

Land of the Avenging Angel

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*Shut the eyes of this people, lest they see with their eyes,
until the land be utterly desolate.*

- Isaiah

Ego sum lux

Not far from here, in the heart of the Pyrenees, in the Vall d'Àneu, painters arrived nine hundred years ago with a mission. We were busily organizing the hierarchy of feudal society, coeval to the disintegration of the Carolinian Empire. We know little of the wars, the truce and the peace of those out-of-the-way places in the time of medieval times. All over Western Europe, from Dalmatia to the British Isles, from Northern Germany to the Christian frontier with Muslim Spain, Romanesque art was spreading with the force of conquests and the expansion of militant religious orders along the pilgrim routes. Western theological thought made its cultured propaganda with miniatures in the mobile pages of the conventual bibles and for the masses, the illiterate, in large format, in murals paintings which covered the interiors of churches and castles.

In that little-known, isolated place, a church dedicated to the Virgin had been raised with structural movement of large stone masses. Apse to the east and portal to the west. Inside, on the cylindrical lower wall of the central apse, these wandering artists painted, according to dictates, angels high up in the hierarchical structures: the so-called seraphim. Their bodies were covered by two folded wings covered with eyes, two more wings opened on their upper limbs, crossed arms, with more eyes, and two more, folded and covered with repetitive eyes, surrounded the angels' faces. They were made in the image of the vision of the prophet Isaiah (6-7): "Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying." But the painters, with license, painted the eyes even though the Lord said look closely, but without knowing... Shut the eyes of this people, lest they see with their eyes... until the land be utterly desolate.

Not too much farther away, at Sant Climent de Taüll, other painters painted two more seraphim with eyes in their wings next to the Tetramorph. God inside a mandorla holds an open book in which can be read the divine inscription "EGO SUM LUX MUNDI" (I am the light of the world). The painters remark amongst themselves that they have heard from the preachers that the light is good and that good is the light of the revealed truth, which is the beginning and the end. They have no intention of imitating reality, neither have they learned to build it. People have a visionary picture of what it is to paint divinity. But they are concerned with their trade: mastering the technique of fresco and color, that is obtaining them with natural earth and local minerals like aerinite (the blues), others like cinnabar (red), which they have had brought from the south of the Peninsula, and others they brought with them from Italy like azurite (sky blue). A poet, watching these painters from the doorway, announces in rhymed and rhythmed verse that in a battle the lord and

master lost the war. There are many dead. Another master will pay them because the divinity is the same one.

The Seraphim in the Museum

Many centuries later, at the beginning of the twentieth century, scientific rambblers arrived on foot at these isolated places. With surprise they saw how these paintings had survived, paintings which seemed to them, whose eyes were used to other pictorial themes and styles, of great rarity. God himself, the iconic form of God, was obsolete in contrast with the new acquisitions of a knowledge of reality contributed by the scientific world. They brought with them cameras, which would serve to store, divulge, compare, study. Empirical science and industrial technology had banished religion, and the proletarian masses, arising from the industrial revolution and self-organized around political groups, trade unions and associations, fought for an earthly paradise without exploiters or exploited. Those paintings, without a context on which to base them, had faded into cultural and artistic memory.

But what had remained closed, lost and intact in the passage of a millennium, was to rouse the greed of the city and of the urban masses when some Romanesque frontals were exhibited at the 1888 Barcelona Universal Exhibition. Very soon, alongside the first studies and reproductions, clergy, mayors and members of parliament began to buy, sell and export works of art. Having torn the Romanesque from under the lime and from under baroque mountain altarpieces, rolled up in boxes, mural paintings were brought down, on mule-back, over meadows and hillsides. Now the seraphim can be seen, thanks to the safeguarding of the heritage by political Catalanism, in the Museum— away from history, away from the humble truth of the earth.

Time and space had become mobile.

I am the Light and the Light is the Other

Not far from here, a few hours away by plane, in Rwanda, the artist Alfredo Jaar arrived working on his own behalf and at his own risk. Other people from all over the world had gone there, some reporting on the exodus and the risk of epidemics, commissioned by international press agencies, but most of them were members of non-governmental organizations who arrived, in solidarity, to help the population. It was impossible to travel to Rwanda. The United Nations soldiers had withdrawn. Millions of dead, wounded, missing. We were at the height of genocide, two ethnic groups, Hutus and Tutsis, were fighting to the death, in the midst of poverty, disease and hunger. The international political community and the Almighty Market were doing nothing to stop the war. People were killing each other in an area where there were no riches to be protected. Africa, land of the origins, has no right to speak. The ancient European states which had traded in slaves, from the fifteenth century to the end of the twentieth century, which had produced soldiers during colonialism and workers in the ex-metropolises, North-America— the policeman — responding to interests of strategy, economy and influence, and the fading empire of the communist international, all had turned their backs on the diversity of holistic cultures. Cultures that were not anthropocentric. Among the first on the list of armed conflicts and

wars displayed to public opinion, the genocide in Rwanda was silenced. The natural balance is often broken. In a world apparently globalized by multinational information conglomerates, where newspaper presses print millions of lay bibles every day and where television sets for domestic use offer an open window like medieval mural painting, terror and wrath are removed from the common awareness when there are no interests of the Almighty Market involved. The law of economy shows its dynamics in barbarism, turns man into subhuman coinage, with no value, and no sense of awareness of the other. The global economy breaks the planet up and leaves black Africa even outside trade. In the end, Africa isn't just non-coinage, it just isn't.

In those out-of-the-way places, far from the geography of information, Jaar takes more than three thousand photographs in the space of less than a month. He notes each shot with a reference number and writes down the context: the place, the name of the person, the age, the circumstances. He answers to strict pronouns: who, what, how, when, where... No feeling, analysis, nothing other than the literality of what we understand as objective reality. Subject, verb, predicates... Cold, scientific. Steeped to the bones in the work of documentation prior to research. The smell of death penetrates the pores of his skin, the light of death is filtered by the camera. The air, like the wings of the seraphim of the prophet, is covered with eyes. In a desert of corpses, of refugees, of desperate people, you can't fly. You can look but you can't see or know. Behold the abandonment of God and of the men who banished a God without goodness.

The church is full of decomposing corpses. The worms have gobbled the eyes. A young woman watches and points. Jaar hears that a Hutu squad had gone into the temple where four hundred Tutsis were sheltering. They were hacked to death. She survived but saw with her own eyes how they killed her husband and children. The photograph. Her name. Gutete Emerita. He would never forget her eyes. Or her name.

Gutete Emerita is alive. From a refugee camp Jaar writes postcards with the names of the living, those in need. Like someone silently imploring a repetitive chain of living martyrs. The crowd is not a number, names and surnames enumerated by the exterminator and which the liberator tries to identify among the crowd. Two hundred postcards he sends in series of 10, 6, 3 and 1 to so many friends all over the world: the friends of a friend who devotes his life fully to art also have names and surnames. Jaar doesn't shout, he sends messages to the world as a sign of life, he causes committed strategies to be unleashed through his activity as a communicator. Images of wild animals and jungle landscapes on the front. On the reverse, he writes the name, names, and the inscription Gutete Emerita is (still) alive, Emmanuel Rucogoza is (still) alive, and so on. This reminds me that a few decades ago On Kawara sent postcards every day from all over the world, to say he was alive, with an identical inscription. The artist's gesture was a comment on himself. Here, repeating the gesture, the other, the survivor, substituted the artist. In this way, the other became first person, the model became the place of the artist. I am the light and the light is the other. When the artist recognized himself in others, the others—the recipients—would also know that he—the sender—was also alive. More alive than ever. Up to the limit: referent and signature and receptor. All that is out of place in this linguistic trinity is the

raving, folksy, tourist image of an animal, vegetable and human world on the reserve.

In the face of terror and tragedy, Jaar ponders the ethics of the war reporter: "Do I fire my camera or prevent them firing at the human being before me? Do I photograph the little girl lost and crying or leave the camera and ask her what's the matter? Do I heal them? Do I accompany them in their pain? Do I offer them my drinking water? Do I save them from the force of the river that is washing them downstream? Do I help them put the tent up? Do I bury the dead? Do I teach them to read? Do I clean their wounds? Do I help them find their parents? Do I look for food for them? Do I help the doctor? Do I sing and dance for them? Do I help them give birth, survive, die?...?"

Jaar fires documentary shots at a group. He fires at another group, and they seem indifferent. He fires and his model thinks it's not at him. He fires at a little girl and her eyes stare at the camera. He fires and a young girl smiles at the camera. He fires at a woman and she casts her eyes over the dead bodies of once close beings, neighbors, friends, family. He fires at the doctor and he doesn't stop his healing. He fires at the boy and he can't speak or stammer anything, struck silent with fear. He fires and they don't want to miss a single second of the play in which they are illustrated. He fires and they try to save their lives against the force of the river. He fires and the worms and flies gobbling the corpses carry on with their work. He fires and the sun doesn't cloud over, against the light. He fires this way and that. Now, exhausted, he photographs the landscape, the fields of tea, the path, the sky.

Before leaving, he sends the postcards from a neighboring country, where so many others take refuge: Uganda.

The rolls of film weigh his pockets down. He will take off again—him, the assistant and the traveling negatives—for America. Death and defenselessness accompany him on the airplane seat. But having once left the land of disaster, images, questions and conscience assail him. He can't sleep or work. He reeks of death. What should he do?

The Seraph in the Museum

The twentieth century has seen how art, idolized as a space both for creation and freedom and for moving money around, took the place of religion. Its vibrant linguistic Darwinism has coexisted with the speeding up of history. It has adapted to the technological revolutions of production and reproduction and also to the emergence of new social messages. As a universal visual code, it has taken part in the gradual globalization, anchoring the roots of what is local. The names it has received are as varied as its prophets and the attributes it has been given encompass all the adjectives of the century. The young have been called to abandon everything and pay service to it in greatness and in hardship. Inspiration, formal research and a mastery of the techniques of expression, whether material or conceptual, are interchangeable in degree according to a free choice in which the teacher is only an initiatory path. The truth is in oneself. The trends that have brought them together appear as schisms, variables of the same corpus. Large crowds, at leisure, queue to look without seeing at a show made of talent—

something rare, surprising, superior. They travel on a pilgrimage to the new temples, dignified by an exceptional architecture. The public feels part of a compelling human spirit. The works are on the move too, traveling, falling back and meeting again beneath the effigy of their creator. The worth of their surplus value exceeds the precious metals. People collect relics and go on crusades. The artist is invited to lunch all over the world and his subjective opinion fills the public scenario.

Jaar is one of those artists who in the final decades of the century has seen his name take a leading position in the history of art. His work and the stamp of his name is familiar and in demand on every continent.

But Jaar is different from so many other hundreds, thousands, millions of artists because he is one of the few who combine critical awareness with an unmistakable language of protest, and at the same time one that creates genuine aesthetic and communicational working methods of great beauty and effect. Protest isn't heartless or sterile in him, it becomes art where the aesthetics raises the degree of ethics.

With the waters of knowledge polluted by so much information—selected information—and with the critical spirit deactivated by the consumption of knowledge, Jaar wonders what role is left to the artistic system, with its analytical procedures and its emotive form, in finding out to what extent we can illuminate the acquisitions of human awareness. Jaar asks himself how art can illuminate a political awareness deadened by the avalanche of images of genocide spread by information. The war— he protests —is not there, but in the lack of solidarity and in the blindness of broad knowledge. The artist must make use of the privilege of freedom which society allows him as political scum and protest with his language at dehumanization.

In today's art, neither the guardian angel of ideological manichaeism, nor the angel of the annunciation in the prophetic truth of the future inhabit the land of the persecuted. The visible no longer endures.

The avenging artist develops the image but he hides it, not that the lament may speak again, but that the beauty of the minimum unit of silence may lead to justice.

The artist is not the mouthpiece of the divinity: he claims the light of the other.

The Word in the Light

What do you do— he wonders —if an image is not good? How do you deactivate the spectacle of death? How do you call the attention of public opinion? How do you rouse awareness in the face of so much indifference? Faced with so many questions, Jaar reflects. He demands silence and invites the spectator to reflect with him. He goes from the image to the poster. He will go from the image to the gaze.

Mute. To Jaar's first commission to take part in a public project, all he could give as an answer was his own silence. But he had to take advantage of the invitation to draw strength from a sorely troubled soul and limit extenuation to a superior condition

that redimensioned aesthetics on an ethical scale. The living impact of living images didn't feed him yet, they only tormented him. His first act was to be a cry: RWANDA. Art often cries out at itself. Who knows if the century of progress takes the form, in art, of a cry from one's own informality. But the name that emerges here has no form, nor recognition. Jaar stops everything, and starts from scratch. He renounces the image, color, just a name: RWANDA. And Jaar takes over the public space.

The public institutions share the public space with commerce. In today's city, neon lights announce indiscriminately the social message of urbanity or civic education and gratuitous consumerism. Posters fire like stray bullets made from images and language against the intimacy of the space, endangering even the health of passive recipients. The spectacle gratifies the pleasure of being pampered, surprised, tempted. Thousands of millions are invested in weapons of communication which impact on the brain with great effect. Visual pollution is limitless; the city sells away the public space from the ethics of silence and similarly the conversation on the big screen that demands full attention, lights off. The artist often takes part in this mass medium with his verbal inventiveness. Jaar the artist questions the brightness of so many exploding messages of hedonism, hedonism everywhere, even in electoral confrontations. His mural message in the multimedia age is simple: sans serifs letters, outlined in negative, no image, no color, no slogan, just one name: RWANDA. And the word was reborn in the light, not because the truth was revealed, but to continue being. An anonymous message as anonymous as this manifestation of art and its author in the light that blinds the sleeping and the wakeful.

Images in the Dark, Words in the Half-light

The word written by Jaar the artist, just one, the first written word, inscribed in the light of the visual space polluted by so many other words and so many other images, was RWANDA, beneath which name millions of sufferers were inscribed. The first word was an erased, mutilated, ignored word. A cry of urgency repeated eight by fifty times, as forgiveness has to be asked seventy times seven. A word which was often present in the media and the international political forums but which was pronounced with its reality hidden. Rwanda was (and is) a virus of humanity that humanity did not want to recognize as such. Solidarity was born of government disagreements and of a civil fabric with no political power. And of the apostates who have renounced three times running the deceit of believing that there is a happy world outside reality, in the death of reality. Having written instead of visualizing would open up new strategies of protest and at the same time of creation. Creation is not pure, engrossed in nothing, it comes from the social evil inscribed in an unsatisfied reality.

After a long silence, Jaar developed his contact prints. Those photographs revived an immediate past for him, as though the time and space they transported had left behind something more that is implicit of more. As though the documents of reality, those that are its zero degree—its maximum objectivity—didn't express with force and talent enough what he had abandoned. Other images from there began to be frequent in the media. To homes all over the world came images of Rwanda through the open window of television news broadcasts. Many more still images were printed in the mobile pages

of the press. The specters and simulacra of death, of the exodus and of the misery multiplied and circulated in the cultured, civilized world with infernal, apocalyptic and surrealist descriptions. As though consuming them was enough to make us happier at not being "them", "there". The artist had suffered there and here, now he suffers for the here of the there. In this double reality he tenses. He asks himself: how do I act?

Jaar knows that common language, be it visual or written, does no more than communicate- weakly -reality. He knows, therefore, that the mimetic academicism of the photo-reporter isn't enough to express the profound reality of man or even his language. He also recognizes that artistic language and its system, with its breaking of the functional common language, has also fallen into the same trap as the rhetoricians.

So he has to make an effort for rupture and rhetoric, experiment and reality to complement each other. He has to experiment again with an art which, while not renouncing the tradition of the critical rupture, does not renounce explaining the mechanisms of reality. Artistic language must also be common language.

"So what do we do with the images?"

He will develop the contact prints and enlarge five hundred and fifty photographs. He will hide them away one by one in boxes and files. He will write a description on the cover. He will pile them up and use them to build monuments of secret, mysterious, inaccessible images. By piling up the boxes he will create basic forms full of content. He will go in search of the primordial idea, that the dead deserve to be buried.

The images have to be buried with the rationality of architecture and the emotion of magic. We have to get back to the word to see the image, read it in silence.

And with the word there was light in the temple of art, far from the political leaders corrupted by the Almighty Market; far from the tourist spectacle that adulterates and degrades the convictions, cultures and traditions of another civilization, one filled with shared misery, for sure; far from religious empires; far from the information market. Funeral monuments buried the images and called for serious reflection on the complex mesh of human reality, of political reality, of the reality of communication, in a word: of reality.

And the public memory of the Rwandan genocide could not be seen, so that the spectacle of death could be thought more than seen, inwardly read, in a soft, inner voice.

The photographic image respectful of reality, that is sociological or documentary, is questioned as much as the image that is manipulated, annulled, unique. The first, which is not denied, is placed in the box, to wait until the sense of reality can be recovered. The second- the black box -will be the support for the contents of the first one which it had expelled. What is called social and collective art will be emptied of its presence, fitted into a alien form, and the art called language and individual will be emptied of its form, fitted into its alien container. And so the art

of photography and the photography of reality, with their obscure talk and their clear talk, became real, and images became real thanks to the power of words to name things.

Words and descriptions, figures and names that were not lost within the flying leaves of a complex and multiple reality, but were inscribed in its monuments, on the ground, on the column, on the block, on the wall, on the beam, on the hidden images and amongst the images. No image may be seen, nor read, only those inscriptions of photographs that float to the surface. By burying the images, will we in the future be able to read history in that present?

Let There Be Light

And the creator, having returned the images to the darkness, had only words. He had written the names of the survivors and the name of the place and the events the hidden images described. It was then that he wrote, days later, ten names of other places in that place. These names, written in a private language, unknown to the majority, rare for the languages of the visible world, only in the ultralocal environment that peoples the world of biodiversity, are also unknown to him, polyglot of the languages that dominate the world of the letters and the arts... it was then that there was light. Those words that said nothing to most, were filled with the dead. Each one dragged the semantic content of thousands of deaths in its phonetics.

Jaar wrote them very small in a black square, in ten light-boxes, so that visitors could confront a full reading of the contents of history, but orphaned of the visibility of history. In this act of constriction, the light of the names illuminates the face of the readers in the blackness of the absent image. Then the spectator, having been mirrored in a word whose meaning he doesn't know, like someone pronouncing God's name in vain, like someone praying with renewed faith, as though by pronouncing an unspoken name, a new reality could be created, then the image born of the thinking reflection and the reproducing reflection would be remade.

The first image Jaar made visible, public, a long time after putting mourning in the images, after having dressed his artist's life in black, after putting a crape on every flag, was a photograph unlike the dramatic pictures the world press still ran. Two boys, seen from behind, embracing, look into the photograph, full of crowds of people standing. The foreground with the boys is clean, while the group, in the middle ground, is blurred, undefined, stained with the multicolourism of their clothing which revives a nature of greenish patches on an earthy red background. That image disinterred, amongst thousands of images full of the cruelty and defeat of genocide, expresses, like the boys with their arms around each other, human warmth, love and friendship. It is an exceptional image because love is always possible— and has to be —although the international community was unwilling to show solidarity. But this image will disappear.

The photograph still won't look us in the face. As though it were the negative of a positive, as though it were the black and white of a reality in color. But the spectator cannot enjoy the permanence of the image, because Jaar has established an interrogation mechanism.

He has applied an approach mechanism in four movements. The image hasn't been given, the photograph doesn't exist. The light illuminates. The photograph of the light illuminates the interrogation through love. The photograph will be present like a temporal instant that presents us with fatality in an ideal, total time, that we had wished ever present.

The Light that Looks at Us

At each new proposal to put the image back, Jaar insists on going on with the Rwanda thematic nucleus so as to take the interrogation on its uses to the limit. His working method borders on an analysis of communication. He takes radical measurements of the change his poetics is undergoing. He had started with the postcards written and goes on with the graphic poster to then file the photographs and use their boxes to build monuments in which all that can be seen are the descriptions of the images. He had just written the names of the towns and for a few moments had allowed an image of human love to appear. Now he wanted to show another image. The eyes of Gutete Emerita assailed him. He had to ask for respect for the image.

We had to be able to read so as to be able to receive the lightning just as the flash makes an impact on what cannot be transcribed. Jaar creates two panels, two synchronized light-boxes. On top with the writing of fire he transcribes the crude legend of the woman who has survived the mass murder, who has lost her husband and children, who looks again at the camera. It has been asked that photography should let the eyes speak. We accept its not speaking, not giving off smell, but we ask it to let the eyes speak. Who is Gutete Emerita? Jaar now wants our eyes to be the ones that have to know how to look at the image. He will not write the laws. He will sequence the reading, in an approach to literality. It tells the story of a woman. The double square of light advances temporally in the writing like an initiation to the image, gradually reducing the text to the point of catharsis. In the end, like lightning, like a flash, the eyes of Gutete Emerita appear and disappear. Impact. It will be the eyes that photograph us. That will interrogate us for ever more. Photography is rediscovered through her, or at least through her essence. It has to be possible to see through photography. Its attraction will not be beauty, or goodness, but its capacity to affect an over-easy conscience. The eyes we had hoped would speak blink, clearly, well-defined, for an instant and for ever.

Gutete Emerita's eyes underline what her story contains. They don't show what she saw and had to bear. But Jaar writes for us to read and reread. Gutete Emerita's eyes shown in this way will make us see what we had not seen. In just a few tenths of a second we have seen through her eyes everything we had ignored in the face of so many other images that we had overlooked. Nothing is opposed to the dramatization of the loss of identity like this linguistic and visual artifact. Nothing before has spoken as much as this dramatic play between text and image. Through the shining screen we have learned to look, then to read an image. Jaar culminates a dramatic work of art in a radically different way than documentary cinema and testimonial photography which always exaggerate with a surfeit of feeling and pain. So many other eyes had had the power to say no and we didn't

know how to read them. Jaar concentrates all the informative charge in the text and all the emotive (and political) charge in the image of the eyes: eyes that cannot hide what they saw and what we had failed to see.

A Grave Full of Eyes

That majestic God that had been painted a thousand years ago on the wall of the Romanesque church, the God who in the book bore the written slogan "I am the light of the world", had been moved to the Museum. Gutete Emerita who had been photographed in the church at Ntarama, where four hundred Tutsis lost their lives, and whose image had been moved to the darkroom in New York, was now presented briefly in museums all around the world: eyes that spy on the visibility of the world. Exposed to the light that was hidden by the night. They are exhibited and they accuse. Everyone keeps silence until it is understood that those eyes are also my eyes.

The eyes of Gutete Emerita are forsaken of love, unable to rest in the dark and unable to remain always visible. Jaar will not let them rest so that they can denounce the other images in circulation that deceive us with their mobility and permanence. He does not want to worship the image so much as fight the sense of indifference. This is why he activates its presence by forcing a reading in an artist's edition, on the internet, and in an installation. In the book, instead of her eyes there is a mirror which will reflect our eyes; and on the internet the reading time is open but when the eyes appear, they vanish in a flash. The technology that had allowed the reproducibility of the image had also become a ruthless god. Jaar has made the photographer's light panel into an organic monument, like a common grave, full of eyes staring us in the face.

Again the story of "The Eyes of Gutete Emerita" or "The Silence of Nduwayezu", the boy who after losing his parents went four weeks without speaking, is written in one infinite line. The public, who had ignored the crimes, have to make their pilgrimage with their eyes on the text. A modest, descriptive language, like a documentary photograph, explains the drama of the woman and the boy. With literalism, with textual precision. When we get inside the story, on moving on to another stage, from the written to the visual, a million transparencies, a mountain of images appear on an immense table. It will be her little eyes that look at us from the little square. When we take up the magnifying glass they look at us even more. When we discover that all the eyes are the same eyes we understand that just two eyes are all the eyes, that there is no escape for us because if two eyes are the mass, shouldn't we know that a single image has the validity of many variants? What is the point of such a profusion of images? This vision horrifies the spirit and fills us with silence: with a single image we can explain the infinite, the genocide was so enormous! The microscopic world seen through the magnifying glass of the photograph is as terrifying as the macroscopic world seen from the distance of history. The attentive reader will see in the double version how a single image multiplied forms a social body. The speed of the multiplication is like the speed of reproduction and of annihilation. This rescued image we have before us is what the genocide was for, nothing was to survive, there were to be no witnesses.

The Light, Notes in the Margin

A monument of buried photographic images isn't enough to redeem the other images, which, with absolute freedom of movement, persist merely to inform. Jaar's images, having been captured in the same place and the same space, contain an element of rupture. More than information, they are denunciation. It is an auto-denunciation of the photography medium itself from within a system that was radically altered by the apparition of photography and its representation of reality.

The selection of the few images Jaar has gradually opened of the photographed memory always makes the people of Rwanda participants in a situation other than death, other than the spectacle of death. The boys embracing or the eyes of a woman speak to us of human tenderness. Before seeing the images we have had to be prepared, by reading the context, so as not to be caught out by surplus images, not to be caught out by the cemetery of images we overlook every day, so as not to become polluted by the visual pollution that deactivates our gaze. There's a double field of battle: in Rwanda, the referent, from which testimonies of the genocide have to be taken at great risk, and outside Rwanda, the place of the sender and of the recipient, where there is a bloodless battle for the image to exist and be effective in the demands of its protest and in the demands of solidarity. We live in a present so accelerated that space, which was contained in time, is shifted outwards. Fragments, traces, faces of places and times outside their oneness are presented without beginning nor end, without signs to mark the reality of where they come from. For a device as logical and rational as the one Jaar puts into operation, the non-distinction between reality and fiction, exterior and central, objective fact and formal license is out of place, but what is more important is that the system should be a hundred percent participative and irreducible in the process of analysis.

Among the terrible images he had captured, there were photographs that breathed, full of life and color. Jaar had fallen into an immense abyss, one of those the history of humanity tries to overlook, because its magnitude shows us up as outside of what is right. It is something we do not want to see in nature, and is a permanent threat between humans. Full of pain and the smell of death, knowing that the world keeps turning, gratifies the African understanding of the world.

Jaar caught this too, when on "29 August 1994" he photographed a large field of tea, vibrant, rhythmic, of crowded leaves which, seen close up, seem damaged. The visual limit, the horizon, gently winding, is closed in the corner by a house. A sketch accompanies the image, the viewpoint where the photograph was taken, the name of the shot, the geographical location, the hills in the distance, a path crossing the fields of tea, another path amongst trees and at the top a church. A second image sequences the itinerary. Now a path, shaded by thin trees, covered with twigs that filter the intense sunlight. On the sketch accompanying the image, the date and number of the shot, the path is described and at the end we see that there is a church. A third image ends the itinerary in fullness: a puffed-up cloud in the middle of the sky. On the sketch, we see that Jaar fired shot number 28 outside the church, pointing upwards. Beneath the

church, some hillocks and an inscription: "bodies 500?". After this information, everything changes.

Rather than the suspended beauty or the infiltrated sadness, what counts is the power of the information that changes the image. It is not that the photograph should be self-sufficient, that it should contain all the elements, but that the direction of this itinerary of the eyes should not be lost. The little diagram orientates us from the viewpoint of the visible; the text frames and informs us about what is not visible but is still very close. We have to know () without having to renounce ().

Through this photographic triptych we could have studied the quality of the tea leaves, the work force necessary, how many doses we could obtain and at what price, we could date the species and study its diseases, or calculate the degrees of temperature the bushy path airs, or study the movement and speed of the clouds, but how different it is to know that here there are 500 bodies of people who have just been murdered. Can the field, the path and the cloud be indifferent to this image? Can the reader of pure photographs be insensitive to this information? With a few notes in the margin, some photographs of landscapes have just been illuminated.

Emergency

We find ourselves at Centre d'Art Santa Monica, in Barcelona, in the central courtyard. An interior cloister surrounds a large courtyard where two large parallel arcs add to the volume, giving a distinct sensation of emptiness. Jaar was perfectly aware of the singularity of the architectural work and the challenge of distributing around the interior all the work which, begun four summers ago in Rwanda, has taken up all his time. It is a radical work which, based on the photograph as a document, considers the ethical limits of its reproducibility in the mass media.

An analysis of the genocide in the style of an audiovisual documentary is projected with a mute, hand-written speech, without any images to be seen, slide by slide. The world's most critical audiovisual warns us as to where Jaar places the reader and what is expected of our part: silence, reflection and respect, states of being that the cynical, gratuitous culture of showbusiness has scorned.

All the issues questioned here have inspired his work on photography, its visibility and communication mechanisms in the age of globalization and information pollution. They are interpretative theories born from a dramatic experience, both individual and collective, both alien and close. Impotently looking on as the imperialist images of war did not halt the genocide or involve the international community, Jaar needed time to invent and risk new mechanisms to once again give to images the value of commitment, to create a meaning they have gradually lost. The exhibition, full of images that cannot be seen, is proposed here as a questioning framework of photography itself.

The universe of information and the cultural universe seem to coexist in a paradox of difficult illegibility: when more information is given than can be consumed, the consumption devours the information. The communications revolution opens networks and makes

far more information than ever available, from the plurality of the various sources that serve it instantaneously to the free choice of the user. But art is essentially questioning, in the same way that photography is more than the transfer of what is real or a strict invention. Jaar asks questions of photography, holding it up to serious challenges before the life and death that photography has wanted to avoid, condemned by some to mere description and by others to pure artificiality. Placed in this case before an extreme conflict affecting all of us, Jaar considers the photographic act returning the image to its silence and then, in a slow process of selection and visibility, leaving open the question of whether or not the development of new creative techniques will return to the ideal limits of an intelligibility that photography illustrated in itself.

Just inside the limits of the interior square of the courtyard of Santa Mònica, Jaar has placed a large black square, the equivalent of measure and order, of the superior geometry created by the human mind, a universal form. Its surface reflects the exterior space in the same way that the interior light is dynamically projected on to the outer walls, the interior of an exterior. There is a balanced equivalence between reception and projection, we are in an "abstract" cause, symbolically and rationally full. There is almost total harmony between cause and effect. But suddenly the African continent emerges. The waters rise and fall, the light is affected by the movement, the reflected model is stunned into silence. And in a few moments, everything returns for a long period of time to the balance which will be newly shaken. Here, Africa, the unknown, the marginalized, is not lost outside us, but presented from within the limits, breaking this false harmony, this apparent balance, this limited knowledge, our self-sufficiency.

Beyond what the black box observes, Jaar's vocation for reality tells us that there is an absent inner reality without which we cannot see what is really observable. For Jaar, reality is inseparable from the human experience. If his work has explored and denounced extreme situations of exploitation, immigration, exile, illegality, the brutality of the Rwandan genocide has spurred him on to a more scientific work, to understand how the world is understood through images. This research takes place out of a commitment to others.

The Avenging Angel

The Avenging Angel is not an envoy or an emissary from any authority outside of the conscience of man. From man's interior is born the awareness of the other without which he cannot live. The immense void he projects upon the world. When this relationship is empowered according to the principle of the economic system of profit, the exploiter can come to make use of instruments of ignominy on the exploited. Outside this dynamic, the avenging angel broadcasts critical messages in favor of those in most extreme need. It encompasses the earthly domain, no continent is strange or alien to it. He is lured by faraway distances. Minor causes are the ones that cause most suffering and hardship. Only marginated groups. A feeling of emptiness grows in him. It is not afraid to denounce, from the very center of power. Field work, documentation, investigation and system. It infiltrates his body like a light and impalpable fluid. The system of work is communicational, that is creative in the construction of messages and their medium, and participative. The

avenging angel has human form, it is an other who lives inside one self. He perceives the mysterious presence of the most contradictory feelings ever to inhabit a human soul. Many human beings have had an infernal internal struggle to stop it, they murder it, killing a part of themselves. When an avenging angel is agonizing, its death rattle sticks in the laughing mouth of the exploiter who spits it out with more force at his exploited. Its eyes, alert, look outwards, are mobile, autonomous, cold—simultaneously happy and unhappy. The technological eye captures images. Very few images that speak. Other technological eyes of similar appearance are not the avenging angel's. Exalted and depressed, to know, it risks its life, which has a beginning and an end like the other's, and takes even more precautions. To be effective it has to experiment with artifacts of communication in a space where aesthetics and ethics intersect. I am overcome by both pleasure and despair in the most contradictory harmonies.

He is so cheerful and yet so sad that his tears reflect at once both heaven and earth.

If only for the joy of his sadness, he wishes there were no death on this earth.

The seraphim with winged eyes that the medieval painters had painted in the cinemas of the time are now exhibited in the museums of science and technology. We have learned that one of these artifacts with the moving spool is to be found downstairs in the reception of an exhibition hall, in Donostia, which bears the name of one of the scientific modernizers of the Basque language. In a period when images of violence are as manipulated as the violence itself, Jaar projects a silent film of an image which will never be colonized, constructed and deconstructed in the beating of a technological heart.

The smell of leaves of tea and coffee grains spreads through the void and fills the space with images evoking just this, eye-opening images that were never shown in that desolate land. Because there is no justice.