

Displacement2

Rita Barros has been living since 1984 at New York's *Chelsea Hotel*. This landmark, or can we say, *Mindmark*, is indissolubly linked with the underground scene of the 60's and also the 70's. In the summer of 2011, the Hotel was sold and closed to the public. Since then the residents have been targeted with evictions and constant harassment from the indiscriminate renovations, in an opaque and aleatory frame subjecting them to risks, physical as well as psychological.

The series *Displacement2* was started in the summer of 2012, and is a follow-up to the photographic series *Displacement*, an expiatory diary of the negative forces which Barros has been subjected to, while resident, and to whom part of her identity has been removed. It is her artistic answer to the de-characterisation of her frame of life, mental and physical, up to then centred in the New York spirit that presided the settling of the cult around the *Chelsea Hotel*, ephemeral spirit in the meantime vanished in the debris of the demolition to which the hotel has been subjected. *Displacement2* could be called *The Party is Over*. Never will the *Chelsea Hotel* be the one Barros portrayed in 1999, in her book, also a cult object, *Fifteen Years: Chelsea Hotel*.

Imbued with the Beckettian universe, Rita Barros uses irony to deal with the absurdity of the situations to which she is being exposed to, through the creation of small 'actions' dramaturgically emblematic of the profound changes that take place, registering the desecration of a collective landmark and the gratuitous elimination of a web of privileged relations with repercussions beyond the disappearance of that atypical community, itself a unique artistic object.

So, in this series, the bricks of the rooftop garden in the meantime destroyed become the subject of the 'actions' portrayed in photography and video. The bricks have acquired the metaphorical status of representing the solid foundations of the home, once built and now transformed into waste, the result of the savage demolition to which the same home is being subjected. Barros uses the brick as a symbolic object, as a weapon against an invisible guerrilla, which operates in the transformation of the real, as well as a cathartic defence against the insidious dissolution that slowly installs itself in her daily life.

With the bricks Barros wants to destroy the destruction. Confronted with her powerlessness facing the events, she acquires a creative strength that more than ever justifies her presence at the Chelsea Hotel. With this body of work she has created an impressive elliptical work of dramatic representation of the life and death of the Chelsea Hotel, as a place synonymous with the creative liberty of an era inseparable from the myth of New York, a unique visual narrative on the history of the hotel and an artistic document of a rare political and social projection.

António Calpi
February 6, 2013
(Translated from the Portuguese)