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OPENING HOURS
TUESDAY - SATURDAY
11:00 > 19:00

Liv Schulman: A somatic play November 28, 2019 - January 10, 2020

Opening Thursday the 28th of November from 6pm.

Humanity knows that it does not know what it knows

Sometimes we meet people with which conscious communication is not immediately possible. However a dialogue can lead to another level, the subconscious. It always seemed extremely surprising in Liv and I's relationship that things aren't made concrete in the moment of conscious words, but when both our sub-consciousness, maybe delayed by a few seconds, are aligned. It seems that this awareness of the subconscious is omnipresent in the entirety of Liv's artistic production.

The characters in Liv Schulman's films are always symbolic figures. They are the embodiment of an order, like in her series *Control: A TV Show*. The superintendent, who I always imagined to be something between a detective and a curator, is a character who embodies power, that which establishes or re-establishes the reality of facts. The symbolic figure's role is to talk about a pre-existing system in order to better subvert it, and it's the character itself that becomes corrupt and strays from their main role. In her new video installation exhibited at Art : Concept, *A somatic play*, a new symbolic figure appears: the customs officer. Filmed in Mexico City, the characters are portrayed in their professional everyday life. They have one mission; their role is to regulate the flow of emotional states. Before starting work, they prepare themselves at the operation office, a hair salon, where they have their hair washed. They discuss new regulations put in place, the emotions that have illegally crossed the border, the new forms of anxiety and tranquilisers which come and go, emerging in the more well-off areas and disappearing under piles of washed-out jeans. They speak of the inspection of psychosomatics, which will be regulated in the same way as a currency. Positive and negative emotions thus become goods as well as cultural products and are re-injected into the economic system.

And yet the customs officers are affected themselves by their own anxieties which are made material through their fixed grins or their internal dialogue and put the possibility of a totalitarian rule on hold. It's in these moments that humour occurs; when there is a division between their assigned role and their internal world, through all the physical and vocal interruptions like the laughter of the first customs officer in the hair salon or the tongue of another customs officer cleaning her teeth relentlessly during her lunch break. There are very few props in this new film, they are relocated to the exhibition space in the gallery: a series of three flocked benches on which the artist places three coloured foam bodies. The viewers are invited to snuggle up in these soft bodies. Through the comical nature of these seats there is a form of impudence in opposition to the pre-established order, and also in opposition to the way we are expected to hold ourselves, literally as well as figuratively. On the costumes in the film we see an embroidered badge depicting two hands joining together to protect an orchid. Two of the customs officers bring this up during their lunch break. One of them raises the problem that is raised by dust that survives. The customs officer admits that this dust, instead of being declared, is carefully hidden in the orchid. What's more, she does not comment on the risk-taking that accompanies such a gesture. Thus it seems that this dust embodies several things: it is poetry, it is revolution, it is the grain of sand which stops the machine from functioning, it is the scent of smoke before the fire.

I believe that it is in deep inside the orchid, between our joint hands, covered in particles of dust, that our subconscious meet, and hence indulge in the most intense conversations, preparing forms of resistance to come, by the exchange of a glance.

By Marion Vasseur Raluy. Translated by Alice King.

