

THE KING OF RATS

Ilari Valbonesi, 2012

Marat Raiymkulov, *The King of Rats*,

Laura Bulian Gallery, Milan

The King of Rats tells you to do this and that, how to think, drink tea, wash yourself. He is a sort of small dictator that harbours inside us. Ferociously ignorant, he could surround us with barbed wire at any moment, as we will keep on working for him day and night. And then one day journalists would come to interview us through the barbed wire and we would tell them we are very well, very well indeed.

It would be better to escape from this white space, to simply redeem ourselves and go out of this trap that directly exposes us to the signifier of the symbolic authority, yet we would immediately be accused of ungratefulness, madness, disobedience, betrayal. An escape from the shadow of the Father equals the escape from family itself and, just as Kafka has observed in his “letter to the father”, it tears the mother apart.

(He turns, advances to front, halts facing auditorium)

The plot of the performance is reduced to its essential aspects: a table, a lamp, and a chair provide a desolate environment in which everything appears still and yet, upon close examination, everything is in motion. There are many interruptions. It is spoken out loud in a foreign language. Sometimes laughs occur with no reason; sometimes meditations take place as if one were at the theatre or the circus. On a load-bearing wall, we see a slide show with shaven businessmen in uniform, wearing perfectly tied ties, alternated with family reunions, environments accustomed to distrust and paper sheets torn apart from a school copybook. In the middle of the room a table stands out, with a pile of books and a few no-tebooks that one can rummage through.

Marat Raiymkulov exposes the traditional structures of patriarchal family, the analogies with the capital's social power, the technocratic division between classes, the ideologies of "productivity", the exploitation of land and women, the inadequacy of all logical-linguistic tools interpreting reality, the democratic illusion, and the job market crisis.

(Circular glance)

His memories, sensations and observations unfurl in space and time like a collection of micro-events borrowed from both literary and philosophical worlds (Franz Kafka, Friedrich Dürrenmatt; Emil Cioran), from today's Central Asia as well as from his own life experience as a student; these micro-events "casually" resonate to each other throughout a given gesture, a set of words, and the caustic art of his drawings.

There is no actual dramatic texture, as the rooms help binding and paging the whole "drawn" work by means of small-sized paper drawings, along with short and bewildering video animations.

The prevailing effect is then a shared feeling to which one cannot give a name: a constitutive and nomadic state of being-outside that can be perceived but through echoes and fragments.

(He moves to centre, halts with his back to auditorium)

There comes a running Minotaur blinded by red colour, a fly-eater, a portrait that deforms as it takes its own life with a gunshot, a precipice, a homeless radio ham that goes through trash.

In a few seconds and with a smile that tends to become a smirk, these animations illustrate the frenzy of an alienated world, the brutal collapse of world stock exchanges, the undisputed power of money, the monopoly imposed by television; they also describe the transition from a welfare state to a "social" society where numerous platforms allow you to "connect with your friends and with whoever works, studies and lives around you"; the same platforms have destroyed the transmission of knowledge and reduced it to a feudal-like system, as they have depoliticized passions and burned paper and libraries where memory itself has turned into a power-driven device.

Standing before the spectacular supremacy of commodities that affects and occupies our lives in their most inner aspects, his characters are captured with their thunderstruck gaze, refugees without any definite political motivations, projections of overt powerlessness and existential nakedness.

(Looking at a drawing with two feet hanging a few centimetres from the ground)

These are images shaped within the practice of conscience, hanged during intensity breaks and yet, they constantly escape from a given here and now, since they are ready to jump on the racing horse of imagination and to tumble down the stairs, moving askew in the air and eventually going back to their point of departure, shaken by shivers.

The unmade faces, which are barely visible through shyly drawn features, get re-made as the background comes to its actual existence, obsessed by the memory of the form, a ghastly soot that gets recomposed through the relief of an internal white light, one that is born out of the strength of a sign, initiated inside the informality of rhythm, the rejection and the forsaking of violence.

(Pause)

Against the dictatorship of the visible, the foolish activism, the eagerness to live, nothing is left but to free one's groundless motivations, someplace where the language of art simply stops signifying and goes back to its original state of tousled whispering, a game of the absurd and real anarchic struggle. *Nothing to be done.*

(Curtain)

Ilari Valbonesi, 2012