



Faustin Linyekula, *The Dialogue Series: iii. Dinozord* (2006)

expectations of what African art should look like and its dominant politics of presentation or, rather, curating, which essentially put the audience before the production. In turn, that is why the right to an infrastructure is also the right to the opacity of that which emerges only when broken, when there is a rupture, when there is friction. Then the infrastructure acquires its poetical or productive power.

Faustin Linyekula lives and works as a dancer and choreographer in Kisangani, Democratic Republic of the Congo. As one of the most renowned African artists he created among others Le Cargo (2011), La Création du Monde 1923–2012 (2012) and Sur les traces de Dinozord (2012). His work often deals with questions of commemoration, forgetting, and the suppression of memory — informed by a heritage of war, terror, and financial crisis in his home country. Linyekula’s choreographic work is accompanied by projects that invest directly in the infrastructure of the city of Kisangani. Originally founded in Kinshasa in 2001 and moved to Kisangani in 2007 the Studios Kabako are a structure for multidisciplinary creation and performance, also including the first professional recording studio in the east part of the country. In the longer term Linyekula plans, together with the German architect Bärbel Müller, to develop three cultural centres in the environment of Kisangani, among them a centre for artistic research.

GIULIA PALLADINI

MAPA TEATRO



THE POLITICS OF MONTAGE

Mapa Teatro’s politics of montage is a particular praxis of imagination. It is also a mode of organisation of creative matter, and a technology of transformation of theatre into a dispositive to conjure a revolutionary subjectivity.

This politics of montage is especially effective in the triptych *Anatomy of Violence in Colombia* (2010–14) where a long research and creative process are accumulated and combined. Such a body of work is articulated through a number of ‘montages’: accomplished

systems in their public appearance (as performances or installations), the montages are also fragments of an imagination in a state of becoming.

This imagination inhabits a space of excess: never exhausted in one single piece, it is deemed to find other forms, medias, and techniques. Likewise, images, persons, and sounds return to linger in new circumstances in Mapa’s uninterrupted conversation with present, past, and future spectators. In the montages, creative matter is organised into



Mapa Teatro, *Los Incontados: un tríptico* (2014)

crystals of work and potential: echoing Italo Calvino's *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*, these crystals are 'modes of growth in time', and temporary deposits of creative matter in 'the gulf of its potential multiplicity'.

The triptych focuses on the strange relation between violence and celebration, which is a *fil rouge* in Colombia's recent past, in which different forces have turned circumstances of celebration into a theatre of massacre. Furthermore, the imagined revolution — the revolution 'always to come' conjured by the communist guerrilla — was strongly characterised by images of celebration of a liberated futurity. Echoing the words of Jaime Bateman Cañón, legendary commander of the 19 April guerrilla movement, revolution was to be imagined as a feast: it should be the achievement of happiness, the struggle itself was to be a joyful theatre of liberation.

The triptych is the magic lantern where the return of Colombian history is exposed in the present to historical potentialities, to phantasmatic utopias, to childish recollections. Each piece takes as a pretext a particular circumstance, pertaining to the main 'actors' of such streams of violence: the paramilitary, the *narcotraficantes*, and the guerrilla of the

FARC. In *Los Santos Inocentes*, the mortal embrace between violence and feast is approached through a religious ritual. The 'feast of the holy innocents' takes place every year in Guapi, a small village on the Pacific Coast, where for many years the paramilitary (such as 'el bloque Calima de las Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia', led by Éver Velosa, alias HH) have exploited and abused the local population, taking advantage of the isolated location of the place, which made it a strategic point to smuggle arms and drugs. In the celebration, on 28 December, all men of the village (mainly Afro-Colombians) dress up in female attire, wearing monstrous, beastly plastic masks, and they run in the streets in a raging bacchanal, hitting with whips whoever they meet. The images of this feast, filmed from close distance, irrupt on the stage as a hallucination, in the safety of a private celebration. 28 December is in fact also the birthday of Heidi Abderhalden, one of the founders of Mapa Teatro, and in the piece such coincidence serves to translate her private festivity into a dream-like journey into the streets of Guapi: the violence of *Los Santos Inocentes* slowly floods the stage, telling the story of this rural region without any trace of exoticism, asking of us burning questions about innocence in a context of generalised abuse, about revolt as something other than a domesticated, carnivalesque subversion.

In *Discurso de un hombre decente*, the festive violence is evoked around the spectre of Pablo Escobar, the most powerful drug trafficker of Colombian history, a public figure legendary not only for his crimes, but also for his phantasmagoric feasts and philanthropic support to his city, Medellín. The piece imagines that Escobar has cultivated throughout his life the delirious project to become, one

day, President of Colombia, and that he has kept writing for years the presidential speech he would finally deliver: a speech which, the piece pretends, was found in Escobar's pocket at the moment of his death. Drawing from the large amount of Escobar's archived speeches, Mapa Teatro learned to reproduce his political rhetoric, inventing a document in which the boss would promise his country an imminent revolution: to legalise cocaine and turn his business into a state sale, making the country rich and independent from the northern powers. Surrounding the hallucination of Escobar's speech (pronounced on stage by the flesh and bone hip-hop musician Jeihhco, activist of the Comuna 13 and public figure of a different sort, in contemporary Medellín) there is Escobar's beloved music, played on stage by Danilo Jiménez, the old leader of the Marco Fidel Suárez band, famously accompanying Escobar in his public appearances. Jiménez was also playing for Escobar on the Sunday in which 'el capo' organised the explosion of a bomb close to la Plaza de Toros in Medellín, exterminating most of his fellow musicians and his wife, and leaving Jiménez with substantial brain damage, from which he recovered only recently. Jiménez appears on the stage but he does not talk: he sings, doing the work he has done all his life. His stories appear as over-titles, far from claiming any grounding in the authenticity of a speaking body, playing with the phantasmagoric quality of memory.

The third piece, *Los Incontados: un tríptico*, brings the spectators in front of the question of revolutionary violence. It is a question that, in a sense, the previous installments had carefully prepared: almost to suggest that thinking about revolution, in the Colombian context, necessarily also entails confronting

everyday violence, racism, and colonial exploitation, carnival cruelty and narcotic domestication: to confront the material reality against which revolution in Colombia was long deemed as necessary and urgent. Precisely for this reason *Los Incontados* (a title echoing a poem by Paul Celan, having in Spanish the multiple sense of 'those whose stories have not been told' and 'those who are not accounted' or 'told') is not only the last piece of a trilogy, but it is itself 'a triptych'. As in medieval triptychs, the central piece, sustained and framed by the others, also mirrors and reproduces their motives, while conferring upon them a new perspective.

The last montage encompasses entire sequences of the previous shows, expanding the stage as a tunnel into a history not reconstructed with accuracy, but conjured as an act of magic. *Los Incontados* are transfigured in an audience of children, gathered in a circle in a living room, waiting for a party to start: the feast of a young girl, born on 28 December, for whom a mute ventriloquist will perform clumsy tricks, making images of revolution appear and disappear, in smoke. The children, and the audience with them, listen to the political slogans of Radio Sutatenza, from 1965. The radio repeats, as a ritornello throughout the piece, that 'the carnival must end, in order for the revolution to begin.' The words are those of the priest Camilo Torres, legendary figure who preached class struggle and land expropriation, found dead in his first action in the NLA armed struggle in 1966. 'El Cura Guerrillero' is also the figure of an infancy of revolution for Colombia, a time whose memory glimmers from behind the smoke of the armed conflict which has affected the Colombian population in the last 40 years, provoking more than six millions victims. Like the



Mapa Teatro, *Los Incontados: un tríptico* (2014)

children gathered in the scene, here we become spectators of Colombia's past through Mapa's kaleidoscope, turning ourselves into the affectionate conspirators of a revolution whose urgency becomes again and again entrapped in enchantment. In this feast, the specter of Escobar, 'El Robin Hood Criollo', that of the poet Vladimir Mayakovski, that of cocaine itself (embodied by moving leaves), that of the raging men in monstrous drag from the streets of Guapi, return and expand, weaving a net of historical alteration. Revolution, against the background of the violence the scene mourns and remembers, is here transfigured in a fairy tale for children, which turns history into creative matter and theatre into a technology of organisation for revolutionary subjectivity.

Los Incontados: un tríptico performs a distinctive act of re-functioning of historical scenes, archives, and their echoes in the present: an operation of displacement and re-organisation which develops further the use of montage proposed by Brecht and described by Walter Benjamin as a political technology for revolutionary subjectivity: a mode of transforming instruments of production on the part of authors understanding themselves first of all as producers. The montages, turning the stage into a territory of historical potentiality, are also modes of re-functioning of artistic work: they are sites where Mapa's continuity of thought and invention is allowed to loiter, to return, *to make a feast*. They host the *longue durée* of a work whose struggle with history is a queer mixture of pleasure

and sorrow, and whose horizon is a revolution which, like a feast, is always to come.

The imagination of Mapa Teatro can be considered a distinctive instance of political imagination, insofar as it speaks to, through, and about a polis: one composed not only of those who attend their performances today but also of those who have contributed to the articulation of the common repertoire of figures and struggles at the core of Mapa's work. The archives sourced, the familiar stories, the bodies of those who are no longer, the nicknames, the hallucinations, the déjà vu and premonitions of a polis resonate in the montages as in many echo chambers of historical memory. Members of this polis, sometimes, are invited on stage to act as limbs of this re-remembrance, but never through a gesture of simple exposure, never as subjectivities on display asked to perform abstract identities. On the contrary, in the multitude of its bodies, Mapa's polis is affirmed on stage always as a political subject and not merely as a subject of knowledge.

Spectators are mobilised as *compañeros* in the scene of a common political work: inventing a past and a future *in the gulf of the potential*. This political imagination is always looking forward to a polis to come, still unknown, for which this work, undoubtedly, shall be a form of living archive (echoing an expression often used by Rolf and Heidi Abderhalden) and a laboratory of potentiality.

Mapa Teatro calls itself a 'laboratory of social imagination'. Founded by Heidi, Elizabeth, and Rolf Abderhalden, the group has been based in Bogotá since 1986, and over the last 30 years has experimented with various media, forms, and artistic languages. In recent years, Mapa's work has focused in particular on the production of artistic events addressing micro-politics and poetics. Among their recent projects are *Witness to the Ruins*, the opera *Orfeo Chaman*, and the project *Anatomy of Violence in Colombia*. Developed between 2010 and 2014, this project encompasses three shows — *Los Santos Inocentes* (2010), *Descurso de un hombre decente* (2012), *Los Incontados: un tríptico* (2014) and a series of drifts: the installation performance *Los Santos Inocentes* (2011) and the installation *Los Incontados: un tríptico* (2014).