

Ali Kazma

(Istanbul, Turkey, 1971)

Ali Kazma's works seem to possess an ancient honesty that art has progressively lost over the course of the past century—the honesty of describing life with exactitude and candor. One might call him a documentarian, but in reality he possesses a dedication and social awareness that was typical of realists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. His work is characterized by a spirit of passionate observation of all the processes whereby man modifies, constructs, and changes the environment and is changed by it, without this observation being transformed into judgment or complicity. Even looking at the activities of employees in a slaughterhouse, Kazma employs the same objective and meticulous narration that he devotes to a watchmaker or a surgeon. Just as for the surgeon, once the patient's body is covered with a cloth, he takes care with the efficient sequence of movements and actions he must carry out in order to bring the operation to conclusion. There is no room for feelings of guilt, expectations or concerns about the patient and/or his personal story. This is how it is for Kazma, even when the activities depicted have violent aspects, and the collection of portraits of different types of work has the same serene cohesion one might see in friezes of the arts and crafts around cathedral doorways, or in medieval illustrations. They all are worthy of consideration, and the beauty of the gesture can emerge in all of them.

In a world of art, where who materially produces the work has no relevance, in a production system where money is made from money, without any concrete anchor to the real and material world, Kazma, going against this trend, points his lens at the way in which our culture produces objects and creates things or situations: "We are constantly pushed to consume," he has stated, "while the production of consumer goods has become an almost embarrassing aspect, not to be seen in public... I want to make production and creation visible."

Sometimes, as in *Clerk*, a video from 2011, it is not an object or something physical that is created, but rather the virtuosic ability to carry out one's tasks, which is demonstrated in all its beauty: the employee in a notary's office who slips documents through his fingers with incredible speed, stamping them to indicate approval. Even the most bureaucratic service industry worker has his artistic and in some way craftsman-like dignity. The sonorous rhythm of the slapping of the stamp on sheets of paper is transformed into a continuous percussion, a minimalist music, overwhelming in its speed, while the minimal gesture of the fingers that nimbly speed through the corners of the documents evokes from afar a repeated minimal gesture reminiscent of Beckett, astonishingly transformed into a positive value. Rather than a paradigm of absence of meaning, there is a cell of significance for every human activity. The same temporal dimension that, in Beckett, was transformed into the emptiness of expectation, here plays with fulfillment, with the musical percussion of the stamp and the satisfied certainty of the date. The documents are en route to becoming official, they are rendered effective because the employee is affixing

to all of them the current date. Everything seems to be in order in man's efficient work.
(EV)

FACRT