

ADRIAN PACI

Peter Kilchmann

Albanian artist Adrian Paci (b. 1967) immigrated to Italy in 1997, and his works are frequently inspired by histories of displacement, his own and that of others. His videos in particular generate strong metaphors for the trauma that results from hardship. In one of his best-known works, *Centro di Permanenza*

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Temporanea (Center for Temporary Permanence, 2007), we watch migrant men and women walk onto a runway tarmac and crowd up a flight of boarding steps, only to discover that there is no airplane at the EXHIBITION REVIEWS t are clearly going nowhere. Since that video was made, the migration of people from country to country has become more insistent in the world. In Paci's recent exhibition "Sue Proprie Mani" (His Own Hands), the topic was addressed in depth, with the artist exploring two incidents of migration between Albania and Italy.

The central video installation, *Sue Proprie Mani* (all works 2015), made in collaboration with Roland Sejko, focuses on unsent letters recently discovered in bags in the Albanian State Archives. They were written in 1945 and 1946 by Italians who were stranded in Albania after World War II, unable to repatriate due to the breakdown in diplomatic relationships between the two governments. The discovery made news headlines, and Paci subsequently gained access to the correspondence. His installation consists of five large projec-



tions showing individuals dressed in period costume; they sit silently reading, at dawn or dusk, their interior surroundings elegant but shabby. Different voices on the soundtrack recite whole or parts of the letters. Tragic news is divulged, a stoic figure reveals unhappiness, a cheerful tone becomes pained, a question turns to an accusation. The readers and the writers of the letters they conjure are caught in limbo. Occasionally the camera pans to show that all the readers are actually in the same large reception room. (The work was filmed in a former royal palace in Durrës, Albania.)

In the adjacent gallery were modest drawings and paintings based on news media images. Several present shots of the dramatic arrival of thousands of Albanian migrants by boat at the port of Bari, Italy, in the spring of 1991. In one, bodies are seen as specks in water, as Italian authorities would not allow the vessel to dock. (There is also a photo diptych, where a figure is shown leaping from a boat.) Other images depict clusters of figures huddling together or men hanging out of train windows making peace signs. Paci's illustrations are pale and indistinct, though they tend to portray the extreme states of elation and despair. Without knowledge of the circumstances of the images, the viewer might interpret a thin, sun-burnt figure with unkempt hair grinning and giving a thumbs-up in one painting as a football fan, a jubilant refugee, a freed prisoner or a traveling opportunist.

Taken together, the works in this show do not manifest the kind of memorable symbolism of some of Paci's previous pieces. They seem instead to exhibit deliberate restraint, demonstrating the mutability of circumstance and interpretation and passing the duties of reflection to the audience.

—Aoife Rosenmeyer

Adrian Paci:
Greeters, 2015,
acrylic on paper
mounted on canvas,
11 by 14½ inches; at
Peter Kilchmann.