

Fear and Laundry

Uri Radovan

9 Feb – 10 Mar 2012

Uri Radovan's exhibition makes use of several types of media—including video, collage, painting and sculpture—whose products take form in space as an overall installation divided into several theatrical and emotionally charged staging areas. Radovan's installation is contemporary Punk Theater, both ironical and not ironical at the same time. The installation creates an environment, or in effect environments, that transform the gallery, with its underlying aspects of public display, into a private space, into a symptom of a mental state, but also into a sort of ironic reflection on such and other mental states. Radovan activates the space by means of the energy of emotional turmoil, but also by means of observation from the outside of the way in which certain codes of action—obsessiveness, impulsiveness, etc.—are grasped as an indication of emotional turmoil.

Punk, according to Diedrich Diederichsen (in a lecture delivered for the opening of a retrospective exhibition of Martin Kippenberger), was in essence an obstinate insistence on explicit meaning in art, hence the contention that the visual has a certain explicit and not implicit content. Punk was instantiated in opposition to stadium rock, jazz-fusion or neoexpressionist painting, which were characterized by spirituality and virtuosity, and unlike them it would not allow meaning to be evaded and demanded a direct link. In that sense, Radovan does not aestheticize mental states, but adheres to his action's ability to bear a code of protest and discontent.

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There are artists from whose work what emerges is the spectacular exteriorization of their action, artists who give their viewers the impression that what they have done was meant from the outset to be exteriorized, to be exhibited. Contrarily, there are artists who give their viewers the impression that what they have done they did for themselves, artists that work in negotiation with themselves, as if absent any purpose of externalizing anything.

Radovan falls somewhere in the middle, between the extrovert and introvert, between the calculated and the impulsive. It seems as if he is conscious of the meaning and message that his works convey, and is well in control of them; however, so in control of them does he appear that the impression arises that he has no choice as it were but to do what he does.

Besides Kippenberger, another artist deserving of mention in connection to Radovan is Thomas Hirschhorn. Hirschhorn—who, like Radovan, turned the appearance of demonstration and protest into the language of contemporary art—often speaks about art, particularly his own art, as being driven by the need to stake a position in regard to the systems and conventions that dictate our lives, and to give that stance artistic form. Hirschhorn works according to a motto that may perhaps suit Radovan: Energy – Yes! Radovan's complex arrays sketch a picture, or in effect pictures, in which the human individual is posited antagonistically against the world, struggles against it, and out of this struggle the human is rediscovered as a force that refuses to submit.

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