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Mobility and mobility capital through the work of Adrian Paci

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Auteur(s) (texte brut)

Guillaume Logé

Chapô

The exhibition “Adrian Paci: Vies en transit,” (Paris, February 26-May 12, 2013, organized by Jeu de Paume) offers original perspectives on many aspects of mobility. Présentation longue

<p>For the first time, a retrospective of Albanian artist Adrian Paci’s work has been organized in France. The title of this exhibition of videos, paintings, sculptures, photographs and mosaics is Vies en transit (lives in transit). I would like to put the reading of this exhibition in the perspective of the “Mobility as capital” debate published on the Mobile Lives Forum website.<p>It is quite justly that the curators of the exhibition, and the authors of the interesting catalogue that accompanies it, use the idea of transit and transition to bring together the diverse explorations of Adrian Paci. Mirroring the course of his own exiled existence (Paci left Albania with his family in 1997 to settle in Italy), the artist decrypts moments of bonding and disconnect in individuals’ lives. Intimacy and identity are linked to geographical, social and family displacement (think in terms of the societal, economic, political and sociological determinism that weigh on man today).<p><p><p><p>Before offering any analysis, I would like to stress the esthetics and poetry of these works, which one could choose to address from solely a sensitive point of view. The videos demonstrate stunning mastery of framing, editing, slows, blurs and tones of shadows and color, wherein one recognizes the hand of the painter Adrian Paci at the beginning of his career (and continues to be in works that show great sensitive strength, borrowing from the cinema a

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In 2001, Adrian Paci earned a strong reputation in the art world with his work *Home to Go*, whose plaster figure carries an upside down roof on his back. To what place do we belong? Where is our home and what does it look like (our “being there” [1])? And what if man were doomed to perpetual

wandering?

To cite the artist, “Home, as I said, is not only a house, a roof, and a family; it is also a state of stability, connection, affection, and identification with something. For me, coming home does not address the question of emigration, but rather the larger question of the quest for stability lost. In a context of substantive transformation and change, we must create strategies of survival and continuity, and the idea of coming home is part of that” [2]. This means developing survival strategies to cope with new forms of imposed mobility that break up the home and cause humans to lose their inner

stability.

This question of a mobility that challenges individuals’ very existence is present in many works. *Centro di Permanenza Temporanea* [provisional detention center] (2007) shows us a procession of passengers on an airport tarmac moving towards a gangway, crowding on a platform and stairs, and, in

<div class="logo logo-mobile"> </p><p>If one accepts the idea that these workers are in fact hyper-mobile, it is surely not in the sense described by Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello (and cited by Vincent Kaufmann and Hanja Maksim). In this case, capitalism does not require employees to be mobile in order to bounce from one opportunity to another. They are not being asked to be flexible and adaptable. On the contrary, if we adhere to the authors' analytical framework, one can even go so far as to question their very mobility. How great is their ability to move in different mental worlds? Or geographically? Here, mobility is not a factor in career advancement. It does not result in any potential for change in their social position. These men have no particular mobility skills, or - o use Vincent Kaufmann and Hanja Maksim's term - no motility capital. They have the same skills as any other stonemason; the only difference is the decision to make them work in a floating workshop rather than a stationary one somewhere in China. They are not consultants going abroad for an expert mission. They are workers working on a block of marble that weighs several tons. The movement that we witness is that of the least mobile work imaginable, and the mobility is not that of the sculptors, but rather that of their tool of production (thus not human mobility but mobility of the material to which man is attached). These workers belong to a class of mobile-immobiles (or sedentary mobiles), who are exploited by the mobile leaders of modern capitalism.</p><p>Although they are in motion, it is questionable whether these sculptors really move. Do they not seem more like prisoners, thrown into the hold, surrounded by walls that obscure the landscape, their only view that of the implacable blue sky above them? In fact, they are cut off from all geography;

<div class="logo logo-mobile"> <p>This video of this boat trip presents us with a paradox. Instead of true mobility, what these workers have accepted is isolation and confinement. Their capital is not mobility capital, but confinement capital (anti-mobility capital?).</p><p>The workers in this film seem to give credence to the ideas of Simon Borja, Guillaume Courty and Thierry Ramadier: "By being mobile, people do not capitalize, they simply comply with orders and - the great paradox - in most cases remain in the social, economic, and spatial place that was theirs to begin with."</p><p>Mobility is seen here as a form of capitalist domination. We are told that in the development of our societies as it is taking place, one needs substantial mobility capital to be accepted by the system and to get a job. Talk about mobility capital as regards this particular work, one must replace this term with "confinement capital" or "imbalance and uprooting capital." These individuals are not so much asked to move as to be able to live in non-places (i.e. the boat) in which their very inner self are challenged.</p><p></p><p> </p><p> </p><p><ol style="list-style-type: none;"><p>^[1] See Heidegger's Dasein which comments on poetic dwelling of the world of Hölderlin. HEIDEGGER Martin, Approche de Hölderlin, Gallimard, 1962</p><p>^[2] Text by Adrian Paci, in Adrian Paci, Transit, catalog for the Vies en transit exhibition, Jeu de Paume, 2013. Coedited by Jeu de Paume, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Mousse Publishing, Milan, p.34</p><p>^[3] CRESSWELL Tim, On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World, London, Routledge, 2006</p><p>^[4] See AUGÉ Marc, Non-lieux: introduction à une anthropologie de la surmodernité, Paris, Seuil, 1992</p><p>^[5] See BENJAMIN Walter, A Short History of Photography and The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction </p><p>^[6] BAUMAN Zygmunt, Liquid Modernity, Cambridge Polity Press, 2000, p.119</p>

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Visuel



Auteur(s)

Guillaume Logé (Researcher in Art History and Environmental Sciences)

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