

Creator of tendness – State of War

Laura Martin by Arnaud Weber 2002

About art attitude & photography

Creator of tendness

Since the past ten years and on foot, Laura Martin has been roaming around with her camera, a veritable extension of her hand and has built a corpus of pictures that she blends and puts together in various compositions, striving to reveal an ear which can listen to love and tenderness, desire, loneliness, solidarity ... moments gathered from a reading, words and things that one whispers into the ear or that one writes on a wall or pens down in a notebook. She opts for two types of scales : the size of a window to the world or the size of the hollow of one's hand and all that it can contain. At the same time as this photographic journal which is all the time getting refurbished with more and more pictures snatched within reality or other settings – in the case of those images that she would have liked to encounter in their reality or that she hadn't dared take for fear of treading upon someone's privacy -, writing occupies an important place in her work. In the course of her readings, she registers fleeting thoughts that she scans later on and presents as her photographs. She considers these two modes of expression as being independent of one another, but however associates them sometimes : « photographs and texts are two plastic languages ; in the written word, I seek, in the picture, I find ».

In a constant shift between her own private life and the Other, the deep-rooted subject of her work, the one that serves as a link between all her creations, is the theme of happiness, as a pretext to encounters, as a modern day quest. She wishes to take people on a voyage that will make them dream beyond the miseries of the contemporary world. Even when she is not feeling too good, she possesses the will to construct positive images. Her motto : « the artist, the philosopher, the intellectual will be capable of finding in his fishing net both luminous flying fish and the slimy octopus from the pits. He rejects nothing. He examines everything with great attention and respect. What he honours the most is the power of the restlessness, and nothing else ». On a day-to-day basis, one must fight against whatever prevents us from acting, the sad affects, the war that is waging within us, one must draw the lines of escape, rather than chalking out concentric circles, one must not withdraw into oneself, alienate oneself. Joy is the spring and it is happiness. It is the river. Its endeavour is to call for peace and calm and she could gladly imagine comfortable beds in the spaces where her works are on display.

Of course, she is at the same time conscious, lucid with respect to suffering and misery, but she wishes to turn away those who break joy, those who put brakes on the vital elan and spontaneity, and to remain sensitive to outbursts, because this is tantamount to remaining sensitive towards the unknown in a given relationship. Generally speaking, in any case, one has to do with and not do against whatever befalls us, and one must create works that emerge from encounters, such as her kiosk, an object whose intent is to bring to the streets objects, writings, words and thoughts, her own and those of others, a shift of the private into the public arena. To recreate the link between the individual and society, to reduce social divisions, to recompose and reconcile public and private spheres.

Laura Martin asks the question : « is contemporary delight possible ? » and she is trying out the experience. To a seller in Fès who is selling balloons in his stall, she offers to inflate a few of them and hangs them on the wall beside him. Morning light traverses the scene and a poetic farandole illuminates the white surface resembling the toothed smiles of children. She captures this moment on film.

At Goxwiller, she carries along the entire village with the history of Broughton (the gift), a far-flung island from the other side of the world, and the magic works in the school which starts dreaming of fantastic voyages. Along with the baker, she carves letters in the bread which make up words such as « desire » and « rapture » and the entire village ends up making sentences which speak of love and happiness while she lights up the night with her photographs, texts, compositions and images projected on the facades of houses. The story of Jean-Paul Sartre who dug up a pond with his hands and believed that he had discovered a spring whereas he had just made a hole in the water supply line, the story of the school teacher, staging his resistance by carrying under his arms all of the 80 notebooks of his pupils and thus manages to be let off from executing the Hitlerian salute, all the stories of villages are collected in this fashion.

Stories, because « in the story, there is you », she says paying tribute to Godard. The work of Laura Martin takes its source in thoughts inspired by Heraclite that she associates with her own thoughts : « there is a hidden harmony in which differences and diversities remain blended and profoundly hidden », « how to escape from the violence of the world ? », through « necessary illusions ? » We should « create tenderness and love ».

A.WEBER, Art Historian, nov. 2002

...States of War

Whereas when she takes up a subject such as war, wars, it is once again with intimacy. The wars that the contemporary society keeps up by breaking social links, wars between individuals, which are in fact a miniature of the wars between States, wars which are born out of nothing, and generate a lot of suffering, she prefers to just hint at them rather than really showing them.

Among her corpus, she composes a triptych of diptychs : photographs, but also sounds, a resonance and a rhythm, because Laura Martin had been a musician for a very long time, an exponent of harpsichord. Sound is present in her works, it is a musical score comprising silences and violent noises which traverses the six images. At the time of the States exposure of War (Philippe Lacoue Labarthe: police chief of exposure) Laura Martin proposed 3 dyptiques :

The first diptych : « Disorders », an allegory of war within a couple. A man, a child who are sleeping amid a complete chaos of objects and clothes. They have been taken in their greatest abandon, totally powerless in their lack of consciousness in front of the camera lens, like all those families disturbed within their own homes in countries at war. But violence is elsewhere. It is latent. The couple is in the process of collapsing, falling to bits and the world that surrounds the man and the child is this reality which seeks an escape from it all, nothing is structured any more : the bodies are falling into a frame devoid of any spatial references. How can they afford to sleep ? They have escaped into their sleep, shutting off the door of their eyelids to a world which is overwhelming them. The next photograph, the war is over, the couple's place par excellence, their bed, is empty. Nothing remains except references to reality which concretises the suffering.



“Disorders“ - Laura Martin 2002

Photographs, digital print, “ 1,20 m x 1, 80 m

« Tired Schiller », the second diptych, this is yet another war, the one figuring in social divisions. A man is withdrawn into himself at a bus stop : the « Schiller » bus stop, at the edge of a road which is ripping up a forest in his heart. The context could not be more romantic than this, but a racing car surges zooming by from the background of the picture, whereas the incarnation of the poet who inspired the ode to joy of Beethoven meditates/cries/sleeps. The allegory is present, it is the immense arrogance of modern technicity in the face of human finitude. This ripped up forest, society, this solitary man, the outsider at the edge of the road, this racing car, technique and money. Two speeds, or rather one immobility and a formidable acceleration. And Laura Martin presents the two photographs in a retrochronological fashion. Technology is not a progress if it is not shared. The ode to joy is pretty much tired by today's life.



“Schiller fatigué“ – “Tired Schiller“ - Laura Martin 2002
Photographs, digital print, “ 1,20 m x 1, 80 m

The third diptych : « Just a little is enough »

In order to trigger off war, in order to provoke human wrath, sometimes hardly much is required. It is lack of understanding that transforms the world. And the tyranny of human relationships. A little bit of empathy will do no harm, an attempt at least, and once again, with very little, everything can calm down and tenderness and love will be reinstated, like in the second picture. The evocation of the after-war is composed with the triangularity of the religious paintings from the Renaissance period : a kind of modern day Pieta, secular, an alleviation which contains mute suffering. No question of forgetting, but just the calmness required to continue to live. And the torturer is not always the one that we believe him to be, today's friend is at times yesterday's enemy and vice-versa. Relationships between people thus established with a little bit of dialogue will avoid a lot of wars, but its absence will contribute to as many wars. Arnaud Weber, November 2002.



“Il suffit de peu » - « Just a little is enough “ - Laura Martin 2002
Photographs, digital print, “ 1,20 m x 1, 80 m