

Sung-Hyun Yoo

TIME LAPSE

The photographer Sung-Hyun Yoo's exhibition *Time Lapse* presents nine photographs of Buddhist temple ruins in South Korea. Taken during two trips in 2016 and 2017, the photographs capture a lesser-known portrait of South Korea, in the guise of a search for the eternal.

Born in 1976 in Seoul, Sung-Hyun Yoo has been living and working in Paris for nine years. The exploration of ruins, forgotten and difficult to access in his native country, appears as a quest for his origins. It is not only an attempt to go back in time, but to evoke the discontinuities between present, past and future. This return to the past, like a search for the "first principle" in metaphysics, is symbolized by ascending the mountains that hold the ruins. It is a soul-searching journey: a quest for what exists, drawing force from what is no longer. The work of Sung-Hyun Yoo also questions the idea of a place beyond living memory, where one no longer goes, as suggested by his photographs taken far off the main roads in his homeland. His work ultimately seeks to create new images of contemporary Korea.

Timelessness as a mark of absence

The sepia tinting of the photographs, inspired by the daguerreotype, places the landscapes and temple fragments in an unreal temporal space, succeeded by a series of flash images. This old-fashioned imaginary setting questions the viewer on the value of a given territory. These fragments—photographed, trivial, clandestine, sometimes shapeless—thereby transform, through the superposition of temporal strata, into rich and mysterious treasures. These remains of a vague and fictional past represent the profound emptiness left behind by the division of Korea. This emptiness lies in each and every person, and surpasses national boundaries. The photographs of Sung-Hyun Yoo explore this past left behind by a South Korea that, although very traditional, turned towards the most technological modernity, as if to avoid looking back. These photographs explore our own relationship to that which makes sense when photography becomes a retrospective fiction.

Surpassing the divisions in order to reconstruct

In the midst of contemporary Korean turmoil, Sung-Hyun Yoo makes mountains gravitate and reveals a serene aesthetic. This process of disengagement becomes especially clear in a context of divisions: that of the expatriate artist, that of a country separated in two. This aesthetic reveals a wish for the future of Korea, to make a long and serene anticipation of consciousness appear: a consciousness in touch with the energy of ancient rocks. Look at one's past, accept it and reconstruct it.