

FOR OUR EYES ONLY

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There comes a time when things change, though being exactly the same as they were one moment before. And, amazed, you ask yourself what's going on. You wonder whether it is yourself, or the way you look at things, that causes some changes in what would otherwise have remained unchanged for years, decades, centuries and maybe forever.

In fact, it actually goes this way. Sorry to cause you a new sense of guilt, but this is the way things go. After millenniums of usage and elaboration of images, we've given great powers to our look, including the ability to change the sense of things. There's nothing we can do about it. Nowadays, discussions on images are quite different from the ones that were going on some years ago (not talking about decades ago) – so much as to cause the great Guy Debord to turn in his grave together with all his smart intuitions about the *Society of the Spectacle*, - which in 1967 caused many living people to tip over, though with not many consequences, unfortunately. It is not possible to control the power of changing things that has been given to our look, not even today. Or maybe I should say all the more so today. Because what we do today with images has been creating an extremely complicated, intricate and crowded gridlock of inventions, repetitions, a temporary but also theoretically eternal apparition in the intangible web space. Thus, it has become impossible to distinguish not only between true and false, but also between what is likely and what is not. However, we've also learnt that the transformation of reality in images – of one of the levels of reality in which we act – causes subsequent transformations of reality – or rather of the other levels of reality, to the extent to which it touches and modifies the wider sphere of Reality in which all realities lie.

Some nights ago, before falling asleep, I thought – but I might have been dreaming or maybe fantasizing, which is probably the correct thing to say – of the beginning of a sort of novel about images. Yes, a novel in which images are the subjects. It's even possible that some years ago I read something similar somewhere, certainly thanks to the genius of Philip K. Dick. I'm not a novelist, so I'm allowed to proceed without deeply investigating about the origins of this pre-sleep imaginative pollution of mine. Therefore, let me proceed. I imagined the main character kneeling by a tree in a rocky and deserted area, with big birds flying low. They might have been seagulls. Probably there was a garbage dump nearby. He was there, looking at some photographs and press cuttings. Then he uttered a sort of whisper: "I must destroy them. They are probably the last images left on earth. I must destroy them before someone finds them, and in any case before they destroy me."

231 days had passed since the moment in which all images on earth had officially been eliminated. The time of the Great Iconoclasm. This was its name. Gone were real images: photographs, pictures, videos, newspapers and old magazines, movies, etc. All of them none excluded. Those on the web as well. This had been the easiest part. A small and simple software was in charge of accessing all the systems and disintegrating all the images. They were substituted by algorithms that could provide - upon request - a text description of the image itself. Simple and, most of all, harmless. Because the problem had arisen from the terrible danger caused by images at a certain stage. It still seems incredible, but it really did happen. Everything started in a small town in Finland. Images had acquired an independent sense from what was the normal possibility and interpretational capability of human beings. At first it had seemed strange, but not dangerous, until an image did manage to impose itself on the collective imagination in an uncontrolled way. The problem was that this image was exactly the same as that of the magic piper. Yes, the one of the fairy tale who leads all the mice to get drowned in the sea. Now, all the inhabitants of the town, one of the most cabled and connected in the country, did convince themselves - all of a sudden and with no evident reason - that that image was a guiding spirit emulating which they could be freed from all mice, or rather from everything that metaphorically was infecting their country and the entire world. Therefore, they all marched off playing and singing in total unconsciousness - or probably in a sort of trance - and after some kilometres they all finished in the sea, which at that time of the year was close to the three degrees, drowning or dying of hypothermia within few seconds. It would be almost funny if 321 people had not died in such a dramatic way. The story was filed as a collective hysteria episode, like many others that had happened in the past. Instead, it was only the beginning of a converse process, in which it was not our look that chose and gave a sense to images, but the opposite. I was told that something similar, I mean the methodical elimination of images, happened in the 8th Century, when all the sacred images within the Byzantine Empire were totally destroyed. Given the means of the time, the destruction was not more than a symbolical one. I also read that the what they now call Small Iconoclasm caused a new order within the religious and political powers of that time. Imagine nowadays. Images. Always images. Never words. Yet, words as well can cause serious problems. **However, since I'm not a writer and I'm here to explain something else, you will need to go on with the story by yourselves.** Also because while I was having fun imagining this beginning of a dickian novel, and maybe also thanks to this imaginative exercise, it seemed by and by more evident that in the work of Ivana Spinelli the intersection of different levels of realities (yes, plural is correct) lies the basic aspect of her action. But what do I mean by "intersection of different levels of realities"? Actually, it sounds one of those formulas through which you say nothing at all. But I don't want to give you the idea - not even for a second - that I belong to that kind of intellectuals and in particular to that kind of

critics who can only create small syntactical architectures, totally precarious and with no chance of being understood, so I will try to get to the point. And, in order to be more persuasive, I'll get some help from a great thinker of our days, Slavoj Žižek. In his "Welcome to the desert of the real", an essay written soon after the Twin Towers attack, the Slovenian philosopher reflects on the sense of the real and of reality. He starts from Alain Badiou's words (2002, *Le siècle*, Edition du Seuil, Paris), who indicates the "passion for the Real/la passion du réel" as the essential aspect of the Nineteenth Century, amplifying their sense: "The basic experience defining the XX Century was the direct experience of the Real as opposed to the daily social reality; the Real in its extreme violence as the price to be paid for removing the misleading levels covering reality."

What Žižek means is related to that experience of the Real that characterized the last century. It certainly was the crucial intellectual experience of the Nineteenth Century, and art did register in various moments its different levels, contradictions, also showing, when possible, its consequences. This was certainly true until September 11, 2001. It was the first year of the new century and the new Millennium, and maybe it's no accident, though it's not the date but the attack that completely changed that experience of the Real as we knew it up to that moment. Immediately after the towers collapse, we neatly perceive the pronunciation of reality in a plural form, displaced on different but contiguous levels. The level of practical reality separates from the media and multimedia ones, finding non-systemic rejoining, and our experience is determined and conditioned by this same multiplicity. Even those who do not act directly on different levels (those who are not native digital but not even adopted) are conditioned in the performance of their daily life, despite the exercise of free will. Obviously, the dislocation of reality at different levels and the nature of the Real which contains them and derives from them, become possible and determined by images. Images. Always images. Never words. Yet, words as well can cause serious problems. Sorry, but our main character is completely wrong. Though words may cause many problems, an image can cause the collapse of an empire. We recently had various proofs of this. However, a part from their menacing nature, images allow the level of reality to create a plausible and thus workable environment, making it ever more crucial in the overall equilibrium. Just think about television and its development in the last two decades of last century, and certainly today. But not only, of course. Nowadays, the world of the web contains an incredible number of articulations of reality which, beyond their circulation and duration, make the road to identification of the Real more and more slippery.

I would say we are almost at our point. It's here I wanted to take you, to make you enter through the right side in this pantheon of images that Ivana Spinelli realized for our eyes only.

From videos to photos, from pictures to the complex organism of ceramic sculptures, with projections and stuffing elements made of different materials, everything contributes to make a sort

of stitch line among all the different realities. If you allow me an unusual hazard in a critical text, I would say this is an act of love towards us all. Ivana Spinelli has caught the sense of images, of some images. It is inspired by their symbolic strength, making them compatible with our instability, and has brought them inside our daily life. But then, what do artists do if not help us understand the world in which we are, thanks to big acts of love?

Loverrs-Fuckerrs is for our eyes only. Its images, its stories, demonstrate us in a practical, tangible way that recapturing the continuity among different realities we will be able to understand once again the unity of the Real and of what it contains.

However, the danger of images has been neutralized this time only. Therefore, do not relax yourself too much and keep on watching out.