



THE DICTATORSHIP OF COOLNESS

INTERVIEW WITH MARCO LAYERA

In which countries can we find the term of “bohemian bourgeois” and the people it refers to? Why did you choose to make your new show about them?

Marco Layera: That social class is particularly present under that name in the United States and in France, but a social group with similar characteristics and values can be found in many other countries under other names. Beyond the term itself, it's interesting to define this social group because I think it has become the dominant class. It is characterised by the development of a lifestyle that no longer tries to make the best of capitalism, but contributes and adheres to it, while defending so-called countercultural values. They form a new bourgeoisie that claims to be humanising capitalism but is instead building a self-satisfied identity for itself. To talk about that social group is to try to define our time, a cold and indolent time in which, through consumerism and from the comfort of our homes, this lifestyle allows us to see ourselves as sensitive citizens, socially involved and politically active.

The textual references that influenced the first steps of your work are mostly French. Is France particularly “targeted” by your company, la Re-sentida?

If, at the beginning of our creative process, we were indeed influenced by some French references like Molière's *The Misanthrope*, some of Michel Houellebecq's novels, or the writings of the Comité invisible, [Note: The Comité invisible (Invisible Committee), “authority of strategic enunciation for the revolutionary movement,” and whose members are anonymous, published two books: *L'Insurrection qui vient (The Coming Insurrection)* and *A nos amis (To Our Friends)* (La Fabrique, 2007 and 2014).] this show isn't meant to directly or specifically call out French society but to define a social class that is as present in Chile as in all western societies, and to which I think I belong.

What do you think of a group like the Comité invisible? Do they share the “pseudo humanism” you ascribe to bohemian bourgeois, or are they serious about toppling capitalism?

The diagnostic of the Comité invisible makes sense to me. In their manifesto *L'Insurrection qui vient*, they describe clearly what's happening and what we're going through right now. Whether you agree with their vision of a revolutionary struggle or not, it's important for voices offering radical propositions to exist, to create a debate that can shake up the status quo.

What are the movements you oppose to the ideological comfort of the “bobos?” You mention at some point the Normal Schools of Mexico. What's going on there?

When we starting working on this project, we meant to explicitly oppose the form the political participation of the bohemian bourgeois class takes to that of radical groups. We studied the frameworks within which the latter arise. But as we were working on the show, we decided to focus on the bohemian bourgeois world and to adopt its point of view, that is, to filter all reference to other realities through their eyes. Rural Normal Schools in Mexico are an education project that aims to provide free education to peasants and to the indigenous populations of the most disadvantaged areas of the country—which are often the most rural areas as well. Students who attend those schools are trained to become teachers so that they can then teach children from their own community. The mission of those rural schools is to train teachers capable of critical thought and carrying revolutionary ideals, capable of using education as a tool for social harmony and transformation. Those structures were brutally repressed by the Mexican state for years. In 2014, during a clash with the police, forty-three students of the Normal School of Ayotzinapa were murdered. Today still, they're referred to as “missing.”

What characters will the actors of your show portray: bohemian bourgeois, other social groups more clearly active politically, or external observers, such as sociologists maybe?

The actors will play a group of people with ties to the artistic and intellectual world of a capital that will include, among others, a “performer,” a museum curator, a choreographer, a journalist, an NGO director... All those people claim to be “deeply aware of social issues,” and everyone agrees that they are.

Will the show be brought together by a single narrative thread? Will a particular fiction arise?

The show is based on a fiction we created and that takes place in Santiago de Chile, on the night of 1 May. On that night, while the streets are awash with an atmosphere of protest, a group of friends from the intellectual and artistic world of the capital gather in a house to celebrate the nomination of its owner to the post of Minister of Culture. The new Minister, however, has locked himself up in his room and decided not to join the party and to refuse all congratulations, having become aware of the hypocrisy of the social circle to which he belongs and of the ineffectiveness of bourgeois art to bring about real cultural change. From that situation, we'll think about the place, the role, and the potential of contemporary art, of culture, of politics, and of the lifestyle of those new bourgeois generations in the organisation of today's world.

Isn't a dramatic work, and more generally a work of art, that aims to entertain while making people think itself a manifestation of this "bourgeois bohemian" approach to culture?

Depending on the context, one could say that almost every single form of artistic expression is at once bourgeois and bohemian. What's interesting is to position oneself in the space created by this contradiction, in this paradox, and to question them to reveal the impossible comfort of the situation. It's very easy and comfortable to criticise the thoughts and aspirations of "others," the way they function, their way of life; it seems to me to be more daring and more revealing to look at ourselves in the mirror and not to be indulgent of what we see reflected in it. I think that nowadays, even the most radical of artistic expressions never ceases to be a privileged manifestation taking place in a safe space which puts neither its author nor its audience in any real danger. From that perspective, I think that one should look for radicalism in life rather than in art.

You've said that you want to desacralise the idea of dramatic representation. Is that why you use different modes of expression on the stage?

Usually, in Chile, the theatre is seen as a solemn artistic discipline, with a lot of rules and formalities that in the end only do one thing: they create a distance between the audience and what they see. When I talk of desacralising the dramatic act, I mean that I want to give it the freshness and insolence that can turn the performing arts into something concrete, that allow you to produce a work whose closeness and accessibility may talk to the audience. When they're used to reach that goal, I see no inconvenient to using many different means of expression on the stage.

Do you think it's impossible to organise resistance right now? Do you feel nostalgia for a more strictly authoritarian order against which one could openly fight?

To talk clearly about the revolution, I don't think that it is impossible today—however difficult it might be to see it through—even though now "the enemy," so to speak, isn't as clear as it used to be. For instance, in my country, it once took the form of a monster called Pinochet, but with the advent of democracy, the enemy has become invisible. Nothing oppresses us in as violent and as clear a way. Our rights seem to be protected, and they are. Technology, means of communication, and drugs have become much more accessible... There's a sort of "fascism of idleness" that has made us lethargic, has numbed us. We've become like victims of a system we enjoy and tolerate and we have nothing to fight anymore, provided we'd even want to.

Interview conducted by Marion Canelas

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