in France in 2020.*

