

Aleix Plademunt

Almost There

On 26 January 1909, John sent Miss Essie a postcard saying he was on his way south. She never got the postcard, but 101 years later I happened to be the one to receive this message. This apparently banal, chance event intrigued me and gave fresh impetus to a work I'd started some months earlier.

Spurred on by John's postcard to Essie Turner, the *Almost There* project got under way with a series of photographs which, rather like a prelude, raised the issue of the journey as a piece of personal research and the impossibility of arriving at the set destination. Frustration.

Travelling in general and travelling to far-flung places in particular have formed part of my photographic work since my very first projects. But for the first time I realised that what I was desperately seeking outside might actually lie inside.

This was my initial approach for undertaking a strange, new exploration that was very different to my previous ones, a journey inwards and outwards to see things up close and from afar. This venture brought me no true or specific answers, but it did make me think about the concept of travelling and distance and everything in between.

As a result, the project began by presenting different images showing different places at radically far-away physical distances.

Almost There also explores the question of physical distance in this constant quest to photograph the impossible, namely the emotional proximity that ties us to extremely far-off places— in both space and time — ie places we've never been or to which we can never return.

My need to always search far and wide for what I felt I couldn't find close by was linked to my interest in the classic American documentary tradition, geographically far removed from my own origins. In *Almost There*, this historical and, you might say, even genealogical dimension has taken on an even greater presence, basically as a result of my interest in visualising the inherent dichotomy in the concept of the landscape between image and territory, ie representing a known territory not so much by physical or measureable signs of identity, but by visual references — in this case photographic — that have played a leading role in the history of the medium.

These classic references, almost intrinsic to the representation of American territory, are suggested and revealed when the distance in interpreting these very distinctive styles becomes so fine that I find myself photographing the same place where some of these creators had been twenty and thirty years ago. The key question here is not the rephotography or tribute, but once again a strategy for revealing this concept of distance.

And then I come close and photograph what I have nearby, where I have fewest photographic references, but inevitably most emotional ties. I photograph the place where I come from and the place I was born and make them hold a dialogue with the landscapes of my photographic imagination, which are geographically much further away, but which I've made form part of my personal imagination. I get on a plane to look down from on high and then I return here, close by. Really close by, to bring together different kinds of distances, spaces in the cracks in which to defy the conventions of logic; and I photograph what I have closest to me, my father, and I discover there isn't just a time distance between us, but also an emotional one as well. And then I leave again, to search far, far away, to seek out the greatest distance. And I find myself looking at the largest known star (VY Canis Majoris) from an observatory in my own country, blurring once again this idea of a single distance. And when I photograph it, I realise I am photographing a star that might no longer exist, because the light I see has taken millions of years to reach me. A light photon is created in the nucleus of the Sun and takes millions of years to reach the surface. This tiny portion of light travels from the surface of the Sun to the Earth in 8.5 minutes. So I want to photograph the

place I was born with an 8.5-minute exposure, so that the photon that left the surface of the Sun at the exact moment I pressed the button has enough time to hit the photographic film and in a certain way leave a trace of its journey.

And that's *Almost There*. A constant return journey. Exploring what I have closest to me and furthest away and how these ideas are interchanged almost without being aware of it. My blood, my country, the country of my most direct references, the places furthest away, the places where I've lived, the places I've felt my own, the universe, the largest planet in the solar system, the nearest galaxy, chance. The impossibility of reaching one's destination, photographing the photograph. Photography as an imaginary return journey and at the same time as a reflection of that place and that thing we can never go back to, which we can never see again in the same way. *Almost There*, in short, explores the genres and languages we use to try and understand the world through images, but it also examines how photography conditions our visions, as well as the intrinsic mystery of each place: being there, getting there, seeing it from afar or observing it up close.

This confrontation between interchangeable distances can only deliver a letdown: I'll never be far enough away or close enough. But in the space between these two distances, in the play of perceptions created between them, things happen, things I decide to explore. Almost far, almost near. *Almost There*.