

Sandie Brischler
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The Art of Prosthesis

Two wounds from the beginning mark our spiritual body.

Sandie Brischler is a young French artist. Born in Paris, she lives now in the Ardennes region of France. Her sources of inspiration are psycho-analytical, mystic, personal, matter-of-fact ; for her it is all the same. Her earliest works left us with the promise of a quite personal approach. Now she develops clear and homogeneous subject matter. She searches into a fault of our consciousness.

A face, a body. Blood divides them, or reunites them.
The eye, and the sex, two veiled wounds, and life of man between them.

I believe, that man, so the artist, is a being that looks for healing. There is a profound relationship between the process of creation, the meaning of art, and the meaning of illness, or handicap.

She forces open the doors of the hospital, a continent since long abandoned by art. However, there was a time when the holy patron of the medical doctors, Saint Luke, was also the patron of the artists. Sandie Brischler lays bare the hidden beauty of a world, that astounds us, leaving us in confusion. She hits on a truth.

Very naturally and through the use of a lot of material signs (bandage, plaster, tubes, prostheses, stretchers) she links the plastic arts to the art of medicine. By the strength of its simplicity, the process places us in front of a fascinating panorama, a view that has something quite visionary.

The world of man is confronted to the sense of life. The vision of which world man repudiates though, he represses it from his consciousness. Since the sense would be that he is broken, split up.

The hospital is thus spiritualised, and becomes again, with Sandie Brischler, what it once was : *hôtel-Dieu, God's House*, the house of the God of our time, of the one who reigns,

because he hasn't yet pronounced his Name. All we know about him, for sure, is that he's wounded, hurt, broken.

I work with the Body, the human body, the sick body, the psychic, spiritual, even invisible body, and my research concentrates on the fragmentation of this body, I call it's graphology. My interest for the medical arts comes out of this basic corporeal subject, a body that needs support, that needs a "prosthesis" to be reunified.

Like a classical artist, Sandie Brischler is passionate about the body, the human, and so fragmented body. Real or symbolic, alive or fantasized, for her it's the same. She strips it, bares it, reduces or magnifies it, treats it, or rather *stands* it. She transforms it into a medical body. There is nothing gloomy about it, neither ironic (sarcastic), nor even sick, so to say. She's classic in the sense that she keeps away from any expressive excess, or complacency.

The Prosthesis symbolises my artistic process best : it's a medical art object, it signifies all that substitutes artificially for a living body, all that makes a "thing" of it, in almost a sacred way, object-bodies, or idealized bodies. The Prosthesis may then be a crutch, a wheelchair, a stretcher, any instrument the function of which it is to "sustain", as a cross – as The Cross – sustains a body that goes to pieces.

And here the spectator is transported into a gallery of objects and images, as familiar as they are unexpected. In all sorts of mixed techniques, photography striking the eye first, then videos, installations, plasters, casts, and drawings too. The subject is, indeed, man in what he lacks or fails or defaults, and what maintains him. Man in his psychic paradox. The prosthesis becomes the concrete, visible, tangible material of his unconsciousness, which covers the field of his spirituality. A wide field, where images are over abundant.

An enigma flies over these unexplored fields. A still secret but inevitable connexion comes about with that other great broken figure of the history of art : the crucified One. Can art in our day still pretend to such a great part of spirituality ? A certain fascination moves in between eye and reason.

The eye is not made for seeing, nor the sex for being seen.

One thing is evident, Sandie Brischler is a fascinated artist. Some thing captures her eye, keeps it prisoner. That thing is mysteriously greater than she is. Takes hold of her being. Dominates her, overwhelms her, lays her low. Mistreats her, shakes her out, moves her. Who would be able to define this thing ? Its contents, or its message are psychic, its energy is neither life nor death. What do we know about it ? Are we in danger ? Madness is in the air.

The artist accepts to undergo a while, before she calls a halt to its wild dynamics, that could prevail. It's the world of visible experience that imposes itself : vision of a fracture, a

fragment of man. A fragment which induces the whole and recomposes it with all means, artificially, or medically. Man is an *artifice*, artificially made, strange, modern, real. And suddenly the relationship becomes clear with the clinical and juridical pictures from the end of the nineteenth century, photos of hysterical women taken by Charcot, of criminals taken by Lacassagne or Lombroso, in search of an ideal of the human kind through its deviations. There the world of the spirit is on the crossroads with the world of medicine. That is : the regrouping of man. Therefore prostheses, wheelchairs, tubes, dummies, dolls, as well as blood, creeds, pietas and crucifixions.

Blurred images, dim like phantoms, others precise and neutral like scientific details.
Man in his objectivity.

Sandie Brischler would like to go beyond the picture. She doesn't call herself a photographer, despite how often she may take her camera in hand, she doesn't speak about her photos, but about her *photosigns*. She invents, using it as a title, the label of *Photosymptoms*, in order to define with more concision our relation to reality. Her picture never stops at the image. Everything is the symptom of something else in the stream of the visible.

The core of the matter is the idea of the eye, including the vision of the body, and of its prosthesis as its law. Guardian of our faculty to see, it's the organ of passion, and cross-refers to the absolute, to the unique, the "eye of God", but also to the injury in man.

The eye lies in wait for a truth it knows nothing about, nothing sure, in which man believes as in his soul, that he wraps in striking names which have nothing to do with rationality. The fascinated eye may surprise the subject, the body, the mystery, it is positive about it's mystique. Yet reasonable and homogeneous, like man himself.

The man's eye stares over the abyss.

The abyss has no bottom. God is its bottom.

Some pieces are called Icons. They are rather large panels, with a black and white photo picture against a gilded background. One group is brought together in the ***Icono-Stasis***. In twelve images Sandie Brischler concentrates here the nucleus of her iconography : the penetrating and penetrated eye. The artist, she would say in French, "*panse*" (dresses, or bandages), man is a "animal pansant" (dressing animal). She "*prosthesises*". Thanks to this sort of innocent wordplay (*panser* sounds in French exactly like *penser*, to think), the word *stasis* (stand up), in the middle between man's pretensions and his limits, regains it's original idealistic weight. The artist sweeps through the world of speech with such freedom that new

content is born. The idea of *stasis* is linked to the idea of prosthesis, *stand up*. As we remember it from the *Stabat Mater*, where the mother stands up right under the Cross. And that refers to the *stations* of the Cross, so that the ***Icono-Stasis*** is in its way, disorderly and free, and far from all orthodoxy, a *Via Crucis*, the Road to the Cross.

In order to humanize a little their hieratic state of being, Sandie Brischler adds some air and life to these images. Enshrining them in deep gilt frames, like in boxes, she presents them with several eloquent companions of meaning, called “relics”, hence they become reliquaries. Closer to the sensuous humans we are, these Pandora’s boxes full of secret fantasies, dwell in a world of spell, and promise us more mysteriously the magic cure we may justly expect from the arts.

These relics are in fact miniature sculptures bearing in its smallest form the idea of broken man, who hopes to find his redemption in the art of prosthesis. They present themselves at the same time as visible and invisible, things seen and unseen, as they are shown in pieces, wrapped up, banded, in two words mysterious and popular.

The same spirit, but in larger size, is to be found in the three-dimensional artworks, the ***Moulages***, or plaster casts on live model. Sometimes shown by the way of pictures, and video, sometimes as such and real, they preserve the memories of complex installations. Their inspiration is taken from the techniques of medicine and surgery, redefining, or rather

recycling the (seemingly) odd instruments that are so characteristic about them. Rendering hidden unconscious meaning to them, Sandie Brischler operates in a field of liberated imagination, and succeeds in creating captivating sculptures. Here the act of fragmentation, of breaking up, and of sustenance approaches a meaningful and vivid reality. The head of a man becomes in her hands an object to bandage and cure, a subject to objectify. And through the treatment of the exterior shell, *par excellence* sustained with the neutral power of surgery, the remains of inner life begin to move. Such corner of the mouth, such hair lock, such look escaping from a banded eye, when delivered to a kind of impotence, confront us with an unsuspected vital energy.

And with iron logic a new and gigantic project appears at the horizon, towards which Sandie Brischler has set her steps, as we can conclude from the first results, the **ECG** : massive transcriptions of the movements of the heart. The detour by the corridors of the hospital has found here its graphic expression in a simple and surprising manner. Modern, neutral and at the same time elegant calligraphy translates our existential or sentimental adventures. Form and content, expression and meaning merge into each other. A precise and vast symbolic program is outlined by the artist. The basics of her multiple process face a basic human exercise : writing. Heart and scripture, the two poles of consciousness, encounter each other. The very heart writes itself towards its fate. Most noble of our limbs, here isolated, seat

of the passion of living, throne of our illusions and our reason for being, invisible, it transcribes life in its last battle with death. Man is a sign, and his body is his handwriting. Just like hieroglyphs on Egyptian temples, like the ideograms drawn by oriental poets, or like those palimpsests found in ancient libraries, the *ECG* plot the lines that link together, as Leitmotifs, the dispatched fragments of our existence. Living scripture or sign of life. Holy scripture or sign of God, who's looking for man with his inaudible voice. Visible imprint of the Word, or put it another way, the essence of man. Endless musical staves that transmit an idea of the sidereal chorus, the harmony of the spheres, beating the time in between the stars. Those lines, trembling to the infinite, finishing though in the fibrillations of death, are the temporal tracks that unite us with the cosmic vibrations.

And the eye of man watches them like the waves of the ocean or the flames of a fire.

Text and translation by Jan Laurens Siesling

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