

Through the evolution of Virgílio Ferreira's work, we can ascertain that we are in the presence of one of the most meticulous Portuguese photographers in the field of portraiture. Nonetheless, in the 'Daily Pilgrims' series, the artist has decided to shift the academic rules of traditional lighting and composition of the photographic domain to make us plunge into a far more obscure territory, which incites an analysis that transcends common paradigms of the photographic image.

Seemingly portraits, these photographs surpass the form of representation, constituting a challenge and a provocation to the observer. As it is known, photography didn't have the ingenuity of creating its own terminology, having inherited the vocabulary of painting: portrait, still life, landscape, etc. Then, how can these images be classified?

While definitely bearing likeness to what we usually call 'portraits', these images deny an objective identity, where the only possible mark of recognition is the Asian physiognomy of their subjects. For me, the image displaying a portrait painted in the background is particularly enigmatic, the character appearing as a ghostly figure, creating an inverted perspective of a double.

These images fit perfectly in the frame of contemporary photographic, not only for challenging the objectivity of the photographic device (blur), but also for including normative features that are currently part of the medium, such as ambiguity and metaphor. The time of these images is dubious - we could as well be looking at dawn or dusk, each summoning us to different interpretations.

Some of these characters may resemble porcelain figures, whose fragility cruises the night of a metropolis, where identity is mixed with many others of the globalized world.

Taken together, these photographs can send us to a dreamlike universe, in a kind of journey into the subconscious. Having a vast interpretative potential, each spectator is invited to create their own story.

Rui Prata, Dezembro de 2009