

On "PIGS - Commemorative Plates for the Euro Crisis"

Zoë Claire Miller exposes culture as a set of behavioral instructions through transforming traditional pottery. Using household pottery, Miller calls to our attention not how origin is of concern but rather how political fictions are reproduced and circulated. How and where is valued formed and deconstructed? Since the global economic turndown in 2008, European countries such as Portugal, Italy, Greece and Spain, the so-called "PIGS" (and most recently Cyprus) have been labeled a threat from within for the EU, while being held responsible for the slowdown of general economic activity. Ironically, the allocation of blame and assignment of guilt for economic catastrophe extends from those at fault - banks and governments - to those most palpably victimized by the effects of the pending national bankruptcy and humungous EU-financed bail-outs that the debt crises entail: the people of each country. This poses a superimposition of negative perception and consequence moving downwards in the power hierarchy - from the institution to the individual. For her "Commemorative Plates for the Euro Crisis" Miller fires each "failing state" represented by a one Euro coin from the respective country onto a traditional decorative plate, also from each country.¹ Playing on consumption, i.e. monetary value, and tradition, i.e. cultural value Miller desecrates and obscures the coins as she celebrates and distorts the regional craft objects. Decorative plates from the various Mediterranean countries all have a distinct style - handcrafted and painted according to local tradition, they are unique objects marked by cultural identity and personal craftsmanship, while the Euro coin from each country has a standardized national motif. Values are exported and exchanged in the circuit of capital that Miller presents: multiple systems embodied in plates that are to be hung and not eaten from.

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¹ The plates are for sale for the price of the date of sale's precise rate of government debt as percent of each country's GDP in Euros.