

La Croisade Des Enfants

Anna Solal

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"When one is small, one only truly finds peace under the table."

Children: A Very Specific Oppression, 1976, *Christiane Rochefort*

Anna Solal invents an endemic artificial flora and fauna, composed of banal and corrupted objects that she transforms into ornaments. One is lost in shades of ochre, melon, dahlia, and broom yellows, in reddish lilacs and pearlescent pinks, in sky, steel, and sapphire blues and in graphite blacks. In this flamboyant and fantasized world, smashed smartphones, scalped shoes, syringes, handcuffs, ropes, and other found objects collide. These artefacts proliferate and intertwine into networks carrying information, energy, and pain. Fractal, alveolated, and veined, these archaic motifs evoke Aztec glyphs, further complemented by cryptocurrency logos.

Anna Solal's coded and lyrical visual language embraces disorder and agitation. She offers us a remedy fused with its own venom, delicate and monstrous. A universe that reminds of Derek Jarman's Prospect Cottage a tenacious garden near a nuclear power plant, which he cherished despite the poverty of soils contaminated by radioactive waste, the burning sun, and violent winds. A romantic, lush, and threatening world, where happiness coexists with horror.

"Only some gardens are paradises. Mine is one of them. Others are like spoiled children: spoiled by their parents, overwatered, coated in chemicals."

Modern Nature, 1991, *Derek Jarman*

Solal constructs architectures of interface. In the piece entitled *Le Portrait d'Instaggram*, a sun is placed under house arrest within a dollhouse—a child-sized mansion studded with iPhone screens. Its rays break apart like the legs of a squashed spider; its body, a miserable net, forms its central point of balance.

The bite of the spider—real or imagined—lies at the origin of the ritual of the tarantella. This phenomenon emerged in the rural regions of southern Italy in the 14th century; rural populations engaged in it to soothe their suffering. A tradition that both the clergy and later modern science sought to suppress, classifying it as a form of hysteria.

These threatened revolts also surface in places difficult to reach, such as the realm of dreams. From 1933 onward, the journalist and psychoanalyst Charlotte Beradt documented those of Berliners during the rise of Nazism. She became the guardian of mental images collected during this period of terror. The signs of totalitarianism's impact on the psyche recount the methodical demolition of the self and

the threshold of intimacy, in favor of a choral subjectivity. One witnesses the mechanization of private thought as it dissolves into that of the mass.

Solal draws inspiration from childhood - which Vincent Romagny describes as a "foundational model of all processes of social domination (1)" - as a metaphor for the way institutions, governments, and other structures of power control, shape, and nurture us. She dismantles and recomposes a windmill, originally designed to scare away birds. Children may replace the birds, which the iridescent blades now serve to repel.

Her *Angelus Novus* offers a junk interpretation of the eponymous watercolor by Paul Klee, dated 1920. Klee, in his time, rendered an angel in colors that seem washed of life, in such schematic lines that it resembles a sewing pattern.

In a drawing depicting an empty classroom, Solal choreographs the internal organization of a social group. The human figure is absent, as if deactivated, a likely symptom of a persecution that leads to derealization. One finds this at its most extreme in Mettray, the penal colony where Jean Genet is said to have been sent after gouging out a child's eye. The detained children maintained a quasi-feudal organization divided into castes: the "toughs," the "vultures" - favorites of the toughs - and the "cloches," or slaves.

Drawings of severed ears - an image that runs through art history, from Vincent van Gogh to *Blue Velvet*- appear alongside other mutilated bodies, while shards of glass masquerade as petals. We observe these fractured landscapes as vultures scrutinize their mass grave. Figuration is fragmented and incomplete; materiality is diffracted. Through these ramifications, drawing forms of togetherness, Solal paradoxically stages scenes of dismemberment, interpreting the effects of authoritarian liberalism, which seeks to reduce us to solitary organs.

Lila Torquéo

(1) Vincent Romagny (ed.), *Politisier l'enfance*, Burn-Août Editions, 2023.