

Sacrificial Mutilation & Interspecies Love in Contemporary Art

Just after getting into bed I have an awful anxious feeling. Have I forgotten something? Did I feed the cat today? Did I pick up the dry cleaning? Did I lock the office? Did I take the Maurizio Cattelan out of the car? I couldn't remember... fuck. fuck. fuck. fuck. fuck. The sculpture was lent out for the exhibition 'Minimal Artists try to make Something look like Nothing and Conceptual Artists try to make Nothing look like Something, or is it the Other way Around'. Later I wake up in the darkness of the early morning soaked in a cold sweat. My thoughts are darting all over the place. Maurizio. Maurizio. Maurizio. Maurizio. Maurizio. More-eat-zee-Oh. More-eat-zee-Oh. Cattelan. Cattelan. Maurizio Cattelan. Maurizio Cattelan. More-eat-zee-Oh Cattelan. Maurizio had once reported to the police that an invisible sculpture had been stolen from his car. What if my invisible sculpture is stolen? I can only think in relation to Maurizio. It seems like Maurizio was everything, everything was Maurizio. Nothing else exists except Maurizio.

Suddenly everything in my bedroom begins to rattle. A tall glass vase clammers against a porcelain teacup. Piles of CDs topple to the floor. The telephone, ashtray and adjustable lamp all vibrate towards the edge of the desk, and each fall off in sequence. My beds rolls to the wall on the other side. The room is spinning. It's a twister! It's a twister...

After an abrupt thud I find myself in an anonymous foyer. The walls are made of black marble and curve so there are no corners to the room. An unattended lectern stands at the bottom of a grand spiral staircase that leads up into darkness. Several doors lead off the main foyer. I enter the first one and find the same anonymous foyer on the other side. Another door and the exact same foyer. The next door leads to an identical room of black marble. Every room is the same and I don't know where I began. I try one more door, and this time Tracey Emin is standing behind the lectern. I walk over to her and try to speak, but all that comes out is "Maurizio". I try again and can only mumble "Maurizio". "Handbag!" snaps Tracey clutching her champagne-in-a-can. I stand there and shrug my shoulders, and Tracey rolls her eyes at me. "Handbag!" Handbag! HAAAAAND-BAAAAAGGGG!" yells Tracey. I answer her, "Maurizio?", "Handbag!", she replies. Tracey and I argue between "Maurizio" and "Handbag" until Yoko Ono appears. Yoko is sporting a limited edition handbag made by the French luxury leather label Longchamp that was designed by Tracey Emin. It's one of a limited edition run of 200 bags that feature a classic patchwork design. The text on Yoko's bag read: "I've come a long way from the 4 cans of Stella, one bottle of brandy and anything that I could shove down my gullet in a night. I'm really fucked up, I've been really broken arted. I felt isolated, insecure, unloved, unwanted and pretty crazy, mad. I did used to be an alcoholic". I try to talk to Yoko but all I can manage to say is "Peace", Yoko replies, "Maurizio". Traceybegins screaming, "HAAAANND-BAAAAAGGGG!"



Jeff Koons, *Puppy Vase* (1998) porcelain, edition of 3000.

HAAAAAAND-BAAAAAGGGGGGGGGGGG!
 HAAAAAANND-BAAAAAGGGGGGGGGGGG!
 GGGGGGGGGGGGGG!". Yoko then whispers to me, "More-eat-zee-oh", then reaches for something from inside her arty tote. She produces a small white flashlight on a key chain that is inscribed with the text 'Onochord'. Yoko begins blinking the light on and off to transmit her own morse code that sends the message "I love you". I want to say "I love you" back to Yoko, but the slick modernist foyer begins to instantly morph into a western style saloon bar. Yoko simply replaces her futuristic shades and then vanishes in a big cloud of smoke.

Tracey heads towards the bar to order us a drink and Ugo Rondinone appears before the rows of liquor bottles to pour her two champagne cocktails. After serving the drinks Ugo reaches over the bar and casually tucks Tracey's hair behind her right ear then props a pink carnation in her hair from his jacket lapel. I recognise the razor-sharp tailoring and slim flit of Ugo's jacket from the autumn/winter 2004 Dior Homme range. Just at this moment I notice my heartbeat. It's getting louder and more intense. Then I realise that the sound of my pulse is being amplified through the speakers in the bar. Ugo winks at me. Music swells into the space and my heartbeat forms the baseline of a sexy R'n'B song. Gilbert and George then arrive via parachute to perform karaoke treats.

They begin miming the words 'my neck, my back' by Khia, and their dance moves involve alternate steps on the black and white checkerboard floor. The black squares are for George and the white squares are for Gilbert, so that they move in parallel lines without ever touching. With each step they instantly change outfits as if in a schizophrenic cabaret show. First Gilbert and George are dressed in their tweed Sunday best suits, with the next step they're in fringed cowboy outfits, then Viennese style costumes complete with powdered wigs, then white bunny suits; next there is Prada utilitarian chic from the late 90s, and so on. I wave my hand in the air to request a rendition of 'Kiss kiss kiss' by Yoko, but suddenly the music is cut as Jake Chapman springs out from the VIP lounge and starts yelling in an aggressive manner.

"The problem with critique," screams Jake, "is that it simply ornaments bourgeois life with the idea of volatility... In Britain nobody was interested in art for years and years and years. Then suddenly the press thought fuck, there's this whole community of people with caricatures, falling-outs and fights. The celebrity status has become more interesting than the work itself, so the work becomes a trace element of the trajectory of famous people." When I look up Jake is now dressed in the exact same Prada outfit as Gilbert and George, but he doesn't seem to notice. Maurizio Cattelan pulls up a stool beside me at the bar. He is impersonating himself to reveal that anyone can be or become someone else. He starts reciting quotes from the recent Flash Art interview: "To tell you the truth, I still go around on bicycle, with neither horse nor carriage. Of course you feel a different pressure and another responsibility. Mostly because money doesn't really open more doors or make challenges any easier". I want to ask him, who does he think he is, but he gets in first. "Actually, money risks trapping you, it makes you too coherent". I reply "Trussardi", and Maurizio says "Warhol". This time I speak a little more sternly, "Trussardi!". Maurizio grabs me by the throat and screams "Waaarrrrholllll!". He fixes his hair and continues, "I am interested in working on the collective, never on the individual. I'm interested in mass fears and hysteria". Jake is still carrying on, now he's yelling about the absolute cultural saturation produced by today's art institutions. Tom Friedman arrives just now after hearing there was meant to be a Prada fashion parade on tonight. He's a little disappointed to find out the show has been cancelled, but instead he decides to ask Tracey to sing a karaoke duet with him. They begin to belt out 'Where the wild roses grow'. Jake comes up to me and shouts loudly in my face: "The YBAs are just a part of a growing cult of celebrity that is contributing to the dumbing down of art!"

As Tracey is singing: "When he knocked on my door and entered the room, My trembling subsided in his sure embrace", Jake walks up to Ugo at the bar and begins to caress him. Suddenly Yoko is back and she is wearing a bandit outfit like in her Fluxus days, but she is also carrying a wooden paddle. "Kiss, kiss, kiss, kiss me, love, Just one kiss, kiss will do", breathes Yoko whilst she grabs her crotch. Gilbert grabs Yoko's paddle and whacks it on the bar. Tracey's seductively backing up towards the ladies toilets and is trying to lure Tom Friedman to follow. Meanwhile Jake and Ugo have begun fucking behind the bar, then Ugo metamorphosises into George, no, it's Gilbert, who then transforms into Dinos, and now it's Jake

fucking himself. But I don't understand what Dinos is doing here since he doesn't really socialise much. I can't bear to look anymore and get up to leave, then Maurizio grabs me by the shoulder and tells me that he's part of the curatorial team for the 2006 Berlin Biennial and how he placed fourth in ArtReview's top 100 movers and shakers of the art world and next he plans to release a conceptual perfume line to finance his more experimental projects. I coolly take a last nip of my champagne cocktail then lunge fiercely at Maurizio and tackle him to the floor. As I get up to dust myself off I notice that I'm holding a Jeff Koons Puppy sculpture, which I'd incidentally used to beat up Maurizio with. But Maurizio seems fine, just a little bloodied and disorientated. Puppy is also still in tact and I see that there's a little message from Jeff on the underside: 'I hope Puppy communicates love, warmth, and happiness to everyone'.

Fiona Bate is a Melbourne arts writer and curator currently based in Berlin. She is also a big fan of Maurizio Cattelan.