

Enrique Muñoz García

CLAUDE

Within the four walls, a story unfolds. “Claude”, an audiovisual installation by Enrique Muñoz García, reveals a different intimacy. Beyond anguish and pain, beyond the generic tendency of contemporary photography to project the body as a degenerate artificial construct in constant mutation, García leads our gaze to assailed territories of the human existence. By employing what at first glance appears to be an empathetic ad hoc observational practice, he allows for his protagonist to “breathe” and freely “perform” his state of being. As such, “Claude” produces the effect of an unseen, unique instant. Familiar yet so foreign, its intimacy perturbs our vision; close yet so far away, its ambient ultimately makes us wonder where the margins of this infinite world end up...

Our story starts in 2003, when Enrique Muñoz García, a Chilean photographer living in Switzerland, and Claude, a chronic heroine addict, became neighbors. Their encounter gave birth to the idea for the project, at least in García's mind. It took some months, in the absence of cameras, for a mutual relationship of respect to develop before Claude agreed to be photographed. The rest is history.

Bathroom, living room and bedroom... The interior of Claude's house provided the background of the project. “Bearing witness to life indoors became of paramount importance, given that Claude spends most of his time in his apartment, inhabiting it in the way he inhabits his own body”, explains Muñoz García.

Still, the bathroom sequence is for strong nerves. Witnessing an over-exploited body that proudly carries the marks of its adventures provokes inevitably a sense of uneasiness. Diluted like blood and bodily fluids in the hot bath water, the white-tiled walls of the room carry the chilling aura of what could be viewed as a surgery room or, in a more literal approach, as a butcher's shop. There is an ambiguity in the way Claude interacts with his own

body that tempts us think that something -horrible- might happen from one moment to the next. At this point, the orchestration of the whole scene by García deliberately puts into evidence the confinement of our awareness within the codified norms of spectatorship. It reveals how we are actually predisposed to a response of suspense. It demonstrates the eruption between what “we are shown” and what we actually “see”, confirming for once more, in García's words, the fact that “we see only what we wish to see”.

On a creative level, the project opened a door to challenge and experimentation. It obliged García to shift from his older practice of instantaneous black and white photography towards a more hybrid and complex lens-based language that transgresses the rigid forms of the classic social reportage in favor of a solid pseudo-documentary style based on the fusion between acting and spontaneity.

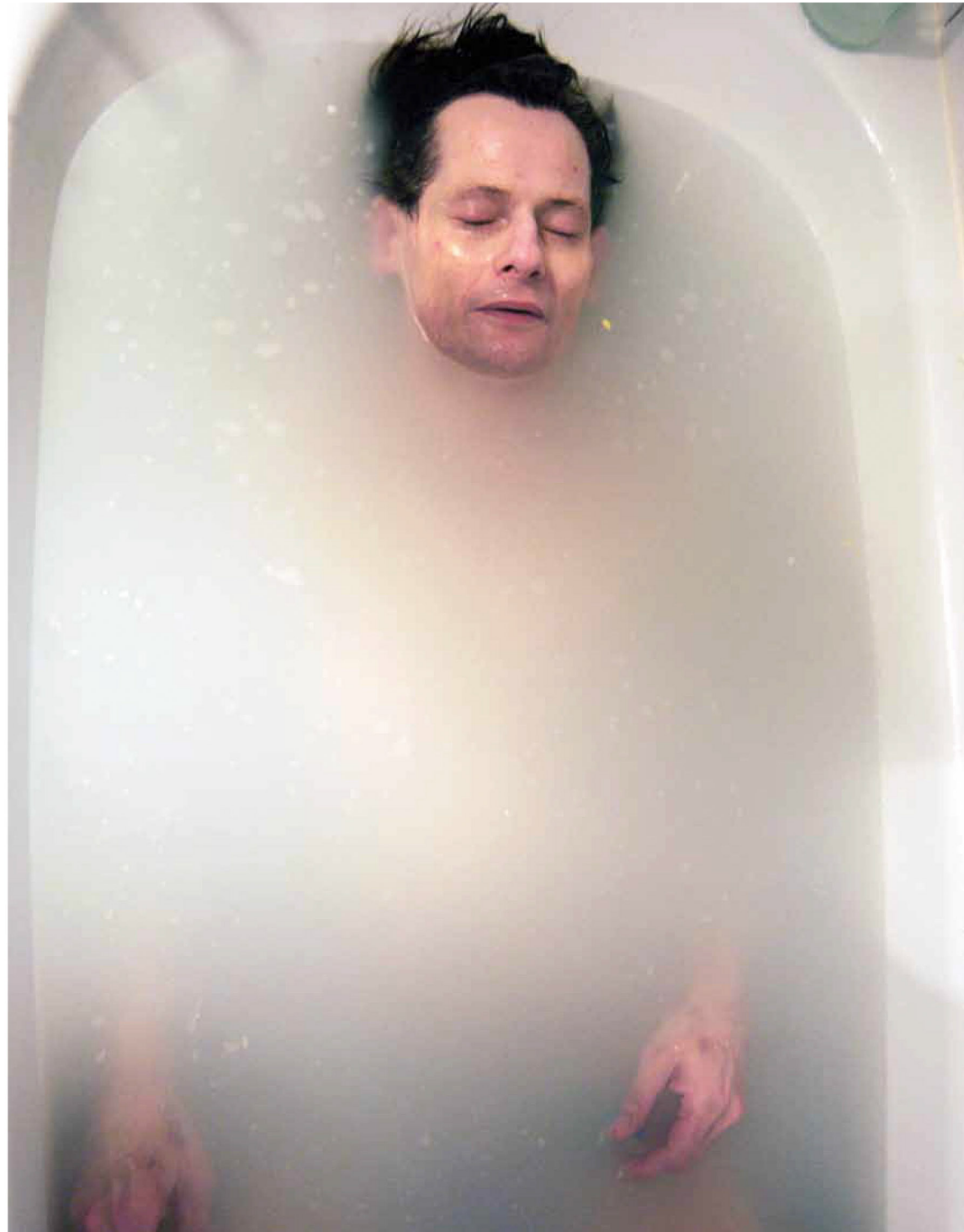
As he recalls: “After many sessions with my Leica M6, I felt that there was something missing. I started working with a digital camera and a Hasselblad. Colour gave a new force to the whole theme”. And he continues: “Then in 2005, video came, at a moment when I was feeling limited by photography. There were many details I could not display through still images. So, I did a first test with an old movie camera, that worked pretty well because Claude forgot that the camera was there and went on with his daily ritual”.

The final result of these incursions has been a video without cuts and interventions, conserving the original sound. There were also some further helpful additions, such as the decision to exhibit the stills separately, as part of a quadraphonic installation by the electronic band ström, which is comprised of fragments of an interview with Claude and ambient sounds. Displayed in light boxes as if they were radiographies, the photographs generate a bathroom-like illumination in the room.

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2011, Environnemental Art Symposium NINE DRAGON HEADS „3PAW” Biel /Bienne, Switzerland; Bieler Fototage, Centre PasquArt Villa, Le Temps fait son Ouvre, Zapping; Au Joli mois du Mai, Non Member, Videoinstallatio; Bahnhof Bern, Zapping; Offspace Juraplatz, Nine Dragon Heads Videos; Offspace Juraplatz, Zapping. 2010, Kunstkeller Weyerhof Nidau, Carte Blanche, Gruppenausstellung; Offspace Juraplatz, K-Objekt, Kunstinstallation. 2009, Museum, Gruppenausstellung, Utopics.ch, Internet Aktion.



Claude, audiovisual installation, 7 color photographs, video, quadraphonic sound, 2007

