

# GERARDO SUTER

## Mexico City The Penultimate Region

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Looking through Gerardo Suter's eyes, the perception of the Mexico City horizon is limitless, like our expectations of possibly getting lost and meeting up again in that exploration. His approximations are perspectives that broaden the horizon, refracting it into faint fragments in which, crouched in the thickness of its layers, the atmosphere dresses in tonal suggestions, textures, and images that stroke our sense of touch as well as all the rest of our senses. These are surfaces whose irregularities challenge the domain of machines in printing images because they continue to feel the heart-

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Photos courtesy of the Old San Ildefonso College.



beats of a gestation process. Whether lead or copper captivating the density of grays and blacks without blurring the horizon, or vinyl canvases converted into the reflection of those billboards blighting Mexico City's streets, Suter's photography makes the supports active elements in the birth of the light that breathes life into these images: they give each solution a singularity, as though they were the glue running through the intensities of that language, or, rather, the exhalations of those presences.

Like a living organism, the city grows in all directions without noticing the imbalances its excessive expansion, its threatening seismic territory, and the effects of climate change on its geography inflict. It traps us, and, like a flash of lightening,



*Spacelapse series, 100 x 200 cm, 2009 (inkjet on paper with acrylic protection).*

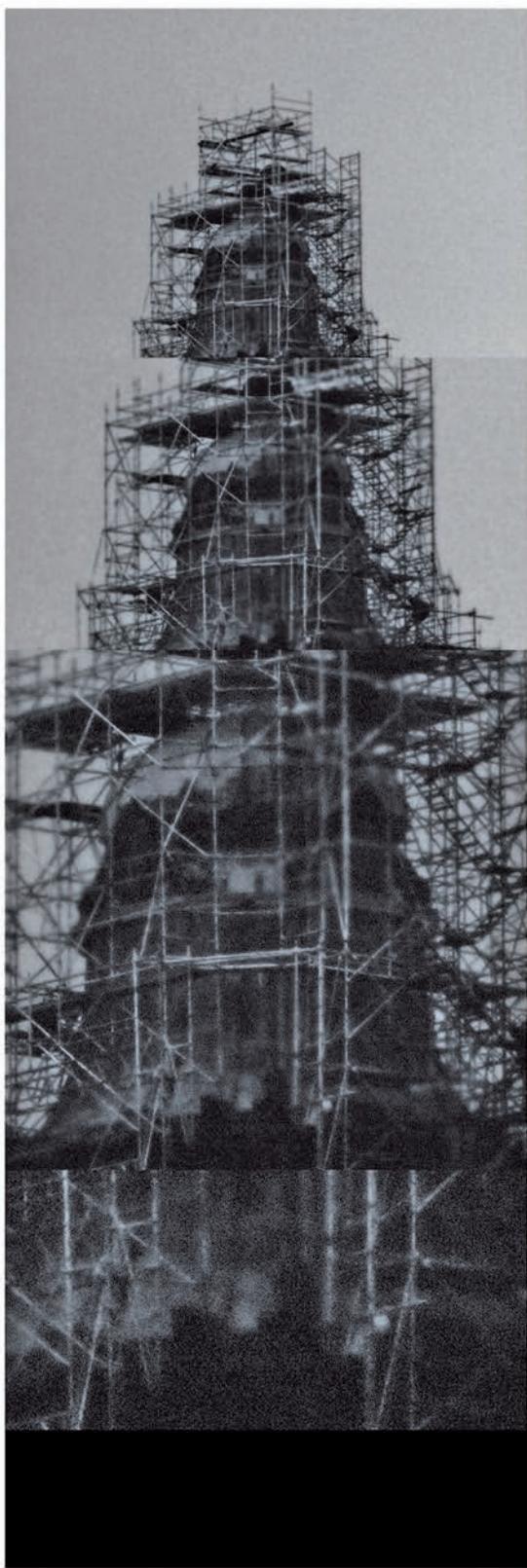
A horizon that cancels itself  
out at the same time that it engenders  
the need to re-situate itself, it opens  
up in front of us like an abyss  
that challenges our doubts.

challenges our imagination and creativity in this becoming that  
the photographer presents us:

If we see that new strata emerge throughout the city uninter-  
ruptedly, and what we observe all the time is unfinished and in  
a continuous process of transformation, the presence of a pen-  
ultimate region in Mexico City ends up being the rule and not

the exception. A penultimate that appears in the surrounding  
areas, downtown, anywhere in between, with different charac-  
teristics, depending on the place, but always there.<sup>1</sup>

In his constantly transfiguring landscapes, just like in our  
social habits, glances are exchanged, sheens like mirages,  
reciprocal questions, indescribable doubts and rumors that  
palpitate or oscillate just like fireflies illuminating their own  
movement. An observer of the city's mutations, the photog-  
rapher reveals and interprets this uninterrupted transforma-  
tion that is sedimented in layers, strata, crumbling or peeling  
walls; structures that are abandoned or undergoing some  
indeterminate process; buildings or urban clusters that tell



*Refoundation series, 240 x 80 cm, 2008 (inkjet on cotton paper).*

Suter reveals and interprets this uninterrupted transformation sedimented in layers, strata; structures abandoned or undergoing some indeterminate process; buildings or urban clusters that tell us about the many cities that are amalgamated.

us about the many cities that are amalgamated and interpenetrate in every renovation or just irrigate the imagination. Silhouettes and specters with reminiscences winking out at us from their compositions of transcendental stylistic trends in the evolution of photography.

To reach the penultimate region, you have to cross over the enigmatic thickness of its clouds and the pollution that intensifies the details of the scenery, forcing us to focus how we perceive it differently. A horizon that cancels itself out at the same time that it engenders the need to re-situate itself. It opens up in front of us like an abyss that challenges our doubts and stretches out before our concerns as we explore its territory. A region diffuse by nature, it holds surprises that attract Gerardo's gaze and, through it is shot a creative sensibility whose culmination prefers to disappear among the subtle vibrations dissipated in the dynamism, the passion, and eloquence that emerges from the oeuvre. We are participants in the coming of the moment; the camera opens up a world whose heart looks, and its eyes reflect the awakening of the entire universe:

The proposal points to revealing a city that has become a space trying to contain something uncontainable, growing in all directions, and that, when it touches any one of the four points of the compass, cancels its unfolding. And that is when the up or the down of Mexico City are spaces that can be colonized and turn into the penultimate region.

Through photography, Gerardo Suter excavates the urban landscape from perspectives that the new arrangement of the streets facilitates; he flies over its heights to diagram its scenarios, gaps, and horizons with an invisible grid. He brings the far-off close and distances what is near to discern their connections, their points of contact, or their intervals. Each of these scales is named by the author, and that is how they revive the complexity of meanings that their austere presence

acquires over multiple uses. Any attempt at definition or normativity flounders because of the unforeseen nature of the manifestations of its space. In the eyes of the artist, the megalopolis becomes a miniature without mutilating its qualities; it sleeps, it becomes huge, and it awakens blurred. Its dreams are restored going through the sieve of the sensations they spark.

Attentive to the reply, Suter knows that the outcome of a cataclysm cannot be foreseen. Its impact forces reconstructions, all charged with subjectivity. With his ability to strike the right note, dawn breaks over the region with a shuddering sun. His promenades are dialogues, relationships, frictions, social breaks that dig up unresolved conflicts and cracks, which will heal over who knows when. The scaffolding and towers, antennas, cables, and structures invade every di-

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rection and trace abstractions and geometries that from the rooftops cut a piece out of the sky. Bursts of lines shoot captivating ambiguities that glide without sails in the panorama with echoes and reflections that unravel the weave of the illuminating gaze.

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*Scenario*, 270 x 360 cm, 2008 (inkjet).

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*Refoundation series, 145 x 185 cm, 2010 (inkjet on paper).*

The penultimate region promises nothing; it only respects the eclipse of the gaze, the blind shot that magnetizes the frame. Suter's images appropriate reality to extract its essence and its paradoxes.

To the extent that the recognition of images advances, we are invaded by a feeling of witnessing a profound immersion that avoids the interferences of anecdote or pretext. The superposition of still and cinematic images, sediments of sound and of stimuli spread like the raging fog that makes an object of the repeated shot, invites us to peek into this new reality engendered by photography:

It should be said that the relationship between conceptual and formal development in each of my projects is fundamental. Defining a theme like an urban landscape of Mexico City, and pro-

blematising with it both the image-document binomial and its location in the architectural space allows me to open up two parallel paths for reflection that join with the artistic or aesthetic result. There is, then, a triple interest that envelops the project: the focus and aesthetic solution adopted for its production, and finally, the reflection about the language used for its representation in the specific space it occupies when it is exhibited.

Careful in selecting formats, textures, and the different supports that make up the photographic language of his images, Suter experiments with resources, and plays and tests

the descent into the charged vacuums created by uncertainty. The penultimate region promises nothing; it only respects the eclipse of the gaze, the blind shot that magnetizes the frame. Suter's images appropriate reality to extract its essence and its paradoxes. Like a latent consistency, an evanescent density that shelters itself in the enigmatic penumbra, indiscernible because it is, paradoxically, a petrified instant of a reality charged with the emotions that capturing it brought out, the penultimate region evaporates before the light and takes refuge in shadow. The shot seems to be an un-agreed-upon date in which what is surprising is the familiarity and fresh

way the landscape invades us through the windows Gerardo Suter opens.

The sensations caused by his atmospheres, in which presences throb and the tracks of intangible human dreams whisper, burst from the clearings that our approach announces. They hint at the juxtaposition of their distribution, and their glazes unhinge any predetermined logic. The penultimate region, like the lake that lies beneath it, does not cleave to any form, any color; it is a space where under these sublimated glazes, history is thoroughly analyzed, its vestiges steal a look to attend to the excitements of memory and the imagination;

In his constantly transfiguring landscapes,  
glances are exchanged, sheens like mirages, reciprocal questions,  
indescribable doubts and rumors that palpitate or oscillate just  
like fireflies illuminating their own movement.



*Refoundation series, 120 x 120, 2009 (inkjet on paper with acrylic protection).*



*Downtown, 240 x 80, 2009 (video photograms).*

The penultimate region is the architecture of a process of the destruction-construction-deconstruction of a space that can be turned into a discursive resource in the field of poetry.

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*Spacelapse series, 115 x 295, 2009 (inkjet on paper with polycarbonate protection).*

layers begin to appear while others dissolve. On the surface, the photograph recovers the emotional breath that was exhaled at the moment it was taken. The breath of life, like a flash, impregnates the fog that says everything and hides nothing. The velocity convened in this meeting encapsulates time and freezes its advance. And that becomes a tangible document that vindicates its visibility and demands a dynamic vision. The penultimate region is the architecture of a process of the destruction-construction-deconstruction of a space that can be turned into a discursive resource in the field of poetry. A scaffolding of sequences and articulations that trace the ambiguity of this region that always presents itself as a promise.

A space catalyzed by a sensation of progressive expansion that intimidates our expectations and our aspirations. A place from where one always aspires to reach the ultimate region, where the denseness of the gaps envelops all the questions suggested in the transit of the will to the next goal. Incorpor-

poreal figures barely sketched by the haze that blurs everything, the facades of these buildings inscribe the passage of time and the light in the infinite. They awaken from the darkness, hiding the complexity of the confrontation of what remains and what retreats. The past revives and the future announces itself from their reminiscences. The public space absorbed in itself in this landscape multiplies its functions in the planes of this architecture of thought-cum-image. It is a mirror where the gaze cancels any similarity to appreciate the transmigrations and the incessant confluences that weave this epiphany. **MM**

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> All quotes are from Gerardo Suter, "Palimpsesto," *Essais, chroniques et Témoignages*. *Artelogie* no. 2, 2012.