

“offers possibilities, it is by non-being that one makes use of them”). The space treated is no longer reckonable, though it does not cease to be plural: is it not according to this barely tenable opposition (since it excludes both number and unity, dispersion and center) that we must interpret Webern’s dedication to Alban Berg: “*Non multa, sed multum*”?

There are paintings which are excited, possessive, dogmatic; they impose the product, give it the tyranny of a fetish. Twombly’s art—this is its morality, and also its great historical singularity—*does not want to take anything*; it hangs together, it floats, it drifts between desire, which subtly animates the hand, and politeness, which is the discreet rejection of any desire to capture. If we wanted to situate this ethic, we could only go looking for it very far away, outside painting, outside the West, outside the historical period, at the very limit of meaning; we would have to say, with the Tao Tê Ching:

*He produces without taking for himself,
He acts without expectation,
His work done, he is not attached to it,
And since he is not attached to it,
His work will remain.*

1979

Wilhelm von Gloeden

Is the Baron von Gloeden “camp”? Through Warhol’s eyes, perhaps; but above all, in himself, he is “kitsch.” As a matter of fact, kitsch implies the recognition of a high aesthetic value, but it adds that such taste can be perfectly dreadful, and that from this contradiction is born a fascinating monster. Which is indeed von Gloeden’s case: his photographs interest, engage, amuse, amaze, and we feel that all our pleasure comes from an accumulation of contraries, as with any festivity related to carnival.

These contradictions are “heterologies,” frictions of various opposed languages. For example: von Gloeden takes the code of Antiquity, overloads it, clumsily parades it (ephebes, shepherds, ivy and vine leaves, palms and olive trees, tunics, columns, steles), but (first distortion) he confuses Antiquity’s signs, combining a vegetal Greece with Roman statuary and the “antique nude” from the Ecoles des Beaux-Arts: with no irony at all, apparently, he takes the most threadbare legends for ready cash. Nor is this all: he populates the Antiquity thus paraded (and by inference the pederasty thus postulated) with African bodies. Perhaps he is right, after all: didn’t Delacroix

report that the truth of classical drapery could be found only among the Arabs? Anyway, it is delectable, the contradiction between this whole literary apparatus of third-year Greek and the bodies of these young peasant gigolos (if any of these is still alive, may I be forgiven the expression, it is not an insult), with their heavy somber gaze and the blue-black glaze of sun-baked beetles.

The means to which the baron resorts, i.e., photography, deliriously accentuates this carnival of contradictions. It is quite paradoxical, for, after all, photography is reputed to be an exact, empirical art entirely in the service of such positive, rational values as authenticity, reality, objectivity: in our detective universe, is not a photograph the invincible *proof* of identities, facts, crimes? Further, von Gloeden's photography is "artistic" in its staging (poses and settings) but never in its technique: few dissolves, very little studied lighting. The body is simply there, uniting nakedness and truth, phenomenon and essence: the baron's photographs are of the genre known as *pitiless*. Thus, the entire sublime blur of legend enters into collision (we need this word to account for our astonishment and perhaps for our jubilation) with photography's realism; for what is a photo thus conceived if not an image *in which we see everything*, a collection of details without hierarchy, without "order" (that great classical principle)? Whereby these little Greek gods (already contradicted by their blackness) have rather dirty peasant hands with big rough fingernails, worn feet that are none too clean, and very visible swollen foreskins—no longer stylized, i.e., tapered and reduced: uncircumcised is what they are, and one sees only that: the baron's photos are at once sublime and anatomical.

This, then, is why von Gloeden's art is such an adventure of meaning: it produces a world (we should call it a "hominary," since we have bestiaries) at once true and fabulous, realistic and (crudely) fake, a counter-oneirism crazier than the craziest

dreams. Need we suggest how close such an attempt comes, despite the "cultural" abyss, to certain experiments of contemporary art? But since art is a realm of recuperations (there is no getting away from it: art recuperates even its own contestation and makes it into a new art), it would be better to acknowledge in von Gloeden's photographs less an art than a force; that hard, thin force by which he resists all conformisms, those of art, of morality, even of politics (let us not forget the fascist confiscation of these images), the force we might call his *naïveté*. Today more than ever there is a great audacity in mingling so simply, as he did, the most "cultural" culture and the most luminous eroticism. Who has done so? Sade, Klossowski perhaps . . . Tirelessly, von Gloeden produced this *mélange without realizing it*. Whence the force of his vision, which astonishes us still: his *naïvetés* are awe-inspiring as feats of valor.