

In Focus – Animated Feelings – The Last Part of the Trilogy “the Woman’s Gaze”

Anna Halm-Schudel (CH) and Tanya Ury (UK/D) confront the third part of the Trilogy “the Woman’s Gaze”. Part of the attraction of this double exhibition lies in the varied use of photographic media, with which the common theme/trauma is interpreted. The formulation of feminine identity, whether as introspective, very personal self-questioning (Anna Halm-Schudel) or as an exploration of mainstream cultural form (Tanya Ury), are both times expressions of an animated emotional state verging on the extremes.

Anna Halm-Schudel seeks certainty with calm, and formally balanced, very disciplined, meditative images. The introspective expression of these black and white photos have a quite obsessive melancholy - the unsparing confrontation with the self, is represented as a painful process. An inner landscape is mirrored in this uneasy space: depressing hotel rooms, hospital rooms, empty beaches. The sad atmosphere is shattered by almost clown-like impulses, with which, in a touching way, she attempts to create a certain distance.

Compared to the fragile uncertainty regarding personal identity expressed by Anna Halm-Schudel, Tanya Ury’s contribution appears to be very self-confident. The woman is situated here within the sphere of eroticism and desire. Several levels of image and text, also a perfume, convey something of Tanya Ury’s multimedia working practice. The title “Ô d’Oriane“, of this cycle of photos refers not only to Wilde’s “The Picture of Dorian Gray”, but also to the “The Story of O” and Kleist’s “The Marquise of O”. But many other meanings are inherent in this construction of words – the American spelling “odor” for “odour”, or the French word “or” for gold. In particular, the o with a circumflex, short for eau = water, is to be found in the name of the perfume “O de Lancôme“.

“Ô d’Oriane“, dedicated to the sense of smell, is the third part of a series on the senses that Tanya Ury is working on at the present. The images imitate fashion photography to be found in chic lifestyle and fashion magazines. English quotations from Primo Levi’s “The Mnemogogues“ and Italo Calvino’s “The Name, the Nose“ have been incorporated into these. And then one also notices the small perfumed sponges, which are attached to the frames. The game between seducing and being seduced, looking and being looked at is governed by a multiplicity of rules that can also cancel each other out. “O” also stands for opening.

Sabine Müller, Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger 6.4.2000

(Translation from German Tanya Ury)