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Art in... dust

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EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS

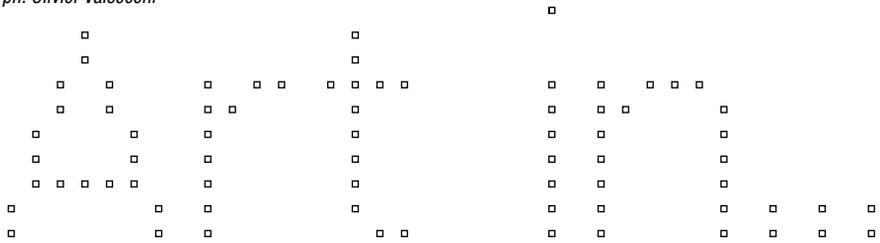
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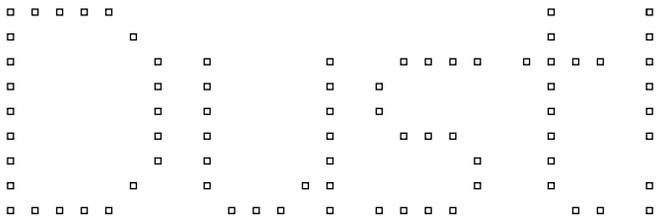


ph: *Olivier Valsecchi*





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“Let me explain Dust and Chaos”
Our cover and these wonderful images
are by Olivier Valsecchi, who tells us in an
exclusive article about the inspirations and
the secrets of his project.



As a way to translate his emotions, **Olivier Valsecchi** uses others' bodies to convey his trance and compose pictures that he qualifies self-portraits, although he does not necessarily appear on the photos.

The Dust series tells about incarnation, the very moment between nothingness and existence, and features hanging bodies bursting out (of themselves? of void?) that could be both humans or ghosts floating in an oneiric atmosphere - a dark, emotional atmosphere that reminds of the Renaissance painting-, playing fictitious encounters between the beginning and the end, explosion and silence, rage and soothing, running and retreat.

Olivier Valsecchi was born in 1979 in Paris, and now lives and works in the South of France. He has taken his own approach to Photography for more than ten years before entering a photography school and completing his technique.

His work was published in many magazines, including Eyemazing, Azartphoto, Le Monde, Photo... and was exhibited at the Promenades photographiques de Vendôme (summer 2010), European Festival of Nude Photography in Arles (May 2011), and Fotofever in Paris (November 2011).

Next solo show will take place in the Centre Atlantique de la Photographie in Brest (France) in March, 2012.

Where everything has (re-)begun.

«These ashes I'm showering you with are the burning clothes of time you want to get rid of.»

This is the exact sentence I told every model who appears in the Dust series. Get rid of time, and chronology. No beginning, no end.

When I started this project, I was experiencing a personal revival, a change so strong that you could call it a new birth. So Dust tells about this specific day when I was born again: when past, present and future merged to create the one and only moment that exists beyond time and space. That would be my definition of Chaos.

The Chaos.

While working on this series I randomly read something about Ovid's definition of Chaos. Funny how things happen at the right time.

In the Greek mythology, Chaos is described as a combination of liquid and fog, order and disorder, light and darkness that were melting together, and when this paradoxes-constructed mass exploded, it gave birth to planet Earth. Liquid became oceans, fog became sky, light became sun and so on. Everything got to its right place.

I kept working with that « Origin of the World » story in mind. I would personify Chaos, give it a body and explore how emotions could fit into it.

The Bodies - writing a biography with light.

I first casted some dancers, thought it would be easier to direct them. But as it turned out they were all control freaks over their bodies, they were all very aware of the aesthetic moves and were not so spontaneous. They all have this mental mirror in their heads, probably because they rehearse their dances in front of large mirrors, so they know exactly the result of their positions and I could tell they would interpret my directions in their own way, with their

dance background. I used to take their place and show them the move I wanted them to do: they would improve it in a mannered way. Dancers are body artists: they have something personal to express. There was kind of a conflict of interests because I usually stuff the models' bodies with my feelings. This way I can be distant from the scene, control and orchestrate every single aspect of the creation, while being there emotionally. Dancers don't let go, they are used to work and



p.it: Oliver Valseschi

rehearse all day long, and I sure was exhausted before they were. That kept me away from the intimacy and abandon I was looking for. So I chose to cast random people, who were just curious to experiment something and listen to what I wanted to express, who were raw material I could sculpt like clay, and would become my mirror. This is a self-portrait series in disguise. For I am mostly inspired by my guts, my work is very personal, it is like I am writing a biography with light. So it was really important that the models act like I would.

Why ashes.

I used ashes because of all the spiritual symbols that they convey, such as Ash Wednesday, when

Christians place ashes on their foreheads and pray God to wash their sins away, and also the mythical sacred firebird Phoenix that is a symbol of rebirth and immortality. Each photo of the Dust series would translate an emotion you can feel while reincarnating: abandon of your previous self, frenzy of embracing a new horizon, balancing between doubt, fear and hope... I made a lot of images and only selected a few for the series, those that made my heart beat, those I could see myself in, and no surprise there is a lot of floating and fetus-like bending, as if the photos were shot in a mother's womb.

ph: Olivier Valsecchi

Editing *Dust* - doing music with my eyes.

When I put the edited pictures together and organized them one after the other in a linear way, I was very mindful of the rhythm the whole series created, as though I were writing some kind of visual music partition. I started photography thanks to music: when I was a teenager, I used to compose and play a lot of songs, and take self-portraits to illustrate the album covers. That must be the reason my pictures are square: there is always a part of me that sees an album cover in every picture. Anyway since I was a very bad singer and my photos were way better than my voice, I neglected music for the

benefit of photography, or should I say, I decided to do music with my eyes instead.

Music and photography are not so different, and I like to think that exhibitions are photography concerts. I may be long to create, but that's only because I want to reach something that could make people faint in front of it, or move them so strongly that they would abandon themselves like in the end of Patrick Süskind's *Perfume* novel. That is a very ambitious and utopic challenge. But I will keep that in mind and work on it.

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