



Rä di Martino, *AFTERALL*, video installation, 2019.

ART & CULTURE

The Opening Response: Rä di Martino

👤 Josseline Black-Barnett

The Opening Response titles a special series of interviews with artists, curators, writers, composers, mediators, and space-makers around the world. Dialoguing within and around the thematic which have rapidly emerged as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic, we offer within this frame a differentiated, honest, and beautiful bid at understanding. Weekly, distinct doors are opened into the lives of the contributors; into their experiences dawning on pleasure, productivity, metaphysics, and paradigmatic shifts. Hopefully, these conversations can act as way-posts and lead to furthered empathy, unison, and co-creation. *The Opening Response* meets the need for weaving the autonomy of a web of conscious communications in times of extreme perplexity.

Rä di Martino (Rome, 1975) studied in London where she's graduated with an MFA at the Slade School of Art and after spending a few years in New York she moved back to Italy. Her practice explores the passage of time, as well as the discrepancies that differentiate epic narratives from lived experiences. Her works are characterized by a tension between pathos and a certain detachment: a disconnectedness that interrupts the synchronicity binding image and text. Her film, video installations and photos have been shown in many institutions, museums and film festivals including Moma-PS1, NY; Tate Modern, London; NiMK Netherlands Media Arts, Amsterdam; MCA, Chicago; Palazzo Grassi, Venice; Artists Space, New York; Museion, Bozen; Magasin, Grenoble; the Busan Biennial; Manifesta; Turin Triennale, Torino International Film Festival, Kino der Kunst, Munich, Viper Basel and Transmediale Berlin. In 2014 and she presented her first medium-length documentary *The Show MAS Go On* at the Venice International Film festival winning the Gillo Pontecorvo award and in 2018 her first feature film *CONTROFIGURA* also shown at Art Film|Art Basel and several cinemas and museums with which she won the Eurimages Lab Award in the same year and is in the selection of the silver ribbons for best docufilm 2018. In 2018/2019 she developed the *AFTERALL* project with the support of the Mibac – Italian Council award in collaboration with the Foundation Volume! with two exhibitions at the Mattatorio di Roma and at the Kunstmuseum St. Gallen (2020).

Josseline Black – In this phase of forced isolation, how are you articulating your response in a public discourse? What is your role in this larger conversation?

Rä di Martino – It's funny because this long period of forced isolation and interruption of all projects and plans has slowly but finally become for me a moment of reflection and study. At the same time, I had since the start a refusal to participate in the many online projects that have been going on. Apart from participating maybe with some older work let available online and for free, I immediately felt that It's impossible to react straight away to what is happening, it's a moment enormous in scope that needs time to be absorbed, especially from artists to then give something back.

JB – Has your artistic practice changed through isolation?

RdM – Absolutely, yes. At first, I stopped altogether to work. Step by step I started only reading, about anything, from the pandemic, to politics, essays, books and watch films. But no work in strict terms. Then I started researching, for something new to do. I have a project to finish for an exhibition I was about to open in spring that has been postponed to the autumn but I put that in pause and am writing down ideas for something that should be a big slow project. But I am just at the beginning.

JB – How has your practical capacity to produce work been affected by the pandemic?

RdM – I am slower and need to think more about what I am doing, can't just go on like nothing happened, have spent the first weeks, many weeks, doing almost nothing like work but didn't feel guilt or boredom.

JB – What is your approach to collaboration at the moment?

RdM – Working often with film and video I collaborate with few to many people depending on the scope of the project and I always liked it. Now I would like to try and collaborate with someone not only in a film crew but that works in a different field, I'm actually thinking about it a lot in this period.

JB – How would you define the present moment, metaphysically/literally/symbolically?

RdM – I found myself once in one of these amazing fog-moments on the coast near San Francisco, I never witnessed it before, I was completely alone on the beach and everything turned white, warm, wet and immobile, very otherworldly. Ok, this is how I would like this moment to be.

JB – Do you see the potential for renewed support for cultural production in spite of macro and micro-economies which are currently rapidly restructuring?

I do see the potential, or at least I am sure that with focus and intention it could a great moment for changes but I don't actually see it happening, governments, politicians and whoever was in charge of cultural institutions seem either uninterested or trying desperately to return to before. Perhaps we will have to start thinking how to suggest something but maybe is still early to understand where we are at.

E.M Cioran writes: “in major perplexities, try to live as history were done with and to react like a monster riddled by serenity”, how do you respond to this proposal?

Well, is very liberating.

How is your utilization of technology and virtuality evolving the paradigm within which you produce work?

In a period in which these seemed your only solution to communicate with the outside and to others, I feel a need to just wonder and reflect and digest the use of it as opposed to just use it. So, I'd say it's a question mark and has just become bigger right now.