

Mario RIZZI

b. 1962 in Italy

Rizzi lives and works in Berlin. Rizzi's practice is an act of mediation through which to present fundamental aspects of the lives of specific individuals or groups of people who have been compromised by the impact of the uprooting forces of neo-liberal globalisation. His video works consider the notion of 'border', particularly in relation to issues of identity and presence, concentrating on collective memories and individual stories. Most specifically he is interested in those people who are in some way caught in a dialectic gap between places, sharing different cultures and values. Rizzi travels regularly, spending long periods of time in the contexts he uses as a subject base, these residencies have included months spent in Istanbul to research and film *Murat ve Ismail*

(2005) and in 2007 time spent in Amman to film *Impermanent*, an emotional interview with Ali Akilah.

In 2005 Rizzi won the Best Artist Prize of the 7th Sharjah Biennial in the United Arab Emirates, and in 2004 and 2005 The Mulliqi Prize at the Kosova Art Gallery. In 2008 he participated in the official programme of the Berlin Film Festival; in 2007 in the 4th Göteborg International Biennial in Sweden and in 2005 in the 3rd Tirana Biennale in Albania and the 9th International Istanbul Biennial in Istanbul.

The Chicken Soup video, 2008 Courtesy of the Artist

Mario Rizzi worked in Taipei for more than two months on his new film *The Chicken Soup*. The work focuses on the stories of two foreign women living in Taiwan, an Indonesian and a Vietnamese. Rizzi does not claim that this work is an investigation into the social conditions of the migrant wives and foreign brides. Instead, he brings to the fore the specific conditions lived by an Indonesian foreign worker who was obliged to work 21 hours a day and abused on several occasions and a Vietnamese woman who lived through a fake marriage, was abused, sold and trafficked while in Taiwan.

The individual accounts of these two women describe the horrific deterioration of the conditions imposed upon them, and their courage and resilience in redeeming their integrity. Here, as is often the case in many cultures, gender prejudice and profiteering have flourished under the protection of so-called 'tradition'. Hence, the lives of many migrants are violated by the oppressive frameworks of brokers, who conduct their business outside the rule of

common law, and who are not visible to the society at large in the global economy. The intimate and private stories of these two women reflect not only the conditions of the human market, but also their sentiments and their disempowerment in Taiwan's male-dominated culture.

The title *The Chicken Soup* is an analogy for the daily psychological pressures exerted on the foreign bride. After giving birth, a woman is not normally allowed to do any housework for one month. The mother-in-law cooks sesame-oil chicken soup on a daily basis, because it is believed to help the body restore its energy. Often a bride coming from a different cultural background does not find the soup palatable. But she does not have the option to refuse the mother-in-law and she does not know the language. Rizzi's film navigates the awful and merciless line where saying no is absolutely necessary and yet at the same time entirely out of the question.

