

Laconic Visual Neologisms **Micaela Giovannotti, New York, 2008**

Itziar Barrio's vision is an idiosyncratic and fascinating new visual language utilizing an array of diverse artistic media that serve to reconfigure old and new ideas, semiotics and signifiers, and objects and symbols.

As Matthew Barney articulated in an interview for his film, *Cremaster 3*, "In the interest of creating a system that has an internal logic, I think there are points in the story where biological systems are referred to or used as art direction in a certain way. I've always thought of the project as a sort of sexually driven digestive system, that it was a consumer and a producer of matter. And it is desire driven, rather than driven by hunger or anything like that..." 1.

If we were to indicate a specific system as Barrio's reference point in the entirety of her oeuvre, it wouldn't be an organic or biological one and definitely would not be one in which there is a clearly detected internal logic. Rather, hers has the appearance of a mass-communication systemic device striving to divulge linguistic and visual neologisms without following a precise order or agenda. Basic and laconic messages are conveyed urgently as with newspaper propaganda through Barrio's quasi-documentary format.

In her videos and performances, pinpointed by sensationalist climaxes and bombardments of multilayered information, a non-linear narrative is created through deconstructed elements that are mainly absorbed from the language of pop culture, cinema and mass-media.

Recalling a nouveau Pipilotti Rist, Barrio masters deadpan irony and surreal masquerade in one single breath of sound and image that leaves no room for meditation or unfiltered comprehension. As with most of the contemporary life experience, her work leaves us disoriented and over-saturated.

One quick look is not sufficient. We are compelled to go back for more. What remains in our consciousness are the

residue and fragments of a new visual code that impress upon our memory and leave us with an unsated, indefinable craving. In one low-tech animated video, a woman repeatedly throws a stick to a dog, who in turn repeatedly brings it back, thus involving both in a cycle that explores issue of control; a game in which it is not explicit which of the two characters is in charge, wielding power. Reincarnating the spirit of the works of artists such as Olaf Breuning, Barrio's grotesque mise en scene reinterprets daily activities and functions in a manner recalling the Theatre of the Absurd of Eugene Ionesco.

1. From CREMASTER 3 – on location at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, NY, Art:21, HYPERLINK "http://www.pbs.org/" www.pbs.org.