

Luzia Simons

interviewed by Emma Coccioli

There are many different artists inspired by the subject of the flower, I am mentioning some of them: Peter Fischli/David Weiss, Vera Lutter, Roger Ballen, Eliška Bartek, Wilfried Bauer, Vera Mercer, Amin El Dib, Thomas Florschuetz, Erwan Frotin, Hans Hansen, Sandra Kantanen, Martin Klimas, Ioulex, Remy Markowitsch, Jessica Backhaus, Dietmar Busse, Holger Niehaus, Mika Ninagawa, Jorma Puranen, Christian Rothmann, Miron Schmiückle, Collier Schorr, Michael Wesely, Takashi Arai, Mario Carrieri, Cy DeCosse, Debby Krim, Nicholas Alan Cope & Dustin Edward Arnold...

What is the reason for your special fascination in this flower and how do you envision the love it represents?

I am fascinated by discoveries. In Istanbul it was the representation of the tulip in Ottoman ornaments - in turn in Amsterdam it was its representation in painting, especially in still lifes. Completely different perspectives and meanings of the same political, geographical or artistic theme interweave. The wild tulip did come originally from the steppes of Kazakhstan, Turkey has managed to cultivate them, and the Dutch succeeded very well in commercializing them. The series entitled "Stockage" refers that: trade, warehouses, stock market shares. The speculation with tulips is also a good example of the first stock market crash in economic history – in 1637 in the Netherlands.

They say that love of flowers varies according to their color: Red tulip, declaration of love; Yellow tulip, may mean despairing love or: "the sun is in your smile"; Violet tulip, modesty. What special values do you attribute to your tulips?

My interest is more focused on the layers and the nuances of perception, where finer differences become visible. The global market economy consists not only of a transfer of goods and technology, but at the same time of one of cultures and their allocations of meanings. That the tulip means life and love in the Persian, Turkish and Iraqi cultures might appear not contemporary to us, but I find it remarkable when, for example, the fallen Iran / Iraq war soldiers are symbolized by fields of red tulips. Artistically I set my attention above all on color effects that tend to painting.

It was explained that in the "Stockage" series you use tulips to question social identity and create a metaphor for globalization. Tell us what your personal experience is and what your personal ideas are regarding the theme of identity today in this globalized world, the world of the transitory.

The scanner is an implacable instrument that only deals with the surface. As if it was providing the right measuring technique to the ongoing globalization. In an enforced global conformity and commercialization of all spheres of life with the corresponding loss of culture, the motif of the "multicultural" tulips can stand in a special way for an artistic interest in localization and identity. That any "transplant", every change of cultural circle represents a painful loss of continuity, but at the same time a no less crucial enrichment of identity is indeed a topic that I have long pursued ("Transit", "Face Migration", "Aerial roots").

Would you tell us about the technique used in scanograms?

When I put real flowers on the glass of the scanner - not a pre-made reproduction, I decide against any "natural" depiction. The scanner, in contrast to the camera and the human eye, does not have any "point of view". Designed for flatbed digitizing of documents he knows neither lens nor focus. He accepts no center and no perspective alignment. It detects nothing but the juxtaposition, finds its way like a blind man and stores pixel by pixel with equal precision. Everything in the foreground is bright and sharp, everything that is deeper is lost in an uncertain darkness. Except a careful retouching of particles of dirt I deliberately waive any conceivable post processing.

Could you tell us freely about the project "Transit"?

"Transit" opens my series of works dealing with identity and continuity. I scanned my own identity papers and other autobiographical documents from Brazil, France and Germany for this project, broke them into fragments and then inserted them in 32 collages (each passport has 32 pages). In plastic shrink-wrapped and individually stapled in unfolded file folders, the installation presented in Stuttgart, Havana, São Paulo, Berlin and Rome questions the manageability of individual, social and cultural identity – a conceptual unmasking of administrative security principles allowing a look behind prescribed structures.

What is your idea of wildness and of freedom? Where are the limits to freedom?

Freedom is an achievement of civilization and as right to self-determination the most important element of all democratic constitutions. An inner boundary defines freedom itself respecting the freedom of others. This is an ethical issue. From outside, freedom is threatened by every kind of ideology. Each claim to power is a sure sign of bondage. However art - as the freest of all forms of communication - strives after discussion. In my forthcoming Amazon project, which will deal with the issue of the journey, this aspect should play an important role. Among other things, there will be a reference to Alexander von Humboldt who faced some resistance with the Freedom ideas of the French Revolution and therefore was not allowed to enter Brazil.