

With Eyes Fixed on the Sea

Refugees welcome: two words perceived as an oxymoron, challenging and/or unsettling, place LIUBA's artistic action in support of refugees within an ethical and socio-educational framework, at a time when art is often reduced to mere phenomenology of current events.

Since 2013, the artist has been undertaking actions on this theme in key Contemporary venues, such as the city of Berlin, involving refugees and navigating between taking a stance, fostering understanding, and expressing outrage. Through her performative actions, which result in video works, the artist denounces injustices; by becoming a living sculpture alongside refugees, she both elevates the act to a level of compassion and cries out the reality of every flesh-and-blood human being—a reality often rendered elusive by the fleeting words and images of the media, which last no more than a day.

LIUBA works so that justice in life may blossom from the utopia of art. In a society striving for neo-humanism, artists, with their extraordinary sensitivity to foresee the future, should serve as advisors to policymakers! Back in the 1990s, the Apulian artist Tarshito, with his project intitolato *Una sola terra una sola umanità* (i.e. *One Earth, One Humanity*), created maps devoid of political borders, envisioning a Mediterranean not yet transformed into a crossroads of migration. Today, LIUBA's aesthetics—comparable to the *Migrants* series by Chinese artist Liu Bolin—are deeply attuned to our times. LIUBA and Liu Bolin share common elements: their works on the subject date back to 2013, both involve the participation of migrants, and both feature the artist blending into the "group dynamic" through mimicry.

The Pino Pascali Foundation Museum in Polignano a Mare is no stranger to such themes. In 2007, the Albanian artist Adrian Paci was awarded the Pino Pascali Prize, particularly for his work *Centro di permanenza temporaneo* (i.e. *Temporary Detention Center*), which focused on immigrants awaiting repatriation at San Jose Airport in California.

LIUBA's site-specific project *You Are Welcome* for the Pino Pascali Foundation Museum in Polignano a Mare emerges from a virtuous circle of connections, enabling the artist to engage in dialogue with institutional stakeholders, local volunteer organizations, and refugees living in the area. The protagonists of the performances—refugees and non-refugees alike—engage in an exchange that places those seeking refuge and those offering it on an equal footing.

This time, the unique value of the venue, with its "eyes" gazing out over the Mediterranean, forges an exceptionally profound bond between art and life.

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Critical Text for LIUBA's Solo Exhibition at the Pino Pascali Foundation Museum in Polignano (BA), 2019 – English Translation