

Nathalie Djurberg “Turn into Me”

19 April - 1 June 2008
The Prada Foundation

The Prada Foundation is pleased to announce an exhibition, dedicated to the Swedish artist Nathalie Djurberg (Lysekil, Sweden, 1978), to be held at the Prada Foundation at Via Fogazzaro 36, Milan, from April 19th until 1st June 2008.

The project, which has been specifically designed for the exhibiting space of the Prada Foundation, consists of constructions that remind of parts of human body and hint at universal symbols. These constructions become pavilions inside which the videos of the artist are projected representing visceral compelling desires and possessive sexual thoughts.

Djurberg's videos are short animations made using *Stop Motion* techniques where small clay or plasticine figures create surreal atmospheres and, often, grotesque stories. The staging of these stories is rudimentary but ingenious, infusing an ambiguous sense of anxiety and unease through their sexual reflections, with references to violence, the macabre, gruesome, and subtle pleasure of cruelty and perversion. Djurberg's works are characterised by an obsessive rhythm, permeated by a taste for the ironic and the humorous, conveying a sense of anxiety and nostalgia, along with unease and sometimes even profound anguish. It's a sensation that is re-enforced throughout all her work by accompanying music, composed by the Swedish composer, Hans Berg.

Nathalie Djurberg entire artistic trajectory is overwhelmed by an orgy of violence and perversion that destroys all appearance of humanity. Each story, moreover, lays bare the baseness and hypocrisy, the mendacity and lust that exist between father and daughter, blacks and whites, animal and nature, man and woman. All is physical, concrete, and material. The verbal element is reduced to nothing, so that the only thing holding center stage is the impact of the event, recounted in all its violence and perversion. The screen is transformed into an “operating room” where the dismemberment and copulation of bodies are presented as the sole rituals in the lives of the characters, who may be of different ethnicities and genders. Djurberg stages and manipulates these figures, decides their fate in life and death, in sorrow and pleasure, as if they were creatures in the hands of a deity subjecting them to cruel and inhuman rites.

“Dispossession” as the perversion and renunciation of one's own autonomy is the central theme of the artist's entire adventure in film. And the first indication of this perverse condition of existence is provided not only by the contents of each individual work, but by the language used, the filming of events involving puppets—that is, marionettes and figurines, human and animal, made out of fabric, clay and plasticine and displaying real, sensual bodies and features. They move about by means of strings and sticks manipulated by Djurberg, in colored settings of cardboard and polyurethane coated with strong colors and suggesting the buildings and interiors, public squares and wooded areas, in which their adventures take place. The puppet itself is a manifest allegory of a body becoming “someone else's tool.” A person is nullified and placed in the hands of others; he or she becomes the means of a decision made by another person, the puppeteer.

Born in 1978, Djurberg belongs to a realistic, disillusioned generation that has witnessed the collapse of the great ideological narratives and their illusory utopias. She has nourished herself on Georges Bataille and Pier Paolo Pasolini, who believed in a “sacrilegious” theory and criticism that could be carried out through writing, as well as art and cinema. Theirs is a “forbidden” form of thinking that becomes a vast apparatus for

grinding up and disintegrating the world, where bodies can be molded like fresh clay, digested and expelled, reduced to fluid and excrement. Coming from a perspective where the different erogenous zones become vehicles for contractual agreements and exchange, undergo metamorphoses and are subjected to quasi diabolical surgeries, the artist takes in the world through the “window” of film and television, which systematically destroys the individual person.

This is a kind of sexuality, practiced with a mutilated, handicapped body, that people don't talk much about, let alone offer up to our gaze, and it is conjoined with an eros that is cruel and extreme. But this is the limit emphasized by Bataille, whose texts have had considerable influence on Djurberg. Bataille's metaphor of the human being's disintegration into base matter continues to be represented by soft clay, which comes together and falls apart; but the existential anger of Djurberg's early films now gives way to a perspective of failure, a bankruptcy of emptiness leading to the death of mutual existence, as in *Turn into Me* (2008), in Milan. This is perhaps why Djurberg is now attempting, in the spaces of the Prada Foundation, to avoid the lightness of her medium's methodology by forging a path into a concrete, physical terrain, where Bataille's *Solar Anus* may serve as a “threshold” for entering a new dimension of her “condemned”—that is, forbidden and transgressive—art. The interior that she has come to build is a landscape of body parts in the feminine form, from which images and films are expelled like fecal excretions, to the point, for example, that a monitor is inserted in the rectum of one female figure crouching like a dog. In the manner of Beckett and Bacon, the artist “opens herself” to the public, putting spectators not before a screen, but letting them enter and penetrate the intimate areas of her art. The visitor-onlooker's gaze passes through all the possible “orifices,” including the anus and the environment, which is made up of a cave, trees, and a little house (waldhäuschen), in which stories of the negation and the dissolution of femininity unfold.

Nathalie Djurberg lives and works in Berlin; she is one of the leading new generation European artists, strongly active on the international scene. She has participated to the last edition of Performa in New York (2007); she has presented solo shows at Kunsthalle Wien in Vienna (2007) and at Färgfabriken in Stockholm (2006); her videos have been shown at Tate Britain in London (2007), P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center in New York (2006) and at the 4th Biennial of Contemporary Art in Berlin (2006)

Nathalie Djurberg. Turn into Me, the book realized for the exhibition, contains a critical essay by Germano Celant and an interview with the artists as well as an in-depth documentation of the artist's work. The book includes a DVD created especially by the artist for the publication and provides an original perspective on her artistic production.

Exhibition details

Title: Nathalie Djurberg
Dates: 19 April – 1 June 2008
Opening: Friday, 18 April 2008, 6 pm
Place: Fondazione Prada
Address: Via Fogazzaro 36, Milan
Opening time: Tuesday – Sunday, 11 am – 8 pm; closed on Monday
Access: Free
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