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JOHN DIVOLA: THE ART OF ABANDONMENT

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September 27, 2023

Ruined, destroyed, empty and forgotten spaces can go unnoticed by many, but not by **John Divola** (<http://www.faculty.ucr.edu/~divola/>) (Los Angeles, 1949), who sees in these places a sample of meanings, **living places** in which you can feel and remember stories that existed. behind the walls.

With **more than 50 years of career** , Divola is a **reference in the world of photography** . Graduated from California State University and with a master's degree in Fine Arts obtained from UCLA, with his camera he has

captured hundreds of works that have been exhibited in the main galleries and museums in countries such as the United States, England, France, Germany, Japan , Australia, Mexico and more.

Since he was little, he showed an innate artistic talent and a different perspective on objects and reality, but he never saw it as a vocation: *"I wasn't in an art museum until I was 20,"* he says. In high school, a teacher asked him to bring a piece of wood to class to make an impression on that material and he remembers that this was, without looking for it, **the first and incipient recognition of him as an artist**. *"I carved the only thing I knew how to draw, a tree. I inked it and did the printing. The wood was grainy and soggy. I didn't notice a knot in the wood in the sky area. So in my impression, the knot looked like the moon and the swollen wood grain looked like waves of light radiating towards my tree. "The teacher loved it and they placed it in the principal's office."*

"I WASN'T IN AN ART MUSEUM UNTIL I WAS 20"







Later, after exploring his creativity and his vision, Divola began to create images with a distinctive and visionary seal, and to see, in photography, **his** preferred expressive medium and the one with the most future. *"When I started, most fine art photographers worked exclusively in black and white, I experimented with color relatively early on. On the other hand, **the invention of photography forever changed human consciousness** ; "One can argue all day about the gains and losses of this evolution, but these language changes become integrated and encoded in our way of being ."* With this vision, **his camera, paint, thread and cardboard**, he traveled around Los Angeles looking for abandoned houses, which he finished destroying and capturing with his lens. This is how he developed his first project " **Vandalism Series**" .

The **initial interventions of this type of** destroyed and uninhabited non-spaces, build a portrait between **reality** (the intervened place), and **abstraction** (those elements that the artist adds and construct a certain meaning – the one that the viewer wants to give it). The disruptive nature of Divola's works lies in this **dialogue** .



In his words: *"Abandoned buildings interest me because they are free and open spaces where anyone can act. As long as the space is open, it will not be empty. These spaces show **layers of gestures and actions**: there is the gesture of the architect who designs the space, the gestures of the contractors who build the space, the gestures of the people who lived in these spaces, the gestures of the drug addicts who break the walls*

*looking for copper wire to sell, the gestures of paintball impacts, the gestures of countless previous unauthorized visitors, and then my own gestures. In one sense, each room is relatively generic and very similar to any of the rooms we have all lived in, but in another sense, **they have very individual and specific stories**. "I am interested in visual opportunities and these layers of gestures."*



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These spaces have not been the artist's only focus. During his extensive career, Divola has ventured into **installation, performance and sculpture** with the idea of intertwining everything and complementing his work to reach the limit between fiction and reality. A series of repetitive elements, like clues (**graffiti, animals, skies, windows, lights, etc.**) complete a complex imaginary. But what are their meanings? Exist?

*"Rara vez intento ilustrar, con estos símbolos, una idea, o explorar una metáfora. Es lógico que tratemos de interpretar y encontrar lo simbólico o lo abstracto, pero las fotografías son casi siempre muy específicas: una fotografía se hace con un cierto tipo de luz, en un lugar específico, y es un artefacto material de un tiempo, lugar y circunstancia, por eso, **se resiste a ser completamente simbólica**. Dicho esto, me gustan las ventanas, me gustan las imágenes dentro de imágenes, me gustan las pruebas de acción y me encanta la apariencia de la luz que ilumina una superficie. **Hago referencia a la historia de la fotografía, el arte o la cultura**, mientras **produzco un archivo** que es una manifestación de una perspectiva particular, en un momento y lugar específicos del planeta".*

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En estas más de cinco décadas de carrera, el amor de Divola por la fotografía y el arte sigue más vivo que nunca. Desde 2015, ha estado trabajando en viviendas abandonadas de una Base de la Fuerza Aérea desmantelada en Victorville, California. *"Todavía disfruto mucho lo que estoy haciendo y no me importa divagar, no creo demasiado en el progreso. **El cambio se produce a través de la observación, la experimentación y el juego**, la tecnología y el mundo son dinámicos y evolucionan. No tengo idea de hacia dónde me dirijo o si esto es lo más lejos que puedo llegar".*

You can follow John's works at **@divola**
(<https://www.instagram.com/divola/>)

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