

Estrangement

PROJECT PRESENTATION

The outer walls of the Kaaba like structure are covered with images of disintegration. The visitor walking unawares around the structure seems to be invited through a low-lit corridor just past an inexplicable monitor. This dark labyrinth is flooded with concepts that shape and guide our lives. Ordinary photographs of abandoned ships on the deserted dried shores of Lake Aral appear to have become works of art when encased in ornate frames. Quotes from Susan Sontag on the wall at the end of the corridor provoke the common views on photography. The labyrinth within this world of images, opens to an expansive room. A photograph of a piece of a piece of destroyed nature covers the entire wall. The floor is covered in handwriting dating back to 1844 explaining the estrangement of man from himself. Marx lies under the visitor's feet! The visitor moves between dark walls through a narrow passage into a room. There is a spotlight on the ceiling which lights up a fishbowl with one red fish in it. The only other furniture in the room is a Maroken armchair.

Philip Glass plays 'The Thin Blue Line - Hypnotic Time' faintly in the background. On the wall there is a photograph of a scrap car abandoned in nature and among the bush there is a security camera, hardly visible. A sign in front of the fishbowl indicates that the fish has not been fed since September 13th 2013 and has been abandoned, left to die. The question is how will the visitor react to this. There are no other exits from this room. The camera which appears to be a security camera is actually a close captioned camera which is broadcast on the monitor at the entrance where the visitor came in.

STATEMENT

As we move from the comfort of our secure modern compounds to entertaining shopping centers, we don't notice the landscape. Perception is selective.

"It" is valued and so photographed.

The one who shares and the one who likes recreate this world built upon these images. And to one another each is 'the other'

Existence has a price and it is paid.

The individual drifts with involuntary waves, roles change;

Our miracles awaken awe but both the creator and the consumer have become strangers to what was produced.

Boundaries fade.

When we need change it is 'the other' our eyes search for.

Alas the other is but a dream.

Life, in all its simplicity awaits us.

“... Photography ... is mainly a social rite, a defense against anxiety, and a tool of power... As photographs give people an imaginary possession of a past that is unreal, they also help people to take possession of space in which they are insecure... Taking photographs has set up a chronic voyeuristic relation to the world which levels the meaning of all events... Photographing is essentially an act of non-intervention... To take a picture is to have an interest in things as they are, to be in complicity with whatever makes a subject interesting, worth photographing... Photography implies that we know about the world if we accept it as the camera records it. But this is the opposite of understanding, which starts from not accepting the world as it looks. All possibility of understanding is rooted in the ability to say no. Strictly speaking, one never understands anything from a photograph... Industrial societies turn their citizens into image-junkies; it is the most irresistible form of mental pollution... In the past a discontent with reality expressed itself as a longing for another world. In modern society, a discontent with reality express itself forcefully and most hauntingly by the longing to reproduce this one. As if only by looking at reality in the form of an object – through the fix of the photograph – is it really real, that is, surreal... Poetry’s commitment to concreteness and to the autonomy of the poem’s language parallels photography’s commitment to pure seeing. Both imply discontinuity, disarticulated forms and compensatory unity; wrenching things from their context (to see them in a fresh way), bringing things together elliptically, according to the imperious but often arbitrary demands of subjectivity... A capitalist society requires a culture based on images... The production of images also furnishes a ruling ideology. Social change is replaced by a change in images. The freedom to consume a plurality of images and goods is equated with freedom itself. The narrowing of free political choice to free economic consumption requires the unlimited production and consumption of images... Whatever the moral claims made on behalf of photography, its main effect is to convert the world into a department store or museum – without walls in which every subject is depreciated into an article of consumption, promoted into an item for aesthetic appreciation...”

Susan Sontag – On Photography - (1977, New York)

“... In estranging from man 1 nature, and 2 himself, his own active functions, his life activity, estranged labor estranges the species from man. It changes for him the life of the species into a means of individual life. First it estranges the life of the species and individual life, and secondly it makes individual life in its abstract form the purpose of the life of the species, likewise in its abstract and estranged form... For labor, life activity, productive life itself, appears to man in the first place merely as a means of satisfying a need – the need to maintain physical existence. Yet the productive life is the life of the species. It is life-engendering life. The whole character of a species, its species-character, is contained in the character of its life activity; and free, conscious activity is man’s species-character. Life itself appears only as a means to life... Estranged labor turns thus: 3 Man’s species-being, both nature and his spiritual species-property, into a being alien to him, into a means of his individual existence. It estranges from man his own body, as well as external nature and his spiritual aspect, his human aspect. 4 An immediate consequence of the fact that man is estranged from the product of his labor, from his life activity, from his species-being, is the estrangement of man from man. When man confronts himself, he confronts the other man.

Karl Marx – 1844 Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts