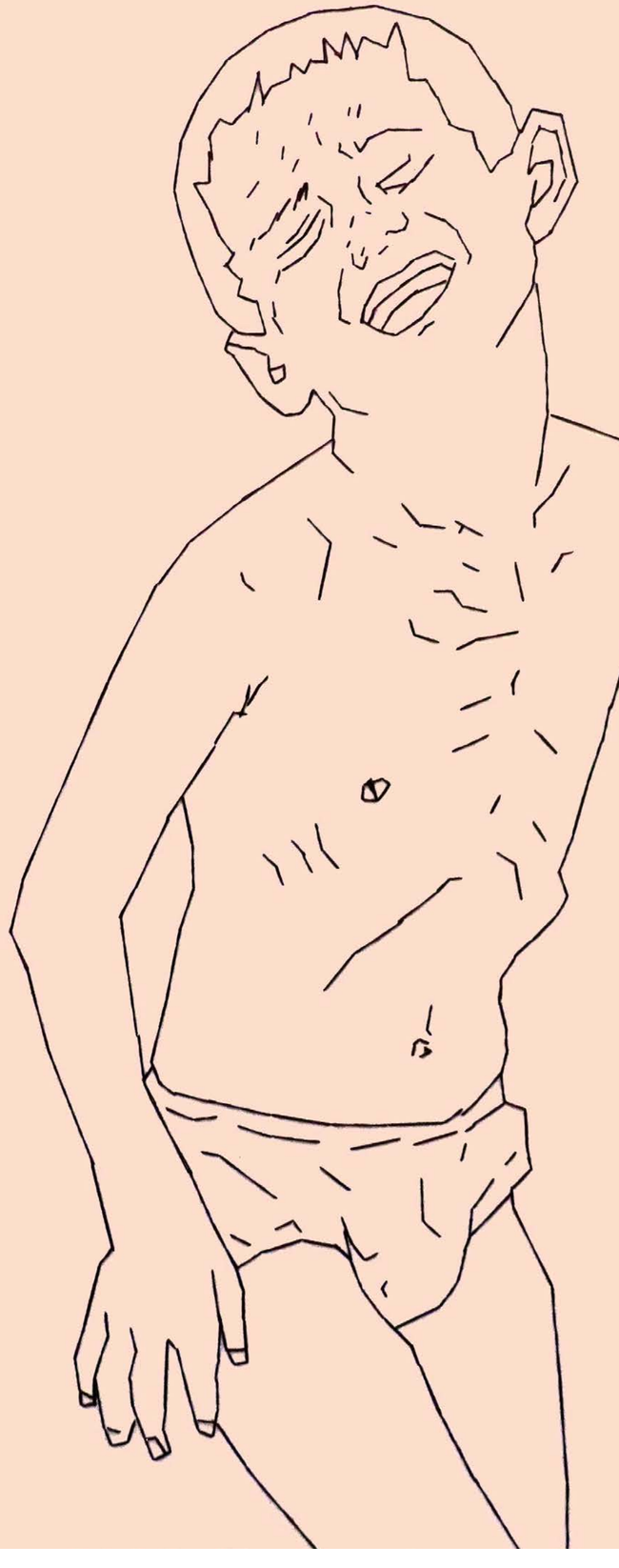

Abnormal



THE WEIGHT OF WORDS, THE SHOCK OF PHOTOS

SYLWIA SERAFINOWICZ



FRANKO B ASKED HIMSELF RECENTLY IF IT IS STILL WORTH OPENING HIS VEINS FOR THE WORLD. WOULD PEOPLE EVEN NOTICE? KNOWN BEST AMONGST WIDE AUDIENCES FOR HIS SEMINAL BLEEDING PERFORMANCES INAUGURATED IN THE 1990S, HE MANAGED TO TRANSFORM HIS PERSONAL, PAINFUL EXPERIENCES OF REJECTION, INTO A PLATFORM USED TO COMMUNICATE THE PAIN OF OTHERS. HAVING BEEN RAISED IN AN ORPHANAGE AND SUBSEQUENTLY IN A BOARDING SCHOOL RUN BY THE ITALIAN RED CROSS, FRANKO B USES HIS UNIQUE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES TO EXAMINE ONGOING EXPLOITATION, NEGLIGENCE AND ABUSE OF POWER. WITH THE EXHIBITION *UNLOVED,* HE MOBILISES CERAMICS, SCULPTURE, SOUND, SMELL, LANGUAGE, PHOTOGRAPHS AND PERFORMANCE TO APPEAL TO OUR EMPATHY.

HIS INTERVENTION IS ESSENTIAL. AT PRESENT, WHEN IRELAND IS INTERROGATING THE CHURCH AND THE STATE FOR THE ABUSE OF THOUSANDS OF CHILDREN AND ADULTS, FRANKO B CONFRONTS US WITH HIS ADVOCACY ON BEHALF OF THOSE LET DOWN BY THE INSTITUTIONS DESIGNED TO HELP THEM. HIS SCRUTINY OF QUESTIONABLE LEGACIES REACHES BEYOND IRELAND, FOR INSTANCE IN *HOMAGE TO THE NEW WORLD ORDER,* 2017, A BODY OF WORK FEATURING THE SYMBOLS OF THE WORLD ORGANIZATIONS: NATO AND THE UN, A SUBJECT AT THE HEART OF FRANKO B'S OPENING NIGHT PERFORMANCE. IN TERMS OF ADDRESSING THE AUDIENCE'S EMPATHY, PERFORMANCE IS ONE OF THE STRONGEST OF PLATFORMS. IT CREATES AN INTIMATE TIME AND SPACE SHARED BY THE PERFORMER AND THE AUDIENCE. WHATEVER HE PROJECTS IN HIS ACTS, THE PUBLIC CAN IMMEDIATELY SENSE. FRUSTRATION, LOVE, SADNESS OR ANGER BECOMES A JOINT EXPERIENCE, LIVED THROUGH, RATHER THAN JUST OBSERVED.

HIS USE OF DIGITAL IMAGES DISSECTS THE REALM IN WHICH HATE AND LACK OF COMPASSION FLOURISH. BETWEEN THE 1990S AND TODAY, WE HAVE CONSUMED AN IMMEASURABLE NUMBER OF IMAGES AND WORDS THAT COMMUNICATE ATROCITIES UNRAVELLING AT THE HOMEFRONT AND ACROSS THE WORLD. MADE AVAILABLE THROUGH OUR SCREENS, FORMATTED TO BE EASILY SCROLLED THROUGH OVER BREAKFAST, DURING OUR WORK AND SCHOOL COMMUTES, THEY COMMODIFY PAIN. SUSAN SONTAG IN HER LAST ESSAY *REGARDING THE PAIN OF OTHERS,* 2003, STRESSED THAT ALTHOUGH, "PHOTOGRAPHY HAS KEPT COMPANY WITH DEATH" EVER SINCE IT WAS INVENTED, THE FOCUS ON PAIN AND HORROR AS REPORTING GOALS HAS BEEN A CONSCIOUS MARKETING DECISION MADE AROUND THE TIME OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR. AS ONLINE CULTURE DEVELOPED, IT PERSISTED AND REACHED NEW DEPTHS. IN THIS CONTEXT, SONTAG REMINDS OF AN ADVERTISING SLOGAN COINED BY *PARIS MATCH* IN 1978, "THE WEIGHT OF WORDS, THE SHOCK OF PHOTOS" WHICH TODAY RINGS HOLLOW. IN A SINISTER FOLLOW UP OF SONTAG'S ANALYSIS, MAGGIE NELSON, THE AUTHOR OF *THE ART OF CRUELTY,* 2011, ARGUES THAT ONE OF THE MAIN DANGERS OF PERSISTENT EXPOSURE TO CRUELTY IS ITS NORMALISATION IN THE BEHOLDER'S EYES.

UNSURPRISINGLY, THIS ACCESSIBILITY TO DISTURBING IMAGERY, INSTEAD OF MAKING US MORE ENRAGED BY THE INJUSTICES OF THE WORLD, DESENSITIZED US. IN RESPONSE TO THIS STATUS QUO, FRANKO B CUTS THROUGH OUR EMOTIONAL NUMBNESS AND BRINGS AWARENESS TO WHAT IS HAPPENING ON OUR DOORSTEP. THE ACT OF MINDLESS SCROLLING THROUGH IMAGES IMPOSED ON US BY THE PRESS CAPTURES THE PIECE *THE WORLD IS BLEEDING,* 2019. FRANKO INSTALLS A SCREEN INSIDE A SIMPLE WOODEN SCHOOL DESK. ON IT, HE PROJECTS A CLASH OF IMAGES OF FAMINE, POWER, POVERTY, VIOLENCE, BEAUTY AND WAR. AN ACT OFTEN PERFORMED IN THE QUIET OF OUR PHONES AND BEDS, BOTH A REASON AND A RESPONSE TO RAGING INSOMNIA, IS HERE EXPOSED. AS MUCH AS BRINGING THE MIRROR TO OUR FACES IS EFFECTIVE AS A CRITICAL TOOL, WHAT FRANKO B IS INTERESTED IN IS A DEFIANCE OF APATHY THAT PROGRESSES AS WE SCROLL.

TO DO JUST THAT, FRANKO B PRESENTS, FOR THE FIRST TIME, THIRTY-TWO CANVASES FROM THE *UNLOVED* AND *ABANDONMENT* SERIES, 2018 - 2019. WITHIN THESE, HE FOCUSES MOSTLY ON MALE SUBJECTS, VICTIMS OF NEGLIGENCE AND VIOLENCE WHOSE DEPICTIONS HE SAW ON THE INTERNET. HE STITCHED THEIR SILHOUETTES WITH RED THREAD; A REMINISCENCE OF PAIN PREVIOUSLY INFLICTED ON HIS OWN PUNCTURED BODY DURING HIS PERFORMANCES. BY DOING SO, HE TURNED THE FOUND IMAGES INTO PORTRAITS. FOR EACH, FRANKO B CONFLATES THE DISTANCE

BETWEEN PHOTOGRAPHED SUBJECTS AND THE AUDIENCE, STRIPPING THEM OF CAPTIONS, LOCATIONS, THE IDENTITY ASSIGNED AT BIRTH AND THE COLOUR OF THE SKIN, FOCUSING INSTEAD ON THEIR TORMENTED, ADOLESCENT BODIES. DISTILLING THE IMAGE FROM THESE QUALITIES LEAVES THE AUDIENCE WITH NOTHING TO FEED THEIR PREJUDICE AGAINST 'THEM'. FRANKO APPEALS TO THIS INSTINCT OF COMPASSION ALSO THROUGH A SERIES OF MONOLOGUES, THE TESTIMONIES FROM THE SURVIVORS OF ABUSE, RAPE AND REFUGEES WHO DESCRIBE AN OFTEN-HORRENDOUS ORDEAL OF CROSSING TO EUROPE. ALL RECORDED BY FRANKO B, THESE PROJECTED FROM FOUND SUITCASES AND INCLUDED IN THIS NEWSPAPER. ON THE TOP OF SUITCASES, FRANKO CUTS TRIANGLES IN DIFFERENT COLOURS, A REMINISCENT OF THE CODE USED IN CONCENTRATION CAMPS TO MARK HOMOSEXUAL INMATES, POLITICAL PRISONERS OR IMMIGRANTS.

ANOTHER MEDIUM USED BY FRANKO TO COMMUNICATE HIS ADVOCACY ON BEHALF OF THE UNLOVED IS THE ONE THAT IS PHYSICALLY FRAGILE: THE CERAMICS. AT RUA RED, FRANKO B PRESENTS *LOST BOYS,* 2019, A SERIES OF INDIVIDUAL FIGURINES ASSEMBLED HERE IN A SYMBOL OF THE RED CROSS AND A CIRCLE, WHILE OTHERS CAN BE FOUND IN DISTRESSED POSITIONS, ISOLATED IN CERAMIC HOUSES. USE OF CERAMICS ALLOWS FRANKO TO ESTABLISH A PERSONAL CONNECTION WITH HIS SUBJECTS. IT IS A VERY PERSONAL MEDIUM FOR HIM, THE ONE WHICH CATAPULTED HIM INTO THE WORLD OF ART WHEN HE TOOK POTTERY CLASSES IN BRIXTON IN THE 1980S. IT IS ALSO A MEDIUM THAT HELPED HIM REFOCUS ON HIMSELF AND SEE THE VALUE IN HIS OWN EXPERIENCE. *LOST BOYS* DESPITE BEING A COMPELLING DEPICTION OF SOLITUDE, ALSO IGNITES HOPE. INDIVIDUAL DEPICTIONS OF BOYS, ONCE GROUPED IN THE SHAPE OF A CROSS, CREATE A POWERFUL STATEMENT OF SOLIDARITY WITH FRANKO. IT IS A SYMBOL DIRECTLY CONNECTED WITH HIS BODY AND LIFE. A RED CROSS IS TATTOOED ON FRANKO B'S HEART AND IS REPEATED LIKE A PULSE ALL OVER HIM. FOR MANY, IT IS A SYMBOL SYNONYMOUS WITH CAREGIVING, PARTICULARLY THE 'PROTECTED PERSONS' HELPING THE SICK AND WOUNDED IN AREAS OF ARMED CONFLICT. FOR FRANKO B, THE SYMBOL IS ROOTED IN HIS EXPERIENCE OF A BOARDING SCHOOL RUN BY THE ITALIAN RED CROSS WHERE HE FOUND HIS REFUGE FROM ABUSIVE FAMILY, AS WELL AS A VEHICLE TO UNDO THE WRONGS IMPOSED ON HIM AS A VULNERABLE CHILD.



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POWERLESS,
NEVER,
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IN ONE OF THE ROOMS OF THE EXHIBITION, WE CAN HEAR FRANKO SAYING THE ABOVE WORDS, FRAGMENTS OF HIS POEM *INSIGNIFICANT,* 2015. IT TAKES US BACK THE ISSUE OF THE LANGUAGE AND ITS DISEMPOWERMENT BUT ALSO BRINGS FRANKO B'S COMPASSIONATE PHYSICAL PRESENCE







IN YET ANOTHER FORM. HE PROCLAIMED THOSE VERSES DURING THE PERFORMANCE *MILK AND BLOOD,* 2015 – 2018, WHICH I SAW AT TOYNBEE STUDIOS IN LONDON IN 2018. I SAT QUIETLY IN A CIRCLE SURROUNDING THE ARTIST AND A GOLDEN BOXING BAG SUSPENDED FROM THE CEILING. I OBSERVED AND LISTENED AS FRANKO REPETITIVELY PUNCHED THE BAG WHILE UTTERING THE WORDS. IT WAS THE MOST VISIBLE MANIFESTATION OF HIS DETERMINATION TO FIGHT THE STATUS QUO. THE TEXT WAS COMPOSED OF WORDS THAT SEEMED TO HAVE BEEN TAKEN FROM FRANKO'S PRIVATE LIFE, AS WELL AS FROM THE NEWSPAPERS, WEBSITES AND THE BRITISH STREETS, BEFORE THE BREXIT REFERENDUM THAT TOOK PLACE ON 23RD JUNE, 2016. FOR ANYONE AWARE OF MODERN BRITISH HISTORY, EITHER THROUGH LIVED EXPERIENCE, WHICH IS THE CASE FOR FRANKO, OR OBSERVATION AND OBTAINED KNOWLEDGE, THE EVENTS SURROUNDING THE LIFESPAN OF THE *MILK AND BLOOD* PERFORMANCE FELT LIKE A DARK REMINDER OF MOST XENOPHOBIC OF TIMES. THE PIECE IS REFLECTIVE OF THIS MOMENT FEATURING OPENLY HATEFUL LANGUAGE DIRECTED AT REFUGEES, IMMIGRANTS OR SEXUAL MINORITIES. DESPITE A DEEP AWARENESS THAT FOR DECADES IF NOT CENTURIES WE SEEM TO BE TRAPPED IN A CIRCLE OF VIOLENCE, FRANKO DOES NOT GIVE UP ON FIGHTING IT. HIS ACTIONS AND USE OF WORDS, AS WELL AS IMAGES, CUTS THROUGH HURTFUL, DEHUMANIZING RHETORIC THAT GOES UNPUNISHED. FRANKO FINISHES HIS POEM WITH A PHRASE, "I HAVE LANGUAGE ON MY SIDE". HE IS NOT GIVING UP ON RETAINING THE WEIGHT OF WORDS, THE WEIGHT OF LIVES.

ASH

IT'S HARD TO TALK ABOUT MALE RAPE. FOR ME, SOMETHING THAT REALLY HAPPENED TO ME BUT I DON'T WANT TO SOUND LIKE I'M TALKING ABOUT SOMEBODY ELSE WHEN THIS HAPPENED TO ME BUT ITS REALLY HARD TO NOT ONLY SPEAK ABOUT IT, MALE RAPE, BUT ALSO TO STAY ASSOCIATED, FOR SOMEBODY LIKE ME WHO DISASSOCIATES SO MUCH. FIRST TIME I WAS RAPED I WAS IN MY TWENTIES AND I WAS IN LOVE WITH A GUY, AND I WAS VERY NAIVE, YOU KNOW YOU'RE YOUNG AND YOU'RE NEW TO THE SCENE OR YOU'RE LOOKING FOR LOVE, AND I MET THIS GUY, WE WERE GOING OUT, WE WERE DATING. HE HAD A BEST MATE WHO WAS A NICE GUY AND WE GOT ON AND I NEVER UNDERSTOOD TILL LATER THAT THEY HAD A FUCKBUDDY RELATIONSHIP AND HE WAS ANGRY WITH ME, THIS SCOTTISH GUY WHO RAPED ME. ONE DAY WE BUMPED INTO EACH OTHER, WE WENT FOR A DRINK AT HIS FLAT, IT WAS OK, I KNOW HIM VERY WELL. THE NEXT THING I KNOW HE SMASHED ME AGAINST A GLASS TABLE. HE SAID TO ME THAT WHEN I CAME THROUGH 'THAT WAS REALLY GOOD SEX', I SAID WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, COURSE I WAS IN LOVE WITH THIS OTHER GUY, HIS FRIEND. AND YOU KNOW I WAS STUNNED AND HE SAID, 'OH YEAH YEAH, IT WAS REALLY GOOD'. I SAID WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, AND HE JUST LOOKED AT ME AND SEEMED TO LAUGH AND I HAD A BUMP ON MY HEAD AND I SAID, 'YOU SMASHED ME AGAINST A GLASS TABLE, YOU KNOCKED ME OUT' AND HE SAID 'BUT YOU SEEMED TO ENJOY, AND BY THE WAY YOU MOST LIKELY HAVE HIV BECAUSE I GO DOWN HAMPSTEAD HEATH AND HAVE UNSAFE SEX AND GET FUCKED A LOT.

THIS WAS 1993 AND I WAS DIAGNOSED WITH HIV THREE MONTHS LATER. TRAUMA BUILDS ON TRAUMA AND YEARS LATER I… I WAS GOING THROUGH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES, I WAS VERY ILL. I COULDN'T WORK FOR A LONG TIME, I HAD SERIOUS INHERITED HEART ISSUES, WHICH I HAD FOUR MAJOR OPERATIONS FOR. AND I NEEDED FRIENDS, I WAS LONELY AND I BEFRIENDED A GUY WHO… YEAH, HE BECAME A MATE, YOU KNOW YOU MEET PEOPLE, AND I SUPPOSE HE WAS A FUCKBUDDY AND WOULD PLAY AROUND AND ONE DAY I HAD BEEN VERY ILL SO I PASSED OUT AND I HAD BEEN FOUND UNCONSCIOUS AND I WOKE UP IN A HOSPITAL WITH 10 PEOPLE WORKING ON ME. IT WAS A REALLY BAD TIME IN MY LIFE, I HADN'T SEEN HIM, HE PHONED ME, HE SAID I AM COMING OVER TO SEE YOU AND I SAID GREAT IT WOULD BE NICE TO SEE YOU. I OPENED THE DOOR AND THERE ARE FOUR OTHER GUYS THERE. I WAS STUNNED AND I WAS SHOCKED, ALL I KNOW IS THAT I DISASSOCIATED. I CAN'T QUITE REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED FOR THE NEXT 12 HOURS, ALL I REMEMBER WAS FOR THIS BUNCH OF GUYS GO IN AND ME FEELING REALLY REALLY EMPTY. I ALSO REMEMBER I HAD GONE INTO A KIND OF SARCOSIS, I HAD TO CALL A FRIEND WHO CAME OVER AND SAID ARE YOU OK? OVER TIME I HAD FLASHBACKS OF THOSE THINGS HAPPENING AND THEN SOMETIME LATER I REMEMBERED AND I CONFRONTED HIM AND I SAID YOU RAPED ME. THE ONLY REASON I REMEMBERED THIS WAS BECAUSE ANOTHER FRIEND OF HIS, ANOTHER CLOSE FRIEND OF HIS, HAD SET ME UP TO BE RAPED BY 12 GUYS, AND KNOCKED UNCONSCIOUS, WELL NOT KNOCKED UNCONSCIOUS, I WAS GIVEN DRUGS, I TOOK THEM, I HAD TO ADMIT IT BUT I PASSED OUT AND THE LAST THING I SAW BEFORE I PASSED OUT, I REMEMBERED SEEING ONE OF THE GUYS WHO I KNEW THERE LOOKING AT ME AND I WAS THINKING, 'WHAT DID YOU DO TO ME' AND ANYHOW THE STORY WAS TOLD TO ME ABOUT ALL THESE GUYS USING ME AND HOW GREAT IT WAS AND HOW MUCH FUN IT WAS, AND THEN THE OTHER GUY, HE WAS FILMING IT, AND HE WAS LIVE-STREAMING IT. SOMEONE HAD ORDERED THE EVENT, MY RAPE, HE TOLD ME THIS, BECAUSE I BUMPED INTO HIM TWO DAYS LATER ON THE STREET. CAN I SEE THAT FILM? HE SAID YEAH IT'S ON MY OTHER PHONE AND I WILL SHOW IT TO YOU. THE GUY WAS FOUND DEAD THREE WEEKS LATER. HE DID THIS TO QUITE A FEW PEOPLE AND WE THINK SOMEBODY GAVE HIM AN OVERDOSE BUT OF COURSE HOW IS ANYONE GOING TO PROVE THAT.





KEELY

I TRIED COMING OUT TO MY PARENTS IN 2012. MY GIRLFRIEND AND I, WE WERE SITTING ON THE COUCH IN MY LIVING ROOM. AT THIS TIME WE WERE IN THE AMERICAN MIDWEST AND IT WAS REALLY COLD AND SNOWING OUTSIDE. SO WE WERE INSIDE AND JUST ABOUT TO TALK TO MY PARENTS WHEN MY MUM REALISED THAT MY GIRLFRIEND'S HAND WAS ON MY LEG AND SHE PICKED IT UP IMMEDIATELY THAT WE WERE ABOUT TO HAVE THE TALK. I NEVER KNEW HOW MY MUM OR DAD PERCEIVED GAY PEOPLE OR PEOPLE WITHIN THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY BUT I FOUND OUT QUICKLY THAT SHE DIDN'T AGREE WITH IT. AT ALL. SHE GOT EXTREMELY ANGRY, SHE STARTED YELLING, SHE WAS SCREAMING AND AS SHE WAS SAYING THE WORD "GAY" OVER AND OVER AS IF IT WERE AN INSULT. AND SHE YELLED AT MY GIRLFRIEND UNTIL SHE RAN OUT OF THE HOUSE, SHE DIDN'T HAVE SHOES ON, SHE DIDN'T HAVE HER PHONE, SHE HAD NO TRANSPORTATION AND I JUST REMEMBER MY HEAD HITTING A WALL, I WAS THROWN DOWN SOME STAIRS, AND I MADE IT OUTSIDE EVENTUALLY AS WELL WITH MY GIRLFRIEND WAITING OUT ON THE STREET JUST TO SEE IF EVERYTHING WAS OKAY AND SHE HAD NOWHERE TO GO. SO, WE WALKED FOR ABOUT AN HOUR THROUGH THE SNOW, UNTIL WE GOT TO A COUSIN'S HOUSE, WHO TOOK US IN, AND, LUCKILY, THEY WERE COMPLETELY ACCEPTING. I HAD NO IDEA WHAT THEY THOUGHT EITHER, SO EITHER THEY WERE GOING TO BE NICE TO US OR WE WERE GOING TO BE KICKED OUT AGAIN… BUT THEY TOOK US IN FOR THREE DAYS AND DURING THAT TIME I WAS CONSTANTLY HARASSED BY MY MUM THROUGH PHONE CALLS, I WAS THREATENED QUITE A BIT BY BOTH MY PARENTS, MY DAD HARDLY WANTED TO SPEAK TO ME. SO AFTER A FEW DAYS, I WAS PICKED UP BY MY GIRLFRIEND'S MUM AND WE STAYED WITH HER FOR A WHILE, AND SOMETIME AFTER THIS HAPPENED I HAD TO RECONNECT WITH MY PARENTS AND OVER TIME IT DID GET MORE MANAGEABLE TO BE AROUND THEM BUT EVEN THOUGH I LOVE THEM, I'VE NEVER FORGIVEN THEM FOR IT. I'VE NEVER FORGIVEN THEM FOR THE TRAUMA THAT IT CAUSED ME. IT IS A REMINDER TO ME EVERY DAY HOW CAREFUL I HAVE TO BE AROUND PEOPLE I KNOW AND ESPECIALLY AROUND PEOPLE IN PUBLIC BECAUSE YOU'LL NEVER KNOW HOW PEOPLE WILL REACT TO YOU IF THEY GET TO KNOW WHO YOU REALLY ARE. AND IT ANGERS ME. A LOT.





BARKOSINA

IT'S SPRING BUT IT'S COLD AND DARK. I HAVEN'T EVEN REALISED IT WAS THE YEAR 1987 WHEN I WAS BORN AND NAMED THE UGLIEST BABY IN THE WORLD. I MANAGED TO LIVE TWO YEARS UNDER A COMMUNIST TOTALITARIAN REGIME, WHICH I OBVIOUSLY DON'T REMEMBER MUCH, BUT ALSO UNDER A DOMESTIC REGIME WHICH I DO REMEMBER. PERHAPS, THE VELVET REVOLUTION WAS OF GREAT CELEBRATION IF MY EXISTENCE WAS HARSHLY FORGOTTEN AND SADLY PUNISHED WHERE NO KINDNESS PREVAILED. APPARENTLY I WAS A TERRIBLE BABY, I NEVER SMILED, I RATHER CRIED, I WONDER WHY. AS SIMPLY, AS I CAN SAY, THERE WAS NEVER MUCH LOVE AROUND THE HOME: BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS, VIOLENCE, FUCKING, PUNISHMENT, VERBAL ABUSE AND SO ON. YEARS HAVE PASSED SO QUICKLY, EXACTLY LIKE THOSE MEN AND WOMEN PASSING THROUGH THE HOME, BRUISES WERE ON AND OFF MY BODY AND MY FACE, FOOD HAD NO TASTE, HUMILIATED AND REMINDED OF IMPERFECTION MY MIND GREW FRACTURES. I TURNED INWARDS INTO AN ISOLATED PLACE, HIDING LIKE THOSE ART BOOKS AND ART ARTICLES INSIDE A DUSTY WARDROBE, SO THE SECRET POLICE FORCE COULDN'T FIND IT WHEN THEY CAME OVER WHICH HAPPENED QUITE OFTEN EVEN AFTER THE VELVET REVOLUTION.

I WAS SINKING DEEPER INTO MY OWN WORLD, GRADUALLY BECOMING THE PERFECT OBSERVER OF ADULT DEVIANTS, I HAVE DECIDED TO TAKE IT WITH ME INTO MY GRAVE. I EXPLAIN WHY. IN MY STORY, I HAVE EXPERIENCED JUXTAPOSITION, WHERE THE DEVIL TOOK MY SOUL AWAY AND REPLACED IT WITH ANOTHER. IT TOOK ME 32 GOOD YEARS TO REALISE I AM A MARVELLOUS HUMAN BEING AND THE POISON INJECTED INTO MY SYSTEM IS ACTUALLY VERY MUCH OF USE, CREATIVE USE. WHEN YOU DEAL WITH THE DEVIL IT'S BETTER TO FACE HIM THAN TO ESCAPE HIM, YET IT WAS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO WORK TO BE DONE. FIRST, I MOVED TO ANOTHER COUNTRY, STOPPED COMMUNICATING WITH THE PAST, BECAME INDEPENDENT… BUT THE INTERNAL VOICE DIDN'T GO AWAY: THE GHOSTS OF THOSE I HAVE LEFT STILL LIVED INSIDE ME. SWIMMING IN THE LAKE OF DRUGS, WRITING ANOTHER SUICIDAL LETTER, EMPTYING BOTTLE TILL THE LAST DROP, FINISHING ALL WITH CUTTING WRISTS, KNOWING IT WON'T KILL ME. ONLY SEEKING FOR HAND STROKING MY MIND. WHEN IT COMES TO LOVE IT GETS EVEN WORSE: I MELT LIKE ICE IN ATLANTIC AND BECOME SO FRAGILE. SUBCONSCIOUSLY SEARCHING FOR DADDY AND LOVE I NEVER HAD, REPEATING THE SAME PATTERN, AS IF THERE IS NO POSSIBILITY GETTING RID OF IT. AND SO I GO AWAY AGAIN, I HAVE NO DESIRE TO VISIT "MENTAL HELP", I CHOOSE TO WALK… WALK IN AN ISOLATED ISLAND. I SLEEP OUTSIDE, I WALK, I JUST KEEP WALKING, I WALK UNTIL I CAN. I DON'T TALK. AND I CAN SEE CLEARLY THE VAST WASTELAND OF EMOTIONAL PITY, THE DEVILISH VOICE TAKING OVER, I WANT TO SCREAM, TEAR APART MY FACE, STOP MY HEART, SPIT ON MY GENITALS, SLAP ME, HUMILIATE ME, EAT ME, FUCK ME, JUST BE HORRIBLE TO ME. I HEAR MY VOICE ECHOING HOPELESSLY AND ENDLESSLY SO LOUD BUT NO ONE CAN HEAR EXACTLY AS IT'S ALWAYS BEEN. IN DELIRIUM, I'M LOOKING FOR DEATH. SHOULD I DROWN INTO THE OCEAN OR JUMP FROM THE CLIFF? SHOULD I LET ANYBODY KNOW? I'M WALKING LIKE A WILD DOG IN MEXICO ON A VERY HOT DAY, CHASING MY OWN TAIL BECAUSE I'M SO HUNGRY… SO HUNGRY FOR SILENCE, FOR SANITY, FOR SERENITY. I SURVIVED LONG NIGHTS AND DAYS AND GRADUALLY MADNESS IS TURNING INTO ANGER, ANGER INTO BLAME, BLAME INTO PSYCHOLOGICAL PRISON, AND HERE I AM. I LOOK AROUND AND THERE IS NO ONE: I SEE NOTHING, I FEEL THE WAVES MOVING AND WIND BLOWING, IT'S DARK, IT'S EMPTY AND IT FEELS GOOD. NO. IT'S NOT EASY AS IN FAIRY TALES WITH A HAPPY ENDING, IT'S ONGOING, IT GOES AWAY, IT COMES BACK FOR YEARS. THANK YOU AND FUCK YOU. MEANWHILE, I CREATE: I READ, I LISTEN, I HATE, I LOVE OR CHEAT. I DO EVERYTHING TO SELF-CURE. AND I REALISE I'LL NEVER GET RID OF THE DEVIL, I HAVE TO MAKE LOVE WITH THE DEVIL, AND THEN HE WILL GO AWAY.







TO BE MONSTERS

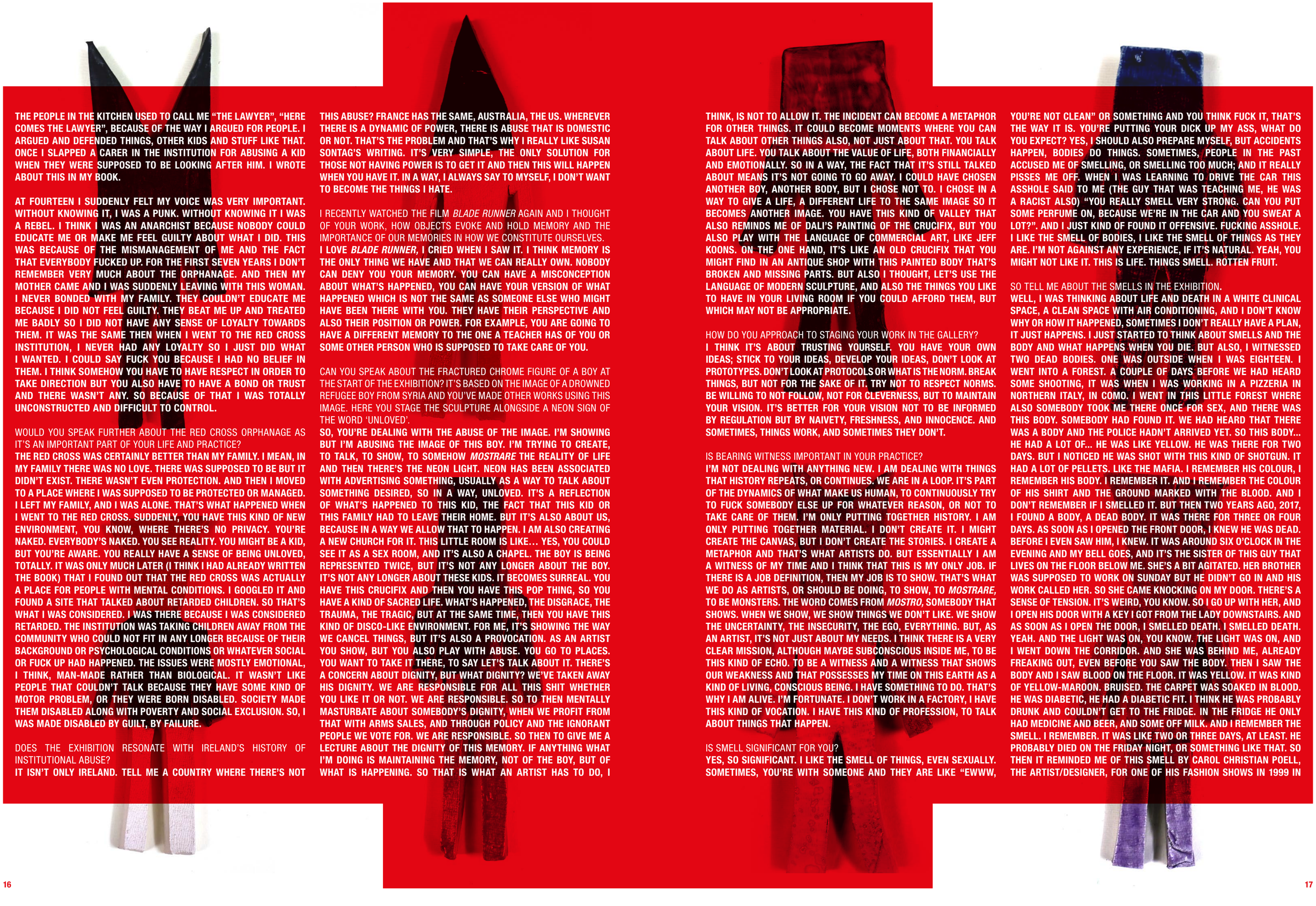
EXCERPTS FROM A CONVERSATION WITH FRANKO B.
FRANKO'S STUDIO, LONDON, SEPTEMBER 2019.
FRANKO B AND JONATHAN CUMMINS.

FRANKO, YOU HAVE SOME EXPERIENCE WITH RUA RED AS YOU CURATED AN EXHIBITION OF A/POLITICAL'S COLLECTION FOR THE GALLERY IN 2017 (*HOW TO SAY IT THE WAY IT IS?*), BUT LET'S TALK ABOUT YOUR UPCOMING EXHIBITION, *UNLOVED*, WHICH YOU PLAN TO OPEN WITH A PERFORMANCE. AS PART OF THE PERFORMANCE, YOU PLAN TO SMASH THREE WORKS FROM YOUR SERIES *HOMAGE TO THE NEW WORLD ORDER* (2017), MONUMENTAL GRANITE SLABS CARVED WITH THE INSIGNIA OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND NATO, BOTH ORGANISATIONS FORMED IN THE WAKE OF WORLD WAR II, AND ANOTHER BEARING THE $ SYMBOL. WHAT DOES OPENING THE EXHIBITION IN THIS WAY TELL US ABOUT WHAT'S TO COME?
I DON'T SEPARATE THE PERSONAL FROM THE POLITICAL AND THE POLITICAL FROM THE PERSONAL, SO THE ACTION IS POLITICAL. IT'S A VERY PERSONAL THING TO DO. YOU INVEST AND CREATE A WORLD AND THEN, BY DESTROYING IT, YOU PRODUCE MORE WORK. DESTROYING BECOMES AN ACT OF CREATION. BUT IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT SMASHING THESE WORKS, IT IS ALSO AN OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE THINGS AWAY. I'M GOING TO GIVE AWAY SOMETHING DURING THIS EVENT, LITTLE CLOTH BAGS I STITCHED WITH A SMALL CROSS WHICH ARE FILLED WITH LAVENDER. I'M GIVING AND DESTROYING, BUT I'M ALSO SETTING UP A NARRATIVE. WHEN YOU GO INSIDE THE GALLERY YOU MIGHT MAKE A CONNECTION BECAUSE YOU'RE GOING TO SMELL SOMETHING THAT IS TOTALLY THE OPPOSITE OF WHAT I HAVE GIVEN YOU – YOU ARE GOING TO SMELL DEATH. BUT YOU CAN USE THE BAG OF LAVENDER AS AN ANTIDOTE TO THIS SMELL. IF A SNAKE BITES YOU, YOU NEED AN ANTIDOTE AND THIS IS WHAT I'M DOING. I'M GIVING YOU AN ANTIDOTE, BUT ALSO I'M GIVING YOU SOMETHING TO TAKE AWAY.

YOUR APPROACH TO PERFORMANCE STANDS IN CONTRAST TO MORE DELEGATED APPROACHES WHERE THE ARTIST REMAINS AT A DISTANCE. CAN YOU SPEAK ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF PROXIMITY AND LIVED EXPERIENCE IN YOUR WORK?
FOR ME PERFORMANCE IS THE DYNAMIC BETWEEN A AND B, OR B AND C AND SO ON. THIS IS WHERE IT HAPPENS. ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN IN PERFORMANCE. FOR EXAMPLE, YOU HAVE AN IDEA THAT YOU'RE GOING TO COME IN WITH A BAG AND A VIDEO BUT THEN THE FUCKING VIDEO DOESN'T WORK OR THE BAG FALLS APART. YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN. I LIKE THIS, AND FOR ME THIS IS WHERE THE PERFORMANCE HAPPENS. THE PERFORMANCE IS IN BETWEEN THE SPACE, BETWEEN THE KILOGRAMS OF AIR THAT WE DON'T SEE, THE WEIGHT OF THE EMPTINESS OF THE EMPTY SPACE THAT WE DON'T FEEL, THAT WE DON'T SEE. PERFORMANCE I THINK IN A LOT OF CASES IS WHAT YOU DON'T SEE, IT'S WHAT YOU FEEL AND WHAT PEOPLE FEEL, BUT YOU CAN'T SEE IT. THAT'S THE INTERESTING THING. YOU CANNOT CONTROL THAT. IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO BE IN CONTROL. *IT'S AN EXCHANGE?*
YES, THAT'S WHAT IT IS. YOU CAN'T EVEN IMAGINE TO CONTROL IT.

WHEN I LAST SAW YOU IN DUBLIN YOU KEPT REPEATING THE PHRASE 'ABANDONMENT AND LOVE' IN RELATION TO THE RUA RED EXHIBITION. HOW HAS THIS IDEA PLAYED OUT IN THE FINAL EXHIBITION?
FOR YEARS, WITHOUT REALISING IT, I'VE BEEN WORKING WITH STORIES; FOUND STORIES, AND FOUND OBJECTS CONTINUOUSLY, CONSCIOUSLY AND UNCONSCIOUSLY. I'VE BEEN COLLECTING. I'M A COLLECTOR. I COLLECT THINGS THAT GIVE MEANING AND WHICH ARE ALREADY LOADED AND THEN I TEND TO ATTACH AN EMOTIONAL ELEMENT TO THEM WHICH IS TOTALLY PROJECTED. FOR EXAMPLE, EVERY TIME I FIND A SHOE IN THE STREET, OR A SOCK, ESPECIALLY A CHILD'S SOCK, IT MAKES ME THINK "SHIT, THIS KID IS GOING TO GET INTO TROUBLE". I RELATE IT TO MY OWN EXPERIENCES. WHEN I WAS A CHILD MY TWIN SISTERS AND I WENT OUT ONE NIGHT. THEY WERE VERY YOUNG, LIKE ONE OR TWO YEARS OLD, AND ONE OF THEM LOST A SHOE. MY MOTHER WAS REALLY PISSED OFF, BECAUSE WE WERE VERY POOR AND I HAD TO GO OUT IN THE DARK LOOKING FOR THE SHOE, BUT I NEVER FOUND IT. SO EVERY TIME I SEE A SHOE ON THE STREET I THINK OF THIS INCIDENT, BUT I ALSO WONDER IF IT'S TRYING TO TELL ME SOMETHING? DID SOMEBODY LOSE THIS ON PURPOSE OR DID THEY JUST LEAVE THEIR BELONGINGS BEHIND? IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SHOW, THESE IDEAS ARE ABOUT ABANDONMENT AND WAR. IT'S ABOUT WHAT YOU LEAVE BEHIND. YOU LEAVE THINGS BEHIND AS A WAY OF GIVING A MEMORY OF YOU, EVEN IF UNCONSCIOUSLY. AND I DO THINK THERE IS AN UNCONSCIOUS SIDE TO HUMAN BEHAVIOUR.

YOU CONTINUOUSLY MINE YOUR BIOGRAPHY. IS THIS A RESULT OF YOUR UPBRINGING?
YEAH, TOTALLY. IN THE END IT'S WHAT YOU GOT. IT'S WHAT YOU HAVE. IT'S THE ONLY THING YOU CAN'T LOSE. THERE ARE THINGS WE REMEMBER BECAUSE WE HAVE TO REMEMBER, FOR INSTANCE; YOU HAVE TO REMEMBER TO PAY A BILL AND YOU CAN FORGET TO BUY THE SALT, OLIVE OIL OR WASHING UP LIQUID WHEN YOU GO TO THE SHOP, BUT THERE ARE CERTAIN THINGS THAT YOU CAN'T FORGET. THESE ARE THE THINGS YOU DREAM OF WHEN YOU LIE DOWN, THEY HAUNT YOU UNFORTUNATELY. WHEN I WAS YOUNG I SAID TO MYSELF THAT I AM NEVER GOING TO ASHAMED OF MY PAST. I WAS SHAMED AND I WAS ASHAMED BY THE INSTITUTION AND SOCIETY BECAUSE OF MY FAMILY, BECAUSE OF WHAT MY FAMILY WAS DOING AND NOT DOING, AND ALSO BECAUSE OF MY STATUS AS A BASTARD. A BASTARD IN TERMS OF DNA, AND THEN I WAS ALSO A POOR BASTARD. I SPENT A LOT OF TIME IN AN INSTITUTION WITH OTHER KIDS AND I FORGOT ABOUT MYSELF, I FORGOT ABOUT MY MISERY BECAUSE I SAW MORE MISERY. I ENDED UP HAVING EMPATHY. EMPATHY IS NOT SOMETHING THAT YOU CREATE, IT HAPPENS. IN A WAY I AM FORTUNATE BECAUSE OF THAT AS I'D RATHER HAVE EMPATHY THAN NOT HAVE IT. I ALSO THINK IT IS A STRATEGY BECAUSE IF I FOCUSED ON MYSELF I WOULD BE VERY MISERABLE, MISERABLE AND UNBEARABLE. SO, I COULDN'T DO THAT. FOR SOME REASON PEOPLE STARTED TO ADDRESS ME AS SOMEBODY, EVEN WHEN I WAS A KID AT THE RED CROSS ORPHANAGE.



THE PEOPLE IN THE KITCHEN USED TO CALL ME "THE LAWYER", "HERE COMES THE LAWYER", BECAUSE OF THE WAY I ARGUED FOR PEOPLE. I ARGUED AND DEFENDED THINGS, OTHER KIDS AND STUFF LIKE THAT. ONCE I SLAPPED A CARER IN THE INSTITUTION FOR ABUSING A KID WHEN THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO BE LOOKING AFTER HIM. I WROTE ABOUT THIS IN MY BOOK.

AT FOURTEEN I SUDDENLY FELT MY VOICE WAS VERY IMPORTANT. WITHOUT KNOWING IT, I WAS A PUNK. WITHOUT KNOWING IT I WAS A REBEL. I THINK I WAS AN ANARCHIST BECAUSE NOBODY COULD EDUCATE ME OR MAKE ME FEEL GUILTY ABOUT WHAT I DID. THIS WAS BECAUSE OF THE MISMANAGEMENT OF ME AND THE FACT THAT EVERYBODY FUCKED UP. FOR THE FIRST SEVEN YEARS I DON'T REMEMBER VERY MUCH ABOUT THE ORPHANAGE. AND THEN MY MOTHER CAME AND I WAS SUDDENLY LEAVING WITH THIS WOMAN. I NEVER BONDED WITH MY FAMILY. THEY COULDN'T EDUCATE ME BECAUSE I DID NOT FEEL GUILTY. THEY BEAT ME UP AND TREATED ME BADLY SO I DID NOT HAVE ANY SENSE OF LOYALTY TOWARDS THEM. IT WAS THE SAME THEN WHEN I WENT TO THE RED CROSS INSTITUTION, I NEVER HAD ANY LOYALTY SO I JUST DID WHAT I WANTED. I COULD SAY FUCK YOU BECAUSE I HAD NO BELIEF IN THEM. I THINK SOMEHOW YOU HAVE TO HAVE RESPECT IN ORDER TO TAKE DIRECTION BUT YOU ALSO HAVE TO HAVE A BOND OR TRUST AND THERE WASN'T ANY. SO BECAUSE OF THAT I WAS TOTALLY UNCONSTRUCTED AND DIFFICULT TO CONTROL.

WOULD YOU SPEAK FURTHER ABOUT THE RED CROSS ORPHANAGE AS IT'S AN IMPORTANT PART OF YOUR LIFE AND PRACTICE?
THE RED CROSS WAS CERTAINLY BETTER THAN MY FAMILY. I MEAN, IN MY FAMILY THERE WAS NO LOVE. THERE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE BUT IT DIDN'T EXIST. THERE WASN'T EVEN PROTECTION. AND THEN I MOVED TO A PLACE WHERE I WAS SUPPOSED TO BE PROTECTED OR MANAGED. I LEFT MY FAMILY, AND I WAS ALONE. THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED WHEN I WENT TO THE RED CROSS. SUDDENLY, YOU HAVE THIS KIND OF NEW ENVIRONMENT, YOU KNOW, WHERE THERE'S NO PRIVACY. YOU'RE NAKED. EVERYBODY'S NAKED. YOU SEE REALITY. YOU MIGHT BE A KID, BUT YOU'RE AWARE. YOU REALLY HAVE A SENSE OF BEING UNLOVED, TOTALLY. IT WAS ONLY MUCH LATER (I THINK I HAD ALREADY WRITTEN THE BOOK) THAT I FOUND OUT THAT THE RED CROSS WAS ACTUALLY A PLACE FOR PEOPLE WITH MENTAL CONDITIONS. I GOOGLED IT AND FOUND A SITE THAT TALKED ABOUT RETARDED CHILDREN. SO THAT'S WHAT I WAS CONSIDERED. I WAS THERE BECAUSE I WAS CONSIDERED RETARDED. THE INSTITUTION WAS TAKING CHILDREN AWAY FROM THE COMMUNITY WHO COULD NOT FIT IN ANY LONGER BECAUSE OF THEIR BACKGROUND OR PSYCHOLOGICAL CONDITIONS OR WHATEVER SOCIAL OR FUCK UP HAD HAPPENED. THE ISSUES WERE MOSTLY EMOTIONAL, I THINK, MAN-MADE RATHER THAN BIOLOGICAL. IT WASN'T LIKE PEOPLE THAT COULDN'T TALK BECAUSE THEY HAVE SOME KIND OF MOTOR PROBLEM, OR THEY WERE BORN DISABLED. SOCIETY MADE THEM DISABLED ALONG WITH POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION. SO, I WAS MADE DISABLED BY GUILT, BY FAILURE.

DOES THE EXHIBITION RESONATE WITH IRELAND'S HISTORY OF INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE?
IT ISN'T ONLY IRELAND. TELL ME A COUNTRY WHERE THERE'S NOT THIS ABUSE? FRANCE HAS THE SAME, AUSTRALIA, THE US. WHEREVER THERE IS A DYNAMIC OF POWER, THERE IS ABUSE THAT IS DOMESTIC OR NOT. THAT'S THE PROBLEM AND THAT'S WHY I REALLY LIKE SUSAN SONTAG'S WRITING. IT'S VERY SIMPLE, THE ONLY SOLUTION FOR THOSE NOT HAVING POWER IS TO GET IT AND THEN THIS WILL HAPPEN WHEN YOU HAVE IT. IN A WAY, I ALWAYS SAY TO MYSELF, I DON'T WANT TO BECOME THE THINGS I HATE.

I RECENTLY WATCHED THE FILM *BLADE RUNNER* AGAIN AND I THOUGHT OF YOUR WORK, HOW OBJECTS EVOKE AND HOLD MEMORY AND THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR MEMORIES IN HOW WE CONSTITUTE OURSELVES.
I LOVE *BLADE RUNNER,* I CRIED WHEN I SAW IT. I THINK MEMORY IS THE ONLY THING WE HAVE AND THAT WE CAN REALLY OWN. NOBODY CAN DENY YOU YOUR MEMORY. YOU CAN HAVE A MISCONCEPTION ABOUT WHAT'S HAPPENED, YOU CAN HAVE YOUR VERSION OF WHAT HAPPENED WHICH IS NOT THE SAME AS SOMEONE ELSE WHO MIGHT HAVE BEEN THERE WITH YOU. THEY HAVE THEIR PERSPECTIVE AND ALSO THEIR POSITION OR POWER. FOR EXAMPLE, YOU ARE GOING TO HAVE A DIFFERENT MEMORY TO THE ONE A TEACHER HAS OF YOU OR SOME OTHER PERSON WHO IS SUPPOSED TO TAKE CARE OF YOU.

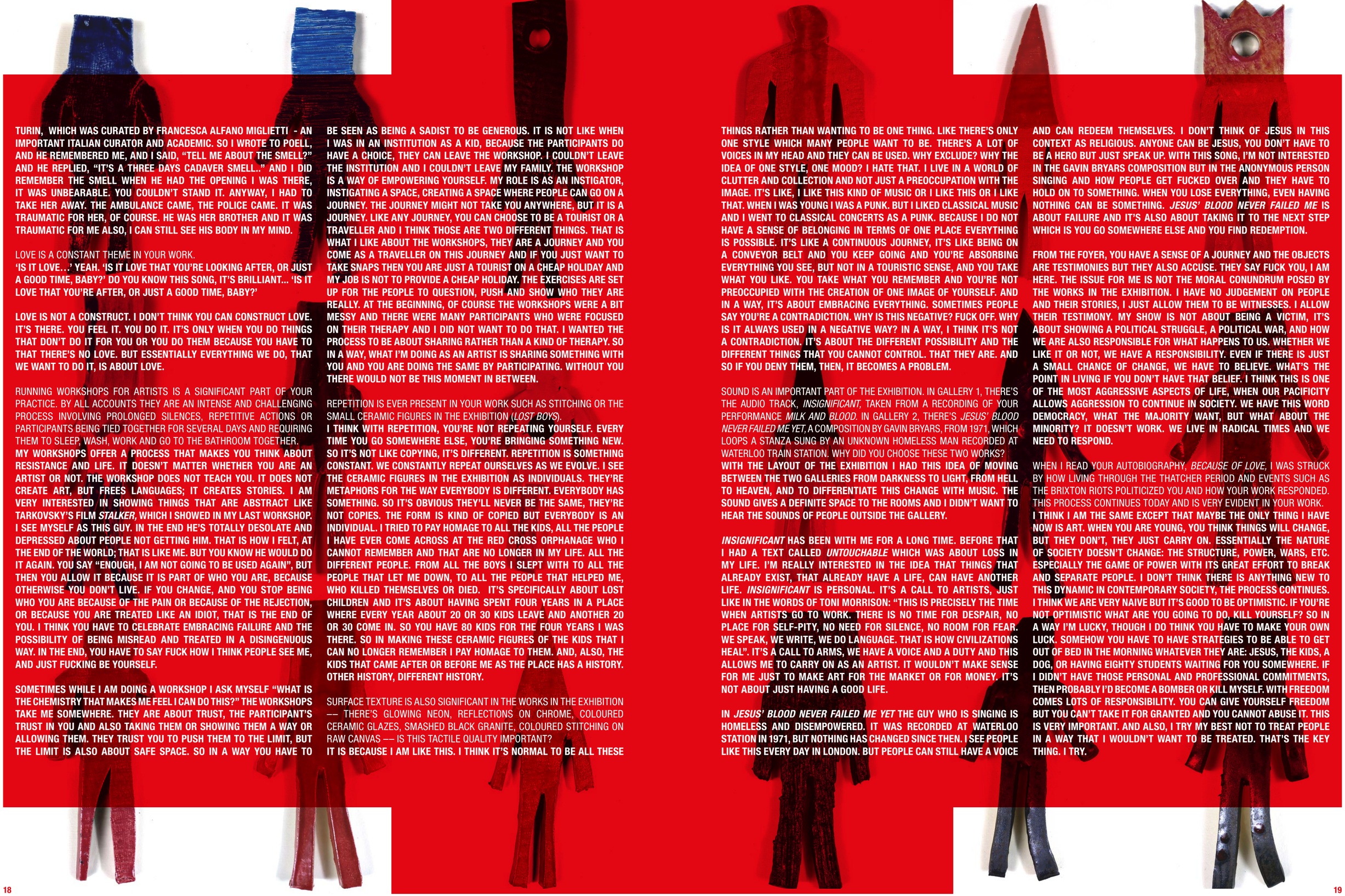
CAN YOU SPEAK ABOUT THE FRACTURED CHROME FIGURE OF A BOY AT THE START OF THE EXHIBITION? IT'S BASED ON THE IMAGE OF A DROWNED REFUGEE BOY FROM SYRIA AND YOU'VE MADE OTHER WORKS USING THIS IMAGE. HERE YOU STAGE THE SCULPTURE ALONGSIDE A NEON SIGN OF THE WORD 'UNLOVED'.
SO, YOU'RE DEALING WITH THE ABUSE OF THE IMAGE. I'M SHOWING BUT I'M ABUSING THE IMAGE OF THIS BOY. I'M TRYING TO CREATE, TO TALK, TO SHOW, TO SOMEHOW *MOSTRARE* THE REALITY OF LIFE AND THEN THERE'S THE NEON LIGHT. NEON HAS BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH ADVERTISING SOMETHING, USUALLY AS A WAY TO TALK ABOUT SOMETHING DESIRED, SO IN A WAY, UNLOVED. IT'S A REFLECTION OF WHAT'S HAPPENED TO THIS KID, THE FACT THAT THIS KID OR THIS FAMILY HAD TO LEAVE THEIR HOME. BUT IT'S ALSO ABOUT US, BECAUSE IN A WAY WE ALLOW THAT TO HAPPEN. I AM ALSO CREATING A NEW CHURCH FOR IT. THIS LITTLE ROOM IS LIKE… YES, YOU COULD SEE IT AS A SEX ROOM, AND IT'S ALSO A CHAPEL. THE BOY IS BEING REPRESENTED TWICE, BUT IT'S NOT ANY LONGER ABOUT THE BOY. IT'S NOT ANY LONGER ABOUT THESE KIDS. IT BECOMES SURREAL. YOU HAVE THIS CRUCIFIX AND THEN YOU HAVE THIS POP THING, SO YOU HAVE A KIND OF SACRED LIFE. WHAT'S HAPPENED, THE DISGRACE, THE TRAUMA, THE TRAGIC, BUT AT THE SAME TIME, THEN YOU HAVE THIS KIND OF DISCO-LIKE ENVIRONMENT. FOR ME, IT'S SHOWING THE WAY WE CANCEL THINGS, BUT IT'S ALSO A PROVOCATION. AS AN ARTIST YOU SHOW, BUT YOU ALSO PLAY WITH ABUSE. YOU GO TO PLACES. YOU WANT TO TAKE IT THERE, TO SAY LET'S TALK ABOUT IT. THERE'S A CONCERN ABOUT DIGNITY, BUT WHAT DIGNITY? WE'VE TAKEN AWAY HIS DIGNITY. WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL THIS SHIT WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT. WE ARE RESPONSIBLE. SO TO THEN MENTALLY MASTURBATE ABOUT SOMEBODY'S DIGNITY, WHEN WE PROFIT FROM THAT WITH ARMS SALES, AND THROUGH POLICY AND THE IGNORANT PEOPLE WE VOTE FOR. WE ARE RESPONSIBLE. SO THEN TO GIVE ME A LECTURE ABOUT THE DIGNITY OF THIS MEMORY. IF ANYTHING WHAT I'M DOING IS MAINTAINING THE MEMORY, NOT OF THE BOY, BUT OF WHAT IS HAPPENING. SO THAT IS WHAT AN ARTIST HAS TO DO, I THINK, IS NOT TO ALLOW IT. THE INCIDENT CAN BECOME A METAPHOR FOR OTHER THINGS. IT COULD BECOME MOMENTS WHERE YOU CAN TALK ABOUT OTHER THINGS ALSO, NOT JUST ABOUT THAT. YOU TALK ABOUT LIFE. YOU TALK ABOUT THE VALUE OF LIFE, BOTH FINANCIALLY AND EMOTIONALLY. SO IN A WAY, THE FACT THAT IT'S STILL TALKED ABOUT MEANS IT'S NOT GOING TO GO AWAY. I COULD HAVE CHOSEN ANOTHER BOY, ANOTHER BODY, BUT I CHOSE NOT TO. I CHOSE IN A WAY TO GIVE A LIFE, A DIFFERENT LIFE TO THE SAME IMAGE SO IT BECOMES ANOTHER IMAGE. YOU HAVE THIS KIND OF VALLEY THAT ALSO REMINDS ME OF DALI'S PAINTING OF THE CRUCIFIX, BUT YOU ALSO PLAY WITH THE LANGUAGE OF COMMERCIAL ART, LIKE JEFF KOONS. ON THE ONE HAND, IT'S LIKE AN OLD CRUCIFIX THAT YOU MIGHT FIND IN AN ANTIQUE SHOP WITH THIS PAINTED BODY THAT'S BROKEN AND MISSING PARTS. BUT ALSO I THOUGHT, LET'S USE THE LANGUAGE OF MODERN SCULPTURE, AND ALSO THE THINGS YOU LIKE TO HAVE IN YOUR LIVING ROOM IF YOU COULD AFFORD THEM, BUT WHICH MAY NOT BE APPROPRIATE.

HOW DO YOU APPROACH TO STAGING YOUR WORK IN THE GALLERY?
I THINK IT'S ABOUT TRUSTING YOURSELF. YOU HAVE YOUR OWN IDEAS; STICK TO YOUR IDEAS, DEVELOP YOUR IDEAS, DON'T LOOK AT PROTOTYPES. DON'T LOOK AT PROTOCOLS OR WHAT IS THE NORM. BREAK THINGS, BUT NOT FOR THE SAKE OF IT. TRY NOT TO RESPECT NORMS. BE WILLING TO NOT FOLLOW, NOT FOR CLEVERNESS, BUT TO MAINTAIN YOUR VISION. IT'S BETTER FOR YOUR VISION NOT TO BE INFORMED BY REGULATION BUT BY NAIVETY, FRESHNESS, AND INNOCENCE. AND SOMETIMES, THINGS WORK, AND SOMETIMES THEY DON'T.

IS BEARING WITNESS IMPORTANT IN YOUR PRACTICE?
I'M NOT DEALING WITH ANYTHING NEW. I AM DEALING WITH THINGS THAT HISTORY REPEATS, OR CONTINUES. WE ARE IN A LOOP. IT'S PART OF THE DYNAMICS OF WHAT MAKE US HUMAN, TO CONTINUOUSLY TRY TO FUCK SOMEBODY ELSE UP FOR WHATEVER REASON, OR NOT TO TAKE CARE OF THEM. I'M ONLY PUTTING TOGETHER HISTORY. I AM ONLY PUTTING TOGETHER MATERIAL. I DON'T CREATE IT. I MIGHT CREATE THE CANVAS, BUT I DON'T CREATE THE STORIES. I CREATE A METAPHOR AND THAT'S WHAT ARTISTS DO. BUT ESSENTIALLY I AM A WITNESS OF MY TIME AND I THINK THAT THIS IS MY ONLY JOB. IF THERE IS A JOB DEFINITION, THEN MY JOB IS TO SHOW. THAT'S WHAT WE DO AS ARTISTS, OR SHOULD BE DOING, TO SHOW, TO *MOSTRARE,* TO BE MONSTERS. THE WORD COMES FROM *MOSTRO,* SOMEBODY THAT SHOWS. WHEN WE SHOW, WE SHOW THINGS WE DON'T LIKE. WE SHOW THE UNCERTAINTY, THE INSECURITY, THE EGO, EVERYTHING. BUT, AS AN ARTIST, IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT MY NEEDS. I THINK THERE IS A VERY CLEAR MISSION, ALTHOUGH MAYBE SUBCONSCIOUS INSIDE ME, TO BE THIS KIND OF ECHO. TO BE A WITNESS AND A WITNESS THAT SHOWS OUR WEAKNESS AND THAT POSSESSES MY TIME ON THIS EARTH AS A KIND OF LIVING, CONSCIOUS BEING. I HAVE SOMETHING TO DO. THAT'S WHY I AM ALIVE. I'M FORTUNATE. I DON'T WORK IN A FACTORY, I HAVE THIS KIND OF VOCATION. I HAVE THIS KIND OF PROFESSION, TO TALK ABOUT THINGS THAT HAPPEN.

IS SMELL SIGNIFICANT FOR YOU?
YES, SO SIGNIFICANT. I LIKE THE SMELL OF THINGS, EVEN SEXUALLY. SOMETIMES, YOU'RE WITH SOMEONE AND THEY ARE LIKE "EWWW, YOU'RE NOT CLEAN" OR SOMETHING AND YOU THINK FUCK IT, THAT'S THE WAY IT IS. YOU'RE PUTTING YOUR DICK UP MY ASS, WHAT DO YOU EXPECT? YES, I SHOULD ALSO PREPARE MYSELF, BUT ACCIDENTS HAPPEN, BODIES DO THINGS. SOMETIMES, PEOPLE IN THE PAST ACCUSED ME OF SMELLING, OR SMELLING TOO MUCH; AND IT REALLY PISSES ME OFF. WHEN I WAS LEARNING TO DRIVE THE CAR THIS ASSHOLE SAID TO ME (THE GUY THAT WAS TEACHING ME, HE WAS A RACIST ALSO) "YOU REALLY SMELL VERY STRONG. CAN YOU PUT SOME PERFUME ON, BECAUSE WE'RE IN THE CAR AND YOU SWEAT A LOT?". AND I JUST KIND OF FOUND IT OFFENSIVE. FUCKING ASSHOLE. I LIKE THE SMELL OF BODIES, I LIKE THE SMELL OF THINGS AS THEY ARE. I'M NOT AGAINST ANY EXPERIENCE, IF IT'S NATURAL. YEAH, YOU MIGHT NOT LIKE IT. THIS IS LIFE. THINGS SMELL. ROTTEN FRUIT.

SO TELL ME ABOUT THE SMELLS IN THE EXHIBITION.
WELL, I WAS THINKING ABOUT LIFE AND DEATH IN A WHITE CLINICAL SPACE, A CLEAN SPACE WITH AIR CONDITIONING, AND I DON'T KNOW WHY OR HOW IT HAPPENED, SOMETIMES I DON'T REALLY HAVE A PLAN, IT JUST HAPPENS. I JUST STARTED TO THINK ABOUT SMELLS AND THE BODY AND WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU DIE. BUT ALSO, I WITNESSED TWO DEAD BODIES. ONE WAS OUTSIDE WHEN I WAS EIGHTEEN. I WENT INTO A FOREST. A COUPLE OF DAYS BEFORE WE HAD HEARD SOME SHOOTING, IT WAS WHEN I WAS WORKING IN A PIZZERIA IN NORTHERN ITALY, IN COMO. I WENT IN THIS LITTLE FOREST WHERE ALSO SOMEBODY TOOK ME THERE ONCE FOR SEX, AND THERE WAS THIS BODY. SOMEBODY HAD FOUND IT. WE HAD HEARD THAT THERE WAS A BODY AND THE POLICE HADN'T ARRIVED YET. SO THIS BODY… HE HAD A LOT OF… HE WAS LIKE YELLOW. HE WAS THERE FOR TWO DAYS. BUT I NOTICED HE WAS SHOT WITH THIS KIND OF SHOTGUN. IT HAD A LOT OF PELLETS. LIKE THE MAFIA. I REMEMBER HIS COLOUR, I REMEMBER HIS BODY. I REMEMBER IT. AND I REMEMBER THE COLOUR OF HIS SHIRT AND THE GROUND MARKED WITH THE BLOOD. AND I DON'T REMEMBER IF I SMELLED IT. BUT THEN TWO YEARS AGO, 2017, I FOUND A BODY, A DEAD BODY. IT WAS THERE FOR THREE OR FOUR DAYS. AS SOON AS I OPENED THE FRONT DOOR, I KNEW HE WAS DEAD. BEFORE I EVEN SAW HIM, I KNEW. IT WAS AROUND SIX O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING AND MY BELL GOES, AND IT'S THE SISTER OF THIS GUY THAT LIVES ON THE FLOOR BELOW ME. SHE'S A BIT AGITATED. HER BROTHER WAS SUPPOSED TO WORK ON SUNDAY BUT HE DIDN'T GO IN AND HIS WORK CALLED HER. SO SHE CAME KNOCKING ON MY DOOR. THERE'S A SENSE OF TENSION. IT'S WEIRD, YOU KNOW. SO I GO UP WITH HER, AND I OPEN HIS DOOR WITH A KEY I GOT FROM THE LADY DOWNSTAIRS. AND AS SOON AS I OPEN THE DOOR, I SMELLED DEATH. I SMELLED DEATH. YEAH. AND THE LIGHT WAS ON, YOU KNOW. THE LIGHT WAS ON, AND I WENT DOWN THE CORRIDOR. AND SHE WAS BEHIND ME, ALREADY FREAKING OUT, EVEN BEFORE YOU SAW THE BODY. THEN I SAW THE BODY AND I SAW BLOOD ON THE FLOOR. IT WAS YELLOW. IT WAS KIND OF YELLOW-MAROON. BRUISED. THE CARPET WAS SOAKED IN BLOOD. HE WAS DIABETIC, HE HAD A DIABETIC FIT. I THINK HE WAS PROBABLY DRUNK AND COULDN'T GET TO THE FRIDGE. IN THE FRIDGE HE ONLY HAD MEDICINE AND BEER, AND SOME OFF MILK. AND I REMEMBER THE SMELL. I REMEMBER. IT WAS LIKE TWO OR THREE DAYS, AT LEAST. HE PROBABLY DIED ON THE FRIDAY NIGHT, OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT. SO THEN IT REMINDED ME OF THIS SMELL BY CAROL CHRISTIAN POELL, THE ARTIST/DESIGNER, FOR ONE OF HIS FASHION SHOWS IN 1999 IN



TURIN, WHICH WAS CURATED BY FRANCESCA ALFANO MIGLIETTI - AN IMPORTANT ITALIAN CURATOR AND ACADEMIC. SO I WROTE TO POELL, AND HE REMEMBERED ME, AND I SAID, "TELL ME ABOUT THE SMELL?" AND HE REPLIED, "IT'S A THREE DAYS CADAVER SMELL.." AND I DID REMEMBER THE SMELL WHEN HE HAD THE OPENING I WAS THERE, IT WAS UNBEARABLE. YOU COULDN'T STAND IT. ANYWAY, I HAD TO TAKE HER AWAY. THE AMBULANCE CAME, THE POLICE CAME. IT WAS TRAUMATIC FOR HER, OF COURSE. HE WAS HER BROTHER AND IT WAS TRAUMATIC FOR ME ALSO, I CAN STILL SEE HIS BODY IN MY MIND.

LOVE IS A CONSTANT THEME IN YOUR WORK.
'IS IT LOVE…' YEAH. 'IS IT LOVE THAT YOU'RE LOOKING AFTER, OR JUST A GOOD TIME, BABY?' DO YOU KNOW THIS SONG, IT'S BRILLIANT... 'IS IT LOVE THAT YOU'RE AFTER, OR JUST A GOOD TIME, BABY?'

LOVE IS NOT A CONSTRUCT. I DON'T THINK YOU CAN CONSTRUCT LOVE. IT'S THERE. YOU FEEL IT. YOU DO IT. IT'S ONLY WHEN YOU DO THINGS THAT DON'T DO IT FOR YOU OR YOU DO THEM BECAUSE YOU HAVE TO THAT THERE'S NO LOVE. BUT ESSENTIALLY EVERYTHING WE DO, THAT WE WANT TO DO IT, IS ABOUT LOVE.

RUNNING WORKSHOPS FOR ARTISTS IS A SIGNIFICANT PART OF YOUR PRACTICE. BY ALL ACCOUNTS THEY ARE AN INTENSE AND CHALLENGING PROCESS INVOLVING PROLONGED SILENCES, REPETITIVE ACTIONS OR PARTICIPANTS BEING TIED TOGETHER FOR SEVERAL DAYS AND REQUIRING THEM TO SLEEP, WASH, WORK AND GO TO THE BATHROOM TOGETHER.
MY WORKSHOPS OFFER A PROCESS THAT MAKES YOU THINK ABOUT RESISTANCE AND LIFE. IT DOESN'T MATTER WHETHER YOU ARE AN ARTIST OR NOT. THE WORKSHOP DOES NOT TEACH YOU. IT DOES NOT CREATE ART, BUT FREES LANGUAGES; IT CREATES STORIES. I AM VERY INTERESTED IN SHOWING THINGS THAT ARE ABSTRACT LIKE TARKOVSKY'S FILM *STALKER*, WHICH I SHOWED IN MY LAST WORKSHOP. I SEE MYSELF AS THIS GUY. IN THE END HE'S TOTALLY DESOLATE AND DEPRESSED ABOUT PEOPLE NOT GETTING HIM. THAT IS HOW I FELT, AT THE END OF THE WORLD; THAT IS LIKE ME. BUT YOU KNOW HE WOULD DO IT AGAIN. YOU SAY "ENOUGH, I AM NOT GOING TO BE USED AGAIN", BUT THEN YOU ALLOW IT BECAUSE IT IS PART OF WHO YOU ARE, BECAUSE OTHERWISE YOU DON'T LIVE. IF YOU CHANGE, AND YOU STOP BEING WHO YOU ARE BECAUSE OF THE PAIN OR BECAUSE OF THE REJECTION, OR BECAUSE YOU ARE TREATED LIKE AN IDIOT, THAT IS THE END OF YOU. I THINK YOU HAVE TO CELEBRATE EMBRACING FAILURE AND THE POSSIBILITY OF BEING MISREAD AND TREATED IN A DISINGENUOUS WAY. IN THE END, YOU HAVE TO SAY FUCK HOW I THINK PEOPLE SEE ME, AND JUST FUCKING BE YOURSELF.

SOMETIMES WHILE I AM DOING A WORKSHOP I ASK MYSELF "WHAT IS THE CHEMISTRY THAT MAKES ME FEEL I CAN DO THIS?" THE WORKSHOPS TAKE ME SOMEWHERE. THEY ARE ABOUT TRUST, THE PARTICIPANT'S TRUST IN YOU AND ALSO TAKING THEM OR SHOWING THEM A WAY OR ALLOWING THEM. THEY TRUST YOU TO PUSH THEM TO THE LIMIT, BUT THE LIMIT IS ALSO ABOUT SAFE SPACE. SO IN A WAY YOU HAVE TO BE SEEN AS BEING A SADIST TO BE GENEROUS. IT IS NOT LIKE WHEN I WAS IN AN INSTITUTION AS A KID, BECAUSE THE PARTICIPANTS DO HAVE A CHOICE, THEY CAN LEAVE THE WORKSHOP. I COULDN'T LEAVE THE INSTITUTION AND I COULDN'T LEAVE MY FAMILY. THE WORKSHOP IS A WAY OF EMPOWERING YOURSELF. MY ROLE IS AS AN INSTIGATOR, INSTIGATING A SPACE, CREATING A SPACE WHERE PEOPLE CAN GO ON A JOURNEY. THE JOURNEY MIGHT NOT TAKE YOU ANYWHERE, BUT IT IS A JOURNEY. LIKE ANY JOURNEY, YOU CAN CHOOSE TO BE A TOURIST OR A TRAVELLER AND I THINK THOSE ARE TWO DIFFERENT THINGS. THAT IS WHAT I LIKE ABOUT THE WORKSHOPS, THEY ARE A JOURNEY AND YOU COME AS A TRAVELLER ON THIS JOURNEY AND IF YOU JUST WANT TO TAKE SNAPS THEN YOU ARE JUST A TOURIST ON A CHEAP HOLIDAY AND MY JOB IS NOT TO PROVIDE A CHEAP HOLIDAY. THE EXERCISES ARE SET UP FOR THE PEOPLE TO QUESTION, PUSH AND SHOW WHO THEY ARE REALLY. AT THE BEGINNING, OF COURSE THE WORKSHOPS WERE A BIT MESSY AND THERE WERE MANY PARTICIPANTS WHO WERE FOCUSED ON THEIR THERAPY AND I DID NOT WANT TO DO THAT. I WANTED THE PROCESS TO BE ABOUT SHARING RATHER THAN A KIND OF THERAPY. SO IN A WAY, WHAT I'M DOING AS AN ARTIST IS SHARING SOMETHING WITH YOU AND YOU ARE DOING THE SAME BY PARTICIPATING. WITHOUT YOU THERE WOULD NOT BE THIS MOMENT IN BETWEEN.

REPETITION IS EVER PRESENT IN YOUR WORK SUCH AS STITCHING OR THE SMALL CERAMIC FIGURES IN THE EXHIBITION (*LOST BOYS*).
I THINK WITH REPETITION, YOU'RE NOT REPEATING YOURSELF. EVERY TIME YOU GO SOMEWHERE ELSE, YOU'RE BRINGING SOMETHING NEW. SO IT'S NOT LIKE COPYING, IT'S DIFFERENT. REPETITION IS SOMETHING CONSTANT. WE CONSTANTLY REPEAT OURSELVES AS WE EVOLVE. I SEE THE CERAMIC FIGURES IN THE EXHIBITION AS INDIVIDUALS. THEY'RE METAPHORS FOR THE WAY EVERYBODY IS DIFFERENT. EVERYBODY HAS SOMETHING. SO IT'S OBVIOUS THEY'LL NEVER BE THE SAME, THEY'RE NOT COPIES. THE FORM IS KIND OF COPIED BUT EVERYBODY IS AN INDIVIDUAL. I TRIED TO PAY HOMAGE TO ALL THE KIDS, ALL THE PEOPLE I HAVE EVER COME ACROSS AT THE RED CROSS ORPHANAGE WHO I CANNOT REMEMBER AND THAT ARE NO LONGER IN MY LIFE. ALL THE DIFFERENT PEOPLE. FROM ALL THE BOYS I SLEPT WITH TO ALL THE PEOPLE THAT LET ME DOWN, TO ALL THE PEOPLE THAT HELPED ME, WHO KILLED THEMSELVES OR DIED. IT'S SPECIFICALLY ABOUT LOST CHILDREN AND IT'S ABOUT HAVING SPENT FOUR YEARS IN A PLACE WHERE EVERY YEAR ABOUT 20 OR 30 KIDS LEAVE AND ANOTHER 20 OR 30 COME IN. SO YOU HAVE 80 KIDS FOR THE FOUR YEARS I WAS THERE. SO IN MAKING THESE CERAMIC FIGURES OF THE KIDS THAT I CAN NO LONGER REMEMBER I PAY HOMAGE TO THEM. AND, ALSO, THE KIDS THAT CAME AFTER OR BEFORE ME AS THE PLACE HAS A HISTORY. OTHER HISTORY, DIFFERENT HISTORY.

SURFACE TEXTURE IS ALSO SIGNIFICANT IN THE WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION –– THERE'S GLOWING NEON, REFLECTIONS ON CHROME, COLOURED CERAMIC GLAZES, SMASHED BLACK GRANITE, COLOURED STITCHING ON RAW CANVAS –– IS THIS TACTILE QUALITY IMPORTANT?
IT IS BECAUSE I AM LIKE THIS. I THINK IT'S NORMAL TO BE ALL THESE THINGS RATHER THAN WANTING TO BE ONE THING. LIKE THERE'S ONLY ONE STYLE WHICH MANY PEOPLE WANT TO BE. THERE'S A LOT OF VOICES IN MY HEAD AND THEY CAN BE USED. WHY EXCLUDE? WHY THE IDEA OF ONE STYLE, ONE MOOD? I HATE THAT. I LIVE IN A WORLD OF CLUTTER AND COLLECTION AND NOT JUST A PREOCCUPATION WITH THE IMAGE. IT'S LIKE, I LIKE THIS KIND OF MUSIC OR I LIKE THIS OR I LIKE THAT. WHEN I WAS YOUNG I WAS A PUNK. BUT I LIKED CLASSICAL MUSIC AND I WENT TO CLASSICAL CONCERTS AS A PUNK. BECAUSE I DO NOT HAVE A SENSE OF BELONGING IN TERMS OF ONE PLACE EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE. IT'S LIKE A CONTINUOUS JOURNEY, IT'S LIKE BEING ON A CONVEYOR BELT AND YOU KEEP GOING AND YOU'RE ABSORBING EVERYTHING YOU SEE, BUT NOT IN A TOURISTIC SENSE, AND YOU TAKE WHAT YOU LIKE. YOU TAKE WHAT YOU REMEMBER AND YOU'RE NOT PREOCCUPIED WITH THE CREATION OF ONE IMAGE OF YOURSELF. AND IN A WAY, IT'S ABOUT EMBRACING EVERYTHING. SOMETIMES PEOPLE SAY YOU'RE A CONTRADICTION. WHY IS THIS NEGATIVE? FUCK OFF. WHY IS IT ALWAYS USED IN A NEGATIVE WAY? IN A WAY, I THINK IT'S NOT A CONTRADICTION. IT'S ABOUT THE DIFFERENT POSSIBILITY AND THE DIFFERENT THINGS THAT YOU CANNOT CONTROL. THAT THEY ARE. AND SO IF YOU DENY THEM, THEN, IT BECOMES A PROBLEM.

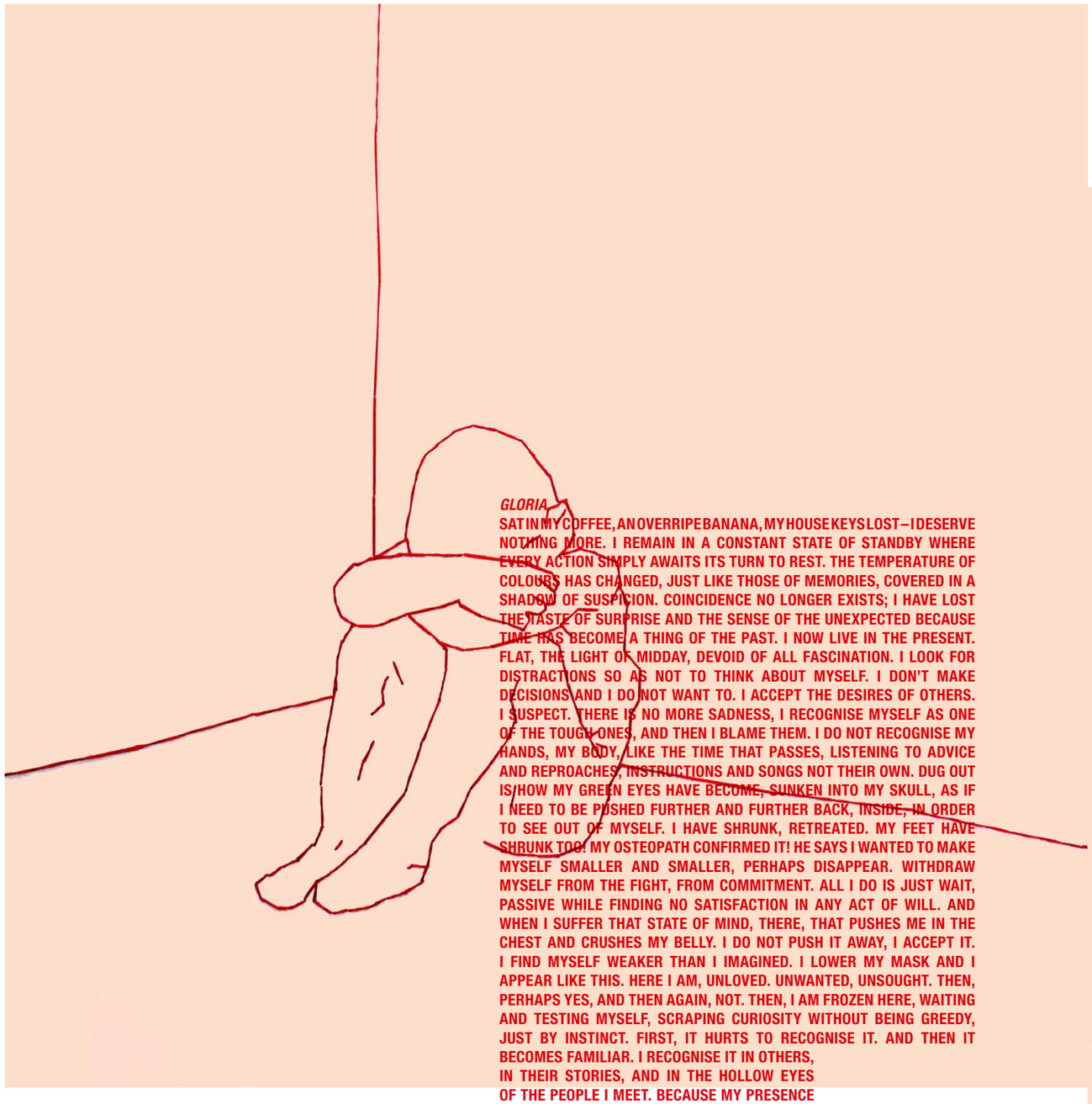
SOUND IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE EXHIBITION. IN GALLERY 1, THERE'S THE AUDIO TRACK, *INSIGNIFICANT*, TAKEN FROM A RECORDING OF YOUR PERFORMANCE *MILK AND BLOOD*. IN GALLERY 2, THERE'S *JESUS' BLOOD NEVER FAILED ME YET*, A COMPOSITION BY GAVIN BRYARS, FROM 1971, WHICH LOOPS A STANZA SUNG BY AN UNKNOWN HOMELESS MAN RECORDED AT WATERLOO TRAIN STATION. WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THESE TWO WORKS?
WITH THE LAYOUT OF THE EXHIBITION I HAD THIS IDEA OF MOVING BETWEEN THE TWO GALLERIES FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT, FROM HELL TO HEAVEN, AND TO DIFFERENTIATE THIS CHANGE WITH MUSIC. THE SOUND GIVES A DEFINITE SPACE TO THE ROOMS AND I DIDN'T WANT TO HEAR THE SOUNDS OF PEOPLE OUTSIDE THE GALLERY.

INSIGNIFICANT HAS BEEN WITH ME FOR A LONG TIME. BEFORE THAT I HAD A TEXT CALLED *UNTOUCHABLE* WHICH WAS ABOUT LOSS IN MY LIFE. I'M REALLY INTERESTED IN THE IDEA THAT THINGS THAT ALREADY EXIST, THAT ALREADY HAVE A LIFE, CAN HAVE ANOTHER LIFE. *INSIGNIFICANT* IS PERSONAL. IT'S A CALL TO ARTISTS, JUST LIKE IN THE WORDS OF TONI MORRISON: "THIS IS PRECISELY THE TIME WHEN ARTISTS GO TO WORK. THERE IS NO TIME FOR DESPAIR, NO PLACE FOR SELF-PITY, NO NEED FOR SILENCE, NO ROOM FOR FEAR. WE SPEAK, WE WRITE, WE DO LANGUAGE. THAT IS HOW CIVILIZATIONS HEAL". IT'S A CALL TO ARMS, WE HAVE A VOICE AND A DUTY AND THIS ALLOWS ME TO CARRY ON AS AN ARTIST. IT WOULDN'T MAKE SENSE FOR ME JUST TO MAKE ART FOR THE MARKET OR FOR MONEY. IT'S NOT ABOUT JUST HAVING A GOOD LIFE.

IN *JESUS' BLOOD NEVER FAILED ME YET* THE GUY WHO IS SINGING IS HOMELESS AND DISEMPOWERED. IT WAS RECORDED AT WATERLOO STATION IN 1971, BUT NOTHING HAS CHANGED SINCE THEN. I SEE PEOPLE LIKE THIS EVERY DAY IN LONDON. BUT PEOPLE CAN STILL HAVE A VOICE AND CAN REDEEM THEMSELVES. I DON'T THINK OF JESUS IN THIS CONTEXT AS RELIGIOUS. ANYONE CAN BE JESUS, YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A HERO BUT JUST SPEAK UP. WITH THIS SONG, I'M NOT INTERESTED IN THE GAVIN BRYARS COMPOSITION BUT IN THE ANONYMOUS PERSON SINGING AND HOW PEOPLE GET FUCKED OVER AND THEY HAVE TO HOLD ON TO SOMETHING. WHEN YOU LOSE EVERYTHING, EVEN HAVING NOTHING CAN BE SOMETHING. *JESUS' BLOOD NEVER FAILED ME* IS ABOUT FAILURE AND IT'S ALSO ABOUT TAKING IT TO THE NEXT STEP WHICH IS YOU GO SOMEWHERE ELSE AND YOU FIND REDEMPTION.

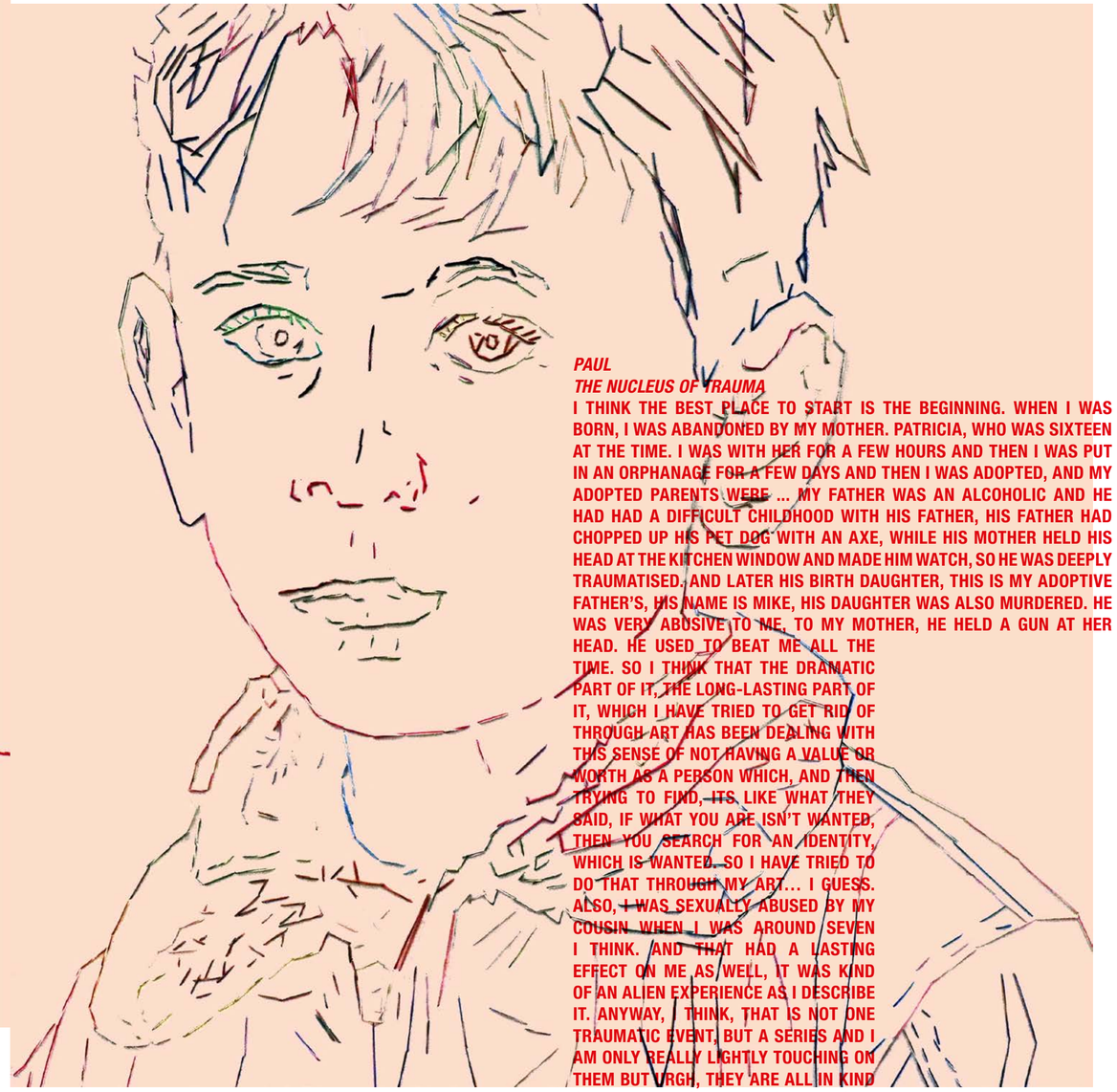
FROM THE FOYER, YOU HAVE A SENSE OF A JOURNEY AND THE OBJECTS ARE TESTIMONIES BUT THEY ALSO ACCUSE. THEY SAY FUCK YOU, I AM HERE. THE ISSUE FOR ME IS NOT THE MORAL CONUNDRUM POSED BY THE WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION. I HAVE NO JUDGEMENT ON PEOPLE AND THEIR STORIES, I JUST ALLOW THEM TO BE WITNESSES. I ALLOW THEIR TESTIMONY. MY SHOW IS NOT ABOUT BEING A VICTIM, IT'S ABOUT SHOWING A POLITICAL STRUGGLE, A POLITICAL WAR, AND HOW WE ARE ALSO RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT HAPPENS TO US. WHETHER WE LIKE IT OR NOT, WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY. EVEN IF THERE IS JUST A SMALL CHANCE OF CHANGE, WE HAVE TO BELIEVE. WHAT'S THE POINT IN LIVING IF YOU DON'T HAVE THAT BELIEF. I THINK THIS IS ONE OF THE MOST AGGRESSIVE ASPECTS OF LIFE, WHEN OUR PACIFICITY ALLOWS AGGRESSION TO CONTINUE IN SOCIETY. WE HAVE THIS WORD DEMOCRACY, WHAT THE MAJORITY WANT, BUT WHAT ABOUT THE MINORITY? IT DOESN'T WORK. WE LIVE IN RADICAL TIMES AND WE NEED TO RESPOND.

WHEN I READ YOUR AUTOBIOGRAPHY, *BECAUSE OF LOVE*, I WAS STRUCK BY HOW LIVING THROUGH THE THATCHER PERIOD AND EVENTS SUCH AS THE BRIXTON RIOTS POLITICIZED YOU AND HOW YOUR WORK RESPONDED. THIS PROCESS CONTINUES TODAY AND IS VERY EVIDENT IN YOUR WORK.
I THINK I AM THE SAME EXCEPT THAT MAYBE THE ONLY THING I HAVE NOW IS ART. WHEN YOU ARE YOUNG, YOU THINK THINGS WILL CHANGE, BUT THEY DON'T, THEY JUST CARRY ON. ESSENTIALLY THE NATURE OF SOCIETY DOESN'T CHANGE: THE STRUCTURE, POWER, WARS, ETC. ESPECIALLY THE GAME OF POWER WITH ITS GREAT EFFORT TO BREAK AND SEPARATE PEOPLE. I DON'T THINK THERE IS ANYTHING NEW TO THIS DYNAMIC IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY, THE PROCESS CONTINUES. I THINK WE ARE VERY NAIVE BUT IT'S GOOD TO BE OPTIMISTIC. IF YOU'RE NOT OPTIMISTIC WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO, KILL YOURSELF? SO IN A WAY I'M LUCKY, THOUGH I DO THINK YOU HAVE TO MAKE YOUR OWN LUCK. SOMEHOW YOU HAVE TO HAVE STRATEGIES TO BE ABLE TO GET OUT OF BED IN THE MORNING WHATEVER THEY ARE: JESUS, THE KIDS, A DOG, OR HAVING EIGHTY STUDENTS WAITING FOR YOU SOMEWHERE. IF I DIDN'T HAVE THOSE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL COMMITMENTS, THEN PROBABLY I'D BECOME A BOMBER OR KILL MYSELF. WITH FREEDOM COMES LOTS OF RESPONSIBILITY. YOU CAN GIVE YOURSELF FREEDOM BUT YOU CAN'T TAKE IT FOR GRANTED AND YOU CANNOT ABUSE IT. THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT. AND ALSO, I TRY MY BEST NOT TO TREAT PEOPLE IN A WAY THAT I WOULDN'T WANT TO BE TREATED. THAT'S THE KEY THING. I TRY.



GLORIA

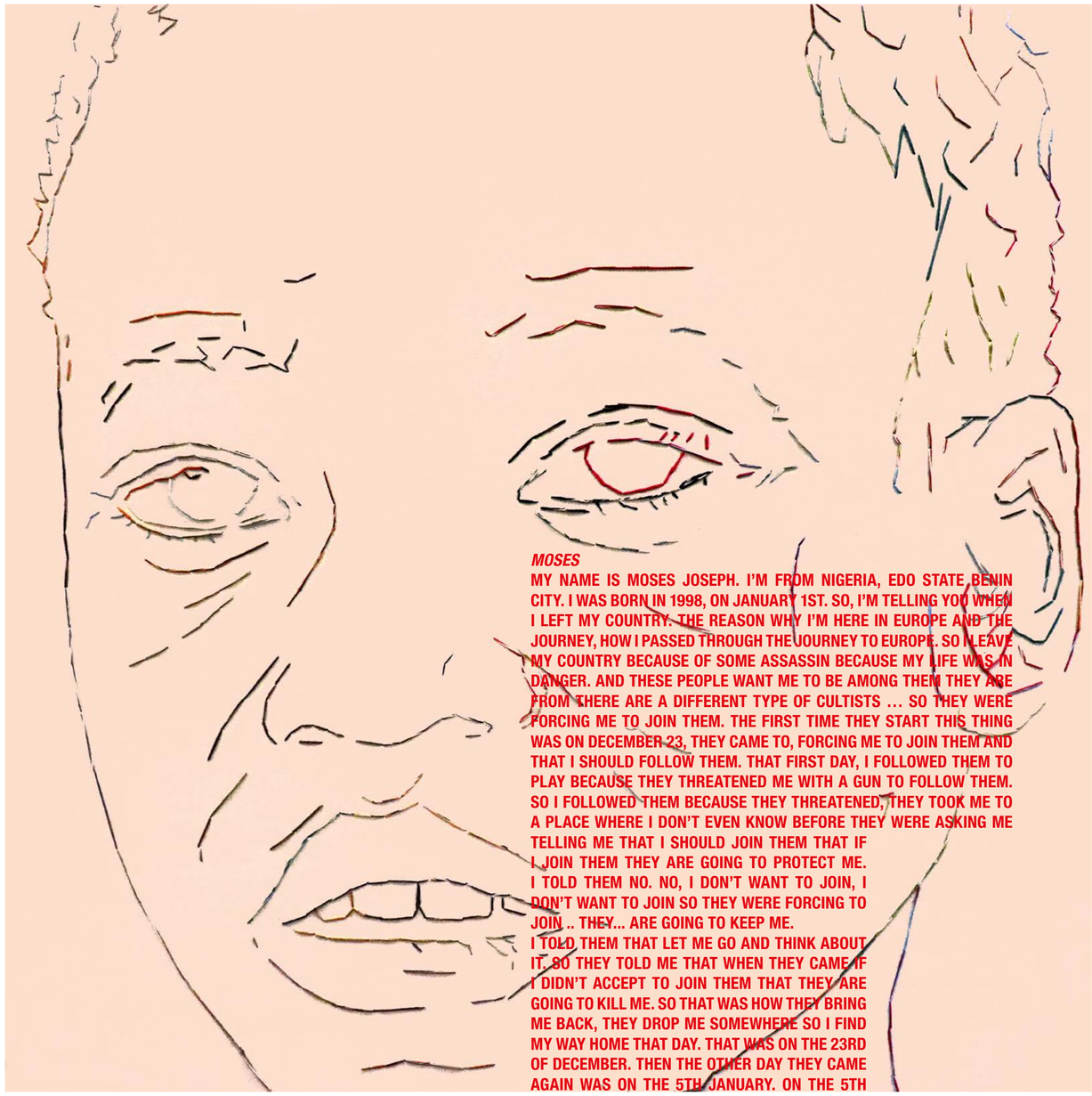
SAT IN MY COFFEE, AN OVERRIPE BANANA, MY HOUSE KEYS LOST – I DESERVE NOTHING MORE. I REMAIN IN A CONSTANT STATE OF STANDBY WHERE EVERY ACTION SIMPLY AWAITS ITS TURN TO REST. THE TEMPERATURE OF COLOURS HAS CHANGED, JUST LIKE THOSE OF MEMORIES, COVERED IN A SHADOW OF SUSPICION. COINCIDENCE NO LONGER EXISTS; I HAVE LOST THE TASTE OF SURPRISE AND THE SENSE OF THE UNEXPECTED BECAUSE TIME HAS BECOME A THING OF THE PAST. I NOW LIVE IN THE PRESENT. FLAT, THE LIGHT OF MIDDAY, DEVOID OF ALL FASCINATION. I LOOK FOR DISTRACTIONS SO AS NOT TO THINK ABOUT MYSELF. I DON'T MAKE DECISIONS AND I DO NOT WANT TO. I ACCEPT THE DESIRES OF OTHERS. I SUSPECT. THERE IS NO MORE SADNESS, I RECOGNISE MYSELF AS ONE OF THE TOUGH ONES, AND THEN I BLAME THEM. I DO NOT RECOGNISE MY HANDS, MY BODY, LIKE THE TIME THAT PASSES, LISTENING TO ADVICE AND REPROACHES, INSTRUCTIONS AND SONGS NOT THEIR OWN. DUG OUT IS/HOW MY GREEN EYES HAVE BECOME, SUNKEN INTO MY SKULL, AS IF I NEED TO BE PUSHED FURTHER AND FURTHER BACK, INSIDE, IN ORDER TO SEE OUT OF MYSELF. I HAVE SHRUNK, RETREATED. MY FEET HAVE SHRUNK TOO! MY OSTEOPATH CONFIRMED IT! HE SAYS I WANTED TO MAKE MYSELF SMALLER AND SMALLER, PERHAPS DISAPPEAR. WITHDRAW MYSELF FROM THE FIGHT, FROM COMMITMENT. ALL I DO IS JUST WAIT, PASSIVE WHILE FINDING NO SATISFACTION IN ANY ACT OF WILL. AND WHEN I SUFFER THAT STATE OF MIND, THERE, THAT PUSHES ME IN THE CHEST AND CRUSHES MY BELLY. I DO NOT PUSH IT AWAY, I ACCEPT IT. I FIND MYSELF WEAKER THAN I IMAGINED. I LOWER MY MASK AND I APPEAR LIKE THIS. HERE I AM, UNLOVED. UNWANTED, UNSOUGHT. THEN, PERHAPS YES, AND THEN AGAIN, NOT. THEN, I AM FROZEN HERE, WAITING AND TESTING MYSELF, SCRAPING CURIOSITY WITHOUT BEING GREEDY, JUST BY INSTINCT. FIRST, IT HURTS TO RECOGNISE IT. AND THEN IT BECOMES FAMILIAR. I RECOGNISE IT IN OTHERS, IN THEIR STORIES, AND IN THE HOLLOW EYES OF THE PEOPLE I MEET. BECAUSE MY PRESENCE IS ANNOYING, THAT'S HOW I FEEL. IF I EXIST, THEY WILL ABANDON ME AGAIN. STRENGTH IS A PHYSICAL ASSET. LIKE FEELINGS. IT SEEMS TO ME TO BE LIKE THIS: I HAVE FELT THEM ALL, I HAVE GIVEN THEM ALL, HAVE I NONE LEFT? I AM AFRAID EVEN TO THINK ABOUT IT. I AM ALWAYS AFRAID. I KNOW THE PAIN AND I AM AFRAID OF IT. AND THEN, SOMETIMES, I FEEL THAT PAIN, THERE, SO DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHER PAINS, SO MINE THAT I BECOME JEALOUS OF IT. BECAUSE I AM THIS PAIN, I DESERVE THAT STORY, THAT WHICH WAS NOT YET INEVITABLE, THAT STORY MADE OF PAST CONDITIONAL, FAT HYPOTHETICAL AND VISCOUS PHRASES WHICH HAVE LATCHED ON TO MY THOUGHTS.



PAUL

THE NUCLEUS OF TRAUMA

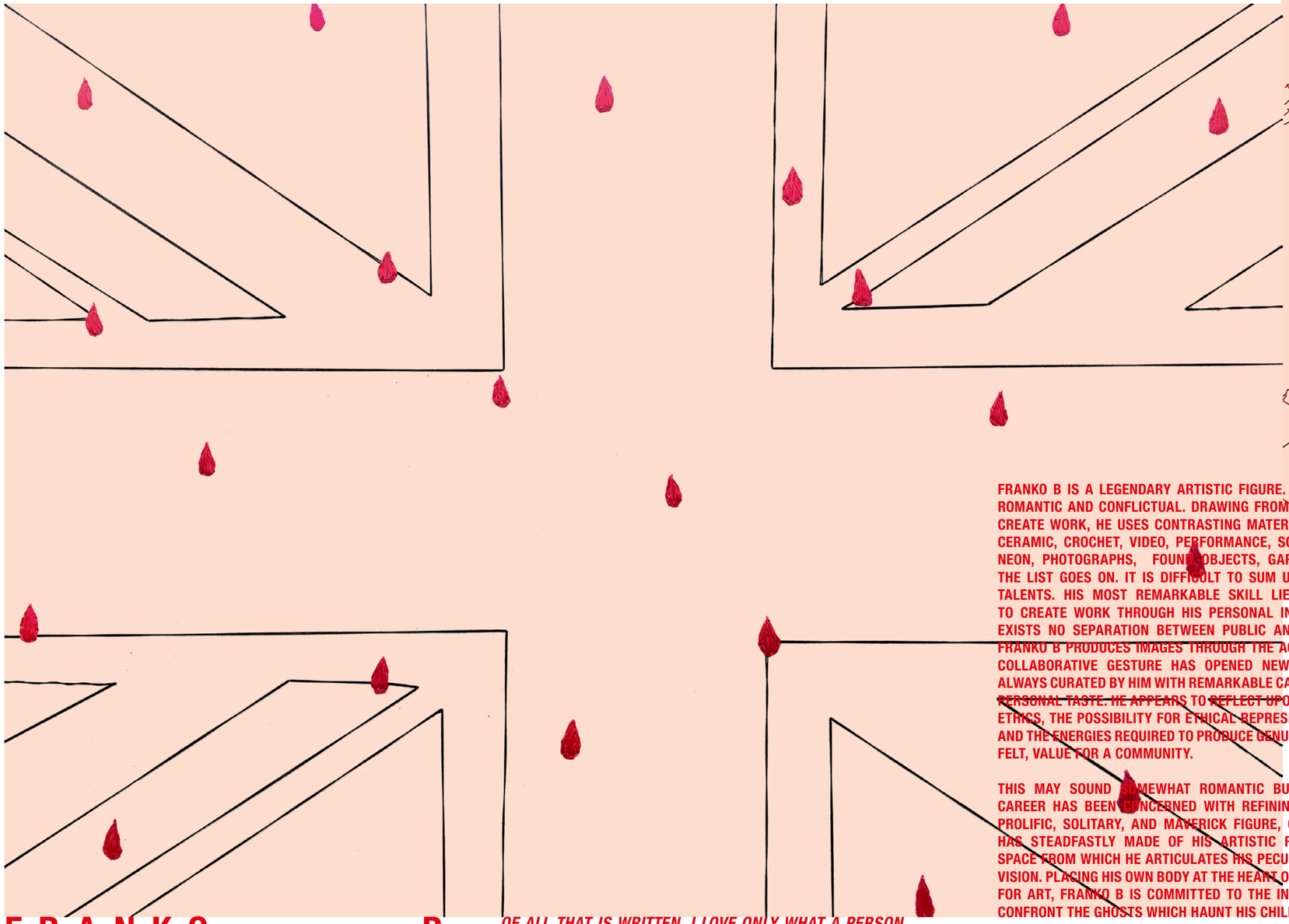
I THINK THE BEST PLACE TO START IS THE BEGINNING. WHEN I WAS BORN, I WAS ABANDONED BY MY MOTHER. PATRICIA, WHO WAS SIXTEEN AT THE TIME. I WAS WITH HER FOR A FEW HOURS AND THEN I WAS PUT IN AN ORPHANAGE FOR A FEW DAYS AND THEN I WAS ADOPTED, AND MY ADOPTED PARENTS WERE ... MY FATHER WAS AN ALCOHOLIC AND HE HAD HAD A DIFFICULT CHILDHOOD WITH HIS FATHER, HIS FATHER HAD CHOPPED UP HIS PET DOG WITH AN AXE, WHILE HIS MOTHER HELD HIS HEAD AT THE KITCHEN WINDOW AND MADE HIM WATCH, SO HE WAS DEEPLY TRAUMATISED. AND LATER HIS BIRTH DAUGHTER, THIS IS MY ADOPTIVE FATHER'S, HIS NAME IS MIKE, HIS DAUGHTER WAS ALSO MURDERED. HE WAS VERY ABUSIVE TO ME, TO MY MOTHER, HE HELD A GUN AT HER HEAD. HE USED TO BEAT ME ALL THE TIME. SO I THINK THAT THE DRAMATIC PART OF IT, THE LONG-LASTING PART OF IT, WHICH I HAVE TRIED TO GET RID OF THROUGH ART HAS BEEN DEALING WITH THIS SENSE OF NOT HAVING A VALUE OR WORTH AS A PERSON WHICH, AND THEN TRYING TO FIND, ITS LIKE WHAT THEY SAID, IF WHAT YOU ARE ISN'T WANTED, THEN YOU SEARCH FOR AN IDENTITY, WHICH IS WANTED. SO I HAVE TRIED TO DO THAT THROUGH MY ART... I GUESS. ALSO, I WAS SEXUALLY ABUSED BY MY COUSIN WHEN I WAS AROUND SEVEN I THINK. AND THAT HAD A LASTING EFFECT ON ME AS WELL, IT WAS KIND OF AN ALIEN EXPERIENCE AS I DESCRIBE IT. ANYWAY, I THINK, THAT IS NOT ONE TRAUMATIC EVENT, BUT A SERIES AND I AM ONLY REALLY LIGHTLY TOUCHING ON THEM BUT URGH, THEY ARE ALL IN KIND OF A WAY THE SAME THING THAT FORM THIS KIND OF NUCLEUS OF TRAUMA.



MOSES

MY NAME IS MOSES JOSEPH. I'M FROM NIGERIA, EDO STATE, BENIN CITY. I WAS BORN IN 1998, ON JANUARY 1ST. SO, I'M TELLING YOU WHEN I LEFT MY COUNTRY. THE REASON WHY I'M HERE IN EUROPE AND THE JOURNEY, HOW I PASSED THROUGH THE JOURNEY TO EUROPE. SO I LEAVE MY COUNTRY BECAUSE OF SOME ASSASSIN BECAUSE MY LIFE WAS IN DANGER. AND THESE PEOPLE WANT ME TO BE AMONG THEM THEY ARE FROM THERE ARE A DIFFERENT TYPE OF CULTISTS ... SO THEY WERE FORCING ME TO JOIN THEM. THE FIRST TIME THEY START THIS THING WAS ON DECEMBER 23, THEY CAME TO, FORCING ME TO JOIN THEM AND THAT I SHOULD FOLLOW THEM. THAT FIRST DAY, I FOLLOWED THEM TO PLAY BECAUSE THEY THREATENED ME WITH A GUN TO FOLLOW THEM. SO I FOLLOWED THEM BECAUSE THEY THREATENED, THEY TOOK ME TO A PLACE WHERE I DON'T EVEN KNOW BEFORE THEY WERE ASKING ME TELLING ME THAT I SHOULD JOIN THEM THAT IF I JOIN THEM THEY ARE GOING TO PROTECT ME. I TOLD THEM NO. NO, I DON'T WANT TO JOIN, I DON'T WANT TO JOIN SO THEY WERE FORCING TO JOIN .. THEY... ARE GOING TO KEEP ME.

I TOLD THEM THAT LET ME GO AND THINK ABOUT IT, SO THEY TOLD ME THAT WHEN THEY CAME IF I DIDN'T ACCEPT TO JOIN THEM THAT THEY ARE GOING TO KILL ME. SO THAT WAS HOW THEY BRING ME BACK, THEY DROP ME SOMEWHERE SO I FIND MY WAY HOME THAT DAY. THAT WAS ON THE 23RD OF DECEMBER. THEN THE OTHER DAY THEY CAME AGAIN WAS ON THE 5TH JANUARY. ON THE 5TH JANUARY, THEY CAME BUT I WAS ABOUT GOING OUT BECAUSE I WAS I WANT TO BUY SOMETHING FOR MY FAMILY THAT DAY. I WAS GOING TO THE MARKET TO BUY SOMETHING. I WAS HOLDING ABOUT 20,000 LIRE I WAS GOING OUT WHEN I SAW THEM. THAT WAS WHEN THEY SHOT A BULLET, SO I DODGED IT, I RAN AWAY THROUGH THE BACKYARD. I PASSED THROUGH THE FARM CLOSE TO MY HOUSE, THERE WAS A FARM CLOSE TO MY HOUSE. I PASSED THROUGH THE BUSH AND I RAN AWAY. I WENT TO A PLACE CALLED 'THE OTHER CITY', CALLED AGBOR. WHEN I GET THERE, I TAKE A TAXI FROM THERE TO ABUJA. WHEN I GOT TO ABUJA, I SAW A MAN THAT WAS DRIVING A TAXI. I TOLD HIM MY STORY. I TOLD HIM THAT MY LIFE IS IN DANGER. I DON'T HAVE ANYWHERE TO GO NOW, AND IF I GO BACK HOME I AM GOING TO DIE, THOSE PEOPLE ARE LOOKING FOR ME SERIOUSLY. SO THAT WAS WHEN THE MAN TOLD ME THAT, DON'T WORRY, HE HAS A PLACE THAT HE WILL TAKE ME TO. SO THAT WAS HOW HE GAVE ME TO ONE NORTH TOWN. THOSE PEOPLE IN THE NORTH, SO THE MAN CAME AND SAID ACTUALLY DON'T WORRY, THEY TOOK ME INSIDE THE CAR, AND THE MAN WAS DRIVING AND HE DRIVE, DRIVE, DRIVE, DRIVING A LOT OF DAYS, THE WHOLE DAY AND GOT TO NIGER. WHEN GOT TO NIGER, THEY ASKED ME TO STAY IN ONE PLACE, I STAYED INSIDE ONE ROOM, WHEN I GOT INSIDE THE ROOM, I SAW A LOT OF BLACK PEOPLE INSIDE THE ROOM. I ASK THOSE PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE GOING, THEY SAY THEY ARE GOING TRAVELLING. AS THEY ARE SAYING, WE ARE GOING TO LIBYA. SO, I TOLD THEM, IS THIS THE WAY TO LIBYA, THEY SAID YES, THIS IS THE WAY TO LIBYA. SO, THE OTHER DAY IN THE MORNING, THEY BRING THE BUS, THEY ASK PEOPLE TO ENTER, THEY ASKED ME TO ENTER TOO. I ENTER THE BUS, WE ARE DRIVING THE BUS, DRIVE, DRIVE, DRIVE, DRIVE, DRIVE. THERE WAS A LOT OF DUST INSIDE THE BUS, SO TIGHT BECAUSE THERE WERE A LOT OF PEOPLE INSIDE THE BUS, WE DRIVE A LOT OF TIME MORNING UNTIL EVENING. THE NIGHT CAME, THEY DRIVE, THAT WAS HOW THEY DRIVE FOR ABOUT TWO DAYS. THEY DRIVE TO AGADEZ FROM NIGER TO AGADEZ. WHEN WE GET THERE, THEY ASK US TO COME DOWN. SO WE SAW A LOT OF VEHICLES IN THE PLACE. THEY WERE CALLING NUMBERS, THEY WERE WRITING OUR NAMES, CALLING NUMBERS, THAT WAS HOW WE STAYED THERE. THEY GIVE US SOME DIRTY FOOD, THEY GIVE US SOME FOOD, GIVE US A GALLON OF WATER. THEY ASK US TO ENTER THE VEHICLE. WE ARE GOING INSIDE THE DESERT, WE PASS A LOT OF PLACES, IT WAS VERY VERY HARD, IT WAS A HARD JOURNEY FROM AGADEZ TO SABHA, IT WAS VERY VERY HARD. WE SPENT 3 DAYS INSIDE THE DESERT. GOING, SPENDING A LOT OF TIME, SEEING DIFFERENT TYPES OF THINGS, I WAS VERY TIRED, ALL MY BODY WAS WEAK, WE WERE DRIVING A LOT OF DAYS IN THE DESERT, I WAS ON THE TOP OF THE VEHICLES, MORNING NIGHT, EVENING. EVERY TIME THREE DAYS, I SPENT A LOT OF TIME, I SEE A LOT OF THINGS IN THE DESERT, A VERY, VERY HARD JOURNEY, WHEN I GET FROM THERE, A MAN CAME. THIS MAN WAS ONE OF THE ARAB PEOPLE, SO HE CAME AND SAID, HE WANTS TO TAKE US. HE TOOK A NUMBER OF US. HE TOOK ABOUT SIX OF US WITH HIM. THEY TOOK US TO THE INSIDE ONE OF THE GHETTO. THEY MIGHT HAVE SOMEPLACE WHERE THEY KEEP SOME PEOPLE, THEY TAKE US THAT, THAT NOW WE HAVE GOT TO LIBYA. WE HAVE TO PAY MONEY. I TOLD THEM, ME I DON'T HAVE MONEY, HE SAID, I HAVE TO CALL MY PEOPLE IN NIGERIA THAT HELP ME. I DON'T HAVE A FATHER, I DON'T HAVE A BROTHER, IT'S ONLY MOTHER I HAVE. SO THEY ASK ME TO CALL MY MOTHER, I TOLD THEM MY MOTHER DON'T HAVE MONEY, HE SAID IF I DON'T REPAY THE MONEY, I AM GOING TO REMAIN HERE, THAT THEY ARE GOING TO KILL ME. THAT WAS HOW I CALLED MY MOTHER'S MOBILE, MY MOTHER PICKED UP, I TOLD MY MOTHER THE WHOLE SITUATION, THAT RIGHT NOW I AM IN LIBYA, LOOK AT WHAT THEY SAID, THEY ASKED ME TO PAY. I DON'T HAVE MONEY AND OTHERS, THAT WAS WHEN MY MOTHER SPEND CLOSE TO TWO WEEKS THERE, SO BEFORE THEY GIVE ME AN ACCOUNT, MY MOTHER BORROWED MONEY FROM SOME PEOPLE, SOME FRIENDS, SOME FAMILY. THEN I PAID, THAT WAS HOW THEY FREED ME FROM THE PLACE. WHEN I WAS FREE, I GO TO ONE MAN'S HOUSE LIKE THAT, THE MAN IS STILL ONE OF THE ARAB MEN. HE TOOK US TO ONE OF HIS HOUSES, WE ARE STAYING THERE, I AM STAYING THERE FOR CLOSE TO TWO MONTHS. THE TWO MONTHS I STAY IN THE MAN'S HOUSE, WAS VERY VERY TERRIBLE. EVERY TIME WE COME OUTSIDE WE SAW A LOT OF TENSION IN LIBYA, THEY SHOT GUNS EVERY DAY, YOU HAVE TO RUN FOR YOUR LIFE, EVERYBODY IS RUNNING FOR THEIR LIFE, YOU HAVE TO SAVE YOUR LIFE, EVERYBODY, THEY ARE SHOOTING GUNS EVEN THE LIBYANS, THEY ARE KILLING THEMSELVES, THEY ARE SHOOTING, THEY DON'T HAVE PITY FOR ANYBODY. ONE BOY DIED, ONE BOY DIED IN THE VEHICLE THAT I WAS IN, A BOY DIED. THE ARAB MAN TAKES HIM INSIDE THE DESERT AND PUTS HIM IN THE GROUND SO HE ASKED US TO LEAVE. SO I WENT IN THE VEHICLE AND GO AGAIN, IT WAS A LOT OF SERIOUS PEOPLE, EVEN THOSE, THERE ARE A LOT OF ASSASSINS IN THE DESERT, A LOT OF PEOPLE WITH GUNS, WITH ARMOURED CAR, THEY HAVE MANY THINGS EVEN BOMBS, EVERYTHING, WHEN THEY STOP YOU, IT IS LUCK, WE HAVE LUCK MOST OF THEM WERE CHASING US, THEY CHASE US, THE VEHICLES IN THE DESERT. SO THE ARAB MAN HAVE TO RUN, HE HAS TO SPEED VERY FAST. THAT WAS THE JOURNEY WAS VERY VERY TERRIBLE, THAT WAS EVERYTHING, GUNS, GUNSHOTS EVERY DAY, IT WAS NOT SO EASY. GETTING TO EUROPE WAS NOT SO EASY, PASSED THROUGH MANY STRESS AND MANY TERRIBLE JOURNEYS, IT WAS TERRIBLE, IT WAS NOT EASY. I FELL, I GOT MANY INJURIES, MANY THINGS - EVEN PASSING THROUGH THE SEA, COMING HERE IT WAS GOD THAT SAVED MY LIFE, THAT I WAS HERE TODAY, IT WAS NOT SO EASY, MY BOAT WAS ALMOST CAPSIZED, EVEN WHEN I WAS ON TOP OF THE SEA, SO I THANK GOD THAT THE ITALIAN RESCUE CAME TO RESCUE US AT THE POINT OF DEATH, BECAUSE WE WERE ALREADY DYING BEFORE, SO THAT WAS WHEN THE ITALIAN RESCUE CAME TO RESCUE US, IT WAS NOT SO EASY, THE JOURNEY WAS REALLY HARD, I THANK GOD I AM ALIVE TODAY, IN ITALY.



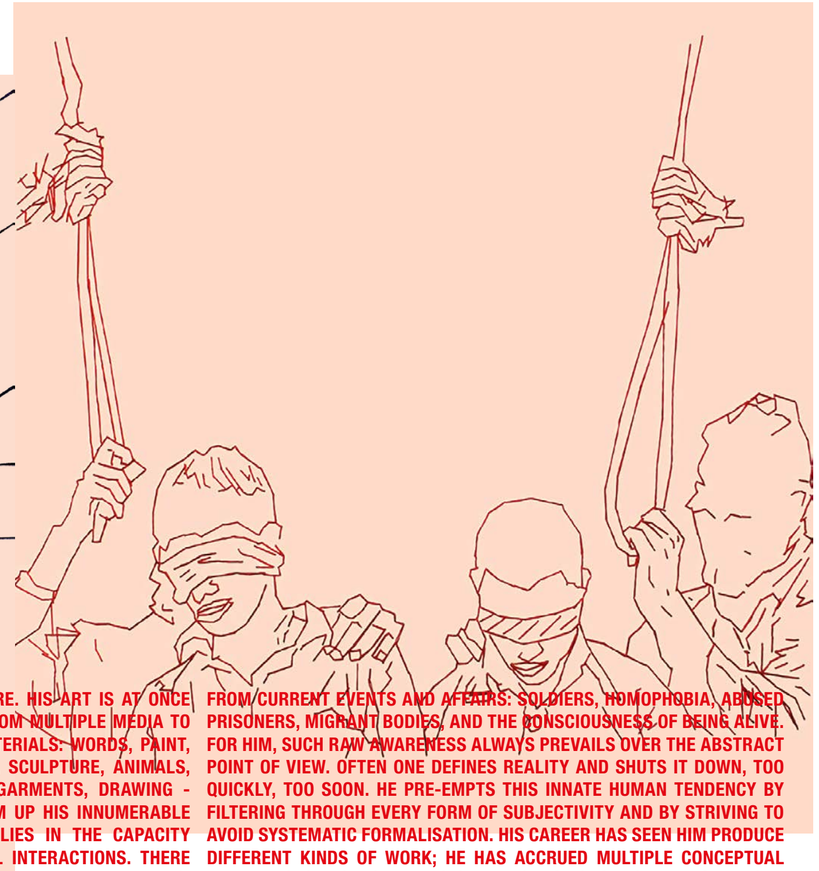
FRANKO B POETRY DOESN'T ALWAYS DEAL WITH WORDS

FRANCESCA ALFANO MIGLIETTI

OF ALL THAT IS WRITTEN, I LOVE ONLY WHAT A PERSON HATH WRITTEN WITH HIS BLOOD.

WRITE WITH BLOOD, AND THOU WILT FIND THAT BLOOD IS SPIRIT. IT IS NO EASY TASK TO UNDERSTAND UNFAMILIAR BLOOD; I HATE THE READING IDLERS. (...) HE THAT WRITETH IN BLOOD AND PROVERBS DOTH NOT WANT TO BE READ, BUT LEARN BY HEART.

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE FROM *THUS SPAKE ZARATHUSTRA*



FRANKO B IS A LEGENDARY ARTISTIC FIGURE. HIS ART IS AT ONCE ROMANTIC AND CONFLICTUAL. DRAWING FROM MULTIPLE MEDIA TO CREATE WORK, HE USES CONTRASTING MATERIALS: WORDS, PAINT, CERAMIC, CROCHET, VIDEO, PERFORMANCE, SCULPTURE, ANIMALS, NEON, PHOTOGRAPHS, FOUND OBJECTS, GARMENTS, DRAWING - THE LIST GOES ON. IT IS DIFFICULT TO SUM UP HIS INNUMERABLE TALENTS. HIS MOST REMARKABLE SKILL LIES IN THE CAPACITY TO CREATE WORK THROUGH HIS PERSONAL INTERACTIONS. THERE EXISTS NO SEPARATION BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE REALMS; FRANKO B PRODUCES IMAGES THROUGH THE ACT OF SHARING; THIS COLLABORATIVE GESTURE HAS OPENED NEW WAYS OF MAKING, ALWAYS CURATED BY HIM WITH REMARKABLE CARE, CRITICALITY AND PERSONAL TASTE. HE APPEARS TO REFLECT UPON THEMES LINKED TO ETHICS, THE POSSIBILITY FOR ETHICAL REPRESENTATION, STRENGTH AND THE ENERGIES REQUIRED TO PRODUCE GENUINE, BECAUSE DEEPLY FELT, VALUE FOR A COMMUNITY.

THIS MAY SOUND SOMEWHAT ROMANTIC BUT FRANKO'S ENTIRE CAREER HAS BEEN CONCERNED WITH REFINING A PURE VISION. A PROLIFIC, SOLITARY, AND MAVERICK FIGURE, OVER THE YEARS HE HAS STEADFASTLY MADE OF HIS ARTISTIC RESEARCH A UNIQUE SPACE FROM WHICH HE ARTICULATES HIS PECULIARLY LUCID POETIC VISION. PLACING HIS OWN BODY AT THE HEART OF HIS RADICAL QUEST FOR ART, FRANKO B IS COMMITTED TO THE INESCAPABLE NEED TO CONFRONT THE GHOSTS WHICH HAUNT HIS CHILDHOOD, AND SOCIETY AT LARGE, BUT ALSO TO EXPLORE THE BLEMISHES THAT THOSE VERY GHOSTS HAVE LEFT. HE HAS CHOSEN SCULPTURE AS AN EXPRESSIVE MEDIUM. INDIFFERENT TO CULTURAL FADS AND ART TRENDS, HE HAS PURSUED HIS OWN PATH OF PRIVATE RESEARCH SINGLE-MINDEDLY AND RIGOROUSLY, REACHING AESTHETIC HEIGHTS AS WELL AS TACKLING NOVEL POLITICAL AND SOCIAL MOODS.

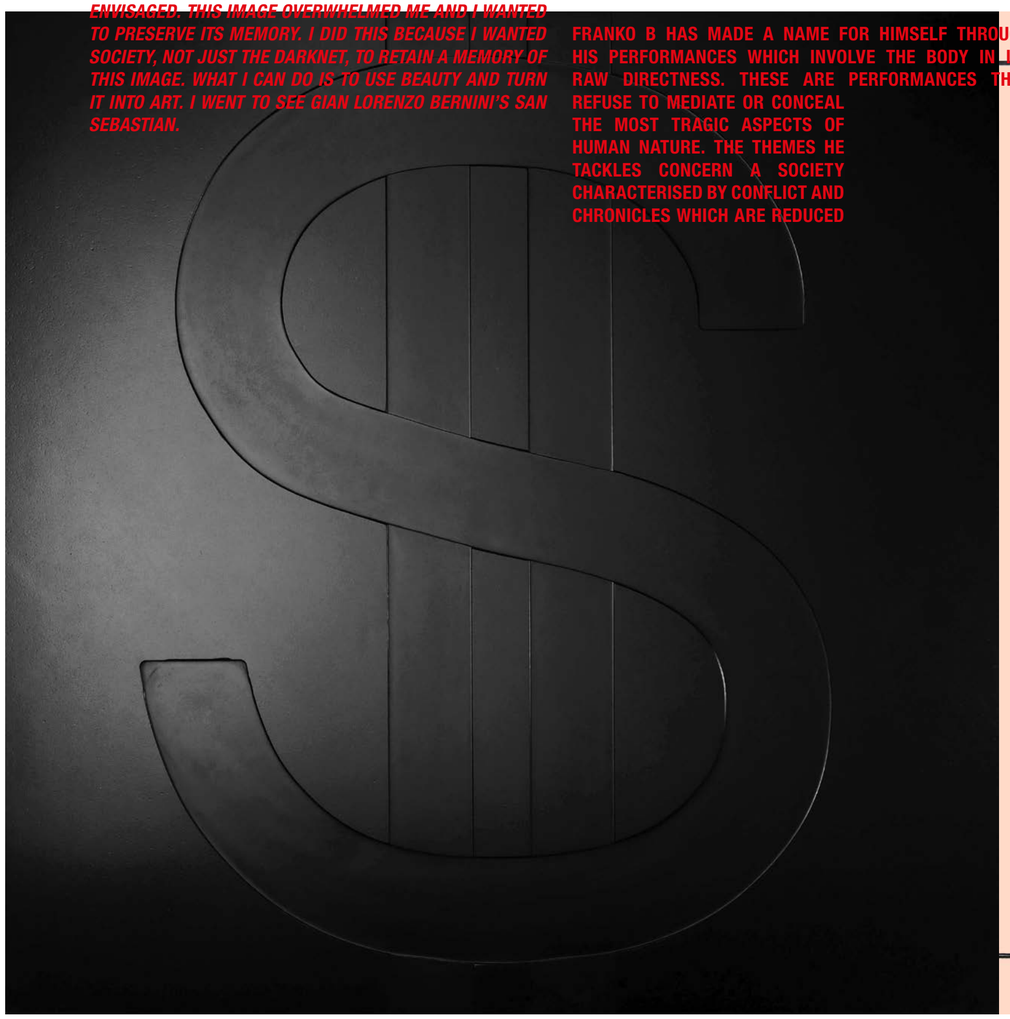
FRANKO B NEVER LOSES SIGHT OF THE FACT THAT HE IS FACING SOME FORM OF HUMANITY. THROUGH EXPLORING HIS WORLD, WE REALISE THAT HIS CONCEPTION OF ART STEMS FROM THE DEEP-SEATED BELIEF THAT THE ARTIST MUST BE IN PRINCIPLE ABLE TO EXPRESS HIS OPINION ABOUT THE WORLD FREELY. IT IS FOR THIS REASON THAT MANY OF HIS WORKS DRAW FROM CURRENT EVENTS AND AFFAIRS: SOLDIERS, HOMOPHOBIA, ABUSED PRISONERS, MIGRANT BODIES, AND THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF BEING ALIVE. FOR HIM, SUCH RAW AWARENESS ALWAYS PREVAILS OVER THE ABSTRACT POINT OF VIEW. OFTEN ONE DEFINES REALITY AND SHUTS IT DOWN, TOO QUICKLY, TOO SOON. HE PRE-EMPTS THIS INNATE HUMAN TENDENCY BY FILTERING THROUGH EVERY FORM OF SUBJECTIVITY AND BY STRIVING TO AVOID SYSTEMATIC FORMALISATION. HIS CAREER HAS SEEN HIM PRODUCE DIFFERENT KINDS OF WORK; HE HAS ACCRUED MULTIPLE CONCEPTUAL EXPERIENCES. MOREOVER, HIS OWN PRODUCTIONS INCLUDE BOTH WORK OF EXTRAORDINARY LYRICAL IMPORT AND OF METHODICAL, AGGRESSIVE DIRECTNESS.

WHAT COULD PASS OFF AS A KIND OF ECLECTICISM IS IN TRUTH A LOVE FOR RESTLESSNESS, AN EXISTENTIAL DESIRE TO DO AWAY WITH COSY, STUFFY, AND PROTECTED ENVIRONMENTS. VIEWED IN THIS WAY, FRANKO B'S EMBROIDERIES WOVEN AT REGULAR INTERVALS WITH THE USE OF WARP AND WEFT, SUGGEST THE WORKINGS OF A MANTRA. THE ACT OF WEAVING IMAGES SOURCED FROM THE MEDIA BECOMES A SLOW, PAINSTAKING, AND POETIC MECHANISM THROUGH WHICH HE SLOWLY RECOVERS THE POTENTIAL FOR AWAKENING FROM THE RELENTLESS AND NUMBING EFFECT OF MEDIA SATURATION. FRANKO SAID:

SOCIETY HAS CHANGED OVER THE PAST TWENTY YEARS. THE CONTEXT IN WHICH I GREW UP, THE CONTEXT WHICH SHAPED MY PERSONA, ARE NOT THE SAME I ENCOUNTERED TWENTY YEARS AGO IN LONDON, NOR THE CONTEXT I INHABIT TODAY. THE WORLD IS GOING THROUGH A CONSTANT CONFLICT, THE SAME PEOPLE KEEP CHANGING AND TRANSFORMING ALL THE TIME. EACH OF US IS LIVING THROUGH A CONTINUOUS POLITICAL AND IDENTITY CONFLICT WITH THE MEDIA AND GOVERNMENTS OVER THE CONTROL AND USE OF LANGUAGES, OUR PRESENT, AND OUR FUTURE. DURING MY FORMATIVE PERIOD, THE SIXTIES AND SEVENTIES, YOU HAD THE CHURCH AND YOU HAD THE STATE. TODAY, THESE ORGANS ARE INFLUENCED BY GIGANTIC CORPORATIONS OF ALL KINDS, BY WEAPONS AND PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRIES, BY SECURITY AND PRIVACY; OVER THE PAST TWENTY YEARS ALL THESE ENTITIES HAVE GAINED A LOT OF MONEY AND A LOT OF POWER. THE ONLY THING THAT HAS CHANGED IN ME, BUT THIS IS NO GENUINE CHANGE, IS THE FACT THAT I HAVE EXPERIENCED NOVEL SITUATIONS AND DEVELOPED BECAUSE I HAVE LIVED. THIS IS NOT EVEN ABOUT CHOOSING, IT'S A DUTY. A MATTER OF FACT.

TO AVOID NEUTRAL VIEWPOINTS, FRANKO B HAS SELECTED PHOTOGRAPHY AND WEB IMAGERY AS HIS PRIZED RESEARCH FIELDS. THE PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGE NEVER CREATES AN IMAGE BUT MERELY RECORDS IT; SIMILARLY, WHEN PAINTING AND STITCHING HE FOLLOWS THIS COURSE WHILST STRIVING TO SHAKE OFF LETHARGY. THROUGH SUCH WORKS, HE INVESTIGATES THE WORLD AS WELL AS THE SUBJECTS THAT HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY THROW AT HIM. HIS WORK IS TENSE, ANIMATED BY THE DESIRE TO COMPREHEND, ESTABLISH LINKS, OFFER ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS THAT EACH CIRCUMSTANCE GENERATES. AN EXEMPLARY AND DRAMATIC WORK WOULD BE HIS *SLEEPING BEAUTY,* 2016, A CARRARA MARBLE SCULPTURE DEPICTING A DROWNED FIVE OR SIX-YEAR-OLD SYRIAN BOY THAT RECALLS ALAN KURDI (AT FIRST ONLY KNOWN TO US AS AYLAN). THE PHOTOGRAPH, DEPICTING THE CORPSE OF THE SYRIAN-KURDISH THREE-YEAR-OLD BOY, LYING ON A BEACH, BECAME A SYMBOL OF THE MIGRANT CRISIS IN EUROPE. THE WELL-KNOWN MEDIA IMAGE OF THE DROWNED CHILD, HIS FACE LYING ON THE SAND, HAS BECOME ICONIC. YET FRANKO B DECLARES:

(…) IT IS AN ICON OF NO REAL CONSEQUENCE. NUMEROUS INDIVIDUALS, INCLUDING CHILDREN, HAD ALREADY DROWNED AT SEA AND MANY MORE HAD REACHED THE SHORES ALREADY DEAD. THE CHILD I CREATED IN MARBLE, WHICH I HAVE CALLED SLEEPING BEAUTY, IS ONE OF THE NUMEROUS CHILDREN WHO DROWNED IN THE MEDITERRANEAN. THEIR PARENTS THOUGHT THAT COMING TO EUROPE WOULD MEAN SALVATION BUT FOR MANY IT WAS NOT. OR AT LEAST, IT WAS NOT WHAT THEY HAD ORIGINALLY ENVISAGED. THIS IMAGE OVERWHELMED ME AND I WANTED TO PRESERVE ITS MEMORY. I DID THIS BECAUSE I WANTED SOCIETY, NOT JUST THE DARKNET, TO RETAIN A MEMORY OF THIS IMAGE. WHAT I CAN DO IS TO USE BEAUTY AND TURN IT INTO ART. I WENT TO SEE GIAN LORENZO BERNINI'S SAN SEBASTIAN.

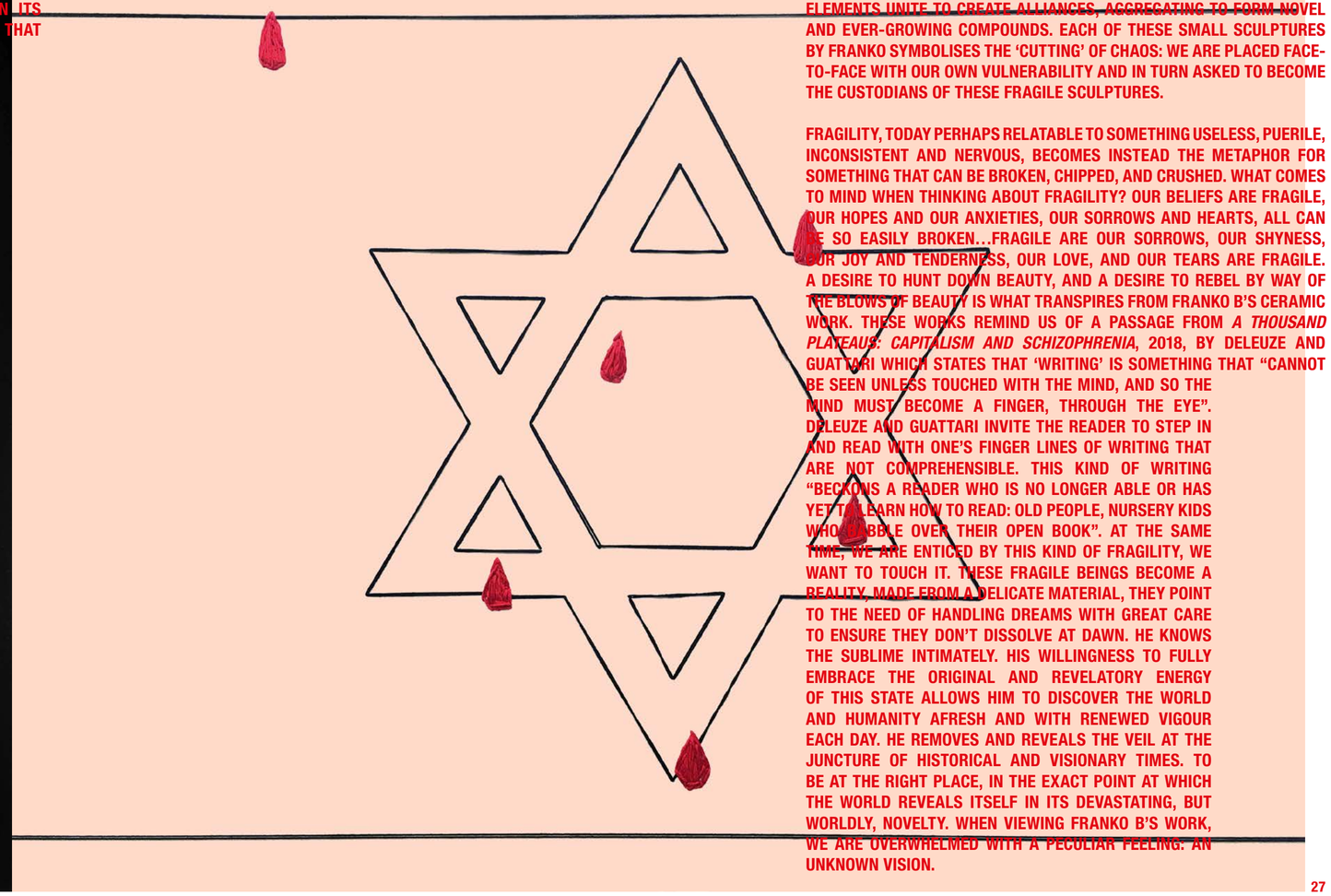


FRANKO B CLEARLY PONDERS A TRAGIC EVENT IN THE HISTORY OF EUROPE TO HIGHLIGHT AN UNRESOLVED 'KNOT' STORED DEEPLY IN OUR CONSCIENCES. FOR HIM, ART INTERROGATES AND AT THE SAME TIME INTERROGATES ITSELF; BY TAKING CENTRE STAGE, ART ALERTS US THAT NO ASPECT OF REALITY CAN BE BRUSHED OFF BUT MUST BE DEEPLY CONFRONTED WITH LOYALTY FROM THE DEPTHS OF OUR BEING. TO ACHIEVE THIS, FRANKO B, AN ARTIST THAT IS QUINTESSENTIALLY MODERN, SEEKS ASSISTANCE FROM THE CLASSICAL WORLD. THIS LATTER WORLD OFFERS FORM, CONTAINS CONFUSION, ENSURES AND SUSTAINS AN ONGOING CONFRONTATION BETWEEN PAST AND PRESENT, THAT KEEPS CONNECTIONS ALIVE AND OPEN. IN THIS SENSE, ANY PRETENCE OF CLOSURE IS GIVEN UP. THE WORK *BLACK PAINTING* FROM 2007 GESTURES TOWARDS THE DARK SIDE OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL VICISSITUDES TORMENTED AS THEY ARE BY THE ARROGANT AND ALL-CONSUMING DOMAIN OF THE ECONOMY. THE USE OF THE COLOUR BLACK EFFECTS A DIALECTICAL TENSION BETWEEN POWER, DEATH, CONFLICTS, LIMITS, VIOLENCE AND ALL THOSE IMPLIED VIRULENT ABSTRACTIONS THAT TAKE FORM IN VARIOUS IDEOLOGIES AND TOTALITARIANISMS. SUCH WORK SEEKS TO TRACE A POLITICAL AND POETIC UNIVERSE MADE UP OF PAIN, EROTICISM, ABSENCE AND INJUSTICE. FRANKO B EXPRESSES ALL, LOADING HIS CANVASES, AS WELL AS HIS OWN BODY, WITH NAKED BODIES, FACES, SOLDIERS, HOMELESS, LOVE-MAKING YOUTHS, ANIMALS, AND FLOWERS. STITCHED IN RED COTTON THREAD, THESE FIGURES EVOKE THE BLOOD DROPLETS WHICH COVERED THE ARTIST'S CHALK-WHITE BODY.

FRANKO B HAS MADE A NAME FOR HIMSELF THROUGH HIS PERFORMANCES WHICH INVOLVE THE BODY IN ITS RAW DIRECTNESS. THESE ARE PERFORMANCES THAT REFUSE TO MEDIATE OR CONCEAL THE MOST TRAGIC ASPECTS OF HUMAN NATURE. THE THEMES HE TACKLES CONCERN A SOCIETY CHARACTERISED BY CONFLICT AND CHRONICLES WHICH ARE REDUCED TO IMAGE, IDENTITY AND RESPECT FOR THE 'OTHER', THE 'OTHER' HERE INTENDED IN ALL ITS FORMS. FRANKO B BRINGS WITH HIM A VISION OF CLASSICAL ART; ELEMENTS DRAWN FROM REAL LIFE ARE PROPOSED IN VARIOUS FORMS, JUST AS WITH THE PHOTOGRAPHIC SERIES *STILL LIFE,* 2003. IN THIS FILM IMAGES OF HOMELESS PEOPLE ARE RE-SHOT IN A NOVEL LIGHT, ONE THAT CONFERS UPON SUBJECTS AN UNUSUAL DIGNITY THAT ENABLES US TO PARTICIPATE THROUGH FRANKO'S OWN EYES, IN A VISION BOTH CLASSICAL AND ERUDITE. HIS WORK PRODUCES A STILLED ATMOSPHERE, A HIGHLY-ARTICULATED VISION THAT GOES AGAINST RHETORIC, A VISIONARY AND TEMPORAL BLAST RESONATING WITH AN ANCIENT PRAYER. NO MERE WHIM ON HIS PART, NOT AT ALL. IT HOLDS THE PROMISE OF A LESSON BOTH STRICT AND NECESSARY SINCE WORKS ARE NOT IMAGES, BUT ALSO BECAUSE IMAGES SHOULD NOT BE UNNECESSARILY INVASIVE.

IN FRONT OF THESE WORKS ONE MUST QUESTION ONESELF. SUGGESTIONS HERE PROLIFERATE FEAR, NUISANCE, ATTRACTION, DISMAY, AND DISCOMFORT. FRANKO B WEAVES THE DRAMA OF WAR, AND THE IMAGES OF SOLDIERS, WITH THOSE OF LOSS LINKED TO PLACES, TIES, RELATIONS, ENVIRONMENTS AND DESIRES. HE WOULD LIKE TO REMIND US ABOUT BEAUTY AND ITS SUSPENSION, FORGOTTEN THINGS, THINGS WE LEAVE BEHIND, THINGS SPOILED BY WEAPONS, AND THINGS THAT ARE DESTROYED. HE WEAVES HIS OWN PATTERNS, OBSESSIVELY THREADING THROUGH THE WHITE SURFACE OF THE CANVAS WITH RED EGYPTIAN COTTON. THE REPETITIVE, MANUAL ACT OF THREADING IS BOTH A TECHNICAL SKILL AND A KIND OF PERFORMANCE WITHOUT A PUBLIC. THIS SERIES ESPECIALLY CONVEYS THE POETRY OF HIS WORK: THE FIGURES OF SOLDIERS OPERATING IN VARIOUS GLOBAL WARS, AS WELL AS THOSE OF HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS, ARE TRACED WITH THREAD AND NEEDLE. ACROSS HIS WORK, DOMINANT THEMES ARE WOVEN TOGETHER INEXTRICABLY: NOTHING IS WHAT IT SEEMS. THIS STATE OF AFFAIRS IS KNOWN TO GREAT ARTISTS WHO OPERATE IN DIFFICULT SITUATIONS AND CAN MAKE HIDDEN MEANINGS EMERGE FROM A SEEMINGLY SIMPLE SCENE. FROM PAINTING TO VIDEO, PERFORMANCE TO SCULPTURE, INSTALLATION TO PHOTOGRAPHY, THE IMPACT OF HIS WORK IS STRONG AND CAPTIVATING. POETIC. ALWAYS.

FRANKO B IS THE MOST POETIC AND SENTIMENTAL ARTIST OF OUR TIMES, SENSITIVE TO THE FACTS OF LIFE AND TO THE POLITICAL DIMENSION OF EXISTENCE ITSELF. HE IS THE ARTIST WHO BRINGS OUT THE BEAUTY AND DIGNITY FROM EVERY CONFRONTATIONAL ENCOUNTER. HE IS THE EXACT OPPOSITE OF THE REPETITIVE AND MONOTONOUS ARTIST. HE EMBODIES A VOLCANO OF IDEAS, HE LOVES MATERIALS, HE IS A FABULOUS EXPERIMENTER WHO MODELS THE EARTH AND IMPOSES HIS OWN UNIQUE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK. HIS CERAMICS EVIDENCE HIS MOST CONGENIAL DIMENSION: THE BODY. MEN AND WOMEN, HOMES AND ANIMALS ARE SKETCHED … A TRACE, A SILHOUETTE, AND FIGURES, HEARTS AND CROSSES, AND THEN AGAIN MEN, AND THEN A DOG…FRANKO B'S FIGURINES ARE ANIMATED, AT ONCE FIGURATIVE AND ABSTRACT, FRAGILE AND PHYSICAL IN THEIR BEING. HIS CERAMICS ARE ABOUT BECOMING: BECOMING-MATTER, BECOMING-FORM, BECOMING-WORK, AS HE GESTURES TOWARDS A SUSPENDED DIMENSION. WHAT CHARACTERISES HIS OEUVRE IS THE ABILITY TO REVEAL THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF SEEMINGLY DISTINCT ELEMENTS: BRIDGES ARE BUILT IN AN EFFORT TO CONNECT SEPARATE ISLANDS. HIS WORK IS ABOUT CREATING CONTACT ZONES AND EXHIBITING THE ENCHANTING POWER OF FRAGILITY. EACH WORK OF HIS CAN BE TREATED AS A POINT, IN WHICH ALL THE ELEMENTS CONDENSE AND ACCUMULATE. EACH WORK ACTS AS A NODAL POINT AT WHICH ALL THE ELEMENTS CONVERGE: AIR, WATER, EARTH, FIRE. ELEMENTS UNITE TO CREATE ALLIANCES, AGGREGATING TO FORM NOVEL AND EVER-GROWING COMPOUNDS. EACH OF THESE SMALL SCULPTURES BY FRANKO SYMBOLISES THE 'CUTTING' OF CHAOS: WE ARE PLACED FACE-TO-FACE WITH OUR OWN VULNERABILITY AND IN TURN ASKED TO BECOME THE CUSTODIANS OF THESE FRAGILE SCULPTURES.



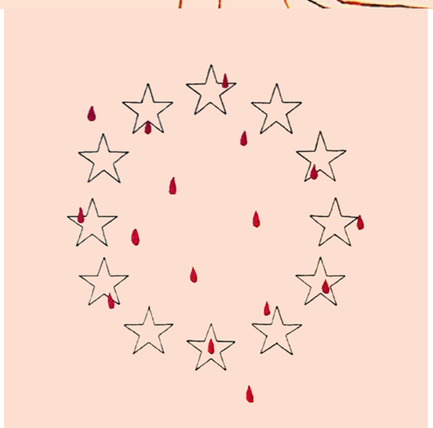
FRAGILITY, TODAY PERHAPS RELATABLE TO SOMETHING USELESS, PUERILE, INCONSISTENT AND NERVOUS, BECOMES INSTEAD THE METAPHOR FOR SOMETHING THAT CAN BE BROKEN, CHIPPED, AND CRUSHED. WHAT COMES TO MIND WHEN THINKING ABOUT FRAGILITY? OUR BELIEFS ARE FRAGILE, OUR HOPES AND OUR ANXIETIES, OUR SORROWS AND HEARTS, ALL CAN BE SO EASILY BROKEN…FRAGILE ARE OUR SORROWS, OUR SHYNESS, OUR JOY AND TENDERNESS, OUR LOVE, AND OUR TEARS ARE FRAGILE. A DESIRE TO HUNT DOWN BEAUTY, AND A DESIRE TO REBEL BY WAY OF THE BLOWS OF BEAUTY IS WHAT TRANSPIRES FROM FRANKO B'S CERAMIC WORK. THESE WORKS REMIND US OF A PASSAGE FROM *A THOUSAND PLATEAUS: CAPITALISM AND SCHIZOPHRENIA*, 2018, BY DELEUZE AND GUATTARI WHICH STATES THAT 'WRITING' IS SOMETHING THAT "CANNOT BE SEEN UNLESS TOUCHED WITH THE MIND, AND SO THE MIND MUST BECOME A FINGER, THROUGH THE EYE". DELEUZE AND GUATTARI INVITE THE READER TO STEP IN AND READ WITH ONE'S FINGER LINES OF WRITING THAT ARE NOT COMPREHENSIBLE. THIS KIND OF WRITING "BECKONS A READER WHO IS NO LONGER ABLE OR HAS YET TO LEARN HOW TO READ: OLD PEOPLE, NURSERY KIDS WHO FUMBLE OVER THEIR OPEN BOOK". AT THE SAME TIME, WE ARE ENTICED BY THIS KIND OF FRAGILITY, WE WANT TO TOUCH IT. THESE FRAGILE BEINGS BECOME A REALITY, MADE FROM A DELICATE MATERIAL, THEY POINT TO THE NEED OF HANDLING DREAMS WITH GREAT CARE TO ENSURE THEY DON'T DISSOLVE AT DAWN. HE KNOWS THE SUBLIME INTIMATELY. HIS WILLINGNESS TO FULLY EMBRACE THE ORIGINAL AND REVELATORY ENERGY OF THIS STATE ALLOWS HIM TO DISCOVER THE WORLD AND HUMANITY AFRESH AND WITH RENEWED VIGOUR EACH DAY. HE REMOVES AND REVEALS THE VEIL AT THE JUNCTURE OF HISTORICAL AND VISIONARY TIMES. TO BE AT THE RIGHT PLACE, IN THE EXACT POINT AT WHICH THE WORLD REVEALS ITSELF IN ITS DEVASTATING, BUT WORLDLY, NOVELTY. WHEN VIEWING FRANKO B'S WORK, WE ARE OVERWHELMED WITH A PECULIAR FEELING: AN UNKNOWN VISION.

‘PRESENTNESS’ SEEMS THE MOST ACCURATE WORD TO DESCRIBE HIS PRODUCTION, STYLE, MEANING, INTENTION; IF WE WERE TO REMOVE EVERYTHING, WHAT WOULD WE BE LEFT WITH? FOR SURE WE WOULD BE LEFT WITH ‘PRESENCE’, ‘PHYSICALITY’, AND EVIDENCE IN THIS REAL WORLD. MEANING, IN THE CASE OF FRANKO, CANNOT BE SOUGHT OUTSIDE THE WORKS THEMSELVES. IT IS MORE LIKELY TO BE LOCATED WITHIN THEIR ‘BEING IN THE WORLD’. WE ARE NOT DEALING WITH IMAGES WHICH REPRESENT ANOTHER REALITY. THESE IMAGES ENJOY INDEPENDENT EXISTENCE; THESE WORKS SPEAK TO REALITY, THEY DO AWAY WITH INTERPRETATIONS OR SUPERSTRUCTURES, SCHEMES AND INTERPRETIVE MODELS, WHICH INEVITABLY PRECLUDE ACCURATE KNOWLEDGE. THESE WORKS SPEAK TO REALITY BY EXISTING. TO APPRECIATE HIS WORK ONE MUST AT ALL COST GIVE UP ALL PRECONCEPTIONS (ESPECIALLY THOSE ISSUES TIED UP WITH FIGURATION, ABSTRACTION, REPRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION), LET ONESELF GO AND REJOICE IN THE EXPERIENCE. ‘MY WORK CONCERNS THE FRAGILITY OF LIVING, THE DIFFICULTY OF LOVING AND BEING LOVED…’. HE USES A SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE TO COMMUNICATE, THUS IMBUING MATTER WITH FEELING. ART, TODAY, IS A SUBJECT THAT ELUDES THEORISATION, ENUNCIATION, HISTORICISING, AND BEGINNINGS. MORE AND MORE, ART CIRCULATES IN UBIQUITOUS WAYS, IT IS AN APPARATUS FOR CONSUMPTION, AND A PALLIATIVE PRODUCT THAT REMOVES THE POSSIBILITY FOR THOUGHT. WE ARE UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT THE CONCEPT OF ‘WORK’, A PRIMORDIAL CONDITION, HAS FALLEN OUT OF THE WORD ‘ART’. INALIENABLE ETHICAL URGENCY TOWARDS WORLDLY AFFAIRS IS IMPERATIVE FOR FRANKO B. THE LOSS OF THE WORD IS FOR HIM ALSO THE LOSS OF VISION. WE ARE NOT DEALING WITH POLITICS IN USUAL AND CUSTOMARY TERMS. YET, NOBODY DOUBTS THAT ART IS A ‘POLITICAL ACT’ INSOFAR AS IT GENERATES AN IMAGE OF THE SELF AND OF THE SOCIETAL COLLECTIVE. THE RAISON D’ÊTRE OF THE WORK IS POLITICAL: TO STIR POTENT AND COMPLEX EMOTIONS. FRANKO B DOES NOT LOOK FOR IMAGES. HE DOES NOT LOOK FOR IDEAS. HE IS AFTER GENERATIVE EMOTIONS AS LOUISE BOURGEOIS WRITES: “THE ARTIST IS A LONE WOLF. HE HOWLS ALL ALONE. WHICH IS NOT SUCH A TERRIBLE THING AS HE ENJOYS THE PRIVILEGE OF BEING IN TOUCH WITH HIS UNCONSCIOUS. HE KNOWS HOW TO SHAPE HIS EMOTIONS, HOW TO GIVE THEM A STYLE. MAKING ART IS NOT A FORM OF THERAPY, IT IS AN ACT OF SURVIVAL. IT IS A WAY TO KEEP SANE AND KNOW THAT YOU WON’T HARM YOURSELF NOR KILL SOMEONE.”

FRANKO B’S UNIQUENESS CONSISTS IN HIS PREOCCUPATION WITH ALL THE PHASES OF LOVE. FALLING, BEING ENVELOPED BY ITS VICISSITUDES, DECLARING ONESELF, ONE OF HIS NEON SIGNS STATES: ‘YOU MAKE MY HEART EXPLODE’. HE USES ALL MATERIALS TO REACH THE SPECTATOR ‘DIRECTLY’: LIGHT, TEXTILES, CANVAS, THE TITLES OF HIS INSTALLATIONS AND HIS PERFORMANCES: *OH, LOVER BOY,* 2001-5, *PROTECT ME,* 1990, *I’M NOT YOUR BABE,* 1995-6, *DON’T LEAVE ME THIS WAY,* 2006-9, *WHO’S GOING TO LICK MY WOUND?,* 1998, *I MISS YOU,* 1999-2005, *NOW YOU KNOW ME,* 2001, *LOVE IN TIMES OF PAIN,* 2007-8, *ME, YOU, NOTHING,* 2010, *I’M THINKING OF YOU,* 2009-12,…TITLES ARE HEART-BREAKING DECLARATIONS OF LOVE. AND THE RED NEON SIGNS SUCH AS: *MY HEART IS YOURS, DO YOU WANT IT?,* 2002; *I FEEL LONELY, PLEASE CALL ME,* 2000; *EVEN THE LOSER HAS A GOOD TIME AT THE PARTY,* 2001. FRANKO HAS CREATED HIS OWN VOCABULARY, ONE THAT SPEAKS TO ART AS IT DOES TO LIFE; THERE ARE INDIVIDUALS WHO, HAD THEY NOT BECOME ARTISTS, WOULD BE NOTHING. IT IS A NECESSITY, AND FRANKO B USES THE FIRST MEANS, IF NOT THE ONLY MEANS HE HAS ACCESS TO, TO ESTABLISH CONTACT WITH THE OTHER: THE BODY, HIS BODY INCISED AND TATTOOED BY PAST EXPERIENCES; A BODY DENUDED, BLEACHED OR BLACKENED, SO IT CAN BE LOADED WITH NEW SIGNS, NOVEL EXISTENTIAL TRACES. NONETHELESS, HE REMAINS *UNTOUCHABLE* (THE TITLE OF HIS POETRY IS ALSO A POETIC DECLARATION, AN EXISTENTIAL ONE). ALL HIS PERFORMANCES, JUST LIKE HIS WORKS, ARE AN ACT OF GENEROUS LOVE, OFFERING A DISARMING NAKEDNESS. FRANKO B PERFORMS CATWALKS IN BROAD DAYLIGHT, BLOODY AND EXCRUCIATING, ONCE AGAIN EXPOSED TO THE PHOTOGRAPHERS’ FLASHES AND FOCUSED GAZES; HE DANCES WITH A BROWN BEAR POSITIONED ON A MOVING TROLLEY; HE CAMOUFLAGES HIMSELF AS A GOLDEN BOXER AT THE CENTRE OF THE ROOM HITTING A PUNCH BAG, ALSO GOLDEN, MEASURING UP HIS RESISTANCE, WHILE FROM THE SAME ‘INJURED’ PUNCH BAG, ONE PUNCH AFTER ANOTHER, MILK DRIPS. THIS IS A METAPHORICAL BLEEDING: *MILK & BLOOD,* 2015-2018. SCULPTURES, CERAMIC, CANVASES WOVEN IN NEON, FROM WHICH TRANSPIRES HONESTY, ALL THESE ELEMENTS EMBODY A COMPACT AND POWERFUL VISION OF A LIFE AT ONCE COHERENT AND POETIC. THE EXIGENCIES OF LOVE, PAIN AND TRAUMA HAVE LED HIM TO CREATE FORMS BOTH SIMPLE AND POETIC. THESE FORMS MIX AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ELEMENTS AND SOCIAL HISTORY, PERSONAL AND COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS. HIS WORKS, MOSTLY CONSISTING IN THE METICULOUS RECUPERATION OF EVERYDAY STUFF, EXHIBIT A PREDILECTION FOR ABANDONED AND DISCARDED OBJECTS. THESE DEFINE HIS POETIC AMBITION; IT IS AS IF THE DRUDGERY OF REALITY COULD NO LONGER BE FILTERED THROUGH. WE ARE DEALING FOR SURE WITH METAPHOR AT THE CENTRE OF WHICH IS THE HEART, AND THE LATTER IS CERTAINLY NO METAPHOR. FRANKO’S THEMATIC CORE IS THE BODY, THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY, HIS PERSONAL HISTORY, SEXUALITY AND THE WAYS IN WHICH ART TRADES ON THE PLAY WITH ILLUSION, MISUNDERSTANDING, DISTORTIONS AND DEFORMATIONS OF THE GAZE. AT LEAST FROM THE EARLY 1990S, THESE RECURRING AND DISTINCTIVE ELEMENTS HAVE SHAPED HIS REPRESENTATIONS; HE REVISITS AND REINVENTS, ESTRANGING AND ALIENATING THE MOST BANAL AND HABITUAL OBJECTS PERTAINING TO THE DOMESTIC SPHERE. MOREOVER, HE ALSO WORKS TO UNDO THE INESCAPABLE AND CONFORMIST PRESENCES INTRINSIC TO HIS PERSONAL LIVED EXPERIENCES, BRINGING TO LIGHT THE MOST DISQUIETING, DISARMING AND PARADOXICAL TRAITS. AGAIN, THE HEART, BOTH METAPHYSICAL AND ROMANTIC, BALANCES SPACE AND BODY. GRADUALLY, FRANKO HAS CONCEIVED NEW SCULPTURES WHICH HAVE REPLACED THE BODY. SUCH OBJECTS HAVE BECOME UNCLEAR METAPHORS, ALMOST LIKE AN EQUILIBRIUM OR A DECLARATION. HIS RELATIONSHIP TO HIS OWN ENVIRONMENT HAS CHANGED, HIS NEXT STEP IS TOWARDS OTHERS, IN THE HOPE OF FILLING HIS SOLITUDE. COMMUNICATION WITH THE OTHER BEGINS THROUGH THOSE FORMS WHICH RECALL FOR HIM (BUT CAN NEVER REPLACE) A BODY. SIMILAR TO HIS RED CROSSES WHICH EVOKE INTIMACY AND CLOSENESS, A RED CROSS HAS BECOME FRANKO’S IDENTITY, A RED CROSS WHICH APPEARS TO INAUGURATE THE SPACE WHICH MICHEL FOUCAULT DESCRIBED AS BEING CHARGED WITH QUALITIES AND INHABITED BY GHOSTS. THIS IS THE SPACE OF PERCEPTIONS AND DREAMS, A SPACE IN WHICH THE REAL AND THE IMAGINED COHABIT IN A SUSPENDED EQUILIBRIUM.









PAUL

I WANT TO TELL YOU A STORY ABOUT LIBYA. WHAT'S HAPPENED TO ME WHEN I WAS IN LIBYA. WHEN I WAS IN LIBYA, I SAW A LOT OF THINGS, MANY DEAD IN LIBYA, SO I WAS VERY HAPPY THAT I FOUND MYSELF OUT OF LIBYA. WHAT HAPPENED TO ME IN LIBYA WHEN I WAS IN ... THEY SAID I SHOULD PAY 3,000 DINAR. SO I DON'T HAVE ANYBODY TO CALL, I WAS INSIDE THE PRISON, CRYING, NOBODY TO CALL. THEY STARTED BEATING ME UP, BEATING ME DAY AND NIGHT, I WAS CRYING. I SAID TO GOD, HELP ME GET THROUGH THIS PRISON. I WAS THERE FOR A GOOD SEVEN MONTHS, SEVEN MONTHS IN LIBYA. EVERY DAY AND NIGHT THEY STARTED BEATING ME. THERE IS NO GOOD FOOD. WHEN THEY BRING THE FOOD, THE FOOD DID NOT GO DOWN. IT WAS TEN PEOPLE THAT WE EAT THE FOOD, THERE WAS ONLY ONE HAND OF FOOD, PUT IN YOUR MOUTH. SO WE STARTED VERSING, SAYING WHICH KIND OF LIFE IS THIS, HOW I WISH I KNOW, I WILL KNOW PASSED THE TRUTH KIND OF JOURNEY. SO, I AM VERY SAD, NOBODY, IF YOU SEE ME THEN, I WAS LIKE A BROOM, NO FLESH IN MY BODY, SO BONES, THERE ARE MANY PEOPLE THERE WHO ARE SICK, SOME SICK, AND DIE THERE THAT ARE RAPID WITH ILLNESS. I GOT TO WAIT IN THE DESERT. I WAS SO TIRED, NOBODY TO CALL. SO I WAS JUST PRAYING TO GOD, ONE DAY GOD TOOK ME OUT AWAY FROM THE PRISON, WHEN I RUN AWAY FROM INSIDE OF THE PRISON. I SEE A LOT OF BLACK THERE, THEY TOLD ME THAT LIBYA IS NOT SO GOOD. I ASKED THEM, HOW DO YOU FIND A JOB HERE TO WORK? TO SEE, TO FOOD, TO SHOP. THEY TOLD ME THAT I SHOULD GO TO THE PLACE THEY USED TO WORK, SO I WENT THERE, THAT IS WHERE I START GOING TO LIBYA TO MAKE SURE I HAVE SOME MONEY TO BUY FOOD. HOW DO I SAY, LIBYAN BOYS, THEY WOULD COME IN THE PLACE THAT OTHER BLACKS WOULD USED TO WORK. THEY WOULD COME PICK YOU THERE, THEY WOULD PICK YOU THERE, THEY WOULD SAY THAT THEIR MOTHER NEEDS SOME BOYS TO WORK IN THEIR HOME. SO THEY WOULD COME THERE AND PICK YOU, THEY WOULD TAKE YOU TO SOMEPLACE, THEY WOULD START SEARCHING YOUR BODY TO GIVE THEM THE MONEY THAT YOU HAD. YOU DON'T HAVE ANY OPTION, YOU GIVE THEM ALL THE MONEY YOU HAVE. THEY POINT A GUN IN YOUR SKIN. THEY WOULD SAY THAT IF YOU DON'T HAVE MONEY, THEY WILL KILL YOU. I DON'T HAVE ANY OPTION TO GIVE THEM THE MONEY, AND PHONES THAT ARE WITH ME. THEY WOULD DROP ME, THEY SAY THAT I SHOULD GO, I WILL START CRYING. NOBODY TO TALK TO.

SO IN LIBYA, THERE IS A LOT OF SITUATIONS THERE, THEY KILL PEOPLE AND THEY CARRY A GUN WITH YOU, YOU SEE EIGHTEEN-YEARS-OLD BOYS CARRYING A GUN, POINTING AT A MUM AND BABY, KILLING. THEY SAY THAT



THEY WILL KILL YOU IF YOU DON'T GIVE THEM MONEY. SO WE DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO, WE GIVE THEM THIS MONEY THEY WILL START POINTING A GUN AT YOU. START SAYING MANY THINGS. AND WHEREBY IN LIBYA YOU CAN'T WALK ON THE ROAD, WHEN YOU WALK ALONE, THEY WILL COME, TAKE YOU, INSIDE THEIR CAR. THEY WOULD TAKE YOU, ONE PLACE THEY USED TO PUT A LOT OF BLACKS, THEY WOULD START BEATING YOU, A LOT OF PEOPLE OF NIGERIA TO BRING MONEY, IF YOU DON'T HAVE ANYBODY, YOU WOULD BE DEAD. YOU WILL BE DEAD, ONE DAY MAYBE GOD WILL HELP YOU GET AWAY FROM THAT PLACE. THAT IS THE SITUATION OF LIBYA. LIBYA THERE IS NO GOOD TAKE CARE OF. YOU CAN'T WALK ALONE, MAYBE IF YOU ARE SLEEPING IN YOUR HOUSE, THEY WILL COME TO YOUR HOUSE AND BREAK THE DOOR. COME AND PICK SOME PEOPLE THERE AND THEY WILL SELL YOU FOR ABOUT 4,000 DINAR, 3,000 DINAR. MANY PEOPLE SOME GIRLS AND BOYS GO AND USE THEIR PRIVATE PARTS TO WORK IN LIBYA. MANY GIRLS THEY SELL THAT TO PEOPLE, THEY WILL GO AND USE THEIR PRIVATE PARTS TO MAKE A LOT OF MONEY. WE DON'T HAVE MANY OPTIONS. YOU CAN SAY NO, YOU AREN'T GOING TO DO ANY WORK BUT THEY WILL BEAT YOU, MOST WILL KILL YOU BECAUSE IN LIBYA THERE ARE A LOT OF THINGS THAT HAPPEN THERE, PAST A LOT OF THINGS, EVEN SOME OF MY FRIENDS HAVE DIED IN LIBYA, SO I AM VERY HAPPY THAT I FIND MYSELF OUT AWAY FROM LIBYA, I AM VERY HAPPY WITH MY LIFE THAT NOTHING LIKE DEATH HAPPENED TO ME IN LIBYA. I SAW FRIENDS, BOYS AND GIRLS, THEY DIE THERE, THEY SHOOT SOMEONE, THEY SHOOT THEIR LEGS, EVEN ONE OF MY FRIENDS IN LIBYA WHEN I WAS IN LIBYA. THEY SHOOT HIS LEG, SO THE MAN HAVE NO TREATMENT. SO ONE DAY THE MAN, THEY PUSH HIM TO GO TO ITALY, THE MAN BOAT CAPSIZE, THAT IS WHY THE MAN DIED IN THE SEA, HE DOESN'T MAKE THE JOURNEY, A LOT OF PEOPLE DIED IN THE SEA, A LOT OF BOATS CAPSIZED, SO WE DON'T HAVE ANY OPTION TO RUN AWAY FROM LIBYA.

LIBYA IS NOT A COUNTRY THAT SOMEONE WOULD WANT TO STAY THERE, LIBYA IS VERY TERRIBLE; IT IS NOT THE WAY YOU SEE LIBYA, THEY WILL TELL YOU THAT LIBYA IS GOOD, LIBYA IS NO GOOD, NO MAH. ME, I PASSED THROUGH THE DESERT TOO MANY TIMES, THERE IS A LOT OF SOULS DEAD IN LIBYA. THERE ARE A LOT OF HUMAN BEINGS YOU WILL SEE THERE, THAT WILL BE ROTTING. AFTER YOU HAVE DIED THEY WILL WRAP YOU WITH A BIG BLANKET AND GO THROW YOU IN THE DESERT... DANGEROUS, SO DANGEROUS. IN THE DESERT, I SAW SKIN, YOU MIGHT HAVE BEEN BONES, IN THE DESERT, YOU MIGHT BE BONES, A SKELETON THAT DIED IN LIBYA. WHEN YOU ARE GOING TO SABHA, YOU SEE ONE BIG WELL, THERE IS NO WATER IN THE DESERT, SO THAT BIG WELL IS VERY BIG AND THERE IS SOME WATER INSIDE. SO YOU MIGHT BE INSIDE THE WELL, SO THE WATER IS VERY ROUGH AND SMELLY, BECAUSE YOU DON'T HAVE WATER TO DRINK. YOU HAVE TO DRINK THE WATER AND GET TO WHERE YOU ARE GOING TO, THIS IS WHAT IS HAPPENING IN LIBYA. LIBYA IS SO TERRIBLE, WHERE YOU ARE GOING, YOU JUST SEEN SOMEONE WHO GOT SHOT, THESE BOYS ARE SHOOTING GUNS AND GET SHOT. THEY WILL TAKE YOU TO WORK, THEIR FARM WORK, THEY WILL SAY THAT AFTER YOU FOLLOW THEM TO WORK. AFTER YOU WORK THE WORK FROM MORNING TO EVENING, THEY WILL USE THEIR GUNS TO DRIVE YOU AWAY, THEY WILL GIVE YOU FOOD, THEY WILL TREAT YOU LIKE ANIMALS, IT IS NO GOOD. IT'S NO GOOD. LIBYA IS NOT WHERE SOMEBODY WILL GO AND STAY AND LIVE YOUR LIFE IN LIBYA. SO I CAME OUT OF PRISON, I FOUND MYSELF IN ITALY, I THANK GOD THERE IS NO GUN SHOOTING IN ITALY. ITALY IS GOOD FOR ME TO LIVE MY LIFE, SO I WON'T GO BACK TO MY COUNTRY I WANT TO LIVE MY LIFE IN ITALY, THAT IS WHY I SEE MYSELF IN ITALY.

ZEBORAH

ZEBORAH ZEB, ALSO KNOWN AS RED. SO IT'S ONLY HALF OF A STORY TO TALK ABOUT THE PEOPLE WHO'VE COME TO EUROPE. THE IMPORTANT THING TO UNDERSTAND IS WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE REST OF THE WORLD AND WHAT PEOPLE HAVE LEFT, ALSO THE PEOPLE WHO HAVEN'T HAD THE CHANCE TO LEAVE. CURRENTLY, I'M LIVING IN IRAQ AND I'M LIVING WITH THE YAZIDI COMMUNITY THAT WERE GENOCIDED BY DAESH. THERE ARE THREE-THOUSAND YAZIDI WOMEN WHO ARE STILL BEING HELD CAPTIVE, EVEN THOUGH THE CALIPHATE HAS APPARENTLY BEEN DESTROYED AND ISIS HAS APPARENTLY BEEN DESTROYED AND NO LONGER EXISTS AND FAMILIES ARE LIVING IN BOMBED-OUT VILLAGES, WAITING FOR THOSE WOMEN TO COME HOME AND INCREASINGLY REALISING THAT THEY WON'T COME HOME.

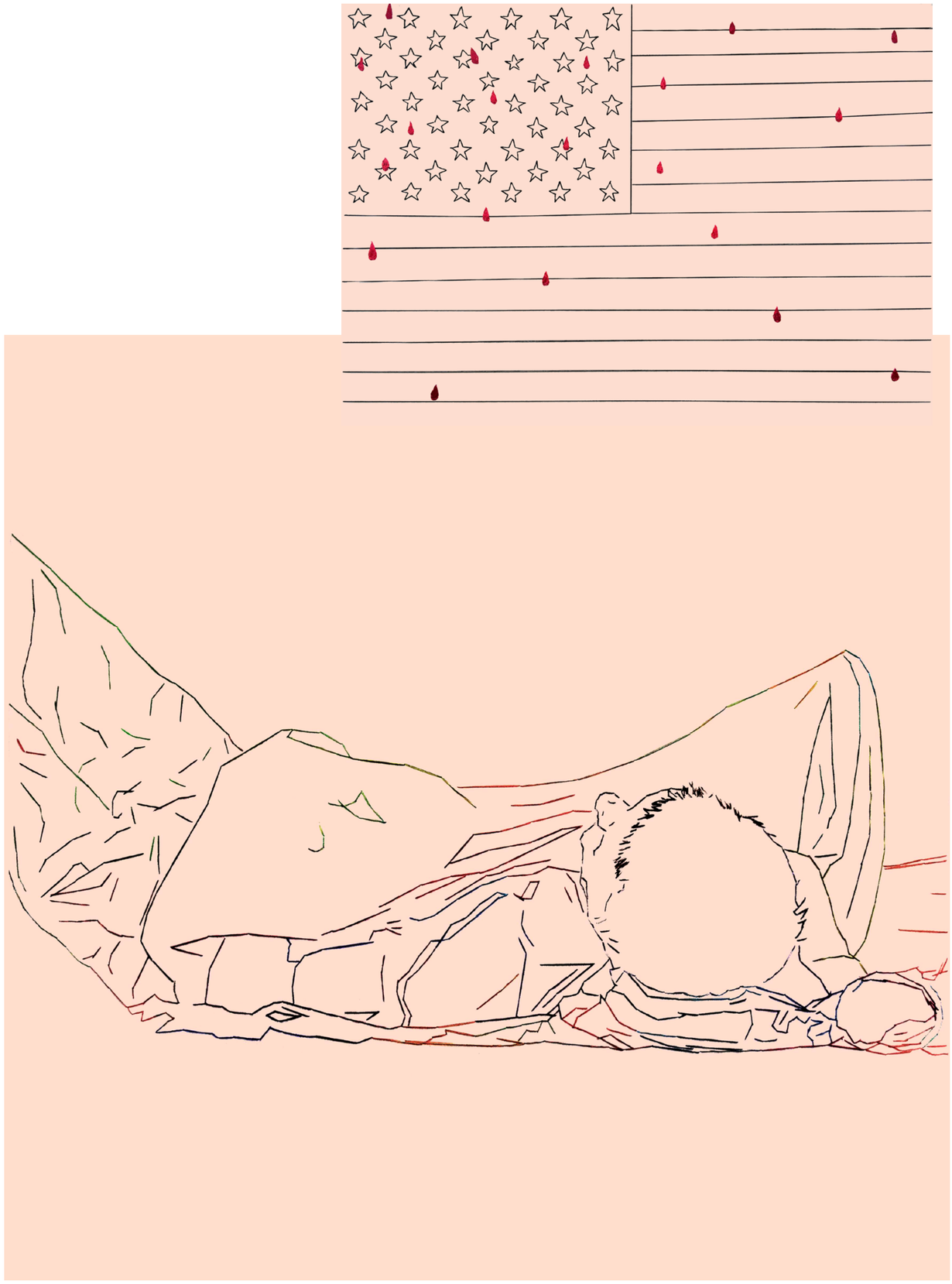
RECENTLY I WAS HAVING A MEAL WITH A FAMILY AND THE HOSTESS POINTED OUT TO ME THAT ONE OF THE OTHER GUESTS WAS A SURVIVOR, THAT MEANS THAT SHE WAS IN CAPTIVITY WITH DAESH, IT MEANS THAT SHE WAS RAPED MORE TIMES THAN SHE CAN REMEMBER AND CERTAINLY MORE TIMES THAN I EVER WANT TO HEAR ABOUT. I FELT EMBARRASSED AND I DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO ENGAGE WITH HER ANYMORE, BECAUSE IT'S UNBELIEVABLE ... HER STORY. AND THERE IS NO WAY TO SHOW CARE FOR SOMEBODY WHO'S BEEN THROUGH SO MUCH. AND THEN, AFTERWARDS, I FOUND OUT THAT MY HOSTESS, HER SISTER IS STILL IN CAPTIVITY AND THAT HER TWO NIECES WERE ALSO CAPTURED AND THAT SHE'S NEVER HEARD FROM THEM SINCE 2015 - THAT WAS THE LAST CONTACT. SO NOW AS THE CALIPHATE, IT'S APPARENTLY COLLAPSED AND DAESH AND THE REMAINING CAPTIVES ARE FLEEING TO CAMPS. IT'S THE LAST CHANCE THAT MAYBE HER SISTER IS ALIVE AND THAT MAYBE HER NIECES ARE ALIVE AND THAT MAYBE THE FAMILY WILL BE REUNITED AND IN THE MEANTIME SHE HAS TO MAKE A DECISION, WHETHER SHE WANTS TO LEAVE, BECAUSE SHE HAS A RIGHT, BECAUSE HER FAMILY WAS SO BADLY HURT DURING THE GENOCIDE, TO LEAVE FOR AUSTRALIA, BUT IF SHE GOES, SHE WILL PROBABLY NEVER SEE HER SISTER AGAIN OR HER NIECES AGAIN. OR SHE CAN GIVE UP HER OPPORTUNITY TO GO AND SHE CAN KEEP ON WAITING FOR HER SISTER WHO MAY NEVER COME HOME. AND IN NORTHERN IRAQ, THERE ARE THOUSANDS AND THOUSANDS OF FAMILIES WHO LIVE WITH THIS EVERY DAY. THE DECISION WHETHER TO LEAVE, THE KNOWLEDGE THAT SOME OF THEIR FAMILY WILL NEVER COME BACK, BUT ALSO THE ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY THAT DAESH IS NOT OVER. THAT THIS IS NOT THE LAST GENOCIDE, THAT THEIR COMMUNITY WILL BE TARGETED AGAIN AND THAT INCREASINGLY THE WORLD HAS MOVED ON, AND NO ONE, NOBODY WANTS TO HEAR THIS STORY AND NOBODY WANTS TO HELP THEM AND SOME COUNTRIES ARE EVEN SENDING THEM BACK TO THE PLACE WHERE THEY'VE ALREADY BEEN GENOCIDED OVER SEVENTY TIMES. AND WHERE IT'S ALMOST CERTAIN THEY'LL BE GENOCIDED AGAIN.

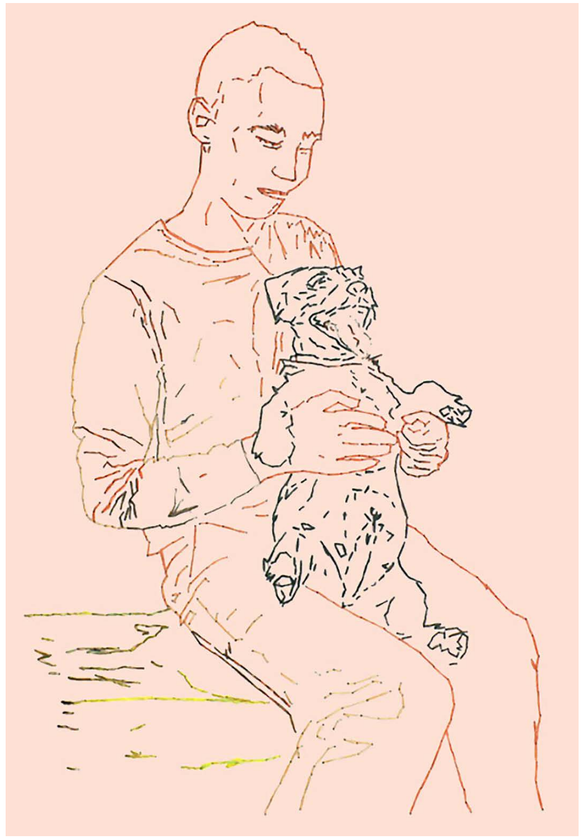
AND ONE FATHER I MET, WHO HAS TWO CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF FIVE, INVITED ME FOR DINNER AND ASKED ME HOW HE COULD GET OUT OF IRAQ AND HOW HE COULD SAVE HIS CHILDREN AND I'VE TRIED TO EXPLAIN THE ASYLUM LAWS IN EUROPE AND THE WAY PEOPLE IN EUROPE FEEL ABOUT REFUGEES AND THE KIND OF WELCOME THEY MIGHT EXPECT IF THEY WERE TO MAKE IT. AND HE GOT ANGRY AT ME AND HE TOLD ME THAT IT WASN'T MY DECISION TO MAKE AND IF I DIDN'T HELP HIM SAVE HIS CHILDREN, THAT WHEN DAESH OR THE NEXT INCARNATION OF DAESH COME BACK AND KILL HIS DAUGHTERS, THAT WILL BE MY FAULT. AND IN SOME WAY, I THINK, I AGREE WITH HIM. IF WE DON'T FIND A BETTER WAY TO RESOLVE THESE ISSUES, IF WE DON'T ADDRESS THE CAUSE OF THE WARS AND THE GENOCIDES, WE ARE ALL IN SOME WAY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE NEXT PEOPLE THAT WILL BE KILLED BY THE NEXT WAVE OF VIOLENCE. AND MANY PEOPLE THAT I MEET. I JUST DON'T EVEN TRY TO UNDERSTAND WHY THESE THINGS HAPPEN AND WHY THEY ARE HAPPY TO ACCEPT THAT AS LONG AS IT HAPPENS IN ANOTHER COUNTRY, THAT'S OKAY. THEY JUST DON'T WANT THE DANGER TO COME TO THEIR COUNTRY. AND I DON'T THINK THAT'S A GOOD UNDERSTANDING. THE WORLD IS A WHOLE, WE CAN'T JUST PUSH ALL OF THE VIOLENCE AND ALL THE SADNESS SOMEWHERE ELSE AND BE SAFE. THAT'S NOT HOW IT WORKS. WE HAVE TO FIND A WAY TO STOP THE HATE AND STOP THE VIOLENCE. FOR ALL OF OUR SAKES.

AT THE START OF 2017, I GAVE UP MY LIFE IN THE UK BECAUSE I'VE DECIDED IT WAS TIME TO GO AND FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE REFUGEE CRISIS AND TO MEET THE PEOPLE THAT WERE TRYING TO MAKE THEIR WAY TO THE UK AND TO FIND OUT WHY AND TO FIND OUT WHETHER WHAT WAS IN THE NEWSPAPERS ABOUT THEM WAS TRUE. SO I PACKED UP ALL MY STUFF AND MY LIFE AND I WENT TO CALAIS. THE JUNGLE, SO FAMOUS IN THE BRITISH NEWSPAPERS, HAD JUST BEEN DISMANTLED BUT THERE WERE STILL THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE, INCLUDING FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN AND YOUNG TEENAGE MEN AND EVEN TEENAGE GIRLS LIVING IN FORESTS AND ON THE STREET BECAUSE JUST DISMANTLING THE CAMP DIDN'T STOP THEM HAVING THE DESIRE TO COME TO THE UK. AS I GOT THERE AND SPOKE TO PEOPLE, AND MET THEM, AND LISTENED TO THEIR STORIES, I STARTED TO FIND OUT WHY IT WAS THAT PEOPLE WERE TRYING TO MAKE THEIR WAY TO THE UK. NOTHING THAT I'VE BEEN TOLD ABOUT THEM WAS TRUE. THE REASONS WHY THEY WERE COMING WERE BECAUSE THEY HAD FAMILY HERE OR THEY SPOKE THE LANGUAGE HERE OR THEY HAD SOME OTHER CONNECTION WITH THE UK. SO AFTER A WHILE I'D BEEN THERE, I DECIDED THAT IT WASN'T ENOUGH JUST TO KNOW ABOUT THE REFUGEES IN CALAIS WHO WANTED TO COME TO THE UK, THAT I HAD TO FIND OUT ABOUT OTHER REFUGEES, ALL THE REFUGEES, KNOWING THAT SO MANY REFUGEES DON'T EVER GET AS FAR AS CALAIS, THAT MANY DIED ON THE ROADS AND THAT MANY ACTUALLY HAVE NO INTEREST IN COMING TO THE UK.

I MET PEOPLE WHO'D BEEN TO SWITZERLAND, THEN BACK TO FRANCE, THEN BACK TO SWITZERLAND, THEN BACK TO FRANCE - SEVEN YEARS THEY HAD BEEN TRYING TO FIND SOMEWHERE TO SETTLE. I MET PEOPLE WHO'D BEEN IN THE UK BUT HAD BEEN DEPORTED; I MET A YOUNG BOY WHO'D BEEN DEPORTED ON HIS 18TH BIRTHDAY, BECAUSE THOSE ARE THE RULES, AND HE'D GONE BACK TO HIS COUNTRY AND THEN HE TRAVELLED BACK AGAIN TO EUROPE, BECAUSE THAT'S ALL HE'S KNOWN, CAUSE HE LEFT WHEN HE WAS A TINY BOY AND HE'S NOT SAFE IN HIS OWN COUNTRY ANYMORE BECAUSE HE IS SO BRITISH. AND ALL OF THESE PEOPLE JUST LIVE IN TENTS, WITH NO, ABSOLUTELY, NO SUPPORT, OTHER THAN VOLUNTEERS LIKE ME. THEY ARRIVE, THEY TRY TO FIND PEOPLE WHO UNDERSTAND THEM, THEY EXPECT A "WELCOMING EUROPE", THEY'VE HEARD ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS, THEY BELIEVE IN THE VALUES OF EUROPE, THEY BELIEVE THAT IT'S GOING TO BE DIFFERENT THAN THE PLACE THEY LEFT, AND THEY GET HERE AND THEY FIND THERE IS NOTHING FOR THEM, JUST SCRAPPY SERVICES PROVIDED BY VOLUNTEERS TRYING THEIR VERY BEST, BUT NO HOUSE, NO ABILITY TO WORK, NO OPPORTUNITY AND THAT THEY HAVE TO PLAY A REALLY TWISTED GAME OF SURVIVAL. THEY HAVE TO MAKE IT THROUGH THE 18 MONTHS, AND IF THEY CAN MAKE IT THROUGH 18 MONTHS, THEN THEY'LL BE GIVEN A RIGHT TO APPLY FOR ASYLUM. IF THEY DON'T GET KILLED OR DIE OR DEPORTED IN THE MEANTIME, AND MANY OF THEM ARE NOT REALLY INFORMED OF THE RULES OR THEY GET BAD ADVICE, SO THE WAITING GAME IS EXTENDED, NOT BECAUSE THEY DIDN'T ABIDE BY THE RULES, BUT BECAUSE NOBODY TOLD THEM WHAT THE RULES WERE.

BUT IN ALL OF THAT, WHAT I MET WERE PEOPLE WHO WERE NOT THE PEOPLE WHO'D BEEN DESCRIBED TO ME IN THE NEWSPAPERS. THEY ARE COURAGEOUS PEOPLE, INTELLIGENT PEOPLE, FUNNY PEOPLE, STRONG PEOPLE, EDUCATED PEOPLE, THOUGHTFUL PEOPLE, PEOPLE WHO VALUED THE SAME THINGS AS I DID, WHO WERE SCARED OF THE SAME THINGS THAT I AM, WHO WANTED THE SAME LIFE THAT I WANT. AND GRADUALLY, TALKING TO THEM AND FINDING OUT WHERE THEY COME FROM, I REALISED THAT I HAD TO GO TO WHAT THEY'D LEFT. THAT IT WASN'T ENOUGH TO UNDERSTAND THIS, HOW TERRIBLE WE TREAT THEM, IT'S ALSO IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND WHY THEY LEFT BUT ALSO WHAT IT IS THAT THEY'VE LOST AS PART OF THIS JOURNEY, BECAUSE EVERYBODY TALKS ABOUT THEY'RE COMING TO EUROPE, BECAUSE THEY WANT MONEY, BECAUSE THEY WANT JOBS, BECAUSE THEY WANT, WANT, WANT. AND SOME PEOPLE WHO ARE A LITTLE BIT SENSITIVE, UNDERSTAND THAT MAYBE THEY LEFT BECAUSE THERE WAS A WAR OR DICTATORSHIP OR FAMINE OR A REALLY GOOD REASON, BUT ONE OF THE STORIES THAT NOBODY TALKS ABOUT IS WHAT IT IS THAT THEY WILL NEVER HAVE AGAIN. THAT THEY'LL PROBABLY NEVER SEE THEIR MOTHERS AGAIN, THAT THEY'VE LOST FOOD THAT THEY LOVE, THE MUSIC THEY LOVE, HILLSIDES THAT THEY LOVE, A COMMUNITY, A FAMILY THAT MEANT SO MUCH TO THEM. THEY'VE SACRIFICED ALL OF THAT FOR SAFETY BECAUSE THEY WERE AFRAID FOR THEIR LIVES OR FOR THEIR LOVED ONES. BUT THEY MISS IT EVERY DAY. AND THROUGHOUT THE STRUGGLE, THERE'S ALSO THIS KNOWLEDGE THAT THE SYSTEM HERE MEANS THAT THEY'LL PROBABLY NEVER SEE THAT AGAIN. THAT THE PROBLEMS IN THE WORLD MEAN THAT THEY'LL NEVER HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE HOME AND ENJOY THOSE THINGS. THAT GOVERNMENTS, OUTSIDE OF THEIR COUNTRY, ARE CONTROLLING WARFARE, AND GOVERNMENTS ARE FORCING THEM INTO THIS SITUATION THAT MEANS THIS NEW PLACE, THIS COLD PLACE, THIS PLACE WHERE PEOPLE DON'T LIKE THEM AND STARE AT THEM AND TREAT THEM BADLY AND IGNORE THEIR NEEDS, IS THE ONLY HOME THEY CAN NOW EVER HOPE TO HAVE.







FRANKO B
UNLOVED

19 OCTOBER - 13 DECEMBER
RUA RED
CURATED BY A/POLITICAL

ILLUSTRATIONS
FROM THE ***HOMAGE TO THE NEW WORLD ORDER*** SERIES, 2017, PAGES:
2, 5, 6, 12-13, 26
FROM THE ***UNLOVED*** AND ***ABANDONMENT*** SERIES, 2018-19, PAGES:
3, 8-9, 10-11, 20-21, 22-23, 25, 28-29, 30-31
UNTITLED, 2019, PAGE: 4
UNTITLED, 2019, PAGE: 7
FROM THE ***STAINED*** SERIES, 2017, PAGES: 10, 24-25, 26-27, 29, 33
FROM THE ***LOST BOYS*** SERIES, 2017-19, PAGES: 14-15, 16-17, 18-19
STILL LIFE, FROM THE ***STITCHING*** SERIES, 2017, PAGE: 33
BEUYS, 2015, PAGE: 34 (LEFT)
ROTHKO, 2015, PAGE: 34 (RIGHT)

TEXTS
SYLWIA SERAFINOWICZ, CURATOR, A/POLITICAL
FRANKO B, ARTIST, AND JONATHAN CUMMINS, FILMMAKER AND LECTURER, BELFAST SCHOOL OF ART
FRANCESCA ALFANO MIGLIETTI, CURATOR
CLAUDIA PECORARO, ARTIST
ARSENY TARKOVSKY, POET

GRAPHIC DESIGN ANTHONY MARTIN

INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED BY FRANKO B
ASH, BARKOSINA HANUSOVA, KEELY LANZISERA-ROSEMANN, GLORIA, MOSES, PAUL, ZEBORAH ZED, PAUL

SPECIAL THANKS TO
ANDREI AND VERONIKA TRETYAKOV, MAOLIOSA BOYLE, BECKY HAGHPANAH-SHIRWAN, RUA RED TEAM, A/POLITICAL TEAM, SOUTH DUBLIN COUNTY COUNCIL, THE ARTS COUNCIL AND ARTS OFFICE, THOMAS QUALMANN, AND TO ALL THOSE WHO SHARED THEIR LIFE EXPERIENCES WITH FRANKO B FOR THE INTERVIEWS FEATURED IN THE EXHIBITION AND THIS PUBLICATION. ***UNLOVED*** MARKS THE SIXTH COLLABORATION BETWEEN A/POLITICAL AND RUA RED FROM THEIR TWO-YEAR PARTNERSHIP.

I USED TO BE CLO'.
IF I'M STILL CLO' OR JUST CLAUDIA, I NO LONGER KNOW.
CLO' IS STILL FLOATING SOMEWHERE. SOME PIECES INSIDE ME. SOME PIECES OUTSIDE.
DOES IT REALLY MATTER?

HALF MY LIFE OVERRUN BY THE LIGHT OF LOVE.
EVERY DAMNED MORNING, WAKING UP WITH THE FEELING I WAS BLESSED FOR BEING IN LOVE AND BEING LOVED BACK.
TRUE HAPPINESS. NOBODY COULD BE AS HAPPY AS THE TWO OF US.
I FIGURED I COULD TEACH EVERYTHING ABOUT LOVE. ABOUT LIFE. (ARROGANTLY)

SUDDENLY, WITHOUT MUCH EXPLANATION, THAT WAS ALL GONE.
YOU'RE MY LIFE, MY WOMAN, MY FAMILY, BUT I DON'T KNOW WHO I AM ANYMORE, I NEED TO GO.

I LOST MY VOCABULARY, THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH, I LOST MEMORIES, I LOST WEIGHT.
BENEATH MY FEET, MY PRESENT CRUMBLED.
VOID OF MEANING, MY PAST COLLAPSED. THE FUTURE CAME CRASHING DOWN.
WHERE HAVE THEY GONE, THE GREEN SANDALS?

(BUT) MOURNING IS A SON OF A BITCH.
THE LESS I SLEPT AND ATE, THE MORE MY ENERGY INCREASED.
AS TEARS DIDN'T SEEM TO END, AS GRIEF WENT ON AND ON, I COULD FEEL RECONCILIATION.
NATURE CAME TO RAVISH MY PAIN.
IN DYING, MY BODY REMINDED ME THAT I WAS ALIVE.

BEFORE GOING TO WORK, MORNING AFTER MORNING, I WIPED MY TEARS AWAY IN MY CAR.
BEFORE GOING TO WORK, AT 7 O'CLOCK, I LET TWO STRANGE MEN FUCK ME.

YOU'VE NEVER SHONE SO BRIGHT BEFORE MY LOVED ONES TOLD ME.

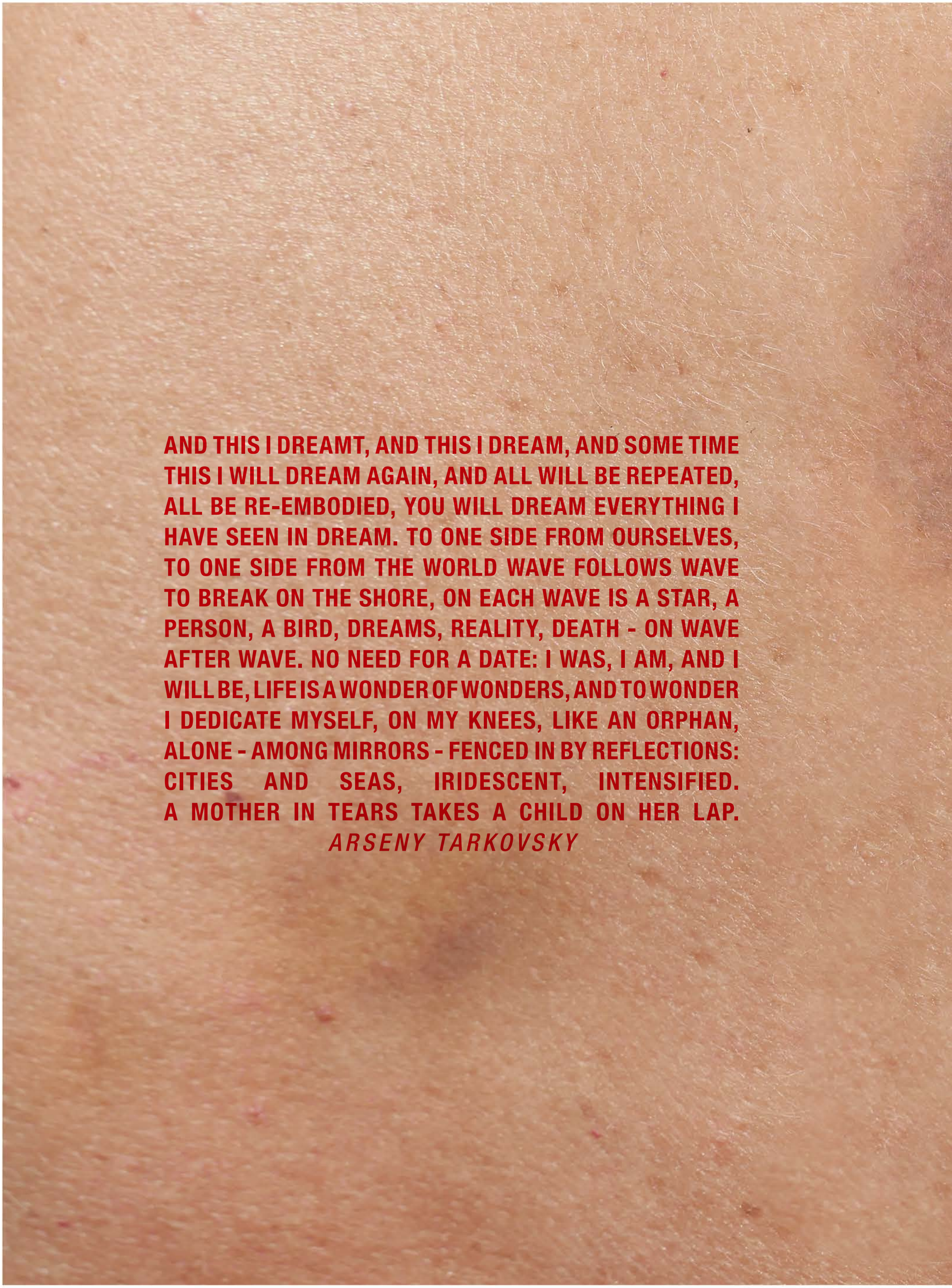
(SO) LATE AT NIGHT, EVERY NIGHT, I SHOOT SELF-PORTRAITS FOR NEARLY THREE YEARS.
I OBSERVED MYSELF TURNING INTO A CHILD, BREATHING, SUFFERING, SCREAMING, NOT CARING.
I LEARNED TO GO THROUGH THE PAIN, TO WELCOME THE DARKEST SHADOWS. I LEARNED TO LOOK AT THE WORLD WITH MY EYES ONLY. I LEARNED THE PLEASURE TO WALK IN THE MIDDLE OF THE STREETS, NOT GIVING A SHIT ABOUT WHAT MY PARENTS TAUGHT ME. I RE-ENGAGED IN MUSIC AND FILMS THAT HAD BECOME ENEMIES. I MADE LOVE WITH THE CITY. I KILLED THE GHOSTS IN MY HOUSE.

I'VE CLIMBED MOUNTAINS. I'M TIRED AND I'M PROUD.
I BLEW MYSELF TO SMITHEREENS TO GET MYSELF TOGETHER.

I'M A WIDOW. I'LL NEVER CHEW AN OLIVE LEAF AGAIN.
I'M A WIDOW. THE WOUND IS BECOMING A SCAR. THE SCAR STILL BLEEDS FROM TIME TO TIME.
I'M A WIDOW. MOURNING IS A COMFORT ZONE BUT I'M READY TO SAY FUCK THE PAIN.
I'M A WIDOW. I'M EMPTY AND I'M FULL.

OTHER PEOPLE'S EYES AND HANDS ON ME.
BOTH FEET FIRMLY ON THE GROUND. I'M AT THE MERCY OF THE SWEETEST WINDS.

MY TRUST IN LOVE IS BROKEN. BUT I GOT ENGAGED TO ME.
MY TRUST IN LOVE IS BROKEN. BUT I LOVE MYSELF FOR ONCE.



AND THIS I DREAMT, AND THIS I DREAM, AND SOME TIME THIS I WILL DREAM AGAIN, AND ALL WILL BE REPEATED, ALL BE RE-EMBODIED, YOU WILL DREAM EVERYTHING I HAVE SEEN IN DREAM. TO ONE SIDE FROM OURSELVES, TO ONE SIDE FROM THE WORLD WAVE FOLLOWS WAVE TO BREAK ON THE SHORE, ON EACH WAVE IS A STAR, A PERSON, A BIRD, DREAMS, REALITY, DEATH - ON WAVE AFTER WAVE. NO NEED FOR A DATE: I WAS, I AM, AND I WILL BE, LIFE IS A WONDER OF WONDERS, AND TO WONDER I DEDICATE MYSELF, ON MY KNEES, LIKE AN ORPHAN, ALONE - AMONG MIRRORS - FENCED IN BY REFLECTIONS: CITIES AND SEAS, IRIDESCENT, INTENSIFIED. A MOTHER IN TEARS TAKES A CHILD ON HER LAP.

ARSENY TARKOVSKY