

## **SILVIA MEI / text, video and photos, sound manipulations? /**

*Embodied beauty. Between painting and pornography.*  
By Silvia Mei

Looking at Giovanni Boldini's whole work, the painter born in Ferrara and grown up in Paris, I found some interesting canvasses, they are evidently his less famous and less fetching canvasses. His painting called *Macelleria in Piazza delle Erbe a Verona* (Butchery in Piazza delle Erbe in Verona, year 1890, oil painting, cm. 35x27, private collection) represents a break in 20th Century and anticipates the European Modern Art of at least 50 years, it reminds closely Francis Bacon's art.

The representation of the eviscerated and beheaded animal is a kind of antithesis of the bright headed and big eyes' women painted by the art master, as you can admire in his *Ritratto della contessa Matilde Franzoni* (Portrait of Countess Matilde Franzoni, year 1892, oil painting, cm. 116x86, private collection). Hands and face of the represented woman are definitely out of proportion.

In his canvasses *Macelleria*, Boldini gives the quartered animal a bystander's head. It is a kind of comment to the un-sex flesh hanging down the hook: it is probably a female animal, soft female veal, woman's flesh, the most trembling flesh that moves the figure and gives her a vanishing effect. Like in *Nudo di giovane con i capelli rossi* (Young naked with red hair, year 1914, oil canvasses, cm. 80x40, private collection) where the red colour works as shield of the naked figure: the chromatic contrast to the whiteness is too dazzling and the body can't be violated by spectator's gazes. The perfect necklines painted by Boldini are too sliding and prevent to look at the rest, to have a clean view of the erogenous parts.

That butcher flesh emanates an unbearable woman's smell, a smell of sex. It is Boldini's clearest bawdiness. It is the most pornographic canvasses of all impressionistic and post-impressionistic canvasses. Even Toulouse-Lautrec was not able to reach such licentiousness. When sex is represented in such an explicit way on the woman's body, it can not be represented anymore, it become a sort of machine or can be represented only in zoomorphic ways, as it happens with Carmen's dancing hips in

Merime's novel where they are figured with cow's buttocks. The non-to-be represented in Boldini can be visibly translated in another sensation: it becomes a smell like in *Viole del pensiero* (Pansy, year 1910, oil canvass, cm. 46x66, private collection), where two open hands trying to reach the bunch of flowers transfigures the so deeply erotic and expressive legs with the vegetable metaphor of the bunch. The more explicit is pleasure, the bigger is the transfiguration. That is: sexual acting out is so traumatic when it appears in all its carnality, so that bodies loose their normal organization and becomes "un-representable", they simply *can't be represented*.

This capitulation of the flesh mixed with pleasure is hugely voyeuristic and beats the paradox with Frenhofer who painted Honoré de Balzac's *Capolavoro sconosciuto* (Unknown masterpiece, year 1831, 1837) where the artist is obsessed by his model and lover. His painting is an amorphous masterpiece and is very closet o Boldini's naked figures; his canvas seems a moving picture, without object.

Looking at the above mentioned Boldini's paintings I wonder if a pornographic painting has ever existed in the same way as at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century landscape or portrait competed with the photography. (Photography has produced a wide array of pornography and has widespread the new medium and enhanced an iconography that is enjoyed as pure image).

No, it does not exist a pornographic painting, or at least it doesn't exist in the same way as it expressed through photography. It exists rather a tradition of pornographic illustration (line and drawing fit better the representation of tangled bodies as oil colours does not). Pornography in painting is a kind of profanation, as an intruding and tactless gaze that slips in the flesh and reminds to the female sex organ. Maybe in this sense, only Coubert was able to be really bold with his painting *L'origine del mondo* (Origino f the world), a highly ironic portrait of a non objectified woman's body represented as a re production mean and nota s a pleasure one. (the op position between the "marxist" title and the representation is piercing). The misogynous Degas, the flaneur, would never reach such a point. He evocated the woman sex in an oxymoron way, as it did painting blotches of blood in his *Stupro* (Rape) (see picture), where the blood-stained linen under the young girl captures the her customer or her rapist.

Michel Henry writes in *Incarnazione*: "In pornography there is an effort to pull at the highest level the objectivity of the erotic relationship so that all has to be seen".

Surely the face is the privileged place of the epiphany of the unseen, of the nakedness and for that reason also the most convenient place to be desecrated. The face has been immortalized by the portrait first and the photography and movie later that capture well detailed woman's faces.

From Boldini to Klimt the distance is very short. Everyone remember Munch's *Madonna* or the Wiener Sezession's *Giuditta* on a golden background. Also Boldini enhances the eyes' expression and the marble-like body's whiteness and smoothness. A sort of Medusa who is looking at oneself and by staring herself, in her profanation and her stripping off, petrifies herself. The game between embodiment and, profanation and petrification outwears visibly in Greta Garbo portraits, whose face has become a cult object, simply an object to look at in contrast to Marilyn Monroe's sexual face.

**Barthes's comment on Garbo's face:**

**[one minute long clip with a series of moving images on Garbo's]**

Coming back to pornography, the face has a fundamental value in the pop porno because it is a token of the pleasure, surface where the unseen becomes visible. Or better said, face that is physically a surface, non individualized, anonymous; an outline rather than a cast of features where the pleasure's lines are traced.

The facial is *topos* of pop porno. As we can see in this last videoclip the facial genre is evocated and not sublimated thanks the gaze, our gaze, that becomes tactile and it is stimulated by the inner intrusion of the camera's mouth and its sliding on the polished surfaces of lips and eyes that reminds the sex liquidities.

**[videoclip on Mina, *Ancora ancora ancora*, "Mille luci", 1978]**

**[Reading of Balzac, *Il capolavoro sconosciuto*, 1837, in Didi-Huberman, p. 136].**

## **LONGING AND DISPAIR / granulacije /**

Man is not only an anxious and suffering animal, but he is above all a shy animal, easily caught and impaled between longing and despair.

## **SHAME MANTRA / granulacije, subrev, vocoder, wav /**

## **TIHANA + WNDV / granulacije, vokal, subrev, študija2, beatmachine/**

glej text od tihane

## **I DANCE ALONE /beatmachine, movement, pressure sensores, action with pressure sensors/ maja movement**

- About my work: I am encountering the wall of unconsciousness of others of my work. I am ashamed as I wish to have my work known and it remains unknown.
- I wish to invest my affect in many objects: in family, in friends, in art, in travel, in work, and I am shamed because I can't do it.
- I wish to be creative. I am ashamed if my work is judged to be in the mainstream of contemporary opinion.
- I always felt I am bright dancer and was ashamed because too much work was just muscular.
- I believe that my work is imaginative, rich and suggestive and sometimes lacks precision, rigor, exactness, so I feel shamed by any suggestion of error.
- I wish my work to have impact on a wider audience, but mostly specialists take note of it and I experience shame.

EMOTIONALLY UNEMPLOYED /song, text/

## **ADELE /text, pisk, pulz??/**

Frozen Images. I noted a massive use of narcissistic female body iconography still used by pornography and mass media. The Playboy magazine's icon, a rabbit, appears for a while on the screen behind Wanda and unveils as evident the pornographic source.

In my mind I linked this assembly of pictures and provocative lap dance gestures with the large, bold artworks of Barbara Kruger that assimilate images taken from the deluge of mass media in contemporary society. Pictures and words derived from television, film, newspapers and magazines comprise the media's powerful ability to communicate. Using these same media effects and strategies in a critical way, Barbara Kruger creates her own sexual, social and political messages, effectively challenging the stereotypical ways the mass media influences society's notions about gender roles, social relationships and political issues.

In a 1984 article focused on Barbara Kruger, American art critic Craig Owens develops the notion of "the rhetoric of the pose". Drawing on the work of Lacan, Owens suggest that "to strike a pose is to present oneself to the gaze of the other as if one were already frozen, immobilized- that is, already a picture.

Wanda –through her aggressive adoption of costumes, props, wig and erotic dance poses – perform the female picture through a reiteration of the visually installed tropes of femininity which crosses them with a complex system of signification that includes videotapes, writings and other enactments. Less caustic as Kruger's work, Wanda aggressivity flows on the biting voice that use the shouting as alienated locus through which Wanda can appropriate her self-made subjectivity.

## **LUKA'S TEXT ON MEDIA /radio live, italijanski radio posnetek, subrev/**

Key cultural operators territorialise and privatise public

resources. This leads to elitism and uncritical reiteration of preferred authors.  
Free streaming technology and telepresence software opens a possibility for new affordable spaces for performance.  
In late capitalism we are bombarded with images of body. We are manipulated with the notions of freedom and pleasure through the visual. It's an environment that increasingly segregates people by way of ethically questionable free market logic principles.  
Free software and open standards encourage innovation, cooperation and solidarity in developed and developing world.  
Processing of the audio/visual and the corporeal on a stage is an important strategy to subvert the numbing and blinding effects of contemporary life. Let's invent our own ways how to position our perceptions of self in relation to freedom, pleasure and society of (promised) wealth.  
Let's open new spaces of visibility for performance and new media art. We need to actively bypass power structures that have a hold on physical spaces of artistic representation.  
Let's forge connections to new online audiences and collide different specifics of various artistic media.

## **TERMINOLOGY /soft soundscape/**

identification thread  
shame  
mechanism of resonance  
shame

## **MAJA'S TEXT /text, wav, ???/**

Vivo in un periodo e in una societa' che glorificano illimitatamente il vincitore.  
Il migliore e' lui, e lui solo. Successo, accettazione, amore significa - essere al top.  
Sentirsi felici e contenti per il successo di un altro?  
Quell'altro e' sempre un rivale. Se il rivale ha successo, sono ancora piu' lontano dalla mia meta.  
Il successo del rivale e' la mia sconfitta. E' accaduto con il

padre, il fratello, giocando con i coetanei,  
nel lavoro, nelle relazioni d'amore. Conosco bene la vergogna e  
l'invidia.  
Nessuna relazione ne e' al sicuro.

I live in a time and society that glorifies into limitlessness  
the winner. The one and only that is the best. Success,  
acceptance, love means - to be on the top. Feeling happy and  
content at success of other? That other is always a rival. If  
rival is successful, I am even further away from my goal.  
Rival's success is my loss. It had happened with father,  
brother, in the play with peers, in the work, in love relations.  
I know shame and envy well. No relation is safe from that.