

Hello Davide. A reconnaissance.

A spectacle that is no longer there.

A wall bearing signs and traces of an act consumed inside the trullo. Upon crossing the threshold of this typical Ostuni dwelling, a sedimented image forms before the eye, like a photograph: a souvenir of an action. Ash on the wall and on the floor, a carpet of burnt and abandoned firecrackers, are narrative signals of something that has already taken place. It is a simulacrum that awaits and receives the audience of a performance that has already occurred, leaving behind its traces as small bodies from a scene that no longer exists, because it has been deactivated. The party is over.

Davide Sgambaro, however, leaves behind the tools of the work, the symbols of a small revolt that took place within the white walls of the site, which - rather than becoming a glass display case - turns into a container for a scenario that signals something past, tracing a casual drawing formed by the combustions of firecrackers exploded against the wall. The artist's experience here becomes "aesthetically irrelevant" (as Emanuele Trevi might write). It becomes relevant and significant precisely when the action is finished, vanished; when the sign is no longer self-referential but universal, and what remains is the consumed context.

REHAB.

The action and imagery of *Whistle and I Will Come to You* belong to one of the four works that articulate *REHAB*, Davide Sgambaro's exhibition realized with Galleria Fuoricampo and Ulià Art Project. Invited to think and act within a new context—linked to a specific landscape, to unfamiliar human presences, and to unique aesthetics, the artist reworked several narratives from his installation practice, creating site-specific actions and works. Adapting to a context by harnessing its peculiarities and symbols, without relinquishing the urgency to change things, to overturn a system through attempts at reprocessing thought, this is the attitude that binds the artist to the place. There is no irony in the intimate form of disappearance - of the self and of the work's process - that Sgambaro enacted in Ostuni. I would define it, rather, as a reconnaissance: of the context, of himself, of the moment. The artist takes stock of the situation, determined to leave a trace.

This *rehab* reflects on the collective future, on the universal that Sgambaro wishes to overturn, to improve, certainly not to ignore. The simulacra he creates are attempts at a rehabilitation into the world. Stepping outside the display case that protected the action *I Push a Finger Into My Eyes (Kiss, Kick, Kiss)* and leaving the enactment enclosed within a clearly defined system, Sgambaro shifts his gaze toward others: witnesses and messengers. Sparks pass, ash remains; traces persist. Actions have consequences that, when approached with seriousness and sarcasm, fix a present that can be transmitted from place to place, across a geography that is, in effect, the same for everyone.

Being present. Getting lost.

"...to be lost is to be fully present, and to be fully present is to be capable of being in uncertainty and mystery. And one does not get lost but loses oneself, with the implication that it is a conscious choice, a chosen surrender, a psychic state achievable through geography."

Rebecca Solnit on Walter Benjamin, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*.

Rossella Farinotti

Dear Rossella,

the process of adaptation and emptying must lead to the production of a metaspaces, and every step I place in front of another carries with it a whirlwind of insecurities, prompting the question: how much do what I do, what we do, actually affect the experience of others? Like in a resort, or rather, a rehab, when I surrender ideas to space, I grow five centimetres; compared to yesterday, today I am a giant, tomorrow once again miniature.

“I don't know if you know what it is like to want to be someone else. To not want to look the way you look. To hate your own face and to go completely unnoticed. I always wanted to be someone else. I have never felt comfortable the way I am. All I want is to be better than myself, to become less ordinary and to find some purpose in this world. It is easier to see things in others, to see things you admire and hence try to become that. To own a different face. To dance a different dance and sing a different song. It is out there waiting for us, inviting us to change. It is time to become who we're not, to change our face and become who we want to be. I think the world is a better place that way.”

Harmony Korine, *Mister Lonely*, 2007

And then what remains? An enormous display case in a space that can barely contain it. Inside, an anonymous fluttering bag; a pair of ghosts with muscular spasms; and us, who, as we turn to leave, remember that we are, despite everything, important.

Rehab is the clash between desire and social obligation. It is both easy and difficult; embedded and accessible from multiple points of view. It is transparent and dirty; it is our social redemption, our relationship with desire, and everything we would never want to become.

Humpty-Dumpty (break my heart) consists of garments emptied of bodies, hinting at life through an imperceptible mechanical muscular spasm. It represents relational fatigue and a lost generation. It is you and me, me and others, and the relationships between them.

Eroi cannot be explained. It still moves me as much as the first time I tore off the first label and realised that, in the end, even tearing has its own formal dignity.

Few objects and a great deal of experience. This is how I conceived *Whistle and I'll Come to You*: as a display meant to disturb the clarity of white lime, the silence of the countryside, the calm of vacation. Ultimately, these are all elements in friction with my present life. I preferred to move stealthily, in advance, and to deprive the viewer of a state of ease and calm in front of the image, because with everything we consume today, we no longer know how to reread active experience. So why not relearn how to joke, how to immerse ourselves in something that may initially appear disconcerting in relation to a banal definition of beauty?

I am melting, though I imagine you there in Milan; perhaps I prefer to melt here. I am certain I will miss this installation deeply, but it does not all fit in my suitcase and airport security would surely stop me to check for gunpowder residue.

Davide Sgambaro