

Une Mer Imaginaire

The Companion Piece and its Logic

by Arslohgo



Arslohgo. „Une Mer Imaginaire“, digital Transformation. 5940 x 4200 Pixels. CMYK, 300 ppi

Anyone who knows “Un Ciel Imaginaire” enters “Une Mer Imaginaire” with a sharpened eye — and is surprised nonetheless. For the companion piece is not a mirror image. It is a response. And responses that mean what they say do not repeat the question; they shift it.

Both works belong to the project “Motifs nuageux particuliers — Rétrospective Dinard 25,” both are part of the SKY series, and both orbit the same conceptual axis: the transposition of what is and what is imagined. But where “Un Ciel Imaginaire” declared the sea to be sky — the luminous turquoise of the water as projection surface for the sky one wishes for — “Une Mer Imaginaire” reverses the operation. Here it is the sky that

carries the sea. Or more precisely: here it is the sky that is the sea — because the sea is not there, because it is only imagined, because it is imaginary.

A Sky without ground

The image shows sky. Exclusively sky. No horizon to suggest a waterline; no coastline to anchor the eye; no boat, no bird, no scrap of land. Dinard, Brittany, the Atlantic — all of it has vanished behind a sky that claims the entire picture space. Arslough photographs the sky above an imagined sea — which means: he photographs a sky that has no ground. That stands above something that is not there. The sky hovers, figuratively speaking, above an abyss made of imagination.

This vertiginous basic constellation is the image's actual statement. A sky without the sea beneath it is no longer sky in the full sense — just as a lid without a vessel is only a form that has lost its purpose. Arslough does not show the absence of the sea. He shows what remains of the sky when the sea can only be imagined.

Sky as Surface of the Invisible

Where “Un Ciel Imaginaire” performed its inversion through color — the sea's excessively intense blue taking over the role of sky — “Une Mer Imaginaire” works with the weight of the empty. The sky we see is not a triumphant sky. It is a sky that seems aware of its own incompleteness. The Breton cloud dramaturgy — whether dramatically towering or lying in calm layers — is not subject matter but surface. Surface over what is missing.

This thought has a maritime depth that exceeds the merely conceptual. The sea is never neutral in the Western pictorial tradition: it is the other of civilization, the uncontrollable, the border between knowing and not-knowing. To make it imaginary — to think it away and leave only the sky above it standing — is an act of peculiar audacity. For in doing so, one deprives the sky of its greatest resonating space. The sea is absent not only as motif. It is absent as acoustic space, as scent, as the counterpart that gives the sky its depth in the first place.

The Inscribed Claim

Like its companion piece, “Une Mer Imaginaire” carries a text embedded within the image — that constitutive feature of Arslohgo’s lohgorhythmic methodology that treats language not as commentary but as pictorial constituent. The text names the imaginary that the image cannot show, because it is by definition absent. In doing so, it performs a different gesture than the text in “Un Ciel Imaginaire”: there, the writing asserted a sky that stood in the wrong place — it was a lie that was also true. Here, the writing names a sea that does not appear at all. It is a claim without pictorial evidence, a finger pointing at nothing.

This difference is decisive. In “Un Ciel Imaginaire,” the viewer could see what was described — one only had to be willing to read the sea as sky. In “Une mer Imaginaire,” that option is denied. The sea is not misrecognized, not in disguise, not hidden elsewhere. It simply is not there. The text summons something that eludes the image entirely. This is no longer description — it is invocation.

Color Dramaturgy of Excess

The CMYK processing serves a different function here than in the companion piece. Where the earlier work was concerned with the chromatic transfer of one pictorial zone into another — the sea became sky through its color — here the concern is with the internal differentiation of the sky itself. A sky that fills the entire picture space depends on structures within: on the interplay of light and shadow in the clouds, on the gradations from white through gray to the deep dark blue at the edges of the picture field, on the texture that alone generates the depth that the absent sea can no longer supply.

Arslohgo uses the CMYK palette to detach this sky from the documentary. It is not the sky that hung above Dinard — or not only. It is the sky one imagines above a sea that exists only in the mind: overwhelming, infinite, slightly oversaturated in its blue intensity where the light breaks, and weighted in the darker passages with a heaviness that recalls the mass of the missing water.

The Pair and its Asymmetry

What holds this pair of works together is not symmetry but complementarity — and complementarity is asymmetrical, as befits a serious conceptual pairing. “Un Ciel Imaginaire” showed too much sky in the wrong place: the sea blazed like sky, and the actual sky was gray and expressionless. “Une Mer Imaginaire” shows too little: the sea is no longer there at all, and the sky must hold its ground alone. The first work was a case of mistaken identity; the second is a loss.

Together they chart an experience that reaches far beyond photography: the experience that what we see and what we mean do not coincide. That between perception and imagination there is always a gap — and that this gap is not a deficit but a productive space. The space in which imagination does its work.

In the Context of the Sky Series

The SKY series explores its theme across three levels: visual, textual, and sonic. “Une mer Imaginaire” makes clear that this exploration does not end with the description of sky but interrogates its conditions. What is a sky without what lies beneath it? What does it mean to photograph a sky when the thing it arches over can only be imagined? These questions are not rhetorical. They are the work’s operating instructions.

And the sonic level? The absent sea is not a quietly absent thing. Anyone who has stood on the Breton coast knows: the sound of the Atlantic is not merely noise — it is a fundamental frequency of the place. “Une mer Imaginaire” is — among other things — an image that carries in its silence the roar one does not hear, because the sea is not there. The sonic dimension of the series is here a dimension of the missing.

Schluss: Imagination as Pictorial Act

“Une Mer Imaginaire” completes what “Un Ciel Imaginaire” began: the exploration of sky as a place where the real and the imaginary overlap — and sometimes exchange places. Together, these two works form a quiet phenomenology of seeing:

What do we see when we see a sky? What do we add in our minds? What is missing for an image to be complete? Arslough offers no answers. He builds spaces in which these questions become inhabitable.

Medium: Digital Composition