



Giorgia Volpe

Ma langue est un sable mouvant

(My tongue is quicksand)

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Invited authors:

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Far from being silent, the exhibition space is filled here with the visual murmurs uttered by Giorgia Volpe's astute collaborations, objects, and gestures. We enter into *Ma langue est un sable mouvant* as we would into shifting quicksand, the body slowly sinking into the cacophony of these works, until it is entirely engulfed. Indeed, this exhibition brings together a body of work that is richly multidisciplinary, encompassing the full gamut of Volpe's multifaceted and eclectic practice. Braids, shoe trees, rag dolls, repetitive chalk drawings and undulating paper cut-outs demonstrate her gift for meticulous craftwork, as well as the time and dedication this work requires. Here, the exhibition space has become a site of hospitality, not only for art objects, but also for craftspeople themselves, as well as other creators, students and visitors, all of whom play an important role in *Ma langue est un sable mouvant*. This dynamism foregrounds another crucial aspect of Volpe's work: participatory action.

Such is the case for Aissatou, a professional hairdresser originally from Senegal who braided several heads of synthetic hair that the public is invited to handle. This work, *Les têtes d'Aissatou*, asserts the importance of hybridized hands-on knowledge in African cultures. Volpe's intervention thus becomes a sort of cultural mediation that makes the case for participatory action as a form of social and cultural advocacy. After having entered a space where shadows cast by a curtain made of recycled materials play on the walls, viewers are invited to rest in hammocks made from similar materials (*L'origine du monde*). These objects invite a multitude of uses and appropriations; in this sense, their performative aspect is tantamount. Indeed, Volpe proposes an aesthetics of contact, sensory exploration and interpersonal immersion whose roots lie in the Neo-Concretism of Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica, Brazilian artists who revolutionized the place of the spectator in contemporary art.

This exhibition questions the world such as it is, overwhelmed by accelerated time, which, according to Paul Virilio, ends up subjecting social and individual behaviours to the tyranny of accumulation. In this sense, the superimposed birdcages of *Cage-corps* are a metaphor for the social body, trapped and suspended in the speed of silence, while a heap of communion wafers evokes an offering in the form of ruins, between humans and the sacred (*Le Tas*). The rag dolls spilling out of old-fashioned suitcases in *Babel, bébelles*, for their part, conjure up the experience of the immigrant's journey, both in terms of geography and identity.

Each of Volpe's installations is associated with a set of materials whose symbolic possibilities stem from a holistic vision of art as a connection point with certain issues. In this vein, a large Québec flag that has been cut apart and randomly reassembled hangs in the entryway to the space (*Mal du pays*), while we find a maple leaf-shaped cookie among the collection of cookie tins installed on one wall (*La fuite du temps*). History here is a catalyst for the desacralization of the national and religious symbolism inscribed in the found objects that Volpe reappropriates and modifies to artistic ends.

Giorgia Volpe proposes a relationship to memory as a collective repository of quivers and tremors, a method of escape from the domination of accelerated time, notably illustrated in a series of pieces using magnetic tape. Whether in the form of balloons seemingly tossed from the stairway near the ceiling of the space (*Avalanche de la raison*), as a curtain (*Pensée magique*), or a fishnet (*Nature morte*), these electromagnetic strips from another era become a memory-atlas of images and actions that the artist shares in order to construct and deconstruct a historical archive of the intercultural relationships at work in our society. Memory here is the biological by-product of a collective body (*Le patron, à la mesure de ton corps*) where different physical forms, experiences and customs, despite being superimposed, are able to express their own singularities within this coexistence.

As a whole, *Ma langue est un sable mouvant* articulates itself through symbolic and metaphorical language in order to describe a sense-laden and emotional journey that ultimately leads to the intercultural landscape presented to us here by the artist. This landscape invites us to adopt an "ethics of looking", as Georges Didi-Huberman puts it, an ethics within which memory is a living archive mired in the quicksand of contact, interaction and human relationships.