

Le souci de soi

In the broad field of the representation, the work of Alice Hamon oscillates between the fiction and the reality to define a better position to mark with a cross on a world map.

Let us stop on this roof covered with chalk in the middle of a green landscape (*Ici Ailleurs* 2013), we see the artist's intervention in a remote zone and we understand quickly that walking is her first pleasure. Within this intervention two actions are at play: The drawing in the manner of a framework and an aerial photography which is almost floating.

The critical point of this work is determined by a question taking shape and emerging from the image, is it a drawing or a photography we want to represent?

All becomes undecided but in the same time precisely laid out with the choice of frame and focal. In another photography (*Bains des dames*, 2007), we find an image of a drawing inscribed in a landscape, shown this time in a Mupi around which the space has been invested by children. We enter the urban environment where social relationships take shape, another track game settles down and troubles us about the order of priorities; a space creates a second one bordering with the surrealism of Magritte.

Alice Hamon's photos oscillate peculiarly between an image of reality and fine art photography, between the idea of walking dear to Cartier-Bresson and the idea of a relational esthetic from Nicolas Bourriaud. It is within an indecision, a refusal of choice or within the assertion of a double-choice that posture and point of view give full meaning; the work is indefinite or to determine.

By playing with mock documentary and choosing locations affected by troubled current history (*Sour* in Lebanon and *Island Arwad* in Syria, 2011) that fills the images with an emotional load, and by interweaving them with other places or cities (*Lokken* in Denmark, 2013) where peace and well being reside, the work shows how the world becomes a ground for a game of contradictions at the reach of a sole person.

Here we can see that photography has matter of politic which involve and responsabilize directly its author. Perhaps, with this case of the image within the image, there is a way out, a possible distancing from a critical position in order to preserve the freedom to travel keeping at bay the pathos of actuality.

Karim Grandi-Baupain, mars 2014

Trad. Anthony Faroux

A certain quality of presence

Susan Sontag writes: "The painter constructs, the photographer discloses." And add later in her essay "On Photography": "By nature, a photo can never completely transcend its subject as a painting can." This is probably why a visual artist like Alice Hamon is at the crossroads of photography, painting and installation. Her works construct and disclose like this large photography on PVC canvas (5m x 7.5m) displayed in the center of the exhibition "The City in Art" at the Orangery of the Senate in Paris last June.

Apparent subject: Calade (it's the title). A fragment of the port seen from the terrace of a social housing block. But this terrace photographed overhanging, fills half the surface of the work and was invested by geometric traces drawn with chalk. In such a way that here is the apparent subject transcended. It looks like Alice Hamon thought about lessons from Edward Weston, one of the pioneers of photography who prophesied the advent of a subversive photography as a unveiling venture.

It is true that the popular neighborhood of Marseille chosen by Alice Hamon has nothing remarkable. But she intervened in the heart of the landscape - at least in the heart of the image that she draws - to which she offer a contrast, an emotional charge that changes everything. For photographers, there is no aesthetical superiority between the effort to beautify the world and the opposite effort to tear off its mask. It is to this double task that Alice Hamon devotes herself with virtuosity as evidenced by the spectacular piece sent to the Orangery of the Senate.

Walter Benjamin taught that a common criterion of excellence between painting and photography could be the presence. The presence was a characteristic feature of the work of art but he doubted that a photograph, to the extent that it was a mechanically reproduced object, could have a real presence. Unless the photography was only one of the components of a complex device where the artist intervened according to a carefully considered project. This is obviously the case of Alice Hamon's work which stands out for its exceptional quality of presence.

Susan Sontag is right when she underlies that photography, while not an art form of its own, has this special power of transforming everything it takes into an artwork. One could even say with her that today "all art aspires to the condition of photography". This is What Alice Hamon demonstrates with an exemplary efficiency.

Jean-Luc Chalumeau

Verso n°116 Magazine, Arts and Lettres - jan/february 2006

Trad. Anthony Faroux 2019