

## Yusuf Sevinçli

Embracing the texture and ambiguity associated with transient black and white photography, Yusuf Sevinçli (b. 1980, Turkey) creates intimate images that allude to finding personal light in collective darkness. His new work is comprised of pictures taken in both Turkey and France, whose different cities evoke distinct poetic energies.

*Sans titre, from the series La Rochelle, 2014-2017*  
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It feels strange referring to Yusuf Sevinçli's images as photographs. Candid, grainy black and white pictures make up his extensive oeuvre, which is almost better described as a collection of stills seized from various memories, isolated while staring off into space. Capturing his own social and political experience of living in Turkey and various French cities, he presents these collective memories by highlighting their intimate and personal features.

While his projects do act as documentation of specific places at specific times, Sevinçli's photographs maintain the same dramatic, emotive quality throughout his different series. He prefers working in black and white because of its fantastical possibilities. "In my photography, I'm looking for a certain kind of poetry that invites the viewer into an imaginative world, while still relating to our current state and to myself. That's why I avoid addressing certain places and indications of time in my photography – because it's a state of mind referring to the author, and that's where the poetry arises. Black and white creates this style and emotional impact".

Sevinçli's most recent body of work includes photographs taken in Turkey and France, where he spends most of his time. When the images are closely inspected based on these geographical distinctions, the different settings slowly begin to represent slight variants in aesthetic style. The artist describes this phenomenon as an unconscious result, saying, "My work is not about places in particular, but the spirits of the cities sneak into my work, and that is the beauty of it. Each town and city has a different history, energy and life, and when I photograph these places, it seeps into my process".

This process is also intentionally poetic, grounded in traditional analogue methods. "Maybe I'm a bit old-fashioned, but I like that analogue photography is something solid that you can hold in your hands. And in my workflow, manipulating the negatives and quality of prints plays an important role". Spur-of-the-moment snapshots – complete with organic glitches – are what set Sevinçli's textured, dream-like images apart from other black and white photography. "While I'm shooting, I don't think much about technical details, and I'm not interested in some sort of technical perfection. The moment and the situation provide the effect, not me. I

believe this sort of approach is more sincere, and less rational, which allows the energy of the moment to have a direct link with the final image”.

Sevinçli has previously remarked that politics influences his creative work, and when pressed to expand on this notion, he still somewhat agrees. “I rarely intend to be directly political in my work. However, I believe that art – at its best – cannot avoid being political. Aesthetics are political. Any work of art, once displayed in public, is a statement from the artist. So in one way or another, every artwork is directly or indirectly political, good or bad”.

One of his more recent projects, a photobook titled PUT, brings together a number of pictures in various formats – single and double page spreads, as well as larger gate folds. While Sevinçli maintains that all art is inherently political, this new book is his most intentionally political work yet. “The book is an exception among my works. It's about polarisation in Turkish society, political violence and the struggle for power in Turkey through the metaphor of vandalised and destroyed monuments in public spaces”. The photographs he is presenting at Unseen Amsterdam 2017 correspond to these themes, primarily due to the urgency of Turkey's current social and political crises. “For the past few years in Turkey, we have been going through a difficult time. Firstly in a political sense, and then of course an extension of this political side seeps into personal life. We are all deeply affected by it. My latest work is definitely a personal witness of this period, and my efforts are being spent to reflect on it artistically”.