

Y V E S S C H E R E R

IN NEARLY EVERY ASPECT OF LIFE BOUNDARIES HAVE BECOME POROUS. WHAT IS REAL AND WHAT IS FICTION? THOUGH IT HAS BECOME EXPONENTIALLY EASIER TO ACCESS INFORMATION, HOW IT IS PRESENTED HAS MADE IT MORE DIFFICULT TO INTERPRET. THIS MAKES THE TASK OF REVEALING SOCIAL REALITIES A DIFFICULT ONE. YVES SCHERER'S PRACTICE STRIVES TO PEEL OFF THESE LAYERS. HIS WORK HAS LARGELY CENTERED ON UNVEILING THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LIFE MOMENTS, PARTICULARLY VERY INTIMATE OR ROMANTIC ONES. FASCINATED, IT SEEMS, BY THE CELEBRITY CULTURE AND THAT OF WELL-KNOWN HOLLYWOOD STARS, HE LAYERS IT WITH PERSONAL MOMENTS FROM HIS OWN LIFE TO NARRATE A NEW STORY, CREATING A FORM OF FAN ART,¹ IF YOU WILL.

ACTING AS AN ANTHROPOLOGIST, SCHERER TAKES HIS OWN IMAGES AND THOSE OF THE ACTORS AND ACTRESSES AS HIS PRIMARY MATERIAL – WHICH ARE LESS REPRESENTATIONS OF THE SPECIFIC INDIVIDUAL THAN THEY ARE REPRESENTATIONS OF THE PERSONAS CREATED BY THE FILM INDUSTRY AND FUELED BY A SOCIETY OF SPECTACLE. CREATED USING THE COMPUTER AS HIS MAIN CREATIVE TOOL, SCHERER'S WORK, WHICH INCLUDES INSTALLATIONS, SCULPTURES, PHOTOGRAPHS, PICTORIALS, AND AUDIOVISUAL COLLAGES, PORTRAYS FAMOUS INDIVIDUALS SUCH AS EMMA WATSON, LEONARDO DICAPRIO, KRISTEN STEWART, AND CHRIS HEMSWORTH AS WELL AS ALL THE PARAPHERNALIA THAT SURROUNDS THEM. INTERTWINING PERSONAL EXPERIENCES, INCLUDING SELF-PORTRAITS, THE IMAGES EXAMINE THE CONCEPT OF IDENTITY, PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE COLLECTIVE, THE PRIVATE AND THE PUBLIC, AND PERHAPS EVEN THE TRIVIAL AND THE SEXUAL. THESE LIAISONS DEPICT THE INTERPLAY OF COMPETITION AND LONGING IN SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED IDENTITIES, CONCEIVED FOR ONE OR ANOTHER REALITY AND THE PERSONAL DRIVE TO IMPROVE WITHIN A CAPITALIST SOCIETY.

THE SERIES *LENTICULAR PRINTS*, PRESENTED ON A LARGE SCALE IN A 2016 SHOW AT THE ROD BIANCO GALLERY IN OSLO, DELINEATES THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SOCIETY IN WHICH WE LIVE – A SOCIETY FUNDAMENTALLY DOMINATED BY SPECTACLE, WHERE THE PARTICIPANTS ARE SO ABSORBED BY VIRTUAL REALITY AND CELEBRITY DRAMAS THAT THEY HAVE STOPPED PAYING ATTENTION TO CONCRETE EVENTS IN THEIR OWN DAILY LIVES. WE HAVE REACHED THE POINT OF BEING SO IMMERSED IN THIS CONSTRUCTED REALITY AND THE ADAMANT DESIRE TO BECOME A PART OF IT



THAT WE HAVE CEASED ACTING LIKE CRITICAL INDIVIDUALS AND ALLOWED INFORMATION TO FLOW WITHIN OUR SYSTEMS INDISCRIMINATELY, TAKING OVER OUR CONSCIOUSNESS. AS A COLLECTIVE, WE WANT TO BECOME PART OF THESE FICTIONS, AND AS A RESULT, WE END UP PERPETUATING THEM. IN THIS SENSE, THE LENTICULAR PRINTS PROPOSE THE MATERIALIZATION OF THE COLLECTIVE LANDSCAPE. THROUGH THESE IMAGES, SCHERER EXPRESSES A DESIRE THAT IS INTRINSIC TO OUR LIVES AS CONSUMERIST BEINGS AND YET UNATTAINABLE, BECAUSE OF BOTH ITS FICTIONAL NATURE AND THE VERY LOGIC OF A CONSUMER-BASED ECONOMY.

IN THE LENTICULAR PRINTS *PORTRAITS* (2016) AND *OUR LIFE* (2016), SCHERER PRESENTS HIMSELF AS A CHARACTER WITHIN THIS FICTITIOUS NARRATIVE. PLAYING WITH TRANSPARENCIES, THE ARTIST JUXTAPOSES HIS IMAGE WITH EMMA WATSON'S, IMMERSING HIMSELF IN HER WORLD AND STRIVING TO POSITION HIMSELF AS HER ANALOGUE. THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN WATSON'S CELEBRITY PERSONA AND HIS OWN IS, IN ESSENCE, A FICTITIOUS RE-CREATION OF HIMSELF – A KIND OF IDEAL BEING, INDEPENDENT AND SEPARATE FROM HIS ACTUAL SELF. THE ACT OF INSERTING HIS OWN IMAGE WITHIN THE WORK INITIATES A META-TEXTUAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE NARRATIVE STRUCTURE OF THE SPHERE OF MOVIE STARS – A STRUCTURE CREATED BY THE INDUSTRY AND ITS COMMERCIAL INTERESTS. THE INDUSTRY IS AS VAPOROUS AS THE IMAGE OF THE ARTIST HIMSELF WITHIN HIS COMPOSITIONS AS WELL AS HIS ATTEMPTS AT CREATING A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HIS IMAGE AND THE CELEBRITY OF WATSON. THE INCORPORATION OF HIS OWN IMAGE SUGGESTS THAT WE ARE ALL PARTICIPANTS IN THE SOCIETY OF SPECTACLE AND NOT INDIVIDUALS DIVORCED FROM IT; THUS, INSTEAD OF ENGAGING IN DIRECT CRITICISM, SCHERER SEEKS TO INCORPORATE THE SPECTATOR AS A FUNDAMENTAL PART OF HIS NARRATIVE.

THE ARTIST'S FIXATION WITH WATSON'S PERSONA HAS TRANSFORMED OVER TIME; AT TIMES, HE HAS PRESENTED HER AS ANALOGUE AND AT OTHERS, SIMPLY AS AN OBJECT. IN HIS SERIES OF NUDE SCULPTURES OF WATSON, SCHERER TURNS TO FEMININE STEREOTYPES SUCH AS VENUS, SIRENS, CATS, AND FEMALE SCIENCE-FICTION AUTOMATONS, ALL OF WHOM HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE OBJECTIFICATION OF WOMEN OVER TIME. HIS NUDE SCULPTURES – MADE FROM DIVERSE MATERIALS SUCH AS COPPER, ALUMINUM, RESIN, AND FOAM RUBBER – SUGGEST AN OBJECTIFIED EMMA WATSON, A SEXUAL OBJECT IN STARK CONTRAST TO THE HIGH-PROFILE IMAGE THE ACTRESS HAS TAKEN GREAT CARE TO PROJECT SINCE HER BEING NAMED AS THE UN WOMEN'S GOODWILL AMBASSADOR. IT IS PRECISELY DUE TO THIS CONTRAST THAT SCHERER'S OBJECTIVE BECOMES PAL-

PABLE – HIS USE OF FEMALE SEXUAL TYPOLOGIES UNDERLINES THE PROBLEM, MAKING OBVIOUS ITS PERSISTENCE IN THE PRESENT WHILE ALSO SHAKING UP THE VIEWER'S REALITY.

IN A RECENT CONVERSATION, WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE ROLE HE PLAYS WITHIN THE SOCIETY OF SPECTACLE, THE ARTIST AFFIRMED THAT HIS INTEREST IN CELEBRITY CULTURE AND THE IMAGES CREATED BY THE MASS MEDIA IS A PRODUCT OF HIS EUROPEAN UPBRINGING. NOW THAT HE LIVES IN THE UNITED STATES, HE FEELS THAT HE IS PARTICIPATING IN THAT WAY OF LIFE. FOR HIM, INHABITING AND TAKING PART IN THE ENVIRONMENT OF NEW YORK ALLOWS HIM TO EXPERIENCE A LIFESTYLE SIMILAR TO THAT OF HOLLYWOOD ACTORS, WITH ALL ITS NUANCES AND INVENTIONS. IN THIS SENSE, SCHERER BELIEVES THAT HIS PRACTICE DEALS LESS IN FICTIONS THAN IN A CONCRETE REALITY, ONE THAT IS TANGIBLE IN THE LIFESTYLES OF A CERTAIN SECTOR OF AMERICAN SOCIETY. AS A CONTEMPORARY ARTIST AND CONTENT PRODUCER, SCHERER IS NOT INTERESTED IN DIRECTLY COMMENTING ON WHAT IS HAPPENING IN SOCIETY BUT IN APPROPRIATING THE FORMS THAT INHABIT OUR WORLD AND PRESENTING THEM IN SUCH A WAY AS TO CAPTIVATE THE COMMON SPECTATOR.

VIEWED FROM A MORE SURFACE PERSPECTIVE, THROUGH AN AESTHETIC LEGITIMIZED AND BASED ON THE TASTES OF CONSUMERIST SOCIETY, SCHERER'S LENTICULAR PRINTS ARE IMAGES THAT EXTOL EMMA WATSON'S BEAUTY AND IMPORTANCE WHILE ALSO TURNING THE ARTIST INTO A KIND OF REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE DESIRE OF THE MASSES TO REACH THE STATUS OF OBJECTS GENERATED BY SYSTEMS OF FAME AND STARDOM. IF WE CONDUCT A DEEPER ANALYSIS OF ITS PRODUCTION, WE FIND THAT SCHERER'S WORK REFLECTS AN AXIOMATIC SYSTEM GOVERNED BY A SERIES OF VALUES AND THE CONSTANT DESIRE TO EMBODY THEM. IT IS NOT UNINTENTIONAL THAT SCHERER CHOOSES IMAGES TAKEN BY WELL-KNOWN FASHION PHOTOGRAPHERS SUCH AS JOSH OLINS AND VINCENT PETERS, WHOSE TECHNIQUE IS IMPECCABLE AND WHOSE OBJECTIVE IS ULTIMATELY TO SHOW EMMA WATSON AS PRISTINE, AT HER BEAUTIFUL, ELEGANT, AND GRACEFUL BEST – ATTRIBUTES THAT ANYONE IN SOCIETY CAN OBTAIN THROUGH MERE COMMERCIAL TRANSACTIONS. THUS, BY APPROPRIATING THESE IMAGES THAT EXALT BEAUTY AND OTHER VALUES, SCHERER DEMONSTRATES THE PREDOMINANCE OF THE *STAR SYSTEM*² AND ITS PARADIGMS IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY.

THE ACT OF APPROPRIATION IS A CHARACTERISTIC OF CONTEMPORARY ART PRODUCED AFTER THE 1950s, ARISING AS A CONTINUATION OF

Yves Scherer, *Portraits* (2016) (cover) Emma (Rose), 2016 (p. 55) Emma (Flower III), 2016 (p. 58) Emma (Black & White), 2016 (p. 59) Emma (White), 2016 (p. 60) Emma (Mysterious), 2016 (p. 61) Emma (Blue), 2016 (p. 62) Emma (Flowers), 2016 (p. 63) All images Courtesy: the artist





THE DUCHAMPIAN PHILOSOPHY OF THE READY-MADE. SCHERER INSISTS THAT HIS USE OF APPROPRIATION IS NOT DIRECTLY RELATED TO THINKING OF THE READY-MADE BUT AN ATTEMPT TO USE PRE-EXISTING FORMS AND ORGANIZE THEM IN SUCH A WAY AS TO CONSTRUCT ALTERNATIVE NEW SCENERIES TO CONTRAST WITH THOSE THAT ALREADY PREVAIL. SUCH A POSTURE RESONATES WITH CONTEMPORARY ART'S VENERATION OF POST-PRODUCTION, A PRACTICE IN WHICH THE ARTIST INCORPORATES PAST WORK PRODUCED BY THIRD PARTIES IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF ONE'S OWN WORK. VIEWED THROUGH THIS PARADIGM OF CREATION, SCHERER'S WORK PRESENTS ITSELF AS THE CONCATENATION OF MULTIPLE NARRATIVES AND PRE-EXISTING IMAGES THAT MAKE UP AND TRANSFORM THE SOCIETY OF SPECTACLE AS WELL AS THE ARTIST, WHO CREATES BASED ON FICTITIOUS ELEMENTS WHILE MOVING FROM NARRATIVE TO OPINION. SCHERER COULD BE SEEN AS A SORT OF VISUAL DISC JOCKEY WHO PLAYS WITH THE VARIOUS FORMS, SIGNS, AND IMAGES THAT ARE AVAILABLE TO HIM ONLINE AND FREE BUT THAT BEAR AN IMPLICIT COST – THAT OF INCLUDING THEIR PREVIOUS SIGNIFICANCE WITHIN HIS WORK.

SEMIOSIS, THE PROCESS BY WHICH THE READER ACTIVATES A MEANING OR A SERIES OF MEANINGS BASED ON A STIMULUS – WHICH IN THIS CASE IS THE IMAGE OF SOMEONE WHO IS PART OF THE *STAR SYSTEM* – ACTIVATES A NEVER-ENDING CHAIN OF GLOBALLY RECOGNIZED MEANINGS. THEREFORE, SCHERER'S WORK COULD INCLUDE MULTIPLE MEANINGS THAT PRE-DATE THE WORK AND, UPON BEING UNDERSTOOD BY THE READER, EXTEND FAR BEYOND THE ARTIST'S OWN INTENTIONS TO GENERATE OR OMIT ANY GIVEN MEANING. THE SEMIOSIS OF AN IMAGE OF AN ACTRESS SUCH AS EMMA WATSON INEVITABLY ACTIVATES A WIDE RANGE OF CONNOTATIONS THAT EXTEND BEYOND HER NAME OR THE AESTHETIC INTERPRETATION EVOKED BY THE COMPOSITION OF THE PHOTOGRAPH APPROPRIATED. IT INCLUDES HER PERFORMANCES AS AN ACTRESS – PRIMARILY THE CHARACTER OF HERMIONE GRANGER IN THE HARRY POTTER FILMS – AS A WOMAN, AND AS A GOODWILL AMBASSADOR TO THE UN, HER SPEECHES, HER BIOGRAPHY, HER APPEARANCE IN GOSSIP COLUMNS – ESSENTIALLY, ALL EVENTS RELATED TO HER, HER LIFE, AND THE CHARACTER CREATED BY THE *STAR SYSTEM* AND BY MASS MEDIA. WATSON'S IMAGE IS COMPARABLE TO THE IMAGE OF THE *MONA LISA* IN MARCEL DUCHAMP'S *L.H.O.O.Q.* (1919). DUCHAMP DECIDED TO APPROPRIATE THE RENAISSANCE IMAGE BECAUSE OF THE CELEBRITY STATUS IT GAINED AFTER IT WAS STOLEN FROM THE GALLERIES OF THE LOUVRE IN 1911. THANKS TO THE PREVAILING MEDIA AT THE TIME, THE *MONA LISA* BECAME A GLOBAL SENSATION AND, AS A RESULT, A POP-CULTURE ICON.

THEREFORE, WHEN SCHERER DECIDES TO APPROPRIATE THE IMAGE OF WATSON OR THE PARADIGMATIC PHOTOGRAPH OF KATE MOSS AND JOHNNY DEPP TAKEN BY ANNIE LEBOVITZ IN THE 1990S, HIS WORK ADDRESSES SOCIAL PARADIGMS THAT GO BEYOND THE INDIVIDUALS THEMSELVES, WHETHER INTENDED OR NOT. LIKE MANY OTHER CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS OF HIS GENERATION, SCHERER POPULARIZES HIS DISCOURSE BY RE-SIGNIFYING IMAGES WITH PREDOMINANT SYMBOLIC WEIGHT. HE CHOOSES TO DEPICT CELEBRITIES FROM THE *STAR SYSTEM* WHO NOT ONLY LEGITIMIZE THE FILM INDUSTRY SYSTEM OF VALUES BUT ARE ALSO SPOKESPEOPLE WITH A CERTAIN MORAL STANCE – IN THIS CASE, FOR PROGRESSIVE VALUES THAT HAVE RECENTLY BECOME PART OF HOLLYWOOD'S DISCOURSE, SUCH AS GENDER EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, AND CLIMATE CHANGE. WHILE TAKING IDEAS OF ORIGINALITY FOR GRANTED, SCHERER'S WORK SEEKS TO GENERATE A REAL IMPACT BY WAY OF THE RESOURCES THAT ARE AVAILABLE TO HIM AND ARE WIDELY RECOGNIZED BY SOCIETY. FOR HIM, THE IMAGES OF WATSON AND DICAPRIO, WITH THEIR COMPLEX AND ELABORATED PERSONAS, PROJECT A SIGNIFICANT NOTION WHICH AIMS TO TRANSMIT HOPE FOR HUMANITY AND REPRESENT AN INCENTIVE IN A WORLD AS ATOMIZED AS OURS, GOVERNED AS IT IS BY THE SOCIETY OF SPECTACLE.

THUS, SCHERER'S WORK PERMEATES OUR COLLECTIVE IMAGINATION ON VARIOUS LEVELS AND DEMONSTRATES A SOCIAL PERFORMANCE WE HAVE PERFECTED OVER TIME – A BEHAVIOR BASED ON THE ILLUSORY REPRESENTATION OF NON LIFE, REMINISCENT OF THE WORDS OF GUY DEBORD, WHICH OSCILLATES BETWEEN THE LIMITS OF THE REAL AND THE FICTITIOUS.

BY ABASEH MIRVALI

1. WE HAVE DECIDED TO USE THE TERM "FAN ART," WHICH SPECIFICALLY REFERS TO ARTWORKS, SUCH AS DRAWINGS, PAINTINGS, SCULPTURE, OR OTHER PLASTIC ARTS, CREATED BY FANS OF A WORK OF FICTION, AND DERIVED FROM A CHARACTER OR OTHER ASPECT OF THAT WORK; AS OPPOSED TO THE TERM "FAN FICTION," WHICH HAS BEEN USED IN THE PAST TO DESCRIBE SCHERER'S WORK THOUGH IT IS EXPRESSLY RELATED TO THE CREATION OF NEW FICTION, SUCH AS STORIES, NOVELS, AND COMICS.

2. THE *STAR SYSTEM* IS A METHODOLOGY CREATED BY THE CINEMATOGRAPHY INDUSTRY, WHICH PRODUCES, PROMOTES AND EXPLOITS PROMISING YOUNG AND UNKNOWN ACTORS BY CREATING A PERSONA FOR THEM. THIS IS DONE BY EMPHASIZING THE IMAGE OF THE ACTOR/ACTRESS AND HIS OR HER LIFESTYLE RATHER THAN THEIR ACTING SKILLS. THIS ALSO TRANSLATES INTO PROMOTING CERTAIN VALUES AND PARADIGMS, OFTEN ENCOURAGED BY THE SOCIETY OF SPECTACLE.