

LIFE , A USER'S MANUEL

Des Histoires en Formes is a survey of young artists from different origins, which collects existing works and others appositely created or adapted and it has been organized by four curators with different backgrounds.

The exhibition results from a confrontation among experiences and knowledge which may at first seem remote, but they are linked by a common belief the present artistic landscape is deeply fragmented, research follows the most various directions and shows a variety of models, patterns, and analytic tools used in defining very distinctive approaches to reality and to the work of art.

In such circumstances, there can be no exemplary or prevailing model, nor a confluence into a single artistic current that would fully explain the wide range of means and aims. In the midst of such freedom, a selection would have implied a drastic simplification and the a priori exclusion of artistic realities which are interesting precisely because they do not fit into pre-ordered schemes.

We therefore took as a starting point the quality of each work and of each artist, and decided to allow the works to express their independence unfettered by any standard of systematic classification, and to let them convey their energy and uniqueness.

We wanted to enhance the most individual traits and let comparison bring a deeper understanding of each single artist. These same criteria were followed while the exhibition was being set up, and we proceeded in search more of visual consistency than of overarching significance.

From this choice, however, we expected some leading strands to appear.

And they did.

Along the way, sympathies, connections, exchanges were spontaneously generated. Here lays our challenge : even such an open-end proposal could created some resonances, possibly through the mere fact of proximity inside the Galleries, and they would have "supported" the exhibition.

Lacking a general statement, or a single banner under which the widely different artists were to be enlisted, the common denominator of their experiences seems to be the attention paid to the real world, to a life lived in a most direct and subjective way, emphasising in turn the practical aspects or the collective dynamics, or more inner and emotional pathways.

This sort of approach excludes any so-called objectivity. The starting point is always a direct experience of real phenomena, of daily encounters and relations between individuals, of workaday objects, and of the widespread models of our present culture characterised by the pervasiveness of media, advertisements, cartoons.

It is the visitor therefore who needs the flexibility to redirect every time his or her attention to the various questions and answers: the magnetic and obsessive visual attraction of Alessandra Tesi's photographs, the lightness with which Cesare Viel invites us to probe the strange loops of his mind and emotions, the bewildering solutions given by Vibeke Tandberg and Alessandra Spranzi to existential problems, while tJmberto Cavenago asks us to forego our usual composure and to try on his humorous skates, and Gilles Chétanian (who intends as his own work of art to speak as a witness according to each visitor's sensibility) just stays at the disposal of whoever wants to chat and have a drink with him...

All these works enjoy absolute freedom, and still some common lines can be detected among several individual researches' for instance, some artists are willing to return to more traditional means of expression, like sculpture or painting (Umberto Cavenago. John Tremblay come to mind), to try and reformulate their scopes and

process, and to reflect on the possibilities of renewing them from the inside, without losing track of the contemporary issues, without being hindered by aesthetic ends or self-referential circuits. There is also a tendency to investigate a particular sort of "domesticity" and the interplay between the contrary aspects of familiarity and strangeness. This tendency is then declined in different manners: by stressing the sly cruelty that sneaks in our daily intercourse, by putting side by side or one on top of the other the locations of caring and of void: by pointing to an obsessive cleanliness which eventually brings out the vaguely morbid and sickly features one can perceive in some of the most aseptic looking places. The serial presentation of images of details which should be familiar force us to a long reading period during which we are reminded of the underground aspects of our daily life. Marie Denis, Alessandra Tesi, Maria Hedlund, Alessandra Spanzi, and Vibeke Tandberg, but also Geir Tore Holm and Cesare Viel, come close to most of those themes.

A common feature of the artists exhibited here, and probably of the latest generation in a broader sense, is that their willingness to experiment fully never takes the tragic, iconoclastic and self-mutilating aspects prevailing among some of the previous generation's works; on the contrary, they do not recoil from trying to please. They take the liberty of creating attractive works and sometimes they even manage to overturn the underlying themes, often shaped by a need for psychological self-examination, by contemporary misgivings and anxiety. Some of these artist's riches spring from this contradiction, from the simultaneous presence of contrasts. Such an approach may betray a kind of optimism, conscious and at the same time vulnerable, and this might eventually provide a key to this exhibition.

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