6. | Mutation





2012, affiches, 30cm x 40cm.
Exhibition view from Contemporary Creation and Social Dynamics, Biennale de Dakar, 2012.
Courtesy of the artist.

Dakar Biennial, 2012

Qu'est ce qu'il reste d'une idéologie, d'un mouvement politique, d'un concept ou d'une histoire. Quelle mutation peut avoir une pensée, un combat ?

En 2006, lorsque mounir fatmi découvre que les documents d'archives du FBI concernant le Black Panthers Party sont désormais accessibles, il invite David Hilliard, ancien membre fondateur et chef de l'état-major du Black Panthers Party, proche du leader Huey P. Newton, afin de s'entretenir longuement avec lui à Paris. Cette rencontre donne lieu à une vidéo *Histoire de l'Histoire*, puis la vidéo *Memorandum* en 2009.
Il découvre alors qu'en 2005, David Hilliard et Fredrika Newton viennent de lancer la « Burn Baby Burn hot sauce », une sauce épicée aux ingrédients biologiques faite maison avec la complicité du chanteur Al Green.
Leur but est de faire du slogan du parti des Black Panthers une accroche marketing. Le 40ème anniversaire de la fondation du Parti la même année semble être l'occasion idéale pour le lancement de ce produit aux allures rétro.

Une idéologie à manger

Selon la fondation Huey P. Newton, une partie des bénéfices finance des programmes d'alphabétisation ainsi qu'une aide aux prisonniers noirs politiques américains. La vision originale était d'aider et de fournir les soins nécessaires aux opprimés et de lutter contre les oppresseurs. Depuis les années 60 et les actions militantes du Parti révolutionnaire

What remains of an ideology, a political movement, a concept or even a piece of history? Can reason, belief, or struggle mutate, change form?

In 2006, when mounir fatmi learned that he could access the FBI archives for the Black Panther Party, he invited David Hilliard, one of the original founders
and principal leaders of the Party, and close associate of Huey P. Newton, to come to Paris (where the artist lives), so that they could review and discuss the archives at length.
This meeting developed into two videos, the first entitled, Histoire de l'Histoire (History of The History), in 2007, followed by Memorandum in 2009.
It was during this time when fatmi discovered that in 2005 David Hilliard and Fredrika Newton had just launched "Burn Baby Burn," an organic hot sauce made in collaboration with the singer, Al Green.
They wanted to use the famous Black Panther Party slogan as a marketing tool and the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Party (in 2005) seemed like a good occasion to launch the new product.

An edible ideology.

The original vision was to help provide support to the oppressed and to fight against the oppressors, and according to the Huey P. Newton Foundation, part of the financial gains from the hot sauce have gone to help programs fighting illiteracy as well as to aide black American political prisoners.

pour apporter de l'aide aux communautés démunies, il semble que les membres originaux du BPP ont choisi actuellement la voie du merchandising en s'adaptant aux lois du marché pour assurer la pérennité de leurs programmes ; le problème constant restant leur financement.
Le lancement de la sauce piquante « Burn Baby Burn » a choqué d'autres membres du parti. Témoins depuis longtemps de nombreuses tensions et scissions jusqu'à l'éclatement de l'organisation, chaque membre du parti original se revendique comme l'héritier de la véritable idéologie et a créé sa propre fondation proposant son témoignage, ses archives, son histoire.
Désormais la légendaire Panthère noire devient une marque comme les autres, une ligne de vêtements, une moutarde au miel, du café portant le slogan « all power to people », en plus de la bouteille de sauce épicée baptisée d'après le cri historique du Parti «Burn baby burn». C'est cette mutation que mounir fatmi propose de mettre en évidence à travers un pastiche de campagne publicitaire, une série de photographie ainsi que des documents d'archives.
Finalement, la question essentielle que pose ce projet est la suivante : que reste-t-il d'un parti politique révolutionnaire comme « le Black Panthers Party » une fois que son idéologie politique devient une sauce piquante à consommer ?

Since the early 1960s revolutionary BPP members have maintained this vision, often using militant actions on behalf of helping impoverished communities. But in the last decade or so, some of these same party members decided to start embracing the idea of merchandising and market demands as a way to raise money for the Party and ensure continued support to these communities.

The launch of the hot sauce, "Burn Baby Burn," shocked many members and added to existing tensions and divisions within the Party that eventually led to the official break up of the organization. Soon after, each original Party member claimed himself as the real vision behind the BPP ideologies and established his own foundation with his own archives, personal accounts, and history. The legendary Black Panther logo became a logo like any other logo, applied to a line of clothes, mustard, honey, a coffee that was called Power to the People, and of course, the hot sauce, with the party slogan, Burn Baby Burn.
Through the use of ad campaigns, photographs and the Black Panther Party archive, mounir fatmi explores this idea of mutation, and poses the question, What becomes of a revolutionary political party once the political ideology has become a hot sauce?

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