

Signs of the times

Estrada Viva – Liga contra o Trauma feels a strong sense of empathy with this collection of Valter Vinagre's photographs. The photographs depict what we too are all about. Maybe that is the nature of photography as a language: we appropriate it, for better or worse, using all energy to make it ours. Isn't this what happens with all art forms? We hope the book's readers feel it too.

This book belongs to anyone who has suffered a loss, purely in that it is a book, a dying medium in an age where 'media worthy' means 'hyper transitory'. There's an apparent irony at play here, too. Although books are objects that speak and photographs are images that represent, this volume of photographs deals with the intangible. It articulates two invisible - and unsay able - aspects of our age: loss and road traffic casualties.

In an epoch in which out of sight means out of mind, no one disappears from the collective memory as quickly as the inconvenient dead. This adjective is applied deliberately, in that those who mourn their losses are also 'inconvenient', their grief is somehow embarrassing. They're 'losers', and nobody likes losers.

No victim is as inconvenient as the one who perishes in a civil war which no one is interested in recognising. Proof needed? The mere fact that even today there is no national monument erected to the victims of the civil war which rages on our roads.

Therein lies this book's importance, both as a register of pain and also of resistance. Resistance to forgetting. Resistance to the years of unheeding violence by the State and other institutions. This is the reason why *Estrada Viva – Liga contra o Trauma* has been campaigning for a Day of Remembrance to be celebrated annually in Portugal. We continued to demand that a monument - a memorial - be built so Portugal can acknowledge and remember every single person who has lost his or her life on Portuguese roads.

Why do this? Humankind has tried to preserve memory since time immemorial. Preserving memory is not only safeguarding the past, it is also acting in the present and trying to influence the shape of the future. In this case, of lives taken from one moment to the next, it acts as an opening salvo.

To say that we will not forget is to say: memory is the key to the future.