

At the edge of the incision

by Jens Emil Sennewald

In his essay « distinct oscillation », the French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy explains the link between text and picture, by speaking about a slit, a fissure or an incision which is similar to the gap between the lips. An incision that creates meaning in what we see. Just as the open mouth gives not only words but allows us to see the dark depths, so meaning appears like an abyss. The written word inscribes this incision in oscillation between sign and line, between text and image. At this oscillation's point, constantly swinging between seeing and knowing, the meaning forms and deforms itself. [1]

Making sense

Daphné Le Sergent's work is about this oscillation. In a beautiful photography-drawing series « axis of time » she has pasted drawings cut diagonally on photographs, in a way that these two halves should make sense together as a scene. In this particular case a battle scene, military reality, real borders. Later, we are informed that these scenes come from South Korea, that she has been interested in its political history and the presence of an incision in this country which has been divided in two.

Identity formation

We also learn that Korean history has become hers, as she feels French but looks Korean. She speaks about different kinds of borders : the faultline between picture and text, especially in the « history is another day » series with barely perceptible embossed text on white paper ; the faultline between drawing and photograph, and also the crevasse in the landscape of memory and politics ; and finally the split that passes through her and forms her identity.

A route of scenes

The exhibition at Metropolis Gallery deals with a diverse range of topics all centred around the theme of a distinction and the motif of the incision. The artist invites us to walk around photographic scenes, to climb onto a platform in front of a big photograph of a security fence («as far as I, you, he can see », 2011), or to roam amongst video scenes, playing with the boundary between documentary or fiction.

There are so many of these representations, that it almost seems repetitive, but the way that the work is divided by its focus allows the viewer to immerse themselves in one of the different aspects of the central question of the exhibition : how to (re) present, how to know or recognise, how to make sense ?

The body's place

If this question is always the question of the body, of the positioning of the body and confrontation between bodies, which is demonstrated by the two touching fists which form a narrow fissure, reminding us of the fissure between the lips. We should then understand that this artist is concerned with the body and its gestures. Apart from collages and photographs, video is the major artistic medium of Daphné Le Sergent, who also teaches at Paris 8 university and leads conferences. In this role, she wears both the hats of visual artist and art critic and so is concerned with the link between text and picture. In her exhibition at Metropolis Gallery, she has decided to vary this work with something she has mastered stunningly : gestures within the image.

By inserting text into the video image (notably in « Politic, Face », 2012), and by choreographing sound and image, she points at every stage of the route to the limits of what pictures can possibly contain. By showing us the « reverse of the gesture » and constructing and deconstructing it in images, she points us to what motivates each image : the encounter

Call for reply

In the text, quoted earlier Jean-Luc Nancy reminds us that this meeting demands a response, a reply, leading him to speak about « distinct oscillation » between text and picture. Daphné Le Sergent's work stands at the edge of the incision to explore the potential forms of oscillation. It is up to the viewer to find an adequate form of response.

[1] Jean-Luc Nancy, « L'oscillation distincte », in : J-L Nancy, Régis Durand et al., *Sans commune mesure*, Paris : Scheer 2002, p. 6-19