

Droste Effect

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#ArtissimaLive Darkest Desire. Artissima 2019



Barbara Probst

Exposure #132: N.Y.C., 368 Broadway, 02.09.18, 3:56 p.m., 2018

Ultrachrome ink on cotton paper 3 photographs: each 112 x 112 cm

Galleria Monica De Cardenas, Milano

In *Darkest Desire*, Anthony Schmitz turns the Brothers Grimm on their heads, retelling the story of Little Red Riding Hood from the wolf's perspective.

It is not clear if the art world works out like Schmitz's tale, but this year, Artissima art fair challenges all visitors to turn their desire of possession into a challenge of self-deconstruction. Art treats spectators like Schmitz does his wolf. Thus, as the animal is helped quitting his desire to eat children, contemporary art audiences are conducted through a therapy of risk.

Let's start with *Vistamare* (Present Future section), presenting artist Anna Franceschini, who built a pre-cinematic machine that does not have anything to do with images, but rather with movement. Two reels drive a metallic belt that carries a number of blond wigs around in a circle. The mannequins and the wigs are hidden references to the culture of pre-cinema, and in general to android technology. The machine moves constantly in an infinite loop. Its title, *Villa Straylight* (2019), comes from William Gibson's novel *Neuromancer*, that was first published in 1984 – with the Villa being one of the locations in which the novel is set. Franceschini's work quotes *Villa Straylight* as it embodies a hypertrophic space that is at the end of Gibson's novel. Through its robotic movement, Franceschini's work blurs such sense of space, producing its loss in an infinite limit. As Vincenzo di Rosa says: "The piece is a dance of desire and deceptions, in the good company of an agonizing and fluttery attempt at positioning".

With *Exposure #132* (2018) by Barbara Probst at Monica De Cardenas (Main Section), we move away from machinery to come back to life. In her 3-piece work, we find a representation of a female body lying in front of three cameras. The woman's body facing the machine becomes the story of a representation of a representation, seen from different points of view. The body of a woman with her sculptural presence depicts beauty and strength at the same time, and it is clear here that Probst brought her old sculpture studio at the Academy of Monaco inside her photographs.

Nan Goldin's *Skinheads fighting, London (1978)* at Guido Costa (Main Section) shows human vulnerability. These photographs are raw, authentic, intimate and, at times, highly turbulent. The desire of parenthood, the risk of an uncommon life, and a tension which is both violent and sexual stand out in these portraits of marginal adolescents who are somehow already old.

Seth Price's *Untitled (2016)* at Isabella Bortolozzi (Main Section) depicts a graphic pattern with monsters' smiles, within a bourgeois frame. This wallpaper-like piece builds an association to pop culture and early Internet aesthetics. The artwork becomes a node in a network of media-related and societal references. Price developed his pattern extending specific sexual features to the human figure, while reaching the goal to create a sort of smile avatar. These ironically sexualized icons are flattered by a black and white stylization, evoking certain toilet graffiti.

The work of Italian artist Riccardo Baruzzi aims to reveal the origin of images, by tracing back their essence and semiology. In the artwork *Ordine/Amazing Threesome Outdoor (2018)* presented by P420 Gallery (Main Section), the artist finds the sign and pictorial sublimation of his representation in a universe of transparent and silent pornography.

In conclusion, with desire / censorship being the theme of this edition of Artissima, the art fair tried (and succeeded) to bring its exhibitors to fall in line with its subject.

The art fair itself presented an off-site exhibition on the theme, *Abstract Sex: We don't have any clothes*, only equipment, conceived by Artissima director Ilaria Bonacossa, and curated by Guido Costa and Lucrezia Calabrò Visconti, whose interview with us will be published on these pages in the next days.