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JOHN HILLIARD
6 MARCH - 26 APRIL 2008

Studio Dabbeni presents its second John Hilliard solo exhibition (born in Lancaster in 1945, he lives and works in London). The exhibition is showing small-, medium- and large-format photographs from two phases: photos from the 1990s and recent ones.

The work of the British photographer has featured a conceptual component since his debut in the early 1970s. In what can be seen as an exploration of the photographic medium, the artist analyses the complex relationship between the reality of the photograph and the illusion of the image. His pictures revolve around the basics of the photographic medium – the shot, the focus and the lighting – in the clever staging of a story that the artist always chooses to leave fragmented, incomplete and with an evasive meaning.

This process of deconstructing the image that distinguishes Hilliard's work has been further intensified over the past decade with the photographer investigating the methods of representation peculiar to the photographic medium, pushing his research to an ever greater reduction of the elements and information contained in the picture. The artist says that this search is driven by a desire to "say less" to "say more", almost as if his actions could result in a heightened perception. Hilliard is inspired by the desire to demand a subtle use of the observers' intellect but paradoxically the meanings contained in the pictures – always preceded by careful study on the artist's part with preparatory drawings – prove increasingly enigmatic and hybrid. Two recent works presented in the exhibition and seemingly emblematic of this outcome are *Yes/No* and *The Artist Circulates*.

Yes/No (2006) is an ambiguous portrait of a woman whose head and feet are cut out of the shot; Hilliard presents a front and back view combined in a double exposure that could be seen as a reference to the artist's exploration, which revolves tirelessly around his work.



Yes/No - 2006
c-type print on museum board
cm 100 x 126

Her dress falls gently and full on her hips, all red on one side, all green on the other. The superimposition creates a muddled colour in the centre of the dress produced by the mixing of the two that – as the artist explains – on the one hand weakens the encouraging "yes" of the green and, on the other, also the warning to desist represented by the "no" of the red. The exclusion of the woman's head and feet from the picture helps to determine a hybrid front-rear effect, but this also highlights the tension in the pose of her body (the woman is clenching her fists); it makes it hard to fathom her personality and know her intentions, and to define her exact position, and role, in the surrounding space.



The Artist Circulates - 2005
c-type photo on aluminium
cm 128 x 157

The Artist Circulates (2005) portrays an enigmatic and somewhat perplexing situation. It shows a woman moving around a studio filled with photographic equipment. In this case, the quadruple exposure adopted by Hilliard relates the figure - seen from behind wearing a gaudy, fashionable dress - to different parts of the studio, highlighting the multiple relationships that exist between her and the people with whom she comes into contact (technicians in work clothes, curators dressed in black, casually dressed journalists with notepads and cameras and young artists dressed informally). The woman emerges clearly in the centre, seeming to glide around draped in the coloured dress that reveals her back, while those all around her, not clearly distinguishable in the superimposition, seem to use her as a point of convergence – it is a crowd in which the single identities start to become blurred.

Opening: Thursday March 6 - 18.00

Duration: March 6 – April 26, 2008

Opening Hours: Tuesday - Friday
09.30 - 12.00 14.30 - 18.30
Saturday
09.30 - 12.00 14.30 - 17.00
Sunday/Monday Closed