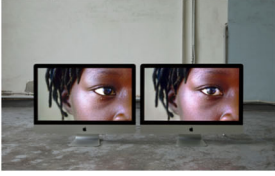


About this review

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Massimo Grimaldi, *Emergency's Bangui And Mayo Paediatric Centres Photos Shown On Two Apple iMac Core 2* (2010)

Massimo Grimaldi

Zero..., Milan, Italy

In this age of 'image culture', what are the strengths and limitations of aesthetic conjecture? Can art still create ethical Utopias that do not privilege aesthetics and formalism? Exploring the political value of images through the process of their conception, realization and consumption, Massimo Grimaldi engages his own ethics of artistic practice in projects and images that do not constitute a social critique but, instead, provide a unique perspective and a fresh awareness of the events depicted, as well as of the role of the artist.



Both titled *Bill Kaulitz Surface* (2010)

In his latest solo show, entitled 'Surfaces', a previously unseen and diverse body of work prompts viewers to reflect on the reasoning behind an image, a title, or, in one instance, a list of 20 schmaltzy tracks in *February 1990 Playlist* (all works 2010), which – paradoxically – defines a tragic period in the Italian artist's life. In the first room, two monitors installed on the floor display a series of photographic portraits of young children taken in paediatric centres in Bangui, in the Central African Republic, and in Mayo, Sudan. The work is part of an ongoing project in which the artist supports the humanitarian medical-aid association, Emergency, by donating any award money he wins as an artist to developing healthcare facilities in the poorest and most war-torn regions of the world. The photographic records Grimaldi takes as documentation of these projects bear the traces of an emotive experience that transcends the dimensions of art; the spectator's gaze finds itself resting on the vulnerability of the children, on their smiles and their marked faces. The elegant design of the monitors on which they are shown neutralizes the textbook clichés and emphasizes the impact of the photographs, arousing feelings of melancholy and discomfort in the viewer.



Mariem before the Image 'Rubine': Daba before the Image 'Magnesia' (2010)

Of a completely different ilk are the two life-size images that Grimaldi has positioned on the facing wall of the same room. Devoid of any basis in reality, these computer-generated geometric forms are almost hyper-decorative and assured in their visual impact. During the opening, the artist took photographs of two children, Mariem and Daba, standing in front of these images; the youngsters were intently focused on observing the gallery-goers as they, in turn, contemplated the art work. Although the children were only in the gallery for that first evening, their presence persists in the title of the work, which evokes their names: *Mariem before the Image 'Rubine'* and *Daba before the Image 'Magnesia'*.



They Were Mostly Women and Children, They Were Defenceless and They Were Unprotected, They Died without Knowing Why or How (2010)

Another conceptual transference lies at the heart of *They Were Mostly Women and Children, They Were Defenceless and They Were Unprotected, They Died without Knowing Why or How*: a work composed of two images – also graphic, apparently arbitrary and overtly iconic – installed flanking one another on the wall. Grimaldi took the title of the piece from a news item in a blog detailing the recent massacre at Jos Plateau, Nigeria; the visual intensity of the images is destabilized by the title, which resonates in all its ethical significance.

Grimaldi's concept of 'image surfaces' is perhaps best communicated in the pair of works, both entitled *Bill Kaulitz Surface*, obtained by amalgamating the face of the singer Bill Kaulitz, from the band Tokio Hotel, with that of a young fan. The two images do not reflect the identity of the subject, which is asserted by the title; instead, Kaulitz 'disappears' until he is nothing more than surface, image.

Translated by Rosalind Furness

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