

I do not want to disappear silently into the night

Katrien de Blauwer

published by **Giuliana Prucca - AVARIE**

AVARIE WITH KATRIEN DE BLAUWER

<project>

Katrien de Blauwer's <collages> are meeting Giuliana Prucca's <avarie>

With this second publication Avarie continues its questioning of photographic and editorial practices, as well as the authorship of the image.

Thanks to the <short circuit> KDB's collages provoke in the representational system, the book <I do not want to disappear / silently into the night> intends to explore and deepen the concept of <emptiness> and its visibility, which is at the centre of Giuliana Prucca's critical and editorial discourse and shows itself in various forms throughout the artist's work.

<ambiguity>
KDB's project may be defined as <post-photographic>: in re-reading and re-using, in a new way, photographic images culled from various magazines, these latter ones lose their status of plain photography and the book that of a classic photo-book. In a similar way, the artist may be defined as "photographer without a camera": the framing broadens itself, taking place no longer in the lens, but in the eye, whereas the vision occurs directly in the <hand>, becoming thereby more physical and tactile.

<depersonalisation>
KDB's work is, at the same time, <intimate>, directly corresponding with our unconscious, and <anonymous> thanks to the use of <found images>, of <subjects blurred> or shot from behind, or of body parts that have been cut away. This way, her personal history becomes the history of everyone. The collage effects a kind of <universalisation>, emphasizing the impossibility to identify with a single individual, yet allowing to recognize oneself in the story. The artist becomes a <neutral intermediary>: without being the author of the photographs, she appropriates and integrates them into her own interior world, a world she's revealing in <third person>.

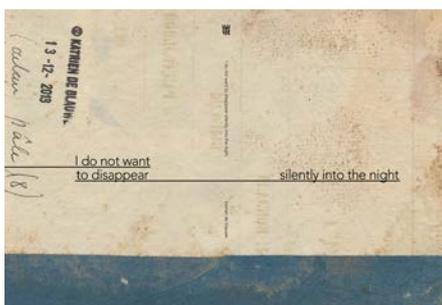
<paradox>
KDB's challenge lies not only in the <union> of <autobiography> and <impersonality>, but also and above all in the unprecedented <combination> of photographs sourced from completely different and distant time periods and locations, which are hereby transformed into a unique image. The dividing line between the two images remains visible. The images never meld into one, and they carry, through their own form, the same meaning of <separation> and <non-communication> that is conveyed by the subjects of the pictures themselves.

<cut>
KDB's work carries the meanings of <break>, <fracture> and <tear> contained in the etymology of the word <avaria>. The cut itself does not just feature as mere <fragment> of stories and bodies that are never complete and challenge the images' recognizability; the cut also works as <margin> and <horizon>, <border> as well as <frame>. It determines what is visible and leaves the rest <off-screen>, in the <void>.

<disappearance>
KDB's cut also acts as a metaphorical process of <removing> and <erasing>: the images are deprived of something that disappears from view but remains perceptible and refers to a kind of entirety. The collage itself becomes a signal that's <present and resistant>, the <form of an emptiness> that is hence never <absence> .

Taking old magazines and re-using materials which might have been dumped and forgotten, KDB gives new meaning and life to what is <residual>, saves the images from destruction and includes them in a new narration. Hers is therefore also a work about <memory>, never though by a process of <accumulation> but by <subtraction>, an evolution toward something <essential> of which her own artistic career bears all the <marks>. Since her first works composed of numerous assembled fragments, KDB is today developing a poetics that's more refined and based on the <juxtaposition> of 2 images, or of one image with its own support.

<montage>
KDB's work calls to mind the techniques of <photomontage> or <film editing>. Her collages are like <still images> that preserve nevertheless their filmic <vibration> and reflect not only the <dynamics> of the artist's rich interior world but also the urge of her search for journals and images. A kind of <performance>, KDB's work combines the <patience>, <attention> and <time> required for the choice of the materials and the <movement> that results from the act of cutting. Her process not only refers to a movie director's work of <editing>, but also to a painter's <superposition> of materials and colours: the artist uses photography and support materials not only as subjects, but as tools. Hence, KDB's collages meet Giuliana Prucca's <avarie> in the <transversality> of their language, and in the proposal of a work that's situated at the border of different artistic disciplines, from <photography> to <cinema> to <dance> and to <painting>.



The two cars continue their course. What remains is the empty road, with the tracks of the tyres in the wet.

<Michelangelo Antonioni>

We know that behind every image revealed there is another image more faithful to reality, and in the back of that image there is another, and yet another behind the last one and so on up to the true image of that absolute, mysterious reality that no one will ever see. Or maybe up to the disintegration of any image, of any reality.

<Michelangelo Antonioni>

I DO NOT WANT TO DISAPPEAR SILENTLY INTO THE NIGHT

<book contents>

Starting from Roland Barthes' remark in his letter to Michelangelo Antonioni, where he observes the director's habit of viewing things radically, even to the point of exhausting them, Avarie's new publication tries to bring together the richness of Katrien de Blauwer's work, her obsessive routine of making collages, with her aim to express what's rare and essential. A contradictory way of <fading out> by means of <profusion>.

In the resulting progression towards <emptiness>, the materials of the book blend and articulate themselves in such a way that their form keeps respecting KDB's field of investigation and leaves an <opening> for the collage's interpretation, which remains <evocative> despite being now part of a <narrative> paradigm.

<collages>

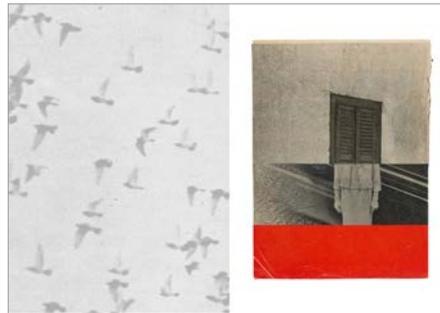
The fragility of the vintage photographs and old papers used by KDB seems to allude to the <invisibility> and <impalpability> of our interior world: our thoughts, fears, feelings, obsessions, unconscious and desires. Their <obliteration> is a constant threat, and yet they resist, remaining <material> and <trace> of an ongoing <vacillation> and <subtilization> of the mind. This <duplication of the point of view> is an element the book takes constantly into consideration, whether by deciding to divide the collages into two chapters, or by respecting their sequence within KDB's creative process: from works made of two images to those of one image only, past the "single cuts", where one photograph is cut, divided and recomposed to form a new, double image.

In answer to the first part, the objective and factual one, torn between movement and sudden standstill, the collages of the second part, less numerous and more static, appear like a <transfiguration of the reality into a dream>, the atmosphere more harmonious, ephemeral, suspended. They are neither separate nor in opposition, but rather <specular>, made of the same material which <repeats> itself though with slight <variations> and <interferences>, generating, on one hand, a doubt of vision and consequently a <shift> between true

and false, while reminding us, on the other side, what's at stake in this book: to reveal the <internal wound>, the <hidden void>, the <sense of loss> through the power of the <cut> and that of the <break>.

<backgrounds>

These are photographs cut from magazines without any intervention from the artist apart from pasting them into a <notebook>, like a <personal picture diary>. They communicate with the collages in terms of <memory> and <off-screen> settings: included in the book as a kind of <photographic blow-up>, they recollect the source from which they were taken and the material they are made of, whereas their presence is the remnant of something that shouldn't be seen, the reminder of an <absence> determined by the cut.



"I want my characters to suggest the background in themselves, even when it is not visible. I want them to be so powerfully realized that we cannot imagine them apart from their physical and social context even when we see them in empty space", Michelangelo Antonioni.

<backsides>

It's the <reverse side> of the support papers used by the artist to compose her collages. A kind of <disproportionate representation> even here, it shows what's normally not shown to the public: material directly out of the unconscious and accidental, and at the same time form of that <void of vision> inevitably produced through choice and cut. They are essentially made of <drawings>, <geometrical patterns>, <stratified colours> and cut-out <articles> in a kind of <margin> of the book's main focus and in the desire to rejoin the <graphics> of the lateral texts.

<words-collages>

KDB doesn't write, but she compiles notebooks made of sentences and headlines cut out of newspapers and magazines, appropriating also in this case someone else's vocabulary to express in a <neutral>

way her own story. The texts are primarily <short>, <essential> and <evocative>. They too belong to the same <invisible material> pertaining to the backgrounds and backsides. Not only because, in their <sharpness> they call up everything that has been <excluded>, but also because the writing seems to contain elements not visible in an image, a <voice over> that tells the story the collages can only suggest. Like the latter, also texts have the qualities of a <fragment>, or those of <cuts> or <interrupted dialogues>, while reminding us, in their <descriptive precision>, of the language of a <script>. With this in mind they have been collected and assembled in this volume with a <binary rhythm> that respects the <communicative suspension> between <two voices>. Voices, that are at the same time the <corresponding> and <reverse side> of one another, inviting each other to speak by alternating <drafts> for a <screenplay> with personal <thoughts>, where, like in the collages, reality and imagination can no longer be distinguished.

<antonioni>

Gradually and distinctly taking form in the <undercurrent> of these two voices, is the voice of Michelangelo Antonioni. A kind of <interference>, further <depersonalizing> the story by its difference and complementary effect, Antonioni is, together with other directors, a reference for KDB without influencing her work though, whereas the book's citation of his texts forms an <homage> and a <connective tissue> that allows to integrate the aforementioned cuts and breaks. The extracts here inserted are not only those featuring most explicitly the discourse about emptiness put forward by the master director from Ferrara, a discourse seemingly shared by the collages, but they have been chosen because they derive from what he himself defined as <films I wrote>, series of sketches or <scripts>, <unfinished stories> he never found the chance to shoot. Texts therefore, that belong not less to the order of <representations of an absence> as they render perfectly perceivable an image that doesn't exist.



Nothing. The spot is an empty passageway between two buildings, empty of everything but emptiness.

<Michelangelo Antonioni>

MONTAGE

<book layout>

If Orson Welles viewed the Italian director as <a marvellous architect of empty boxes>, Michelangelo Antonioni's primary importance for Avarie was that of a vital reference for the <construction> of the book with Katrien de Blauwer. He was an essential <guide> for an editing that would never cede to the fascination and comfort of the narration, but would keep creating <breaks>, <surprises> and <gaps> in the story's development instead. A choice of images that would catch the gaze and lure it into an investigation of what's ultimately going on, driving it to find meanings that lie always beyond. Keeping in mind the collages' highly <cinematographic> content, the book <I do not want to disappear / silently into the night> takes therefore inspiration, in its <layout> and even in its <terminology>, from Antonioni's filmic sensitivity, along with a few suggestions from the arts, that share his <pure, geometric and linear vision>.

<line>

In spite of story's discontinuous character and the fragmentary nature of its images, the book reads well, that is, it follows a linearity that seems to reproduce the sequentiality of the film reel, especially when it comes to the succession of the horizontal collages. This movement can also be observed in the graphic layout of the text-based part of the book: here the intrinsic linear character of the writing is further emphasized by a series of lines that link, erase or frame sentences or paragraphs. Again, the book takes inspiration from the very nature of the collages: the neat and precise cut that combines and divides the images appears to be drawing a line that defines the exact boundaries of what we are supposed to see.

<off-screen>

As mentioned before, the technique of KDB's collages evokes the art of <film editing>: a process of <removing> and, at the same time, <construction> of the image, which in turn is indispensable for the making of the movie and, in our case, of the book. Like Antonioni, whose "interest - according to John Berger - is always <beside> the event shown", Avarie has been trying to focus its main attention

on the <unseen> and <off-screen> elements of KDB's collages, giving them also a certain tactile presence through the use of different kinds of papers throughout the volume. Like Antonioni's characters who are rarely centered, but rather at the margins of the image and often caught up in something that's outside the frame, the book's texts, backsides and backgrounds are always shown <laterally>. This way they won't just relate to a space that's open to the reality of an absence, but also, paradoxically, to an instrument, a <camera>, that frames the various parts inside the book and brings them to a close, including the void expressed by the collages themselves.

"The moment is dramatic, but the character can even not look at the other, he knows his face, he perfectly knows what he thinks and why, he must look elsewhere to understand, in the void", M. A.

<interstice>

Antonioni's sense of the void appears not only in his fascination with the desert, the shapeless and boundless spaces of Zabriskie Point, the monotonous, misty and abstract urban landscapes of Deserto Rosso as they absorb, attract and swallow the human body to the point of its dissolution; the <void> we find in Antonioni's work, and especially in his unfinished screenplays included in the book, is often a <space in-between>: a gap between buildings, a temporary break in the urban landscape, colonnades that divide things and people as seen in L'Éclisse, the rivers or the canals and even the coastal faults into which the protagonist of L'Avventura seems to disappear. Antonioni's art is, according to Barthes, an art of the <interstice>, in an oriental way where the void is never just empty, but always filled with a presence, whether fleeting or evanescent. Often, in his movies, the characters and objects are filmed in the midst of narrow spaces, corridors, semi-closed doors or windows. For that reason, as a kind of homage, the writing of Antonioni inhabits the book's interstitial spaces: be it between the columns formed by the voices of the words-collages, or as an ongoing strip that interrupts them in the middle or at the very center of the book. In <I do not want to disappear / silently into the night> even KDB's collages are <framed in-between> by texts, voices that break off at the beginning of the book in order to continue towards the end, and by backsides that divide, in the middle, the first from the second part: the <void> fills with photography and the images thus get to be not only <content> but also <form> of this emptiness. Each section of the book has been arranged in <blocks> that are deliberately separate, bearing in mind that the sharp and regular cut of the collages is always a source



of inspiration for the book's composition along with a thought-out repartition of the volumes, shapes and colors that form the frames of Antonioni. Another geometrical pattern to inspire the book's layout lies in the art of <Mark Rothko>, whose "paintings made out of nothing" found Antonioni's admiration. What's of interest here is not so much the process of <clearing> and <de-individualization> employed by the artist who gradually abandons the human figure, but the <interval> that remains between his colored rectangles or squares, an interval that once again evokes the images and papers aligned or superposed by KDB which never merge completely. But the paintings of Rothko, the director keeps writing, are also "made of light" like the frame of a movie: they're thus not dense and impenetrable blocks of colour, but real <windows> that <open> a view that lies beyond, in some space that's invisible and mysterious.

<window>

In order to convey the <polyvision> of all its meanings, the book <I do not want to disappear / silently into the night> was therefore designed and modeled on a simple <window>, where each part (folds/shutters, collages/window panes, backsides/central bar frames) corresponds, complements and mirrors another one, like the images of the triptych in the film Napoléon by <Abel Gance>. The insertion of two <folds> at the beginning and at the end of the book containing the textual part allows to <duplicate> the binary rhythm of the book and to instill thereby a certain <dynamism> in the static nature of the pattern: the main gesture of the collage, that of combining two images, <multiplies> in the <repetition> of the motifs and body parts, in the <stratification> of the materials and, finally, in the <editing> of the book. A <duplication> that's nearly <geometric> prompted also by the <multiple panels in black and white> by the abstract and minimalist artist <Brice Marden>. The first advantage of the folds is that of allowing the reader to connect the text to any image of the book without it being didactical or insistant on a univocal interpretation. The second is that of interrupting the sequentiality of the reading: it's in effect possible to regard simultaneously texts and collages, at one <glance>, in one <shot>, thanks also to the <swiss binding> that allows for the book to open completely flat aside from evoking one of KDB's indispensable tools, that of the glue with its symbolic capacity to bind everything together. All therefore becomes <image>, <picture>, <screen>. Or indeed <window>.

