

Gretta by Gillo Dorfles

Almost a chrysalis, still enveloped in its cocoon, trying to come to light and become a perfect insect: that is the sensation given to the observer by the last Gretta's photographic images, in which the greek-brazilian artist wrapped, entangled and (at times) submerged in a subtle texture of window - screens with large nineteenth-century embroideries.

Sometimes, a visual idea, arising accidentally or deliberately from the occasional whole, induces to the creation of an autonomous figurative event full of suggestions and mystery.

When Gretta imagined the numerous sequences which utilized her own body, rendering it unrecognizable through this "magic cover" of a new style, perhaps she did not yet realize that she had done something different, quite different, not only for her predecessors but also from the numerous similar compositions that the Body Art has been conceiving since now.

The beginning of her pictorial training - was polarized in the research of a distortion of human image - mainly the face - her own face - which was no more obtained through the effective modification or gesticulations, nor the self-provocation of painful stimulus (which is the case of many artists of body-art, from Gina Pane to Marina Abramovic), nor the junction of several signs, deformations superposed on the same picture (which is the case of Arnulf Reiner) but through the mechanic-optical transformation of the self personage. The artist's face (by means of the use of distorsioning instruments, was decomposed in a sequence of dramatic and convulsive images, in which the mouth, the eyes, the hair, had been decomposed, transformed into nonsense or a dumb-show, expressing horror, desolation, dissociation. These figures, which sometimes conserved the tenderness of the original form, were reduced, the major part of times, into horrible masks, grimaces of vindictive fury, representing a deliberate taking position against the falsely hedonistic and hypocritely pleasant situation of today's and always the "object-woman".

The fact that such effects being obtained through a mechanic "trick", does not reduce its efficacy, and the first artist's album - Self-photos and Diary of a woman - consists of an impressive documentation of this unusual realization.

But it was obvious that Gretta did not want to confine herself to a deforming version of her deepest expressive will and that - as Claudio Willer says - after the "process of destruction of the face and the conventional image of the body", there was "a menace of incursion of any other kind of form - therefore a descending trip, down to the deepnesses of the unseen world".

Today, in the present photographic row, we have to consider much more the graphic/photographic look than the simple corporeal projection, although if it is always through the body, not glorificated and magnificated but most frequently moritificated and “humiliated” that the images are obtained.

The entanglement constituted by the different corporeal poses, the frequent presence of a cat, -toy – fetish – lovely object, the fusion existing between the members of the woman and those of the little animal (representing the manifest exaltation of a metaphorically emphasized sensuality) are nothing more than the “material of construction” of all the photography will be able to reveal or hide.

I saide “reveal” or “hide” because in the context of such images, what we are able to read or decipher is as much important as what we cannot distinguish and are obliged to imagine, so completing, in our manner, to our liking, the ambiguity of the photographic document.

The operation of continuous and sometimes tiring deciphering of an image which, by its own nature, is ambiguous and equivocal, seems to me to be the most interesting and new aspect of all these works.

Here there is: the eye collects a palpitation of members under the texture of the embroidered painting: it is not able to distinguish what is on the veil on the skin and what is the real drawing of the patch; it sees and does not see the presence among the upholsterers of the painting: a breast, a buttock, a cheek, which sometimes are mixed with the back of the cat, with its hair, intermingled with the shadows projected on the skin such a mixtum composition of the woman and the animal (the belle and the beast reviewed and revised) and the fact of the body being oftenly twisted into turpid positions, makes the resulting plastic of such motions is very unusual, even from a strictly photographic point of view.

We can even say that with this work Gretta has demonstrated how the mechanical medium, if utilized in a correct manner, can be an expressive autonomous message, without exerting the creativity of the body-artist. Sure: such pictures will not be the same with another artist, with another option, however, even considered under the point of view of photographic document, Gretta’s corporeal options reach an unusual efficacy. We are in front of a little common contamination, between the creative activity of an artist who knows how to enjoy the expressive dynamic and plastic possibilities of her body and the realization of a photographic documentation which remains autonomous as well as in its technical as in its esthetic values. Therefore, the observer has to interpret by himself such works, according to his personal mind disposition, according to the deductions he has got of them; any symbolical, metaphorical or psychological deciphering will be valid and the conclusive datum will be the one which derives from the interaction between the artist’s creative fantasy and that of the observer, sometimes as much creative as.