

il manifesto

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If bodies change with cruel acts

«Radical change» by Lenz Rifrazioni, inspired by Ovid's «Metamorphoses»

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Those folks from the *Lenz Rifrazioni* have got us used to lengthy immersions in the work of a particular author, to dramaturgic excavations of texts that have been re-worked in line with a highly personal scenic vision that emphasizes visual aspects and sound canvasses over a narrative development. So we really should not have expected anything different from "*Radical Change*", a longstanding creative laboratory inspired by Ovid's "Metamorphoses" which was rounded off with the presentation in diptych of the last two passages, "*Io*" and the preceding "*Daphne you must be my tree*". But, nonetheless, the radical transformation indicated by the entire title maybe strays beyond the literary source since it seems involve also the work of the two creators, Federica Maestri and Francesco Pititto. Or, maybe it is just the realisation of a change that has been going on for some time, which leads to a performance writing that is more and more centred around the bodies of the interpreters.

Daphne has a face that hints at the disquieting remoteness of Valentina Barbarini. She stalks forward hurriedly, as if for a fashion show. Long visibly unnatural blond hair, high black boots that are in stark contrast with the non-colour of a vest that does not hide much. In her hand, an overnight bag, out of which she draws small pieces of wood of different shapes, a pair of Dr. Scholl's sandals to put on later. As if that was her work. To be incessantly repeated. The stripping away of her feminine image only to sink into another. Deadly pale, with the consistency of a vegetable. Off with the boots and the vest, off with the wig to show cropped hair. The myth of the nymph transformed into a bay tree to escape from the erotic desire of the god Apollo is consumed in a series of small ritual acts, inside a neutral space devoid of depth.

Kneeling, she busies herself with the wooden material that represents her destiny, while like an echo arrives the voice of her prayer. I'm worn out, I don't want to run, she will go on to say. I don't want to be liked any more. But the silhouette covered in the small bits of wood she is wearing seems to crush her to the ground, before she can raise herself onto the pedestal of an ephemeral victory against the human.

Carnal is the inevitable adjective that the presence of *Io* calls to mind, and not only because of the ample fleshiness of the performer, Sandra Soncini, dissected by four screens that mark off the scene on all sides, framing the spectators into the space of the action as well. With her back turned, she lets the bath towel that she entered with fall to the ground in that place of shared intimacy. She remains seated on a column of unmistakable little red tins of "Simmenthal" pressed meat. She opens one and with a finger slurps out the contents, filling her mouth. Simulacrum of the mythical story. There is a whole pile of other identical tins in a transparent plastic bag, and a layer of little cylinders of that gelatine-cocooned pulp stretches across the floor, a real meat carpet on which the young woman's naked body will be impressed. At the centre of the action is the evocation, as impressive as a magical ceremony, of the sort that the nymph *Io* underwent, transformed by the god Jupiter into a heifer to hide her from the jealousy of Juno. With cowbells around her neck, she puts on leggings and armbands and a mask that bear the product's trademark, and advances on all fours simulating the horns sprouting from her head. Across the screens run the words that say the unsayable. Shadow - the

wood - the hard earth. The violence of the god. By now far off.