

The Highlights - Stopping by at a Friends' Place

I recently asked some teenagers whether they live in their minds more in the present, past or future. When I asked myself the same question I was barely able to answer it. Finally, I decided on the future.



Wolfgang Tillmans, *Silver Installation VI*, 2009, Unique C-Prints (231 x 563 cm).

Sitting on the train from Rome to Venice I realized that every person is forced by their job to live in a certain time zone intellectually. An architect might be trapped in futuristic competitions of buildings that were never built for most of his or her life. A doctor always has to work in the frame of seconds and sometimes they are even fighting fights of milliseconds. Sportsmen always fight in milliseconds yet an archeologist remains in a world hundreds of decades passed.

So with interest I read an article about Futurism in "Tate Etc. Magazine" where Boris Groys states an interesting thesis that the impact of futurism was to create a totalitarian moment inside public space-the impossibility of the spectator to stay outside physically and psychologically. This made me think of Wolfgang Tillmans' space at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni at this years Venice Biennale. For the 3rd time within the last two years I was standing inside his environments. The first time was at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, then at the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin and now in Venice. With each time the same thing happened, his pictures were like the wardrobe of C.S. Lewis' "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe", I would step inside to be transported to a world that was impossible to exit.





Rosa Barba, *Coro Spezzato: The future lasts one day*, 2009. Film installation, 5 x 16 mm films, each 5', 5 modified projectors, dimensions variable. Photos courtesy Nine Budde.

The original movement of Futurism probably wouldn't have existed if it weren't for the invention of the photo camera. Photographs were proof to the movement's provocative actions. It was the tool necessary to transform nonsense into existence. For me, as a straight white female, Tillmans' photographic world sometimes has a an unfamiliar exoticism: threesomes or moresomes -- fucking, drinking, peeing, raving, testosteroneing night and day at odds with delicate still-lives on a kitchen table. These pairing offer a simple dissent: a rave's toughness to a flower's delicate golden leaf. They are all held together by an absence of deeper privacy; while we often see his companion's interiors there seems to be no palpable personal space. Everything seems in transition, which I associate with public space. In Tillmans' pictures I find the transitional soul of the public on the beds and kitchen tables inside these apartments. Maybe by doing so he re-enacts the futurist's ideology of a totalitarian movement unconsciously.

So after Tillmans' space I walked downstairs to the former Italian Pavillion where I found a beautiful contrast to this by an artist who had transformed a public space situation into an intimate happening via machine sounds. Rosa Barba's piece "Coro Spezzato: The future lasts one day" has developed a new dimension of drawing sound into space. She based her installation on the Venetian polychoral singing styles invented during the Renaissance. Polychoral singing techniques are several choirs singing inside one church at different locations. Hereby they created an acoustical experience directing ones attention to their surroundings. Barba's piece was composed by the sounds of five 16mm projectors instead of church choirs. Words were projected on the gallery walls echoing a chorus as a solo and a duet. The rhythmic clicking of the projector accompanied the lyrics with an unsteady motion.

When I stepped into the room I was a little disappointed that it wasn't completely dark. I wanted to be consumed by the celluloid's magic. It took me some time to realize that this wasn't primarily about celluloid; it was about melodies you couldn't hear but which your brain started to create unconsciously. The speed of the projectors combined with the projected words caused this acoustic association in your brain. It was like a Fata Morgana. When I heard the sound it created a melodic fantasma like an audio trompe l'oeil. Instead of shooting intimate sceneries that appear transitional and finite, Barba created moving pictures, creating an intimate and personal experience for the viewer. Everyone will have had another melody popping up in his or hers brain.

Retrospectively, I hope we are all on our way toward an inside revolution. There is great need for this in our overwhelming external world, which has bombed so much of our inner peace. For me it isn't necessary anymore to search for shocks while viewing art. I would rather have someone take my hand and leads me to a place of peace. Both artists have done this in a beautiful manner at the 53rd Venice Biennale.