

Scenes from private life

Photography and the codes of theatricality

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Still Life (2005)
110 x 136 cm



Tempo, Agosto 2003
126 x 163 cm

While an individual exhibition is currently showing at Mk Galerie in Rotterdam, Duarte Amaral Netto (n. 1976) presents in Lisbon, at Módulo, the “Between two Worlds” exhibition, composed of eight color images of various formats. The photographs are not linked to seemingly significant events, they don’t document or declare any content worth considering. The lack of a clear sense is its most noticeable common sense.

A restless muteness pervades all photographs equally, regardless of the strategic context chosen by the photographer. A closer look will later check, in each one of them, that it is all staged. From the bourgeois vulgarity of the settings to the attitude of the characters, through the oriented use of light, everything is calculated so that it attains a certain disposition.

And, however, that territory of hesitation that each image constitutes is the fuse of psychological drama that insinuates itself without ever being revealed. In the first image one sees an absent-minded man, sitting in a kitchen, who is hiding his head with the arm. In the next two images, a boy and a girl are, respectively, surrounded by a scenario of vegetation, traditionally identified as prone to contemplation. Several other larger photographs, and in panoramic format, show couples in hotel rooms or domestic environments. The panoramic format that sets the characters in the image apart suggests a separation and creates various polarizations between feminine and masculine that extend to the exhibition’s title. On the other hand, titles such as “Last night” or “The Party” lead us to fictional data that one doesn’t see but that re-orientates our relation with what one sees

A diffuse silence pervades all of these images, we said. But it isn’t about a silence with neither origin nor continuation. Everything they lead to happens outside of them. In the immobility of each scene, frames of staleness are calculated. They are placed, purposefully, in a moment of suspension created by the photographic dispositive that sets in them its psychological theatricality, relational and affective. That theatricality comes, historically, from far away, transports codes of representation of ancient painting and of some modern realism, capable of expressing a psychological density. It comes to materialize its slow artifice on the instantaneous act of a photograph, question its relation with any one truth. In its relation with time, the whole image assumes a chain of plots that precedes it and another that extends it beyond the moment of its setting. Untangling that ball of thread is, in the case of Duarte Amaral Netto’s photography, our difficult role.

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