

She was dead when they found her body. Three members of the collective were present at that moment, while the rest of us fled to the sound of the sirens. Sirens used to represent desire, now they signify danger. There are definite sirens in the word desire. A lot of anger in danger. Both very red. While we knew she wanted something radical for that last performance, no one suspected she would use real dynamite and loaded machineguns. A week before she managed to mobilize the forces of order under the bridge where she faked a first suicide. The film we shot to document that piece was very successful; the abstraction of both her gesture and the response it engendered from the authorities. The one and the multiple, the I and world ensemble, so abstract yet so transparent. The recording of an ever-simple trajectory - one aloof dissident straight line going down to the middle of a circle of concerned citizens - in an unbearable slow motion. No doubt that the registering of it was more powerful than the performance itself. A silent scream. She was after the idea that while there were millions of strangers unwillingly dying in the world - this vast and massive ignored misery - the life of one bourgeois had the power to mobilize an army of its own kind. The absurdity to save one person while half of the planet is starving. Not that she was exceptionally altruistic, but she sometimes needed to believe in something. Something radical. Despite the failure of all *isms* and the vague character of Martians, this human need to believe in something, in anything. A powerful desire for transfiguration, a living transcendence of a sort, a salvation, an eternal intuition that somewhere is better, different, in search of a lost paradise with improved taste, where we can pick grapes with our mouth. The idea of change stems from the nostalgia for something that never existed, a thirst for an apocalypse where everyone would be an artist. Hell. It was not so much the content of it all that was functioning best in that particular piece, but the deliberate poetics of the enterprise. Something bigger than the initial idea. She called it *Chute Libre* (*Free Fall*) and had a fragrance designed especially for it, eponymous, with myrrh as a main ingredient because of its extraction process which consists of a purposeful wound inflicted through the bark of a tree. Honey-like note, sharp, pleasantly earthy, and somewhat bitter. In that performance, the artist was positioned exactly between the strange and the familiar, the criminal and the victim. Bitter-sweet.

I am not trying to defend her or look for naked truths, as we all know that truth is always dressed up, confessions disguised. We are all defendant lords, managers of our own neurosis, chiefs of personal blazons, everyday justifying our coat of arms. If making art is planting flags, then an army of selves is too much. She was not even trying to make sense of it all either as she knew that revolution and dictatorship are two faces of the same coin and that art is quickly recuperated by fashion, advertising, real estate or nostalgia. She was not about synthesis but only interested in the antithesis of the antithesis. Fragments and doubt were her main concerns. People accused her

of dishonesty and were quick at pointing out the contradictions in her work. That is because in her oeuvre, she had taken on more and more the figure of a trickster. She often talked about the grace in the agility of the thief, nothing sticking to him. Pink Panther. For the deceitful, life is a game which demands artistry and detachment. The crook plays for himself. The terrorist is less seduced by the coup d'état than the *coup de théâtre*. The murderer is an artisan of crime, he produces meaning. The scoundrel who killed sixty-nine women and turned them into sausages, is expressing something. Nothing more disturbing than a pork farm. The Saudi wearing a Rolex on his black horse, plotting to bomb the Twin Towers, one tooth at a time, nothing more arrogant than American occupation. The cheat, additive in nature, is a composite and plays on multiple lives while the victim, essentially subtractive, is mistaking his origins for the destination. In his *Éloge de la complexité*, Edgar Morin states that the simple fact of increasing complexity of an ensemble augments its performance, its potential. The just is afraid to lose something while the embezzler already risked everything. In the *Thomas Crown Affair* with Steve McQueen and Faye Dunaway at the end of the film, the airport scene, when the larcenist disappears into the crowd. He hired a big number of individuals dressed exactly like him - black suit, white shirt, red tie, black bowler - thus he can be at once spotted while it he is impossible to seize hold of. He vanishes into the crowd yet he is always visible. Simultaneously nowhere and everywhere. Genius. Brilliant. Delightful. The burglar, carrying all pretensions, goes on to the next page while the trustworthy, empty handed, is fixated on the same word. In a *Naked City* episode, Roddy McDowall plays a talented stage actor who is swiped with endless refusals. Prevented from perfecting his art he becomes an unflinching murderer. When the police surround him on a rooftop, facing the impasse the actor replies with mad lucidity, "You do not understand. I play for myself!" That is just before he throws himself into nothingness. Suicide as a last word. I have to admit that I was happy to see the cops and all the reactionary devices to counterweigh the absolute catatonia we drove ourselves into. It is not that I simply turned my vest inside out. It was more complicated than that, or perhaps simpler. There is always an ineluctable ambiguity in surrendering. Like Cleopatra who decided to fall in love with the enemy to make her defeat more palatable. She converted humiliation into sex appeal. It was a very creative way to have the last word. Facing Octavian's overthrow, she eventually took her life away with an asp.

She was lying in a coagulating puddle, almost right in the middle of the gallery space and it looked like an art piece I once saw, *Lâché de feuilles rouges*. A pile of A4 format sheets of red paper thrown from the mezzanine onto the white floor. A shooting star reaching the earth. I still refuse to believe that a falling star and a meteorite are the same object. Revolutionary impetuses dismantle as soon as the leader is decapitated. Montezuma as the ancestor of an infinite series of failed Mexican revolutions. Enormous white statues of Stalin being pulled down by ropes; big things, like icebergs, always fall in slow motion. We were no exception. I said we but I meant the collective. I rarely use we, disqualifying any conversation who speaks in the name of any we of any sort.



Not only do I find it distasteful but also infinitely suspicious, extremely questionable and moreover, just tragic. An artist takes a part-time job as a minor clerk in order to pay the rent and progressively slides towards the we, ending up, within less than a year, speaking in the name of the company in a very convincing manner. *We used to carry that. We will look into it. We are expanding. We are relocating. We specialize in identity theft.* Absorbed by the institution or the corporation, the individual, even the most resilient, ends up gradually dull-witted and then totally ossified, petrified, sooner than later, speaking in the name of someone else. The identification becomes total, the alienation, complete. The worse types are unionized, programmed to be against management. Although they have no share in the business they slave for, they speak about it as if they own it just to sublimate the fact that it is the company that owns them. These people also come with a whole set of automatic sayings. When asked "How are you?" they answer "Five minutes from my coffee break!" or "One more day before the weekend!" They barely exist on their day off as their brains are wasted on mindless things. The parade of the walking dead happens every day of the year. Seneca: "I made myself the slave of no one, I do not wear the name of anyone." It is bad enough the world needs slaves for the wheel to turn around, but the proliferation of self-imposed forms of slavery leaves me bewildered. *In memoria di me*, a film by Italian filmmaker Saverio Costanzo. A Jesuit monastery on a Venetian island with two protagonists. Andrea, tormented and disappointed with life, commits as a novice within the Catholic Order. Convinced he has found truth he meets another novice, Fausto, who is struggling with the idea of it all. While one remains impassible by embracing dogma, the other, tortured, is looking for answers emerging from within. The viewer walks along hallways, passageways, antechambers, refectories, cells, places of transition, with profane music collaged onto the spatial narrative; a military march from Schubert, speaking about voluntary prisons, a waltz by Johann Strauss or a concerto by Tchaikovsky known for its tension between the soloist and the orchestra, where the former has to take over and dominate. A film about the victory of the individual over the group. The personal, the idiosyncratic against the general consensus.

As part of my socio-aesthetic research, I once experienced full on benefit placement within the ranks of a corporation where employees of all levels had the right to defer salary towards a year off. I used to think that a sabbatical came from an ancient tradition used for deepening personal academic research but in this case, the most meaningless occupation was eligible for the furthering of its own development. A coworker (for lack of a worse term), who was already not doing much on a daily basis, was very happy to take a year off to really do nothing. Doing nothing for some people is the ultimate absolute, their idea of fun. She tells me that she was taking a sabbatical to live *comme une artiste* for a year. What could I possibly reply. I thought that being an artist, like being gay, was something you were born with. I thought it meant someone who cannot find sleep, seeking every minute of the day and night, by involuntary reflex, a mental illness, itchiness, a chronic condition, a brutal restlessness, an infinite discomfort, a general dissatisfaction, a true curse, in search of the poetic, the poetic, in order to



survive the mediocre, the mediocre, someone who says no, no, no, not in space but in time, this time she, the coworker, the coward, the cow, was spending, wasting or killing until she tried to live once every seven years. Congratulations my dear, your sabbatical means the year you will realize you wasted your life. After twelve months in *artiste* hell, on the verge of suicide, you will be so happy to come back home and reinstate yourself within the fold of your secure job, relieved from disposable freedom, finally finding purpose away from the unexpected. Small bureaucrats are vampires sucking what they call the system which owes them everything, a few breaths away from anticipated retirement, a few blinks from death. The state is an abusive father they loot. The small task employee, with an empty brain and a pocket full of lottery tickets, avenges his condition every day, so stressed out about not handling stress, contributing in a minimum manner while withdrawing maximum benefits. They are all potential serial killers. Why did I get in such diatribe? Because of the implied consensus, the we. I was asking myself, why I said we, though I was not truly one of them. I just happened to be there because she was a friend and I was trying to understand her research on the notion of *La bêtise* (generalized imbecility). I did partake in her soft subversions, which gradually became bluntly perverse, and even hateful I must admit, but for the most part I was staying behind the camera while everything was played out in front, so frankly, I was not officially part of them, whom I secretly referred to as having collectively landed upon "*the pile of nearly-made-its*." While this collection of losers started its deep descent soon after my unconscious subordination, it is evident that this temporary affiliation and its abrupt end, forever cured me from any need of belonging. *We were under arrest, a super-the-slam, a boom bang! A Boomerang.*

*On the Revolutions of Celestial Bodies* was the title of Copernicus's treatise about the movements of planets around the sun. Revolution then passed from astronomy into the vernacular coming to representing abrupt change in the social order. There is something *révolu* (*passé*) in *revolution*, obsolete. American, French, Russian, Chinese, Cuban, Spanish. So much red, fields and fields of poppies, to finally understand that there is not such thing as true revolutions, in the sense of complete rotations, total conversions, pure miracles. Revolutions are fragile moments, ephemeral in nature, manifesting themselves like targeted fireworks under complicit constellations. Essential cries, but real inanities under the skies. Velleities. Big sighs. The inherent vulnerability and volatility of momentums. The right time to say *I love you* for the first time. Agitated present, conjugated times, regicides, restorations, reforms, counter-reforms, the big zigzag of History, a giant slalom. History as a series of slopes and tracks and the obliqueness of its rewriting. Bolsheviks, situationists, super heroes. The twentieth century was big on the idea of change, notably prolific in manifestos of all kinds. Understandably so, as western culture went through a lot of unimaginable horror screenings that seemed to have drawn little holes as to evacuate the unfathomable, liquidate time from continuity, liquefy reality. The reply of the artistic youth seemed to echo the violence it merged from. Killing painting. Killing narratives. Bombing language. Totalitarian reflexes leaked from the political to art's battlefield. There is something military in the avant-garde. The

front, the new, not only a masquerade of MUSTS, DOES and DON'TS, SHALLS and SHOULD, SHOULD NOTS and WHAT NOTS, but a genuine desire to kill the fathers. Art would thus be this cultural edifice born from the guilt of the killing of the genitors. Goya's *Cronos* upside down. The fox biting its tail, the hand that feeds. Modernity as a way out of continuity, ruptures as origins, discontinuities as a need for the tabularized, triggered by a genuine exasperation, an immense dissatisfaction with the present. The idea of transcendental change is so human in nature but so blind to human nature. I think it comes from Christianity which for some reason decided to do away with the traditional Greek and Jewish suspicion in humanity. But because in all evidences it never worked out, we seem to be waiting for new gods, erect new statues. *Waiting for Godot*. I see an army of messiahs in the word manifesto.

Humans love to create a new set of rules to identify with and rally around, stubbornly hanging on a cracked branch they mistook for a tree, which they imagine in turn to have strong and deep roots. It is shocking to see how superficial the roots of very old trees are, once they are pulled out by a storm. We are all uprooted, vagabonds looking for a home, nostalgic for a genealogy that would tell us who we are and where we are going. Yearnings for belongings coupled with the splendid and naïve idea that one can extract oneself from the world and change it once for all, that would be enough credulity as it is, but moreover, it is always the need to spread ideas on a planetary scale that makes me uncomfortable. Proselytism is not very sexy. Wisdom, like poetry, should not need to convince anyone; on the contrary it should capture you in a violent vortex just to spit you out on the sidewalk minutes later, leaving you with the feeling to always run after something you just missed. Bold oversized capital letters are always screaming and lacking in the fertility of subtlety. The desire for consensus, the fetid transpiring need for allegiance is creating a lack of debate, which leaves a sterile platform. Groupings tend to kill discourse. Truisms, rules, tracts, posters, headlines, preachers, dogs, mobilization, internationals. It is all a bit rich. And what a stupid word that is, IN-TER-NA-TION-AL. A crest with a small steel gray oval grid with a blue arrow pointing towards the "*regent*" and "*champion*" "*worldwide*." Logo has lost much meaning. It used to mean speech, discourse, now it is a constructed identity specially designed for people who do not have one and nothing to say. International just means internet. Although I am not exactly nostalgic, I get very irate with loss of meaning, as if I am scared to become dead poor, language wise, as a poet, sapped, polluted, besieged. I am paranoid about the annihilation of meaning. Even though I know that new particles are born in the process of colliding, I cannot help to think that a technocracy happens when technology becomes more important than culture, more important than history. The word memory alludes to computer memory more than anything. Although there is something very poetic about a memory contained in an apple, about a sticky mouse dragging arrows into a web, still, we seem to be constantly saving and deleting ourselves.



None of us looked at each other at the funeral. We gathered only to vanish in all directions minutes after the event. We knew the trial would soon catch up with us anyway. I am trying to recall, not without a strain, the night of the carnage. The confusion of signs. Head throbs. I did swallow several capsules of gamma amino butyric acid but it had the countereffect of multiplying the number of neurons firing to my brains so I could not distinguish the languages of war, militant, terror, birds, court, tournaments, history of all revolutions, crusades, propaganda, axis of evil, the Ten Commandments, 613 seeds in each pomegranate, rewind-play-fast-forward, animals becoming intense, XXX, excess. Dali's paranoiac critical method is the Surrealists' most important legacy. The ability of the brain to perceive links between things which rationally are not linked. I just stepped a notch too deep, beyond the ability to systematize because of a lack of differentiation between the state of the world and my heartbeat. As if Foucault's *dispositif* had been all encompassing, therefore irrelevant, beyond mechanisms, more than prisons and madhouses, more than Agamben's cigarette, more than facebook and twitter, but all systems of capture in one single huge machine. We are all wikipecified. They put us in a van without futile brutality. They were not used to be called for an art opening and deal with skinny vegan types with big glasses. When they heard that we were using machine guns they expected to find a mad crack house or some mafia insider bloodshed. I think they misheard the word Manifesto for Mafioso, both subscribing to organized crime. We were more like deserters. All I remember is not the events that followed but what is still processing in my psyche which became an accelerator of particles, a probability theory, a festival of paranoia, a convention in hypertension, a vast interstice of abstract intuitions, a necklace of neurosis, an archipelago of life savers. In my delirium, all of our previous actions were compiled in one big strategic impulse springing from the immensely puerile and stupid idea that the world could be changed. Giant close up of conflicted agglomerations of pubescent hormonal imbalance. Revolution as adolescence. It is always painful for philosophy teachers to teach youth about idealism, its absolute essential nature as well as by the same absolute, its unavoidable failure. Tentative angry cells marching in deep layers of crap towards freedom. Central America, squeezed in a protest, some march of the dead, other people's rights, no idea how I ended up there, thinking about something else and the crowd screaming *El pueblo unido jamas sera vencido*. The cry of the vanquished. I was so irritated by the massive movement, the us, the we again. The consensus. That is just it, the consensus of it all which I find most suffocating. What is scary about consensus is that people stop thinking by themselves and it is sufficient to rally around a set of ideas, someone else's vision, blindfolded. Unanimity as a lack of opposition. Scary. Even the term leftwing nowadays does not mean anything else than a consensus between individuals who do not need to read anymore. One just has to prove one lives on the eastside of things and that one is pro-Palestinian, pro-environment, does not own a car, despises fur and hates people with money. Burning books by not reading them. The blind lefties are just as wearing as the westside jocks, perky lululemon *derrière*, designated spot for their burnt plastic coffee on the top of

the stroller. It's just a set of preconceived ideas, values and behaviors. Ever since that last collective overdose I cannot even be on a bicycle path without feeling part of a benevolent brotherhood supra consciousness of exemplary non-smoking passive aggressive citizens who recycle on the right day without a miss. Bicycle gear, especially the shape of the helmet, makes me violent. I never escape contempt. It is a chronic condition. It's awful. I am just learning to live with it.

While we were waiting for Security, I heard a sardonic ritornelle. Assaults, like revolutions, are reversible. Being caught is like a domino effect, a love triangle. Lion becoming sheep. As a child I always reveled in front of any types of reversible garments, and the trickster feeling of it all still provokes in me the same fascination. An episode from *Twilight Zone*, Peter Falk who plays a Latin revolutionary rapidly turning into a dictator once in power, seeing enemies of the party through his personal mirror. Under the intellectual dictatorship of the collective, whoever had the pretension to aspire to an individual thought was rapidly marginalized, ostracized, nailed. There was nothing else to say because when you abstract all planes to a line and all lines to a point then there is not much space to add anything. At the end of it all, they looked like members of a dysfunctional family around the table of a dinner that seriously went wrong. What happened I think was a lack of experience with chance. They forgot to invite it. Captive of their own rules, they could not even intervene at the right moment to salvage the best as they took the oath to the *laissez-faire*. They were so pedagogical in thinking that art should be useful, utilitarian and functional. I was a bit shocked as I have always felt that art was at best of times, useless, amoral, apolitical, anti-didactic, futile, pulling from that nothingness its own relevance, its own power and a certain mystique. By definition, the opposite of creation is abolition, annihilation, destruction, counterfeit, copy, imitation, nothingness. Thus, art would be opposed to all of the above, even when it seeks to abolish, annihilate, destroy, forge, copy, imitate, nothingness. It is obvious that the only way to destroy the desert is to build on its surface. Of course that writing is to strafe, to attack ground targets hidden in white planes, with automatic gunfire from a low-flying aircraft. Speaking is doing violence to silence, breathing is saying no. Creation relates just as much to genesis as it does to the nuclear bomb. Making art is perpetually creating and destroying the universe. We are all wonderers, false pleaders in search of ephemeral immortalities. Some with the arrogance of the forger tend the surface of things, while others, with the humility of the sexton, spend their time digging graves. Libraries are cemeteries for the immortals. The delicate gesture of opening a book for a genie to pop out, as if the authors wrote just for you. For who else?

Is it not a relief to know that even dedicating our entire life to study one aspect of one single thing would be only to scratch its surface? That alone should be enough to internalize the multiple versus the consensus. To know that the process of thinking is about sorting out the identical, that in order to comprehend, we need to differentiate, having a thought would thus be producing sameness in order to survive chaos.



Therefore, our thought processes would be nothing more than self-preservation reflexes. Our great ideas would be hijacked by the safeguard of our political and economical positions. That sheds light on the history of philosophy. Anyhow, that one artist comes up with his own sets of ideas and constraints is a given, a necessary thing, a frame of work, but the question is why to make it universal. As if Bergson is more right or less relevant than Spinoza, Leibniz closer or farther to enlightenment than Lévinas, Sartre lesser than Deleuze, and Confucius? Each philosopher's life's work is a corridor, a passageway, bridging to a room opening onto another room, personal discourse engendering new ones to infinity. A chain of ideas. Ideas about chains. Art as missing links. I see in art today a resistance about making a front, not by simple disengagement, but with a gained skepticism, resisting the new, the constituted movement, the consolidated aesthetic, the concealed tendency, the *sous-vide*. While crispy outside and tender inside are perhaps preferable, there is no need to invest this preference with propaganda and design at once a whole movement around it. I prefer to understand that the new and the old is not a question anymore. The old, being tangibly vaster, and the new in need to prove itself as equally interesting. In face of the awkwardness of living today knowing we will die tomorrow, the huge task of elevating the viewer above his quotidian is already heroic - imposing, in an overloaded world, yet another image, yet another text, as something necessary - art thrives in that tension. The work IS the manifesto. Suddenly I was not feeling well at all. I must have fainted for a while because the security guards dressed in black were now all wearing white. Change of guard. Uniforms. *Uniformity*. We all wear uniforms. Even nudity nowadays has become a uniform. A woman is never truly naked. The whole room started to spin. I was falling again, even though I was already lying down. Everything was turning, the room, the events, the globe, my head, eternity. We are all falling. Every step we take is defying gravity. Standing up we belong to ourselves. Sitting down we are half surrendering. Lying down, we are fatally conquered; by love, by sleep or by death.

In court, everyone was wearing black again. Left, right, round table, panels, gates, defendants, plaintiff, precious wood, togas, frank incense. Before the questions started to fire up in our direction on the motives of our operations, we had individually internalized the deep meaning of table, chair, floor, ceiling, and walls. I then recalled that piece where the artist had screwed the horses of a merry-go-around in the opposite direction of its base. It was something about the obsolescence of revolutions and counter-revolutions. I am not sure, because the more you play with *détournement*, revolving and devolving, it is revolution itself that gets neutralized. We are all pattern seekers. We distinguish motifs while looking for models, decipher tendencies while drawing laws. Masons of concepts, weavers of signs, we trace dotted lines between things and beings, between life and death. We are all misbranded, blinds leading blinds, demonstrators, protestors, stickmen with big ideas. Universal junkies. Night owls and early birds. Leeches and crocodiles. Suitcases and butterflies. Absurdity as a means of survival. *DADA doesn't speak. DADA has no fixed idea. DADA doesn't catch flies.*