

MANIFESTO DIALOGUE: THESIS ON CONTEMPORARY ART AND THE PARAPSYCHOLOGY OF CREATIVITY

— WHY DOES FASHION PLAY SUCH AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN YOUR WORK?

— I HAVE BEEN TORTURED BY, ON THE ONE HAND, AN ABSOLUTE FASCINATION WITH FASHION AND ALL THAT IT IMPLIES AND, ON THE OTHER HAND, BY A REALIZATION OF ITS ABSOLUTE MEANINGLESSNESS. FASHION IS INTEGRALLY ABOUT DEATH. AS WALLACE STEVENS SAYS "DEATH IS THE MOTHER OF BEAUTY." DEATH IS A FEATURE OF ORNAMENTATION. JEWELLERY, CLOTHES, CRAFTS-ART, ALL SUGGEST SOMETHING VIOLENTLY ORNAMENTAL WHICH TEARS INTO THE INDIVIDUAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND TEARS OUT AGAIN, FORCING IT TO ACCEPT THE COMMUNICABILITY OF ALL THINGS.

SIMULTANEOUSLY, ONE MUST NOT FORGET THE ESSENTIALLY INSTANTANEOUS BEING OF FASHION: IT HAS CONSEQUENCE ONLY FOR THAT MOMENT OF ITS MANIFESTATION, WHEREUPON ITS ALLURE IMMEDIATELY DISSIPATES, SWEEPED AWAY IN THE DELUGE OF SEETHING ACTIVITY THAT ARE THE PRESENT TIMES. HENCE A POWERFUL IMAGE AT ONCE BECOMES A CLICHÉ; IT DEGENERATES INTO TYPES — THE BOHEMIAN ARTIST, ARTIST-PRESTIDIGITATOR, THE SEXY SIDEKICK, THE ARTIST'S MODEL, BALLERINA GRUNGE.....

ONE OF MY INTERESTS IS TO STAGE A CONFRONTATION BETWEEN APPARENTLY SIMILAR, CLOSELY RELATED IMAGES AND MEDIA — FOR EXAMPLE, THE FILM-STILL AND THE FASHION PHOTOGRAPH. YET THESE ARE ABSOLUTELY DIFFERENT. FASHION IS MORE OBSESSED WITH FILM THAN FILM IS WITH FASHION, ALTHOUGH THE INFLUENCES OBVIOUSLY RUN BOTH WAYS. THE FASHION PHOTOGRAPH IS NEVER ANY MORE THAN THAT, A STILL, WHEREAS THE IDEA OF THE FILM-STILL IS TO CAPTURE AND EXEMPLIFY AN EVENT — EVEN IF THAT EVENT IS MERELY THE SIDE OF THE LEAD CHARACTER'S HEAD. OR SO IT SEEMS. IN FACT, THINGS ARE MORE COMPLICATED THAN THIS. MY PROJECT IS TO RAMIFY THE DIFFICULTIES — SCREEN PRINTING, GRAPHIC DESIGN, FASHION PHOTOGRAPHY, CINEMATIC IMAGES, STENCILS, AND SO ON, ARE ALL GATHERED INTO THE ANTAGONISM OF AN UNEXPECTED PROPINQUITY.

THIS IS ALSO A MATTER OF CONTENT. THE PERSONAGES IN MY IMAGES HAVE BEEN CAST — THAT IS, THE VIEWER SHOULD SUSPECT SOME SLEIGHT-OF-HAND BEHIND THE SCENES. AND THERE SHOULD BE A SENSE OF DÉJÀ-VU— I'VE SEEN THIS BEFORE, I'VE NEVER SEEN THIS BEFORE. MOREOVER, THE MODELS WERE SELECTED PRECISELY FOR THEIR AESTHETIC QUALITIES — THE "BABE," PRECISELY BECAUSE SHE LOOKS LIKE SHE SHOULD BE A BABE. HER REALITY AS AN IMAGE MAY HAVE NOTHING WHATSOEVER TO DO WITH THE REALITY FROM WHICH SHE'S CAST. SHE IS LITERALLY AN AESTHETIC HOOK. AND THE SAME GOES FOR THE GUY, ALTHOUGH OF COURSE IN A DIFFERENT, "MASCULINE" REGISTER.

EVEN WANTING TO HAVE NO AESTHETIC CAN NEVER ESCAPE FROM A DEGREE OF ITS OWN POTENTIAL FASHIONABILITY. AS SOON AS SOMETHING'S UNFASHIONABLE, IT'S FASHIONABLE. IT'S LIKE "THE END OF IDEOLOGY" — THERE'S NOTHING MORE IDEOLOGICAL THAN THE STATEMENT "IT'S THE END OF IDEOLOGY." AT ONE STAGE THE PUTATIVE AVANT-GARDE EVEN WANTED TO REVIVIFY ITSELF AS A "REAR-GUARD." BUT THE POINT IS TO TAKE IT TO ANOTHER LEVEL. AFTER ALL, FASHION RARELY TAKES ITS OWN IDEOLOGY AS ITS EXPLICIT OBJECT. IF IT CEASELESSLY SCOURS THE PAST FOR WASTE ELEMENTS TO REINCORPORATE, IT DOES THIS MERELY IN THE SERVICE OF A NEW INSTANT GRATIFICATION. BUT THERE IS A PARADOX. AT THESE MOMENTS OF THE MOST COMPLETE AND DEGRADED BANALITY, FASHION MANAGES TO SEIZE ON THINGS THAT DO IN FACT HAVE A GENUINE CULTURAL RELEVANCE.

THERE IS A KIND OF PERVERSITY THERE, CERTAINLY A FETISHISM — WHICH EXULTS IN ALL SORTS OF AFFECTS. THE DIALECTIC OF SHAME AND SHAMELESSNESS IS CERTAINLY ONE OF THE MOST DYNAMIC ASPECTS OF FASHION. I AM INTERESTED IN CAPTURING THAT MOMENT WHEN THINGS MAKE THE TRANSITION FROM UNACCEPTABLE AND HUMILIATING PERVERSITY TO PUBLIC ENTERTAINMENT, BY TURNING THEMSELVES INTO A SELF-ANNIHILATING NOTHING.

—WOULD YOU CONSIDER THAT YOUR WORK HAS AN ETHICAL IMPORT?

—YES, THERE IS A RIGOROUS ETHOS OF THE DECLARATION. I AM INTERESTED IN RECONSTRUCTING THE AESTHETICS OF THE OUTMODED AVANT-GARDE FOR THE PRESENT TIMES. THE FILM-STILL, FOR EXAMPLE, IN ITSELF DESIGNATES A CERTAIN ERA OF VISUAL PRODUCTION, TIED TO THE DISTRIBUTION AND PUBLICITY OF CINEMATIC COMMODITIES. MY WORK BLOWS THE FILM-STILL OUT OF THE CONTINUUM OF ITS CONTEXT, IN ORDER TO RECONSTITUTE THAT QUANTUM OF DETONATORY ENERGY THAT IT ONCE HAD FOR THE SPECTATORS. TRENDY TAKES ON USELESS THINGS, IF YOU LIKE. BUT IT CANNOT HAPPEN JUST BY ITSELF. ONE MUST TAMPER WITH THE GESTURE. THIS INVOLVES A DELICATE PROCESS OF SELECTING AND COMBINING INCOMPATIBLE DISCIPLINES AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS — OFTEN TO THE POINT OF FOOLISHNESS OR VULGARITY — IN ORDER THAT THE POSSIBILITIES OF SOMETHING TRULY NEW MIGHT SHOW THEMSELVES. AS SOON AS YOU LOOK AT IMAGES SUCH AS THESE, YOU TRY TO PIECE TOGETHER SOME OVERARCHING LOGIC TO THE WHOLE THING — WHEREUPON EVERYTHING DISINTEGRATES. IN FACT, EVERYTHING'S CONSTRUCTED UNDER THE IMPULSE OF ITS OWN DISINTEGRATION: THE COMPULSION TO FIND THE TRUTH OF AN OBSCURE PERFORMANCE.

I AM, IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, FOR A RESTRAINED VAUDEVILLE.

—CAN YOU EXPOUND ON YOUR NOTION OF 'RESTRAINED VAUDEVILLE.'

— YOU KNOW, I LIKE THE IDEA OF MICHELLE PFEIFFER AS 'THE SHY ACTOR' — SOMEONE WHOSE ENTIRE LIFE IS AT ONCE DEDICATED TO THE MOST RELENTLESS AND PUBLIC SELF-EXPOSURE, WHO INDEED CLEARLY FEEDS OFF, EVEN MAKES A FORTUNE FROM, SUCH PUBLICITY — AND YET IS ALSO ALLEGEDLY "SHY" AND "RETIRING." THE PARADOX SHOULD NOT BE UNDERESTIMATED. IT'S NOT JUST A LIE THAT SHE'S "SHY" — ON THE CONTRARY. BUT HER SHYNESS CAN ONLY SHOW ITSELF THROUGH A PUBLIC PERFORMANCE. NOW THAT'S RESTRAINT.

THERE'S A LINK THERE TO AN EROTICS THAT IS CLEARLY ONE OF "UNDERSEXUALIZATION" — A KIND OF PORNOGRAPHY THAT YOU'D NEVER FIND IN THE STORES. ON THE CONTRARY, IT'S UBIQUITOUS. IT'S THE ACCOMPANIMENT, THE AIDES TO ACTION, THAT ARE SO IMPORTANT. THEY DON'T SEEM TO BE THE MAIN EVENT, BUT THEY'RE ABSOLUTELY INDISPENSABLE TO THE EROTICS OF THE PERFORMANCE. YET THEY MAY OFTEN SEEM DEVOID OF EROTIC POWER IN THEMSELVES.....THE MEANS TO, NOT THE END OF, THE PRODUCTION. BUT I AM INTERESTED IN THE MEANS — MEANS WITHOUT END. THE AIRBRUSH, THE CAMERA LENS, THE LIGHTING, THE GLOSSY PAPER.....THESE ARE THE TRUE ELEMENTS OF EROTIC ATTRACTION.

SO THE PROP, THE ACCESSORY, THE ORNAMENT — ALL OF THESE STAGING DEVICES, TO WHICH AN INCREDIBLE AMOUNT OF ATTENTION IS DEDICATED, AND WHICH MUST BE PLACED OR DEPLOYED IN JUST THE RIGHT WAY TO ACHIEVE THEIR GREATEST EFFECTS, ARE THEMSELVES VISUALLY INTEGRATED AND PRESENTED AS THE UNACKNOWLEDGED CONDITIONS OF THE WORK. YET IT IS IN LOSING ONESELF IN THE ALREADY OVERWORKED MATTER OF THESE FLAT AND TECHNICAL DEVICES THAT NOT ONLY EROTICISM, BUT THE MOST ELEVATED SPIRITUALITY IS UNLEASHED. IT'S A PARTICIPATORY CONCEPTION OF THE OBJECT.

VAUDEVILLE, LIKEWISE, COULD ONLY HAPPEN AS THE MOTIVATED TRANSFORMATION OF THE OPPOSITION BETWEEN MEANS AND END. THE SUPPOSED STAR ALWAYS MAKES A BIG DEAL OF THE "BEAUTIFUL ASSISTANT," EVERYONE MAKES GENERIC AND EXAGGERATED GESTURES, THE STAGING, PROPS, LIGHTING AND COSTUMES ARE SELF-CONSCIOUSLY HIGHLIGHTED. THE BODY IS DEPLOYED IN SOME DEGREE OF DISGUISE OR TRAVESTY, AS ONE PROP AMONG OTHERS. THE PROPS SUGGEST A PROGRAM. YET YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT THE NEXT ACT WILL BE. BUT EACH HAS ITS OWN LOGIC, WORKING WITH THE TOTALITY. BUT WHAT IS THE TOTALITY?

THE PROCESS IS NECESSARILY LABORIOUS, AND OFTEN INVOLVES GREAT PAINS; THE RESULTS, HOWEVER, ARE NECESSARILY TRANSIENT, EVEN WEIGHTLESS. THINK OF THE GREAT GENRES OF VAUDEVILLE — THE FREAKS, THE EDUCATED PIGS, THE GYMNASTS, THE PRESTIDIGITATORS, THE GAMES OF DECLAMATORY ERUDITION, THE VIGNETTES OF DOMESTIC DISHARMONY AND BETRAYAL — THEY'RE HILARIOUSLY FUNNY, ENGAGING, AS WELL AS BEING SOMEHOW TRAGIC AND GRANDIOSE. IT'S GOT NOTHING TO DO WITH "MAKING THE BEST OF WHAT YOU'VE GOT," OR "GETTING ON," OR ANY SUCH THING. IT'S RATHER THAT THE JAPES AND PRATFALLS OF VAUDEVILLIAN PERFORMANCE EXPOSE THE HAZARDOUS CONCATENATION OF LIFE — FROM THE EXCRUCIATINGLY BAD TO THE ENJOYABLE.

THAT'S THE SINCERITY OF VAUDEVILLE. AND ITS SHAMELESSNESS. THERE'S ALWAYS A SENSE OF SEEDINESS AND DESPERATION ABOUT IT — A SORT OF SCRABBLING WITH THE PRESUMED INDIFFERENCE OF THE WORLD. AND AN EXTREMITY OF TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT, TO PROVOKE DISTRACTION AND AMUSEMENT BY A SORT OF PARA-SYMPATHETIC MAGIC. THAT IS ITS STRUCTURAL ONTOLOGY.

BUT, FOR ME, VAUDEVILLE MUST BE RESTRAINED, TOO.

—WHAT IS YOUR PHILOSOPHICAL POSITION ON CREATIVITY?

— CREATIVITY IS A PROCESS OF RESTRAINED VIOLENCE. IT'S A SORT OF PHILOSOPHICAL EXPULSION OF THE BODY. THE ORIFICES, ABUSED, ABSORB OR PROJECT ALL MANNER OF EFFLUVIA, FORMLESS AND SOMEWHAT REPULSIVE ARTIFACTS THAT, NONETHELESS, HAVE A CERTAIN SEDUCTIVE QUALITY. EVERY LIVING THING ASSIMILATES. THE BEAUTY OF SUCH PRODUCTIONS IS ALWAYS ALSO THE SEDUCTIVENESS OF TORTURE AND DEATH, THE PROPER LIMITS OF THE BODY OVERFLOWING AND CHOKED WITH THE UNASSIMILATED — EVEN INASSIMILABLE — RESIDUES OF ITSELF. FISCOLLOLLIA. I CALL THESE EXTRUSIONS "ECTOPLASMIC EXTENSIONS." IT'S A NEW CATEGORY OF CREATIVE PRACTICE. FOR SOME TIME NOW, WE HAVE BEEN LACKING SUCH A CONCEPT. IT IS A CONCEPT WHICH BINDS TOGETHER RAW INSTINCTS WITH THE ETHER OF THE CEREBRUM.

THERE ARE ALWAYS SUPERNATURAL ELEMENTS IN MY WORK WHICH ARE OF CRITICAL IMPORTANCE. THE OUT-OF-BODY EXPERIENCE IS ALWAYS AN IN-THE-BODY EXPERIENCE, TRANSMITTED BY OBSCURE PSYCHO-CHEMICAL PROCESSES THAT ARE AT ONCE EMINENTLY MATERIAL (THE STRUCTURE OF THE BRAIN, THE NERVOUS SYSTEM, NEURONAL FIRING, ETC.) AND SOMEHOW INEXPLICABLY SPIRITUAL. YOU CAN LOOK AT THE MOST DETAILED IMAGES OF THE BRAIN AS LONG AS YOU LIKE, BUT YOU'LL NEVER FIND ART ANYWHERE. ONCE AGAIN, WE CANNOT PREVENT SPIRITUALITY FROM ENTERING THE PICTURE. IT'S ALL QUITE FANTASTIC. ART IS A REGIME OF TRICKS, BOTH VISUAL AND SPIRITUAL.

SO WE MUST LOOK AT IMAGES WHICH TRANSMIT THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF IMAGING THE TRANSMISSION. THIS IS PRECISELY THE CONCEPT OF ECTOPLASMIC EXTENSIONS. THIS EXPLAINS THE IMPORTANCE IN MY WORK OF ATMOSPHERIC DEVICES — SMOKE, FIRE, CONNECTIVE TUBES, VEILS, DRAPERIES, AND SO ON, WHICH FIGURE THE IN-BETWEEN WISPS OF AESTHETICO-SPIRITUAL PRACTICE. ART, LIKE THE SPIRITS, IS ALWAYS IN EXCESS OF THE TECHNOLOGIES YOU REQUIRE TO ACCESS IT. ART IS THE APPREHENSION OF THE INFINITE.

— WHAT ARE THE PSYCHOLOGICAL BASES OF YOUR ART?

—MY WORK EXPLORES THE DEEP PARA-PSYCHOLOGY OF CREATIVITY.

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