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Anna Boghiguian, Or on Departing as a Form of Listening

Chiara Vecchiarelli

The works of Anna Boghiguian are like those rare moments when selective listening is put on hold in order to allow for the passage of what is normally kept at a distance, hidden in the noise of the world, in the repressed.

If in her works the ear often becomes image—a form in the space of the installation or in that of the painting—it is not only because hearing is weak in her but also, and especially, because this very weakness makes it a figure of a broader listening, one that is capable of immersing into life without expecting it is anything like a parlor. In these works, images listen and language watches: those who mistreat life and those who are instead capable of embracing it.

A feeling inhabits her practice that is similar to the one described by the philosopher Rosa Luxemburg when, a few months before her assassination, she witnessed the humiliation of a buffalo at the hands of a soldier. In the eyes of the animal she saw the silent suffering of a child who is beaten without knowing why, and realized that the tears she was crying were the animal's. This profound feeling of compassion permeates Boghiguian's new series of works inspired by a key event in the life of the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. During an emotional crisis on January 3, 1889, he is said to have thrown himself around the neck of an ill-treated horse. This recalls an episode described some years earlier in a letter by Fyodor Dostoyevsky, an author of whom Nietzsche was particularly fond. He rendered this experience in the dream that the central character in *Crime and Punishment*, Raskolnikov, has just before committing his crime. Raskolnikov sees himself as a boy hugging the neck of a horse being whipped to death, only to discover that he himself is the boy, the horse, and the executioner. For the philosopher of *Beyond Good and Evil*, what happened in Turin marked a break within his humanity—too fast a departure from that very humanity put into question by the "beyond-man" of whom he writes—from which he never recovered.

It is this potential breaking point, which is also the key to a cosmic understanding of life, with which Boghiguian deals. Since she cannot traverse the cosmos other than in spirit, she travels the earth. And in this way, all the world enters her drawings: History on the grand scale, as well as the minor history recorded in conversations in the streets, her wide reading and her experience of nomadism as an existential condition.

When she returns from her frequent travels around Europe, India, Cambodia, Canada, Cuba, or wherever her interest might take her, she works in her studio on the top floor of a building on an island in the middle of the Nile, from which she looks out over the city as if she herself were one of the birds that alight on her plants and fly over her installations, pointing towards a shift in vision. From this bird's-eye view that often governs the organization of her works, in the distance that counterbalances the immersive gesture, there is sometimes a place for irony, one that rises up between the lines of the many texts that take part in the economy of her images, as a redeeming misprint that relates to the dust of the world. Then, she is off once again, just like the sails of the

felucca that sometimes unfurl in the spaces of her exhibitions, gesturing at a new journey, an exodus from herself that will have no return other than in the form of a new departure.