



Installation view "Jacopo Miliani. A Slow Dance Without Name", Kunsthalle Lissabon 2016
With: Thinking WOW!; Thinking WHAM!; Thinking HUH!;
Thinking POW!; Language is a Dancer; and the performance
Dança sem título (all 2016); Dancer: António Torres

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Jacopo Milani
"A Slow Dance Without Name"
Kunsthalle Lissabon
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In the influential essay "How to Do Things with Words", J. L. Austin spoke of performative utterances, referring to words that produce a new reality when spoken aloud. Austin's thought has often been translated unto contemporary art, but the Italian artist Jacopo Milani (*1979) inverts this proposal and explores performance as a speech act. In this exhibition, he does so by taking striptease as a metaphor for the performance of desire, while also considering art itself as a site for its construction.

The exhibition begins with a small, almost unnoticeable, sculpture that sits on a reading table at the entrance of the Kunsthalle. A pair of wax hands, molded after the artist's own hands frozen in motion, encircle Alain Robbe-Grillet's 1955 book *Le Voyeur*. This sculpture is an apt introduction for the main installation, pairing hints of an imagined idea of movement with allusions to a desiring gaze.

For Milani, striptease materializes the metaphor for thinking desire; its choreographed movements are a linguistic act. The dancer performs determined and stereotyped gestures that convey a certain discourse and desire. Even if the dance performance *Dança Sem Título* (Untitled Dance; all works 2016), only occasionally occurs in the exhibition space, it is the show's pivotal piece. A male dancer in small golden trunks moves around in a very methodical, tense and precise dance routine. As with Felix Gonzalez-Torres's 1991 *Untitled [Go-Go Dancing Platform]*, it is in a way irrelevant whether the spectator witnesses the performance or not: every object in Milani's show suggests its presence and thus takes the observer onto an imaginary journey. Either the dancer himself or simply the suggestion of the dance becomes the vehicle of desire.

The black screen *Language is a Dancer* is both the backdrop for the performance and a sculpture in itself, is made of reflective material on the one side and matt on the other – both reflecting the exhibition space and the spectator and denying that reflexivity and access.

Tentazioni (Temptations), two huge back gloves, one hanging from a ceiling beam and the other laying on the gallery floor, underlines the production of desire, as the black gloves function as sexually charged objects that imply a narrative of undressing. On the walls, several brass speech balloons reminiscent of comic books are left blank, leaving room for the (spectator's?) thoughts left unsaid but hinted at continuously throughout the show.

The last work in the show is a photograph, hung quite low and titled *Fags*. It depicts a series of cigarette butts thrown onto the street, referring to a time of waiting and anticipation. The double meaning of this work's title is the only reference to homosexuality within the exhibition. This almost hidden, final reference makes the viewer reassess the show and the nature of the gaze in the sexually implicit performance. For Milani dance is a linguistic act but its meaning, like that of objects, can be transformed by language in turn.

