



*Coppie*

**A dialogue with Pedro Barateiro curated by M. Scuderi**

**Massimiliano Scuderi:**

Why Couples? The term 'couple' expresses a bond but also a duplicity, uniqueness and repeatability, union and separateness. As Adorno wrote about marriage, this image evokes the trick of self-preservation as a reference to the responsibility of one towards the other. Can you explain to me the meaning? Is there a relationship with the place hosting the exhibition?

**Pedro Barateiro:**

I've always been interested in the idea of transformation as a form of developing oneself in the relationship with others. A couple doesn't necessarily need to be seen in the strict religious sense of marriage, although historically it has been used as a strategy to maintain a certain order based on hetero and patriarchal ideology. Marriage is an institution based on commitment, a kind of contract between two people. It has been used to maintain stereotypes that are being questioned more and more. My interest in this concept of couple or couples is extended the sense of how a community is built. The bond between two people, being it a romantic couple or not is the basis for our interaction with each other. Friendship and kinship are concepts that are deeply related to my idea of what couples could mean. As I am interested in deconstructing binary narratives, I'm trying to find what is it in the social bonds created between two people that make it a micro society, and how it evolves to a larger community. It's also important to think about how intimacy and care has been changing in the last years with the introduction of social media.

I decided to bring this idea to A Sud because this is a space that comes with a strong sense of family. The apartment could be a rebuilt of a family home but also an office. The extreme exposure to sun and light, but also the surrounding city, through the use of windows all around the space, also became an important set-up for this idea of how to speak about couples. The title of the exhibition—Coppie—is taken from the work where I use two chairs suspended in metal tubes, in a way giving them a possibility to be outside of the eyes of the spectators, while at the same time transforming them into almost monuments. Again, the relation between two people is the key element for all social relations.

**Massimiliano Scuderi:**

Some of the works on display speak of the ambiguity of reality. Does this aspect recur often in your works?

**Pedro Barateiro:**

I have always been interested in this ambiguity of reality that you mention. I have always seen myself as an ambiguous agent, first because of the way I perceived myself but also the way others read me. Questions surrounding my sexuality have always appeared among family and friends and I have never really wanted to express clearly if I was hetero, gay, bi or something else because I think the discussion is taken under an ideology of gender that I don't want to participate. The discussion of gender is extremely manipulated by an heterosexual reading of history where religion, politics and biology are subsumed by a greater narrative of progress. Ambiguity has permeated my life and work in different forms because it is a way of not accepting pre-established codes. The practice of drawing allowed me, since a very young age, to construct my own world and subjectivity. The practice of writing, later on, made me more conscious about the context and the type of activity an artist can develop in a neoliberal capitalist society.

My work reflects on questions relating to the construction of fictional narratives and totalitarian discourses in the West, particularly the tools used in late capitalist societies to colonize thought and imagination. I am particularly interested in audiences, both in a physical and conceptual way. Language and orality, but also the choreography and theatricality of actions produced by human agents, have dominated western culture within the narrative of positive progress of science and technology. The scientific developments produced in laboratories define much of the ways in which culture is manifested in the western world. In Europe, culture is historically associated with agriculture and religion, by reproducing events using tools that tend to enhance its theatricality.

My work tries to understand the way fictional narratives influence and manipulate, the development of the events taking place around us. The changes of perception of a world under ideological and ecological crisis, that is the result of an incapacity to react and understand the place we're living in.

**Massimiliano Scuderi:**

What is your research based on in general, what are you interested in?

**Pedro Barateiro:**

That is a big question. Well, it's hard to define main concerns in the work. There are things that I tend to repeat or insist on. But I don't do them consciously, they appear in different ways throughout my practice. The works may reflect on my interpretation of things, they project a certain way of thinking. In that sense, it can be quite clear sometimes what the subjects are, but they appear and disappear constantly. While making the work, I don't think too much if this or that gesture will become a comment on something. Art is about everything and nothing. But there is a necessity to understand things in a particular way, and art, for me, it teaches that everyone should be free to interpret things in a particular way. Ultimately, is about a type of empowerment that comes through a respect and understanding of the world.

That being said, you can find some things, images, ideas, abstractions, sounds, texts, that are recurrent, or that reflect a certain language. As you know, I'm not at all interested in consistency or stability in my practice. I'm interested in transformation, how objects change; how people change. I like to keep the poetics of making art open, and that means a level of freedom in the work. I could say that by now I'm quite aware of the contexts in which art operates and this idea of freedom seems more and more entangled with capitalism, and so more constrained and limited.

Some of my main concerns reappear, and they are probably related to certain forms of colonization, being it of the imagination or territory. I've been interested in figuring out how to deconstruct the binary narratives produced by Western knowledge. There's the relation to power and mythification of violence; but also the use of image and language to build the "grand" narrative that many times serves only those in power. I've been really interested in the history of science and how it's been manipulated by ideology and politics.