

The Smile at the Foot of the Ladder: # 2
A performance project by Marianna Vecellio

Ragnar Kjartansson, Hot Shame
The Quest Of Shelley's Heart

The Smile at the Foot of the Ladder is a story in a story. The facts follow a harmonic temporal line that seems to wrap around itself until the mysterious death of Augusto the clown. Henry Miller precisely wrote this fantasy and reassures the reader that death reinforces his birth, that his end baptizes the beginning, "an invitation to flow with time".

The end of the story does not mark the end, but rather he crystallises himself in a dimension that is in and out of time, to continue, maybe, in the reality of the reader "taking it with you" – as the scholar, Dorothea von Hantelmann, says – "map making existence", the emotional mapping that is around the performance, between action and user, or in the case of a story in a question, between the story and the reader. "The performance can not be a refined piece of work – continues von Hantelmann – but lives the connection that is established with the social space of the spectator."

The work *Hot shame, the Quest of Shelly's Heart* by Ragnar Kjartansson (1976, Iceland) is a camouflage in a camouflage: a space of reality with which the artist decided to play until completely vanishing. Kjartansson chooses a legend, the one on the burial of the heart separated from body by Percy Bysshe Shelley, the English Romantic poet.

There are different positions about this, the rest talks about an out-and-out *research*: the artist isn't interested in the truth of the fact as much as the collection of romanticism, death and eternity that the story may suggest, and creating around that, an elegy, narrating the memory of a memory, and transforming the gallery space into an act of devotion *to the bleeding heart*, bleeds because it is wounded, or simply because, for Kjartansson, "life is sad and beautiful...I love life, I love its desperation."

The artist defines the installations as *tableaux vivants*, a place where different disciplines collide, where repeating in a sort of loop, grotesque and dreaming, for hours, days, the performance; playing with the works' temporal dimensions to enter and exit itself, until in every single taking over diverse contingent possibilities and the spectator, invited to carry out a fulfilment at the outside, confuse with themselves.