



© Yvonne De Grazia

Yvonne De Grazia

*DANGER... IT'S WHAT YOU
RUN AWAY FROM*

CENTRALE
FOR CONTEMPORARY ART

box

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ESAL - École Supérieure d'Art de Lorraine, Metz (France),

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Conversation between Yvonne De Grazia and Tania Nasielski

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T.: Yvonne De Grazia, we are in your studio today to talk about the exhibition at the CENTRALE.box: *Danger... it's what you run away from*. Could you in a few words explain the reference to danger in this title, but also the running away from it?

Y.: I chose this title, because the exhibition contains a lot of elements related to death and dangerous things, expressed by means of different materials. It's a title that covers everything I'm going to show in the exhibition.

T.: This work draws on the book *Bambi, A life in the woods*, adapted by Walt Disney, which evokes both the softness of the fawn and the dangers it faces. This was your starting point which was subsequently broadened to include different registers in terms of materials, but also in terms of content.

Y.: Yes, I created an archive of text and low-resolution images and I began to play with all these registers. I collected words and images, sometimes from found footage or from the internet. Low-resolution images from the Cold War era, just after the release of the film, in the 1940s. The Cold War really impacted on me as a child. At that time, I had the feeling that I was leaving a certain collective memory and entering another reality. So it's something that has always made me quite anxious. I'm very interested in history, which I then analyse and rework ... but you can't always control everything and so this research that I worked on for almost a year allowed me to control things that are beyond control in life. And to me this is a way to convey things that are not necessarily visible, and to give them a second life. That's when I started to completely redesign things, to give

them another presence, not unlike what happens in Minecraft, a bit of an "artificial intelligence" effect. I deployed different materials and different techniques, including weaving and print on demand. I depixelated images, I also worked with databases on the world, on the earth. So on the one hand, there's the image I worked on, and on the other hand, there's the data that I translated into diagrams or statistics and that I have processed using different techniques.

T.: Yes, there's fabric, there's paper, there's velvet, and there's an element that runs through all the works in the exhibition, these are lines, streaks: everything is streaked. It would be interesting to hear you say a few words on this... We see fabrics that are perforated by letters forming a short text, a quotation from the book *Bambi, A life in the woods*. Could you quote a few lines from this text?

Y.: Yes, there are a few sentences from the text that I had laser-printed on fabrics, which are sentences from the book and which do not exist in the film because the film was intended for children. They are about living, about death and about fear. I imagine that the character, or the animal in the film, was so scared that everything went blank. And it was this moment, between consciousness and what might be death or a new beginning, that really struck me.

"When I'm frightened, I have streaks before my eyes so that I can't see at all and my heart beats so fast that I can't breathe. »

T.: It's very evocative of the fear you were talking about and also, it refers to these streaks, "streaks before my eyes". It's particularly interesting in relation to your work, because the streaks are present on all these fabrics, all these materials, and

prevent us from distinguishing the image instantly.

Y.: Yes, it's a form of camouflage and at the same time, it's also a way of re-creating the image. There's a lace effect, a digital effect, a Minecraft effect. All these things have developed both naturally and in my research, throughout the process, and tie in the works from beginning to end. For example, I started to draw a very low-resolution image, pixel by pixel. This really produced squares everywhere, but it made me think: "Why don't I take a low-resolution image and subsequently depixelate it?" and this made for a lace effect. And then finally in the fabrics, when I started to engrave in them, this also created streaks, just like the video contains moving streaks. It's a bit, perhaps, like dying.

T.: Yvonne, you've just told us about this whole process: removing pixels, reworking the image, and so on. Now, just as this whole process takes time to develop an image, we, visitors, need time and distance in space to distinguish this image, so that it reveals itself to us via the pixels, via the streaks. Is this effect of a time shift intended?

Y.: I think that, in any case, a work, an image is not perceived for more than one or two seconds. That's normal. But perhaps the fact of having an incomplete register puts our memory on hold, or creates a pause that allows us to look a little longer. We are overwhelmed by a lot of images in general, but they tell us everything, right away, and maybe it's a way of putting a buffer in between, a way of thinking based on ideas and of seeing more.

T.: To see differently?

Y.: That's it, to see differently.

T.: And to play a little on retinal persistence?

Y.: Yes, it's rather an emotion, and when there's an emotion, the words drop away. And when there's this absence of words, I have my images, everything that prompts me at that moment to convey that message. But it's very difficult to say "yes, I do it for this or that reason". The "why" is something that cannot really be explained, whereas in communication and graphic design, which I am in charge of, it has to be explained. But here it's different.

T.: Here the two co-exist. That's to say, there are the images that need to be deciphered and then there are the words as well?

Y.: Yes, I never really wanted to work with text, it's something that was very much on trend in the 90s. My teachers were in favour of it, while I remember saying to myself "I don't want to work with text". At the same time, if you work with text in a certain type of "font", it speaks in a different way. And today, everything that is data, or words, has almost become an image. Before, text was something literary, but today, digital platforms cannot exist without words or images, they are really intertwined. And we are moving more and more towards this, I think.

T.: This work, containing images and words to be deciphered, that instils in us this overpowering sense of danger, could a parallel be drawn to what we are experiencing today, in the context of the pandemic?

Y.: Yes, today we talk so much about lockdown and anxiety. I think that we

are facing a period where fear is part of everyday life and we at risk of being overwhelmed by it, I hope not for too long... but I have the impression that fear is again part of everyone's everyday life...

T.: In your work, we find those fears and the beauty of certain images, including the moving and gilded streaks in the video. Does your work show us something precious, in every sense of the word?

Y.: I, for myself and through the process, try to generate something new, something beautiful in each image, but if anyone else finds it beautiful? I wouldn't know.