

Lisa Gipton: Pour l'amour (Paris)

By Robert Nelson
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Digital technology explores the limitations of the chemical trace of light.

It's amusing to watch the birds in a city square, maybe over coffee when, as a tourist, you have time to contemplate the marvel of natural flight in a dense metropolis. My eye was drawn to the birds in a photograph by Lisa Gipton called *The Night the Moon Had Come*.

It shows the open place by the Pont Marie. It's getting dark and we're looking upwards: the buildings recede to the horizon and you can sense the stillness of dusk, suddenly interrupted by the hectic excitement of flapping wings. The birds take off.

I can tell by the pigeon closest to me that it's flying somewhat towards me, because I can distinguish the tail feathers from the head in the roughly cruciform shape. The next bird you can interpret similarly, even though you can't exactly see which end is which. But the third and fourth and fifth pigeons, being further from the lens, are inscrutable: they dissolve into an arabesque and then a blur, a lyrical abstract intervention in the evening light.

Photography tends to do this at some point: it captures movement and detail to a degree that reveals a kind of failure, where you realise that the capture of sight cannot be sustained and the motif breaks up.

In Gipton's exhibition, the photographs are especially grainy and colourful owing to the technique. They begin as polaroids, which were then scanned to produce the digital prints on display. So the digital technology explores the limitations of the chemical trace of light.

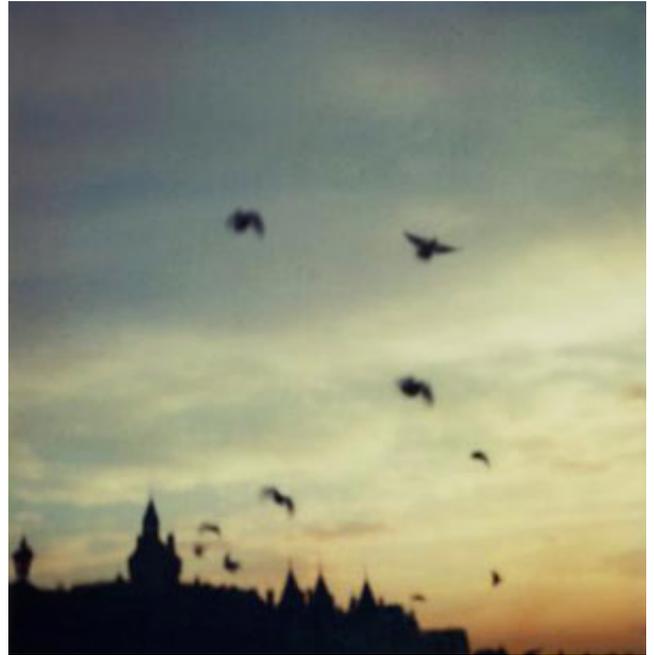
Gipton's images show a somewhat wintry unpopulated Paris around the Hotel de Ville, with perspectives observed by generations of painters and photographers; but you sense that the classical city may be wearing new scars. For example, the work with the somewhat sickly title *A Lifetime Lived in One Brief Summer Night* shows the Seine at the point where Diana, Dodi and driver crashed in the tunnel.

The grain of the photographs doesn't make the images remote, but strangely warm. This is typified by the flock of birds retaining their energetic integrity despite dissolving into the blurry ether.

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Lisa Gipton's *The Night the Moon Had Come* (detail).