

Mousse Magazine

“Una sola moltitudine” at smART – polo per l’arte, Rome

smART – polo per l’arte presents “Una sola moltitudine” (A single multitude), a double-solo exhibition by the artists Filippo Berta (1977) and Calixto Ramirez (1980), curated by Saverio Verini.

Following on from the success of “STOP AND GO. The art of the animated GIF”, dedicated to one of the languages of recent digital culture, smART has moved its attention to the genre of performance art. Both active in Italy, but frequently participating in international exhibitions, Berta and Ramirez are united by a rigorous, conscious and recognizable artistic development, closely linked to the use of the body and its relationship with the landscape, the spaces of the city, and other more intimate contexts. The idea for the exhibition is based on the similarities between the two artists: their choice of the performance as a favourite medium, their use of the human body, the physical and psychological tension that dominates their actions, and their translation of performances into “concrete” pictures – by means of photographs and videos – that have an iconic and visually meaningful character. But “Una sola moltitudine” – a title that refers to an eponymous collection of poems by the Portuguese writer and poet Fernando Pessoa – also intends to present two diametrically opposite approaches towards the idea of the performance: on the one hand the collective dimension and the research into human relations of Philip Berta, and the other the very pronounced individuality of Calixto Ramirez.

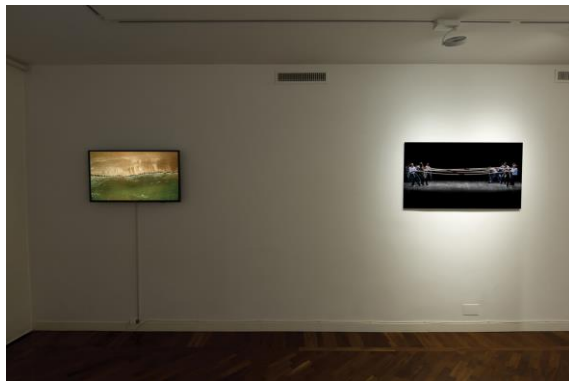
The performances of Filippo Berta, which always involve groups of “ordinary” people, force us to face the relentless banality of our actions and, at the same time, their inestimable power. These gestures are able to imprint themselves on the eyes of the beholder, and they become shared rituals that come to populate a collective imagination consisting of humanity and disillusionment, encounters and conflicts. Filippo Berta emphasizes the banal action and he repeats it and amplifies it, turning it almost into an act of heroism and resistance, and highlighting the extraordinary aspects of our everyday lives.

Calixto Ramirez, on the other hand, uses his body almost exclusively as a measure of surrounding reality, as a sculptural element that takes on a shape and a position in its relation to its physical context. His work is characterized by a radical economy of means and for the artist his own physical presence is sufficient to give life to disturbing and unpredictable performances with a strong visual impact. Ramirez seems to be forever risking his safety in totally useless deeds and actions; and it is precisely this “friction” between danger and futility that gives his performance their grotesque and ironic character, mocking and playing with the limitations and inadequacies of our actions.

In the show, in addition to a selection of works realized over the last few years, there will be some new productions conceived on the basis of certain specific aspects connected with smART, such as the characteristics of the exhibition space, the presence of children who take part in the association’s educational activities, and the characteristics of the local neighbourhood. The works of Berta and Ramirez “will face each other” in the exhibition space, creating a dialogue between two different approaches to the idea of the performance.

[at smART – polo per l’arte, Rome](#)
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"Una sola moltitudine" at smART – polo per l'arte, Rome, 2016
Photo: Francesco Basileo