



The Lustful Turk (Mum The Turks Are Coming), 2012

CKLZ: Patrizio di Massimo' exhibition at Villa Medici in Rome is based on an early 19th century epistolary erotic novel called "The Lustful Turk". The protagonist is an English girl who was kidnapped and taken to the harem of Ali, dey of Algiers. "The Lustful Turk's" central theme is the one of sexuality and introduces the ones of colonial and racial, as they all come from the same historical period. In this particular case, it is interesting to observe the balance of power between Ali and the English girl, as it could be related to a certain vision of reality held by a high-culture toward a supposed lower one. Can you tell us something more about the exhibition? Do you think that the theme of balance of power is also central Patrizio's work in general?

Alessandro Rabottini: It is interesting to talk about a balance of power in Patrizio di Massimo's work, even if I have to admit that I had always thought that his research was referred to the negotiation's idea. There is always something that is exchanged for something else, something that it is given up provided that something different is obtained. In his exhibition, the book you have mentioned was the pretext to develop a series of works, both pictorial and objective, based freely on the novel. In the exhibition's design, the sexual violence's metaphor – the one committed by the dey of Algiers on Emily Barlow, who is the book's main character – is used as a metaphor to imply the mutual incomprehension between western and eastern cultures. The penetration's image shifts from a literal side (the physical penetration, especially the anal one) to a metaphoric one (the cultural penetration, colonialism and the conflict between cultures). Thematics such as seduction and fetishism, pain and pleasure, redemption and guilt, all become components of a matter that approaches a certain part of western painting's history and of its potentialities in the present. Many of the paintings exhibited, portray particular memories of moments in which figurative painting withstood to the avant-garde and modernist languages: De Chirico's Metafisica and Savinio's visual enigma, the way in which Picabia introduced commercial illustration in the painting's language, Balthus' anachronism and Grosz' soft-porn, just to name a few. These artists' work – as well as many others – started a battle with the avant-garde's language where figurative painting had often been understood as something not only as anachronistic, but, even awkward, as if it were a pleasurable escapism accompanied by guilt. I would like to add, moreover, that the exhibited works deal with certain thematics that had survived in the European visual cultural and, in particular, in the Italian one: just think about the dialectic between the ideal masculine black body – taken from the African statues and turned into a sexual power's fetish – and the ideal western female body – taken from the classical statues and turned into the opposite image, the one of a mutilated classical ruin.



The Lustful Turk (Blow), 2012



Cushions n.1 (Portrait of Emily Barlow), 2012

CKLZ: Patrizio di Massimo's work, Una Turandade Buzziana (in forma di note), was born as a video about an hypothetic mise-en-scene of Puccini's Turandot in a surreal place: Tomaso Buzzi' Scarzuola. The montage overlays two different performance, the one by Marco Solari, Buzzi's nephew, that plays a guided tour of the Scarzuola, and the one by the unknown prince, the main character of Turandot. For the Stedelijk's event, Patrizio and you had taken this work on a further level when surrounding the video with a theatrical scenography to make the interaction and the work itself more performative. The result takes to a disambiguation on the relation between theatre and museum, and also on the represented subject itself. Could you tell us how this process works?



Una Turandade Buzziana (in forma di note), 2012

Hendrik Folkerts: One of the first things that Patrizio and I considered in our conversations about the performance at the Stedelijk Museum on November 15, 2012, was how to re-stage "Buzzi's Turandot" in such a way that it would add another layer of meaning to the work in relation to the exhibitions at MAXXI and the RCA London. Having said this, I should note that Patrizio's performance is part of an ongoing research – or institutional dialogue, if you will – about theatricality in the museum. Just a few days after the historical re-opening of the Stedelijk, I curated a performance program entitled Stage It! (Part 1), together with Vivian Zihlerl, on September 27, 2012. We invited a number of artists, coming from various backgrounds and generations, to explore the new spaces of the Stedelijk through notions of the experience of body in space, feminist performance histories, the relation between the body and architecture, etc. – all relating to a range of potential futures the Stedelijk may engage with after the re-opening. This evening, which included performances by VALIE EXPORT, Andrea Geyer and MPA, generated so much content that it led to a second performance event, taking place on January 17, 2013, and is simply entitled Stage It! (Part 2). Looking at the new architecture of the Stedelijk, but also the old building, one will be struck by the dramatic and theatrical gestures in the building: the various stair cases, the monumental architecture of the rear facade of the old building that is now part of the entrance of the new building, the enormous new white facade, etc. All these spaces are extremely theatrical, and give way to questions about how elements of theater function in the museum institution. This is a question particularly pertinent to performance art, with its traditions in both the visual arts and the performing arts, and the spaces they occupy – the black box and the white cube. The performance program Stage It! (Part 2) invites such artists as Sharon Hayes & Brooke O'Hara, Pablo Bronstein and Dominique Gonzalez Forster to explore this question of theatricality with regard to performance art. This is a long, though necessary, introduction to Patrizio's work at the Stedelijk. Buzzi's Turandot is an incredibly complex work that deals with the relation between architecture and theatricality, masquerade, history and memory, and the visual vocabulary of film. The work was shown at the Stedelijk in a setting that invoked these notions. We changed the Teijin Auditorium into a setting that resembles a theater space, with an almost fluorescent red carpet, a playbill, theatrical seating, drinks during intermission, monumental screening, etc. In addition, the film was shown in three different acts, following the chapters of an opera piece. This particular decor provoked the audience to not experience Patrizio's work as a film (necessarily), but as an installation and possibly, a performance. The result, I have to say, was quite overwhelming. It was as if Marco Solari was actually present, guiding us through the city built by his great uncle Tomaso Buzzi. But Solari did not stop there: his 'presence' opened up a new way to look at the Stedelijk, as not only a museum, but an inherently performative space that allows artists such as Patrizio to draw on different artistic and architectural traditions in order to develop new work or re-stage previous work in an alternative setting. In brief: with only a few gestures, the Stedelijk became a theater of visual arts, a stage upon which art is not limited by a discipline but encouraged by the potential of many! And this is truly the accomplishment of Patrizio's work, a work that offers so many layers and complexities that each time it is shown it brings along a new context, a new way of perceiving things. In that sense, Buzzi's Turandot is a wonderful connection between the two Stage It! projects in September 2012 and January 2013 – from an exploration of space to an investigation of the theater in the museum space, and in the middle a young Italian artist guiding us through.

CKLZ: Hombres entre las Ruinas, an exhibition that you just curated at TEOR/ÉTica, San José, where you are Associated artistic director, takes it's departing point from a German eagle resting on top of a Mesoamerican pyramid and which was built in 1939 by fascist in Costa Rica. It's a disorienting image that leaves us bewildered and intrigued, maybe also because of its geographical distance to our European historical context. Regarding several Patrizio Di Massimo's works such as the video Oae (2009) or the performance Flight from disorder (2010), we have found the same will to create this disorientation. Working with inevitable icon's reinterpretation and with iconography's appropriation in the course of time, Di Massimo seems to focus his research also on these symbols that had lost their original meaning and their function as vehicles of a certain ideology by becoming a mere aesthetic object. What do you think about it?



Duet for cannibals, 2010

Inti Guerrero: I have felt close to your work over the past five years. I've highly appreciated that different approach that you have compared to many artists of our generation whom revisit history, which in your case has specifically been driven towards the heritage and tradition of fascism, that you have moved away from over-fetichizing "the archival". It seems as if, rather than revealing and de-contextualizing strata from a politically repressive era, you have become more interested in appropriating, the inherent aesthetics languages that come with the idiosyncrasies of fascistic realms. In other words, your eclectic body of work which varies from realist painting, primitivist drawings and also film operas, allow the spectator to understand that fascism does not prescribe to one single historical momentum, but that it is encountered within the historical body we embody, where taste, visual culture and art history are brought forward in relation to patriarchy and society's traditionalist inclinations towards the canon. This all sounds as a pastiche, but I wonder if perhaps you see yourself precisely as an artist that is interested in this pastiche? and may I add, would you also say that this interest comes from your gaze towards the Italian context and its National History, in which collective imageries of patriarchy, baroque visual culture and traditionalism intertwine? We recently collaborated for an exhibition entitled Men Amongst the Ruins which is taking place at TEOR/ÉTica, Costa Rica. For this show, I included your work within a specific segment that explores the ways in which racial anxieties manifest in different places. This segment of the show was based on a letter originally published in 1939, in the main newspaper of Costa Rica which attests to the most ludicrous fascist ideology in Central America. Installed within the exhibition, the letter was written by scientist Clodomiro Picado (1887-1944), one of the precursors of the discovery of penicillin, whom warns Costa Ricans through a scientific thesis about how their white European blood was becoming darker as a direct consequence of 20th century black immigration, which was coming at that time from the Caribbean. Perhaps unconsciously following Patrizio Di Massimo's practice on how to revisit past, I was less interested to expose and lecture the spectator on the specific historical racist context of Dr. Picado, and rather, through curating, I wanted to bifurcate the meaning of this racial cleansing ideology, towards different realities of the present where one can still find this type of anxiety that the encounter with alterity always comes with. For this, the exhibition included your video Duet for Cannibals, 2009, where you appear at a cafe, trying to pursue a black musician from Milan to take part of a corporal composition in which sexual and racial tabus begin to permeate. Would you say that through the dialogue that you engage with this man, you first propose a witty equal condition of power and domination, but perhaps most importantly, you seem to question through a "simple drawing" if that which we are repulsed by, maybe that which we unconsciously desire?



Hombres entre las Ruinas, TEOR/ÉTica San José, 2012

CKLZ: In your oeuvre it is interesting to notice how the historical past, especially the Italian one, wants to reshape and to reconsider the present. It seems that you excavate from the past certain icons and images and then you use their languages to redefine our comprehension of history and contemporaneity. As we know, history can be subjective despite its own objectivity, it can be victim of a greater or lesser fascination and awareness, and this depends from certain backgrounds. Which kind of interest do you have about the ways of your work's perception by an audience that shares (or maybe not) the same historical and language background that you have?