

**The anatomy of dreams:
Mia Bailey
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Remembering Mia's videos is like trying to reconstruct a dream. You try to retrace the beginning and the end of the story, to identify the actors or even to find *the* symbolic key. You know all too well that the more you search the more you'll lose the thread...

At first glance, a sense of the hermetic sets in with Mia's work. Everything in the atmosphere and the sense of aesthetics invites our curiosity, only to later tempt us to say that there will be no answers. From what escapes us, what will remain? An image or a sensation? A feeling of betrayal or a hunger for meaning?

Mia does not impose an emotion- she sets an open backdrop. The general appearance of Mia's videos is simple and minimal. There is a single camera, which films a course of action. The frame is fixed and creates the space in which the scene unfolds. The artists' work recalls the genre of still life- or rather, of "silent life". The action seems to occur under a bell jar. Everything oscillates between a state of being *still alive* and *already dead*.

"Cutting Lilies, Repairing Lilies" for example, consists of two video monitors. One shows a person cutting lilies with an almost surgical concentration and precision. The other presents us with an identical world in which a similar individual repairs lilies with sticky tape.

A large green plane as backdrop, a frame that severs the body, a white shirt... Every element of the composition seems to be charged with meaning. Yet we are far removed from the lily as a symbol of purity or power! Even farther from the use of green as a reference to nature. The very idea of the symbol, rather than the establishment of a definite symbolism, seems to be the point of anchor of this work. Mia seeks a level of perception that brings the viewer towards the *mental* image.

Like our dreams, Mia's video sequences have neither a beginning nor an end. We enter a course of action that is already taking place, or rather, we ask ourselves: has it always been occurring? We enter an isolated time-span in which the possible existence of off-screen time is eliminated. Paradoxically, the suggestion of what is beyond the screen predominates the artist's work through her framing.

The creation of the backdrop seems to have occurred in a different time.

The same goes for the body... By which temporal access has it landed in the midst of this composition? The body appears as a prisoner of the scene. It does not seem to have come from elsewhere, or to be capable of escape. Its only field of life is the image.

If we enquire about the life of the body beyond the screen, the artist replies that the body does not exist outside of the frame. Or rather, it exists elsewhere, in the same way as the protagonists of our dreams cease to exist when they exit the scene.

In Mia's universe, the characters do not have a history or personal characteristics. They have a sculptural role, which they accomplish in "worker's clothing". Mia explores the body as a figure. She reveals no personal traits and even goes so far as to veil all physical characteristics. Hands wear gloves, faces are masked... This partial camouflage of the body hinders any reference to personal identity and turns movement into an abstract force.

The paradox of the body in Mia's work is fascinating to observe: its vital force is amputated; at the same time it is the only element that allows life to circulate in the image. In other words, it is the only generator of movement. Movement, which is automatic in its concentration and in its precision. The body is undone and redone, created and annihilated... A perpetual renewal.

We are however far removed from the video art of the 1960's, which recorded a gesture repeated to the point of exhaustion. Here, the body does not tire! There is no sign either of fulfilment or of fatigue. The mind is elsewhere, or rather gives the impression of acting in the ban of an exterior force. The protagonists unceasingly execute their alienated actions. Although the body is colonised by movement, the host appears indifferent. All the while, slowly, the viewer reclaims his or her freedom.

The apparently hermetic quality of Mia's work is broken precisely at the moment when a transfer takes place between the *body of images* and the *body of the viewer*. The artist seems to want to draw us into a state of frustration and revolt. To awaken in us the desire to take distance from the current trend of imagery and symbolism, which remain overpowering and closed. What remains? The suggestion of a return towards the living?