

Foretelling Heritage: Photography inside the Narrative of Catastrophe

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Abstract : In the present time, catastrophe seems to be inevitable, and individuals are permanently overwhelmed with challenges that test one's ability to cope with reality. Undoubtedly, photography surpassed the barrier of efficient communication in a world filled with omnifarious narratives. It wandered an outing shorter than words and younger than other sciences but became, nowadays, imperative in the context of several fields of knowledge, namely Heritage studies. Heritage and photography thus emerge as unapologetically related concepts, a fact that makes them equally relevant in today's society. Political, economic, social and humanitarian challenges alter the way in which the relationship with the past is managed and the way in which identities and ideas for the future are constructed. Ruins and destruction have become part of aesthetics discourse since the 18th century and are an area of interest when we discuss cultural heritage preservation. The image proves to be a unique way of revealing the event details when we refer to a catastrophic situation, whether it be anthropic, social or climatic. Like poetry, which has a challenging connection with silence, image is capable of creating spaces of sound and silence, and it is often these "pseudo-voids" that capture the attention of the spectator, of the one who sees/observes/contacts with the photography. The way we look at the catastrophe, how we describe it, and the images we keep in our memory will determine the record/capture/news of the event. We, thus, have a visual record, a document that will contribute to the creation of individual and collective identity, in a jigsaw puzzle of memories, pseudo memories and post memories. Based on photographic records in the Portuguese press, we intend to rethink the earthquake at Angra do Heroísmo - Azores in 1980, exploring the viewer's perspective on the catastrophe's iconography under the perspective of aesthetics and genealogy of the catastrophe.

Keywords : photography, aesthetics, catastrophe, Portugal

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