

Note for GAAF Venice 2017 catalogue

The two pieces I am contributing to the **Personal Structures 2017** exhibition at Palazzo Mora belong to a group of photographic works I've referred to as *Sur l'herbe*. The title was meant, of course, as a rather obvious (and not overly serious) allusion to Manet's *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe*. Indeed, the early pictures in that group involved figures in an outdoor setting, unclothed opposite clothed, and thus could be viewed in part as a reworking of themes and iconography that have famously shown up in painting (Giorgione, Manet).

Much more than in such art-historical references, however, I was interested in setting up a context in which certain dualities and oppositions might be played out: contrived *mise-en-scène* and autobiographical document, planned set-up and improvisation, chance and control, voyeurism and exhibitionism. This work often involved a tension between the private (the personal?) and the public realms – the main figures always being my (then-) wife and myself, never hired models.

In this context, the “private” and the “personal” seemed to be tied up with role playing and, to that extent, to representations, maybe archetypes, therefore – somewhat paradoxically – to the non-personal.

A dose of humor and irony, and also a variety of other references increasingly crept into the work. *Fantasy 1* – a “sylvan fantasy” of sorts – could be viewed as mock mythology but perhaps also as an expression of personal desires. The preposterous setting of *Last Hurrah Home* might conjure simultaneously some sort of contemporary catastrophic aftermath together with 19th century photographic portraits of stern pioneers in homesteads of the American West, among other images.

I noted that the title *Personal Structures* was coined in reference to and, one gathers, as a counterpoint to the 1966 *Primary Structures* show's *mot d'ordre*. Personally, as it were, I share the old-guard minimalists' emphatic repudiation of “subjectivity” and “Self-expression” as the main basis or motivation for art. On the other hand, 60's-ish dismissals of painting, of the “pictorial” more broadly, and especially of meaning – of complexity and multiplicity – appear decades later a little simplistic and none too relevant.

If anything, my current concerns and interests have become increasingly “pictorial”, lying at the interface of several domains, techniques and issues – having to do with painting, photography, “digital transforms”, notions of reality as representation (and representation as a referent), literal and figurative space, painterliness(!), tactility and opticality... That these are aptly subsumed under a “Personal Structures” heading may or not be the case.