

Martina Simeti

RM

Trojan Horse

16 September 2022 – 9 November 2022

Opening Thursday 15 September, 6:30 – 8:30 pm

With a text by Barbara Casavecchia

If my memory does not deceive me, I have read in Virgil of the Palladium of Troy, a wooden horse the Greeks offered to the goddess Pallas, which was big with armed knights, who were afterwards the destruction of Troy; so it would be as well to see, first of all, what Clavileno has in his stomach.

Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, vol. 2, ch. 41

Martina Simeti is delighted to present Trojan Horse, RM's first solo exhibition in Italy. The exhibition will be visitable from 16 September to 9 November 2022.

Trojan Horse continues the investigation begun by the artistic duo RM with the exhibition Bloodsuckers, held at the Swiss Institute in New York in winter 2022. For their first solo exhibition in Italy, the duo – founded in 2015 and based between Geneva and Berlin – proposes a new set of works evoking bedbugs as “carriers of invisible Others”: a pair of double sheets and their pillowcases with crocheted embroidered inserts and a wooden sculpture that faithfully reproduces a prototype of the vacuum cleaner. Making ample use of irony and dark humour, RM explores the mechanics of transmission, the secrecy of nocturnal intimacy, the “fictitious and sacred space of privacy.” Linguistic detours, stigma and shame are transformed into tools for claiming our history, bringing to the surface the inequalities that pervade contemporary society.

Do you remember the Bidone Aspiratutto? I asked RM about it too, out of curiosity. While DIYing in our family house at the lakes, I would play with it while my grandfather, father and mother handled cement, electrical cables, shelves and tiles. Designed by Milanese Francesco Trabucco for Alfatec in 1974, it aspired to be the ultimate vacuum cleaner, and cool too, like certain contemporary Dysons. It was a tautology on wheels: a bin made of sheet metal painted military green, with the label (capacity, voltage, Made in Italy) turned into a stencilled logo, as if it was an army jeep, although in M*A*S*H version. A tank ready to annihilate the planet's dust with its flexible cannon, a macho-

ironic object that bypassed gender divisions yet not class divisions (worker/housewife). Certain patterns we introject, even without meaning to.

I am allergic to dust. Domestic dust is made up of half human organic matter (hair and especially skin, on which *dermatophagoides* mites feed, thousands per gram, especially in beds), and then of animals, plants and minerals, and even fragments of meteorites. We breathe and ingest past eras and bodies throughout our lives. Our own bodies constantly crumble, recombine and evaporate, although we prefer to ignore the porosity (from *poros*: passage, orifice) of all boundaries. RM tells me that bedbugs (*cimex lectularius*) use vacuum cleaners to travel, propagating from one office or apartment to another as they are cleaned up by domestic pieceworkers. Industrial vacuum cleaners, which promise the aseptic gift of cleanliness, are their Trojan horses: they become carriers of invisible Others, whose hosts we become. In the dark, we dread their arrival, like nightmares (from the Latin *incubare*: to lie on, to brood over). Even the bugs and viruses that infest our computers use Trojans to enter, grow and multiply, invading the fictitious and sacred space of privacy. Many compartmentalisations between inside and outside are illusions, and it is salubrious for them to flake, like our skin, inhabited by the dermal microbiota (mites, mycetes, bacteria and viruses), the commensal that helps us get rid of dead cells: the higher the biodiversity, the fewer the potential pathogens. The microbiota in our digestive tract (bacteria, viruses, fungi, protozoa), which make up about one kilogramme of our bodyweight, regulates the production of neurotransmitters such as dopamine and serotonin, which in turn preside over memory, attention, pleasure, sleep, mood, empathy and creativity. The exchange of microbes between mother and new-born during birth and breastfeeding boosts their immune defences. We are plural ecosystems and symbionts. Cleaning and cleansing, obsessively, does not protect us from complexity.

- Barbara Casavecchia

The artist duo, founded in Geneva in 2015 and formerly known as Real Madrid, recently changed their name in the wake of a legal dispute. De-christened, they now proceed under the name RM. Their work has been exhibited in private and public institutions such as the Swiss Institute New York, Aye-Aye Copenhagen, CCS Paris, Macro Rome, CAC Geneva, the Rome Quadriennale, Migros Museum Zurich, ICA Milan, Plymouth Rock Zurich. In 2018 they were artists-in-residence at FAAP Sao Paulo and ProHelvetia Johannesburg; and in 2017 at the Goethe Institute São Paulo. They received a Swiss Art Award in 2018 and were finalists for the BNP Paribas Prize in 2017. In 2019–20 they were fellows at the Swiss Institute in Rome. In 2023 they will exhibit at the CEC in Geneva and at Auto Italia South East in London.