

Regina Virserius

My relationship to photography as an artistic expression

I use the photographic medium to explore the different layers of perception. Each photographic series corresponds to a formalised mental construction, which I arrive at by assembling the parameters of the photographic subject in order to reveal particular elements that interest me. These parameters could be sketches, readings, location scouting, characters or objects. The series is a percept* that permits me to create a visual impact through sheer numbers.

It's through sculpture, and therefore by working on the dialogue between notions of space, plane and volume, that photography has become my principal medium of expression. My premise is that a 'work of art' is produced by alternating between the *outside* (the physical world) and the *inside* (the artist's imaginary world). The photographic tool interests me in as far as it acts as a medium between the 'real' and the 'imaginary', and between the 'imaginary' and that which is viewed as 'real,' displacing and fragmenting a reflection on the observer's activity. In this optic, photography has the capacity to manipulate how it reflects its subject. The image fluctuates between encapsulating the inside and the outside world, and by analogy between perception and the object that is seen.

In the realm of photography, the frontal view of the pictorial space allows a positioning of ideas that reflect my observations. The challenge then is move into two dimensions. Photographic image is more constraining than sculpture because I develop subjects as extensible materials, understood through their volume, material, light and texture. Once condensed into the opacity of an image, the photographic form takes on a new dimension in the spectator's physical space. By playing with changes of scale, for example, the enlarged children's toys of *Paysages d'enfance ("landscapes of infancy")*, photography allows me to evoke the passage of time in the adult observer.

Working with spatial issues

My investigation of space started with city views. My series on libraries began in Rome and continued in Paris. The work was in some way a displacement of my interest in pure architecture: I perceived the libraries as mental spaces, and thus they had a metaphorical relationship to architecture. I chose these libraries for characteristics that would represent the origin of institutional libraries of XIX century. They are emblematic of the source of this formal institution and they act as anchors, reflecting the history of the city.

In libraries, there are spatial distortions, due to the contrast between the simple form of the place itself and the complex stratification of its contents, the accumulation of books. My investigation is oriented toward this distortion of space and the loss of scale; I ask myself about libraries as mental architecture, a place for classification, cataloguing and inventory. They evoke the *daedalus* of infinite classification, a labyrinth for the accumulation of knowledge. As such, the library becomes phantasmagoric, a place of dreams, where the imaginary is deployed on multiple planes.

Time and space

In the series entitled *Inflexion* and *Folds*, I am investigating the relationship between the two distinct time frames of the human body and landscape. The human body goes through the life rhythms to which we are accustomed, whereas landscape, which is more

hostile, forces us to face geological time. As such, these two series are photographic studies in subject and object, a fragmentation of the whole into details and wrinkles. This research leads me to work meticulously on the activity involved in making the final image. The photographs are printed *matte*; consequently the image appears trapped and absorbed in the paper by the successive layers of ink, rather than resting on the surface from the absorption of light by the silver gelatine.

Work concerning the body

The imaginary can be deployed even better when the image is austere, essential elements. My research on the body or fragments of bodies shows that passing the subject through the camera lens rests on an imaginary construct, allowing the invisible to be rendered visible. The specific body that I choose to position and photograph in a space is an integral part of my research on austerity. I am interested by the body's weight, substance, plasticity and temporality, which is evident in how I make and present these images. The shots I take are long, either horizontally or vertically, and I work only with daylight. Using the body, I investigate the suspension of time. The model escapes himself, becoming a pictorial pattern.

The work of object in its photographic dimension

With the series *Una cosa mentale*, I attempted a frontal, methodical observation of the object "chair." In this work, I don't produce an object as I did as a sculptor, I observe and I flatten it into two dimensions. There is a deep, dark almost-black that reveals the shape of the chair and a blinding whiteness that evokes the sketch of the object. This effect is desired so that the mental dimension can become another perception of an object in the photograph.

The form, Still life (nature morte, stilleben)

Still life is a way of representing that, which is secret. The series *Atlas: Imago Mundi* is an attempt to create a new perspective on ritualized food, the food of Christian, Jewish and Muslim religious rites. With this *Atlas* I suggest a horizontal reading, organized by animal, vegetable, liquid, dry fruit and bread, that has a specific meaning for insiders. Otherwise, one might just associate the foods' texture and colour, perhaps wondering about the meaning of this Imago Mundi.

Percept* is a form that Gilles Deleuze pronounced while he talks about an artistic activity. Percept reveals perception. And not concept with is a vocabulary and work of a philosopher.