

Womxn waves, murky waters

"We leap over the precipice. At the bottom is the light of the herring boats. The cliffs vanish. In small waves, in gray waves, innumerable waves break below. I don't touch anything. Don't see anything. We are going to sink/flow, land on the waves. The sea will come pound in my ears. The white petals will darken with seawater. They will float and then sink. Catching me in their rolls, the waves will hurtle me to the bottom. Everything falls, a terrifying avalanche dissolves me. "

Virginia Woolf, *The Waves*

The immersion in the turbulent images of the "Blue Continuum" by Magali Dougoud inspires the vertigo of a fall into the flow of a liquid world, where faceless, watery subjectivities drift in the murky waters of capital. In the way in which Virginia Woolf may have literally anticipated in *The Waves*, "The Blue Continuum" explores a world of breathless voices whose diffracted identities bear witness to the uneven networks of confluences that sustain liquidity and affect. Because the waves, in these two works, do not seem to refer so much to expanses of water in the making, as to a point of societal imagination. Crystallizing affects, drowning consciences and liquefying bodies, the pattern of liquidity in the work of Dougoud emphasizes how much it has been turned into a metaphor, as well as into a motive for a social and ideological decay, addressing the political-economic extension of neoliberalism. In this enlarged landscape, certain waves - feminists - and certain dives - deadly - are surfacing.

"The Blue Continuum", a video shot in Berlin in 2020, explores the story of women, either murdered or driven to suicide in the city's rivers, canals, ponds and lakes. Rosa Luxembour, Joana, Franziska Schanzkowska, Lena Sand, Esmá Yalabik, Lucie Berlin are some of these women, historical or anonymous figures, whose marginalized bodies and dissident subjectivities found themselves hurried in the enslaving flows of the liquid world. Crowning syndrome of the disengagement brought about by the injunction to capitalist flexibility, the avalanche of dissolutions of these minor bodies into the waters of the German capital ices the metaphor over. The Spree, the Landwehrkanal, the Karpfenteich, the Havel, the Teltowkanal or the Sächsendorfer Badesees, where Magali Dougoud anarchically immerses her camera in the footsteps of these missing women, offer, through the effects of overexposure and visual interference induced by the agitations of a threatening body of water, the disorderly and blind spectacle of an opaque bath, of which the artist endeavors to bring to the surface multiple identities, incomplete stories and speculative characters. In these morbid and dirty waters made up of "medicated piss and lyophilized plastics", the artist seems to identify organic components, "skin, organs, teeth, hair and nails" thwarting the fluidity of the currents and offering the opportunity of a new - restorative - story that Magali Dougoud proposes, in this work, to take charge of. "

Borrowing from the epic register, "The Blue Continuum" constitutes the speculative (science) fiction of a reconstruction - both historical and identity-based - in deep waters. In this alternative narrative, unfolding in numerous chapters, the bruised bodies of these women contribute to the formation of a new revolutionary assembly, the "Womxn Waves", seeking to embody a "poetic unity and a dissonant policy" for the purpose of a rebellion. This constituent metamorphosis, resulting from biological and political processes, is enabled by a strategy of unifying recognition through voice: capturing the intervals, the textures and the sounds of their muffled phonations, the community of "Womxn Waves" asserts itself in the performance of an "infinite cry inverting the principle of silence" and consolidates an army of bodies "shapeless, numerous, dark, shady, complicated, threatening, erotic and equivocal". Thanks to the emancipatory resources offered by speculative fiction and by means of thread image processing technology, working through aerial breakthroughs, aquatic immersions, overexposures and encrustations of body-narrators, Magali Dougoud thus opposes a resistance to the socio-political, as much as physical, liquefaction of these female bodies by a solidifying strategy of recombination-reconstitution.

If this reconstitution, in the form of a science fiction of historical nature, fosters the emergence of a saving imaginary, avenging the violence brought to these bodies, it is above all because she confiscates the narrative of these tragedies from the anecdotal scope /news headlines. The femicides, although never named as such in official or media coverage, which appear in Magali Dougoud's work have, historically been relegated, for some of them that is, to the status of anecdote, while being the subject of popular voyeurism reinforced by the unscrupulous methodology of police investigation. While the silencing of these bodies encountered the indecent visibility of their state of death, Magali Dougoud offers, against the tide, a raucous story against a background of blurred images, where the absent bodies are blinding.

The effects of obstructions and visual diffractions in "The Blue Continuum", opposing the principle of transparency of beings and bodies in a liquid societal environment, are also assessed on an identity level. Because the elusiveness of these womxn waves, constituting themselves in a "deformed and transformed assembled becoming", "going beyond the human race", seems to replay the instability of identity of the missing women they designate. Rosa Luxembourg, killed by a soldier from a bullet to the head and then thrown into the Landwehrkanal in 1919, was known under the pseudonym of Ana Matchké and bore the surname of Rosalia Lübeck at the time of her death, acquired on the occasion of an arranged marriage upon immigrating to Germany in order to avoid political expulsion. Franziska Schanzkowska, admitted in a psychiatric ward in 1920 after a suicide attempt in this same canal from the Bendlerblock bridge, was described as "Fraulein Unbekannt" (unknown woman) by the police, before she masked her identity under the false name Ana Anderson. A popular belief lends her, for many years, the identity of Anastasia Nikolaïvna Romanova, princess of Russia who is said to have survived the massacre of her family in 1918. She will be buried under the name of Anastasia Manahan. Joana, whose body was found in the Spandauer Schifffahrtskanal in 2019 and whose circumstances of death have not been clarified, does not have a last name. These plural identities, confiscated or unknown, reported in games of semantic echoes and visual mutabilities in "The Blue Continuum", underline the power relationships, the normative powers and the gendered oppressions that underlie the construction of identity in liquid society. Replaying these troubles in the identity, while formulating a politically situated critique of the principle of authenticity, Magali Dougoud chooses to visually embody the community of womxn waves in the form of a mermaid, which crosses the chaotic flow of images from the "Blue Continuum". A composed and phantasmagorical figure, the mermaid, in Dougoud's work - which is reminiscent of the witch, who marks the political history and the imaginary of the different feminist waves -, seems to present itself as the support for a critique of biological identity, essentializing bodies, genders and identities.

Opening on broadened biopolitical perspectives, "The Blue Continuum" repositions the story of the liquefied bodies of these dead women in the waters of Berlin in a globalized environment, where the depths of a strangely familiar floating and contactless world stand out, marked by toxic bacteria whose infernal virality holds anthropocentric capitalism accountable, contributing to the separatism of social bodies and to the dissolution of living things. Against a history that repeats itself, the waves undulate in revolutions.

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