

Press release

JOAN FONTCUBERTA

Trauma

1 December - 22 January, 2019

Opening on the 1st of December at 12 am.

Joan Fontcuberta (Barcelona, 1955) is a well-known artist. He has developed a multidisciplinary activity in the world of photography as a creator, critic, exhibition curator and historian. A visiting professor at universities in Spain, France, Great Britain and the USA, he regularly makes contributions in the specialised press.

He was given his first camera as a Christmas present, although he didn't seriously devote himself to photography until he entered the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona in 1972 to study Information Sciences. During this period, he combined attending his university classes with working both as a journalist and in particular, in advertising, in a family-run company.

He is the author of a dozen history and essay books on photography, such as *El beso de Judas* (1997), *Ciencia y Fricción* (1998), *La cámara de Pandora* (2010), or *La furia de las imágenes* (2016).

Over his extensive career he has received many awards, for example the David Octavius Hill Award in 1988 or his appointment as Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres by the French Culture Minister in 1994. In 1988, he won the National Photography Prize; in 2011, the National Essay Prize and in 2013, the prestigious International Hasselblad Award.

Joan Fontcuberta chose photography as a specific form of experience, putting his capacity to ensnare truth and memory to the test. But Fontcuberta is also interested in the metabolism that transforms the body of the image, and in recent years, he has been visiting archives and collections in the search for images of different states of trauma. The *Trauma* series is a direct result of this: photographs suffering from some type of disorder that disrupts their documentary function and disqualifies them from continuing to 'occupy' the archive.

Fontcuberta attempts to salvage the remains of the photographic substance from the ruins, an element to which we attribute the alchemical power of retaining life, whilst evading the call of death. With ridiculous arrogance, we humans boast of using the camera to beat time and to kidnap experiences and stories, holding them prisoner. Now we realise that although this illusion could have lasted a long time, it does not last forever and in the end, time takes its revenge: the photograph, once the stronghold of memory, becomes amnesic; the image turns into a ghost.

In some faiths, ghosts are the souls that cannot be recovered for reincarnation because they still have an unfinished task to perform. Perhaps these photographic phantasmagorias continue their wandering due to these unfinished tasks, which involved retaining something that had already disappeared. Therefore, *Trauma* represents a tribute and a farewell. But in the same way that some plants only bloom before dying, many photographs are only capable of offering us their most horrifying beauty at the very last instance. And this is the element that Fontcuberta includes in his work.

This is the artist's first exhibition at the gallery.

For further information and photographs: galeria@pilarberra.com – Tel: 00 34 91 308 15 69/70 – www.pilarberra.com