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MARKUS RAETZ MONICA DEL CARDENAS

Review

FOR MARKUS RAETZ, the dream of art is to discover ever-new images, even within a single form. Fulfilling that dream in this exhibition, he offered an experience something like being inside a kaleidoscope. The key to the exhibition lay in a room hidden off to one side. Abstract shapes cut out of thin iron sheets hung from the ceiling; on the floor, two electric hot plates had been placed on a gray wood base. Gradually, as one moved, a myriad of portraits appeared, conjured through various systems of anamorphosis. The heat given off by the hot plates moved the wires holding up the suspended shapes, so that the faces continually changed, sometimes seeming to have closed eyes, sometimes smiling mouths, sometimes appearing concentrated and immobile. Observing this work, *Duo*, 1998, was a bit like watching a person whose face continually changes in mood and expression. Declaring the impossibility of maintaining a single form based on a fixed viewpoint, its design, using a means as insubstantial as hot air, acquired three-dimensional body.

The three-dimensionality of sculpture was put to the test by this continuous mutation—not only in *Duo*, but in other works as well. In *Si-No*, 1996, when one looked sideways at a bronze sculpture carved with the word NO, one saw instead the word YES. The charm of such transformations became even stronger as one realized their underlying theme: the link between the use of words and the creation of the self. What differentiates humans from other species is this capacity to transmute the biological structure of communication into words, sounds, and images in order to inte-

ract with others and with the world. Raetz makes visible the work of creation and its ineluctable relationship with the need to give a face to things, people, and words. He does this by using classical systems of visual communication—drawing, sculpture, perspective, mirror reflections. In fact, the entire gallery was punctuated with mirrored discs, suspended from the ceiling, that turned with every shifting air current. On the one hand they accentuated the sense of the space's mobility, and on the other they became the tools for a spontaneous and involuntary anamorphosis as viewers entered these kaleidoscopic images and joined the continuously changing reflections.

This was about subjective participation. Individual observers could cast a longing glance behind a sculpture, into a mirror, and make their own interpretations through direct exchange. The appearance of things could not be completely exhausted through frontal examination, for the works, in most cases, required viewing in the round. Even in *Magnolia*, 1998, a Polaroid, a magnolia leaf assumes the shape of a pair of lips, while in *Gyroskop* (*Gyroscope*), 1995–99, two thin branches anchored to two large cogged wheels, like those inside watches, turned and, right beneath the observers' eyes, created a sweet, sensual dance. These two branches, without leaves or bark, evoked two human bodies, in dialogue and in love. And the story continues.

—Francesca Pasini

Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.