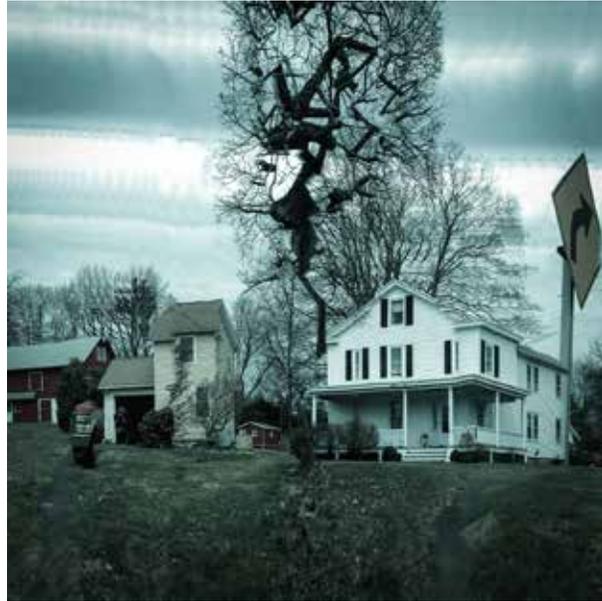
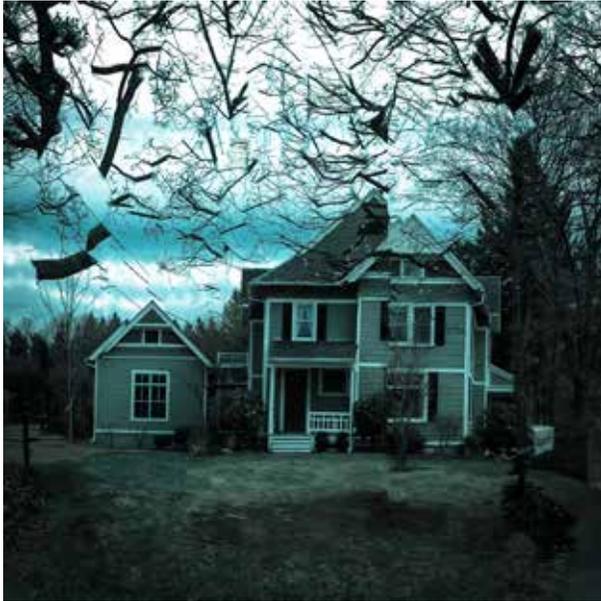


DISPLACE .v[II]



*The woods by the house began to move. Knifing streaks cut a slow bleed. Blurred digital trip; heavy breath.
Throbbing, staining, sour oxygen huff.
Fixing your stare on the antidote. This plastic blend is your current cup. Hidden under the canopy of memory you are
home-for now.
The clawed border slips you a Cheshire smile. The shadows under the trees: blue sky, green margin.*

Zach Seeger

The struggle of the static arts against time has been a fiery one throughout the centuries, and though it's not the moment to go over each and every setting that has staged this conflict through history, we simply need to remember that everything comes down to this very concept: the domination and the agonic strife between time and space—the two conditions of possibility in our consciousness—constitute the basic materials of aesthetics. There's not much more. When José Carlos Casado (Málaga, 1971) articulates a new narrative among both, starting from the uses allowed by the new digital technologies, he's simply updating the ancient tradition that bets on images—flat, bi-dimensional, paralyzed—that concentrate within themselves the biggest possible amount of sequences, lapses, temporal chains, a before and an after... or several, respectively. Containing and exposing them at the same time, that's the magic. Offering and displaying them simultaneously for us, but not expelling them, leaving them behind, for our memory to hold. Because that pregnancy of the image, definitely associated in the photographic language to the *decisive moment*, imposes in its logic that the visual chain runs ahead and back with certain ease, but clearly stating the ability of imagination to complete what's presented before us as a veritable body, as an undeniable presence, allowing us to update, in the very moment of the work's enjoyment, what's already passed and/or what's to come in the shot's framing.

This shift, this *displacement*—but also substitution or dismissal—alluded to in the title of the presented works, is without a doubt as much temporal as is physical: the artist intends to transport us to a plausible, viable place, but to our surprise, that place isn't reached after going over the logical stages of the road leading to it. Even more, once there, that paradoxical itinerary we've followed leaves us *in another place*, yet with the sensation of being in some known location. The road Casado points us to is that of an instant jump among consecutive sequences, its abrupt juxtaposition and its fading in a continuum that leads us to the territories both familiar yet alien at the same time (the Freudian *Das Unheimliche*), of things already seen

that look like new ones, to the development of the wickedness nested inside the most simple and everyday objects, suddenly turned into others, renewed, different. Therefore *this place* (a sound play on the title: dis-place) has turned into another. Those objects have been *displaced*.

Without exception, all the works presented in this show have been created starting from a smartphone camera; an iPhone, to be more precise. With that technology democratized in our First World, the artist has captured snapshots of the landscape that appeared through the window of a train or a car on his travels to Robert Wilson's Watermill Center, in Southampton, New York. Reality is, therefore, the starting point of his remarkably sophisticated recreations of nature's spectacle, which end up becoming a highly stylized show. The simple technique—discovered by Casado—with which he carries out the composition/decomposition of the original scenes, results in a fragmentation of the data, a sort of new way of seeing.

In a way similar to the Cubist disassembly, riddled with facets, chippings and simultaneous viewpoints, here the plane of representation turns into an editing table, used to try and fit the pieces together, seeking a certain continuity of the sense, after the data of its disposition have been altered during the capture. The camera, more than acting like a traditional optical lens, behaves here like a scanner. It mustn't be forgotten that the viewpoint's movement and displacement at the time of creating these works hasn't delivered anything more than fixed, static shots, that is: the still images of the photograph.

Not even in the videos on display at the end of the exhibition do we find anything else than Casado's smart articulation around this same premise. As he himself insists, the procedural journey of his work is summarized in the formula "movement-static-movement" (the first one corresponding to the speed at which the lens moves during the capture; the second one to the capture itself; and the third one to the introduction of the new temporal dimension during the editing process, that turns the photograph into a movie), while the conventional video would simply adhere to "movement" in all its stages.

In the first presented series, *Dis_place.vWinter*, the prevailing effect is that of a small disorder in the world, but not its dislocation, its total collapse: things are—or appear so before us—in a place where in principle they shouldn't be, but we still can partially locate them and place them in their functions, in their original sense. It must be realized that the shapes are not manipulated through any post-production process, unlike the color, that has been subtly shifted; it's the very composition model that has imposed the programming for the camera's operation that arranges the data of the capture in such a way. In this sense, therefore, they're still "misunderstood" organic images. Their internal logic is impeccable, since they're not the result on any kind of dysfunction, of a glitch in the operating system, of a malfunction in the optics or the processor; they simply make up a visual text whose formal features take it away from the legible, intelligible, standardized ones, for which the machine's programming was devised.

In this sense—and here resides one of the most fertile paradoxes of these series' process—Casado's work veers those images away from that, inevitable at first, teleology that programmers imprint in their work, and that the machine, by definition, multiplies through its use, in a barely perceptible way, in the social space. This would be, even, the most refined political dimension that we could acknowledge in his project. The reality offered by Casado's images are a sort of *lapsus*, an amnesia around the digital translation of the sensations imposed by the media, which are substituting our relationship with the surrounding phenomena at a breakneck pace. Beyond any formal consideration, its aesthetic value poses a question not so much about the nature of simulations from inside the system—among which we progressively move without criticism or conscience—but about the short circuits we inevitably experience if we aspire to see the whole picture passing through them, that is, through the artificial codes in which we've decided to live as a culture.

The natural views that we discern among the forms are a landscape, there's no doubt about that. We are also certain the eye is *outside*, as a necessary condition for the genre itself to exist. But, something is broken *in the inside*. The lack of correspondence among the exterior of the representation and its interior is a continuous source of instabilities: How can those branches float without a trunk? Where's the rest of the headlight and wheel that we see parked in front of the house's door?

By themselves, they define a car but where is the rest of the car? In the forest, is it possible for two trees to grow symmetrically one next to the other with such precision at replicating each other's shapes? We're already separated from that nature, between magical and wicked, by a small chasm, the most difficult to go over.

The synthetic colors provide altered clues, but don't lead us to improbable guesses. In the *Winter* series, taken as its name indicates when the snows fell, the greens, grays and blues are predominant, and the iconographic level (the snow-capped fields, the bare trees, the gray skies, the water puddles, etc), form a set of vignettes that are later distorted (as the choice of the framing by the artist, an eminently aesthetic choice). In the second series, *Displace.vGo&Back*, we have exactly the opposite: hot, saturated colors, ignited almost to the point of solarization, that emphasize the autumn period in which it was created.

The eighteen pieces that make up this second series are actually a single split photo. Its structure is as follows: the first nine photographs are born from the fragmentation of the original image into as many portions, while the remaining ones emerge from the same process but ordered in the opposite direction, so that, when put one behind the other for their complete development, they produce an effect of symmetry. The horizon's line of the whole set recreates a two-way trip, closed in a loop that the associated video makes effectively infinite.

Beyond the seasonal calendar's narrative suggested as background when both projects are superimposed, *Go&Back* proposes a complete cycle by itself: the one that goes from the morning to the evening, a complete day that, after the sunset, sees the sunrise again, day after day, without pause. If in the former case Casado took his work materials from the car's window, in this one he used a train's. The difference of speeds between both determines not only the syntax of each series, but the artist has also strived for final effects that reflect that accelerated look, in proportion to the vivacity of the received impressions: we only need, for instance, to see how the square format of the first one, that allows to individualize the developments in the montage, acquires a more dynamic and sequential air in the second one, thanks also to its elongation, that permits to compress it in a "sequence-shot" inside a wall.

Go&Back takes to the extreme—to the limit of abstraction—the pure impressions that arise from our contact with the objects, the analysis of the scope of experience that permeates all the recent work of the artist. The two videos associated to this production, which are shown here for the first time, culminate Casado's research on the matter for the time being. In them, the superpositions, as well as the alterations of detail, such as the constant movement of the central focus over what is looked at, prevent any doubts of the artist's complete command of a given issue, instead of being rocked by a swinging of pure subjective aesthetic impressions about shape and color.

The first video, *Dis_place.vFunction'*, only 15 seconds long, is a flash, a ray under the full sun. When everything's accelerated, the images become a pure frenzy where the recognizable parts in which we split the visible reality start to become indistinguishable, a blur, a veil, a cataract, in every sense. Nevertheless, we still can distinguish trees, fragments repeated with precision regardless of any logic: recognizable elements that tell us about something different to the pure media of the visual arts language. These are the elements that will act as footholds to know that, I insist, it certainly isn't the simple expressionistic impulse, the emotional drive, what turns figures into abstractions here, in almost a gestural brush.

The second video, *Dis_place.vMyTripYourEyes*, is a triptych on flat panel monitors, around 3 minutes long. Watching it we witness a slow journey that, again, is presented as a two-way trip through a saturated stage, maybe more complex than the still images seen earlier. Here, Casado's intention has been to metaphorically embody the view to the outside through the train's windows, in the travel that originated the whole exhibition. During the endless swinging that leads us in a loop first to the right and then to the left, and so on, we gradually make out symmetries and unexpected lacks of correspondence, surprising details (here the surreal tints dye this particular universe with El Bosco's keys and the love for details of Dutch art or the Quattrocento, so dear to a certain metaphysics and the *return to order* of the European thirties). In fact, these details—they're not fragments, since they acquire a notable independence—escape from the monitors' shell, gaining in the end a total

separation from the video, splashing the walls where the screens hang from, until expanding to a kind of mural installation. In any case, this new exhibition from José Carlos Casado, *Dis_place.v[III]*, has as its undercurrent theme what reality (or the Jungian “real things”) may be; when facing this kind of images, their definition as well as their status is something difficult to specify for the spectator. Splitting the strata of our experience to the world, here didactically embodied in the contemplation of the changing nature, becomes an endless focus of paradoxical definitions. One of them—and not among the lesser ones by the way—is that our grasp of the things that surround us is ephemeral, when technology acts as a mediator in our approach to everyday things, to the quotidian stuff, it is much more unstable than we would first believe. So I presume Casado’s position is that the important thing is what the spectator decides to believe when facing the variety of data that we accumulate through the body and its technological extensions.

Óscar Alonso Molina

Madrid-Santander-Madrid, May 2014

1 Complete Title:

```
Displace.vFunction travel(go) {  
  }  
  if (complete) {  
    stop();  
  }  
  else {  
    go back(again);  
  }  
};
```

The title refers to the language that a computer programmer would use to communicate with the computer, based on circumstances: “do this, if not, do this other thing”. The artist uses it metaphorically in his title to allude to the romantic idea of travel, what one gains and/or loses when going somewhere and coming back.