

MEGUMI MATSUBARA | WALK STRAIGHT**from 31th may to 30th september****Text and conversation with the artist by Maria Giovanna Mancini**

Voice Gallery is pleased to invite you to the private view of the solo show **Walk Straight** by **Megumi Matsubara**, held in the spaces of the gallery in Marrakech **on 30 May 2014 at 19:00.**

The Japanese artist presents a complex project composed of two different works: the first nucleus is disposed along the vertical visual axis the spectator encounters entering the gallery; the second part is represented by the video installation present in the environment that is oriented on the axis ideally orthogonal to the first. The two different installations intersect intensifying references and gazes and interlocking the different points of view.

Since the first impression the public can recognise that the centrality of photography is a metaphor of vision. The presence of different screens, some transparent, others reflecting or semi-reflecting, allows the act of vision to reveal itself as an action and a process that is by no means involuntary. In fact, the spectator is immersed in a machine of vision where seeing becomes a spatial experience.

In the first ambient of the gallery photographs shot in the artist's home in Fès are exposed; in these the image, at times, loses contact with the original referent through the process of re-photography, where shadows and reflections produced by shiny surfaces or glass frames emerge. The vision of some of these images is complicated further by the addition of suspended semi-reflecting glasses of a sepia colour, which slightly darken the underlying picture. In other cases, instead, the vision is direct. The screens, placed at a certain distance, exponentially multiply the trick of reflection inserting, in the flux of images staged in the installation, the representation of the very spectator, indispensable element in the visual device created by the artist. On the background wall a red flower, also a photo of a photo, whose vision is forced through the transparent glass interposed between observer and work, faces the spectator exposing a reflection that only by careful observation can be recognised as part of the image and not as an effect of the glass intruding between the two elements of the visual relation (subject and object).

The second body of work, part of this installation, which crosses the first group of works with a redundant effect, is composed of a circular projection of a video in which 3000 photos of a sunset are edited in a loop. The shooting time of the sunset is stretched on a timeline of about twelve hours where single images slowly transform into one another through the morphing effect to which the artist submits the whole sequence. On the wall opposite the projection a mirror is mounted. Only in that moment when one turns one's back to the projection, going towards the exit of the

exhibition space, the public will see at its front the mirror giving back their profile, outlined by the image of the sunset, slowly coming in succession behind.

Megumi Matsubara operates a spatialisation of vision that transforms the very act of seeing into an analytic process of composition and decomposition which the observer can enact not only with the eyes but also with the rest of the moving body. Passing through the space of the gallery enables the observer to "know" the images – and the act of vision itself, of which the project is an allegory – exclusively by moving through it, in a spatial depth perceptible despite their being two-dimensional.

MGM: In this show, as in previous ones, you pose to act of seeing under a process of multiplication and decomposition, forcing the spectator to act (moving, touching, listening) in order to see.

Do you conceive the artwork as a multi-sensorial experience of crossing? Can you tell us about the title you chose for the show?

MM: *Walk Straight became the title of this show, because I find this act very difficult. (Also, the plan of the gallery is L-shaped)*

To be able to have clarity to walk straight, you have to accept everything around you. Courage is not enough. When the sense of direction obliterates, you also need to maximize your sensitivity, receptivity. This might create fear, since you need to be available to receive the unknown.

By this title, I underline this fear as well as the optimism of this act. If you trust deeply yourself as well as the surroundings, your own perception becomes your only navigation.

MGM: Your portfolio is rich of experiences more easily reconnectable to architectural design, where you build habitable rooms and navigable spaces. The accent on a collective dimension of space emerges.

In the case of the installation in a gallery, instead, do you talk to a public intended as an individual?

MM: *I never imagine public as an audience. I barely imagine audience either. I only imagine people. I like imagining people hoping to communicate with each one of them.*

My work is creating a blank space – where your presence becomes very important, to create an intimacy. This intimacy makes you care about things that only you can see. Space has nothing to do with physical environment.

The only space that exists to me, is the space in my mind, in people's mind, and it's sharable. My work is all based on this understanding of space.

MGM: The use of photography is central in your analysis of vision and, as a live reproduction of the real, it records the immaterial signs of our everyday life (shadows and reflections). Photography is photographed in a process that Craig Owens has defined *mise en abyme*.

In your images re-photographing opens the series of repetition, containing at the same time a new element: the reflection produced by the image's surface. You introduce a new element in the process of mirroring.

Can you tell us about the relation in which you connect objects, their photos and their reflected images?

MM: *The eight photographs taken in my home that I am showing are images of images: shadows, lights, reflections, rather than images of objects. But how can something be defined as an object? I don't know One as a singularity. How can you tell the moon is the moon when it is not illuminated by the sun? How can the moon be separated from the stories I project on it? The moon is already an image to me.*

MGM: In the installations you realised you often intertwine different projects. Do you always work retrieving signs and hybridising in a new reflection elements and projects you have already realised?

Is it important for you the idea of the transformation of the work, in relation to the specific site in which the piece is installed?

MM: *I am a life that has a direction. In the course of this life, events happen. Things come and go. But nothing disappears from my life and I don't disappear from any other life. Any interaction that existed remains. No matter if you see it clearly or not, they interconnect beyond your control.*

To me, One by definition contains Many in itself. I am not Me because of myself. Existence is not so much in the hands of oneself. To me, the purest form of existence is like mist. Our bodies are containers of things like temperature, humidity, beats. These elements interact with many things around them and change their states: they metamorphose. Nothing disappears but everything changes its state.

What is important for me is not the idea of transformation but the understanding of the nature of beings, and being in touch with it through my work.

MGM: Your work suggests continuously the ambiguity between what is material and that which is immaterial.

Is it in this sense that you privilege glass and reflected images?

MM: *I like thin glass. I like transient reflections on it; but I know I can break it. Knowing this, I will not break it even if I can. Only because of that, thin glass becomes strong. In the same way, I can kill a butterfly. But, sensing its fragility, I choose to be careful. You are not powerful because you can be cruel; that is not strength. And because of that, glass and butterflies can also become strong. Only because they are so fearlessly fragile, they become strong.*

Power and fragility is a pair. When you understand this contradiction, beauty begins to unfold. Beauty is a language that has a power to speak to all. But to master this language, you have to learn about contradictions. Beauty betrays you if you are oblivious to this.

I want to challenge power. I want to challenge our ability to use our real strength. Reflections, shadows, hybridity may look subtle. But they are also the true nature of beings. They are so fragile and therefore, to me, they are undoubtedly strong.