

Reflexion IV.

Gert Bonfert: "Im-maginations".

Introduction: "Imagination" is the capacity to step back from the world in order to see it as a picture. But there is a different capacity: the one that enables us to put self-produced information into a picture. Let us call it "im-magination". Through "imagination" we become subjects to an objective world, and through "im-magination" we become projects for objects. At present, pictures made through "imagination", (like photos), tend to be substituted by pictures made through "im-magination", (like synthetic computer images). This becomes obvious in a didactic fashion with Gerd Bonfert. He first produces pictures through his "imagination", (he makes photos), and then he handles them, (turns them around), in order to "im-magine" self-produced informations therein. He thus shows us how to transform ourselves from subjects into projects.

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If one looks at one of his pictures, (for instance at C 67-13, 1986), one may recapitulate his rotating motion. He first receded from his own body step by step like one does if one steps back from a king sitting on his throne: without turning around. He was first an obedient subject of his own body. In this humiliating posture he pressed upon the rebaser of his camera, and thus produced a photo of a male act. But then he projected himself out from that humble posture, he turned his back to the king, (to his own body), with a sovereign contempt, and he payed his tribute, (his attention), to the photo. He liberated himself from his subjectivity, and he assumed projectivity: he began to "im-magine" something into the photo. It is, at this point, not really important to ask what it is that he "im-magined", (to himself, into the photo, and through it to ourselves), or even what it is that he attempted to "im-magine". The important point is his existential twist: he became a creative project, by deposing the king, (his own body, his objektive condition).

If one realizes that, (and it is not quite as easy to recapitulate that twist as it may seem to be), then it becomes necessary to ask what it is that is here being "im-magined". The answer to that question has already been suggested: a self-produced information. What is "Information"? Any improbable situation, such as: the more improbable, the more it is "information". And what is "self-produced"? Anything that results from a processing of available informations. Bonfert submits the informations available within the photo to a processing which renders them improbable, and he then "im-magines" those new informations into the photo. Thus: he transforms his own body into something improbable, (something which is no longer a "condition", but has become a "product"), and he then puts this body into an improbable surroundings: he inhibits the body in order to exhibit it. However, one must look closer at this picture if one wants to find out what Bonfert meant by this project of his.

He moulded his body as it was imagined within the photo as if that body, (and its image), were made of clay: he changed himself from a creature, (Adam), into a ceator. Which implies that he no longer considered the photo, (and his body therein imagined), to be something real, but to be something potential which may be processed to become real. While moulding his own body thus, he twisted it, and he turned it around a longitudinal axis in such a way, that the feet be left untouched, while the waist rotated at 360° and became distorted upward. This twisting is not only shown within the picture, but lines have been introduced therein, ("noises"), which mean to explain didactically the motion of the rotation. The head has been unscrewed from the body, and it is only the traces of this unscrewing which are left within the picture. (As if he wanted us to suspect that later on a new head will have to be "im-magined", to be screwed upon the body.) That body, now become improbable, is exhibited within an immaterial coffin, with the feet left untouched sticking out and resting upon that ground which we consider to be "material" according to prevalent conventions.

The thing that Bonfert here "im-magines", (and wants us to "im-magine"), is that twist and turn thanks to which we may break out from the conventional "objective reality" into the realm of potentialities which permits creative information production. That existential turn-about which transforms us from subjects into projects. The picture here under discussion may be used as a model for every future analysis of the new "power of im-magination" which is emerging at present: we ought to put away our old "imagination", (the one to which our body conditions us "objectively"), we ought to put it into an immaterial coffin, (without having necessarily to bury it), and we ought to concentrate ourselves upon that new "im-magination" which enables us to create a new picture of Man, a new picture of ourselves.