

PHOTOGENICS

Dialogue with Papo Colo & Jeanette Ingberman, 1982

PC: The face is a hieroglyphic of our biography.

Jl: The images created in these two photographic series have a mystery beyond the signals of the medium—transforming reality not reflecting it. The sequencing of images and gestures creates an atmosphere of drama but with no clues to a specific plot. Yet, there is specificity to the image, an exactness of detail. It is not a frozen moment but the performance of an entire play. The photograph is the complete drama, not a pause in the action, a fragment that exists only as itself. In its totality, the photograph is the visible theatre of the artist, a theatre whose speech is mute but whose projection of life is translated through a fragmented spectacle of poetry acting as a force within the movement between text and gesture.

PC: Theses are not portraits of self-portraits
they are question marks of the presentation of a body
and the gestures of that body.
Dance of personifications.
One personality with many others that with the help of words
reach the silent movies.

Jl: In these photographs, the artist is both actor and director, model and photographer, author and manipulator of the text (in meaning and visual presentation). The image does not interpret the text as much as give it the possibility of breath, of spacing, of movement within itself. The letters weaving in and out of the gestures of the artist creates a new gravity. The space of the photograph is no longer limited to its two dimensional surface but expands into the visual, textural construction of the text, into a spacing within the words, within the letters themselves. The narrative, short, staccato poem fictions, are not subtitles to a foreign script, not the speech of the actor inside the photograph nor the dictations of the artist, but language transformed into image. Markings on a page - not blank or ruled page but an image page – already containing within itself a meaning moderated through tones of light and dark. The text and the image are equally important, each containing within themselves both a literary and visual message.

PC: The professional actor interprets life
in a way he imitates it.
The person who acts,
lives and functions through his acting.
His acting consists of his behavior.

Jl: Between the poetic gestures and the illusive definition of the image there develops a sexuality that pervades the whole surface of the work. Identity is created through anonymity, obstructions, and the drama of desire. Face and sex partially hidden, partially revealed, are fragments that establish clues to meaning. Personal identity is erased to create personal history. The artist, posing inside the photograph, is identifying his 'others' with himself. He is not masquerading but concentrating, inventing transformations and layering meanings. The artist and the image he composes of himself in front of the camera are inseparable. The moment of certainty is

transformed by the mechanical process of photography and fiction is authenticated by this evidential act of authority.

PC: The exhibitionism of the hermit is to show his solitude.

Photography is related to news,
information of the true/
distortion of substance /
manipulation of thoughts/
the best propaganda/
a political weapon/
a collective unconscious
of un-lived history
made present
through bombardments
of images.

My
behavior in front of the lens –
instant gesture of the self
of being many
by being one.

Jl: These actions/gestures are not total improvisations, movements without thoughts. They are the narratives of a vision realized through theatrical effects of premeditated positions, a rigorous presentation of the imagination of the artist. Not the resurrection of identity through stereotypes of cultural icons but the re-creation of identity through one's own body, an interpretation of the artist biography as fiction.

The strength of the photographer is the actor inside the model, the capacity of the object to reflect the subject, the click of the camera echoing the gesture of the body. A precise moment, telepathically transferred/ translated into a two-dimensional construction of the imagination, transcribed from a color reality to a black and white fantasy.

PC: The face is usually associated with charisma
and charisma is a source of manipulation.
With their faces, actors manipulate emotions
and politicians manipulate our lives.

These photo works are trying to
over-mystify films, especially Hollywood types.
They are narrative poems about acting a gesture.
Films that are never put together.
Stills of fragments of imaginary thoughts.

Jl: The relationship between the text and the image is not that the text serves as a caption to the image thus inscribing the work with meaning, not that the image functions as an illustration to the text, representing its meaning. The photograph does not exist as a verifiable code to the artist's past actions, a present to a sanctified history of the gesture. It is evidence of his imagination, of the ability to create his own biography.

PC: In some parts of the world
to photograph someone is to capture
part of their spirit.
In my work
I try to expose that,
capture that part of the spirit
and set it free.

Jl: The conclusion of the viewer is the collaboration between photographer and model: the artist
as actor modeling his
imagination through his body/form.

PC: The only mystery is the one that you invent.

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Papo Colo 1983.

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