daniel agra

MANIFESTO

Abyssurbs

The contemporary city is a contradictory organism: at once a site of concentration and isolation. It is a territory of potential encounters in which thousands of bodies coexist without ever coming into meaningful contact. Buildings, streets, and interiors cease to function as mere settings and become material manifestations of a collective condition shaped by speed, anonymity, and distance.

Abyssurbs does not represent the city; it interrogates the conditions of inhabiting it. Rather than describing what the city is, the project examines what it means to exist within it. The city emerges as a cathedral of concrete and glass, a honeycomb of superimposed cells in which each illuminated window discloses a life largely indifferent to the one beside it. It is an anthill, but one stripped of the collective intelligence of ants. Here, no one remembers the way back to a common nest; each individual constructs, in isolation, a private labyrinth of asphalt and uncertainty.

The project situates itself within a photographic practice that rejects the image as a passive reflection of reality, treating it instead as a means of inquiry and critical perception. Its visual language emerges from the multitude and its silence, from urban noise that does not necessarily produce communication, and from physical proximity that fails to become human intimacy. The camera enters the abyss rather than observing it from a position of exteriority, inhabiting it from within and adopting the discretion of its subjects: anonymous, transient, and never posed, they move through the frame without awareness of being observed. Each image leaves a question unresolved: are we, in fact, capable of recognizing the other?

Abyssurbs articulates two inseparable dimensions: the city and the abyss. The latter is not necessarily located beneath our feet; it can emerge between two people walking side by side without looking at one another, or between individuals who occupy the same space while remaining enclosed within interior worlds that never intersect. This is a depth that is not geographical but psychological and existential. The city consequently appears as a mental landscape in which memory, movement, desire, routine, and conflict accumulate: a repository of lived experience. Every architectural structure operates simultaneously as refuge and boundary; every gathering of bodies contains both the possibility of encounter and the evidence of separation. Shadows, bodies, architecture, voids, and intersections acquire narrative agency. Documentary observation gives way to a subjective mode of reading in which the image functions as a catalyst for associations, questions, and affective states. Urban space is no longer merely something to be seen, but something to be interpreted. The abyss of the city resides neither in its buildings nor in its streets or distances, but in the gradual erosion of our capacity to perceive the other.

Every urban passage contains innumerable stories that remain unspoken; every window suggests an existence; every shadow preserves a presence; every empty space may become the trace of someone who once occupied it. The camera therefore does not claim to authenticate an objective reality; it constructs the conditions for interpretation. The image operates as a fragment that withholds closure and generates meaning, offering not a comprehensive account of the city but elements of a larger narrative that the viewer must reconstruct through their own experience. Rather than prescribing a singular reading, the work establishes a productive relation between image, memory, and imagination—one capable of estranging the familiar, unsettling the everyday, and rendering the apparently insignificant newly perceptible.

Abyssurbs constitutes an uncomfortable invitation: to recognize, in the figure of the stranger crossing the street without acknowledging us, a fragment of our own condition. The project does not adopt a moralizing gaze; instead, it arrives at a quiet yet disquieting proposition: the city we inhabit is simultaneously humanity's most consequential collective achievement and its most intimate abyss. Between these two poles, Daniel Agra's gaze remains suspended, sustained by the insistence of one who cannot cease looking, holding in focus the precise distance that separates us from ourselves.