

Hendrik employed all his iconographic knowledge in decorating his Roman house/museum. He filled his atelier with sculptures inspired by the world of Humanism, and there, a natural extrovert, he received Italian and foreign callers, always happy to converse and to make acquaintances and friendships among the vast mass of humanity, which he portrayed and described in his sculptures, paintings and photographs. He was defender and champion of [the idea

of] a global city in which the entire world would communicate, a centre in which knowledge would be exchanged and intellectual inspiration found.

The Museum today, as it was then, is a place in which the stylistic symbiosis of the exhibition spaces allows contemporary art to express itself in open “conversations”, forming, in images, a palimpsest of testaments from the most varied of sources.

Beneath the Traces

Maria Giuseppina Di Monte

“Intersezioni” [Intersections] is the result of a collaboration between two artists, Claudia Peill and Kaisu Koivisto, whose professional relationship and personal friendship dates back to 1997, the year in which they exhibited together at the Loggia del Temanza in Venice.

That experience was then replicated with their exhibition at the Museo Laboratorio di Arte Contemporanea at Rome’s Sapienza University and the Uusikuva Art Gallery in Kotka, Finland.

Since then the work of both artists has changed in more ways than one, nonetheless remaining fundamentally true to the premisses from which both began, reflecting an authenticity and integrity that does art much good because it does not stoop to the fashionable aspirations typical of so many contemporary projects.

Claudia Peill and Kaisu Koivisto’s work is very different: a diversity that is no obstacle to – but if anything renders all the more productive – the debate at the heart of the approach they have chosen in responding to a location as rich in history and charm as the Museo Hendrik Andersen.

Each starting with assumptions and premisses equi-

distant from the Norwegian artist’s unique poetry, Peill and Koivisto have rendered the museum a vital and communicative space, developing a relationship with it that they have translated into a form of narrative, which stretches out through the various rooms creating an atmosphere (in Peill’s case more mysterious, and for Koivisto more provocative) that emanates not so much from single pieces of well-displayed “excellence” as from the counterpoint of voices or “notes” making up the score: at times head-to-head in conversation/argument, at times each claiming for themselves the physical space they need to tell a particular piece of the story.

Kaisu Koivisto has said very clearly that the key to her dialogue with the museum is a discourse on “material, materiality, utopia and megalomania”¹. In the footsteps of Hendrik Anderson, Koivisto appropriates this space – this museum-home which is so distinctive both architectonically and in its decoration – identifying the Norwegian artist’s most unique characteristics and bringing them to our attention via an insistent “conversation” that aims to stimulate the visitor’s interest with questions that seem now more relevant than ever because they stir us from the tor-

¹ K. Koivisto, from a letter sent to the curators M. Amatore and M.G. Di Monte, presenting her plans for the exhibition, October 2012

por that has dogged the last decade, lived without passion or ideals and without great feats or dreams. “While Claudia Peill and I were drawing up our plans for the exhibition”, says Kaisu, “we studied Hendrik Anderson’s works and analysed his projects and ideas. His utopian projects were all summarized in his plan for a ‘A World Centre of Communciation’”.² With these suggestions as her starting point Kaisu introduced a theme she holds dear, connected with a particular early twentieth-century utopia: Soviet communism. A utopia significantly related to the evolution of art in its modern sense and to the dramatic emergence of the avant-gardes who fought so tenaciously to affirm the ideals that the October Revolution seemed, at first, to have made concrete.

First Expressionism and then Bauhaus laid the foundations for a radical renewal of art and for the diffusion of the values of democracy and social equality which would later become a dead letter in the political reality of the former Soviet Union.

The polemical slant of Koivisto’s arguments fits, knowingly, into the utopian discourse of which Andersen made himself prophet and proselytizer. With her photographs she renders visible the miseries of war, which are physically present in the form of “relics”: bombs dropped during the Second World War. These war relics now dot and scar the parks of Liepaja in Latvia, their disquieting laconicism speaking of a past that is both distant and very near, its traces, incorporated into the panorama we have before us, live alongside us, perhaps even unbeknown to us because, “we live with ghosts and this coexistence in the everyday is the very possibility of encounters”.³

This theme of *traces* is one of the leitmotifs of Kaisu’s work. The defence of the environment and its inhabitants – be they men, animals or plants – has always concerned her: she sees it as a question of fundamental importance. Man’s relationship with nature is effectively an issue that cannot be avoided, the starting point for investigating one of art’s central themes: the controversial relationship between nature and nurture which is now more than ever of burning, crucial relevance.

Addressed by countless armies of artists who have thrown themselves into dissecting and reanalyzing it using various degrees of metaphor and symbolism, this theme has been the premiss around which many of the great artists of the recent and more distant past have woven their work. Here it seems natural to mention perhaps the most representative of them all: Titian, the great Venetian who made the dichotomy “nature/nurture” a mainstay of his work. Interpreting with great profundity man’s ambiguous relationship with the world, his works reveal how far this dichotomy is from having been resolved and how it continues to affect the relationship we have with our surroundings.

For Titian this relationship is exemplified in the “destruction” of a delicate balance, then restored with the death inflicted on Marsyas, in his tragic handling of the theme in the celebrated *Flaying of Marsyas* (National Museum, Kroměříž). Here Titian famously assigns to his protagonists the role of representing the two parts: “Marsyas had the seven-reed pipe, the instrument of Pan, the emblem of natural harmony. Hanged head-down and flayed, he represents the inversion of the natural cycle, the end of the natural primitivism of Saturn and Dionysus, the beginning of the historical civilization of Jove and Apollo”.⁴

This antithesis, or perhaps more correctly, this scission of man/world, nature/nurture is the terrain across which Koivisto moves, drawing into focus the ways in which these antonyms interact and intersect, constantly in tension, with sometimes fatal results.

Hovering near the viewer, at the centre of the first room of the exhibition Kaisu has positioned a huge polar bear (fig. 30), jaws splayed open, teeth and tongue clearly visible. But all that really remains of the bear is the outer “shell”, a white fleece stretched out over a frame of wood and metal so that it can be studied at head height. Entitled *Ghost* (2009), this sculpture/installation is the incarnation of animality reduced to pure façade. No fearsome pride, no power, no threat is any longer expressed by this ragged trophy. The bear is now simply a rug on which to walk, to be flaunted as a symbol of the all-powerful

² *Ibid.*, cf. Kaivu Kovisto’s letter

³ T. Elfving, “Ghosts of Yesterday and Tomorrow”, in *Kaisu Kovisto Loud Silence*, the catalogue accompanying the exhibition of the same name at Aboa Vetus&Ars Nova Museum, Turku; South Karelia Art Museum, Lappeenranta and the Kuntsi Museum of Modern Art, Vaasa, 2012-2013, Aboa Vetus&Ars Nova, The Matti Koivurinta Foundation, Turku 2012, p.58.

⁴ A. Gentili, “Apollo e Marsia”, in *Da Tiziano a Tiziano. Mito e allegoria nella cultura veneziana del Cinquecento*, Bulzoni, Rome, 1988, p.240 cf. also M.G. Di Monte “Pathos ed empatia nell’ultimo Tiziano” in *Il dolore*, Sensibilia 4, eds. G. Galloni and M. Rotili, Mimesis, Milan, 2010, pp. 117-129

strength of man, capable even of subduing and of reducing to a simulacrum one of the most ferocious beasts on the planet. This is one of the subjects most frequently explored by Kaisu Koivisto, the presentation of animals that have been flayed until all that rests of them is the skin, the inert outer shell, the body emptied of its substance and therefore of life. The artist has re-proposed it in several versions some of which seem quite different, as for example in the case of the "triptych" formed of the covers of three faux-leather armchairs hung on a wall: *Skinned* (1999), which does not form part of the current exhibition but is of interest because it highlights the same dilemma more dramatically described in the presentation of the pathetically lifeless bear so ostentatiously offered up for us to gaze on.

Kaisu has "skinned" the armchairs' faux-leather upholstery, sewn it back together and hung it on the wall in a reference to the fact that the chairs are the product of a manufacturing industry which elaborates organic materials, the raw materials that serve to make the furnishings we use without ever asking ourselves how they have been produced. Kaisu Koivisto also reflects on the theme of the outer skin/shell in *Cows in New York City: Reintroducing the Species* (2000, figs. 9-11, 77), the series she created in the East Village. Here she laid her "fake cowhides" near factory buildings and chimney stacks. They are still "skins" but this time the material adopted is not real cowhide but old plaid blankets shaped to resemble a cow's body, as though the blanket were a hide. The animal's body is no longer there: in its place a shape that recalls its gutting, an operation of which this becomes, alternatively, sign, icon or symbol.

In the exhibition catalogue⁵ Kaisu Koivisto recounts how and why she chose to create this installation and to photograph it. The aim was to restore the "*genius loci*" – once agricultural and rural – that in New York has been erased and replaced by urbanization and industrialization.

Kaisu describes the animal condition with sharp lucidity and at times with a streak of nostalgia and sadness, particularly in her sculpture/objects like *Puppy*

106 (fig. 38), 2012, where a defenceless little animal, which looks much like a little dog, stares at the viewer, its fur immaculate, its iridescent glass eyes communicating disorientation, impotence and resignation. Nature, as Taru Elfving⁶ observes, has been reduced to a packaged image destined for consumption. Animals, the living beings closest to man, are no longer merely "inferior" but are now also abused: this is why Kaisu uses horn, teeth, skins and other organic materials. Her intention is to unmask man's shameless cruelty and to brandish before us the surrogate of what was once a "life". Her operations with and manipulations of animal skins aim to debunk the myth that man can and should dominate the world.

Kaisu Koivisto's works are not aesthetically "beautiful", nor do they strive to be so. Often they are kitsch, but not in the normal sense of the word, because in Kaisu's case one cannot talk of a project or a piece being unsuccessful; on the contrary, she achieves her objectives perfectly. She irritates us. She irks and riles us because she faces us with ourselves, with the progress and degeneration of our civilization. Her objects, far from being "indifferent", are disturbing and depressing because, in direct and graphic terms, they reveal the abjectness of our way of life.

In *Ideology and Utopia*, a series on which the artist began work in 2010, Kaisu photographed murals (fig. 13) discovered in Soviet military bases in the Baltic states. The Finnish artist's photographs immortalize murals representing tanks and fighter planes in order to convey a message that is simultaneously a *memento* and a warning. She focuses our attention on the dark years of the Cold War, whose spectres and ghosts could, in an instant, rematerialize.

The series of bombs (*Bombé*) photographed in Liepāja, Latvia, in 2011 (figs. 23-26) are as innocuous as they are worrying. The brilliant colours in which they have been painted, in order to be recycled as rubbish bins, suggest their new use without, however, concealing their original purpose as weapons of mass destruction. Past and present converge and blend: the not-so-distant past survives as vestiges and fragments. It is thanks to this very interest in traces and frag-

⁵ K. Koivisto, "At the Ruins of the Cold War", in *Kaisu Koivisto Loud Silence*, op. cit., p.44

⁶ T. Elfving, "Unnatural and Inhuman Touch", in *Kaisu Koivisto Loud Silence*, op. cit., p.48

ments that the works of Kaisu Koivisto and Claudia Peill complement one another and interact, albeit in materials that are quite diverse and hard to compare. In *Flood* (fig. 29), 2013, an installation conceived specifically for this exhibition, Kaisu has used old leather jackets, retrieved from recycling bins or bought in thrift stores and then sewn together to form a carpet covering the entire room. Given that these are garments imported from various places around the world, here and there labels surface indicating their country of origin: "made in Italy, Finland, USA...", - a result of modern-day globalization which, regardless of where a thing is made, guarantees that the product will be available worldwide.

Transformation and travel are fundamental themes for both Koivisto and Peill, and the two artists continue to circle these subjects, employing increasingly symbolic and subtle language, but one that remains closely related to the ideas with which they began.

Kaisu had already addressed the theme of travel and globalization in 2001 with *Model Airplane* (fig. 12) where, utilizing a model plane, she broke off one of its wings and replaced it with an elk's horn. An anomalous and dysfunctional object that incorporates and metaphorically integrates diverse levels of meaning. The airplane is modern man's means of transport: capable of connecting people and places thousands of miles apart, it is a product of a technological sophistication that conquers space and time, altering lifestyles, natural cycles and relationships. Nature grafts itself onto this process, forcing its way in to destroy the artificial equilibrium that has been achieved at the cost of so much violence and destruction.

The question comes naturally: has technological progress really done us so much harm? We are not convinced that Koivisto feels so, but we do believe that her message, without demonizing the achievements of science and technology, aims to bring us face-to-face with the problem and to encourage us to reconsider our relationship with the natural world. So, in what sense can art favour this process? Art should consider forming an alliance with technology, "in a completely different zone, one in which po-

etic invention is clearly reliant on the ethical/political aspects of the making of art".⁷ That means to say not that art should put itself at the service of politics, but that the relationship between art and technology can, nowadays, be of vital importance particularly in ethical and political terms.

Claudia Peill works with photography but in a completely different way from Kaisu whose inspiration, whilst not necessarily "documentary", begins with the desire to describe a situation objectively, to denounce and publicize it - as is demonstrated by the *Bombé* series and the other photographs of which we have already spoken.

Instead Peill's use of the photographic medium begins with an entirely different principle, tending to conceal rather than reveal the "contents" of the photograph, and then gradually unveil the objects via a clever exploration of details. Her approach is different not only on a technical level but also philosophically.

Claudia Peill's early work concentrated on the issue of types of identity, a line of research that led her to investigate the body, parts of the body and faces. More often than not these belonged to strangers, people she had seen walking past on the street, passing by and then gone. By that point, however, her camera lens had already immortalized them, fixed them once and for all in a way that can never be repeated. Without a doubt, as Roland Barthes has observed, photography reproduces an infinite number of times that which has only happened once, "... it mechanically repeats that which can never be repeated existentially. In [the photograph] the event," Barthes says, "never goes on to become something else ...".⁸ Yet Claudia Peill's photographs are archetypal examples of the desire to transcend photography, aspiring to move beyond it and become painting. In this way they trespass on a terrain that is not their own, breaking free of the referent that would keep them bound closely to itself. It has been said, quite rightly, that photography is based on an act of selection, meaning that the photographer chooses what to frame and what to

⁷ P. Montani, "Arte e tecnica: vecchie e nuove forme di dissidio e di alleanza" in *Lo stato dell'arte. L'esperienza estetica nell'era della tecnica*, eds. M. Carboni and P. Montani, Laterza, Rome-Bari 2005, p.17

⁸ R. Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, (R. Howard, Trans.) Hill & Wang, New York 1981. (Original work published 1980)

leave outside the picture, but it is equally true that once it has left the photographer's lens to be re-elaborated and re-manipulated, the picture itself ends up having a more fluid and less direct relationship with the reality that it recalls.

Claudia Peill manipulates the image leaving the photograph as background, like a relic or a vestige to be studied, analysed, understood and interpreted, and therefore, "she clips, blurs, repositions and duplicates the image both on the single sheet and across the entire series..."⁹. In a sense Claudia Peill gainsays photography, rediscovering the unity which it always seems to lack in precisely that most photographic of elements, the *trace*, filled now with new meaning thanks to her technical re-elaborations.

It is no accident that Peill's photos form orderly sequences enclosed in a frame, more often than not metallic, which holds them together, containing and contrasting the multiplicity (the possibility of producing and reproducing photos *ad infinitum*) derived from the fact that photography is a mechanical process and the photographic image therefore a form of document, attesting to a particular act or event that happened in a specific time and place.

The fragment is extrapolated; it is removed from the reality in which it originated and becomes simply an image: an image that does not so much "narrate", in the sense of providing an account or a report, as emerge and impose itself as part of a whole. A detail of a face or a body, a fragment of architecture or of a sculpture, a piece of landscape: they are reinvented or re-presented through a filter, after having been decanted, not because of any particular desire to extract their essence, so much as to reveal, this way, their very existence, an existence that has emotional and sentimental colour.

"Taking photographs", says Pieroni, "forces Claudia Peill to avoid being noticed, leaving her subjects to go about their own lives without posing for her, or against her. So the lens and the shutter capture details, close-up and in black and white, of all manner of distinguishing features"¹⁰. Claudia Peill is not interested in verifying reality through photography but

in freeing photography of its conventional documentary function, reinforcing, instead, its expressive and aesthetic character. In *Giallo limone* (fig. 15) and in *Rosa/Rosae* (fig. 14) as in the sequence *Onde* (figs. 16-18), all 2001, the long series of square, juxtaposed panels emphasize details of faces, tattoos and piercings alternating with monochromes in various colours, all perfectly appropriate, harmonious, elegantly organized. There they hang, on the wall that they punctuate, dividing it into two halves like an architectural frieze. They are clearly traces of a visual story that Peill has captured with her camera lens and then offered back to us, the viewers, with a careful editing that alters the nature of the photograph as such and makes of it something more, something more permanent and solid, despite the evanescence, the filmy layers of colour and the lack of focus.

So then, what are these traces? One possible answer is that given by Dave Hickey speaking of Ellsworth Kelly's photographs, when he said – adopting Charles Sanders Peirce's metaphor – that the American artist began to make images, "that were the *consequence* of seeing the world, just as a footprint is the consequence of walking on snow"¹¹.

This is also true for Peill who observes and portrays physical reality to then reconstruct it as would a writer who, having taken reams of notes, goes home, re-reads them and re-orders them, weaving his plot around them.

It is, on reflection, precisely that: a weave, a sort of fine embroidery, a careful chiseling from which an attractive *mise-en-scene* springs forth. Obviously, as Rosalind Krauss reminds us, whilst one can paint a picture using the imagination, it is not possible to do the same thing with photography which, being the trace left by a photochemical reaction, can only produce a result if the initial connection with the physical subject is maintained.¹² This is true just as it is true that once edited, mounted on a support and manipulated in whatever way required, photographs, as Claudia Peill sees and uses them, cease to be what they were and become something else.

They are like the "emotions recollected in tranquili-

⁹ A. Pieroni, *Kaisu Koivisto Claudia Peill. Pelle, forma, mappa*, Adriano Parise Editore, Verona 2001, p.10

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.14

¹¹ Cf. M. G. Di Monte, *Ellsworth Kelly. La forma è il contenuto*, De Luca, Roma 2010, p.60

¹² R. Krauss, "Marcel Duchamp ou le champ imaginaire" in *Le Photographique*, Editions Macula, Paris 1990, pp.83-85

ty" of which Wordsworth speaks in the *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*, describing the process that from the perception of objects leads the artist to the act of poetic creation.

Between the physical object and the tangible result of its artistic transfiguration there lies an abyss. For the artist the photograph becomes a medium to be exploited in order to generate a "form" and it is, in fact, forms that attract Claudia Peill, be they those of people, of landscapes or of situations. In the series that includes *Attesa*, *Adesso*, *Succede* and *Caduta libera*, all 2004, whilst having begun with shots of athletes diving, in the final images Peill offers us only fragments of their bodies, clipped and blurred, like shadows blooming behind the weight of water. The water itself acts as a zoom dilating the figures and revealing details like a magnifying glass. The divers have vanished and all that remains of them is a trace, almost a photographic negative, as can be seen in *Caduta libera* (figs. 19-20) where details of a foot, of an arm and of a head stand out like dark shadows against the blue background.

Turning our attention to the large installations for the exhibition, in the same room in which Kaisu has situated her polar bear Claudia Peill has constructed a double diptych, held together in a single frame and hung on a purpose-built [angled] wall erected at the back of the room.

These are actually two separate works, each formed of two panels, mounted so that they converge at the point where the wall turns. In this way both works can be seen quite clearly even as one enters the room, which is divided in two by a marble column. Peill has exploited this perspective for *Orizzontale/verticale* [Horizontal/Vertical] formed of two monochrome panels alternating with another representing a metal structure that resembles scaffolding (figs. 43-44). The colour is deep and dense but without becoming tactile, conserving, if anything, transparencies and nuances that recall the myriad layers of Rothko, where a liberating void materializes in the colour's depths.¹³ Most of Peill's works, as the selection made for the Museo Andersen demonstrates, are marked by the

desire to create a bridge connecting both past and present. So among the details evoked in her photographs/paintings we note fragments that refer to iconographies both ancient and modern. Here and there details surface of a necklace which recalls that of Leonardo's "Lady with an Ermine" or the jewels of other noblewomen portrayed wearing clothes and gems of sumptuous refinement: details described with great elegance in the beautiful series *Onde*¹⁴ (figs. 16-18, details).

Ornament, in Peill's work, is not mere decoration, it is not an embellishment empty of significance. On the contrary, here the decorative appears in the original and fundamental sense of the word¹⁵, and is capable of eliciting a profound and lasting reaction in the viewer. In *Onde*, the long sequence of squares establishes a specific relationship with the wall that hosts it so that both art work and environment are transformed, reacting to one another in a fruitful way. It is in this particular sequence that Peill depicts "details" of piercings and tattoos, and the choice is by no means casual. In fact Peill makes no distinction between structure and decoration, or functionality and ornament, ably interpreting the post-modern aesthetic that has rediscovered the tensions inherent in this contrast. "Ornament has no signature and no author, no great master or aura. It is impossible to invent it a mythology, to render folklore the genius and the subject it 'expresses'. It narrates nothing – no feats or marvels, creeds or destinies – beyond itself and its own labyrinthine coils."¹⁶ Claudia Peill attributes to the decorative its original and most authentic meaning, just as the Maori did when, in decorating their faces, they created true works of art. To paint one's face is, in effect, to "create" it, in the sense that in this way it finally emerges, acquiring dignity, social significance and spiritual profundity. The artist's latest works seem to confirm a desire to move away from any authorial choices too strongly permeated with subjectivity, towards a work emptier of individual identity. Here a further liberation takes place with the decision to turn her back on the "subject" and to concentrate on structural elements.

¹³ Cf. M. Butor, "Le moschee di New York o l'arte di Mark Rothko" in "The Mosques of New York, or The Art of Mark Rothko," Richard Howard trans. in *Inventory. Essays* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968) pp. 260-277; originally published in *Revue-Critique* no. 173 (1961)

¹⁴ Cf. M. Smarelli and C. Peill, "Aspettando l'ora di pranzo. Conversazione fra amici", in the catalogue accompanying the exhibition *Messa in onda*, Italianisches Kulturinstitut, Cologne and the Italian Cultural Institute, London, 2002-2003, pp. 8-12.

¹⁵ TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: In English as in Italian, 'beautiful, seemly', from Latin '*decorare*' ('to adorn, embellish, honour'), from '*decus*' ('honour, dignity, glory, grace, decorum, ornament').

¹⁶ M. Carboni, "Silenzio e verità dell'ornamento a partire da 'Il senso dell'ordine'" in *L'arte e i linguaggi della percezione. L'eredità di Sir Ernst H. Gombrich*, eds. R. Boesel, M.G. Di Monte, M. Di Monte and S. Ebert-Schifferer, Electa, Milan 2004, pp. 99-107

¹⁷ O. Paz, "water writes always in *plural", in *Marcel Duchamp: Appearance Stripped*

Bare, New York: Arcade Publishing, 1978. (Originally published in *Marcel Duchamp: A Retrospective Exhibition*, by the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art, New York, ed. Anne d'Harnoncourt and Kynaston McShine, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia 1973)

¹⁸ L. Hegyi, "Nell'intrigo della referenzialità. Appunti sulla pittura di Claudia Peill" in the catalogue accompanying the exhibition *Mario Schifano e Claudia Peill. "La città delle ombre bianche"*, Galleria Anna d'Ascanio, Rome 2006, pp.8-11

Bolts, screws, pieces of scaffolding, these neutral "things" possessing no individual character seem, in fact, to better answer the need for anonymity that was already emerging in her earlier exploration of the poetics of ornament.

In *Chiodo fisso* just as in *Cobalto* and *Contro il cielo*, all 2013 (figs. 48, 54, 57), we are in the presence of objects insignificant in themselves but whose function, far from being redundant or a mere adjunct as it might first seem, is actually essential in the role they take on as "hinge". The metaphorical and allusive significance of these works cannot but remind us of the interpretation suggested by Duchamp, who affirmed that *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass)* was a "hinge-painting". "A hinge picture", says Octavio Paz, "which, as it opens out or folds back, physically and/or mentally, shows us other vistas, other apparitions of the same elusive object."¹⁷ Like the tubes of scaffolding, the screws, the nuts and the bolts are "junctures/joints": they hold things together, they connect things, they slot into place, they are elements capable of creating a form of communication. Metaphor is strongly present in Claudia Peill's work: we have on-

ly to think of the felicitous series "Città delle ombre bianche" [City of White Shadows] (2006) where she created semantically stratified images in which life and history entwine and blur. "The poised fields of colour (seemingly empty) and the fragments of almost hazy poetic images are drawn together and arranged in an architectonic scheme, creating a structure that is both coherent and compact and which seems simultaneously closed and self-referential, expansive and open to external associations."¹⁸ This becomes possible precisely where personal biography is grafted onto the more articulated tissue of cultural tradition, which is what Peill has done in incorporating architectural elements into her images: ancient ruins, columns, the remains of the market or of the forum of the city of Leptis Magna in Libya. Immortalized in the photographs and then represented in evanescent, fluid forms, these ruins emerge like shadows of a glorious past, brought back to life to remind us that yesterday and today, today and tomorrow are all connected, uninterruptedly.