

Suspensions

Martina Cavallarin

The essence of the image lies in its being completely external, bereft of intimacy, and yet more inaccessible and mysterious than the intimacy of thought itself. Its meaning is embedded yet at the same time explicit.

Maurice Blanchot

The works of Claudia Peill constitute a constantly changing journey into the notion of identity. Memories of the classic figure, the plastic pose become the antithesis of the creativity of her linguistic process. The world, as it is photographed in the first phase, turns into poetry at the end of the creative process.

We have repressed the real world, and so what world is left to us? The world of appearances? Not at all. Together with the real world, we have simultaneously repressed the world of appearances.

Friedrich Nietzsche

The silent appearance of Peill's photography turns into a scream when the work reaches its final form. But the research stage starts long before. The importance of the shot is the foundation stage of her work.

In *Caduta Libera* the artist photographs Olympic divers in their athletic stance, in the plasticity of their posing, in the effort to slow down their

fall. Or perhaps they are simply bodies in the balance, suspended between their being both victims and creatures of the sky. Then Peill takes her material into the darkroom to reconstruct her mental image. She tears it apart, shifts it about, puts it back together. From a technical point of view this is photography, but this approach is more that of a delicate modular pictorial process. She is dismembering the identity of the figure only to (re-)present it under a new guise. The divers lend themselves to the lens, and this is where the behaviour of the artist comes in as she attempts to catalyse a process of self-liberation by personifying anguish and other states of mind. Peill makes up for the athletic gesture by invoking the creativity of her artistic skill. The result is a sense of disorientation given by ambiguity of the rise and fall. Peill reorders and re-scatters the figures, and then re-photographs them along with a little manual intervention using a pencil.

The sequence is ritualistic: the shot, the darkroom, the breaking up of the image, the graphic touches, the installation. Moving the photos means cheating reality until the very meaning becomes something else. Thus the attention is shifted. Distorted by countless interventions, the figure becomes both the summary and the multiplication of itself. The

image turns the photographic language on its head, depriving it of its analytic nature, that of the investigation of reality, only to turn into a more thorough, lateral investigation of reality itself.

The compositional virtue in the open space of the work involves dividing and breaking up together with an element of reticence, of holding back, of denial. The images never turn into a more thorough form of investigation. The image never appears as a whole, but it unfolds like a film sequence, acquiring by contraction all that which is lost in the unfolding.

Peill kills bodies in order to set them free. The sea of technology which lies behind the scenes of the darkroom leads to a loss of image quality compared to the original shot. The works are not left to stagnate on the surface of some electronic signal.

Photography endlessly reproduces that which takes place only once: it mechanically reproduces that which will never again be repeated existentially.
Roland Barthes

Peill takes a step forward. She reproduces the existential stages. Each work plays on the doubled, tripled, quadrupled figure. Its anatomy

is the fruit of a new invention.

Transparent resin and powder colours constitute the next stage. Blue, purple, pink, ochre, black and white, green. Each work has a dominant colour which underlines a psychological approach, a mental state. From the strict black and white which once characterised her work, Peill has adopted greater colour freedom.

Every single panel is then trapped inside square or rectangular frames of matt grey metal. From the lightness of the bodies to the weight of the installation, almost as if the ephemeral, transitory figures needed concrete support so as not to disappear or escape. Chromatic liveliness clashes with the splitting up of the image and its stern setting, providing an ongoing source of tension.

Suspension, precarious balance, position. Is this rise or fall? Hanging in the air allows you to control both body and mind. The awareness of precariousness, the hybrid state, the efforts made put you in a temporary role in which you are pushed downwards in order to be held upwards. The natural way finds new solutions.

Caduta Libera stems from a reflection on the spectacular yet devastating images of 11th

September, where the fall and the impact caused destruction and death. The brutal reality of bodies falling through space, captured by the sterile eye of a video camera. Their cry is unbearable yet silent. The fall does not correspond only to a physical phenomenon: the devastation is mental.

The body plummets while the mind rises. There are no words left to say; the anguish is lessened only by a state of calm, 'tween earth and sky. The event follows no logical thread: there is no aim, no need. It is a form of reasonlessness which cannot be questioned.

The anamorphosis of thought as set out by the image. Through the form, indeed, in the very heart of the form this anamorphosis is carried out, the disappearance of the object, of its contents and its sense.

Jean Baudrillard

Isolation, emptiness and silence are the founding stones of Peill's works. She plays on the notions of transparency, simulation and division.

As Charles Baudelaire wrote: *The dual nature of art is a tragic consequence of the dual nature of man.*