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Amor Es Un Lugar Ljubezen je kraj

Dougald Hine

This is an extract from 'The Crossing of Two Lines' by Dougald Hine & Performing Pictures (Stockholm: Elemental Editions, 2013). The excerpt has been made with permission from the publisher and the book is available at: <http://elementaleditions.tictail.com/>

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Dougald Hine: I'm curious about the latest work you've been doing with the workshops in Zegache, the work in the exhibition Amor Es Un Lugar.

RB: In some ways, it's the most straightforward project that we've done in the last few years. Because we've been involved in these contextual projects, building chapels, the house...

GB: Or producing the saints, where people have an idea of which saint they want to work with and how they should look.

RB: These participative processes that are very... almost contemporary art-ish! But now, we wanted to do an exhibition, and also we wanted to do it as a gift to our extended family in Oaxaca, to the Talleres and to Georgina. We wanted to give them a visual feast.

GB: And to show our friends there some of the things that we could not show them in words.

RB: So, within three weeks, we unleashed a fury of energy and did what we are best at doing: animation and media installations. This is actually our field, what we are skilled at. We produced six new animations using the technique that we have developed around the pinhole camera and stop-motion animation, on paper, with the whole textural feel to it, using sunlight, with all the inconsistency of light. When we show these animations, these very short-cycle animations, people immediately fall in love with them.

GB: This was also us trying to show what we see: because as a foreigner, coming to a new village, but also a cultural foreigner, you see beau& in things that might not always be obvious. So with this work, we were trying to show some of what we see.

A lot of the pride in the village centres around the church and the fantastic restoration work. Now, in this latest work, we moved our focus to the things that are left behind. In this case, a series of statues of angels, saints and monks that didn't find their place in the church during the restoration.

These are the objects that are kept in one of the side buildings, near the church?

RB: Yes, the bodega they call it. These are things which will be taken care of, in principle, if money and time can be found, but in reality they may well just stay there.

GB: And they are beautiful objects, as they are: they could have been shown without being restored, but they belong to the church and they are not allowed to be moved from there, so there they are, locked in this dark room, and now they are attacked by termites and woodworm. When you lift one of the pieces up, there is a little pile under it which has the shape of a mogote, that distinctive steep-sided hill that you see in the Oaxacan landscape. You know, the Zapotec name Zegache tran-

slates into Spanish as los siete mogotes, because there are seven hills...

RB: Just like Rome...

GB: So it felt significant that here were these mogotes of things disappearing. We saw a chance to rescue the statues by dragging them out into the unmerciful sunlight, to expose them in front of a camera, expose them to the light, and capture them. But it's not a documentary project, it is an art project, and so we get the statues to perform: blow life into them, like Giuseppe with Pinocchio! As Robert says, it was a heavy production. Every animation is made up of 36 images, so we put them on a 360° plate and move them ten degrees between each take. Each image is two minutes exposure, three or four minutes in the darkroom, four minutes of scanning each image into the computer. It's a time-consuming way of doing animation.

RB: It's also important to point out that, aesthetically, in our previous projects with Zegache, we tried to work participatively around the making of the altars and their content, to work with the aesthetic of the place. Yet we're children of a modern society, as well, so we tried this time to take forward our own aesthetic, what we find interesting aesthetically within Zegache.

I mean, we're definitely into baroque, as well, and Zegache is baroque. Each pueblo in Oaxaca has its own speciality: there is the pueblo that is specialised in Barro Negro, the black clay, or in alebrijes, these folk art sculptures of fantastical creatures, and Zegache is about the Baroque church with baroque artefacts. We definitely dig that, but for them baroque is making it new, full of colours and details, and what we wanted to introduce was the decayed baroque, the baroque ruin. I mean, we know that the classical temples probably looked like Las Vegas, with all the colours, but classicism appreciates it when it has decayed, when there are no colours, when it's broken. So we did the same thing with the baroque in Zegache, we looked at decay as a component within the aesthetic.

How did they respond to that?

RB: Oh, they were like, this is cool!

GB: Again, it was the total openness of this culture, the syncretism of southern Mexico, the ability to take what we were doing in their stride and enjoy it.

Another thing, material-wise, this time we also worked a lot with the rusty iron that surrounds the roofs and the fences around people's houses, that's made out of old oil cans or other materials that are available for free.

RB: The workshops usually put a lot of their money into materials, whereas what we tend to associate with Mexican style is the ability to make something out of nothing, so we wanted to work with that, instead.

GB: It's also that the workshops are experts in reproducing, making something in exactly the same way. By adding these materials, we still made seven boxes the same size, but they're all individual, because this part of the material has decayed so much it can't be controlled. RB: Yes, cheaper materials, colouring the wood with motor oil, taking what is at hand – and yet also having these gold leaf details. This was the decayed baroque that we were seeing.

The thing is, though, if we had done this the first time when we started working with Zegache, I would have felt a bit different, because it's such an aestheticised exhibition...

Whereas at this point, it's not just you coming in and sampling local work into your aesthetic for an external audience. It's now part of a working conversation with people you've been working with for years in the Talleres, some of whom have come here to work with you in Sweden, people who have got to know each other by showing each other what you can do?

RB: Exactly, this is what I mean when I say that we earned enough credit to make an aesthetic move like this.

GB: That's also why the exhibition is called Amor Es Un Lugar, 'Love is a place'. It is an homage to the people, to the place, a place that has become so important to us, and it's an exhibition in Oaxaca. It's not us coming in and producing something that's going to be shown in a gallery in Sweden, with no connection to the place.

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Dougald Hine: Zanima me vaš zadnji projekt, ki ste ga pripravljali v sodelovanju z rokodelskimi delavnicami v mestu Zegache, dela z razstave Amor Es Un Lugar.

RB: Na nek način je to najbolj neposreden projekt izmed vseh v zadnjih nekaj letih. Prej sva se namreč ukvarjala z bolj kontekstualnimi projekti, gradnjo kapelic, hiše ...

GB: ... ali z izdelovanjem kipov svetnikov, kjer so ljudje prihajali z zamislili o tem, katerega svetnika upodobiti in kako.

RB: Skratka, s takšnimi participativnimi procesi, ki so zelo ... skoraj sodobno-umetniški! Tokrat pa sva želela pripraviti razstavo in jo hkrati predstaviti kot darilo svoji razširjeni družini v Oaxaci, članom studia Talleres in Georgini. Hotela sva jim pripraviti vizualno pojedino.

GB: In svojim tamkajšnjim prijateljem povedati določene stvari, ki jih z besedami nisva mogla izraziti.

RB: V roku treh tednov sva torej sprostila velikanski val energije in se lotila tega, v čemer sva najboljša: animacij in medijskih instalacij. To je dejansko najino področje, za kar sva izurjena. Ustvarila sva šest novih animacij z uporabo tehnike, ki sva jo razvila s pomočjo preproste camere obscure in stop-motion animacije, na papirju, z občutkom tekture, z uporabo sončne svetlobe, skupaj



z vso njeno nekonsistentnostjo. Ko jih predstavi – gre za animacije zelo kratkega cikla – se ljudje takoj zaljubijo v njih.

GB: Šlo je tudi za to, da sva želela pokazati, kaj vidiva midva: namreč kot prišlek v vasi in tudi kot kulturni prišlek lahko vidiš lepoto v stvareh, kjer jih morda na prvi pogled ne bi. S tem delom sva torej želela prikazati nekaj od tega, kar vidiva.

V vasi so zelo ponosni na svojo cerkev ter fantastično restavratorsko delo, ki so ga na njej opravili. V zadnjem projektu pa sva želela pozornost preusmeriti še na ostale stvari. V tem primeru gre za serijo kipov angelov, svetnikov in menihov, ki po obnovi niso našli svojega mesta v cerkvi.

Govorite o objektih, ki so shranjeni v eni izmed stranskih stavb v bližini cerkve?

RB: Ja, v majhni trgovini, pravijo jim bodega. Za te objekte bodo v prihodnosti načeloma poskrbeli, če se bosta le našla čas in denar. V resničnem življenju pa se kaj lahko zgodi, da bodo ostali kar tam.

GB: Objekti so lepi tudi takšni, kot so: lahko bi jih razstavili brez predhodne obnove, toda pripadajo cerkvi in jih ni dovoljeno premakniti, zato ostajajo zaprti v tistem temnem prostoru, kjer jih zdaj napadajo termiti in lesni črvi. Pod enim izmed kosov smo našli majhen kupček v obliki mogote, za pokrajino Oaxacan zelo tipičnega hriba s strmim pobočjem. Iz jezika Zapotec v španščino prevedeno ime Zegache pomeni los siete mogotes, saj mesto obkroža sedem hribov ...

RB: Tako kot Rim ...

GB: Zdelo se nama je pomenljivo, da sva naletela na te mogote izginjajočih stvari. V tem sva videla priložnost, da kipe rešiva, tako da jih z vlečeva ven na neprizanesljivo sončno svetlobo, jih izpostavimo pred kamero, izpostavimo svetlobi in posnameva. Toda ne gre za dokumentarni projekt, to je umetniški projekt, zato sva kipe postavila v

vlogo nastopajočih: vdihnili sva jim življenje, kot Mojster Pepe Ostržku!

Kot je povedal že Robert, gre za zahtevno produkcijo. Vsako animacijo sestavlja 36 podob, zato sva jih razporedila v krogu 360° in jih premikala v zaporednih presledkih desetih stopinj med vsakim posameznim posnetkom. Vsaka podoba zahteva dve minuti osvetlitve, tri do štiri minute v temnici in štiri minute, da jo skenirava na računalnik. Gre za zelo dolgotrajen postopek animacije.

RB: Poudariti je treba, da sva, kar zadeva estetiko, v preteklih projektih v Zegacheju zmeraj skušala vključiti domačine v proces izdelovanja oltarjev in njihove vsebine in delovati skladno z estetiko prostora. A hkrati sva otroka moderne družbe in zato sva tokrat želela vključiti tudi svojo lastno estetiko oziroma izpostaviti to, kar se nama v Zegacheju zdi zanimivo z estetskega vidika.

Torej vsekakor nama je všeč barok – in Zegache je baročen. Vsak pueblo v pokrajini Oaxaca ima svojo posebnost: eni so specializirani za lončarstvo Barro Negro (črna glina), drugi so mojstri izdelovanja t. i. alebrijes, ljudskih rezbarij v obliki domišljjskih živali. Zegache pa ima svojo baročno cerkev z baročnimi artefakti. Absolutno nama je všeč, ampak oni bi radi barok na nov način, poln barv in detajlov, medtem ko sva jim midva želela predstaviti barok v razkroju, torej baročno razvalino. Saj veva, da so bili tradicionalni templji v izvirem stanju verjetno pisani kot Las Vegas, toda klasiko cenimo šele takrat, ko je razpadla, ko barve izginejo, ko je zlomljena. Enako sva naredila z barokom v Zegacheju, razkroj sva obravnavala kot sestavni del estetskega.

Kako so se odzvali na to?

RB: Oh, bili so navdušeni, zdelo se jim je kul!

GB: Njihova kultura je res odprta, ta južnomehiški sinkretizem, njihova sposobnost, da mirno sprejmejo najino početje in v njem uživajo.

Tudi kar se tiče materialov, sva tokrat pogosto uporabila kar zarjavelo železo iz streh in ograj njihovih domov, pogosto so te reči narejene iz starih pločevink ali drugih brezplačnih materialov.

RB: Njihove rokodelske delavnice sicer običajno nameenjajo takšnih materialov sicer izdelala sedem škotel iste asociira predvsem na sposobnost ustvariti nekaj iz nič, zato sva želela raje poskusiti na ta način.

GB: V delavnicah so tudi pravi mojstri reprodukcije, torej ustvarjanja natančnih kopij nečesa. Midva sva z dodajanjem takšnih materialov sicer izdelala sedem škotel iste velikosti, toda vsaka je unikat ravno zaradi obrabljenosti materiala, tega pa ni mogoče nadzirati.

RB: Ja, cenejši materiali, barvanje lesa z motornim oljem, uporaba tega, kar je pri roki – vseeno pa tudi dodajanje detajlov z zlatimi lističi. Takšna je bila podoba razpadajočega baroka, ki sva jo doživljala.

Vendar pa moram povedati, da če bi vse to počela že ob prvem sodelovanju z Zegachejem, bi se najbrž počutil nekako umazanega, saj gre za zelo estetizirano razstavo...

Vendar sedaj temu ni tako: nista preprosto prispela tja in tipičnih lokalnih izdelkov po hitrem postopku vključila v lastno estetiko, vse skupaj pa namenila nekemu zunanemu občinstvu. Oblikoval se je skupen delovni proces z ljudmi, s katerimi preko studia Talleres sodelujeta že leta; nekateri so vama sledili celo na Švedsko in skupaj ustvarjate še naprej. Ste skupina ljudi, ki se je zblížala preko izmenjave svoje ga rokodelskega znanja in ustvarjalnosti.

RB: Točno o tem govorim, ko rečem, da sva si prisluzila dovolj zaupanja, da sva lahko izvedla takšen estetski premik.

GB: Zato se tudi razstava imenuje Amor Es Un Lugar (Ljubezem je kraj). Je poklon ljudem, krajem, mestu, ki je za naju postalo tako pomembno, poleg tega gre za razstavo v Oaxaci, ne pa za produkcijo, ki bi jo nato želela predstaviti v neki galeriji na Švedskem, brez vsake povezave s temi kraji.

