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Massimo Grimaldi: The archeology of Representation

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In 2001 Ian McEwan published *End of the World Blues*, an essay that addresses the rebirth of apocalyptic fantasies on the part of certain contemporary religious groups. McEwan describes an era assaulted by an infinitude of images, impossible to read; he traces a brief history of the sense of death and destruction that pervades photographic representation; and he resorts to the metaphor of vertigo when he describes the contemporary individual's coexistence with a sense of the finality of life. Citing Jorge Luis Borges, he writes: "the world inventory of photographs has been accumulating at an accelerating pace, multiplying into a near infinitude of images, into a resemblance of a Borgesian library."

Massimo Grimaldi's work expresses a sense of vertigo, similar to the one described by McEwan. The artist questions his task in a world invaded by images, and his role in a superficial reality that appears "hybrid, wan and gray."

Grimaldi finds one response in the language of art and in particular in formal research. However, while he concentrates on its specific qualities and its linguistic problems, he does not entrust art with a privileged role in society but instead sees in it the possibility of immersions in the uncertain fabric of thought. The artist proceeds by trial and error and adopts recurrent terminologies: 'opacity', 'hybridization', 'arbitrariness', 'inexpressiveness'. The image must represent form; form must emerge as a collection of characteristics, the totality of which is absorbed in complete indifference. "My works - says the artist - are not roaring tigers, but rather the quicksand that swallowed them down." Grimaldi's sculptural works (*Gianni Bugno*, 2003; *Smashed Guitar Inside A Dismantled tent*, 2006; *Charles Aznavour Object*, 2007), his graphic objects such as *Sergio Cofferati Image* (2000), up to the most recent digital works, all use a sense of dissatisfaction and incomplete comprehension. The saturated, manipulated images become illegible, the result of numerous variations, the expression of a vertigo caused by the cancellation of any original identity and the account of what the artist calls a "melancholy of an image, lost in the infinite possibility of images."

On the occasion of *What is to be done?*, the artist presents a performance/installation, *Before The Images*, 2009, which consists of images on the wall with real people leaning on them and in front of them. In this work, Grimaldi seems to want to retrace the genealogy of representation, in an archaeological journey that reveals the layers and deposits of the image, to restore a work that possesses neither memory nor excellence. The performance in particular expresses a conflict between, on the one hand, the coldness and specificity of computer-manipulated photography and, on the other, the person who stands in front of it, without any apparent relationship to it.

The artist combines and contrasts the results of a digital, algid, anti-expressive and synthetic operation with the subjective experience of the performer and the viewer who, each aware of the other's presence, exist in a single space - before the image. He triggers a short-circuit that motivates and underscores the unsuitability of both means - static image and performer - far revealing a condition of absolute discrepancy: "Two languages never provide the precise character, but always, necessarily, a precise caricatural and simplified aspect. The progressive hybridization of things (...) relativizes them and marginalizes their value."