

EXHIBITION REVIEW – PARIS: Two Perspectives on Antoine d’Agata’s – “ANTICORPS” at Le Bal (2013)



By Guillaume Blanc, ASX Paris, February 2013

Antoine d’Agata – *The drifting mankind*

With the exhibition *Anticorps*, Le Bal shows, from 24th January to 14th april 2013, the work of Antoine d’Agata under the form of a monumental installation. The ground floor is conceived as an airlock of acclimatization prior to encountering the stark violence of the basement. On this floor, the visitor is invited to help himself to the piles of images and texts printed on light paper, spread on the floor of the room. Moved initially by the satisfying feeling of being able to take away a kind of piece of d’Agata’s work, he doesn’t yet realize that he won’t come out of it unscathed, except for perhaps a slight warning by a video projected on the far end wall. This video doesn’t show, it tells. With words, it tells what the images waiting for us downstairs will have to tell. The voices emanating from it haunt the room, their words are poisonous, oppressive, muddled. This is indeed the first expression of the well-thought out chaos that shapes up in the basement, like a huge criminal organization.

The stairs lead us to an overwhelming space. The walls breathe no more, they are covered with images from the floor to the ceiling, as as many painful scars to bear. The exhibition space fades away and vanishes behind a broad stream of photographs that underlines the abundance of a body of work that is spanning only twenty years.

This ocean of images indirectly draw a language, semiotics : that of extreme violence that mankind inflicts on to itself. This language hinges on gestures and topographies that repeat tirelessly, as to hammer out the truth of human vileness. War, drugs, prostitution, social hiatus, urban desertion and neglect : these are the themes confronted together that punctuate d’Agata’s work and make up a whole that reveals an obsession of the trace, the mark, the scar.

On the sensitive surface : the trace of the movements and gestures of prostitutes by which over time, their body degrades and dies. The traces are on the architecture and the environment : the trace of a conflict or of a desertion leading to ruin, on the internet : the digital trace of individuals that the police classify in numeric files... mankind exceeded itself and won’t come out of it unharmed.

The intelligence of this scenography lies in the fact that the individual violence of every presented image is softened by their set up and their continuous juxtaposition : once the shocking nature of these pictures has set in and receded, we better read them, understand and perceive the deeper concerns and the questionings which they involve.

Eventually, what is left ? What does the viewer win after leaving this place ? The quantity of images the viewer has been confronted with teaches him something : there isn’t any spectacle in what we see on the walls of Le Bal. What we see is the rule, the norm and facts shared by the whole planet that tell of a universal scourge. And what we understand, glancing at this large sewn panorama, are the underlying concerns of d’Agata’s work that show an obsessional quest : depicting the human rottenness, making art and and living from it.

