

When I first saw Karen Stuke's photographic works on theatre during a studio visit in his atelier in Berlin I felt immediately member of a Greek chorus, *coreuta*, together sharing the performance and being with ideal spectator participatory and who reacted to the events and the staging as it had probably reacted the real audience. Suddenly into the stage architecture with explosive energy. A work in particular I abducted, the image of *Clara* by Hans Gerfors brought to the stage at the Opera Comique Paris. It seemed to best represent the idea that inspired Stuke's passion for theatre. The specular image of the table in the middle of the scene and of the ceiling recapture with unusual immediacy the aristotelian unity of action, a single action that is an organic whole and complete in itself and also found the two old-time principles of unity of time and space, there forever compressed.

From this happy Stuke's obsession for the theatre and her idea of capturing in one image die Geist, the spirit of an entire theatrical representation, the idea of a residency project during Napoli Teatro Festival Italy 2010, the decision was natural. I submitted my curatorial proposal to Mr. Renato Quaglia, former director of NTFI, and it was greeted with the active and forward-looking sober enthusiasm that characterizes this man of profound culture.

Karen Stuke has been guest of Primo Piano Gallery in June 2010 and it was an extraordinary continuation of that decade of an artistic career that in theatre finds the most original and consistent operating expressive element. Stuke's artistic experience thus became organic to that of Napoli Teatro Festival Italia and to the city itself. The sudden diving of the artist in theatrical element so natural for her along with the daily experiences with the town and all Festival workers are returned to us in harmony and beauty of the art works made with pinhole camera.

Using a pinhole camera, which operates with the principle of the camera obscura fully described by Leonardo da Vinci in the Codex Atlanticus is restoring the long European tradition of these machines, meant to draw, together with the long history of the study of light-sensitive materials that had already urged the Plinius' and Vitruvius' researches to flow into these two strands of research one in physics and one in chemistry from the Sixteenth century onwards. These important scientific and technical research thus become part of a question of aesthetics and poetics, as writes John Szarkowski: the idea that you can capture and retain an image that is by the light and nature.

In the use of this magic box that captures an entire theatrical work imprinting on a single photographic plate, we find the story of a double dream that materializes in a specular way, that of the theatrical conventional space, *skéné*, who was sucked into a tiny hole, *sténos opaios*, which mimics what happens in a very small space leaving an indelible mark.

It seems then to hear Walter Gropius' words declaring his intention to put the audience right in the action and force them to take part and, paradoxically, those of Bertolt Brecht instead professing *Verfremdung*, the de-familiarisation, hindering the identifying and soliciting the critical action. Stuke in her works brings together those unities which I wrote at the beginning and causes then the impossibility of identification making us lose all the points of balance.

Antonio Maiorino, curator, from the book: "Opera Obscura di Napoli"