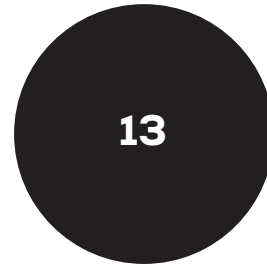




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## **View. Theories and Practices of Visual Culture.**

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*Teresa's Case*

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Ewa Tatar

## **Teresa's Case**

Second image from the series. Teresa Gierzyńska, *About Her*, 1979 ongoing.

Timespan of the events: life 1:1.

Location of the events – usually a home interior. Author and protagonist – Teresa Gierzyńska. She is speaking in third person. She begins her narrative having turned 30.

Before, she mostly spoke for two: *The One Month of My Life* contest announced among others by Polish Radio. An unsent manuscript from 1972: *Monday, February 5<sup>th</sup>. We got up at 11:30 am. Monday is the worst day of the week. On Mondays, one would like to start a "proper" kind of life. However, we could not. Museums, galleries, theatres are closed. In my grocery store nothing is fresh and there's a small choice of products. This Monday however was the worst. We didn't have any money at all. In order not to get hungry we had to be very diligent. Edek was helping his mom with some major washing (the kitchen with the boiling underwear was on the ground floor, while the washing machine and the bathroom was on the first floor). I first made some soup out of "nothing" and then some pancakes. We just got around to our English lessons when it was already 8 pm! Then we walked the dog and I had my ritual phone call with Dorota. "What's up?" (I learned that my mom is coming to town). Edek was reading Literatura na Świecie. At 1 am an idea popped into his head. He was making prints on the printing press for about an hour. All day it was cold in the house because E.'s brother REBELLED and didn't take care of preparing the furnace, as was his duty, and he had left for the entire day (I now dream of starting a rabbit farm, without money of course). We got to bed at 2 am.*

*Untitled* b-w photography, silver gelatin print, pencil, stamp, 29x19 – the first. It takes around 5/6 of exposed photographic paper. Fringed by white frame, wider at the bottom with a handwritten inscription. The picture features a woman. Its composition and light determine the way we look.

*I have a feeling that the more I am motivated by a subject, the closer I am to being objective. One begins with what one feels, and arrives at realism – for the sake of communication.* Agnes Varda, 1994.

Almost every image from the series is unique. Early ones on favorite matte paper. When it ceased to be available in mid-1980s., materiality of each photo had to be negotiated from the very beginning. The manner of handing this work over also determines its reception. Although the viewer's eye always plays ping-pong with the descriptive grammar of Gierzyńska's visual language.

Intense contrast. Vertical composition in two lines. Oily black. Soft effect of working with an easel. Under the enlarger, I cut until it hurt (from a conversation in July).

In the foreground, in a narrow frame, a female body. An open composition. Static form of the body introduces monumentality to the representation of a delicate silhouette. The camera is aimed at the center.

*I kiss* – squared in a square – is a similar case. Twisted neck and head leaning to the right with face nestled in arm. The face with explicit features albeit softened by the shadow make the picture slightly more dynamic. The same can be said about hair. However, hands are really responsible for introducing movement in the picture.

Right arm across. Aiming its elbow at the viewer, sticking his/her eye and leading the gaze. Upwards and inside. Relief + blackness. Isolating the body, insulating the surroundings. Blurred. Nearby vaguely visible face.

A drawing with the body = a drawing with the light. When one sees the photo up close, one sees it in fragments. Exactly the way it depicts the body. Diagonals of the image and of the paper intersect in the same point.

Left cuts the body horizontally (just like *About Her* depicts life). At times, the scenes are cut into sequenced, some images are retrospections. At times, narrow frames tend to fetishize fragment (this was thematised by her other work – *Touch* – imprints of the body and photos tinted pink with aniline. And a draft – multiple psychological portrait. Intimate and delicate. Elegant), just like popart-ish nipples in *Pieszczotkach / Caresses*. At times, they are so abstract that the presentation remains outside representation. At times, they are very daring.

Between left and right arm – a sheet wrapping the body like a gown. Its formation recalls a Ionic ornament, quasi-Ionic sign. But Gierzyńska's photos are synthetic, sometimes even raw. At times – left wrist – poetry emerges.

How to be separate. Pictures are either planned in detail beforehand, or – like these few, in short series, framed similarly – improvised. She plays with technique of collage, and shows unstructured drafts (like *About Her* from 1977 accepted for presentation during 7<sup>th</sup> International Poster Biennial, a collage of intimate photographs glued onto metal plate, 100 x 70, with a letraset *About Her*).

Titles, if at all applicable, and not only a subset of *Pieszczotki / Caresses*, in about 97% are female adjectives. What is going on with her? Emotions, mood. *Untitled* is an inscription, a citation from Rousseau.

*I know nothing from what I see, but all from what I remember, nor have I understanding except in my recollections. From all that is said, from all that passes in my presence, I feel nothing, conceive nothing, the exterior sign being all that strikes me; afterwards it returns to my remembrance; I recollect the place, the time, the manner, the look, and gesture, not a circumstance escapes me...*

Not this one. *Confessions*, book three, used in a catalogue of her exhibition in the FF Gallery in Łódź, 1990. This one is a prayer for purity of senses and emotions. There is room for such words as bestiality and timidity. Distance – “estrangement effect” – a comment analyzing or naming an action. OK, here, she repeats after him but on her behalf – thus Derrida argued for subjectivity of the Nymph, which I am referring to in my interpretation.

Logically structured subject but dispersed in representation. At Times, me is first person plural. Two names for relationship with oneself. A look at oneself, but from the outside, predates oneself corresponding to oneself. What is being said by the deformations in reflection?

Time, space, actors, props, light. Exhibition-constellation IT SHE ME at the MDM in 1981 included this work as well as others, for example landscapes. IT thematised the way one looked at these works. Very closely. Hanged on threads photographs glued onto cardboard. Signed at the back + a stamp. Composition similar to these elegant

geometric nitro reprints from the early 1970s., before press clips and images from catalogues emerged in *Crux of the Matter*. Some punctually tinted with aniline.

*Dangerous One* has red eyes, silver. Other pink, like poster for *Stolen Kisses*.

One can read about her for the plot, as Brooks would have it. But one can also read in search for a language of vulnerability, including the story of sexual life (I have not ask Teresa yet about Wisłocka). Of sex seen primarily as a female body. And despite this imaging, even from the perspective of the XF, Gierzyńska's managing the gaze should be considered a successful revolution.

Mieke Bal: *Close-ups undermine spatial continuity. Close-up immediately cancels that which preceded it, leaves us alone, ejected from linear time, alone in relation to the image ... . Pure affect.*

Subject. Predicate. Object. What does she feel?

Exposition.

Words and pictures are synchronic.