



## **ARMIDA GANDINI**

### **STANDING UP - COORDINATES OF THE IDENTITY**

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#### **Armida Gandini | Interview**

##### **in conversation with Marco Nember**

*The artistic development of Armida Gandini has been enhanced over time with symbols that have become the object of the artist's reflection in different meanings and forms. In a space without coordinates, the presence of a net is of fundamental importance in defining not only the affected portion of the plane, but also and above all for conversing with the human presence that animates the artwork. How has your vision of a symbol both powerful and equivocal over the years evolved?*

The question hits the mark regarding the basic concept of the exhibition. If in 2009 the network was a metaphor for an obstacle to be faced and overcome, today it is also a structure to lean on. The unlimited limbo in which the protagonist of "I say I can try" moves, devoid of coordinates, transforms itself into an abstract space more labyrinthine than a real labyrinth. I realized that the apparent freedom of the white space can become disorienting, while the comparison with the tangible world becomes more concrete when the grids of the barriers materialize. Therefore, it is not only external elements that mark a territory, delimit boundaries and build sites, but support structures that give the body and its thought an 'order'. In essence, reference points that make our orientation in the world possible.

*The complexity of your thought is illustrated through very different artworks: from drawing to video, you use a range of output which in itself forms an irrefutable added value to the continuous process of investigation of personal realities and collective imagination, which has always been the base of your work.*

Yes, that's right (now that I think about it I wonder if this also is a consequence of my bodily and mental liquidness. I have a tendency to approach the project from different perspectives, even from a linguistic point of view; even if drawing is at the basis of working method often the process crosses over into photography and video. I must specify that this exhibition specifically represents a synthesis that embraces several past researches: it is not a coincidence that my alter egos with braids come back, the women of the project "Looking out of me", the images of family albums and the stratifications of "Luoghi della memoria", in which drawing overlaps with photography and the body identifies with the environment in which it is contextualized.

*To venture and follow your coordinates allows an intimate journey full of cues about your inspiration and your afterthoughts. How did you choose these images which can be associated with your moral and cultural DNA?*

Faced with certain images an identification mechanism kicks off and we recognize ourselves; immediately memories, lived experiences, past events resurface. As for the photograph of Frida Kahlo, for example, the detail of the braids confirmed to me, when I enhanced it, the connection because of which even before I had put her into group with mother of culture. If there is a woman who has struggled an entire lifetime to keep standing up despite everything, that's Frida. I wondered what remains when the body is denied (because fragile, because sick, because suffering or ill at ease) without a structural basis that sustains us as a skeleton ...The series "Coordinates" is an attempt to answer this question. There is an image about which I'd like to talk with you - you know my obsession with cinema and how stimulant it is for me - that has accompanied me during this work, appearing in front of me when I least expected it: surely you

remember the sequence shot that closes the Claude Sautet film "Nelly & Monsieur Arnaud", with a beautiful and haughty Beart walking head-high through the Paris crowd, responding in this way to her abandonment ... I think Sautet has been a source of inspiration for this exhibition.

*Cinema forms an inexhaustible source of inspiration for you from different aesthetic and moral points of views. How have Sautet's movies helped you shape the content of the exhibition?*

Sautet is one of my fathers and his films play in front of me as if I were witnessing the unfolding of real life sequences, those that you face looking from the window of a bus or comfortably sitting on a sofa. In Sautet's last movies, the presence of Emmanuelle Beart is also to be interpreted as a tribute to the unforgotten muse Romy Schneider, considered by the younger actress an inspiring model of femininity as well as of professionalism. Sautet moves me with his outlook on daily life, still emotional, a little old-fashioned, elegant and disenchanting; but also the game of self-citations, references, personal comebacks. I would dare to say that the braids shared by my protagonists correspond to the chignons of his. In these authors, Sautet but also my beloved Rohmer, I have always been fascinated by their lightness, in reality only apparent and supported by an impeccable stylistic machinery, and their lack of theatricality.

*In "Stand Up", your elaboration of bi-dimensional images uncovers their architectural qualities suggested by the composition of the framing: your rereading transforms them into unforeseen sculptures, unexpectedly fragile. Where does this desire to work on photography come from?*

Photography has always been a starting point for my work: most of the time these are images not taken by me, but found in family albums, in databases, encountered browsing books and magazines. Decontextualising and inserting them into new areas is a practice that I often adopt, cutting out, drawing, in this case incising. Moving the plane of the photographs from horizontal (so two-dimensional) to vertical is the objective that has inspired me in these last works; a very simple gesture in the attempt to make "stand up" what is lying down, even more so because fragile, almost insubstantial.

*The drawn wrappers of "Casing" at the same time preserve and accentuate, redefining with passion images of strong expressive value and inserting themselves naturally in your artistic path.*

I must say that the "Casing" series is a rather isolated research on my path, an attempt to give solidity to the evanescent bodies on commercial photographs, those that people more or less distractedly browse flipping through magazines in a waiting room. This is not a work with an anthropological background, although it could appear so, as it starts from trendy images. What interests me is an experimentation with the layered shape of the grid that make up for the rarefaction of the body within the standard format of the printed page. Another opportunity to look at the project from a different perspective.

*In your words I clearly read an indomitable will to fight, build and grow in order to completely permeate your work, in all its forms. I believe that the reading and re-definition of the universe that surrounds you is being reformulated: in my eyes it appears not only as the end of a process, but rather as a fundamental part of reasoning in progress, which constantly allows the possibility to recontextualize your work in the light of new realizations, encounters and clashes.*

A destiny part of my name: Armida = woman who fights. I am a rather concrete person, but sometimes I have fun with symbologies; if I told you that number nine, the day of my birth, among other things seems to indicate a lack and, associated with this lack, a desire, this would explain a lot of things ...

Marco Nember

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