

A Timeline of Silence

The work of Yiannis Theodoropoulos

In his photographs, Yiannis Theodoropoulos invents, excavates, reconstructs and transforms the objects that live in his house, which doubles as his studio. This process is far from a diaristic or a mnemonic one. The ancestral home is riven by childhood and adolescence family images, and while these are traumatic and haunting at times, the home nevertheless remains an inexhaustible source of inspiration for the visual arts photographer.

In the intimate space of the home, Theodoropoulos creates possible spaces and possible stagings. This fixation on one's roots speaks of return but also of distance. The artist returns to these places to reminisce, but also to share with us what he sees today, in the present tense. Through this conditional return, his photographs do not depict "times past".

The space of the home/studio is not idealized but neither is it imaginary, dreamy. In it, the familiar and the uncanny coexist. Theodoropoulos's photographs bring to the surface the silence of the space. He searches. He moves step by step into a past that becomes present. He returns not to the space of the home to recount the events of the past, nor to remember and try to bring a part of history into the present. He returns alone, and it is precisely through this stillness, this quietness that he pinpoints that which is of the utmost significance. His photographs carry the allure of the home/studio. The memory of the space is turned inside out, like a glove being removed. The artist becomes a topographer creating a microgeography of the space's atmosphere. The objects in his house, an armchair for example, are photographed in spaces other than the ones they habitually occupy while the artist infuses them with a future reality. Thus is born a mythology of the real, in which the present clashes with the times of old.

Skilfully avoiding re-enactments of the past, the photographer chases after his desired motif. In his research and his pursuit of the photographic subject we discern a particular movement, a method generated by an obsession (*idée fixe*). There is a sense of stoicism in this method. There is dedication here, endurance even. Out of nowhere, something suddenly appears. He captures this random image which is discreet and unexpected but at the same time explosive. An encounter takes place between the photographer's eye and his subject. This random find carries within it the essence of the search, the path that links past and present, disrupting the familiar environment.

Theodoropoulos is fascinated by these random appearances of his subjects. He steps into the role of a traveller, a sightseer in an enclosed, limited and finite space. The things he shares his home with, these varied objects, the stuff of life, are tidied up in a random encounter, in a new space-time continuum. What was about to be lost paradoxically appears.

His photographs provide a momentary opening to what is concealed. They exhibit a "decor" which constantly fluctuates and disappears. In what is a rather indifferent background, he seeks the form's surrounding environment. He inhabits a space which persistently, as well as systematically, awaits its own devouring. The artist's lens seeks to define his new subject which swallows up the existing object, leaving behind it only abandoned residues, corpses,

wrecks of the past. In that moment everything is at play. His approach entails a continuous montage of shifts, excerpts and riddles. This is an almost sacred solitude of the subject, of the shot devoid of metaphysical references. Theodoropoulos' photographs touch us like a distorting mirror.

The objects photographed dissolve under the artist's piercing gaze. His aesthetic is predetermined. Here we are dealing with carefully planned out details, distances that are meticulously thought through. The various objects that present to the contemporary viewer an anachronistic taste are sorted through and distinguished as they are transposed into a novel context. Through a bric-à-brac chaos and constant shifts, the photographer shoots wondrous and compelling images, all the while resisting the charms of whatever sense of lightness there may be. Avoiding the temptations of past forms, Theodoropoulos battles with himself searching for his shot with unspeakable desire. We can, therefore, talk of the "death" of the heirloom.

Despite their private and personal starting point, his images are not commemorative. They are stripped of the past. The approach is akin to a purge. Every photograph constitutes a catharsis, a metaphorical levitation of sorts. The artist is not interested in documentation. With simultaneous rigour and simplicity and with swift precision he isolates and immobilizes: *This* is his method. He photographs in a crystalline, unambiguous way that allows no room for fickleness. He deconstructs and reconstructs as if in a dream. In his photographic montages he invents new hierarchies. His beautiful images couldn't be any less detached and uninvolved. Quite the opposite is in fact the case.

Theodoropoulos's works don't reflect his personal environment. We are drawn to his images, and are fascinated so much by them because despite the fact that the home/studio seems to be an experiential space, the images themselves are not esoteric dramas.

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Translated from Greek by Irimi Bachlitzanaki