OPEN SPACES   **English description**
2022 – Series- 12 images

OPEN SPACES is a photographic project put together in prison setting.

On a beautiful summer's day in Bourgogne, Guillaume Martial set out to photograph the Varennes-le-Grand prison, on the outskirts of Chalon-sur-Saône. Upon reaching the walls of the prison, he set up his equipment and opened the shutter. As if by magic, this action pierced the stone to reveal the first photograph taken in world history by Nicéphore Niépce - *Point de vue du Gras,* an image dating back to 1827, revealing this very prison site to the world.

Wow! In this familiar picture, you can see the prison yard, its architecture and the two watchtowers of the jail. Is it a mystical vision? Or an optical illusion? Has perception merged with reality?

Following this mysterious discovery, Guillaume Martial immersed himself inside the remand prison. He now shares this exclusive research with us while reminding us that the photographic action is just a matter of point of view.

The photographer was given the chance by the prison authorities to put on a prisoner's uniform to experience and feel the oppressiveness of being locked up. Faced with restricted mobility imposed by the architecture, he swiftly began to focus on the activities and spaces where individuals could regain a sense of freedom of movement: in the courtyard, the gym, and the sports fields.

The production of images is limited in prison for reasons of security. Therefore, Guillaume Martial interacted with the visible and the invisible, both of which are intrinsic to the medium of photography and the prison environment. In this context, and at first glance, everything seems to hide behind these visible barriers of locks, bars, doors, and walls. The gaze is hidden; however, this is crucial in relation to the surveillance and control of the people within these walls.

If paradoxically photography is seen as the art of opening up to the world, it also has the power to imprison a part of it. The camera can be considered a prison that opens and closes, letting life in and out in a disturbing metaphor of imprisonment. Time and space are inseparable in prison. For the prisoner, these aspects are of the utmost importance, with the exception of their loved ones. The passage of time is constrained by the restriction of space. Similarly, photography relies on exposure to time and the ability to open the shutter to produce picture.

So how can we deal with the issue of locking up both an individual and space through the photographic action ?

This is where Guillaume Martial found a clever solution by creating a visible off-camera shot. The geometry of the shapes therefore removes the main character from the image, that is, the human being. By cutting and pasting, Guillaume assembled his images to open up a visual field, which allowed him to investigate that vital space that is so highly sought after in prison. The confined image consequently opens up off-camera, encouraging us to think and let the mind run free.

Here you can find the Vitruvian Man at the foot of the wall interacting with the chronophotography of sport, cinematic burlesque, and the experience of Brunelleschi from his perspective. The image is no longer restricted, it is able to move around and transform itself into an object open to the outside world. The image, restricted to a shot, is suddenly seen in its entirety.

Therefore, Guillaume Martial took a step back to deconstruct the prison space, so he could successfully disassemble it and make it more visible within these open and detailed compositions.

This piece is part of a new visual representation of the prison environment. It offers a sense and a touch of freedom in an environment deemed to be hostile, where control through the gaze prevails. It consequently empowers and liberates the goodness within us, always ready to regain...these open spaces.