

Incessant suicides de Gala Garrido

I resist any thing better than my own diversity

Walt Whitman

When suicides are never-ending, rebirth can become insufferable. However, neither death nor rebirth are the protagonists here, but the rhythm of their repetitive successions. The temporality that is structured through repetition eliminates the pathos of time (something appears, then something will die) that necessarily implies giving the work a final destination. "Incessant Suicides" does not speak of an end; its purpose is to emphasize the energy of transformation. Or as the artist has told me: "Incessant metamorphosis of a self that imposes the face of the other to re-encounter itself and thus be forever in that endless transmutation of what it is".

Echographies

She is the one who is always on display. But she is not exactly the protagonist. These are not strictly self-portraits. So there is no point in circulating or recycling the exhausted character of Narcissus and his suicide, even though the title of the exhibition would suggest it. But I don't want to stray too far either. Perhaps it would be enough just to "unfocus" the myth and, from its peripheral space, bring to the forefront a character that is found in some versions of the famous myth as the one in love and unrequited by the self-absorbed young man: the nymph Echo and her condition and damnation of being the sounding board of the sound waves that are repeated by reflection. To become the echo of the other. This is how most of Gala's photographs are constructed: putting herself partially in suspense, where the reflexive act is fundamental: re-flexing in the sense of bending along the path towards the other, in a path that always goes back and

forth. For example: "I wanna be loved by you" (2009), on a contact sheet, 6 times Gala echoing Marilyn, hiding and undressing in front of the camera's eye, and in the search for the desirable, crossing out inappropriate images. Barthes said, "what one enters into with the other is a relation, not a correspondence: the relation brings two images together."¹ The repetition of the portrait leads to an alteration of the persona(s), of Gala and of Marilyn; neither of them vanishes, rather, their differences are juxtaposed in a relationship of dislocation, meeting and reuniting in the images of a single object of desire. Something similar also happens in "Maria Lionza" (2011), where the process of repetition-difference is further emphasized through the images reproduced in small prints: the woman of the popular myth resonates through the artist's body.

If we insist a little more on the fact that echo is an acoustic phenomenon produced by a wave that reflects and returns to its source, then Gala's photographic-preformative work functions as a kind of echography: the resonance of the other is interpreted as an image.

Body-scenario

Here we can leave the anecdotal of the myth and examine its staging. I have already said: repetition, resonance, difference...and I need to add: theater and the play of disguises. However, there is no proper theatricality here. The incessant suicides occur in a ritual act and in a staging where the accent is on the mask that is articulated through a series of objects, props (clothes, make-up) and their cultural and artistic meanings. The mask never totally hides, but, as was the case among the ancient Greeks, makes it possible to make oneself resonate "through"², to re-present the others with one's own body. "Ingres, Man Ray, Carmen Miranda" (2009) evokes in the same photographic image the famous samba singer and the well-known "Violin" by Man Ray, who was

¹ Roland Barthes. *Fragmentos de un discurso amoroso*. Siglo XXI Editores, México, 1982. p. 80.

² "Persona", the name given by the Greeks to the mask, is closely related to the verb "personare", to resonate, to make sound. The Greek theatrical mask, besides having a function of characterizing the moods, had a certain mouth flaring through which the actor projected the voice that became louder and more penetrating.

himself inspired by a painting by Ingres. Thus, the mask made of diverse references, not only points to the complexities of otherness, but above all, emphasizes the place of the artist's body as a support for these references. Her body, marked by memory, is made of her personal history and is also penetrated by a complex web of inherited stories, which, in order to come to the surface require, as Gala tells me, a sort of sacrifice: "These images are the record of an intimate ritual in which I sacrifice myself, before myself and in front of the camera: an infinite game of mirrors."

" Prótesis" (2006) makes it even more obvious the role of the mask in relation to the body that supports it, through the disguise of deformations, augmentations and artificialities that seek to build the false body stereotype as an object of desire. For what has been said above, apart from its condition of prosthesis, the mask functions as a device of intermediation between the depths of the self and the desire for the surface of the reflected image. "everything that is deep loves the mask"³, Nietzsche said....

Oculophilia

And if there is a *mise-en-scène*, eyes are also needed: the camera's or the spectator's. "Bataille, Bellmer, Maruo" (2010), synthesizes the mechanics of desire by making references to Bellmer's naked dolls with socks and multiplying legs, Bataille's *Eye Story* and Maruo's unbridled manga erotica. Eye, orifice, anus, ass, image within the image, book, bathroom, camera, eye. The depths of the intimate that are externalized before an attentive observer -perhaps in a singular "Japanese kiss"- in the series of "Disposable Images" (2005-2011) take us through the daily territory of two people, where the diversity of moments is perceived through a cyclical change of light from a window: a succession of his and her naked bodies are revealed there, alternating with their faces, doors and paintings, inscriptions, fragments of photos, blood or semen stains, marks on the walls, objects or bodies. A relationship is drawn from small material evidences (disposable, perhaps reusable; in any case, there is a need for detachment) about a relevant event -love?- which, to call it in the manner of the Greeks, remains obscene,

³ Friedrich Nietzsche. *Beyond Good and Evil*. Alianza Editorial, Madrid, 2005. p. 20.

that is to say, out of the scene. In this way, the mise-en-scène also incorporates what is not in it, what the image cannot obviate, what the eye has to guess.

In the succession of disposable images, the relationship is gradually diluted, the man's presence disappearing first, and emphasizing Gala's everyday life without him. But the eroticization of the image does not disappear: it extends even to the last picture of her, intentionally out of focus. There is always an other, outside or inside one: to possess it, to penetrate it, to transgress it, to dilute it...In relation to this, Gala explains to me: "These images are the evidence of a self-imposed violence to observe myself and approach the moment when I dissolve and become one in the ritual. A way to reappropriate the moment in which otherness occupies me and possesses me for an instant." Even playing the role of a housewife ("Manual for the Good Housewife"2007), or Maria Lionza, or the eye of Bataille, amidst fruits or artificial skies, electro-domestic appliances or stuffed snakes, Gala's transvestism, through a ritual-exploratory process, produces resonances with the other, and above all, speaks of her own diversity.

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