

Hometown

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We dwell in the margins between first doubt and final discovery.
To wander here means to finally arrive. Welcome Home.

Patrick Tosani

Living in our complex world makes simplicity an inviting space to escape in. At first glance, Patrick Tosani's work seems to be the essence of simplicity, but a second glance reveals information hidden in the depth of its detail. Tosani is a 66-year-old French photographer currently teaching at the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Paris. In his career, he is regularly part of worldwide exhibitions. Always playing with perspective, proportions, and scale, he illustrates a new dimension to the observer.

His approach makes everyday objects, or even bodies, appear extraordinary and foreign. We decided to display three series shot in 1992, 1996, and 1997, where his quest drives him to analyze the body's presence and the relationship to reality.

Interview by Zoé Paula





C-print Color Photography, ©Adagp
P.T.D, 1992, 190 x 144 cm



V.T, 1992, 199 x 183 cm



X.X, 1992, 193 x 169 cm

What was the idea behind these series, and what inspired you to photograph them?

Têtes date back to 1992 with the aim of observing a person, a body, by simplifying as much as possible the perception and the morphology of it. The body as seen from above reveals primarily and almost only the head. Despite a global vision of the model, the head practically hides the rest of the body. I still use an artifice that I will explain below. In contrast, with the idea of turning around and grasping the whole person, I later (in 1996) became interested in the body seen from below, which explains the title *CDD: Corps Du Dessous*. It's a concept quite similar to that of the Heads. It is also about simplifying the shape of the body, in a way, to „objectify“ it. What is whole, the body, becomes fragment through framing and photographic cutting. *Vêtements* (1997) succeed the *CDDs* and are linked in the sense that they are the clothes worn by these bodies but in a different way: unfolded, free, random, as opposed to the compressed form of the *CDDs*. I have the experience of covering in a shapeless way a body that we don't see. It is the body that inhabits its clothes. The etymological connection of the words interests me and the meaning that all this gives off. The force of meaning of the clothing makes from the outset the hypothesis of the body: where is the body?

What fascinates you about objects? Does the identity of your models play a role?

These series that observe the body by turning around are in the continuation of the different series of objects I have made previously. The objects photographed were in a way extensions of the body, close to the body (spoons, shoe heels, drums, spirit levels...). This approach to the objects questioned their formal presences, so to speak „physical“ in the image, by their meanings, their material and metaphorical dimensions, by the scale of things. The viewer must confront an image that refers to an object of the real that is not a copy, nor a representation of the real, but a new object reactivated in a new sensitive space that makes sense. This approach, which is at the same time very physical and very conceptual of the viewer, led me later on to question more concretely the image of the body in order to increase this sensitive and pragmatic reading of the image.

Are there any interesting anecdotes related to these series?

The clothes or models chosen for these series, as well as the protocols for their placement in space, are based on criteria of neutrality, on the ordinary and simple aspect of things or people so as not to envisage any typology, for which I would have had great difficulty in choosing arguments and which would have risked being illustrative. So I decided that the people photographed were strictly part of my close, family, friendly circle of acquaintances. There are as many men, women as children and it is often difficult to realize the differences in gender and age. The morphology of the bodies, the singularity of the models, but also their anonymity lead us towards a more abstract, universal, and philosophical reading.





Vendredi, 1997, 238 x 461 cm

Looking at the three series *CDD*, *Vêtements*, and *Têtes*, I wondered if they are linked in some way

While, yes, these three series are completely linked, they are realized in different moments. The central point is the body and the way of fragmenting it while looking at it as a whole, as a symbolic entity. Generally speaking, I observe the objects, the bodies, as I move around, turn around, examine their envelopes, their surfaces, and the potential for meaning that emanates from them. *CDDs* and *Têtes* are the diametrically opposed points of view, the bottom and the top and clothes are the ones that dress the bodies.

Is there a reason why you have arranged your objects in a very simple and clean way? It seems that you are playing with the obvious.

The white background neutralizes the significant information of the surrounding space in which you are working. As I was saying before, it is a way of focusing only on the object, the model, the scene that we are looking at, and paradoxically it is this that best defines the „place“ of the object by its neutrality by the play of shadows, by the contrast of shapes... We are there, in front of the object, in front of its only presence. The neutrality of the background reinforces this notion of the presence of things, of the presence of reality, and this is the singularity of photography. Other circumstances require multiple interactions in space and time and they all have their reasons for being.



Jeudi, 1997, 254 x 277 cm



Lundi, 1997, 276 x 378 cm



CDD IV, 1996, 237 x 156 cm



CDD II, 1996, 215 x 171 cm



CDD VI, 1996, 218 x 164 cm



CDDIX, 1996, 218 x 151 cm

**How did you photograph the *CDDs* and the *Heads* technically?
How did you manage to position yourself under the people?**

I came back to the protocol for taking pictures of the *Heads*, for which I was talking about a working device. For each model, I had to put the head in a large white cardboard box in which I had cut a very tight hole. The installation was meticulous because it had to mask the whole body without letting anything show of the operation. Digital retouching did not yet exist. So there was a white background surrounding the body which allowed me to photograph the head with a play of shadows, a great detail of the hair, the skin, and especially to isolate it from the shoulders and the rest of the body (without realizing the masking artifice). This is what is disturbing in these images and creates a very particular reading that we absolutely do not have if the shoulders and the body appear. This makes it possible to singularize, with a lot of details, the heads of these models who remain otherwise totally anonymous. This paradox interests me a lot. Concerning the *CDDs*, I had built a small scaffolding 2.5 meters high, on which I had installed a totally transparent plexiglas worktop strong enough to carry the weight of a body. I could then photograph the models from underneath, exactly plumb. I had to solve complex problems of lighting and reflections, but the particular point of view transformed the weight of the body into an abstract mass due to the morphology of the models and the loss of identification of the person. I therefore wanted these images to suggest a strong notion of physical and symbolic density, and the anonymity of the models also helped to reinforce the abstraction of the figures.

What do you want to express with the photos?

I think that in these two series, as in others, I try to bring out an iconic aspect to the objects or bodies by conceptualizing these data of the real with the photographic image. I attach a lot of importance to an active perception, and thinking of the real that is confirmed in the active experience of a singular, photographic form. By confronting these images, the spectator is confronted with his own body, his own experience. The models appearing in these photographs have lost their identities to the benefit of a generic image allowing the spectator to measure himself against a new form of reality.



SORTIE

Patrick Tosani *"These people, these models, and these objects are photographed on a neutral white background*

in order to reinforce this isolation and this partition of the body, of the thing.

This effect of fragmentation is all the more sensitive as it is a body that is essentially non-fragmentable.

This white environment underlines a will of neutrality and especially of concentration on

the thing looked at."

