



Echoes of Sculpture

Ciprian Mureșan

June 7 - July 13rd 2023

During the 50s, in the former communist countries, a complex mechanism was created for propaganda purposes, that would eventually produce a high amount of «official art» - standardized and gravitating around a central character: the proletarian worker. His figure was often used and abused, even if it did not serve him at all. Labour, therefore, was supposed to be the subject of that art. Abandoned after 1989, when we found ourselves with an unwanted heritage; the Socialist Realist sculpture. 30 years later, one could honestly wonder: where is the hero of yesteryear, where is the worker today?

Trying to put myself in the artist's shoes of that time, I decided to create some replicas in the same formal language, focusing on the symbol of the proletarian worker, with the main difference that I made the sculptures from white cotton paper, an extremely perishable substance. The paper's materiality, with its texture and relationship to light, make the statues appear like ephemeral citations of some historical figure. Each of these "Ghosts" have a "camera obscura" (pinhole camera) mounted with photosensitive paper inserted inside their heads at eye level, for the purpose of photographing everything they see. Thus, the statue is not merely an object: it becomes an eye witness, a fragile receiver of the context and its essential changes over time.

While working in my studio, I made some test photos with the pinhole camera. After an hour of exposure the camera captured the surrounding environment with all the objects in the room, all inert, well defined, while the human figure - the worker - was invisible, due to the movement. Yet you may observe some nearly imperceptible traces of the worker's presence, the final image is empty, devoid of heroes.

Similar to what Diego Velazquez did with *Las Meninas*, or Giulio Paolini in *Portrait of a young man with Lamp de Lorenzo Lotto*, by switching the roles between the subject and the object, or between the artist and the viewer, I try to reverse the roles between the viewer and the artwork. Now it is the artwork that looks at us and captures history.

Project assistants: Septimiu Jugrestan and Paul Stoie