

## **B.A.R.O.C.K. - AN ELUSIVE PARABOLA**

Excerpt from the text by Mark Gisbourne for the exhibition  
B.A.R.O.C.K. Artistic Interventions in Caputh Palace, 2019

(...) To speak of avatars is also central to our understanding of the works of Myriam Thyès, whose video art and photographic installation draw directly upon recurrent themes of female superheroes, warriors, huntresses, and women of power. Thyès's intervention takes the form of two videos and a photographic installation. Having trained as a painter the artist's practice operates as a re-visioning interface between photography and film as it relates to her background in painting.

In the Electress sleeping room she has installed a video entitled *After Tiepolo* (2013) referring to the Venetian master's famous allegorical Four Continents fresco at the Würzburg Residence. Shown in the form of an edited and animated ceiling projection, the Tiepolo frescoes are image overlays wrought into a time-based cosmological phantasmagoria. A synaesthesia takes place as the frescoes become fused with a virtual visualisation of the universe, leading to a psychological reworking of the idea of collage and/or image montage. The video should be read as a palimpsest of layered unfolding as the planets, constellations, nebulae and galaxies emerge and colour meld into elliptical symbolic orbits of cosmological presence. The frescoes represent the scope of the human world, while pictured heavens encompass the universe bringing it into the present. In its denouement numerous famous buildings, structures of the modern world enter in, pervade, and obliterate the cosmos and Tiepolo fresco beyond, and in turn also become lost in a dissolving cloud. The mythical fuses with science and natural history, the planets and constellations are after all named from mythical deities as the astronomical blends with the allegorical. In divergent ways the video generates a differential sense of truth between mind and imagination, transcendence and immanence, and the empirical and the symbolic.

The second video projection called *Graceful Allegories* is taken from the science fantasy movie *Avatar* in 2009, where the female superhero Dr. Grace Augustine (Sigourney Weaver) and her avatar are presented in an oval projection on the ceiling of the Electress antechamber room of the Schloss. The transmutation and monomyth journey of the hero in pursuit of self-discovery are central to the work. In the film *Avatar* powerful huntresses like the lead female Neytiri are integral characters that help drive the film.

And it is a similar idea of the "avatar" (incarnation, embodiment, or manifestation of a person or idea) that is carried forward into the photograph installation *Gallery of Heroic Women* situated in a nearby Elector's antechamber. In this case we find vertical and rectangular portrait images of the twelve Caesars and the Emperors of the Flavian Dynasty finishing with Domitian. Above each painted image, Thyès has placed an oval cutout of one or two edited video stills, showing famous film actresses, superheroes or women of power, from fictional action heroines to anti-heroines. The chosen comparison is largely formal and the two are simply contrasted, the male Romans emperors we might read as reflective of vice and little virtue, while the female superheroes present a counterforce of creative intelligence. (...)

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