

At the Galerie Soledad Lorenzo, Madrid (2007)

Fuck me gently. goddamned spectator

After the apotheosis that the presentation of *40 Espontáneos* resulted in last autumn in Madrid (irritated audience clamouring for a refund, unofficial espontáneos jumping on stage, people in the auditorium crying out during the performance, etc.), La Ribot has returned with her most recent piece to the city from which she had exiled herself. The première of *Laughing Hole* took place in Art Basel 37 in 2006 and is her longest piece to date (6 hours for the Madrid version). Despite the length, the action is very simple. The gallery floor is covered with pieces of brown rectangular cardboard strewn around haphazardly, resulting in an irregular, soft and warm surface. As for the audience, one can occupy any space and decide when and how one wants to see the piece.

The sound creator is seated in full view on one side of the space operating his equipment. La Ribot enters the space in the grips of hysterical laughter, picks up a cardboard piece from the floor, shows the text written on the flipside and sticks it to the wall with wrapping tape. The other performers then enter and do the same. The laughter is recorded, manipulated and constantly reproduced, creating a soundtrack in parallel to the actual laughter of the performers. There are sentences written on all of the cardboard pieces: some look like marketing slogans, others like headlines of Anglo Saxon dailies, words with a clearly political message or even insults and swear words. Little by little, the bodies softened by the constant laughter, reveal the messages of the cardboard pieces as if they were turning over tarot cards. The walls of the gallery become covered and lose their hygienic whiteness, hereby becoming walls in the true sense of the word that surround and entrap. Six hours of performance go by this way. The audience enter and go out, leave and return.

It all starts to look familiar: the laughter (that appeared in 1993 in *Los Trancos del Avestruz* and got reused in the *40 Espontáneos*), the brown cardboard (the same as the one that hid her body from view in the distinguished piece *Fatelo con me*, and that covered the floor in *Still Distinguished* (2000), *Despliegue* (2001), and *Panoramix* (2003)), the short and hardhitting sentences written with a marker pen (*n°14* (1997), *Cándida Iluminaris* (2000), *Poema Infinito* (1997)), and the falling (it would take too much time to make a list of all the times that La Ribot drops to the floor). We can feel ourselves right at home once again: without a doubt this is a La Ribot party. However something seems to have changed this time around. For the first time we find ourselves confronted with a proposition that is overtly and obviously political. It is true that a lot of the Distinguished Pieces had a political aspect to them (*n°14*, *De la vida violenta*, *Another Bloody Mary*, *Eufemia*, *Divana*, etc.).

We can even think that there is something political in La Ribot's work regarding space, the structures of representation and the relationship with the audience. Nevertheless, never before had such a theme appeared so upfront and named as such. *Laughing Hole* speaks of the illegal prison of Guantánamo and the whole ideological operation that surrounds the subject. The cardboard pieces that are revealed do not leave any doubt: "your death", "die here", "my Guantánamo", "brutal hole", "my hole", "brutal shit", "fucking audience", "fuck me gently", "over 40ies audience", "immigrant on sale", "speculated death", etc. The sentences that gradually invade the walls create an obvious framework of references. However, maybe the biggest political effort is not in the texts, but in the laughter; this obsessive and hysterical laughter that floods the entire space and that inevitably brings to mind Hannah Arendt's laughter when confronted with the banality of the evilness of Adolph Eichmann, responsible for a number of Nazi massacres. If one takes time to think about it, it would be possible to have the same reaction when faced with the profound stupidity of Bush, Blair, Aznar, Putin, Pinochet, Videla and so many others. Quite frankly, in the world we live in, we find ourselves confronted with people who by their profound incapacity to think and understand what is

going on in the world, are at the root of immense crimes. The uncontrolled laughter here once again becomes a pertinent reaction to the banality of those who destroy life in this world.

And maybe the inextinguishable laughter has more political implications than sarcasm and bitterness. Maybe La Ribot's laughter has got something to do with the laughter of Democritus of Abdera (460-370 BC). There is something hedonistic in that quest for losing control, for a state to which we abandon ourselves, towards which a fit of laughter leads us. Gradually as the hours pass, the temperature starts to rise, the bodies of those present are often also affected by laughter, a mix of smells starts to fill the air, the attention gets dispersed through the dense and divided atmosphere, the sound of conversation mixes with the laughter, the sweat of all the bodies present humidifies the air, limits become vague... and the laughter continues to ring out. Hedonistic laughter that, as Francisco de Quevedo (1580-1645) had the wisdom to point out in his time, and that Michel Onfray (1959-) proposes today, transforms itself into a liberating enterprise. Laughter to face the stupid mediocrity spread all around the globe. When facing banal criminals, laugh and celebrate by taking leave of the body, take leave of a body softened by laughter, porous, capable of blending with other bodies. Laugh to the point of exhaustion. Laugh until Guantánamo stops being a possibility. Which is perhaps the biggest political proposition of *Laughing Hole*.

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