

The “always never seen” of Keiichi Tahara

There are already so many things, words, people fluttering in all directions! How to navigate? For his part, Keiichi Tahara has decided to focus his psychic sensibility and photographic perception on just one. But, so that all is not caught up in mute fascination, he chooses this ultimate thing, which is vibrating, fluctuating on the verge of the melting point, where it can take on an unforeseeable power of proliferation. And to compose a groping gaze, to locate the edges of a nascent world, he must perform a radical deframing of the photographic act, by relinquishing the old ideal of objective denotation and by refocusing on the mutations of visual enunciation that result from his “weapons” of the most sophisticated technical means.

Paradoxically the “never seen,” which is thereby revealed, fits perfectly with the “already seen” of the most archaic, the most archetypal, such that we can speak of a machinic or machined subjectivity produced by this complex *dispositif*, which is the most intimate that can be sensed without ever becoming familiar. Because there is no fixed orientation, because there is the wandering like a dead soul that the mourning rituals have not yet appeased.... Threatening by its arbitrary yet necessary burden, reassuring by its stowing the most assured evidence. Yes! It’s a window, it’s a radiator, it’s a guy with glasses wearing a round cap.... From what visual effects can we identify this turning-upon-itself of Keiichi Tahara’s objective and this new primacy of enunciation?

First of all, those of its outermost presentation: we have the shadows cast by the frames as a result of their angle of arrangement on the walls of the exhibition space as well as the abrupt reflections of the supporting glass; and the rhythmic choices determining their spatial layout according to multiple temporalities; in short, an entirely ephemeral art, familiar to the Orient, which makes manifest incorporeal crystals; the iconic content subsisting, for a time, only as existential pretexts. Then, as a disharmonious counterpoint, we have the intrusion of surface singularities—scratches, rubbings, streaks, various impressions—inherited from the techniques of painting today. (I surprised myself by wanting to erase, tissue in hand, some traces embedded in a print that in fact remain as a technical purity without equal!)

For its part, the internal framing has been designed to generate a permanent instability of the relations between figure and

ground, as much in depth as on the surface. The primary modules of semiotization thus find themselves in a condition that allows percepts and affects to work, so to speak, of their own accord. Rather than the Freudian “primary process” of dreams—too much at the mercy of blowback from “secondary elaboration”—I’m thinking here about the “functional phenomena” specific to the crepuscular states described by Herbert Silberer or the “primary delusional experiences” identified by Karl Jaspers that accompany what is commonly called “delusional flashes.” But don’t misunderstand me. It’s not at all a question of comparing these photographs to the images of projective tests like the Rorschach, whose obsessive symmetries program an irremediable subjective closure. As machines that undo the common sense of forms, Keiichi Tahara’s diagrams throw us, on the contrary, into a universe without foreseeable ends, without the delimitations of identity. The scenes of heterogeneous enunciation are determined by singular matters, of which no structural paradigm can deliver the key. Chords of unheard-of-senses are deployed by harmonies and dissonances that are not accountable to any principle of contradiction or sufficient reason. A piece of Montblanc silver paper ignites on contact with a frame leaning against the corner of the wall.... A comet at twilight passes through an ether of granular sensuality.... A tropical explorer—again the guy with the round cap—hovers between parquet floorboards and a forest of domestic sequoias.... A pane of glass explodes into kanji gesticulations then solidifies as a futuristic Zen temple.... *A Victory of Samothrace*—still in silver paper—is poised to jump out the window.... An abstract of Mondrian, who had been dozing since the dawn of time above the radiator, awakens to a greenhouse effect worthy of Vuillard or Bonnard.... The ego, the I, the other, and everything else subsequently cascade down into a dark aquarium in which the impassive eye of an Egyptian fish is enthroned....

* This text, translated by Jay Hetrick, was originally published in French in 1985 and is forthcoming in Félix Guattari, *Machinic Eros: Writings on Japan*, eds. Gary Genosko and Jay Hetrick (Minneapolis: Univocal, 2015). Courtesy of Univocal Publishing.





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