

Haris Epaminonda

Haris Epaminonda would tell you that she has always been fascinated by discarded things, stuff that implies the solid presence of “that which once ‘was’ here, there—at least somewhere.” Those include the televisual imagery of forgotten soap operas, the pages of outdated magazines, old books, and artifacts from civilizations she has never known. As a result, the Cypriot artist’s work bathes in the auburn haze of the bygone, her films, collages, sculptures, and reconstituted books bearing signs that they owe more to the past than the aesthetics of the present. And yet, it is her reconstitution or reassembly of imagery out of their original context and in the present—with an eye that could only have come out of that present—that gives them their particular force.

Perhaps it’s the utter contemporaneity of her approach to images and how she cuts them. As critics have noticed, it is the making of decisive cuts that fundamentally relates both Epaminonda’s process of editing her short films sourced from sequences of found footage and her composing of collages. One of the artist’s on-going projects consists of a series of images largely constructed from the pages of found 1950s or 60s nature and travel magazines wherein the artist’s careful incisions to remove parts of the image reveals a layer of colored paper beneath. Each is titled *Untitled*, followed by a sequential number and the denomination “c/g,” “c/a” or “c/l” giving them an air of the ordered rationality of an institutional archive. In them, one finds no revolutionary reconstitution of the commercial image à la Kurt Schwitters or Hannah Hoch, instead, Epaminonda’s cuts decidedly suggest a continuation of a secret logic internal to the image, almost as if *it*, not *her*, had decided it: take, for instance, in *Untitled 009 c/g* (2007) where an incision runs from the axis of a man’s gaze to the pinnacle of the rocky mountain he stands near to the edges of various rocks, the whole insinuating an Euclidian geometrical form (as if the lone mountaineer’s arrival at that very point was, in fact, to form the pyramid now visible to us). Or the way, in *Untitled 012 c/g* (2007) two ancient statues communicate via a jagged-shaped cut that connects them along points that emerge from each figure’s own angles and lines.

The artist’s attraction to the hidden sense of the world extends to her photographic production in which extraordinary phenomenon encountered in the everyday motivates taking a picture. See her Polaroid instant photographs of the decapitated heads of Greek statues sitting on a curb, a rainbow stretching across an expansive field, or even her film consisting of a soundtrack and single, unmoving image of a zebra caught in a psychedelic-colored harness of three men, *Zebra* (2006). The latter’s strange burst of color is nothing more than an optical defect on a slide image, a mistake, but with Epaminonda’s insistence that you look at the still picture over time, *as a film*, the full fantastic surreality of the scene becomes apparent.

In recent years, her work on exhibition projects brought the same juxtaposition and recontextualization of her collage and filmic work to the space of display: African tribal statues, Greek figurines, e-bay-purchased vases, de Chirico-ese plinths, even cacti and ostrich eggs inhabit and reconfigure the white cube into a place of wondrous strangeness. There Epaminonda’s sensitivity to how their combination with even the simplest of 8mm films of a standing bird, *Marabu* (2009), or a tree’s leaves waving in the wind, *Palm* (2009), makes, as is usual with her, the mundane seem scintillating.

Elena Filipovic