

Goeun Museum of Photography Special Exhibitions

## Bernard Faucon

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### "In Search of Lost Time"

The new international exhibition program prepared by Goeun Museum of Photography will launch with Bernard Faucon. As well known, Faucon gained fame worldwide in the late 1970s when he started a new trend of mise en scène photo or staged photography. Through various media we are already familiar with the distorted and fabricated images in all forms today. Moreover, many use a compact camera to capture daily moments and use the program on their cellphone camera to easily manipulate the image and share the result with others. This genre of staged photo has already penetrated deep into the lives of the public and thus became familiar and comfortable. What Goeun Museum of Photography would like to highlight here is the effect technical advancement - including the digital technology - has on the identity of photography. What must be first assumed is the point of

impact where photography as a trace of reality collides with the world of illusion. That is where Bernard Faucon comes in.

Faucon reconstructs his memories of youth through *The Time of Mannequins* and *Summer Camp*. For this purpose he positions the mannequin and the boy, his alter ego, into the squared frame and meticulously places the tools as if setting a stage. In this small yet grand world created by Faucon, the eternal dream of youth becomes real. He had stated before that what he shows in the images are a fake that are unrelated to reality. What he means is not that photography fails to reveal reality but that it will be impossible to take a photograph of the long gone past, dream and fantasy that he wishes to create. It is impossible to directly capture the space and object that only exist in memory. Yet photographic recreation does become possible once the obsession is gone to capture the object as it is. It is the limits yet ironically the potential of photography.

Faucon presents illusionary images based on reality and questions photography as a reflection of objective world to put it into context. The issue is constructed upon the sense of loss in his *The Probable Evolution of Time* series and this sense of loss is linked with the desire for life. Appearance of a mannequin or a boy is significantly decreased in this series, which are replaced by a glass on an otherwise empty table, balloon flying into the sky and notable images of fire captured in various forms. These icons are a reminder of the objects that have disappeared in time from the empty status and become an essential clue that connects one series with the next.

The *Rooms* series is a prominent balance of color and light unique to Faucon that shows a seemingly empty space resembling a stage without an actor, yet filled with purity in itself; Dazzling light coming through the window, intense fire burning from the floor, the doodling and traces of a bouquet left behind in the empty room. The memory of youth that Faucon, the owner of this room, wishes to recover is materialized as the image of a boy reflected in the mirror or rising from the floor, a face profile drawn on the wall, or an illusion behind the curtains. In this series, Faucon entertains his ability to recreate a space that seems to exist only in a dream, and presents the photographic potential to reveal “the optical unconscious”. “The face of love, that cannot be photographed” which Faucon had “most wished to capture” can be confirmed in *The Rooms of Love*, *Winter Rooms*, and *Gold Rooms*. While his early works are perfect compositions of the time in the past, these series start by admitting those lost times will never return. The face Faucon adores and wishes to keep with him perishes after leaving only minute traces due to the endlessly flowing time. This is realistic, imaginary yet fantastical, quite similar to the essence of photography. Photography seems to capture life but its essence only proves the object had “existed” (but not anymore), proving only its absence and its death.

The Idols & Sacrifices series commonly understood as a combination of portrait and landscape shows a peculiar balance between the boy's image as a perfect being and the landscape scattered in red paint. Faucon explains this red color symbolizes the wounds and the despair of photography at the same time. Having intended to speak of the present through traces, Faucon puts the boys' torsos exposed in light in contrast to the red blooded landscape and reveals the two sides of images that include both visual and virtual, sacred and vulgar.

Writings series and his last photographic series of The End of the Image too are a continuation of telling the story of his presence and time through a number of signs like the mannequin, a boy or the fire. Sentences handwritten on the landscape or the boy's skin either expose or hide something that can't be shown in the photograph. The long yearned desire of Faucon to capture the beautiful past, the time that cannot be kept, or the image of existence is consistently present in these works, from his first to the last series. The moment that he sought after endlessly in fact has no actual form. The pursuit of distortable image that is a reflection of existence, and the regret and remorse about it form the core of what Faucon tries to deliver through his work. In that sense, Faucon chose to generalize some highly personal concerns through photography and proved that photography is an object of reason in a poetic and at times sharply insightful way.

From «Bernard Faucon» exhibition, Goeun Museum of Photography wishes to focus on the chaos caused when photography became actively incorporated into contemporary art instead of newly composing the art world of Faucon. There is a view worried the features or the essence of the photography medium is perishing due to its technical advancement while there is another view that takes the same environment and perceives it in the context of production, distribution and reception. Traditional photographic aesthetics tend to concentrate on documenting the reality and the issue of reality and fabrication in photography has been discussed fiercely forever.

As mentioned above, whether it was Faucon's intention or not, he threw a fundamental question at the recreation and its limits in the world of photography and has presented images that intrigues our sentiments and interest in the world. This is something that cannot be ignored in contemporary photography. In that sense, the Museum wishes the exhibition can provide an opportunity for Korean photography to look back at some of its tendencies to rely on certain form or style of photography or else blindly follow the trend. Moreover, it will be great to find a chance to reconfirm the importance of photographic philosophy and the various photographic commitments based on such philosophy that can be consistently found in the works of Faucon. One of the most crucial roles of the Photography Museum is to acknowledge and appraise where Korea's photography stands in

the context of world photography, and suggest the way for it to develop constructively.

A total of 83 photographs from all of the series named above will be presented in the exhibition including 15 Fresson printed\* vintages. It will be meaningful to compare the texture and colors of these Fresson prints with digital. By tracing through the full assortment of Faucon's work, the viewer may go back into moment of presence and the past that we dreamt of that Faucon wished to discover and capture. It will be a journey in search of "lost time", a continuous theme by Faucon who intended to create a world of his own that goes beyond the time.

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