

## **Gaston Bertin, the invention of a recognizable language**

by Jonathan Fox

Playing with paper and taking pictures of it. Say that and it sounds like child's play. Do it and more so. But Gaston Bertin's photographs are anything but.

Gaston's work responds to what Worringer termed the "abstract need", and what corresponds to the assumption of a place in oneself, a filling of a chaotic and random void within the viewer, or what was not reasonably known to be present (or missing). His work is vital in that it is necessary; its apparent randomness and casualness is in reality something far different. The work lacks nothing in its presentation – neither narrative structure nor logic – but rather can be construed as the fulfillment of a basic and fundamental necessity. Not an alternative but a necessary part of a narrative call that has been lost with time, that of a work of art that reaches directly to the collective subconscious.

Perhaps it is useful to tell the spectator that Gaston Bertin in this case produces without digital manipulation. Would that satisfy the curious? Would that end the questions and the doubts about how, why, with what? What if the spectator knew that what they are seeing is a mechanical process turned digital, that the digital represents a mere tool rather than the tool of creation, a useful development that neither deepens nor cheapens the result; in fact it affects it in no way. It is a process that time has caught up to...

What can be construed as remarkable in Gaston Bertin's work is the invention of a recognizable language from the preparation of objects that bear no conscious meaning, that represent no fixed societal codes. In choosing to work on the level of the sub-conscious, an accumulative effect takes place, and a meaning is drawn out of human necessity rather than artistic bravado.

And if you knew that this French-born, Barcelona-raised, New York-educated documentary photographer had a background of infinite influences, would this help you? What we have here is a sum of the parts: The French surrealist, the New York City street, the Barcelona Modernisme, the Milan design. Without a story there is no art.

Gaston's abstract installations can be viewed as a study, a documented voyage into the world of color and form in which the three-dimensional imposes itself on the viewer in spite of the two-dimensional photographic medium, in spite of the two-dimensional source from which it is borne.

Signs and symbols that form the backbone of a cynical post-modernism are here abandoned to what could appear an archaic process – the complete submission to ornamentation. The columns and cornices are now forms and colors. It is the recreation of a world existent yet lost to most, an architectural model of the inner-eye as it were, the duplication of that "oceanic feeling" that seems to affect us most when we are enclosed within that cloistered "total experience", the church.

Did Gaston search for the purely aesthetic and found something else? I think so.

Jonathan Fox, January 2008.

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