8. | Mutations - Burn Baby Burn





2014, Mutations - Burn Baby Burn, La Fête de l'Humanité, Paris.
Exhibition view from Liberté mon amour, Fête de l'Humanité, 2014, Paris.
Courtesy of the artist and Ceysson & Bénétière, Paris.

La performance Burn baby burn s'est tenue pendant la "Fête de l'Humanité" en 2014 aux abords d'un stand de restauration rapide de type sandwicherie. Elle convie le public à une séance de dégustation de mets arrosés de sauce piquante "Burn baby burn", sauce pimentée aux ingrédients biologiques et faite main. "Burn baby burn", à l'origine cri de résistance politique, est ici une marque déposée par le parti des Black Panthers, à l'initiative d'un de ses fondateurs, David Hilliard. En 2005, apprenant la nouvelle de la déclassification des archives du FBI concernant le parti contestataire, Mounir Fatmi invite David Hilliard pour un entretien afin d'évoquer l'histoire du mouvement révolutionnaire. C'est lors de cette rencontre que Mounir Fatmi apprend l'existence d'un certain nombre de produits dérivés commercialisés par le parti.

La performance questionne le devenir d'un groupe politique et d'une idéologie contestataires, pris dans un contexte économique marqué par le capitalisme et le libéralisme. Elle réalise une association hautement improbable : celle d'un nom aussi prestigieux sur le plan de l'activisme politique que celui des Black Panthers et d'un stand de restauration rapide. Elle soulève une contradiction flagrante entre le souvenir des actions hautement engagées du parti et le constat présent d'une opération de marketing. Elle observe une transformation : celle d'un symbole politique connoté (la panthère) et d'un cri historique de résistance ("Burn Baby Burn !") en un logo et une accroche publicitaires. La transformation dont il est question a d'ailleurs entraîné une polémique au sein du mouvement et s'est vue refusée et rejetée par certains de ses membres.

La performance prend également en compte les procédés de

The performance Burn Baby Burn took place during the 2014 “Fête de l’Humanité” music festival near Paris, next to a fast food stand that sold sandwiches. It invites the audience to a tasting of foods doused in “Burn Baby Burn” hot sauce, homemade with organic ingredients. “Burn Baby Burn”, which was originally a cry for political resistance, is a trademark belonging to the Black Panthers party, on the initiative of one of its founders, David Hilliard. In 2005, when he heard about the declassification of FBI archives on the revolutionary movement, Mounir Fatmi invited David Hilliard for a discussion about the history of the movement. It was during that meeting that he learned about the existence of a certain number of tie-in products marketed by the party.

The performance questions the evolution of a political group and a revolutionary ideology in an economic context dominated by capitalism and liberalism. It creates a highly improbable association: that of a prestigious name in the history of political activism, the Black Panthers, and a fast food stand. It highlights the blatant contradiction between the memory of the party’s militant actions and today’s acknowledgment of what is nothing more than a marketing operation. It observes a transformation: that of a politically charged symbol (the panther) and a historic cry for resistance (“Burn Baby Burn!”) into a logo and an advertising slogan. This very transformation actually created dissent within the movement as it was rejected by some of its members.

The performance also takes into account the mass reproduction processes of the consumer society by featuring numerous identical bottles of hot sauce. It underlines the fact that the message, through endless repetition, loses its ideological charge… Finally, it expresses a constant

reproduction en masse de la société de consommation en multipliant les bouteilles de sauce aux formats identiques. Elle met en évidence le fait que le message, à force d'être répété, perd quelque peu sa charge idéologique… Elle exprime finalement une préoccupation constante pour un parti historiquement contestataire qui se voit forcé de jouer le jeu du capitalisme et se trouve ainsi pris dans une contradiction associant la nécessité de financer ses diverses actions engagées auprès des populations (financement des campagnes d'alphabétisation, aide aux prisonniers politiques noirs américains) et la soumission aux règles du marketing, dont les tenants et les aboutissants risquent d'échapper à son contrôle.

Le risque pour la contestation politique est en effet sa digestion par la société de consommation - le message révolutionnaire subversif devenant un simple condiment destiné à être avalé et ne faisant que chatouiller les papilles gustatives, et l'image glorieuse du groupe révolutionnaire, un logo perdu au milieu des enseignes géantes des vendeurs, digéré et rendu inoffensif par le système marchand. La performance met en garde contre ce pouvoir de phagocytage des mouvements contestataires exercé par le système capitaliste et en appelle à raviver la flamme révolutionnaire.

Studio fatmi, aout 2017.

preoccupation for a historically revolutionary party that was forced to play along with capitalism and finds itself trapped in a contradiction between the need to fund its various militant outreach activities (financing literacy campaigns, helping Afro-American political prisoners) and the submission to the laws of marketing that ultimately slip out of its control.

The risk for political contestation is its digestion by the consumer society – the subversive revolutionary message becoming a simple condiment destined to be swallowed and merely titillating taste buds, the glorious image of a revolutionary group becoming a logo lost among so many others, digested and rendered inoffensive by commerce. The performance warns us against the capitalist system’s capacity to swallow anti-establishment movements and encourages us to rekindle the revolutionary flame.

Studio Fatmi, August 2017.

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Studio Fatmi, August 2017

exhibitions:

2014

Liberté mon amour - Fête de l'Humanité - Expo collective



Mutations - Burn Baby Burn

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