The Visible and the Invisible

Else Marie Hagen’s scenes are meticulously planned. In these staged photographs everything is the result of a long procedure involving thinking and visual planning until the final form is realized. There is a dreamlike quality to her images. Standing in front of Cover II., I feel a certain discomfort and quietness at the same time. A young woman stands in front of me. Her eyes are closed. She wears layers of clothing, all in washed-out colors, or maybe it’s the Nordic light that makes them look so pale. I get the feeling that she might fade away at any minute. The surface is flat, very flat. It looks like she is on a catwalk-like ramp. Will she follow it out of the picture? What might happen if she opens her eyes? The physical reality here produces a paradoxical illusion of stillness and movement simultaneously.

I turn to the right and there is Panorama. The crinkled golden surface reminds me of the gold of old icons and early renaissance paintings where they depicted God and the heavenly spheres in their timeless glory. What kind of panorama is this? The crumpled gold paper encloses the scene and makes me feel claustrophobic. The female figure has her back to us, absorbed in the “panorama” of this artificially gold surface where the reflecting light gives us a feeling of movement.

I found these pieces to be an intriguing exploration of the Visible. The more I look at them the more and more I get interested in the Invisible hidden behind.

by Emese Krunák-Hajagos

Featured image: Else Marie Hagen, Panorama, 2009, 123 x 254 cm chromogenic print

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