

Vlatka Horvat – About hybridization and hiding spots

When I initially encountered Vlatka Horvat's work I remember first thinking about the romantic concept of the Sublime. The idea of the human subject acknowledging its insignificance in relation to the majestic magnitude of nature and therefore surrendering and abandoning itself to it. In her series *End in Sight* (2017), a sequence of photographs depicting different people within various outdoor spaces, the artist has cut out and re-positioned a small side portion of each picture so to align the horizon line while obliterating the human figure. Here the subject is de-centralized, denied its core role within the image. Horvat intervenes on the original structure of the image to de-construct and re-configure existing hierarchies among the elements that define it, both visually and conceptually.

In this series as well as across a number of other works, the artist explores the landscape from different perspectives. Looking at it as an artistic subject as well as a physical environment, questioning the status of the human being in relation to such environment and therefore addressing the on-going negotiation between nature and humanity. Although Horvat's artistic operation partly suggests the idea of the man as being swallowed by an overwhelming environment, I would say she is rather pointing towards relations of encounter and coexistence, exchange and reciprocity.

The question foregrounding her research into the landscape is both of artistic nature as well as related to her experience as a human being. On one hand the artist is thinking about her position in relation to the spaces and contexts she is inhabiting, a concern that potentially opens up, moving from the personal sphere and extending into a broader universal ground regarding the human subject at large.

On the other hand the artist pushes the reciprocity and interpenetration between the human figure and its surrounding space to the point of posing a question on the identity of the artistic subject. What is the actual subject of the images we are looking at? Where does the epicentre of the composition stand? Is it even relevant to be searching for a central subject within these compositions? Perhaps we should look at this imagery simply as the collapse of two – complementary - visual dimensions.

Perhaps the key to these speculations lies in the element of the line.

As a matter of fact, Horvat's investigation into the landscape - whether this is natural or constructed - seems to culminate with a particular focus onto the line of the horizon, a recurring theme within her work, an element indicating both the finitude of the human being and its tension towards unlimited possibilities.

At times, the horizon is even abstracted and dissociated from the reality of the landscape. The artist stretches it and distorts, alienates it from any actual spatial context to turn it into pure image...or action. The line embodies a movement of cutting, removing and shifting ... the line defines the way in which the artist re-imagines a given figure. It is the division between before and after, the space of tension and shift towards a new formulation. The line is the tool to re-think and re-imagine the mode of conceiving, articulating and presenting the human subject. It is a vibrant space, a fertile ground incubating new potentialities for the image.

As much as that obliterating act might appear brutal and invasive, I would read it as transformative and constructive intervention, suggestive of new modes of representation of the subject in itself. Horvat's line is neither a scar nor a mutilation but instead a re-configuration. Through removal and exclusion it generates new space, new territories for the subject to inhabit.

Actually, I would suggest it even implies an element of visual deception and playfulness. Operating as both a physical and semiotic threshold, the line doesn't only allow forms of hybridation or apparent transfiguration: it marks the disappearance of the subject. The figure is hiding, or being hidden or, perhaps, insinuating a different way of being "present", excluding some of the factors that define its conventional representation so to bring forward other possibilities. A little bit like what happens when one of our senses is disabled: the remaining ones are suddenly amplified. And so it is for the human figure: its fragmentation empowers might empower its own depiction and constitution as a subject.

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