

Narra-tographie

In the anonymous grey of a parking lot, a small girl in yellow shoes and vibrant pink tights clocked with white blossoms bends intently over a bed of bright flowers, face solemn, and then plunges her face into the yellow and violet petals. An explosion of watermelon disintegrates on pewter-grey roof tiles, the edges of the split green hull insidiously desiccating, black seeds swarming over the splayed red flesh, scattered gobbets drying into fibrilled meshes. An ever-changing spectacle unfurls on the steps of the Rialto Bridge: shadowed faces beneath the exhausted droop of sunhats; a dapper, silver-haired man frowning and tapping at his watch; two clasping hands; a small wooden cross dangling tentatively against a pale blue shirt; a tarantella of arms and faces; fist-crumpled pocket flaps on a straining, buttoned jacket; a woman lifting an arm behind her head, face stilled by the intensity of her own private world. A dog waits expectantly, his shadow a dark double against the whiteness of a closed door. On spring-green grass dotted with daisies two teenagers play out a figurative seduction: chasing, wrestling, retaliating, surrendering. Stags startle into awareness, their eyes gunmetal glints in the vanishing light. A girl sleeps on a bus, her eyelashes black ellipses against her cheeks, her lips soft and unguarded.

We live in the midst of the narratives of others; we walk by them as we hurry to our destinations, our eyes look through them, our minds slide over them. Roland Barthes described “the narratives of the world as numberless,” but for the most part we do not read them for we are preoccupied with our own narratives, our own lives.

But it is exactly these numberless, tiny, evanescent narratives of the everyday that call out to Francisco Carrascosa as he rambles through cities and fields and strides up mountains, as he lingers in cafés and on beaches, as he stands at windows or leans from balconies; as he lives and watches. This curiosity of seeing, intense and greedy, has been poured into his five-year-long project of recording some of the multiplicity of glimpsed narratives through the lens of a camera, resulting in excess of more than twenty-six thousand images, which have been distilled into *Johnnie Walker on the beach*'s five volumes.

Johnnie Walker on the beach, then, is Carrascosa's narrative about these elusive visual narratives: a photographic account of a way of seeing depicted through the observed stories of the everyday, and delineating how the camera's gaze is elicited by the synergy of the proactive subject that calls for attention and the inquisitive, watchful narrator-witness – the narra-tographer. From the *studium* of the background cacophony of life, Carrascosa is always alert to the tiny details that slice through it and reveal its latent, unfolding narratives.

It has become a truism that the essence of photography is death, that every image speaks of mortality and past time. But *Johnnie Walker on the beach* suggests instead that the essence of photography is seeing as duration, as ongoing life. For, when one photograph is taken, another awaits; when one narrative closes, another begins; when one person passes by, another approaches. And this is the meta-narrative that Carrascosa recounts: a tale told in pure photography of life's fragile beauty and squalid ugliness, its speaking gestures and stilled silences, its intimate warmth and impassive coolness, its fragmentation and cohesion. This is life caught in the act of becoming.

Abstract of essay *Narra-tographie* for photobook *Johnnie Walker on the beach* by Francisco Paco Carrascosa:

© **Caroline Morpeth** lives in London where she works as a freelance author and an editor at Hachette UK. She has an honours degree in Literature, which included studies in art history and critical theory, philosophy, and creative writing; interests she maintains to this day.