

ADRIAN PACI. LOST COMMUNITIES
24.11.2019 – 23.02.2020
Kunsthalle Krems



OPENING: Sat, 23.11.2019, 6 pm
PRESS CONFERENCE: Fri, 22.11.2019, 11 am
PRESS PHOTOS: <http://bit.ly/LostCommunities>

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"I need personal encounters; more is created as a result. I don't like predefined goals: art arises out of the wonderment of encounters – wonderment allows you to recognize the potential, the potential telling us something is there and something is missing at the same time. My work is about examining in depth this presence and absence."

Adrian Paci

Refugees leave their home, friends, relatives, often their entire family behind because, for whatever reason, they see no future for themselves where they are living. They leave for the unknown, for a foreign land, without their own language, without the community of family and friends. A drastic change of existence full of uncertainties begins.

Emigration, being lost in a foreign world, the loss of communities, the search for a new identity, and the yearning for what was lost and for those lost are central themes in the work of Albanian artist Adrian Paci. To express them, he creates strong iconic pictures, videos, and sculptures. In his early video installation *Apparizione* (2001), made shortly after his emigration from Albania in the late 1990s, he filmed his little daughter trying, in Italy, to sing an Albanian children's song. In a second projection, opposite to the first one, we see the family that stayed behind in Albania trying, all together, to help her put together the verses of the song—at once simple and impressive. One of his best-known works, a key piece relating to the currently so topical and politically charged subject of migration, *Centro di permanenza temporanea* (2007), is a memorable, precise, and relatable depiction of the dilemma of being unwanted and the forlornness of those who go away.

At the Kunsthalle Krems, Adrian Paci shows works that particularly are about the loss of communities, for example, his new video piece *Interregnum* (2017), in which he edited together file footage from the mourning services of the "great dictators" of the 20th century like Mao, Stalin, and others—an almost unimaginable document of that momentary acute human grief fueled primarily by a sense of loss of a long-existing community.

The exhibition is retrospective in character, covering a range from the early works of the 1990s all the way up to most recent pieces, including some especially developed for the exhibition, such as the video *Prova* (2019), in which he starts out from a previous work, *Turn on* (2004), and continues to work with the protagonists from back then, work-seekers from Shkodër, Albania. Aside from a number of video works, Paci also shows drawings and paintings as well as the iconic sculpture *Home to go* (2001).

Adrian Paci was born 1969 in Shkodër, Albania. He emigrated to Milan, Italy, in the late 1990s. Today, Paci lives and works alternately in Milan and Shkodër. Adrian Paci twice represented Albania at the Biennale di Venezia, in 1999 and 2005. He exhibited internationally in major art venues such as MoMA PS1 in New York, Folkwang Museum in Essen, Germany, and Jeu de Paume in Paris.

Curator: Andreas Hoffer

ADRIAN PACI IN CONVERSATION WITH KATHRIN RHOMBERG (ABSTRACT FROM THE CATALOG)

Kathrin Rhomberg: There is an old question that is rarely discussed in connection with contemporary art and I wonder if it is relevant for you. It is the question about truth and if art can be a medium of truth.

Adrian Paci: Naturally questions of truth in art are important to me. However, I am less interested in the notion of “the Truth” in itself than in the human need to express one’s experience and put it into language. I guess this relation between expression and experience, between fiction and reality is somehow connected to what you call the search for truth. I see my work as an expression of my need to translate real experience into the language of art. In doing so, I avoid bringing in additional elements and try to use only what is necessary. It is the depth and layers of the experience itself that suggest different readings and interpretations. It is through your life encounters that you come across stories, images, gestures, even fantasies.

Which work comes to your mind when you speak about the need to make the experience productive?
First of all *Albanian Stories* (1997), my first video work. It shows a little girl who went through a traumatic experience, but she is able to deal with it through the process of storytelling and fiction. She lends the experience a kind of lightness and playfulness, which I think is very important.

The film addresses in a very moving and powerful way not only the experience of migration but also of life in a troubled country. You witnessed it as a young artist in Albania. How did it affect you?
It affected me strongly of course. The radical transformation of life coincided with my desire to explore the new expressions of contemporary art. During my studies at the Academy of Arts in Tirana we sought hard to get information about what was happening around us. We wanted to overcome what we had learned from the art of the past and tried to build new references. In the meantime, Albania suddenly became a different country and our references lost their meaning. But my migration to Italy in 1997 also brought about a huge change.

You are addressing the past also with the medium of painting. You were educated as a painter. That was your main artistic expression for many years after you finished your studies at the Academy of Arts in Tirana. How is your painting practice related to the video works?
My experience with video changed my way of thinking about painting. As a young painter I tried to find my own style, my own gesture, my own touch. Yet the experience with my first video work in 1997 gave me another perspective. The perspective of someone who instead of creating a work, produces the work through the process of encountering something happening in front of him. Subsequently this experience also influenced my paintings. Instead of creating “new” images I started to refer to an existing image. Since that time, my paintings are always about a dialogue with a single frame from a moving image. There is always a kind of vibration that characterizes the image, an inner movement even if the single frame appears still. This new approach helps make my painting lighter. It somehow takes the responsibility out of the painting, out of creating the painting. In this sense I can say that my painting is very much about the activation of a process more than the creation of an object. It is always about something that comes out of the dialogue with something that stays positioned in front of me. In this dialogue you always search for a potentiality and try to activate it through the gesture of painting.

In the case of your first video work, why did painting not offer you the possibility to capture the dramatic events you and your family had to go through?
It was the potentiality of the event, the story that determined the medium. I could not do it with painting.

I can see this also with other works. When for example, in your video *Turn On* from 2004, you bring the workers back into a public awareness and claim their right to be perceived despite their miserable economic conditions, or in *The Line* from 2007, where a line of people moves towards a mobile airplane stairway, which is detached from the plane and hence the people are displaced; it seems that these events can be only captured by video.

Yes, I had to enter into a more direct dialogue with reality. And I could only do it with the video camera. As you know I was trained in realism. In that sense art was for me always the result of a kind of encounter with reality. Maybe every artist is faced with the question of how to reflect what you see and what you experience. It is important that it does not become just a description or a moment of information. In my case, it was also about getting away from painting and operating with an artistic medium I knew nothing about. But also taking advantage of the freshness of the kind of amateurish use of video I did not have in my paintings. As such video also helped me to overcome the question of medium for a while and to form a more direct connection with reality.

You speak about the freshness of your amateurish use of video. How important is the form?

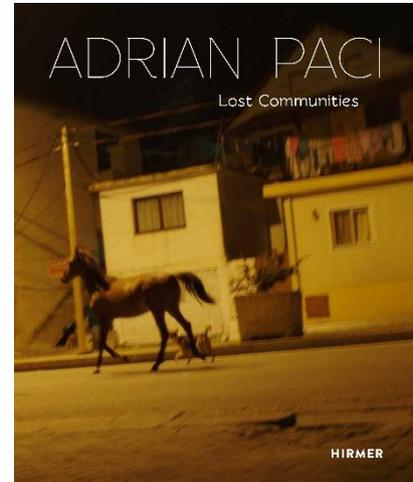
The form is very important, because through form the essence of things is manifested in appearance. Before we talked about the question of the truth. How the truth takes form and appears? This is the question. In creating an artwork I have to deal with form. But the form does not have a separate value. It always questions the signals it is getting from something that generates the need to take shape and appears in a certain way. In this sense the form is important. There is no truth without a certain form through which this truth appears. It has to do with the “what” and the “how.” They are both connected. The “what” is always appearing in a certain way. So I have to take care of the form, of the “how.” To go back to your question of being amateurish, I think this has to do with a sense of directness and the lack of filters more than with a stylistic choice.

The complete interview can be found in the exhibition catalog.

EXHIBITION CATALOG

available at the Kunsthalle Krems store

Title	Adrian Paci. Lost Communities
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OTHER EXHIBITIONS BY THE ARTIST

ADRIAN PACI. BROKEN WORDS

19.10. – 01.12.2019

Salzburger Kunstverein

Künstlerhaus

Hellbrunner Straße 3

5020 Salzburg

ADRIAN PACI. PROVA

21.09. – 01.12.2019

National Gallery of Art

Bulevardi Dëshmorët e Kombit

1001 Tirana, Albania



Adrian Paci, *Broken Words*, 2019 (Filmstill)
Courtesy der Künstler / the artist, kaufmann repetto,
Mailand / Milan, New York, Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zürich

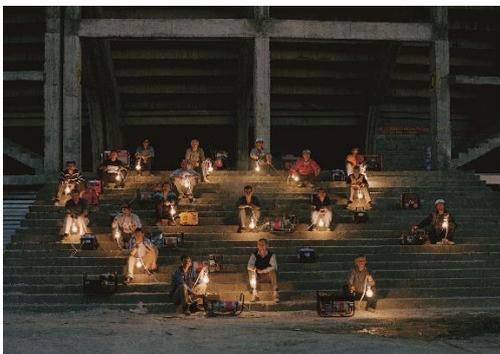
WORKS OF THE EXHIBITION (SELECTION)



Adrian Paci, *Centro di permanenza temporanea*, 2007 (Filmstill)
Courtesy der Künstler / the artist, kaufmann repetto, Mailand / Milan, New York, Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zürich



Adrian Paci, *Home to go*, 2001
Courtesy der Künstler / the artist, kaufmann repetto, Mailand / Milan, New York, Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zürich



Adrian Paci, *Turn on*, 2004 (Filmstill)
Courtesy der Künstler / the artist, kaufmann repetto, Mailand / Milan, New York, Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zürich



Adrian Paci, *The Wedding*, 2007, Series of nine paintings
Courtesy der Künstler / the artist, kaufmann repetto, Mailand / Milan, New York, Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zürich



Adrian Paci, *Prova*, 2019 (Filmstill)

Courtesy der Künstler / the artist, kaufmann repetto, Mailand / Milan, New York, Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zürich



Adrian Paci, *At sea*, 2017

Courtesy der Künstler / the artist, kaufmann repetto, Mailand / Milan, New York, Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zürich

EXHIBITION DETAILS

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WINTER OPENING HOURS

Tue–Sun and Mon when holiday

from 10 am to 5 pm

closed on 24.12., 31.12. and 01.01.

ADMISSION

Adults € 10

reduced € 9

Family ticket € 18

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