



JUAN USLÉ  
**LÍNEA DOLCA**  
2008 - 2018 IRREFRENABLE

# espaivisor

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LINEA DOLCA 2008 - 2018. IRREFRENABLE.

## Gastar el tiempo como si sobrara

Apenas unos pies –sandalias con calcetines que parecen salidas de una novela muy subrayada de Yasunari Kawabata- devuelven la imagen del suelo salpicado a la que debe ser la cotidianidad en el estudio del pintor. Si no hubieran aparecido esos pies apenas esbozados por el objetivo, es probable que la franja estrecha y moteada se hubiera confundido con la superficie que ocupa la parte superior de la fotografía, el cuadro mismo que, apoyado contra la pared, escudriña el propietario de los pies, cuyo ojo toma la instantánea, teniendo en cuenta la lógica del espacio.

Siguiendo con el juego de malentendidos que plantea la fotografía -los que persigue con frecuencia Juan Uslé en sus cuadros también cuando enreda a la mirada-, la superficie pictórica despliega con desparpajo su apariencia ambigua de fotogramas salidos de una película abstractizante. Ocurre siempre con el cine vanguardista: sobre la pantalla se proyecta una ineludible ausencia de narrativa. Sin embargo, la ausencia de narrativa no quiere ni mucho menos decir falta de relato -a veces es todo lo contrario.

Casi como una increíble prolongación de sus trabajos pictóricos, la mayor parte de las fotografías de Juan Uslé no permite distinguir elementos figurativos nítidos. Si en la serie *Negra* las formas se camuflan como claridad o fragmentos; en *Tramas* el mundo se va reduciendo a geometrías; e incluso los *Paisajes* se difuminan y se dupliquan, boca abajo, gadget visual del siglo XIX, mujer en el columpio del *Ballet mécanique* de Leger. Porque sus fotos -y a ratos incluso sus pinturas- tienen sabor a cine de vanguardia. Igual que ocurre en la mítica película de Michael Snow *La région centrale*, estrenada en 1971, en las fotos de Uslé el mundo y las cosas del mundo aparecen desplazadas sin remedio, despedazadas, sumergidas en un trastocamiento que más que vaciarlas de relato, las reviste de una historia sorprendente que obliga a repensarlo todo. Es un juego a la vez preciso y desestructurado. Una línea quiebra los fotogramas. Un color desbarata el orden impecable del cuadro. Unos pies irrumpen en el espacio fotográfico y lo agrietan.

En ese rompimiento, en ese resquebrajarse, se instala poderosa cierta noción temporal que habita las obras de Uslé. Es ahí donde se comienza el relato, en el acto mismo de transcurrir –ocurre en el cine de vanguardia. Porque el ocurrir temporal está implícito en las propias tiras de películas y se aparece certero en *Soné que revelabas*. Es el tiempo que se rompe en el propio material, en el orden de los cuadros de Uslé; tiempo que se proyecta como falla, algo muy sutil que se posa en las fotos y cambia la significación del acontecimiento. Al fin y al cabo, las obras de Juan Uslé son huellas, testimonios, velos, territorios intermedios a los cuales se recurre para contar de nuevo.

Sobre estas transformaciones, sobre esta naturaleza escurridiza, se podría reflexionar frente a sus fotografías, quizás a partir de una obsesión -¿o se debería hablar de costumbre?- por captar en la realidad lo que ve en sus cuadros mientras los hace; lo que ve en una estrategia narrativa que tiene bastante de relato autobiográfico. La ambigüedad se resuelve solo en el título -y a veces ni eso.

Pero tampoco Uslé corre en busca de la autenticidad cuando agarra la máquina, ni la fotografía asegura la verdad. Más bien, ficción y documento se nublan y se tachan sin tregua, fotogramas de una película sin relato aparente proyectada sobre la pantalla que no está. Esto intriga -y mucho- en el papel que las fotos tienen en el proyecto de Uslé. El modo en el cual documentan la mirada, llenan los huecos entre lienzos, viven en ese tiempo paralelo del cine; el que habita la sala, en los laterales de la pantalla.

espacio #1 - galería

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Inauguración: Viernes 21 de Septiembre 20:00h

FIAC. París 18 - 21/10/2018

FRIEZE MASTERS. Londres 04 - 07/10/2018

ART BASEL. Miami Beach 06 - 09/12/2018

ARMORY. New York, 08 - 11/03/2019

## Spending Time Like There's No Tomorrow

The tips of a pair of feet –sandals and socks included, which could have been lifted straight from a heavily underlined novel by Yasunari Kawabata– are enough to disclose that what we are seeing is the paint-splattered floor of what surely must be an artist's studio. If these barely glimpsed feet had not appeared, the narrow, stippled strip on the bottom would probably have been mistakenly confused with the surface occupying the upper part of the photo, namely, the painting leaning against the wall that is being scrutinized by the owner of the feet, who, bearing in mind the logic of the space, must have taken the snapshot.

Continuing with the mix-ups induced by the photo—and often also pursued by Juan Uslé in his paintings when he entangles the gaze—the surface of the painting unabashedly flaunts the ambiguous semblance of stills taken from an abstract film. Avant-garde film always seems to come down to the same thing: an inevitable lack of narrative projected on the screen. That being said, the absence of narrative by no means implies a lack of something to say—and often the complete opposite is true.

Almost as if they were an incredible extension of his painterly works, in the vast majority of Juan Uslé's photos one cannot discern clear-cut figurative elements. While in the series *Negra* the forms are disguised as clarity or fragments; in *Tramas* the world appears to be reduced to geometries; and *Paisajes* even blurs and duplicates, upside down, a nineteenth-century visual device, the woman on a swing from Leger's *Ballet mécanique*. His photos—and sometimes even his paintings—are clearly redolent of avant-garde film. Similarly to what happened in *La région centrale*, the celebrated film by Michael Snow premiered in 1971, in Uslé's photos the world and worldly things are irrevocably displaced and disjointed, caught up in a disruption that, more than emptying them of narrative, invests them with a surprising story that forces one to rethink everything. It is a game that is at once precise and unstructured: a line cuts through the stills; a colour upsets the careful order of the painting; feet intrude into the photographic space and crack it open.

The particular temporal notion that inhabits Uslé's works worms its way into this fissure, into this rift. And this is where the story begins, in the very act of taking place—similarly to avant-garde film. After all, the temporal taking-place is implicit in strips of film themselves, as categorically evinced in *Soné que revelabas*. It is time that is interrupted in the very material, in the order of Uslé's paintings; time that is projected as a flaw, something eminently subtle that settles in the photos and changes the meaning of the event. All things considered, Juan Uslé's works are prints, testimonies, veils, intermediary territories to which he turns in order to retell.

One could reflect on these transformations, on this slippery character, in front of his photographs, perhaps starting with an obsession—or should we say habit?—to capture in reality what he sees in his paintings as he does them; what can be seen in a positively autobiographical narrative strategy. Any ambiguity is resolved only in the title—and sometimes not even then.

Yet Uslé does not pursue authenticity when he picks up the camera, nor is photography a guarantor of truth. On the contrary, fiction and document relentlessly cloud and cancel each other, like stills from an apparently storyless film projected on a screen that is not there. This casts an intriguing light on the role of photos in Uslé's project; the way in which they document the gaze, filling in the gaps between canvases, inhabiting the parallel time of cinema; the time that dwells in the movie theatre, on the sides of the screen.

Uslé has, on occasion, spoken of the relationship between photo and painting, of photography's function as an interlude that allows him to dodge behind the lens, to use it as a veil and a mask; at once the same as and the opposite of those carefully drawn canvases on which painting is the act of concentrating on what happens while it is happening. Uslé's photos—a place of apparent

improvisation—call to mind the reconnaissance flights of the pilot and writer Saint-Exupéry, who looked on the airplane as an “instrument of analysis”, almost like Captain Nemo, a character who fascinates Uslé.

To look, then, analysing. And to analyse looking. Fragments of reality that are later joined together on the surface, sky and ground, sandals with socks taken from a heavily underlined novel by Yasunari Kawabata. The narrative is completely overturned and the whole story is told; the pieces are put together, in fits and starts. And this is precisely what it is all about: looking for every detail from above, looking at everything as if through the eyes of another, almost painstakingly. Uslé's “abstractions” often have a title that transports the imagination towards narrative.

But to say that this proposed gaze from on high is only related with analysis is perhaps going too far. There is an unsettling time dimension in these new ways of looking, given that, in the reconnaissance flight, conventional time soon vanishes—the most intriguing thing about film is the very idea of parallel times that take place on and off screen. The strange thing is not what happens in fiction, but the time that passes outside of fiction itself. In such a way that time is obstructed. Parallel times are entangled in front of the camera lens. And especially at the sides: decentred. Out of focus.

This is the way the camera functions in the hands of Uslé, dressed up in the guise of an anthropologist in the manner of Michel Leiris, searching for the uncanny in each little everyday thing, for something odd, located in no man's land. And it records a reality which has a lot of parallel reality—literally—with some of the particular time of the movie theatre. There is a strange battery of visual affiliations between his paintings and his photos, unanswered questions that remit to a complicated place of explaining with known words. Familiar words are of no use in front of Uslé's photos. Perhaps he photographs to freeze an instant of the world, to confront the concept of time as successions and variations that crowd his work.

Although Uslé takes photos in all cities, similarly to Borges' *Atlas* in which every morning during his travels he woke up Buenos Aires no matter where he might be, the cities gradually take on the grid of Uslé's eyes. It is the same atypical autobiography that impregnates his painting: a logbook that, like what happens with Captain Nemo, keeps the secret intact.

And so his eyes slowly travel the world, in the suspended time of flight, of the flâneur. A miraculous, displaced time that engages with a new unsuspected form of contemplation, one that calls for the spectator to have time ahead of him in order to return once again to the event—at each meticulous brushstroke of lights and shadows—with new eyes, torn from tedium and excess, from completeness. “To photograph is to go out onto the street, to walk around the studio and to steal fragments from life”, as Uslé once said.

Spend time and waste it oddly, because time is the greatest of all gifts to give oneself and others. Taking photos like kidnapping the everyday and a memory of the permeability of existence in the life of the studio where one believes oneself to be safe. Almost like taking photos between times; a discontinuous line that often intrudes in the immaculate surfaces of his paintings and is both interruption and eruption. Taking photos like someone making time. And spending it like there's no tomorrow.

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