

Lizzie Calligas

Light and Dark

I met with Vilém Flusser back in 1990 through Light and Dark.

At that time, I was working on “Metamorphoses: My Body-Your Body.” These pictures were created in my studio with an analog camera and a female model, in darkness. Using slides and projections, with a very complex technique, the photographs of the nude bodies became strange and haunting. Some samples of this work were sent to Andreas Müller-Pohle’s *European Photography*. Flusser found them very inspiring and decided to write about them. His essay “Leiber” was published alongside an English version, “Bodies”, together with my work.¹

In September 1991, we were both invited, together with other artists, to the Biennale of Ein Harod, in Israel, so we finally met. Since we were staying in the kibbutz for two weeks, I had the chance to spend hours with Vilém and Edith, talking about philosophy, ideas, art, and history. That was the beginning of a precious friendship, which suddenly ended less than a year later because of his tragic death. In Ein Harod, I showed the big installation “Stigma” in a completely darkened basketball stadium. Only two sources of light and a large photograph. I had been reading Flusser’s books in English translation, and above all “Gestures”, which had been translated in Greek. Gestures was also the subject of some work I was doing in 1996, mainly with photos of hands from statues in museums.

Flusser’s death was the terrible and painful loss of a mentor and of a friend. But his memory is still very strong until today.

The pictures from the “DARK” series were created in my house on Spetses island (Greece), during the quarantine because of the corona virus. It is a collection of vases with the flowers that I picked every morning from my garden, or while on walks. I photographed them in low light conditions and with heavy shadows.

I want to dedicate this work to the memory of Vilém Flusser on the occasion of the centennial of his birthday.

¹ Vilém Flusser, Leiber / Bodies. In: “European Photography”, Göttingen, nr. 40, vol. 10/4, October/November/December 1989: 70-1. See also Lizzie Calligas, “Metamorphoses: My Body – Your Body”. Galerie Bodo Niemann, Berlin, June 1991, Foto-Szene, July 1991, and Vilém Flusser, „Standpunkte“, Göttingen 1998: 188-190.

Mario Cascardo mariocascardo@gmail.com

22/July/2019.

Dear Lizzie,

How are you? Thank you very much for reading my message and this e-mail. As far as I know, Flusser wrote about two of your works: the triptych “Metamorphosis: my body - your body” and the “Meeting with Venus de Milo”. I feel like it was a great joy for him to find these works, since he was always interested in the question of body, the “spirit” and movement. The question of “migration”, as we might call it ... I would like to know your opinion about the reading he did of these two works. How was your meeting? Was it somehow productive for you too?

You and Flusser exchanged a few letters in 1990/91, as I saw in the Vilém Flusser Archive. In this exchange, Flusser talks about your works and his book “Gestures”. Did you get to read this book? You seem to “share” with Flusser a “phenomenological” approach to the body. Were you influenced by the thoughts of people like Merleau-Ponty and/or other phenomenologists? I would like you to comment freely on your dialogue with him, if you may. Your impressions, objections ... please feel free. According to your answers, I may ask supplementary questions.

My research focuses on Flusser’s presence in the midst of Brazilian arts in the 1960s, but I am very interested in building “bridges” between this moment and later moments. I am trying to understand how Flusser’s contact with the arts “determines” or “interferes” or “co-habits” with his thinking about media in the 1980s and 1990s.

I hope this message finds you well.

My very best wishes, and thanks again

Mario

Τρί, 23 Ιουλ 2019, 1:31 π.μ.

προς Mario

Dear Mario,

Thank you for your mail. [...] My encounter with Vilém Flusser was a very intense one. We spoke for hours during our visit to Israel where I participated in an exhibition and he gave a talk. He was with his lovely wife and we spent a lot of time together. His death was a terrible shock for me as well. We had just started some long discussions about my art and more general subjects. I am the only Greek artist for whom he wrote a text and we planned more activities. I attended his memorial, I was so sad for the loss of a good, supportive friend, and a brilliant mind! [...]

1- I think that when Flusser saw the “Metamorphoses: My Body your Body” 1990 he was interested in the transparency, the different layers of meaning and the ambiguity they project. The technique, which consists in photographing with projections on a nude body, was also interesting for him, as it exposed the inside, what lays behind the surface of the body. Revealing an inner state of the body. Venus de Milo, is something similar: uncovering the “marble-like” quality of Venus, showing the female human underneath. Both are photographic projects done almost at the same time, in 1990-1991.

2- Our meeting with V.F took place in September 1991, during our stay in a kibbutz in Israel, and the participation in an exhibition at the beautiful Museum of Mishkan le O’Manut in Ein Harod, curated by John Stathatos. I exhibited a big installation inside the Gymnasium, with the title “STIGMA” [...]. We spent hours talking, and connected very well. Gestures! Yes, I have read it. There was a project of mine in progress titled “Gestures” that later became “HANDS”.

3- There was no influence whatsoever when I was doing “Metamorphoses”, it was a direct inspiration from my personal experience at that time. The reading came afterwards. [...]

Thank you for your interest

Lizzie Calligas