

# SO MUCH DEPENDS UPON A RED WHEEL BARROW

You can always find plants at Wilfrid Almendra's; in one shape or another. Jean (2014), the work at the inception of the exhibition So Much Depends Upon a Red Wheel Barrow (title borrowed from a poem by William Carlos Williams, an American poet of French, English and Puerto Rican descent), can be seen like a greenhouse for weeds. Perhaps like a shelter too, for those that are often labelled intrusive and invasive. At Wilfrid's new studio, my eye quickly turned to some twitch grass seeping in through some rooflight.

Pausing for a second, I asked myself if weeds stop being invasive and start getting domesticated, from the moment it is cased under glass. But the greenhouse devised by Wilfrid doesn't share the features of a cell. If anything, its permanent home is in a garden in Isère. It is only temporarily hung onto a wall here. What's more, you need to bend over a balustrade to get closer ; and despite the slits and openings that let the golds and sapphires of Jean shine through, the cathedral glass prevents us from catching the grass, forever escaping our glorifying eyes, threatening to turn the weeds into the headline of a show.

This is the challenge I'm facing as I write on this exhibition, since its characters and what they embody as ideologies, struggles and damage keep slipping away. You have to squat down, get on your tiptoe, lean and bend so you get a sense of the relationship Wilfrid builds between his sculptures and their poetic and political load. Or rather, one of the keys to feel the exhibition finds itself in those very gestures. If the exhibition is full of dead-ends, wonky balance and things that refuse to say and show, it's because it wants to turn the viewer into a voyeur (in the perverse acceptance of the term).

So much so that the orifices, splits, reflections, are obstacles to rub off against and pass through, such as this paved way that gives itself like a runway for sculptures whose joints feed off a viscous material, some kind of semi-organic semen that reappears twice in the exhibition – looking like a liquid stemming out of the sculptures while acting as their crutches –, a mix that could be made out of sperm and sweat, implying the existence of an underground network irrigating the exhibition, the sculptures and the space – up to the lighting – of a particular energy. Even the columns of the space inflated.

But energy = effort. In the pocket of the trousers that would belong to that ever-disappearing

naked body can be found a Doliprane package (a pain relief). If So Much Depends Upon a Red Wheel Barrow is fuelled with the force and forms of struggle, manifested through the use of corrugated iron, the precarious architectures threatening to keel over communicate weariness and fatigue. That is what Martyr (2020), which welcomes and stands up to you, is all about. Its body is, indeed, riddled with marks of a past labour perpetuated in the space that is now Wilfrid's studio, a former furniture and upholstery workshop (a martyr is that piece of material placed between a tool and another material so it can be worked without being damaged. It's a surface that is, literally, sacrificed). Actually, the marks on the martyr then prompt us to look at the walls under a new light, more specifically this blue line – there before the exhibition – that runs over what looks like a burnt painted wall, and leads to a dirty sock.

A whole erotic of precariousness is thus in action – we could even say erotic of the precarious – that also questions the relationship between artistic labour and laborer work (parallel that crystallise with the shoes, stained with paint; but which paint? or where is the painting?). This eroticism, however, is always denied to us. Like the weeds preserved in Jean refuse to give themselves, the body of this artist-worker, sweating so much that it makes us thirsty, outruns us. So, maybe, the peacock's feathers are only here to divert our attention?

for Wilfrid, from Cédric -

