# Carlos Vidal

## JOÃO ONOFRE: The Schizo-images and their Representational Consequences

### I

Carefully considering the complex and diverse creative path followed by João Onofre (and deepening a previous study on the matter)1 over the last thirteen years (and I am taking the video Untitled (We Will Never be Boring), from 1997 as a key reference), a path that has been developed particularly in two mediums, video and drawing (despite our being able to also talk about projects with a performing aspect), I would begin this new approach to Onofre's work by introducing four aggregating concepts (which correspond to several sets of works), two of which form determi- ned new elements (that of the schizo-image and that of the "double obscu- ring"), and two others being only developments of more or less stabilised ideas that can be linked to Onofre (but which come from the vast field of the visual arts) due to their interrogative-questioning peculiarity about the threshold of the image that Onofre and his production have raised for some time – in short, considering its forms of meaning and depiction (concepts such as confusionality, a reality that is also psychological, or that of "representation of the irrepresentable", when Onofre and other visual artists take on the omnipresent subject of the representation or figuration of human and/or historical death).

1) Let us thus start by presenting a new subject, made explicit from the outset in the title of this essay, the SCHIZO-IMAGE, or schizo-appeared- produced image, considered as such because it is made up of and severed into opposite and conflicting components, albeit always in the same body; or rather in a same shaken unity.

It will be of interest to me here to apply one of the definitions of schi- zophrenia (that dates back to Eugen Bleurer and to 1911) to the image, although never to the creative act nor to its production/producer. I am interested in the term, or clinical reality, in one of its possible definitions that comes from its etymological matrix or origin. For Eugen Bleuler, the inventor of the terms schizophrenia and autism, in a 1911 work en- titled Dementia Praecox or Group of Schizophrenias, schizophrenia (and we will soon

see Bleuler's etymological base)2 would be the paradigm of the disturbances of madness, occupying the place that Freud attributed to hysteria. The etymological explanation points towards processes such as splitting, cracking and dissociating. In other authors, however, schi- zophrenia is linked to an incapacity to inscribe the Ego within the tem- poral situation (Eugène Minkowski)3 or a loss of the sense of the real, indistinction and catatonia. But Bleuler is accredited with the creation and definition of "modern schizophrenia" through a term that precisely designates disintegration and shattering: Spaltung.

Bleuler: "I call dementia praecox schizophrenia because (...) the Spal- tung of the most diverse psychic functions is one of its most important cha- racteristics."4 Thus it is the concept of Spaltung/Splitting that is of inte- rest for me to analyse here. Bleuler makes a distinction between a primary Zerspaltung, which corresponds to disintegration in the form of shatte- ring the psychic functions, and a more specific Spaltung, which is seen as a splitting of thoughts. For Laplanche and Pontalis, in their Vocabulaire de la Psychanalyse,5 the French term dissociation refers particularly to Zerspal- tung, but in this essay I prefer the second definition (that of the splitting of thoughts into several groups) to characterize some of Onofre's works.

And I prefer the idea of the splitting of thoughts because in some of Onofre's works there is a sudden breaking out of a dissociation between a primary meaning (that I can also call the "work" itself) and a meaning that is not exactly "secondary", but is rather deepened, pondered, more evident (or even practically evident) that belongs to the work as much as the primary meaning, but which stands as opposition and contradiction in relation to that first meaning. This is why I state that these schizo-images are characterised by an opposition between the work and its me- aning, or a split between a reading that is primarily induced by the work and later necessarily deepened in an opposing manner (or a real, true and initial one). I would enumerate three works, which I will develop two of them further on: Untitled (We Will Never be Boring), video, no sound, 60', from 1997; Casting, video, sound, 12' 59'', from 2000; and Untitled (Leveling a Spirit Level in Free Fall feat. Dorit Chrysler's BBGV dub), video, sound, 4' 20'', from 2009.

2) In second place, in some works by Onofre I detect a propensity to- wards that which I would call "DOUBLE OBSCURING", a procedure that is impressively striking in the series of Black Drawings, produced in 2008. These, like many of Onofre's works, are symptomatically presented without a title, but the titling or the discrimination of the work and "sour- ce" of the (non-) image comes indirectly, through abbreviations and co- ded indications. We are apparently dealing with monochromatically black works, but, for example, the vague title Untitled JH (1st section 7th verse), states that Onofre has used a given line from a song by Jimi Hendrix [JH], precisely the text that is somewhat difficult to make out, being printed (as if this were a "war" of mutual annulling of black colours).

The text, no; rather an illegible phonetic transcription. So we have a first line of obscurity: the monochrome or a text on black on a black back- ground; a second line of obscurity: we neither read a text nor a line, but their phonetic transcription, in a sometimes (almost always) impossible legibility; examples of "phrases": "I seeyouroawn che-eks, saves that", "acangh't you see I'm red-a well hell you know I'm red-a" or "nomorwoarandnomorwoarandohhohoohh(nothing)", trulypeculiartranscriptions of lines or lyrics from Michael Jackson, David Bowie, Kylie Minogue or from the death metal band Cannibal Corpse, among other choices. What I mean here by "double obscuring" is a strategy of obscuring of the already obscure subjectivity or initial deconstructive subjectivising of language – I used the term "double obscurity" for the first time in a characterisa- tion/definition of "political art"6 as corresponding to a process that pro- poses to go beyond mere subjectivity, something that the idea of the "im- penetrable darkness" or the unconditioned poetics of the neo-baroque writing of José Lezama Lima exemplifies very well, as this unconditional aspect had its aim or main enemy in always mercantile communication. We may to some extent follow an idea of Mario Perniola's:

*Communication is the opposite of knowledge. It is the enemy of ideas because it is essential for it to dissolve all contents. The alternative is a form of proceeding based on memory and imagination, in an interested disinterest that does not flee from the world, but makes it move.*7

Well, this text by Perniola can also be directly presented as a defini- tion for these

drawings by Onofre, which appeal to an erasing that is here made "pure visual imagination", which is how I see monochrome in ge- neral and these works in particular.

Purified "visual imagination", therefore. If we follow Clement Green- berg's essay, "After Abstract Expressionism",8 we will see that monochro- me is not so much a painting transformed into an object (due to being fre- ed from any reference), nor a rejection of the pictorial (the monochrome seems to reject the image, any image), but rather the stating of its visual essence, and thus the recourse to monochrome in João Onofre is mainly visual and at the same time misleading and problematising, forcing us to work in a optic world in dark on dark or black on black, showing us that one single colour can also contain phrases and narratives; in short, a world of meanings. Greenberg:

*Elsewhere I have written of the kind of self-critical pro- cess which I think provides the infra-logic of modernist art ("Modernist Painting"). The aim of the self-criticism, whi- ch is entirely empirical and not at all an affair of theory, is to determine the irreducible working essence of art and the se- parate arts. Under the testing of modernism more and more of the conventions of the art of painting have shown themsel- ves to be dispensable, unessential. By now it has been establi- shed, it would seem, that the irreducible essence of pictorial art consists in but two constitutive conventions or norms: flatness and the delimitation of flatness; and that the obser- vance of merely these two norms is enough to create an ob- ject which can be experienced as a pictures: thus a stretched or tacked-up canvas already exists as a picture – though not necessarily as a successful one.*

In this manner the monochrome is the expression of the visual es- sence of the painting and not a rejection that we might call ontological. The monochrome is born out of this essentialism of Greenberg's, or is correctly explained through it. It is, to all intents, a painting and a vi- sual entity. But here Onofre makes it textual, despite being made up of a textuality that is close to the illegible, as neither the dark lettering can be easily made out against the dark background, nor, when it can be distinguished – that is, when we understand it – is it clear, because the text is confused, incorrect (grammatically) and appears to be writ- ten in an invented language (a sort of schizo-

language, or language in "implosion").

3) In the third place, in some works João Onofre creates a very per- sonalised but clearly intentional (and intentionality stands out over personalisation-originality) CONFUSIONALITY.

This confusionality sometimes arises out of the presentation of a vi- sual "object", of a text or statement, that is then granted a sound co- vering (resulting in a text that is not presented as read nor to be read, but sung), a transformation later transformed, a process that, from one transformation to another, loses form or legibility, like in the work Ca triona Shaw sings Baldessari sings LeWitt re-edit Like a Virgin Extended Version, video, sound, 14' 23'', from 2003.

Sol LeWitt wrote 35 theses about conceptual art, which were ori- ginally published in the first issue of Art & Language, and are known as "Sentences on Conceptual Art", beginning with the first sentence or the- sis, the famous: "Conceptual Artists are mystics rather than rationalists. They leap to conclusions that logic cannot reach". Later, in 1972, in a fifteen-minute, black and white film, John Baldessari sets each of the- se theses to music in order to melodiously sing them, albeit with ironic dryness. Here we have a first diluting of the subject and of the object in question: Baldessari sings what LeWitt wrote to be read, studied and me- ditated upon, perhaps in silence. João Onofre finally dresses that which Baldessari sings, and does it in an up-to-date manner, with Madonna'd Like a Virgin: at the end we have a Madonna song with lyrics by LeWitt; so we have a monument-symbol of mass culture and the cultural indus- try (but my statement should not be read with Theodor Adorno's "dark" tone) with LeWitt's lyrics; that is, LeWitt's complex thought here under- goes successive dilutings: LeWitt/text goes onto Baldessari/song to beco- me Onofre/memory (pop and sociologics).

Instrumental Version, (video, sound, 6' 53''), from 2001, also illustra- tes the confusionality proposed by Onofre. Is it a video or a musical work? Or is a video a non exclusively visual object? What are we told by this work that presents a bizarre interpretation of a work by Kraftwerk by the Uni- versity of Lisbon Chamber Choir? This video lasts 6' 53" and is if the song The Robots, taken from the album The Man Machine (1978) by Kraftwerk. João Onofre asks for the electronic sounds to be transcribed into regular notation (as Messiaen did with natural sounds – see the long

symphony Des Canyons aux étoiles ..., 1974, for example); then the conductor of the choir produced a harmonic version of these abstract sounds without a text (without the original text) and without words. Just as the Black Dra- wings are strange phonetic transcriptions of pop-rock songs, this video shows us the expressive potential of onomatopoeias and related sounds that "say" nothing, because in generic terms they are meaningless pho- nemes. But here, as I have stated, the confusionality is set up when we cannot classify the work: is it a video? Is it a performance (note that the first time it was presented as such, at the inauguration of the group exhi- bition Arritmias: Inibições e Prolongamentos do Humano, Oporto, 2000)? Is it a musical work? Indiscernible? Undecidable?

And what can one say about Thomas Dekker, an Interview (video, sound, 16' 07'')? We can never be sure here whether we are dealing with the actor Tho- mas Dekker or the alien character who is the only survivor of the film Village of the Damned (1995) by John Carpenter. Indeed, all of Onofre's work maintains (and has to maintain!) this doubt on the threshold, on a knife edge. Here is an excerpt from the interview (from the video of the same name):

*J.O (João Onofre): Thomas, I have seen you for the very first time in the movie Village of the Damned as a child actor whe- re you are an alien with supernatural and telepathic powers. But contrary to the rest of your alien peers, children who look like siblings from the same parents that want to destroy humanity, you go through a process of humanisation. How old were you then?*

*T.D (Thomas Dekker): I was 6 years old. J.O: And now? T.D: Now I'm 18.*

*J.O: Ever since then I have wondered that you are a true spe- cimen of a coming community of movie and TV professionals that start working at an early age. Do you agree on the idea of coming community?*

*T.D: Yeah. I think there's this very select group of people that started so young and have actually managed to sustain it and keep working through it and you do feel a member of some sort of strange kind of group of people that are willing to go through all that that requires.*

*J.O: How do you feel integrated in the movie and TV indus- try? It mustn't be easy at all. In fact, it should be extraordina- rily difficult to work as an actor since such an early age.*

*T.D: It's pretty much all you know. You don't, particularly so- meone like me who,*

*like a lot of other child actors, were ho- me-schooled, you don't have the circle of friends, you don't have the sports activities, you don't have any kind of group outings. You work all day, you audition almost every day. You have constant rejection. The jobs that you don't get, but it's fulfilling when you do work, so fulfilling.*
*J.O: Back in 95 on John Carpenter's footage you are super gifted. Do you think that this generation of young actors is somehow a bit like that as well?*
*(...)*

Actor and character are seamlessly blended together; the child who is now 18 is not very different from the Carpenter character who was 6 years old before and now will also be 18. The community that Onofre refers to as "movie and TV professionals that start working at an early age" is also the "community of alien children" in the movie, so the question by the inter- viewer (João Onofre himself), "How do you feel integrated in the movie and TV industry?" is a question for Carpenter's character that could be this one, "How do you feel integrated in our human community?", etc. It is also a way for Onofre to be ambiguous and make us ask: are we still inside or now out of the John Carpenter movie? Inside or outside a João Onofre video?

Exemplary of this confusionality (or extreme ambiguity) by Onofre is his declared interest, as shown in drawings, for the Hitchcockian term, concept or device of the "Macguffin".
Let us go back to Onofre's solo exhibition in Barcelona, 2005 (Gale- ria Toni Tàpies). One of the emblematic works was a drawing in which Onofre, using a type font that directly quoted Ed Ruscha's text-painting, wrote the word "MACGUFFIN" on a white sheet of paper. The term re- fers to a false lead or mere support to move the action forward in a nar- rative, film or other work that uses plot or sequencing. It is, as Hitchco- ck told François Truffaut, an apparatus for trapping lions in the Scottish Highlands9; that is, an apparatus for trapping lions where they do not exist. It is a plot device which, although it does not have the status of a character, makes the story and the characters move and makes the plot go forward, making it the intrigue that captures us. Lacan used the term "empty house", analysing Edgar Allan Poe's "purloined letter" or the white handkerchief that goes from hand to hand in Othello (Shakespeare) so that the shady figure of Iago can lead Othello to kill his beloved

Desde- mona out of jealousy.

Hitchcock did not invent the "Macguffin", but he raised its structural presence to the level of supreme wisdom, transforming that which is no more than a misunderstanding into the centre of the world. Let us take North by Northwest: Cary Grant is Roger Thornhill, who is pursued be- cause he is mistaken for a man who possesses a decisive secret. But the "real" man does not exist – the "Macguffin" thus fulfils its mission: be- cause of something that does not exist Thornhill's world (and not only his world) moves. So the true "Macguffin" is always that which does not and cannot exist. Only in this manner can it produce intrigue and mobilize our attention. Redoubled.

4) Like other artists (among them Gerhard Richter, Bruce Nauman and James Coleman...) who are closely linked to the subject of repre- sentation, of the representation of history, of the representation of the irrepresentable, and yet who do not believe that representation is me- rely an iconographic equivalence (and I am talking about artists who, for example, know that death is not represented through the figure of a dead body), Onofre, in an equally recent photographic series, Every Gra- vedigger in Lisbon, dealt with the figuration of death in order to show us that death is above all something which hides representation within it- self, to which it can be hesitatingly equated towards the irrepresentable. But it (death) is still an irrepresentability that has to be worked on and accepted as such – precisely as irrepresentable; this means accepting an inevitable challenge to represent the irrepresentable, as if this irrepre- sentable, death and the death body, is not granted an image (whatever it might be), it feeds all the forms of phantasmagoria that are made fragile to us in absolute fear. As Giorgio Agamben states in the essay published here, "L'immagine imemoriale": the ghost is the being that constantly returns, threateningly remaining in the world of the living and still con- nected to the place of (its) dead body. The funeral rite corresponds to a need to grant this threatening being the value of an ancestral being long- gone; that is, to grant it an image. It is with this in mind that Onofre goes into the series of photographs Every Gravedigger in Lisbon.

Despite being familiar with the reality of death, the Ancient World, at least since the Roman Empire, as described by Philippe Ariès (Essais sur l'Histoire de la Mort en

Occident: Du Moyen Age à Nous Jours),10 fea- red the proximity of the dead. So they built their cemeteries outside their city limits. In Imperial Rome, for example, they were built along the Via Appia. Also according to Ariès, our relationship with death would hardly change at all from the Middle Ages to the middle of the XX century. It was in the nineteen forties that death became an obscene fact and a prohibi- ted element to be erased in all its traces and signs (dying at home became unthinkable). The ancients separated death from life, but modernity has wished to "annul" death, granting it an irrepresentable status.

João Onofre, in working on the figuration of death, confirms these fears but grants them a face or faces, albeit hidden by the glasses that all those portrayed in the series wear. We come across a dialectic me- thod: to show, to exhibit, to index, to map and to make visible mean the opposite: Onofre hides, obscures, unrealises or invisualises through excessive clarity. Merleau-Ponty had already stated that there was an invisible fold in each thing that one sees (with we ourselves being able to "fold" the visible so much that we make it invisible); Baudrillard refers to the same thing with the concept of the hyper-real: absolute reality, while the real is only a desert.

In these photographs from 2006 Onofre is guided by this princi- ple: total clarity obscures! Therefore, portraying all the gravediggers in Lisbon banalises the image of death into non-existence. And what we know about the "being" of death (about which we cannot know anything, deep down) is the non-existence of all and any knowledge. The gravedigger personifies this impossible interpretation. Each of these men has buried dozens and hundreds of other men, so for them death stopped existing long ago – it is a job and a profession: only. Onofre here portrays these professionals linked to a routine without metaphysics. The gravedigger, who has death as his profession, does not see it – which is why all those portrayed are wearing completely dark glasses.

## II

After having presented the four essential aggregating poles in a rea- ding of João Onofre's work, we should try to point out common denomi- nators among them. Let us then state that in Onofre's work we are always between a simple and a very complex and ultimate crisis of the image, which we might call the base of an

invisuality, which neither belongs to the domain of the visible nor of the invisible. Invisuality is a concept that much better portrays the crisis of the image in the visual arts (which was already latent in the Duchampian, nihilistic and nominalist gesture) than the fiery opposition between the visible and the invisible and the option for one of them, or the opposition between vi- suality and invisibility. In invisuality, or in the space where the image is divided within it and against itself (the schizo-image), phenomena are ex- plained that mere opposition or the existence of the two well-known cate- gories of the visible and the invisible cannot achieve, discern or explain. The conceptual terrain of invisuality shows us that there is something between the visible and the invisible, for example an old idea of João Onofre's, the "spatio-temporal gap between two bodies" (see his two well- known videos of clashes of bodies – a man and a woman – head-on clashes in the "horizontal", defying gravity, and bodies crashing into themsel- ves, works from 1998 and 1999, which I analyse in my study João Onofre: Aquilo que Nunca Acontece/That which never happens).11 The concept of invisuality shows that there may always be something that is not present but is determining, because we can and should distinguish between what we see and that which exists; it is a matter of guaranteeing ourselves that the implicit or only circumstantial may have an extremely strong phenomenal reality; it is a question of understanding that the work of "double obscuring" the visible and that which seems to be totally explicit may be a form of granting it strength in representation, despite being a labour of hi- ding or "obscuring"; it is also a matter of understanding that just because we cannot look at the light full on (a subject dear to Georges Bataille) or the originating source of things, this does not invalidate its existence, which the more intense it is the more it cannot be looked at.

To some extent this is what João Onofre shows us in his video Untitled (I see a darkness), sound, 4' 16'', from 2007. Here the image of the work gradually develops from darkness into light and total illumination, whi- ch takes place alongside the action and "plot" of the work, which consists of a performance by two children in a recording studio singing the old song by Will Oldham that was made popular by Johnny Cash:

Well, you're my friend And can you see Many times we've been out drinking Many times we've shared our thoughts Did you ever, ever notice, the kind of thoughts I got Well you know I have a love, for everyone I know And you know I have a drive, for life I won't let go But sometimes this opposition, comes rising up in me This terrible

imposition, comes blacking through my mind [CHORUS:] And then I see a darkness (...)

The understanding of invisuality turns "darkness" into absolute light.

Here there is a crucial duality, like that which defines the category of dialectics from Plato to Hegel, a thesis and an antithesis or a simulta- neous presentification and self-denial of the image, as well as that of the visible and of visibility. A confrontation that, if we again return to the subject of the schizo-image and abruptly leap to a different context, one understands as having been politically and philosophically well under- stood in Mao Zedong's China, particularly in the historical controversy in which there was an attempt to determine whether it was the "One that divides into Two", or the "Two which became the One".

The interesting thing here is that in Onofre it is not a matter of re-es- tablishing the irreconcilable Platonist duality between the Idea and the Phenomenon, but of stating that such a duality, or even all and any dua- lity, we might say, can exist in the SAME image, because it is the duality that defines the world of the image: because an image is always something that rebels against itself. That is, the possibility of an image referring in terms of meaning to something that is very distant from it, or even of being the opposite of what it reveals and of thus referring to its opposite, is a property of the image, and above all of the videosphere. It is thus in this sort of schizo-state that a lot of the images and narrative situations created by João Onofre live.

### III

As I have stated, the Platonist world is dual, and is resolved in a gap and great irreparable fissure between the Idea and the Phenomenon. In this context Plato's target is the Sophist relativism, from which I believe that the Phenomenon should be freed. The aim of the Platonist struggle resides in the point in which sensism, which leads to the Sophist opinion and which is equivalent to it, is defeated by the Idea. The Idea is reached through dialectics, the highest philosophical method. Dialectics disseminates doubts and contradictions about contradictions and "un- loads" them onto the body of sensism (or fluxism, to use a term dear to Deleuze in another field). When the Idea defeats sensism the dual world seems to be able to disappear. But this is a problem that cannot be sol- ved, I believe, because there are Platonist texts that tell us that the Idea exists in the sensitive, and others that tell us that the Idea is totally

remo- ved from the sensitive. The duality is permanently re-established. Plato is also ambivalent in relation to the sense of sight, oscillating between a condemning or suspicion of it (ocular suspicion), and a blessing of it as the greatest and most complete sense.

In Hegel this duality is not undone, and opens up somewhat abruptly to a third element.12 The dialectic is also the highest philosophical work in Hegel, continuing on from Platonism; but the opposition between the He- gelian thesis and the antithesis does not necessarily lead to a synthesis that undoes the primordial duality, but rather to a third, more perfect, element. This is an inevitability that we will not see in Mao Zedong, as will be shown. Therefore, surprisingly, it would be necessary to wait for Mao Zedong and for the "One divides into Two" (versus the "Two forms One") in order to find an irreducible approximate dual modality which I, considering João Onofre, call the schizo-image. That is, although the methodological and conceptual link between Plato, Hegel and Mao Zedong is almost nothing (or provisionally nothing, but let us not forget that in these authors what is at stake is a model of society and of thought of which dialectics forms the operational basis), it appeared necessary for me to consider these three places of thought in order to better explain what I understand by the schi- zo-image or schizo-video (or schizo-form) in Onofre.

In the Renmin Ribao, of the 20th of May 1965, the philosopher Ai Siqi13 contests his party comrade Yang Xianzhen, who defended the thesis op- posite to Mao and to his line; Yang Xianzhen defended that the Two com- bined and was reconstituted in the One, appealing to tradition: "What is unity of opposites? There is an old Chinese saying, which illustrates the unity of opposites very well, and that is combing two into one. This saying means that a thing is a unity of two sides. It has the same meaning as 'one dividing into two'". For Ai Siqi this is the way to wrongly and through a metaphysical formula reconcile the social classes in conflict. Against this metaphysical strategy of conciliation, wise Mao proposed the formula of "unity-contradiction-unity", expressed in this manner to suggest approa- ches far beyond the universe of the political struggle; one should note how Mao can thus greatly aid us in the understanding of that which since the beginning of this text I have been calling schizo-image and schizo-video:

Marxist philosophy holds that the law of the unity of opposites is the fundamental law of the universe. This law operates uni- versally, whether in the natural world, in human society, or in man's thinking. Between the opposites in a contradiction the- re

is at once unity and struggle, and it is this that impels thin- gs to move and change. Contradictions exist everywhere, but their nature differs in accordance with the different nature of different things. In any given thing, the unity of opposites is conditional, temporary and transitory, and hence relative, whereas the struggle of opposites is absolute.14

## IV

There is no necessary or compulsory relationship between schizophre- nia (of images, or schizo-image), Platonist and Hegelian dialectics and Maoist politics, nor is it natural and correct to find in their crossings the elements that help us to overcome the narcissistic cycle within which Ro- salind Krauss imprisoned the video in her seminal essay in 1979, "Video: The aesthetics of narcissism". Or rather, such an overcoming in this man- ner is neither natural nor incontestable, but it is possible – for this reason Plato, Hegel and Mao were here interwoven in some of their motivations.

Let us start out by understanding schizophrenia in its etymological sen- se, or in its first reason as defined by Bleuler. The particle "schizo" comes from the greek **σχίζειν**, "to divide"; this is joined by "phren" or "phrenés" **φρήν** which refers to the part of the body that should connect the body and soul. There then emerges the term "schizo" connected to splitting, divi- ding, breaking up or dissociating (Bleuler's splitting/Spaltung) that which should be interdependent. But schizophrenia should not be confused with an illness of the "splitting of the Self " or with common multiple personality disorders. In the same way, in talking about schizo-image, I am not refer- ring to a type of disturbing image or one disturbed in its, let us say, "Self ", I am not referring to an image with multiple or infinite appearances, me- anings or significations. It is not exactly this that is intended here, as has been clear from the beginning, when I introduced the subject – there is no intention to have equivalences with polysemies or endless flows of readin- gs and free interpretations, nor de- territorialised, semantic or political energies (with the latter being indeed more connected to the formulas of schizo-analysis of Deleuze-Guattari, the procedures of whom I do not wish to apply in order to explain emblematic works by Onofre).

Coming back to some terms and proposals put forward by Mao, he con- ceives the preservation of a certain unity of opposites in nature and society, and at the same time

accepts analogies (without having proposed them) in the same fields (natural, societal), to etymologically classified schizophrenia: starting from Mao's dialectic this is a matter of accepting the possibility of the existence of an image losing control over its mea- ning, to the point that a proposal for a minimally satisfactory meaning for it can be obtained through the inverting of the interpretation itself (or primary meaning). I am thus interested in this decisive inversion, and not how in Deleuze-Guattari, there is a freeing of flows of meanin- gs or, in other terms, the liberation of desiring production in relation to Oedipal confinement.

The image is that which it is; that is, it is a unity made up of two unities in confrontation/conflict. In being, differently, a unity without unity, it is something that allows us to be freed from the spectacular prison that Guy Debord was talking about, when in thesis 4 of La Société du Spectacle he states that people in the contemporaneous condition of the specta- cle relate through a (common) identification with certain images: "The spectacle is not a collection of images, but a social relation among people, mediated by images".15

So Onofre allows a freeing of the image from this spectacular iden- tity confinement, as well as from its unity in which form and meaning come together, mutually illustrating each other, recalling Krauss's thesis when she defined video as the medium in which recording and diffusing take place simultaneously; this simultaneity may be stopped, because in Onofre the image tends to be permanently split into two, only becoming clear when placed against itself. Thus the recording- diffusion simultaneity that Krauss talks about loses strength, because Onofre's video image, that is, his filmic schizo-image, overcomes that Kraussian cycle, setting up a crucial duality, which means that in Ono- fre One divides into Two. Let us then see how this schizo-image frees the video (and the artist or video-artist) from the above-described nar- cissistic cycle.

It is from an understanding of video as a mirroring (linking this meta- phor of the "mirror" to an automatic technical truth of the medium), and also considering the pioneering works of Lynda Benglis, Richard Serra, Joan Jonas, Peter Campus, Nauman and Acconci, that Rosalind Krauss will come to the following conclusions: (1) the possibility of mechanized mirroring is central to the artistic discipline that has the video as its me- dium; (2) on the other hand, from this mirroring we will deduce the cha- racterization of the medium of the video, which for Rosalind Krauss is "narcissism"; so for Krauss the video as an "aesthetic of narcissism" co- mes from the

fact that it can produce instant feedbacks. That is the first definition of narcissism as the medium of video:

Unlike the other visual arts, video is capable of recording and transmitting at the same time – producing instant fe- edback. The body is therefore as it were centered between two machines that are the opening and closing of a paren- thesis. The first of these is the camera; the second is the monitor, which reprojects the performer's image with the immediacy of a mirror.16

Starting from Lacan, Krauss will consider that it is in the simultanei- ty that dissolves the subject into the object that videographic narcissism stands out. For this she turns to a text by Lacan from 1956, "Fonction et Champ de la parole et du langage en psychanalyse". In this essay Lacan deals with the relationship between therapist and patient, and above all with the silence with which the patient's discourse is received by the analyst. Through this study Lacan tells us about the process of analytical cure and of narcissism, or of the breaking of the narcissistic cycle (whi- ch leads the patient into perpetual frustration) as the analyst's principle task. In the first place, in therapy we have the patient's monologue and the analyst's silence. From this empty silence, what Lacan calls "the mo- numental narcissistic construction of the patient" is set up. This cons- truction, despite being "monumental" (meaning supposedly solid and firm) will "clash" (or end up in) the analyst's silence; thus a trench of (immense) frustration emerges in the patient. But then in the second place Lacan will not consider the analyst's silence listening to the patient as what sets off this frustration, because for Lacan the patient's frustra- tion is inherent to his discourse. In the third place, this "monumental Self" that the patient projects is an object that captures him; consequen- tly, he becomes statically captured by his projection; that is, the patient-subject gradually or rapidly becomes aware that he does not correspond to his projection, that he cannot stop feeding, giving rise to a monstrous alienation (the fourth moment); following this, in fifth place, it is urgent for analysis to break with this static fascination by the subject with this mirror that is his own fiction; thus, analysis has to make the subject un- derstand the difference between his lived subjectivity and the projected fantasy, that is, in sixth place, analysis must separate the person who is on the analyst's couch and the person "talking".

Well, as the instant feedback of video itself does not allow this sepa- ration, Krauss considers that video makes the spectator and author fall into a suspended space of narcissism. It is for this reason that in the first video works (and Krauss highlights the

work of Vito Acconci) the author's body almost always appears as the protagonist: because it is considered that the author is not an actor, but rather a sort of guide to himself in the new language. On the other hand, the author, within the plot of his own work, retro-feeds off himself (he records himself/films himself breathing, talking, questioning himself, inflicting pain on himself in order to check his own presence, etc.). In real time, meaning without time nor delaying.

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**V**

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Recapitulating, the narcissism of the video, or that which makes it "narcissistic" for Krauss, comes, conceptually, from a parallel between this medium in its simultaneities and the Lacanian definition of narcis- sism, and technically, from the place occupied by our body, mirrored in a same time between two machines: the camera and the monitor; or, more broadly, between recording and projecting, capturing and showing, the subject and the object. Following on, there appears the narcissism of the medium's impossibility (or "incapacity") to promote the separation be- tween the elements in this problematic duality.

In Lacan, as we have seen, we have the narcissistic "cycle" when the patient analysed, faced with the analyst's silence, is imprisoned by him- self in what he says, in what he projects, with this projection being some- thing to which he himself never corresponds, because it is a "monument" that is greatly superior to him. So the analytical cure has to free the sub- ject from his discourse. In another context, but in a clear parallel, the video and its simultaneities also do not allow a separation of the author from that which he invents and "projects" (in a dual sense: that he in- vents and diffuses in a projection or on the monitor).

And, on this point, what does Onofre do? He allows, as we will see through his schizo-images, a separation of the recording from its sho- wing, precisely because the work is more than what we see; or rather, sometimes, more than a few, it is even the opposite of what is seen. The work can then become the opposition and contradiction between the re- cording and the diffusing, generically between the form and the content, or, more specifically between the first content (which is still a part of the "form") and the "definitive" deepened, pondered content, which is disco- vered at the end of the work of ready the fixed work; a finalization that is an opposition to the rapid (initial) presence or presentation of the work.

To summarise, in Onofre there is an opposition between the content pre- sented and the content determined.

Let us analyse Casting and Untitled (Leveling a spirit level in free fall feat. Dorit Chrysler's BBGV dub) in this light. At the outset, in Casting we have the presence (or "figuration") of an opposition between the heroic cry of emancipation or of redemption in emancipation, of the Karin/In- grid Bergman character – "che io abbia la forza, la convinzione e il co- raggio" – and the male and female models coming from TV and adverti- sing who in Onofre's video repeat this, in this case as a "sentence" and not as a "cry". We indeed have this opposition, but the meaning coming from unending reflection is exactly the opposite of that first reading, whi- ch becomes only descriptive after adequate reflection. Casting has/must mean the OPPOSITE of what it seems/appears, the OPPOSITE of what it PRESENTS, so I say that in the schizo-image the form is opposed to the content and vice-versa.

The cry "che io abbia la forza, la convinzione e il coraggio" is stated at the end of Stromboli Terra di Dio (1949-50) by Rosselini. The film describes the relationship between a man and a woman who are thrust into a harsh, violent conflict, mediated by an omnipresent volcano on the island where the couple lives. The result is progressively devastating, and the volcano unexpectedly becomes an absolute indifferent to the action: even so, a very special spectator, because it is metaphorically the most influential and cer- tainly premonitory element when through its inexhaustible indifference it synthesizes the conflict between human beings. The female character in Stromboli is a Lithuanian woman, an uprooted character, therefore. On the one hand, this woman is lost in the relationship (and on the closed island); on the other hand, there is never a relationship "between two" without the poles doing without something of themselves, because the relationship, any relationship, is a land without belonging, a beginning and an end of mutual dispossession. And this is the tone for the reading of Casting.

Stromboli, dealing with the conflict between nature and humanity, or between modern culture and archaic culture, contains a supposed huma- nist message, but I believe it is more linked to romanticism than to simple humanism – but that is not what is at stake now. At the end of the movie, when Karin tries to escape from total enclosure, at the top of the moun- tain and surrounded by the volcano, she then finally realises the meaning of transcendence, and launches into the sentence that João Onofre makes be repeated in Casting. And what happens?

Each actor-model, out of those chosen by Onofre, candidates like in a casting session, comes to the foreground, introduces him or herself by name and states the phrase said by Karin/Ingrid Bergman. Then they go back and wait in the line with the other competitors in the background; they will all say the phrase several times (sometimes "better", sometimes "wor- se"). These are models who were contracted from the same agency, who had been shown Rosselini's film and had the project explained to them.

The most fascinating thing about this video is its occult, subtle side. At first sight, I would state, but in an illusory manner, like in all first observations, what stands out is the contradiction between the models of the society of the spectacle and Karin's final gesture, which refers to the strength, conviction and courage of a cry of redemption. But what contrast is this? The revealing of the society of the spectacle? Contrast be- tween the world of advertising and the TV (the poor little rich man) and Rosselini's gesture with everything that it represents? Is this not too ob- vious? So. What is Casting about?

Like in the movie, where Karin has to suffer through initiation in order to understand the transcendence of love and of landscape (see the roman- tic topics of human dissolving into the landscape, of natural/cultural dis- solution, and, at the same time, attraction to catastrophe), exactly like in the movie, in Casting there is excess and learning – being carried out by the hesitating, fragile models, apparently condemned to fail and to "improve" their performances. Then, in the sense that each extra has to repeatedly state a line that for them (and for us) appear strange, they will attempt to understand it, perhaps without managing to do so, but increasingly ques- tioning its spirit.

We could choose greater or lesser approaches, chose among "candida- tes", etc. But it is extremely interesting to see how at each new utterance each model does their best to improve that approximation between "two" worlds: that of the harshness of the movie and the exposure of being publi- cly exhibited at work doing something one does not understand. The model fumbles to find the diction, expression and accentuation, and each time he or she performs they try to connect themselves to what they are saying: this makes the video a recording of emotional oscillations and not an a priori conflict between two "worlds" (redemption against advertising). That is, there is not opposition between the catwalk and a moralistic or exclusive hierarchy. Because we all are the world.

This imperative need for inversion and NEGATION of initial meanin-

gs/significations is something that we observe and stands out, exactly in the same manner, in Untitled (Leveling a spirit level in free fall feat. Dorit Chrysler's BBGV dub).

Here a man, a European free fall champion, carries a HD camera on his chest and does five (chosen) jumps during which he attempts to set a me- asuring instrument, a spirit level, on a level. The soundtrack for the video is a theremin version of the song Good Vibrations by the Beach Boys con- ceived and performed by Dorit Chrysler. The sound and the loop refer us back to an atmosphere of eternal return, in which the aim seems to be an eternal search for balance. But, once again, the meaning of the work ends up being the opposite: instead it is an eternal search for and presentation of our unlevelling and imbalance. It depicts and embodies a perpetual present in imbalance as an eternal exposure of the human condition.

In this sense Onofre manages to grant an extension to the present time (transformed into a perpetual present), because he attempts to represent the eternal return of imbalance and not the opposite, because if balance is an aspiration, imbalance is a condition. Ours; the only one we unders tand. The human lives that which is human, his precarious moment in a precarious body and soul. He lives this because he cannot find the non- existent absurdity of the mechanised balance mad metaphor in the per- fect position of the spirit level.

This extension of the present time reminds me of some considerations by Saint Augustine. The philosopher and Doctor of the Church states:

*What, then, is time? If no one asks me, I know; if I want to ex- plain it to someone who asks me, I do not know. I can state with confidence, however, that this much I do know: if nothing pas- sed away there would be no past time; if there was nothing still on its way there would be no future time; and if nothing exis- ted, there would be no present time.*

Augustine presents his definition of time like this. The subject is de- veloped until the crucial consideration that time can have no extension. The past, for example, has no extension because it does not exist; that is, it has existed – which means that whatever the past was or has been, it was so when it was present (which it is not anymore). The same will be said of the present. Thus:

*Look where this leaves us. We saw earlier that present time was the only one of the three that might properly be called long, and now this present time has been pared down to the span of a bare day. But let us take the discussion further, be- cause not*

*even a single day is present all at once. It is made up of night hours and day hours, twenty-four in all. From the standpoint of the first hour all the rest are still future; the last hour looks to all those already past; and any one we pick in be- tween has some before it, others to follow. Even a single hour runs its course through fleeing minutes: whatever portion of it has flown is now past, and what remains is future. If we can conceive of a moment in time which cannot be further divided into even the tiniest of minute particles, that alone can be ri- ghtly termed the present; yet even this flies by from the future into the past with such haste that it seems to last no time at all. Even if it has some duration, that too is divisible into past and future; hence the present is reduced to vanishing-point.17*

It is in this sense that I believe that Onofre manages to grant extension to the present time in this work, above all in this work. If we otherwise make the aesthetic representation present come together/coincide, its meaning, its signification and the (always fleeting) image with the subject of "balance", we see that that, according to Saint Augustine, this presence of balance, in the work we are contemplating, the confluence of represen- tation-signification-meaning-image in the term "balance" (which never actually appears in this video, and because it never actually appears in life), this balanced present is, indeed, an impossibility in its extension/duration. And we have to invert the first reading of the work (its first image, or "ima- ge", or simply "form"), to stop seeing here the attempt to represent and find the balance and start seeing in this video the eternal return of the pre- carious and of imbalance, and only thus does this work possess meaning, presence, logic and extension. It can only exist in this inversion.

That is why a schizo-image is that which depends on its own negation. It is an image against the grain. That is, a schizo-image is that which has to be able not to exist in order to fully exist. It is that which, like Bartleby (Mel- ville), would rather not exist. And only thus can exist. Exist, as a full fact.

1 See C. Vidal, João Onofre: Aquilo que Nunca Acontece / That wich never happens, Oporto, Mimesis, 2003.

2 See, de Eugen Bleuler, Dementia Praecox oder Gruppen der Schizophrenien (1911), ed. used: Dementia Praecox or the Group of Schizophrenias, International University Press, 1968.

3 Cfr. Eugène Minkowski, Le Temps Vécu: Études Phénoménologiques et Psychopathologiques (1933), Paris, PUF, 1995 (particularly, Book I, Ch. III, pp. 58-71, and Book II, Ch. III).

4 J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, Vocabulaire de la Psychanalyse (1967), ed. used: Vocabu- lário da Psicanálise, Lisbon, Moraes, 1970, p. 215.

5 Ibidem,p.216.

6 Cfr. C. Vidal, Definição da Arte Política, Lisbon, Fenda, 1997.

7 Mario Perniola, Contro la Comunicazione (2004), ed. used: Contra a Comunicação, Lis- bon, Teorema, 2005, summary on the cover – development on pp. 9-51.

8 Greenberg, Clement, "After Abstract Expressionism" (1962), in Collected Essays and Criticism, Vol. 4, (ed. by John O'Brian, Vol. 1 to Vol. 4), Chicago, London, The University of Chicago Press, 1993, p. 131, 132.

9 François Truffaut, Hitchcock [Dialogue], New York, Simon & Schuster, 1984, pp. 136-139.

10 See Philippe Ariès, Essais sur l'Histoire de la Mort en Occident: Du Moyen Age à Nous Jours, Paris, Seuil, 1977.

11 See note 1, pp. 15-19.

12 As an introduction, see, by Michael Inwood, A Hegel Dictionary, Oxford, 1992, pp. 81-83.

13 See, for example, Ai Siqi, "Surreptitious substitution of theory of reconciliation of con- tradictions and classes for revolutionary dialectics must not be permitted", on http://mar- xistphilosophy.org/aisuu.pdf (October, 2010).

14 Mao Tse-Tung, 5 Ensaios Filosóficos, Lisbon, Nova Aurora, 1976, p. 109.

15 Guy Debord, La Société du Spectacle (1967), thesis 4.

16 Rosalind Krauss, "Video: The Aesthetics of narcissism", in John Hanhardt (ed.), Video Culture: A Critical Investigation, Layton, New York, Peregrine Smith, Visual Studies Workshop, 1986, p. 181.

17 St Augustine, The Confessions, XI, XIV, 17 e XI, XV, 20, London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1997, pp. 295-297.