



DANIELA ZEILINGER

Mirage, mirage

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As a result of natural laws “*mirages*” elusively appear as fictional reality, akin to the Fata Morgana induced by erratic layers of air of different temperatures, which once led to the legend of the „Flying Dutchman“ – a fertile ground for both artistic production and exaggerated pathos.

Daniela Zeilinger’s *mirages* are also doubtlessly challenging the realities of our subjective and creative perception, which they inevitably destabilize. We thus face the dichotomy between the delusional artistic interpretation of these works and their scientific veracity, an inconsistency, which has always been shaping the historically polarized relation of photography and painting. Whereas painting was supposed to be fiction, photographs appeared as documents critically negotiating new forms of representation. Even if today this dichotomy has been largely deconstructed, Zeilinger scrutinizes the thin line between photography as a tool for the visual representation of reality and painting as imaginative work by layering artistic processes on top of each other, as if they were *mirages* themselves.

Zeilinger’s artistic approach springs from intuitive drawing as well as from the rather technical deployment of analogue and digital photography. These methods yield a broad range of hybrids between photography and painting, which are neither figurative in nature nor completely open to free interpretation.

One manipulatively oriented shadow here, some calculated superpositions there, and multiple image reproductions – together they give rise to a field of tension between abstraction and reality construction. Painterly fragments do appear on the photos, although color play is either almost totally missing or replaced by engineered parasitic images, which in their minimalism force the viewer to notice them.

Layer by layer the artist approaches the question of the potential of connecting painting to photography, even though the final outcome of her photographic reproduction process always translates the interplay of intuition and technology into a well-balanced composition.

The question of reality of pictorial representation thus manifests itself like a *mirage* either revealing itself by its subtle references, or else staying opaque by means of a special black-and-white technique. Plainly visible remain only Zeilinger’s attempts at translation and transformation, by which she tries to question the conditions of image production at the painterly, digital, and analogue levels.

Daniela Zeilinger’s art operates in the blurry interstices between figuration, illusion, and object recognition in painting and photography. She is able to combine these two media so well that they are able to form a symbiosis and elucidate their respective aesthetic characteristics.

– Alexandra-Maria Toth