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Brittany, 1940 - date written on a document found more than ten years ago by the artist, after the death of an old aunt, alongside a 1925 Kodak box filled with negatives. It sounds like the beginning of an old black and white film. It's a family story, marked by lies and things left unsaid, with a quisling grandfather as the main character.

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First World War: the grandfather enters the minor seminary and turns to religion - his mind filled with a strict, counter-revolutionary morality. Between the wars: he sympathizes with the Breton far right movement, his mind intoxicated by fascist ideology. 1940: he peddles wine to the Nazis and becomes an official supplier for the Feldkommandantur of Morbihan. This marks the end of the seminary and the beginning of collaboration with the enemy. A fiction has been created from a reality discovered years later, that of a man Erwan Venn never knew. The artist takes the old negatives from the Kodak box, and with them the buried memories of this same grandfather, of his relatives, his pleasures, his daily life: loving, playing, believing, travelling; things that are, all in all, quite typical of family albums that we love to rediscover. From these originals, he keeps everything but the essential element of the portrait: erasing the bodies and faces, as if to perforate the image and reveal the secret of that collaboration. Not a look nor a word to express oneself, the development of extreme ideologies has deprived this period of thought and personality: *Headless*.



21.10

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24.10

Booth A30

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11.11

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14.11

Booth B24

Erasing the faces and bodies from the archive images reveals, more generally, the process of indoctrination that suppresses all forms of difference and singularity. It is also, on the artist's part, a violent and vindictive gesture, an act of rejection of a legacy he refuses, without forgiving it.

Erwan Venn's retouching is like brownish stains that remain on old white shirts. These stains are so pervasive and aggressive that they end up eating away at the fabric and boring a hole through it. A pair of shoes, some swimsuits, a wedding dress, a cross, or a porcelain doll remain. The doll is the only face left in these photographs. Its eyes do not lie - perhaps that is why they are still there - they have nothing to hide, nothing to report either, as if everything had already been said.

The rest becomes ghostly, non-existent.

The artist may have erased part of his archives; these images nevertheless make it possible to fill in a "memory hole", to dig beyond a family archaeology, a passage through a national and collective History that is still punctuated by the unsaid. Erwan Venn's headless and bodiless characters are the ghosts of a collective memory that is still too often fading.

From the same archives, Erwan Venn draws portraits of children with troubled, sometimes lost, almost aggressive eyes: *Petits Bretons*. These strange, white eyes, with their small, floating pupils in a void left by the iris, directly echo the *Village of the Damned* and the frightening, chilling atmosphere that prevails there.