



Prometeo Gallery Ida Pisani

**Badiucao | Gianluca Costantini**

*Line of Duty*

Essay by **Elettra Stamboulis**

Imaginaries of resistance in defense of human rights

**opening: January 26, 2023, 18:00**

**27 October – 09 March 2023**

Via Privata G. Ventura 6, Milano  
[www.prometeogallery.com](http://www.prometeogallery.com)

From **Thursday, January 26, 2023**, the spaces of **Prometeo Gallery Ida Pisani** present *Line of Duty*: a double solo exhibition by artists **Badiucao** (China, 1986) and **Gianluca Costantini** (Ravenna, 1971). The exhibition project is configured as the natural continuation of a dialogue between two artists geographically distant, yet close in vocation and language, united by a gaze always ready to confront the social and geopolitical contradictions of the present. It is no coincidence that Badiucao and Costantini met on Twitter, sharing an 'other' space that, in a time when borders are getting stronger and inequalities are increasing, has the possibility of creating *fissures*: glimpses of expressive freedom in which political militancy can condense into words and images that, as in a great Global Square, circulate from hand to hand and from screen to screen, germinating a shared awareness. Conceived in this way, the exhibition *Line of Duty* is then also a fissure: a space of possibility in which it is the line - the one that decisively traces the migrant bodies in Costantini's drawings and shapes the bitter pop irony of Badiucao's works - that constructs images somewhere between testimony and symbol: new frameworks of the present in which the adherence of the chronicler meets the aesthetic translation of the militant artist. In this interweaving, biography and artistic research refer to each other: the Badiucao affair is already written in his name - an alias created to maintain anonymity even in Melbourne, where the artist lives and works in voluntary exile, at a distance from the censorship of the Chinese Communist Party apparatus - while Costantini has also met with the establishment of Turkish President Erdoğan, who issued a condemnation against him for "terrorism" for his drawings after the failed coup attempt in 2016.

If the former operates a direct critique of the repressive apparatus of his native country through a language strained between parody and disquiet, the latter uses drawing as a moment of synthesis: the repeated and successful attempt to create iconic figures out of the silhouettes victimized by global news, which, for example, became the object of political action with the silhouette of Patrick Zaki or the drawings in support of the Iranian uprising. Thus, another resonance emerges between Badiucao and Costantini: the shared urgency of using artistic practice as a means of aesthetic revelation and direct action in defense of human rights, especially in a historical moment harried by the overproduction and saturation of informational space where the excluded names, voices, and bodies risk remaining invisible.

Finally, the *Line of Duty* exhibition marks the initial trace of a big question: what resonance can art have in the complex intertwining of geopolitical power and social inequalities? The works-lives of Badiuca and Costantini pave the way by creating imaginaries of resistance: visual but also symbolic lines, which like faults breach the wall of globalized violence and the mechanics of consolidated power.

## **Biographies**

### **Gianluca Costantini** (Ravenna, 1971)

He is an artist and activist who has been fighting his battles through drawing for years; he has been accused of terrorism by the Turkish government and of anti-Semitism by the American radical right. He actively collaborates with the organizations SOS MEDITERRANEE Italy, ActionAid, Amnesty, ARCI, CPJ Committee to Protect Journalist and with major human rights festivals, including the HRW Film Festival in London and New York, FIFDH in Geneva and the Milan Human Rights Festival.

From 2016 to 2019 he accompanied with drawings the activities of DiEM25 Democracy in Europe Movement 2025, the movement founded by Yanis Varoufakis, and collaborates with artist Ai Weiwei. In 2019 he received the "Art and Human Rights" award from Amnesty International. He has published for many Italian and international newspapers including Internazionale, Corriere della Sera, Domani, Oggi, La Lettura, CNN, Drawing the Times, LeMan, ABC Australia, Mekong Review, Courier International, Le Monde Diplomatique, World War 3 Illustrated. His most recent solo exhibitions have been at Studio 1929 in Lugano and at the d406 Gallery in Modena, the Terni Museum Caos Centro Artisti Opificio Siri, the Tina Modotti Gallery in Udine, and the Auditorium Parco della Pace in Rome. He has also participated in numerous group exhibitions, most recently *Fractured Spine* at Photobastei in Zurich, *Iran Rising* . *Iran Protest* at Fathom Gallery in Washington and *The art of Defiance* at M2Gallery in Sydney. In January 2023 he installed a selection of drawings creating a "floating exhibition" on the Ocean Viking.

His latest publications include *Patrick Zaki, An Egyptian History* (Feltrinelli Editore, 2022), *Libya* (Mondadori, 2019).

### **Badiuca**

Born in China in 1986 and raised in the city of Shanghai, Badiuca is a popular and prolific Chinese political artist. A law student at East China University, after watching an underground documentary on the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre, he abandoned his studies to pursue protest art.

In 2009, he emigrated to Melbourne, Australia to make his first satirical drawings anonymously under the pseudonym Badiuca and where, in order to continue his studies, he worked as a kindergarten teacher for several years to support himself.

He uses all mediums, but the most powerful tool for spreading his message remains Twitter. He works as an assistant for artist Ai Weiwei in Berlin in 2018, whom he considers the most important teacher not only artistically. Compared to Banksy for his disruptive critique of modern society, he showed his true identity on June 4, 2019 (the anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre) during the presentation of the documentary about him *China's Artful Dissident*.

He has continuously and empathetically supported protests in Hong Kong: his images, which often take visual references from party propaganda that are manipulated and recontextualized, are concise and strike the viewer directly, without mediation. He confronts a variety of social and political issues in his work. Along with Fang Fang's diary, Badiuca's blog is the only unmediated document of the information control service we have of the lives of Wuhan residents during the first lockdown. He uses his art to challenge censorship and dictatorship in China through his Twitter account @badiuca. His work has been used by Amnesty International, Freedom House, BBC, CNN, and China Digital Times and exhibited in Australia, America, and now for the first time in solo form in Italia.

On October 4, 2021, he was presented with the Vaclav Havel Prize in Oslo. In 2021 at the Museum of Santa Giulia in Brescia he presented his first solo exhibition *La Cina (non) è vicina*, shown again at Dox in Prague in 2022 under the title *Mad(e) in China* also curated by Elettra Stamboulis. In December 2022 a selection of works was exhibited at the European Parliament in Brussels under the title *We are the last generation*.

