

Beggar's Food

I'm Hungry/ Are You Hungry?

Concept

The chefs of *Beggar's Food* will offer the public who are participating in the performance a bowl of soup, a dish that is connected to the simple and poor culinary tradition. An example of *social diet*, soup is capable of seducing taste, giving comfort and protecting from the cold of winter in a genuine and economical way.

Beggar's Food is an event connected to food and the pleasure of the palate, but at the same time it is a prototype for the creation of a new economical model, an inversion of the mechanism of supply/demand for those who live in difficult social and economical situations.

"I'm Hungry" is a statement, but at the same time a question, which crowds around the streets of Milan in a problematic way: on sidewalks, in the underground, on streetcars, these places are stages for increasingly pressured requests from those who are hungry, those who do not have a roof over their head, those who do not even have the bare minimum to be able to survive. The demand for food passes through the cleanliness of a car windscreen at a traffic light, the gadgets of street sellers, the roses given at restaurant tables, the petulant echoes of a question that multiplies uncontrollably. The answer is often detachment toward those requests, and in many cases, exploitation of them.

In a liberal economy the economical relationships are regulated by law and by supply and demand. By demand of something we mean its request by a group at a certain price in any given moment. A poor person does not have money, cannot achieve a price, and this is why his or her demand is excluded from the market place. An economical exclusion that becomes a social exclusion and feeds mechanisms of exploitation of work force. The work force is the only offer that a poor person can give by lowering their price. Immigration, a phenomenon that feeds the growth of the number of poor people in Western economies, becomes a place filled with human patrimony where the manufacturing companies reap benefits through the cost of work, meaning immigrant labour, at a very low cost.

The reduction of the cost of labour is one of the strategies through which companies can optimize their gains: by paying their workers less they can reduce their costs and so raise their final gain. To do this many manufacturing companies delocalize the production, that means that they move their production outside of Italy, in countries like those of Eastern Europe that have lower labour costs than our country.

Some kinds of manufacturing companies cannot apply this mechanism of delocalization because of the nature of their production, which needs for example a connection between the moment of production and that of sale. This type of manufacturing company uses different strategies to reduce the costs of work by staying in Italy.

Among this kind of activity lies, for example, restoration, where immigrants and new poor people are often used, who offer themselves to the market at low costs and without contractual guarantees. When faced with the problem of the impossibility of exploiting the immigrant in his own country, through the delocalization of production, some types of production find ways, mostly illegal ways, to exploit them "at home".

The problem of the question "I'm Hungry" and its consequences are at the core of the concept of *Beggar's Food*. The performance takes its title from Berthold Brecht's "Three Penny Opera", which was inspired by the satirical comedy "The Beggar's Opera" by John Gay in 1727. In the original text, Gay makes the poor people, the beggars, into the pariahs of society, heroes of a world turned upside down. Gay triggers an overturn of the values of his contemporary London to represent the image of corruption and immorality of the political system of high society as a reflection.

In the same way, the performance *Beggar's Food* isolates the social phenomenon of the excluded, the poor man, and makes him a street action, a situation where he can take part, provoking an overturning of the rules with which to play. *Beggar's Food* inverts the burning question of the poor man by transforming it until it becomes an offering: "I'm Hungry" becomes "Are you Hungry?". Thanks to the competence and experience of Massimo Bernardi and the staff of Dissapore, the poor man enters into the world of food, becoming a person who offers something instead of a victim of his own question.