

MESQUITA, Ivo. "Sem Título" [untitled]. In *Seis Artistas na XXII Bienal de São Paulo*. São Paulo: Galeria Camargo Vilaça, 1994, p.34-35.

## Untitled / Ivo Mesquita

Translated from portuguese by Stephen Berg

Rosângela's Rennó's installation for the Twenty-Second International São Paulo Biennial uses photographs from family albums and texts gathered from newspapers to articulate the singularity of personal histories with facts which appear in the mass communication media. Blown up and darkened, the photographs are juxtaposed with texts which refer to photographs in news fragments, texts where human frailty and wretchedness are revealed for the creation of a space to experienced in black and white silence.

They evoke an intensely private life, secret and intimate, and in the effort of allowing themselves to be contemplated they resort to our natural curiosity about the lives of the others. They propose meditations on the image, the creative process and the experience of living in a world where everything has already been invented and is saturated with images and information. Through an experience of the place where they lodge themselves, they seek to establish some possibility of singularity, of the individuation of existence.

It is not a question of writing biographies or an autobiography. On the contrary. The installation proposes to keep away any definition or affirmation of reality so as to create an interaction with the spectator, who is capable of inventing a reality from the interstices of image and texts. But there is something beyond the indetermination of references: texts and images appear as though they were reprocessing memories in addition to fragments of a history, of any history, including that of photography itself. Since the beginning of her career Rennó has dedicated herself to a systematic investigation of the effects of time, forgetting, and social and psychological changes as transformers of memory recorded by photography, in its own right a process of transforming experience into memory.

What is the meaning of these decontextualized texts and images? I propose here to look at the past, to what has already happened, and is used as a deliberate strategy of disguise, infinitely more complex than mere nostalgia or any appeal of an ideological nature. Questioning the codes of identification, photographs are not merely self-evident reproductions of the real – Rennó is interested precisely in the imperfection of memory and photography, as they both fragmentary and approximate lived experiences -, but they are constructs, the product of a way of seeing which ensnares the spectator in a politics of the gaze, proof of the observer as master of the observed.

The texts appearing alongside the images would be at once parameter and commentary, which might lead the spectator to seek within himself for the keys to an understanding of the environment created by the artist. And yet they establish a primordial distance between the text and the image. They concede no explanation which might be manipulated to constitute a meaning or shed light on what we are attempting to see. On the contrary, in physically distancing themselves from the image they emphasize the space of indefiniteness. The narrative support transcends the literalness of words and gesture which selects them, channeling notions of state, statute, and identity which express the precariousness of the implicit.

Rennó is not concerned with the opposition between text and image in the manner of other contemporary artists. The juxtaposition of texts and images, where each is charged with indefiniteness is not enough to bestow meaning, for the pairs are not agents of the construction of a possible interpretation. This task is left to the spectator who must construct a meaning for them.

Photographs and texts juxtaposed within an environment, are not “empty” only because we cannot know exactly to what it is that they refer.

There is much more beyond the indeterminacy of references. On being presented out of their contexts, they (photographs and texts) reaffirm their condition as things past and reveal with lightness their initial condition for the establishment of another situation, another inscription, other signifiers. If what they present is not clearly identified, there is a precise meaning for the place to where they are going: outside the

picture, to a space beyond the surface upon which they are supported, to their own perception. Because they are part of the record of a history about the process of the emptying of the image, for it no longer appears unaccompanied and we are left with the responsibility of establishing the connections between image and text.

Rennós installation intends to enable a sort of future memory of the present in a game with time, where past and present unite, are superimposed and are confused. The artist does not shed us in search of a meaning for these photographs and images as much as she invites us to create an image and find a memory.