We cannot ask for the suppression of images using an image… or can we?

By Jorge Luis Marzo.

A few years ago, I took notice of an intriguing image I had found in an Argentinian newspaper from 1939[1]. It concerned the advertisement of a manufacturer of radio receivers illustrated with a high-mountain landscape, above which had been printed the phrase: "Suppress the images." So, I invited the reader to share information that might elucidate the case. Andrés Galeano has answered the call, without knowing it.

"What are those images that negate the presence of the image?", he asks us. We cannot ask for the suppression of images using an image…or can we? Language is the fountain of hypocrisy from which our contradictions drink, so why couldn't that be possible? Umberto Eco made a good demonstration of the possibilities of language to be tortious, to be an inverse mirror of itself, like the word "images" that appears in the advertisement also reflected, inverted upon the waters of the lake.

Could we speak of a metaphor? Metaphor, from the Greek *metapherein*: to carry beyond, outside. This is, a rhetorical figure of speech that insinuates one thing expressing another. Or of metonymy, that designates one thing with the name of another, with which it is associated by logical contiguity? I don't know, it doesn't seem to me that the fog dissipates.

Let's look for a moment at these images:

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[1] J.L. Marzo, "Supprimez les images". In Joan Fontcuberta, *Camouflages*, Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Paris, 2014.

They are photographs that today we call *stock*, simple and embellished representations specific to sold stereotypes. They are accustomed to accompanying articles, illustrating advertisements, or serving as abstract backdrops, like elevator music. They say nothing because they say everything. They don't inform, because they are nothing, they are simple non-events in search of a buyer, a contract, behaving as small fish that go changing sharks. They are images without guarantees, spectres without image captions, that make everything so transparent. They let us see nothing. They are some of the images of capitalism, non-events that capitalise things.

The image that announces the absence of image functions in the same way. The thing is subtracted from the image and, in this case, it turns into information, into a graphic icon. They are also images that phagocytose others, adapting themselves, capitalizing the original identity in order to adopt a technical identity, whose principal value is its productive utterance, its informative capacity to show nothingness, to demonstrate the iconographic obsolescence of merchandise: icons of human profiles, emoticons, photographic cameras, Polaroids, dog-eared computer documents, crosses…the images transform into graphics. Here the English language comes to our aid. *Image* and *picture* are not the same. The *image* is an abstract representation, conceptual, while *picture* refers to the image presented or realized on a concrete support, a drawing, a painting, a photogram. The image that announces the absence of image hides the *image* and enthrones the *picture* as productive material of the great archive of the world.

At the same time, in the world of absolute transparency, the life of the image now leaves a trace when it is annihilated, eliminated, subtracted, hidden. It is the ghost of the program itself, that can't help illuminating the the shelf in which the thing now absent was, covering it it with the white sheet. The archive, that has become map, turns the hollow into a datum beyond its repertory. Pure Modern Economy, where smoke is registered and sold. It is an imprint in the form of an image that announces its absence at the time it is presented dressed as another and without wishing to deceive. Pure Modern Theatre, where the characters play their non-roles in the garb of other characters. Borges spoke of a map so exact to reality that it ends up substituting it, showing the world in the form of ruins. *Voilà*!