

THOMAS DANE GALLERY

Oliver Basciano, 'Luisa Lambri', Art Review, February 2008, p.120

REVIEWS **LUISA LAMBRI**

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THOMAS DANE GALLERY, LONDON
21 NOVEMBER - 21 DECEMBER



Untitled (Teatro Regio, #03), 2007, laserchrome print, 48 x 40 cm, edition of 5 + 1 AP. Courtesy Fondazione Teatro Regio, Turin

For her first London exhibition, Luisa Lambri has photographed internal details from modernist architectural masterpieces, abstract and perhaps slightly mysterious: Frank Lloyd Wright, Carlo Scarpa and Gerrit Rietveld are all present. By making the shots tight and anonymous, markedly more so than in any of her previous work, and leaving the building designer absent from the titles, she avoids the distraction posed by their fame and by the history of the buildings portrayed. The work could be seen as a portrait of Lambri's physical relationship with the architecture, and by extension a more universal human relationship with built space. The restricted parameters of the images offering a truer reflection of how an individual experiences a building: not with the wide angle of an architectural portrait, but in the detail, as the eye wanders, surveys and concentrates on the peripheral. It's an impression further supported by the work's cinematic qualities. Each is made up of a series of shots taken in quick succession, displaying only minute visual differences to its neighbours, like a series of film stills. This, together with the manner in which the light flows into many of the images through a window or door adds a performative element, the light suggesting action just around the corner, accentuating the unseen artist as the lone human presence within the work.

The modernist buildings viewed – all of which were built as domestic spaces – are minimalist, perhaps even a little stark. They were built by the traditionally male profession of architecture as a rejection of the traditions of the domestic decorative historically associated with the female. By choosing such spaces and turning them into 'portraits' of her own physicality, is Lambri making a comment on this? For sure. She is presenting a masculine product as a small-scale, closely shot, delicate portrait, using natural light to charge the works with emotion.

Lastly, Lambri gently plays around with the visual references the buildings are able to provide. She works with film, prints of which are then digitalised, causing a loss of the original's high level of detail. In the two-work series *Rietveld Schroeder House* (2006, architecture by Gerrit Rietveld, 1924–5), this distortion flattens the form, turning an image of Rietveld's work, a member of the De Stijl group, into an almost visual homage to his contemporary, Mondrian. The simplicity of the imagery, the initial abstraction, together with the uncluttered curation of the exhibition as a whole, belies Lambri's intricate, powerful interplay between the environmental and the personal. The spectacle of guidebook-approved architecture is cleverly superseded by something more subtle, by something more ethereal: a beautiful, successfully observed personal relationship between the artist, the viewer and the built environment. *Oliver Basciano*

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