

“I did not know Buñuel and only today
do I know of Bataille and Klossowski [...].”
Carol Rama, 1980¹

Carol Rama Teatrino

Silvia Eiblmayr

Resistenza was the title Carol Rama gave to her 1944 oil painting whose surface is covered in dead or nearly-dead human figures. They are standing or hanging on the gallows, standing on their heads or lying down (see p. 36). It is always the same type of figure which Rama outlined in black as if in a woodcut: a phallic shape, made anonymous by a head like a skull, the body emaciated down to the bones, a torso—the legs are simply left off. These figures, seemingly drifting on the empty surface, are partly covered in black and red paint, which Rama slewed onto the canvas in an aggressive, actionist style. The paint has run down as if in a drip painting. Carol Rama confronts the image of mass-murder, serial death, and the bodies dissolving in death with an attack on the artistic form itself. The splattered paint, dried in dribbles down the canvas, has the appearance of blood that has run out of a wound.

With this hybrid juxtaposition of expressive drawing and actionist form, Carol Rama found a radical way of bringing her personal trauma and the more general trauma of the Second World War to a head. But, according to Edoardo Sanguineti, “[...] there wasn’t any desire for scandal in Carol, except the scandal is inherent in things themselves, with respect to certain habits of vision which the public have.”² The terror of war, and implicitly, that of the political order which wages war, itself becomes a scandal because formal conventions are broken in the portrayal of it. The material itself takes the place of story-telling, metonymically taking the place of death and destruction.