

MARCO LA ROCCA

Buena onda

One way ashore, a thousand channels

Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (1990)

There was a time, during the second half of the XX century, when some brilliant minds started questioning the virtues of having strong roots and being bounded to a certain place. By looking at those phenomena that the idea of “radicality” had encouraged in the past, as the rising of nationalism attitudes and ideas that would have increased the pre-bellum enthusiasm, some psychiatrists, sociologists, historians and critics started refuting the idea of “setting down” as a way for expanding one’s domain, overlapping their personal experience regardless of the rest, of the autochthonous.

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari were among those who counteracted the idea of the “root”, encouraging the benefits of the “rhizomic” thought in their 1972 essay titled *A thousand plateaus*. They believed that the rhizome could keep the positive aspect of spreading and staying balanced between one place and another, with the advantage of fighting, at the same time, the totalitarian aim of the single root.

At the end, one should be more magnolia and less broom. The same dichotomy was highlighted by Édouard Glissant in his studies on the “Antillanité” and “Créolité”: on the one hand, the aim to defend one’s own territory, language or culture and, on the other hand, the idea of a positive hybridization that shall preserve its original features to re-interpret them throughout a process of mutual growth. From these same ideas Nicolas Bourriaud developed the concepts of “Radical” and “Radicant” (see *The Radicant*, 2004). Then, since the beginning of the new millennium, every contribute of this kind has started becoming popular and concepts as *Mondialité* (É. Glissant) or *Glocal* (Z. Bauman) turned to be recurrent in the vocabulary of the contemporary man.

In this theoretical frame, some artists started to use languages, attitudes and rituals from cultures that were different from their own one to convey them in new hybrid artistic practices. Let’s think about

Rirkrit Tiravanija, who was born and raised in Buenos Aires, but has Thai origins: he started using art galleries to share with the visitors dinners prepared by himself with his assistants, making two aspects of both his backgrounds collide together. The fascination for the exotic perceived by the Western men has many examples in the field of literature too: a brilliant one is Jack London’s *Martin Eden* (1909) for sure, a book where the will to discover new places and domesticate the ocean prevails. However, these needs did a huge effect on the visual arts too: one of the most renowned artists that became famous for doing it was the French painter Paul Gauguin, who sailed the sea to reach Polynesia, where he stayed until his death, fascinated and in love with the Polynesian culture, which would have been the only protagonist of his late pictorial production.

Marco La Rocca (1991), as many other artists of his generation, is son of these influences. Raised in a small Italian town and part of the radicant people, he doesn’t have any difficulties to open his eyes on the different and new things he sees out of his nest, to convey them into his own practice. He’s been living in Cochabamba (Bolivia) since November 2016 and, since then, he could observe and compare himself with a new local reality. In the era of Internet and worldwide communication, it seems easy to know at least something about everything and it’s usual to hear or see something about foreign and far realities. Actually, who’s writing believes that this presumption often fails its intention, leading the people to know all of nothing. You’ll be able to understand a reality only to the extent of being totally involved in it. La Rocca has done this step and tells me: “The more you travel, the more customs will change. Grandparents’ sayings are always right”, as he’s collecting experiences to add to his *carnet de voyage*: frames from the street, from markets, from those very old traditions that are still alive despite of every attempt of homogeniza-

tion with the American culture. Hence, step by step, he was able to build “his own” Bolivia.

This was the starting point for the artworks he has made since his departure, as the *Tienda* serie, made of paintings that represent food, beverages, cigarette packs or snacks sold all over the country. Those are examples of a different market that is different to the Italian one, but it's in the differences that the artist has found some analogy. By looking at them as a “stranger”, his eyes could see, understand and interpret. Thus, the path he has built for the beholder of this show resumes the Bolivian culture's splendors and miseries, starting from the *Eterna Primavera* (“endless spring”) which inhabits the local landscape: flowers and plants are seen through La Rocca's eyes and the style he's been building during his years of study in Italy. Here we can recognize the artist's main touches, as the bidimensional quality he's inherited from Street Art (whom he still practices in Bolivia) and from the great artists who introduced it to the realm of painting (Jean-Michel Basquiat *in primis*). La Rocca's paintings come with a restless rush that looks at Georg Baselitz or Julian Schnabel and with the chromatic joy he has seen in the works by Andy Warhol, Mario Schifano and all the protagonists of the European and American art between the Fifties and Seventies.

This floristry richness soon reveals the economical disparity hidden under Cochabamba's curtains, that is a mirror to witness the social polarization that the country is hosting: on one hand we see the happy few, comfortably living their lives, and on the other we have the poor neighbors that face tremendous problems as air pollution and the missing of water furniture to houses. The local flora, with its bright and rich colors, is accidentally part of this system which sharpen the differences to the extent that we finally start talking about the advantaged social groups (as happened with the disorders in Venezuela, just to name one example).

The same issues are part of the series named *La Raza*, in which small herds of stray dogs wander in the street, suspiciously turning their heads to the passenger: a sign that intends to strike fear, representing the wild side of a country that has not been tamed by the capitalistic jet-set yet. One of the proofs of this is also the strength of the religious

rituals that accompany the Bolivian culture: the Coa ritual, for instance, to thanks Pachamama, highlight the will to preserve the local customs despite of the imposition of the Christians that happened centuries ago.

Fascinated by the sacred propensity of the Bolivian people, La Rocca has started working on some wood tables to realize dishes of food that resemble a last supper, which recalls back the Italian tradition, close to the Catholic cult. Tradition that emerges back in the case of *Barcelona vs Real Madrid*: an installation showing a soccer field made of tiles, which evaluates the American influence brought to Bolivia through sports and games. Soccer is one of the favorite sports and some rumors say that the President Evo Morales chooses the local army's soldiers basing on their performance on field. Whether this is true or false, the only existence of this rumor is the proof to evaluate the weight that this sport plays on the everyday life.

“Buena Onda” indicates a positive and propositive persone, one whom you can trust, who's often friendly to others. Marco La Rocca perfectly fits this description: he's a curious and sincere, just like his artworks are. The exhibition aims to represent the artist's route as a stranger throughout a foreign land: the perfect *cliché* from which we cannot separate ourselves, maybe because of that fascination for the far away and the unknown we still hold in ourselves, looking for a new occasion of growth. As the artist remains the more sensible among the travelers, he comes to a new world and soon observes, archives, speaks, reacts, thinks and reworks only to notice, as Bourriaud's *Radicant* has taught us, that every difference leads to a point of connection.

“People are the same the world over”, as my grandparents say. The result of this process are some series of artworks trying to explain it without the cold sight of the student, yet with an enthusiastic participation. La Rocca has gone deep throughout his journey, facing a totalizing experience: Buena Onda wills to give the people the fruits of this experience, leaving his roots for a while, as Gauguin did in the beloved Polinesia.

Marco La Rocca (1991) graduated in Graphic Design at the Brera Academy in Milan and has work as an artist since then, taking part in solo shows and collective exhibitions. He also had the chance of making some public intervention targeted to the urban decorum. In 2016, he was dedicated the solo show *Dear Money* at Casa 900 (Monza, Italy) and he took part to *Statements#2* (2016), curated by Ivan Quaroni at Circoloquadro (Milan) and *Human Rights—Memento* (2014) curated by Roberto Ronca at Fondazione Campana dei Caduti in Rovereto. Marco La Rocca currently lives and works in Cochabamba (Bolivia), thanks to a residency program, and was shortlisted among the finalists of the Cramum Prize, curated by Sabino Maria Frassà.

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Marco La Rocca — Buena Onda

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