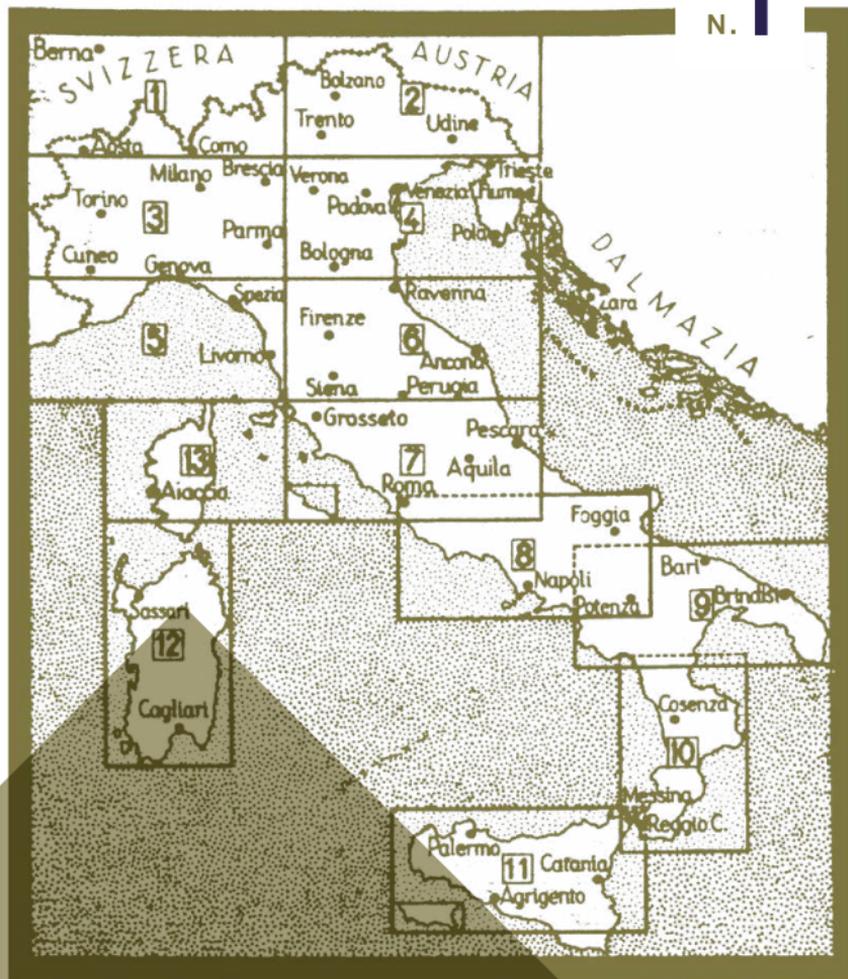


MAGIC CARPETS ITALIA

THE OTHERS

— HRVOSLAVA BRKUŠIĆ
— MELANIE GARLAND

N. 1



MAGIC CARPETS THE OTHERS

Italy, with its history and artistic heritage, seems to be a critical peninsula, still remaining linked to the ghostly presence of its past, at the risk of falling into a mythologisation without a future. The Magic Carpets platform, with the curatorial approach it was given, aims to be an essential tool for interweaving relationships with others and with the local context. Magic Carpets Italy is a special context for artists who, through travel, expand their perspective on the anthropological panorama, opening up to the political and social influences that mark the contemporary scenario. From a global historical perspective, our peninsula still appears as a place that firmly preserves its cultural origins, though affected by numerous internal contrasts. Experience in our country, while important, no longer resides in the long and laborious path of education, which influenced many writers and artists in the seventeenth century, but in experiencing the contentious reality alongside the enduring memories of the past. It's not easy to deal with the recent history of our country, but this project must also address the reality that surrounds us at a difficult time. With this theme, we wanted to look at the phenomenon in its complexity and in its contradictions, through a profound reflection on what is happening. This happens es-

pecially through the artists, who manage to analyse both the surface and the nucleus, both the roots and their branches. This close attention characterised the residences of both artists, who focused on the phenomenon of migration and on the individuals crossing through our country in search of refuge.

The dialogue with the young artists Brukšić and Garland was opened up on one of the more controversial topics in our country Europe's current history: migration. The flight of thousands of human beings from poverty, from fear, from war: people who have abandoned their homes, cut off their loved ones and their roots to pursue the dream of freedom. The first country they encounter is Italy, which, because of its shape and geographical location, becomes a possible harbour for those fleeing the terror that is tearing apart their countries of origin. Italy is also a country that, for various reasons, seems to have lost its memory: because, perhaps, it has yet to deal with colonialism, fascism and terrorism. The Other should become an Us, but instead remains inexorably The Foreigner. The artists' works are constructed around the symbolism of the non-place, of the home that doesn't belong to us. The non-place, that sense of not belonging, is part of the private and collective affairs of each of us, and especially of those who migrate, who move from their place of origin, searching for fortune and a new life elsewhere.



The Croatian artist Brukšić analysed our country's colonialist past, a history that is hidden and mystified in various ways, wondering what Italians' relationship with their past is and linking it with the many faces of the migrants now in our land. With the backdrop of a colonialist Rome, Hrvošlava places herself in a position of listening and records the voices of those from countries that were once popular targets for imperial Europe. The word-concepts of multiculturalism and especially of "other", now worn out by the lacking, but increasingly urgent, issue of the decolonisation of our still-colonial minds, become essential for the active listening highlighted by the artist. Melanie Garland, an artist of Chilean origin, shows



the constant condition of limbo experienced by migrants: then and now. The blank page becomes the main place to write down one's life, to rewrite one's identity, worn down by the waters crossed. The artist's idea is to give voice to those that we imagine to be distant, to see and recognise that, in the twenty-first century, we have the opportunity to picture Europe through the words of those describing our country from the point of view of the Other. "Taken from a letter from an immigrant to his mother. You can't imagine what goes on in this planet called Porta Palazzo. You have no idea! You're far away and Casablanca is a city, but our planet is a piazza. It's our republic, where we make it rain and make the sun shine [...]" (Mohammed Lamsuni, Porta Palazzo mon amour, 2006).

Magic Carpets aims to be a platform of awareness that, in addition to focusing on an identity that we might define as multi-ethnic, is being built every day, piece by piece, aiming to cultivate a sense of belonging. Here, people outside their country of origin can create a network, starting from the classification processes that come from the logic of the great classics of our childhood and returning to the idea of the flying carpet that continues to live in our imaginations. The processes discussed by Nicolas Bourriaud in his essay Post production designate "a zone of activity", where alternative protocols for representations and existing narrative structures



are processed: “to learn how to use forms is above all to know how to make them one’s own, to inhabit them”, we pass from a culture of consumption to a culture of activity, from a passive attitude to a form of resistance based on the reactivation of neglected or marginalised potential. This project, and especially the theme chosen for Italy this year, draws attention to those who represent our critical conscience; opening up to the voice of the Other, as a method and not just an initial source, to re-establish, instead of sterile Eurocentrism, an idea of global decolonisation. Our old continent seems to want to show itself to the world with a will for power that produces ghosts living in a no man’s land, becoming bearers of the bad conscience of an entire nation, scapegoats of an entire people.

Sympathy (from Greek: [syn] with, together [pathos] passion, feeling) is the nexus and the meaning of those that live by listening to the other, who manage to become spokespeople for a relationship extended to us. So artists, much like writers, have the difficult task of reactivating, with a different perspective, our conscience, now dormant for centuries.

Benedetta Carpi De Resmini





A DIALOGUE BETWEEN ARTISTS: A JOURNEY INTO THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA

The young artists invited for this first year of Magic Carpets, Hrvoslava Brkušić and Melanie Garland, from Croatia and Germany, respectively, took the theme suggested to them to the fullest: all people that travel, by choice or by force, with a special focus on those who, compelled, have had to face difficult places and routes, crossing land and sea to arrive on our peninsula. These are the people that we, not exactly with a positive reception, often define as “different”, who



bring our cities, our streets and our squares to life. During their stay in Rome, both artists focused on two fundamental concepts: Rome and Italy, Italians and foreigners, starting from what they felt were the historical traces to consider in order to explain today's massive migratory phenomenon.

Hrvoslava expresses herself through video and sound installations, live performances and films. In the days she spent in Rome, wandering through the city and exploring its hidden places, she searched for sounds and voices that could bear witness to its vivacity, finding images of present and past Rome, letting herself be carried away by the noise of the city and following the course of the Tiber River, with its constant fluctuations. For the artist, it turned out to be crucial to focus on people's faces, to go in depth into a study of Roman society, of its now varied and multi-faceted population, to discover the cultures that make it a variegated melting pot. In line with this research, during her residence, the artist organised a workshop with foreign students at the school of FOCUS - Casa dei Diritti Sociali (House of Social Rights), a volunteer association that offers free Italian language courses and theatre and photography workshops. Hrvoslava listened to the stories of the theatre group, made up of young people from various countries – Brazil, Peru, Guinea, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Morocco, Georgia – each with a different and complex story behind them. The artist encouraged



the young people to reproduce sounds hidden inside them, at the same time inviting them to talk about the sounds that reminded them of their home, overcoming geographical barriers and listening, from afar, to their lands and their memories, activating memories stimulated by questions like: what sound reminds you of home? What sound do you identify with the soundtrack of your city? What sound would you like whispered in your ear?

In large cities like Rome, where life's fast pace does not allow us to stop and listen, the artist invites us to reflect on ourselves, to listen slowly and deeply, to give importance to every single identifying vibration of our state of being, to break down linguistic barriers and to overcome shame. The material recorded during this workshop, together with the video clips and sounds collected by Hrvošlava around the city, were developed for the presentation of the final project of her residence, entitled *Mediterranean Sea*, a clear reference to the Mediterranean and to its fluctuations, places of crossroads and passage, where life and death meet and collide, in a constant struggle.

The Mediterranean and migratory journeys are crucial elements for Hrvošlava's research, which put her in close dialogue with Melanie. Originally from Chile, Melanie has lived in Berlin for several years. A visual artist with a particular attention to the creation of complex conceptual



maps that feed on a combination of anthropology, art, architecture and urban planning, she has lingered on the meaning of the migratory process and on the arrival of peoples in new and unknown lands. The artist comes from a family that left the Old Continent for South America, which is why she is constantly searching for her own identity, constantly wondering about what it means to move, to go distances, to sever one's roots and bring them elsewhere. She reflects on the spaces and

places of arrival for migrating people and uses the neologism coined by the anthropologist Marc Augé of “non places”, territories that have the prerogative of not being identitary, relational and historical. Melanie defined refugee camps as such, where time and space wear thin, mix, until they become one body of hoping and waiting. Working on the identification of spaces where migrants stay, the artist went to the Baobab Experience, a refugee camp in Rome, sadly known for the large amounts of people in transit it has had since 2015. Strengthened by her experience in other refugee camps, like in Calais, the artist decided to perform an action inside it, asking people to write an anonymous letter, in Italian or in their native language, about their experience as migrants and to address it to whoever they wanted. On the journey they undertook from their countries of origin, these people had to adapt to constantly changing situations, implementing strategies of survival and adaptation. The letter, in this dynamic, is the oldest means to communicate a state of being, to leave a trace of oneself on paper that can cross borders. In line with this action and stimulated by a migrant past, for Melanie, writing and paper are essential, where words mix with drawings. During her residence in Rome, she composed a diary – which inevitably recalls the diaries of migrants – entitled “Liminal Space in Rome”, where annotations and thoughts are scattered with sketches that give us an alternative reading of Rome, a liminal place, where people and populations meet and experiences and words overlap. The

artist's book, together with a series of works, made with different materials like paper and resin, make up the final project of the residence, entitled *Liminality*, which invites us to reflect on the relationship that is created in the memory of migrants from memories of home to moments in a new land: feelings mix and are confused, crossing geographical borders and creating liminal spaces.

The works of these artists, so different from an expressive point of view, hit deep inside all of us, working with memory and identity. They tell us about travels, arrivals and departures, invite us to stop and reflect, to relearn how to listen to ourselves and others. They urge us to look ahead, beyond borders, to destroy the mental barriers that have been created like boulders, urging us to consider the private affairs of the exiles, those that find themselves in a foreign country, helpless, waiting for a verdict.

Giulia Pardini



HRVOSLAVA BRKUŠIĆ





MELANIE GARLAND





A DIALOGUE WITH GIAN MARIA TOSATTI

Giulia Pardini: Gian Maria, you were invited to participate in a residence organised as part of the Magic Carpets platform by the Latvian partner, New Theatre Institute of Latvia. What was your first impression of Riga, and of Latvia in general? Tell us, what was your experience of this journey like?

Gian Maria Tosatti: In Riga, you can sense the rarefication of Europe. While its southern border is shaken by conflict, genocide and shipwrecks and Europe dies violently, the northern border between the Baltic and Russia is a place with the opposite climate – of distances, silence, inaction. But the substance is the same. A sense of disappearance leaves an acrid taste of the massacres in the south and assumes the pungent taste of rarefication here in the north. And here, as it does to some degree all over Europe, democracy seems to be perceived as something useless, unnecessary. 30% of those eligible to vote actually do. Half of them would like to put their liberty back into the hands of the same Russia that held it frozen for seventy years. In Riga, I found the same basic problems I felt in Italy, in France, in Belgium. It made it clear to me that we are facing a critical stage, as Europeans.

GP: The theme chosen for this residence was the value of urban spaces and how to make them communal again. What do you think about this? Was the community in Riga open to working with you?

GMT: I concentrated on disappearance. I went to the large courtyards of Soviet blocks, originally designed to hold community activities, outdoor games, sport. I found them deserted, empty. Gardens completely abandoned. And yet, behind window panes, the presence of citizens was attested by flowers being grown inside. Ghostly presences of a phantom society. I wanted to address this. I built a mirror. I didn't want to hold an exercise class for the elderly. Instead, I wanted to show them their state



of crisis. Artists aren't social workers; they are honest interlocutors. They reflect the truth they observe. It's the citizens that then have to respond to this reflection. They don't have to work with me. They have to work with each other. Artists aren't so different to the Christmas spirits in Dickens' famous story.

GP: What do you think are the similarities and differences between Riga and other European capitals? Do you think that, in Italy, we are neglecting the importance of public spaces, places for gathering and discussion, too?

GMT: Italy is a complicated country because it's the combination of many states and cultures joined together by the language of poets, which has been common to them only in the last sixty years. In the south, community spaces still hold great importance. They are used and defended. They are still part of a strong community and identity culture. This doesn't mean, however, that institutions no longer need to defend what is still shared with legislation, in order to avoid a shift toward individualism. The contest of democracy is played on this field. Wherever community exists, there are organisational and defence tools against the totalitarian claims of the élite. Wherever we are alone, beaten down by cultural individualism purposely created to "dividere et imperare", we have no power to influence society and we become silent slaves to mechanisms that are larger than us. In Europe, all of

this is very clear, in Riga and in Rome.

GP: Your work is often a revival of abandoned, unconventional spaces, to work toward regeneration with contemporary art: can you tell us about the work you're preparing for the HOMO NOVUS festival in Riga?

GMT: This time, I'm using an old Soviet building. I am creating a work that reflects that sense of disappearance I was talking about. Dozens of uninhabited flats, empty beds. Deserted children's beds and cradles. Where is everyone? Where are we all? Here. I wanted to throw this question in the face of my Europe, along with a harsh outlook which certainly doesn't come from my imagination, but which I found in the streets, in the courtyards. I found it among the folds of a dream, the dream of socialism, which soon became a nightmare. Liberation from it did not come with new humanism, but with a sort of transition towards a spectral condition. From denied democracy to vanished democracy.

A DIALOGUE WITH GROSSI MAGLIONI

Giulia Pardini: Francesca and Vera, you were invited to a residence in the city of Novi Sad by the Serbian partner Novo Kulturno Naseleje, as part of the Magic Carpets platform. What was your first impression of Serbia? Tell us what your experience of this journey was like.

Grossi Maglioni: In Serbia, we found very rich imagery, different from ours, with epic stories and mythologies often having to do with war and sacrifice, and an art historical scene related to interesting performances which we knew very little about. We were immediately enthralled by Novi Sad's urban landscape, which shows traces of the conflict and a community that has developed around unique rules of coexistence. The appropriation of public space seems to be happening slowly and the green hills that hide the many atomic shelters are silently part of the territory and of the common areas between residential buildings. For us, this was a chance to explore the need to look for a dialogue existing between citizens and the landscape and to elaborate on some traumatic aspects of recent history.

GP: Can you tell us about the project you worked on during the resi-

dence, called Occupazioni: Il Dialogo Perenne (The Perpetual Dialogue)?

GM: *Occupazioni* is a project we started in 2015. It revolves around an installation made of ropes and curtains, which has been modified many times. With the help of the public, through workshops and roundtable discussions, we explore the body's ability to occupy space and live in a community. Starting from the scenarios that arose in the installation, we wrote a story of a child that grows until the moment he/she meets other people to build a new village with. The final chapter of *Occupazioni*, in Serbia, took place under a tent that we called *Tenda del Dialogo Perenne* (Tent of The Perpetual Dialogue), installed in a public space in the neighbourhood of Novo Naseleje in Novi Sad. We worked on rewriting the story with people from the area, in a sort of staging of the



narration in its making. With a series of meeting-assemblies, we discussed themes like: the figure of the mother/beast, the creation of the landscape through a “magic body”, memory/the atomic shelter.

GP: Building a village, with carpets and curtains, inviting the public to take part, involves a willingness to discuss and an invitation to dialogue: how do you deal with these two elements in your artistic practice and in this work in particular? How was the work with the Novi Sad community carried out?

GM: We work in a duo, and this has naturally affected all of our works. Dialogue is necessarily at the base of the work, and this aspect has been coming out more and more over the years. From the beginning, with the performances, we sought out forms of interaction with the public, to overcome the frontal nature of the theatre and any ambiguity and reference to it. We wanted to get feedback, responses from the public that would determine the work’s progress. With the passing of time, this quest for dialogue has been increasingly aimed at the definition of meanings and the construction of imageries, like we tried to do in Novi Sad. Our attention is on dialogue, in its making, on imageries and meanings that are not crystallised, that change and become history. So *Occupazioni*: il Dialogo Perenne is linked to the idea that community, as such, exists as a process.

GP: You are artists and mothers. In this large project, one can also

sense a strong interest towards women, as the cornerstone of society: can you tell us about the mother figure within this project?

GM: In 2015, we worked on the first tent for *Occupazioni* at a residence where we brought Francesca’s first child with us, at just 3 months old. On that occasion, we felt the need to build a caring tent that could welcome and celebrate this birth. It was the first time we shared this aspect of our lives at work.

We are exploring the prospect of being artists and mothers in an art system and society that exclude, confine and marginalise them at work, as if this experience took something away instead of adding something. We have to struggle with ourselves, as well, to not cede to this thought. At the same time, we are forced into an imagery that refutes the most fearsome and bestial aspects of women and mothers. Aspects we wanted to explore as social functions of mediation with the other, in this case expressed in the relationship with one’s own child.

MAGIC CARPETS ITALIA

THE OTHERS

Supported and promoted by



Co-funded by the
Creative Europe Programme
of the European Union

Benedetta Carpi De Resmini

Artistic Director

Giulia Pardini

Emerging curator

Micòl D'Andrea

Marketing & Communication manager

Sabrina Vedovotto

Producer & Social media manager

Luis Do Rosario

Photographer and documentation

Isabella Manciolli

Graphic Designer

Flaminia Casucci – Allegra Seganti

Press Office

Technical support

Mabj

Residencies Partner



Partner for the workshops



Special thanks for the beverage

Enoteca Picchi s.r.l.

Photos pp: 3,4,6,10,12,14,17,18,19,21,22,23

© Luis Do Rosario,

Courtesy Latitudo for Magic Carpets

Photos pp: 7,8,9,20

© Andrea Piras,

Courtesy FOCUS - Casa dei Diritti Sociali

e Latitudo for Magic Carpets

Photo p. 25

© Gian Maria Tosatti, Courtesy New

Theatre Institute of Latvia for Magic Carpets

Photo p. 29

© Vojin Ivkov, Courtesy Novo Kulturno

Naseleje for Magic Carpets

Partner year #1

Albumarte

**AlbumArte | Spazio indipendente
e no profit per l'arte contemporanea**

Cristina Dinello Cobianchi

Presidente and Project Manager

Valentina Fiore

Project Coordinator

Carla Pasqualucci

Rosa Valentina Raffaele

Projects' Assistants

Special thanks to:

Benedetta Acciari, Antonio Arévalo,

Beatrice Bertini, Silvia Cabasino,

Cecilia Canziani, Michele Colucci,

Viola De Andrade Piroli,

Elena De Filippo e Officine Gomitoli,

Gianni Garrera, Giuseppe Garrera,

Francesca Grossi, Sarah Zuhra

Lukanic, Vera Maglioni,

Andrea Piras, Armando Porcari,

Marco Raparelli, Alessandra Tescione,

Gian Maria Tosatti, Saverio Verini,

Giovanni L. Zipoli.

