Marc Bauer

Mi piace Commenta Condividi, A Rhetorical Figure

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14.02.2020
21.03.2020

Location
Milano

Istituto Svizzero

Information
Opening reception
13.02.2020
H18:30

Category
Solo exhibition, Art

'Likes' and 'shares' are social media's capital, today's capital. One simple click is enough to express one's own approval and, with a few words, one can spread his own opinion or discord. Our smartphone's glossy surfaces act as transmitters and thousands and thousands of images and comments scroll under our fingertips. For his exhibition "Mi piace Commenta Condividi, A Rhetorical Figure", Marc Bauer traces the mechanisms, images, and rhetorical devices employed by digital communication. He accomplishes it with a new series of drawings, a sound installation and site-specific murals produced for Istituto Svizzero's gallery space. He also accomplishes it at a time when the world's politics is sometimes handled on Twitter through 'aggressive' capital letters and where cat videos and hate speech content are spread through the same digital waves. In Italy and elsewhere.

His black & white and coloured drawings are the result of a in-depth research along with his media's translations. They are based on digital images and photographs found on social media, sometimes meticulously copied, others recreated through subjective memory. The works exhibited at Istituto Svizzero, Milan, take their cue from Marc Bauer's study of Matteo Salvini's Twitter communication, Interior Minister of the Italian government until September 2019 and currently the contentious spokesman for the right-wing populist opposition. The artist shows how political messages can spread through posted images and numerous fast typed tweets. Thanks to his particular sensitivity to images and their iconographic DNA, Marc Bauer unfolds before our eyes a collage, occasionally related, in which the political and manipulative potential bestowed in words and images is revealed and our own visual memory is stimulated and questioned. Although the artist specifically focuses on Italy, "Mi piace Commenta Condividi, A Rhetorical Figure" is also a universal critique of the current political climate.

Specifically: the wolf of the on-line magazine *Il Populista*, which looks at us from high above with threat. And also, the equally frightening wolf of the popular comic book *Dylan Dog*. The hero, Dylan Dog, hates mobile phones, loves poetry and fights as 'nightmare investigator' wolves and other horror creatures. Likewise, in Marc Bauer's graphic interpretation Francisco de Goya's of the late 18th century work, *El sueño de la razón produces monstruos*, dark creatures are central. The etching can be assumed as a self-portrait of the Spanish painter and, according to one possible interpretation, it invites viewers not to fall asleep, but rather to pay attention to the monsters that hound them. Even Salvini's posts on Twitter, for which he obtained hundreds of 'Likes' and 'Shares', have been translated by Marc Bauer into black and white drawings. In such a manner we see for example a cat eating a sardine. The *Gattini con Salvini* recall the movement of the so-called Sardines, which since last autumn have been filling the Italian squares like heterogeneous swarms to oppose the right-wing populist conspiracy. Moreover, we see the leader of the Lega eating a Nutella sandwich and posting images of pizzas or Madonnas as alleged insignia of Italian culture with the aim of distinguishing the 'self' from the 'other'. What risks being lost in the image's noise from the World Wide Web suddenly appears as an absurd and disturbing panorama of political communication. We are left with a feeling of 'Mal-Être', a feeling of anxiety. Images and words appear in our heads, the wolf grinds its teeth. We see people hanging upside down or reversed portraits, which refer to the iconography of the so-called 'infamous paintings'. In Italy they are imprinted in the collective visual memory and recall Mussolini's corpse exhibited in Piazzale Loreto (Marc Bauer also shares this image with us). In addition to this, we see blurred photos of boats crowded with refugees, complemented by harsh slogans in capital letters, and furthermore Pier Paolo Pasolini, who at the time was an insusceptible critic of the Italian state. And then in the middle—perhaps a warning, perhaps a provocation—another voice, another comment: populism as a political position is aimed at the beasts and is it only saltwater that separates us from the people on the other side of the sea? The comments have been translated on the digital platform deepl.org. The Internet speaks all languages. Opinions are spreading beyond linguistic borders, although there are always cries out loud for the borders to be finally closed. With the research and accumulation of such images and their graphic realisation, Marc Bauer illustrates how digital communication can work, how the associative accumulation of images flows, and how the market for 'likes' and 'shares' takes place. And perhaps he also asks us to be careful. In Italy and elsewhere, in dark times—in the same way Goya's etching can be interpreted—but not only. In the background, instead, *Bella Ciao*'s refrain can be heard, today hummed in the Sardines' chants in the Italian squares.

Marc Bauer

Working primarily in graphite and pencil and almost exclusively in monochromatic black and white, Marc Bauer (b. 1975 in Geneva, lives and works in Berlin) creates drawings drawings that explore ideas of memory and history, both personal and collective. Often drawing from memory, he creates a world complete with fictional characters and narratives, embedding them in a familiar representation.
Marc Bauer studied at the Ecole supérieure d'art visuel in Geneva and the Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten, in Amsterdam. His work was featured in numerous group shows, including the Drawing Room (solo) in London (2019), the 21st Sydney Biennial (2018), the Centre Pompidou in Paris (2017) and the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst in Zurich
(2016), and in many solo exhibitions, including the Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, the Centre Culturel Suisse, Paris and the Frac Auvergne, Frac Alsace, Frac Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur. In February 2020, he had a solo exhibition at De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill-on-Sea, UK. He is the recipient of the GASAG Art Prize 2020. The award will be presented this year for the sixth time in collaboration with the Berlinische Galerie. Marc Bauer was Fellow at Istituto Svizzero in 2005/2006.

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