



“Voiceless” by Anna Konik

June 23rd - July 13th, 2005



Voiceless is the title under which Anna Konik shows two new projects: *Transparency* and *In the Middle of the Way*. Both these works seem to contradict the title as in them the artist grants those who do not usually have a voice an opportunity to speak. *Voiceless* is the story of “others” – the aged, the lonely, the homeless. In its two component pieces, individuals who are members of socially marginalized groups get the chance to tell us about themselves, lead us along the paths of their lives, talk us through their feelings and values. Their stories are barely audible and you must stop and focus for a few moments to hear what they have to say. These encounters could hardly have been easy for the artist. Her subjects might seem comic or grotesque to others, yet she treats them with the utmost seriousness and respect, and it is her far-reaching openness, I believe, that renders her capable of this. A silent and impartial listener, she gives them the chance to tell their touching and often wise stories.

Transparency features Mija of Berlin, Mr. Thaddeus of Warsaw and Madame Wichmann and Mr. Brozy of Stuttgart – a quartet of people who are advanced in their years and very lonely. They tell seemingly commonplace life stories of unfulfilled dreams, love, devotion and solitude, but the artist presents these stories told by people aware of their own imminent end in an unusual manner. Anna Konik’s subjects have been filmed so as to be “transparent” – in their homes, sitting at tables and looking directly into the camera; their images have been doubled and their statements, at first glance merely reluctant confessions made to the artist, become original, new narratives. For Konik has filmed each of her subjects twice – each time in the same space and recounting what seems to be the same life story. Their dual images juxtaposed, her subjects seem to listen as much as they speak, sometimes agreeing and at other times disagreeing with themselves. Entering the installation, you encounter a life-size figure (Mija sitting at her table or pushing her shopping cart, or Mr. Brozy in his wheelchair) and – willing or not – witness an intimate confession that is at once a monologue, a strange dialogue and the conversation of someone with their own mirror image. The artist’s singular form of presentation is emphasized through the “oddity” of her subjects, whose behavior hardly fits our idea of “normal” life, reality.

Ania Konnik has an amazing sense of people, she knows how to listen to them and make them feel comfortable. Only these abilities can explain why her collaborators seem to trust her. Without ever posing or being theatrical, they speak of their defeats and unfulfilled ambitions, of love, solitude and the houses they never built...

Ika Sienkiewicz-Nowacka

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