

PAUL ARDENNE.

Richard TRONSON, transformed images.

Painless image X, 2000 : The view of a courtyard in an historical monument's garden. A well in the garden. In front of the well, kneeling, for clothing, only cotton under wear and socks, a woman is on her knees with a plastic bag over her head.

What is she doing there, to which purpose is she here? Impossible to know more.

Interior 1, 2000: Two characters standing, facing a library wall, with their backs turned to the viewers. A single clue: The library does not seem real. (It is in fact a wallpaper imitation of books shelves.)

On the left hand side of the image, a woman half naked in what looks like a perfectly framed and neat composition. The woman has her hands placed on top of a closed piano. On the right hand side of the same image is a man dressed in a medical white overcoat with his hands in his pockets. Neither is looking at the other one, they are invisible strangers to each other. There is no apparent reason why these two beings should meet in this scene where communication is none-existent and where everything seems false. Nothing more is revealed, like Voltaire said "boredom is to explain all."

A Creative mind

Richard Tronson's Muse at first sight leans toward the disturbing, confusing and the bizarre. In fact, the explanation for this presents itself overtly as a sense of "the absent"...As soon as the artist gave up painting in the early 90's , he took up photography and started to produce a large amount of stunning and intriguing images.

His early photographic work titled "Medicalized" 1997 shows superimposed images by transparency. The artist visually worked with medical radiographic images and fragmented pictures of the human body.

Made in the same way, the series titled "Naturalised" 1998 offers to the viewer images of a dissected nature, replacing this time the human body by various samples of nature such as tree barks, straw and sea weed. The same technique was applied for the "sex progress" series as well as his "Incarnation" work both made in 1999. This time shots of the human body were taken and superimposed onto mortuary images as well as mixing images of meat and pornography. The body and the way the body is regarded is the artist main interest. The flesh is identified but

not visually pleasurable it is contaminated and repulsive, somehow shameful.

A well thought aberration.

The “painless” images and the “Indoor” photographic series (2000-2003) are all together a new set of work. This time the artist handles differently his objective, showing new photographs of short scenes, fragments of stories and actions in time.

The main and new input of Richard Tronson’s work would be the realisation of a set and a scene. We can see at least one more often two characters, protagonists in the artist’s stories, scenes.

The artist becomes director and creates theatrical scenes through photography.

The actors of those still images are driven to what seems to be dysfunctional behaviour, lost attitudes with an overwhelming absence, lack of communication. Anachronism, quiet insanity, lack of exchange are the things that seem to qualify Richard Tronson’s work.

In “Interior”14, 2001 the artist presents a man inside a palace, lost in his thoughts, carrying a bottle of champagne and wearing sandals.

The scene depicts luxury, indulgence with boredom and despair.

In “Interior”4, 2000 in a similar way, shows two individuals at the bottom of a staircase and having coffee. The woman has her head hidden under her sweatshirt and the man in front of her, head down is crouched in a ball on top of his chair. Located within social and cultural history these two individuals are behaving abnormally in a very extreme manner.

The characters are somehow trapped in their own feelings unable to reach out for each other.

The constructed background reveals fragments of the past, places and history.

Aesthetically the images are neat and clear where things are “correct” and well presented but the people wandering in those images often break the viewer’s expectations. The characters are shown confused, and inadequate, in anachronism with their environment facing breakdowns or major inner struggles.

The artist raises problems of modern communication when individuals are confronted with a laden past, a loss of identity under the weight of history. How can modern individuals exist and reinvent themselves a world so marked by history? Where is the modern man’s place when surrounded by so many ideas and places of the past. How can he or she be part of the picture, without disrespecting the past and still reaching out for the new?

The artist reveals what he sees as an everyday struggle, the simple act of facing our fears and reaching out for each other when trapped in our

own interior world, the existential dilemma of how to be part of the “whole”, to be in coherence with our surroundings.

Double meaning.

Let's look at those images; all of them embroidered with incomprehension just to verify the fact that they all depict an intense but subtle internal contradiction. Firstly between gestures and attitudes, the photographed protagonists always seem out of reach, detached from ordinary stratospheres and far from the world's stereotypes. We could easily be thinking of an Alien dimension were bizarre beings appear on the edge of insanity. As if sleepwalking the characters are, it seems, taken away from normal behaviour, acting in a dysfunctional manner, forced to be in places they dislike.

That is why the artist often chooses psychiatric units as a background. Another internal contradiction would be from an aesthetic point of view: when the images appear visually perfect, the artist traps the viewer by revealing disturbing and dysfunctional components.

A world created on purpose by the artist to mark the gap between a certain understanding of the world or the given image followed by the incomprehension of a fully revealed image. The chance to show that images prove nothing. What is real in what we see? And is there more to understand than what is shown to us?

Atmosphere.

An other striking aspect of Richard Tronson's photographic compositions is the atmosphere that he creates. The unpredictable and unusual aspects of life, the scenes could almost be coming from dreams.

A disturbing reality where people do not ostensibly possess feelings. Overall the images give of a strong sensation that could be compared to the Freudian idea of “Unheimlichkeit”, a distressing strangeness that can often take control of us when confronted to the true nature of things. Through his photographic work the artist takes the viewer to a brutal journey in a world of incomprehension were his is rapidly sent back to reality.

The idea of a distressing strangeness that Freud develops in his essays on applied psychoanalysis gets its argument from a state of incomprehension. (I do not exactly know what is happening to me), the moving effect (I should like the situation I am in, which is not the case) and also of an overwhelming melancholy (I can not grasp the world even though I thought I had it all figured out). The consciousness delocalisation creates an atmosphere of marginalisation; the characters

are put in a disturbing environment. ("One day on a warm summers afternoon, writes Freud, I was wandering around the unknown and deserted streets of a small Italian town [...] when I suddenly felt strangely worried). Loss of oneself in a place he thought he knew well. Richard Tronson's work could easily be referred as "Unheimlich", a redirected world. The artists photographic work is at the same time familiar and disturbing, the mind can never quite grasp the context in which the pictures are set.

Like "Bataille" explained in his "History of the Eye" when seeing your certitudes scattered around, it is a way to remember that an artistic image is more than a sign; it is an unfinished story, open to endless reconstruction. A world where things are far from being finished.