

DIALECTICAL PRAXIS: THE WORK OF FRANCISCO TOMSICH

Dialectics, dislocation, translation, metaphrase and transposition are key words in Francisco Tomsich's artistic practice. Different languages and media (painting, video, installation, drawing, sculpture, photography, literary writing, music composition) are approached in their very specificity and put together in order to represent complex creative processes in certain coordinates of time and place. An expanded notion of diaries is the main paradigm of organization in this model of actuation, and books and large-scale exhibitions the preferred formats. This way (one amongst many) of approaching Tomsich's work does not mean giving prominence to autobiographical aspects. On the contrary, series of art works, publications, editions, long-term projects or site-specific devices are intended to engage with material conditions of production, political and spiritual responsibility and urgency for producing dialogues and conflicts between images of the past, notions of present and active models of future. What I mean by the word "specificity" is related to a very coherent repertory of themes, materials and procedures, not obscured by the multiplicity of activities carried out by Tomsich in different contexts. Heads on plinths can be found in drawings made in 2000 as well as in installations made in 2017. The myth of Icarus is visited in texts written in 2006 and sculptures made and re-made from 2007 onwards. A short list of aprioris that his works meditates upon should include: the revolutionary imperatives of art practices, the building of tradition and the notion of repetition, the burdens and misunderstandings of recent history, translation, anarchitecture, political iconography, allegory, monument, portraiture as knowledge and communication, drawing as resistance and attention, notions of usefulness, critique of institutional and common-place reductionisms of art practices, myth as return of the same, friendship.

Materials, forms and functions in Tomsich's work are thoughtfully related to specific traditions he wants to examine, and this applies to the use of sonnets for exercises on collaborative poetry-writing as well as to his re-elaboration of fresco techniques in painting in order to achieve that loose, diffuse and ancient-looking character that evidently alludes to specific sociopolitical context (as previously studied in his series of "disappearing" chalk paintings) as well as to actual matters related to our perception and use of painted images. His quest for new forms to address actual societal and artistic "symptoms" permeates all his work, from his series of carved potatoes in dialogue with significant artists and traditions to his recent video works, exercises on multi-layered translation; from his incursions in choreography and performative events to his long-term research on the relations between word and sound developed together with the composer Vladimir Guicheff. These practices are always based on investigation, dialogue and search of certain consensus about procedures and meanings. This is why activism, teaching and collaboration with other cultural workers and artists from different fields is a constant in his praxis. This latter aspect had lead him to found and integrate numerous art groups and what he calls "non-disciplinary artists' associations" in South America (where he was born) and Europe (where he lives since 2013). In his case, nomadism is also related to clear personal decisions and the quest for traces of 20th century's history which are in danger of disappearing and being forgotten.

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