



# Final Analysis

**Roger Hicks considers...**

'The Raising of Lazarus', by Raymond Martinez

Portfolio reviews are among the many attractions of the annual *Rencontres Photographiques* (Photographic Meetings) that take place in July in Arles. Some are free, sponsored by various manufacturers – the first I ever did were on the Leica stand. Others are paid for. You can go to as many as you can find the time, the inclination and, sometimes, the money to attend. You take your portfolio along, and for 10-30 minutes you get advice, mostly on how to structure and present the portfolio itself, possibly a critique of the pictures and, with any luck, some advice on self-promotion.

In 2017 my wife Frances and I did some reviews for *Voies Off*, which bears a similar relationship to the *Rencontres* as the Fringe does to the Edinburgh Festival: rather bigger than the festival itself, and at least as important, albeit in a different way.

## Traces of Life

In any organisation that relies heavily on volunteers and enthusiasts, there will obviously be the occasional breakdown of communications, timings, and so on. Thus it was that we found ourselves with a slot unfilled. Raymond Martinez, the author of this picture, lives in Arles and was talking to some friends at *Voies Off*. Slightly diffidently, he wondered if he might take over the vacant slot. We were more than happy. When we had seen this series, called *Traces de Vie* (Traces of Life), we were even happier.



First, we liked the pictures immediately, without any explanation. This is always a good start. Second, the premise is absurdly easy to grasp: imprints of faces, hands and sometimes whole bodies in sand. Compared with some of the tendentious and over-complicated stuff you see at Arles, this was refreshing. Third, the idea was thoroughly realised. It wasn't an attempt at an idea, a preliminary try-out: he had thought it through and made it work. Fourth, there was plenty of food for thought.

The series was conceived as paying homage to the Medusa, whose very glance turns people to stone. But sand is another

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way of looking at stone – a very evanescent way. This particular picture is *Léveil des Lazare*, the awakening or raising of Lazarus (Gospel of John 11:1 to 11:44) – except that 'des Lazare' suggests a plural, so Martinez mixes Greek mythology with the Gospels.

## Magical work

Fifth, Martinez didn't like the idea of conventional titles, so he invented his own pictograms to accompany the pictures. Then, at the end of

the portfolio, he wrote 'translations' of them. This sounds pretentious, but it isn't – it's magical. Visit his website at [www.raymoonphoto.com](http://www.raymoonphoto.com) and you will see.

Sixth, he gets his pictures in front of people: not just with the portfolio review, but also by getting out and meeting fellow photographers. Along with his website and representation in London by Millennium Images – visit their website at [www.millim.com](http://www.millim.com).

Roger Hicks has been writing about photography since 1981 and has published more than three dozen books on the subject, many in partnership with his wife Frances Schultz (visit his new website at [www.rogerandfrances.eu](http://www.rogerandfrances.eu)). Every week in this column Roger deconstructs a classic or contemporary photograph. Next week he considers an image by Christian Mader.