

ESTHER SHALEV-GERZ

The Spectre of Light

The photograph is plagued by the spectre of reality, and our insistence on its truth. And if, latent in the texture of the image is always the spectre of reality, what is possible in the space of its forgetting? What is the residue of its forgetting? Since the invention of photography artists have sought to question the claim that the photograph holds to the truth of nature, and to construct a credibility gap that will allow a space for the imaginary, for that which cannot be photographed. In the work of Esther Shalev-Gerz this credibility gap is opened up from within the space of the photographic image in its foetal state, which is the originary negative from which is constructed the positive photographic imprint of the image and our reassurance of the potent ion truth of the real. In the work of Esther Shalev-Gerz the act of photography is the making of negatives that refer to the subject of their origin, but which displaces this subject through technique, through the reversal of light which converts the real into a disembodied spectre. By withholding from the image its positive state, its status as "beautiful illusion", she seduces us from our compulsion for the illusion of the real, and gives us instead the texture of memory, for when we strive to discover within the negative image the truth of its originary positive, the phantasm that we designate as "the real", we are reminded that the photograph is only a photograph: - not reality itself, but only its forgetting; that which is even more and other than the subject to which it refers.

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