

by Domenico Russo

THE FIRST MAN SUBSTRATUM

At times, closing our eyes, we see faces, landscapes, images that rarely appear lucent and clear. Blurred beyond the fogs of memory, the visions do not elude the essence of the subject that remains extraordinarily visible in its contours in the penumbra. This dialectic between indefiniteness and essence is an evocative movement, sometimes spontaneous, a surprise that verges on the unexpected.

Analysing in depth such sensation in SUBSTRATUM, **Gonzalo Borondo** accesses his father's and public's photographic archive, and he does so in the similar way conscience moves over the surface of memory: that is how it succeeds in settling in the eye of the beholder. A moment of connection initiates another journey that calls on the soul and every human sense. We are in the birthplace of names.

Here, we move in a way that is not random, just like in SPAZIOC21, where the end of a simple architecture fades into temple and turns into a sacred forest, capable of enduring history as archive of variable images. **Borondo** is like the first man; in naming, he establishes words and terms of a new language, opening the way of communication. Once he has given his artworks their identity, though, they begin to tell their stories to one another, to independently live the relationship with their interlocutor, who is none other than the observer who participates in their presence.

The artist tries a language, photography is an atypical tool of him, and balances skillfully a varied system of techniques in order to give life to the expanded story of a feeling. Life flows deep, enveloping, in the uterus of this art, remote and present at the same time. Audience and artworks mutually merge with one another and we understand how for **Borondo** to make art is first an act of love towards the other. Or also an act of faith, a belief in the unknown, in humankind and the magnificence of feeling in every time and place.

The artist puts in play an emotional perception, melancholy and complex, spiritually distant from the tarmacked world, solid and electronic, but connected to everything through glass sheets and other semitransparent materials that favours the spatial permeation of the planes and the formation of the artist's personal poetry. Layer upon layer adds to the variety of existence, in a functional, and beautiful, whole: an harmonious diorama on a rarefied summit, from which what moves beyond the surface can be glimpsed.

The bottom is a suggestion, a whisper. At times, what seems superfluous becomes essential, and in the seemingly secondary data of the contemporary, in its scraps, in its anachronism, the maps of a better future are found, a more sensitive future, one that does not forget the past.

The passage of time settled in the substratum dissolves a value system, releasing the density of today's life in an alternative spiritual dimension; on a different plane of experimental photography, varied living possibilities are executed, welcomed in the gap between high and low, street and church, sky and earth, sacred and profane, modern and classical. And a gradual loss of the present takes place, not by substitution, but by addition. Like an overtaking of the absolute wakefulness. From that frontier, nexuses lose sheen, and the image of something different, even of ourselves, reveal itself strong and throbbing. Everything is history, and everything is today.

The form, precise and meticulous, sustained by the character impressed on the sheets is always deep. Its intensity is a matter of emotion, pleasure, or inquietude. And our faces, straight towards Borondo's images, go through them, through the echoes of time, and therefore contribute in affirming the reality of existence. As if the artist were asking our eyes to call on a name, to faces, statuary, landscapes, and architectures; to shout to them that they can reciprocate, as vibrant forms of the present, because in order to live fully our own time, we have to stand alive before the past.

Then we open our eyes, and the images in our mind instantly disappear, evaporate. But the memories somehow remain. That is where SUBSTRATUM operates, excluding the disappearance. With a reversed and positive act of foreclosure, **Borondo** elicits a memory that is stable, present, and spiritual.

gonzaloborondo

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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.*

