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THE WORK IS UNIVERSAL AND DEALS WITH THE RHETORIC OF POWER.

The work entitled *OPUS* (2005) by Cuban artist José Toirac is a meaningful and eloquent example of the multiple expressions of political power in his oeuvre. Among his previous significant series of works, mention must be made of *Con el permiso de la historia* (With the Permission of History), in which he explored the strength of the photographs of the revolutionary incidents in Sierra Maestra and how they captivated the *imaginaire* of the Cuban people. With the subsequent triumph of the Revolution, his images are gradually replaced by figures, numerical data.

So throughout the four minutes and forty-nine seconds of this single-channel video filmed in black and white we discover a succession of figures, shown in a loop, announced by the unmistakable voice of Commander Fidel Castro.

In this work, the ceaseless rhetoric of the patronizing discourse of power that almost results in the physical and psychological exhaustion of listeners is reduced by José Toirac to a sort of minimalist sound-number illusion not devoid of a certain amount of humor, as is usual in his oeuvre. The endless political discourse is divested of all its content and, in a process of deconstruction and synthesis, is reduced by the artist to an interminable litany of figures, a lulling mantra of data impossible to corroborate that is presumably intended to produce a state of calmness in the listener, the

viewer, regarding the uncertainty of his present and future. As the artist himself points out, the impossibility of verifying this information, conveyed as if it were merely political propaganda, means that basically it can only be accepted as truth starting from an act of faith. The figures and data transmitted from the echelons of power thus become a new form of religion.

Emerging from a specific and recognizable context such as that of Cuba, and taking the figure of Fidel Castro as the greatest exponent of contemporary political hyperbole, Toirac's work is by extension universal and deals with the rhetoric of power and the institutional use and manipulation of thousands, indeed millions, of facts and figures that is carried out in today's world on a daily basis. It is up to the viewers to decide where to place the frontier between their reason and their faith.

Orlando Britto Jinorio

Translated by Josephine Watson

Born in 1966 in Guantánamo, Cuba. Lives and works in Havana, Cuba.

83.4

OPUS, 2005
Single-channel video
4'49" / b/w / sound