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## FinisTerra - Relocation into the Open, 1997/2007

About a photo study by Tom Fecht

*First the provocative title : "Relocation into the Open"*

You relocate to give up an apartment in which you feel is home for another one, which has yet to become home. You leave a room, which, through the experiences and time you had spent in it, had acquired its own familiarity. The new space, in contrast, is still un-lived, undefined, open to occupations, fulfillments, and adjustments. In this respect, every relocation is a step into the unknown, and only acquires new certainties over time.

Here, however, "Relocation into the Open" is associated with Finistère, the end of a terra ferma, of the main-land, of the European continent., We are not only confronted with temporary unfamiliarity; no certainties are to be expected. Projections and assurances in regards to prospective living become obsolete. "Relocation into the Open" also arises from the context of 1998, as the century is nearing its end, scarred with expectations, borders and ownerships, when the so-called factual constraints and remaining amendments risks for the future don't seem to allow for any decision making or responsibility.

The open is the unbounded and limitless, where previously bounded up spaces open up to the unknown, into the open, towards the distance. Here, it is the area between land and sea. The sea symbolises the open, with its vastness, distance and depth. Its horizon, at times clearly defined, then blurring into haziness, opens and reopens the view, the search and the longing, without ever pointing to a particular direction. On the distant horizon emerge small islands, lighthouses, and the tip of an ending bay. Their proximity to the land calms our senses, while the lighthouse evoke the open vastness of the sea, where one can travel for weeks without seeing the coast.

The word "Relocation" seems at first complicated: why not say: "move" or "start" into the open instead? The term does not describe something new, the conquering of a future in which one can take refuge. It is not the open adventure in its common sense. The distant horizon is neither a challenge nor an invitation. There is no longing or desire beyond the horizon. The desire is to be present in the "here and now" of the horizon, alive in the transition of land and sea. The "here" is a vast, open space and the "now" a moment in time encompassing all that ever was and what is yet to come. It is the coming together of indefinite space and timelessness; the openness of the "living space" where the relocation occurs, is, paradoxically, a closed openness.

The “Relocation into the Open”, occurs in the balanced serenity at the fringes of beach and sea, and leaves behind the modern stigmata of avoiding uncertainty. From its uncertainty lure no dangers to fear or overcome. To open oneself to this infinite space of the undetermined, one must be in a state of quiescence which enables us to reconnect with ourselves, others, things and the world. Accepting the indefinite, and its uncertainty open us up to possibilities and to the empowerment of living, doing, giving, taking, and letting live. The possibility and power for both, something and nothing.

And now in more detail:

A “Relocation into the Open” took place. A human being looking for a new place of openness. A table and two chairs were brought into the open. Table and chairs – not bed and stove – the material reality of settling down, of placing a new apartment on the beach, at the edge of the sea, spilling the main land in its countenance and vastness. They attest to the move into vastness with their claim, openness itself. The table was apparently set into the ebbing water of which left no traces. The sand is still moist under the chair and table, which are a bit sunken, but drier than in the area between the table and waves, which run calmly towards the land in wide movements. The light of the sky reflects in its wetness. The calm and solitude of this big table contrasts with the movement of the soft waves, while its surface naturally echoes the succession of the horizon, waves and edge of the water.

The solitude of this “Intérieur à l’extérieur” is such that people would disturb the scene. Very special people of a certain disposition would wish to move here, of those who like to move into the open. To view beyond the distance that exists between themselves, the horizon and beyond.

A table and a couple of chairs. A table long enough to accommodate an entire party, many guests or a big family. Just two chairs at each end, facing each other, leaned against the table sides as in a pub upon its closing. It seems to me that here, “Relocation” evokes more of an “after” than a “before”. The chairs are leaning, ready to be used for seating, for conversation, for the exchanging of ideas, perhaps for sharing the enjoyment of the view or of a meal. You can drink to, look at and talk to someone across the length of the table, or be in peace. Questions arise as to the “where” and the “what” of the chairs’ undecided function. Are these the two new “residents” of this strange apartment? Is someone expecting a visitor? Are we witnesses to the interruption of already onset togetherness? The chairs tilted towards each other at the table but still distant from one another convey closeness and distance, as home and the unknown conjure a move into the open.

The mood marking this relocation is one of tension, which one could define as relaxed tension. The “previous” and the “yet to come” are simply united in the togetherness of departure and arrival, of arrival and departure. Perhaps more appropriately a person having departed than a departure. Because the relocation reaches into the open, it means an on-going departure of the habitual and fixed, a liberated arrival paired with calm expectation and an opening into the future. The table with its chairs leaning against it also suggest it. The present table stands in the open, facing the ever-changing wind and waves, opposites to the horizon’s still line. “Settling” in the open requires a contradiction or tension between the stability of a residence and its indefinite nature. Living in this place keeps the moment from being underway. It is achieved when the relocated manages to stay in the room of this openness to preserve its very openness.

Three additional ideas:

First: The openness is a room of quiet expectation, which doesn’t expect anything. People and society have molded it by incorporating it into their interiors. This molding is only a setting of accents, which doesn’t imply anything foreign or strange, but seems part of the environment itself, so that people and nature can live together in peaceful unity. The earth itself, land and sea, were, as Brecht used to say: “a convivial home”. This doesn’t mean it was humanized, but more that it was free to be what it had always been, a place for people and things.

Second: Contrary to first impressions, nothing is missing in this picture, at least not in the common sense of “missing”. The open is neither a “lack of” or a “nullity”. The remaining chairs for the long table “are missing” no more than the people who sit on them. One can suggest the existence of the non-existent. They aren’t, but are there. This gives the scene a combination of reality and illusion. The space described, and the timelessness of the “here and now” find a concentrated presence in the rigidity and partial artificiality of the table with its chairs, which seem to occupy the void.

Third: One can also imagine the table as a giant scale. Its surface and medial vertical – the table legs in the middle – seem in strict symmetry from top and bottom, right and left, front and back, as the multiple axis of the earth and sky, land and sea and people are balanced. The invisible balance of the whole becomes visible in the table-picture. If the observer allows himself into the scene, he might be pulled inside and experience first hand a “Relocation into the Open”.