

The New Worlds and the Old

Movement 2 : A Bewitching of History

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During the season *Interior Empires*, I wanted to reconsider the colonial question via different paths. What happens to empire after decolonization? Does it disappear or does it become interior, that is to say both psychological and at the heart of national territory? What in its logic remains active in the present, what continues to develop in other forms? It would be easy to examine this question by clearly separating colonists and colonized—and to produce a few memorial laws as antidotes to the spectral contamination that always lies in wait.

But the question is not so much the return of Empire, as Empire returning, in other words the indecisive forms colonization has engendered. A complex body traversed by violence. This second chapter of the exhibition *The New Worlds and the Old* considers the question of attempts to establish community beyond this violence, but also looks at the failures that compose the social landscape of interior empires.

Many of the works in this exhibition are composed of reconstitutions, be they theatrical, performative or historical. They attempt to unravel history by restoring its body. But what makes for bewitchment in this chapter is the fact that History is never replayed with the objective of serving as proof. History is always the base for fictions that here try to negotiate violence, there to reconstruct a community, or on the contrary to declare an enemy. As many hypotheses as survival strategies. If history is the subject, the body is its theater, the body as multiple space—military corps, civil corps, foreign body, the body of the nation—bodies that some might wish to be separated, purified of the enemy as of a violence one does not believe to be one's own. Body that resumes all conflicts, is swollen with all contradictions, that serves as theater to colonial histories that have become imperceptible. Body that by these devices has become truly monstrous.

It is this body that parades in the streets of Ougadougou like an inscrutable apparition, the violence of the body that the performers of *Capitulation Project* cannot place at a remove. The same complex body that is rejected by the soldier of *DRAGOONED* and which *Maurits Script* tries to construct in a temporary way by redistributing the roles of a colonial history. The ongoing separation between person and character is radically upset in all of these works whose staging reminds History of its own fictive nature. The colonial debate is moved into the psychological register, where it finds, today, its new territory of conquest.

Olivier Marboeuf, curator