

## **Imprints of Elusive Selves and Others**

Iris Klein, 2006

Catalogue statement for

*Switching Worlds: Desires and Identities*

In this body of work, which spans over several years, I created emotive *Stimmungsbilder*, still-life mood images that confront the viewer with a constructed female figure in a dreamlike environment. Through the use of specific photographic materials and manipulations[1] in making these black-and-white prints, light and meaning are made to evolve slowly from the darkness of shadow. The softness of line, nuances in tonality, and attention to contrast create a mysterious, apparitional aura.

It was in my teenage years in Vienna that I became aware of an internalized gaze that felt almost innate. I started to see myself as if I were someone else. In general, I was fascinated by body language and pose, and a seven-year interlude as a fashion model in Japan and LA exaggerated this interest. The projection through posture and posing became a studied and analyzed affair. When you model, you become a canvas onto which you try to project different emotions, states of consciousness, and recognitions. You try to expand and stretch and slip into roles. The pose always makes another body of itself, as Roland Barthes so eloquently stated. Unavoidably, a simultaneous I/her state becomes more and more pronounced. The implementation of a “mechanical gaze,” of a camera, even where none is present, takes over.

Living in New York helped me decode the various cultural influences I had been exposed to, and I finally resumed my work as an artist. I took up photography and explored the concept of objectifying myself in the form of a body-double to extrapolate feelings and facets of everyday multiple personalities.

I created a projection surface of myself by fabricating a rag doll that I “peeled off” of my body. The cartoon-like fakeness was intentional. The doll had no movements of her own – a pure costume displayed for the camera, underlining the coherence and integrity that a photograph can bestow on its subjects, an echo of the mechanics of photography itself. Although being conscious of creating representations of representations (of some sort of feminine images), I also wanted to construct a world of its own, a shadow world, where the deliberately obfuscated doll became visible only after the prolonged gaze of the viewer.

In one sense, my work is about an examination of the self as other, as a being with an elusive or even absent center. It is also a means to relive certain experiences and observations. The figures serve as projection surfaces or placeholders: the structures of identity alter depending

on the surroundings, reverberating to the projections of others. I use this projection surface not only for myself, but to create a generic tabula rasa of others as well, a tableau for making visible our half-conscious anxieties and desires.

Iris Klein, 2006

Catalogue statement for

*Switching Worlds: Desires and Identities*

[1] In the darkroom I expose using paper contacts instead of negatives in the enlarger and apply different diffusion techniques before I selenium tone the fiber-based prints. My Lambda prints are scanned from original gelatin silver prints created with this method.