

Vida Yovanovich's Photography / Olivier Debroise

Nearly a decade ago, Vida Yovanovich was presenting one of her first photographic projects to the public as visual reports: a wide-ranging series of silent images of railway stations, tracks running to infinity, boxcars transformed into rural cottages with geraniums in the windows, railway wagons inhabited by transient people—things forgotten since (at least in Mexico) networks of bus lines took the place of this venerable mode of transportation. With exceptional simplicity, Yovanovich was able to capture the poetic dimension of these highly present evocations of a lost time. The sepia tones of those photographs emphasized the twilight atmosphere. Seeking the same pathos, Vida Yovanovich spent over five years exploring the common room, bathrooms and corridors of a hospice for the elderly near La Villa de Guadalupe. The place is as miserable and undesirable as those who live there against their will.

Perhaps the subject matter is not entirely original, and references to Diane Arbus and her many disciples are evident. However, Vida Yovanovich created much more than a simple and stark essay, instead producing a visual poem that verges on a narrative. Indeed, the subjects reappear from one image to the next, in an intense dialogue with the photographer. They pose and allow themselves to be photographed in complete candidness, while they wait for some unlikely visitor or the beginning of their *soap opera*, but also while sleeping, bathing, or sitting on the toilet; while they caress other photographs: pale, static simulacra of times they yearn for so desperately. Her complicity and intimacy with these subjects—women abandoned on the threshold of death—allow Vida Yovanovich to present us with much rawer images than the supposedly direct images of other photographers in more of a hurry.

Everything occurs within the space of a hospice, to underscore the horror, the degradation, and the shameful presence of death: damaged and peeling walls, broken windows, and ceilings inhabited by old pigeons that flutter among the old women, as if in a Hitchcockian nightmare, determined to ultimately take over the unfurnished space and the filthy bathroom (thus ends this brief narrative).

vidayovanovich.com

Vida Yovanovich is a discreet photographer who publishes and shows her work only rarely, but she always seems to take her time, perhaps because time is precisely the underlying theme of her work. And because of this, she is able to achieve a rare intensity. She is probably one of the few photographers who truly have something to say and show, and knows how to do it.

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