

WALDSZENEN, Bernard Marcelis, in *13 critics 26 fotògrafs*, 1992, Barcelona

Pierre Radisic has literally attacked the forest, turned it out of places where he could where he could deduce one or other element. It is only later that he works on his plates, before there is properly speaking a picture. His memory of the moment the photograph was taken is shaded away, yielding to a new closeness to the components that he has to hand. "This period of inactivity is very important, since it reorientates the shaping of the results towards a blend of the real and the imaginary, which brings it closer to my other current interests". It is hardly surprising to learn that he also paints, is involved in opéra and its decor, and is interested in natural history and the multiple meanings that its images evoke.

Now begins the important laboratory stage of the work, a véritable photographie introspection, a quasi-scientific dismantling of the medium. This approach allows the photographer, alchemist-like, to elicit unsuspected images, working with several frontal overlays to give an impression of encrustation not unlike some computer images.

What characterises this series of photographs by Radisic, are the notions of contour and light - in his case indissolubly linked concepts. It helps maintain the particular tenor of these pictures, verging on the fantastic, that seems to emerge from the forest penumbra, from the darker side of nature, out of a sort of vegetational oblivion. This impression, artificial in origin, is strengthened by the curious atmospheric light marked by the total absence of shadow. The clear detachment of shapes with their perfectly defined contours produces a double image, so that at times the pictures seem to be collages. The trees become totems, the roots become monsters, and the vines are transformed into reptiles that coil about the trunks. In true alchemist style, Radisic recreates pictures from materials that are quite banal, various views of the forest. His perfect technical mastery allows him to perform all the transformations down to the last détail, of which only the final stage is revealed to our eyes. Nobody is better placed to explain: "As for the picture as such, it is taken in the most unconventional way possible: through a translucent surface which splits the image optically into a number of bursts, the paper is imprinted such that a very high density is obtained, almost black. Next, the image is chemically attenuated to the desired density and contrast. Then it is corroded in places, "highlighting" certain elements at the expense of others, which become muted to the point of merging with the organic matter.

It ought to be remembered that at the outset, they are simply black and white photographs. The colours are added subsequently, entailing a new transformation of reality thanks to optimal use of materials: Gold will give red and blue, Selenium will produce mauve, Uranium will bring out a brick red, Antimony will make dark orange, Vanadium will form yellow, the Sulphur will cause brown to appear, and the other developers will lighten other blues.

Fascinatingly ambiguous though it is, Radisic's work remains eminently photographie. The alteration which he brings to bear on the material, on the photographie plate, entails a modification in the perception of the image. The connection with reality, a crucial subject in photography is perverted in a controlled way, while the actual structure of the picture is never altered. Radisic never adds anything. The photographs have nothing to do with collages or any other extrinsic experiment. His purpose consists simply in revealing/ developing, as a real wizard of the black box.