7. | The Silence of Saint Peter martyr





2011, France, 5 min 04, HD, B&W, stereo. Size may vary, video projection.
Exhibition view from Narracje 4, Gdanska Galeria Miejska, 2012, Gdansk.
Courtesy of the artist.

Narracje 4, Gdansk, 2012.

Très loin dans la nuit des temps moyenâgeux, la torture existait déjà, avec grande sophistication. Liée à la folie et au plaisir de ceux qui torturent : modèle du genre,la légendaire comtesse hongroise Elizabeth Bathory. Ou alors, liée à la religion : ainsi, plus avant dans l'Histoire, au 13ème siècle, l'Inquisition faisait rage à travers l'Europe, avec son cortège de tortures institutionnalisées par la papauté. Eliminer les hérétiques. Amener l'Europe entière à la même foi. Supprimer les Cathares. Faire admettre à toutes et à tous leurs erreurs, accorder parfois le pardon, supplicier parfois et brûler les corps de celles et de ceux dont l'esprit libre voulait penser autrement. Des sorcières, notamment, auprès desquelles pourtant les inquisiteurs allaient apprendre leur métier (Carlo Ginzburg). Tout cela pour la bonne cause, toujours : celle de la foi juste. Modèle du genre : Saint Pierre de Vérone, qui depuis l'enfance prêchait cette juste foi, y compris au sein de sa propre famille. Inquisiteur, il tortura tant et si bien qu'à un moment donné il prévit lui-même que lui aussi mourrait assassiné. Ce qui ne manqua pas d'arriver, par un coup de hache sur le sommet de son crâne, un meurtre qui fut suivi de la sanctification de Pierre après que, mourant, il eût trempé son doigt dans son propre sang pour écrire sur la terre « Je crois en un seul Dieu ».

mounir fatmi s'intéresse à la religion, à toutes les religions, et au rôle qu'elles jouent dans la culture et les relations interculturelles – ces relations que fatmi se plaît parfois à considérer comme des greffes nécessaires. Sa position, par rapport à la religion, est celle de l'interrogation : l'artiste

St. Peter Martyr (also known as St. Peter of Verona) was a 13th century Italian priest and Dominican friar both celebrated and reviled for his role as preacher, evangelist and Inquisitor. As a fierce opponent of heresy and idolatry he collected as many friends as he did enemies, eventually falling to an assassin's strike before his canonization as a Catholic saint. According to the story of his martyrdom, after being struck by an axe to the head and knife to the back, Peter Martyr rose to his knees and recited the first article of the Apostle's Creed. In his final moments, the steadfast devotee proceeded to dip his finger in his own blood and write "Credo in Unum Diem" ("I believe in one God") upon the earth before succumbing to death. His unwavering fortitude was immortalized by the esteemed painter (and fellow Dominican monk) Fra Angelico (born Giovanni da Fiesale) in a 1438 fresco titled "St. Peter Martyr Enjoining Silence." Here, with finger pressed tightly against his lips (as both a compositional and instructional device) this painting of Peter Martyr is located in a lunette above the cloister in Florence's San Marco Church – directing the monks entering the sacristy to move quietly in their passage. Centuries later, Fatmi dislodges said finger in a digital animation/appropriation of Fra Angelico's original painting – turning the silent, unmoving icon into a hallucinatory vision of unstable meaning. Rather than pointing to a singular purpose, Peter Martyr's arm becomes a compass arrow gesturing in multiple directions as his eyes (and aura) move in and out of sight. Set to an aggressive mechanical soundtrack in a quasi-sacred site in the Gdansk Shipyard

pose des questions, il nous pose des questions, avec une acuité hors du commun, mais sans ironie et toujours avec le plus grand respect pour ceux qui croient.

À l'âge de vingt ans, mounir fatmi découvre Fra Angelico et sa peinture. De *La guérison du Diacre Justinien* il dérive un ensemble de travaux sur les miracles superposés de la foi et de la science : c'est *La Jambe noire de l'Ange*. Du sublime portrait de Saint Pierre par Fra Angelico encore, fatmi tire la vidéo *Le Silence de Saint Pierre Martyr*. La beauté esthétique des images fonctionne ici comme un piège béant, un piège dont nous protège le son de la vidéo, typique des œuvres de fatmi : effrayant, douloureux, terrible. C'est à ce rythme grinçant que le Saint Pierre de fatmi ouvre et ferme ses yeux, tout en pressant ses doigts sur ses lèvres.

Silence : on ne parle pas de ces choses-là.

Barbara Polla, avril 2015

(was this once a church?), The Silence of St. Peter Martyr speaks volumes to the violence of that which is obscured in the absence of words. In the attempted silencing of Lech Walesa (by the KGB) he was made near-divine through Solidarity; in the post-industrial silencing of the Shipyard, will this site be reborn, or will it fall to the "cutting edge" knife of progress?

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