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Asylum (Merlini - Tellas) | Chiara
Lecca | Gianni Moretti | Nero

TEMA number 3

ANIMAL/masculine

cover: Federica Aradelli
translation: Sara Poldi Allai

INDICE

Editorial	3
Asylum (Merlini - Tellas)	5
Chiara Lecca	13
Gianni Moretti	27
Nero	41

EDITORIAL

When I started to work at TEMA I didn't have big expectations for the future, mostly trying to spare myself disappointments. However, since the first issue came out I have convinced myself of the importance of persevering down this road, always trying to make things even better.

Today the third issue is here and brings along some radical innovations. You might have noticed the beautiful cover designed by Federica Aradelli (XIII), close friend of mine and eclectic illustrator. She will realize each one of this year's covers, in order to create a uniform image that will identify our route, from here to the fourth issue and a clear theme-based routes that ends with the fourth issue. Speaking of route, it's worth talking about this issue's theme: Animal/Masculine.

Animal/Masculine is not about gender, even though I would easily find a series of good reasons to call the male gender "animal". We all are animals, we belong to the animal race that inhabits the planet. Masculine is instead our negative side. It is our instinct, irrationality, violence, the side of us that comes from our bowels, from the ground. The few lucky people to which I explained this concept as a preview, found my point of view unusual and controversial. You take it as it is, I am a woman. What really matters are the

interviews where animals become the artistic/symbolic language through which these artists dig deep in their human nature.

First come the birds from the Asylums Project: two illustrators investigate how nature becomes a physical gesture. The work in progress is quite pedant, but it is also tormented in its visual outcome accompanied by a screeching soundtrack.

After that we find Chiara Lecca's pigs and rabbits: with irony and acuity she uses them to represent middle-class life, the hypocrisy of vision and our debt to nature. Birds return with Gianni Moretti, as do snakes, dogs, monkeys and humans, but they are first of all silhouettes, symbols that tell a story about life as an undeterred, painful inner research. Finally there are Nero's dogs or how to transform the best friend of man in the symbol of force and conflict. The dog is morally better than the human being and is therefore the perfect actor to represent our weakness.

The second important news is...the English version, of course! Enjoy it. What will be the next step?

Sibilla Zandonini

ASYLUM (MERLINI-TELLAS)

(Bologna - 1986, Cagliari - 1985)



Asylum is an itinerant project which had a sort of preview, then the appointment at FragileContinuo in Bologna and while we're writing to each other you're at Zelle Arte Contemporanea in Palermo. Though I usually try to avoid this kind of question, I guess I can make an exception. How does the project work? Are you planning more stages? Is it a work of overlapping so that new pieces are added at every stage, or do you recreate each time from the ground?

Asylum is an ongoing project. From the moment of its conception to date it has changed shape and strengthened its identity; we can say it's an installation-study, which allows both of us to see the evolution of our own path stage after stage reflected in an ensemble image.

For instance, you build the nest each time, right? Hence there's a period of research on the territory to find the suitable materials, as if you were the little birds which have to build a home. Humanity lost the direct relationship with nature as a source of solution to its problems. Is this research just functional or is it part of the mental process of the work? What leads two designers to weave branches, to use hands in order to create something three- dimensional?

The concept behind Asylum is the accumulation, almost obsessive, of lines as of



branches and leaves. The building of the nest turned out to be a very physical and intimate sculptural experience; collecting nesting material at the exhibition place was first a functional choice, then it gradually became almost a ritual action that



allowed us to vary the identity of the installation itself according to the type of the autochthonous vegetation of the place.

I am always fascinated by team work.

How did you artistically meet? Thinking of the wall drawn in Bologna, it's evident the perfect balance between the different strokes, as if you balance each other. Do you plan how to cross the lines, or do you rely on instinct so that the four hands will function as one?

This project has started quite naturally and instinctively, by the simple desire to create something together.

For most of the time the work is performed in different places and cities but, as we know each other production so well, choral works come to life without too many words.



Birds are at the core of Asylum; they have always had multiple symbolic meanings: to Egyptians, birds were related to the soul which, flying, could break away from the physical body. Generally, all the ancient iconographies use winged beings to indicate a relationship with the afterlife or the spiritual sphere. Or again, the angels were painted with white feathery wings, and there is a reference to the birds of the sky as angels in several passages both of the Bible and the Koran. This spiritual dimension is related to flight. In your work, however, all the birds drawn by Martina are stationary, ideally resting on the branches drawn by Tellas. They are so human, powerless. Are these birds talking about us or about themselves?

There is no conscious will of humanization of the birds in Asylum.

We limit ourselves to a careful observation of nature, with the intent to take more and more creative ideas on how to represent it.

Martina, your approach to drawing is very physical: thick and pasty colours, palpable flesh, light feathers. The natural element takes up most of your work even outside of this project. Alongside this truthful naturalist drawing you put a geometric research, a tribute to Munari and to the harmony of simple shapes. Are they two sides of the same coin? Does your intervention change depending on the purpose, whether it's commercial or artistic?

There are certainly many different facets in my work that are however the result of the same research.

My training was more in graphic illustration than in art. This allowed me to observe and to take possession of “editorial” languages and to transpose them in other areas. I tend to direct my own style towards what excites me at that moment...

Asylum has been a boost to concentrate on gestures, on a research about style which I had never given to investigate.

Tellas, you have rather a diametrically opposed attitude, at least in appearance. Your drawings are delicate scribbles, hiding the power of child drawing, instinctive, but it is evident how they are the result of a slow observation. Complex geometries, symbols, weaves.

Sometimes it emerges almost a pedantry in your tracking a concept, countless studies to draw a nest, a rock. Would you take us into your process, if it's possible?

My work is a continuous observation of nature, which tends to move from illustration to minimal or abstract forms. This is definitely dictated by the land where I have grown, Sardinia, that means a lot of vegetation, barren lands, sea, wind and chirpings. It was pretty simple in Asylum; although our works have two different backgrounds they manage to comply well. Actually we have different



gestures, but the material we handle is always the same, and it is probably one of the things I like about Asylum.

We cannot forget the third element of Asylum: der Mauer, born Enrico Gabrielli, eclectic clarinet player and experimenter. He's a little sorcerer, the shaman, he gives life and breath to birds, and concretizes the environment. He says his solo project is called der Mauer because it builds walls for himself and for others. Was the installation without der Maurer's “noise” going to die?

The collaboration with Enrico was almost inevitable.

His study is naturalistic such as ours, it is a sound hypnosis enchanting and disturbing.

The aim of his work was to dig deep and give the viewer a feeling of wrapping in the work itself, a stunning sound that has certainly given relevance to the whole project.





ASYLUM
MERLINI / TELLAS

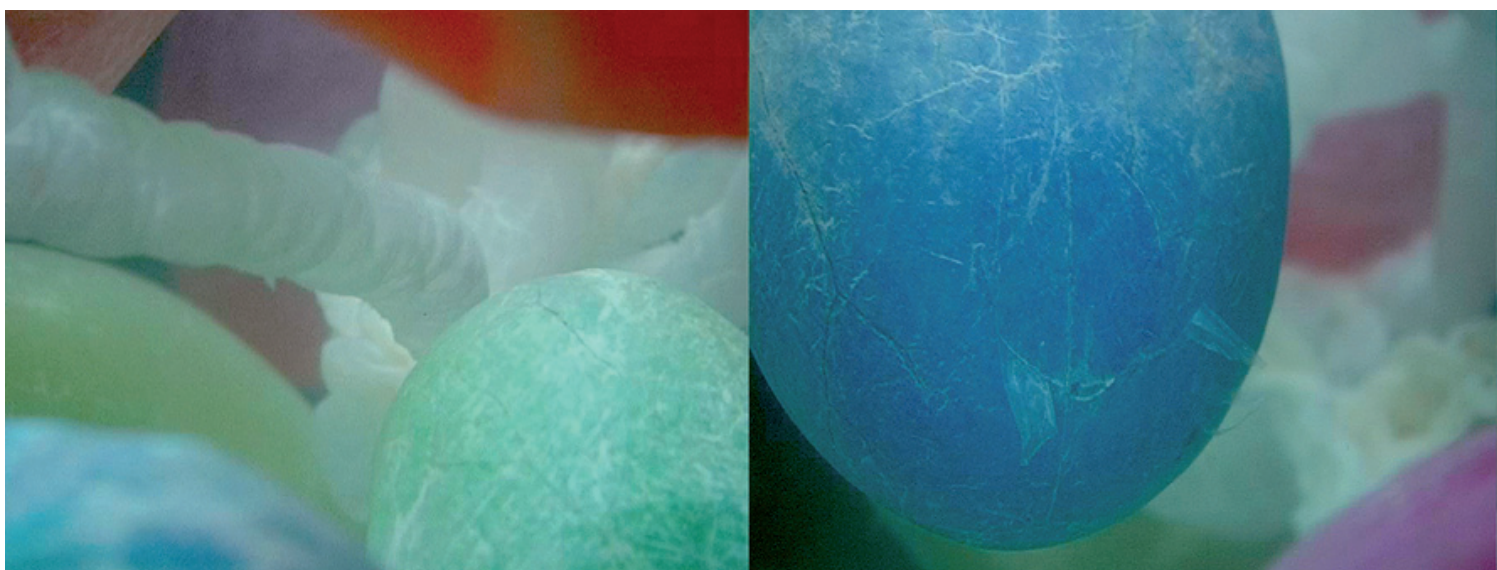
video di Giancarlo Morieri

CHIARA LECCA

(Modigliana - 1977)



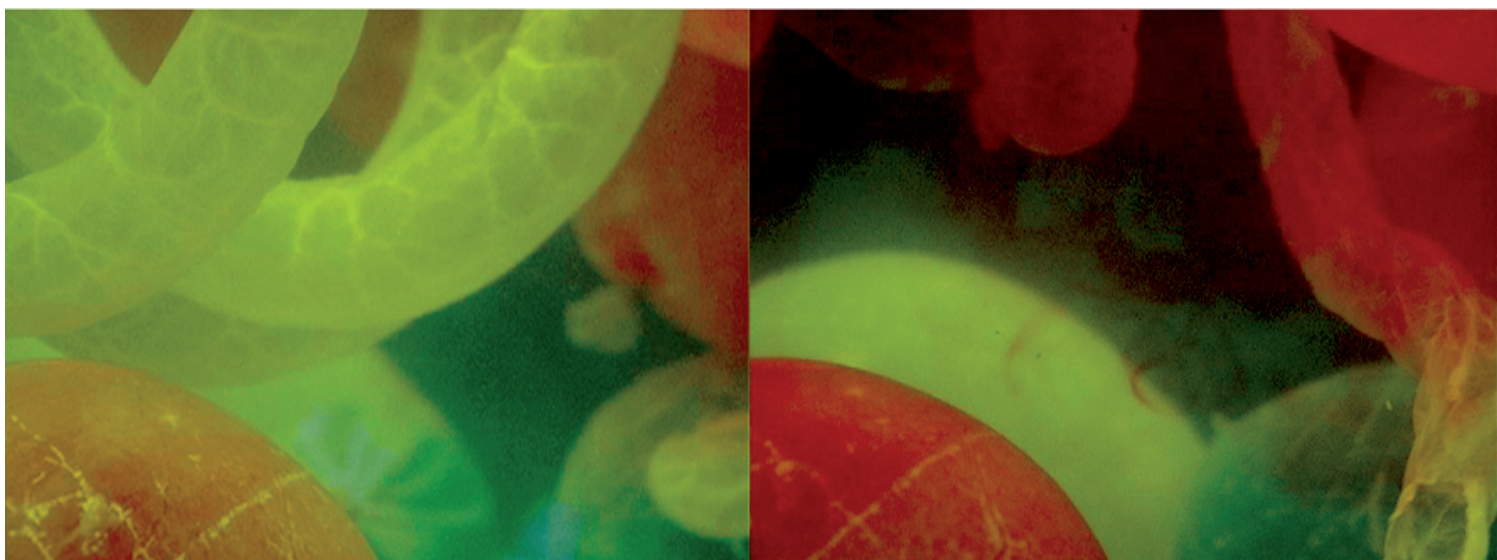
Red rabbit - 2010

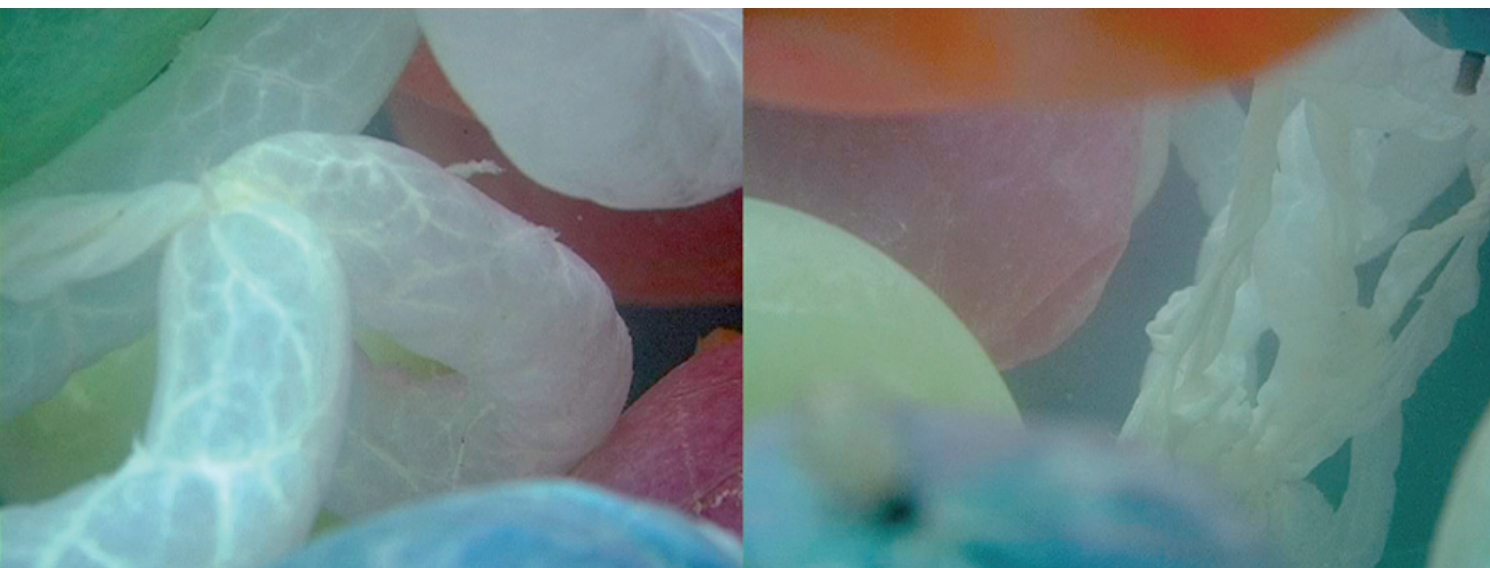


It's curious, after an articulated artistic path you felt the need to describe the creative process of a work. With the video called Bowels you identify the moment just before the birth of the idea at humoral level, as if there were a bowel movement to lead you to creation. Is your approach really just visceral? Is making art a matter of belly?

At this stage of my research I felt this need, I wanted to tell about the process

to shed light on one of the keys to the reading of my work, through the language that's most congenial to me. I imagine art as a visceral propulsive energy, the same underlying all our actions. My approach is indeed visceral as regards the initial input: I listen and observe what I have around and I focus on what strikes me most at the sensory level, on my thorns in the side. It's about social situations and objects triggering feelings very clear to me but not





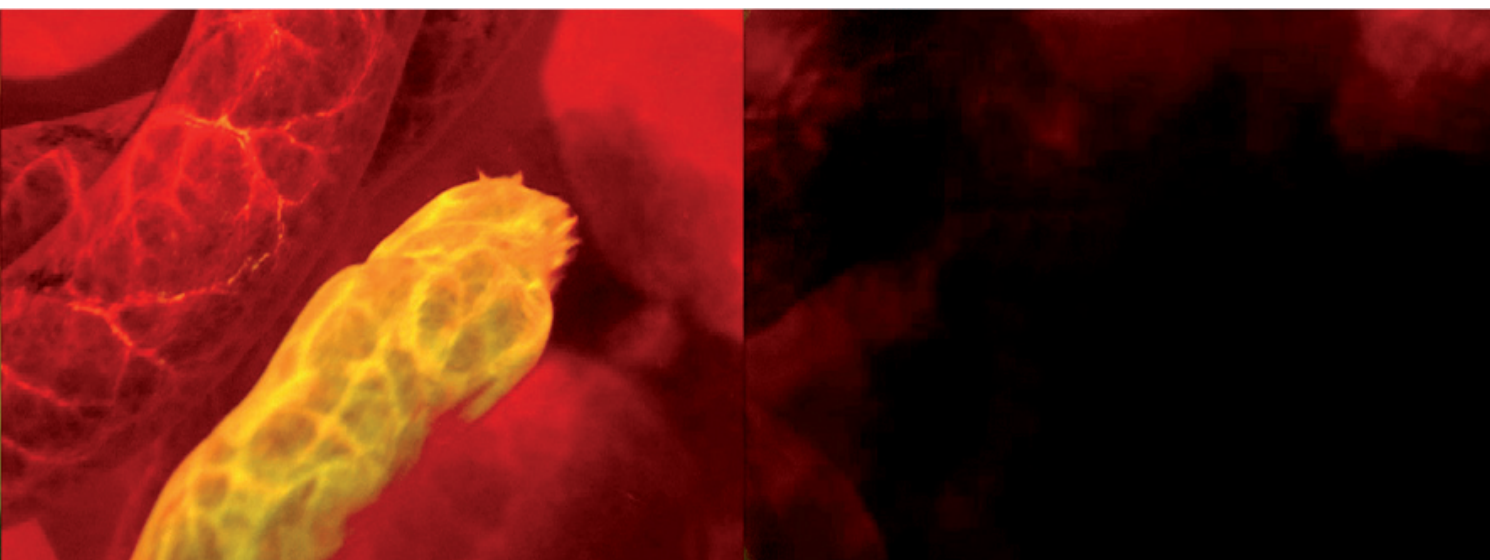
Bowels - 2010

describable in words, so I try to turn them into artworks.

The next following step, however, is mental, in fact it consists in choosing the most appropriate technical means and linking materials together so that, once assembled, they reflect these feelings. I believe that a work, as such, should go beyond the simple visual enjoyment, and should be permeated with an aura, it should leave a track in the viewer. Having

said that, you can try to get that magic if the starting point is visceral, so that you can talk directly with the unconscious part of who benefits from it. Therefore in my opinion making art is a matter of belly, even though these thoughts may be denied by the number of artists whose work is purely mental.

It's interesting to observe your path as a whole: your process of growing up. It



Bowels - 2010

seems you have won shyness, thus going from performance and irony, to the courage to show your capabilities, any filter.

It may seem like that, but my shyness is far from being won, it's indeed part of me now more than ever, I've always been coping with it, it's a love/hate relationship but we haven't divorced yet. However, the environment around me has changed, and my role as well: the first experiments date back to 2003, I was at the third year of the Academy, I hadn't discovered taxidermy yet and I used to carry my works into thermal bags ... a very different context from the one in which I am now.

And as you have changed, the chosen animals have changed as well. At the beginning the selected animal was the pig, rather pig ears that became friendly handbags or hairbands, always well closed into plastic displays.

They remind me a lot of the Barbie clothes that had the monopoly of my desires when I was a child; you push hard on the commercial and feminine imaginary. There is quite a difference between saying a man is a pig and define a woman a pig (I try to cast out my feminist side which would say that it is only because we still live in a masculine society). What did you have in mind when you made that kind of works?

I wanted to show aspects of our society from different points of view, what I'm still

trying to do. I'm interested in examining what we don't realize, what we apparently forget the aspects of our everyday hidden by public morals, because of laziness, routine and comfort.

Initially, I chose the pig because it lends itself to the game more than other animals, it's praised and abused in a myriad of ways, it's the animal which commonly becomes part of our indecent vocabulary. Having said that, I am a Barbie's daughter as well; the choice of the blisters was dictated by the fact that they best summarize an idea of possession and mass consumption, accessible to all; also, my blisters contained objects with a strong link with libido and food, which are both often relegated to our hidden desires. So the performances put on stage a world I'd define a dream tied to these drives. Indeed, the fact that they have been conceived by a woman created a mental short circuit, but it's a bluff, since those scandalous thoughts arose as a result of our prejudices on swine field!

You always say you use animals' items because they are part of your life, you live in the country and therefore have a direct link with the natural element. Maybe that's why you use animal parts that are butchery scraps; this shows a deep respect for animals. It's a very nice feeling; contemporary artists working with taxidermy very often forget this kind of relationship and the animals become



Pocket Ears - 2003

simple colours on a palette. Is it a natural process? Does it sometimes become a limit?

I'd never kill an animal to make a sculpture: I limit myself to use only the remnants regarded as waste. So I consider my work an attempt to establish a relationship between the natural world and the human world, experienced outside conventional patterns. I use organic materials as ploy to arouse atavistic impulses belonging to our

collective unconscious, to the oldest part of our brain.

I consider myself a very lucky person. Especially in the first years of my life, I've been steeped in the animal and natural sphere in a direct way, and I cherish precious memories related to that period. It's true that animals, and everything connected to them, become part of everyone's life, not explicitly but rather well packaged, adapted to our lifestyle ... Today more and more children will probably wonder about the shape of the

tree from which we get the milk!

Our society desire for liberation from the natural and animal sphere can make us forget our origins. But I think it's essential to bring more attention to these issues because we have a huge debt with animals and plants related to our livelihood, to the things we use to cover our body and especially to the survival of the ecosystem.

The technique of taxidermy is directly connected to this atavistic relationship, it's a very old process, I use a still valid and practiced medieval method. It could become a limitation in my work when the viewer does not pay attention to this relationship and thus risks a superficial reading.

Domestic Economy and Still Life contain

multiple elements: animal and plant parts life that collaborate to create something definitely decorative, ornamental objects with a little 'retro style referring to a bourgeois culture of living. Those nearing to look better find out the bluff, the real nature of things is disclosed. Sometimes you may seem almost arrogant in your criticism; as a spectator myself, I sometimes forget that an artist always puts himself at stake in what it produces. Could we define your art as a social art?

I think so, because I try to investigate how social reality refers to the natural world, with the desire to create doubts, imagine new structures. Who benefits from my works is obliged to reflect on their position about the natural realm.

I find the connection human / animal full of paradoxes, but the attempt to understand animals is necessary to truly understand





ourselves. Indeed it's this kind of relationship I'm interested in, and man tends to divide it into categories: pets, barnyard animals, animals to be eaten, to be used for clothing or furnishings, and doesn't consider it in its complexity.

The Paschal Lamb is the most violent work in terms of image, and perhaps even the one that most winks the eye to the aesthetics of publicity: a neutral background, clean hair and bright coloured eggs. It would seem almost a pro-vegetarianism campaign, but instinctively I wouldn't say that you are vegetarian, because of your work called Le Petit Cuisinier [The Little Chef], which to me it's

like looking behind the web of your work.

Le Petit Cuisinier is a work born in a very specific situation. Indeed I made it during a residency; I was in Poirino, Turin, at the Fondazione Spinola Banna for Art and the artist Jorge Peris was the visiting professor.

The residency program consisted in the analysis of our own work, its consequent destructuring and its reprocessing in an installation. I have made Le Petit Cuisinier: the installation included nine knife blades. They were placed on the usable space walls so that they were perceptible only after careful observation; they also showed their more dangerous side, the



The Paschal Lamb - 2007



Art of Fugue - 2009

sharp blade, but appeared as thin lines on the walls. The viewers knew of their presence but the work was almost invisible, and at the end of the exhibition path a map displayed the various positions. It's a work that involves a reflection on danger, fear, defence, counterattack...

You like to wrong-foot the viewer, in every work there is a far-off level of reading, which is deceiving, and a close one, which is disclosing. It's a little like the unawareness of animals: the cat bringing a dead bird home doesn't think it will upset or move you. What kind of relationship do you have with spectators? Do you take the relationship between art and

viewer into account while creating a work, or is it a minor element?

The viewer is the so called litmus test, I exactly understand if my belly betrays me or not, but usually I tend to worry about it just after finishing the work. Actually I think it's me the first wrong-foot viewer; indeed, while producing a work, it slowly withdraws from me and I realize the work is finished when I perceive its "own life". At that point the work doesn't belong to me anymore, it belongs to all the viewers.

Life and death. It's a topic, if one might say so, that has always been questioned by the art world. There's a work that really strikes me, in which you rebuild strange





living things by using snake skins tanned to be belts. I'm talking about Art of Fugue, the art of escape - peculiar title, considering that you encage these monstrous animals after having given them life. Why this contradiction? Does freedom not exist either in life or in death?

I have made Art of Fugue in 2009. I was invited to take part in an exhibition called The Goldberg Variations in Berlin, Germany, with the curatorship by Martina Cavallarin. Therefore the theme was very unique, we had to think over Glenn Gould's work and classical music. I used old reptile belts to recreate one meter long snakes, within which there were small sensors allowing clockwise and anticlockwise rotation when perceiving movements.

Personally, the exciting aspect of classical music is the composition, consisting in mathematical and symmetric patterns: a musical genre that gives back a lot both at sensory and at emotional level is conceived in mathematical terms, with a rational and calculated process.

So I opted for a work bringing to strong emotional reactions as a result of a mechanical, technical movement. Indeed the belts assembled in this way induced unconditioned fear reactions in those who came across, like the animal from which the belts derived from. In their Berlin version, incidentally, the belts were exposed directly on the floor of the exhibition

space.

The title refers to an unfinished work by Bach, but also wants to make fun of any escape by visitors.

“(…) Only those cultures that have avoided the Renaissance stage, (…) see the danger that art really represents.”

(Glenn Gould, The Glenn Gould reader)

Regard freedom, my opinion is that's utopia.

Misses (Fiorenza, Patrizia, Roberta, Carlotta, Irene) is a lashing work, very critical of the female model of aesthetic appearance: horsehair arranged as if they were opulent wigs. The wig is a strong element, it's required to disguise oneself, to hide, which are actions an artist carries out in all his works without ever being able to really cover himself. Again, irony is the primary communication channel: is it a weapon or a conviction? (The ironic language is currently one of the few taken into consideration, in every field, including politics; double meanings and dissimulation have prevailed over more direct communication forms.)

I think the value of irony changes dramatically depending on the area and use. I consider it a good survival technique. It allows me to deepen themes in my work that would probably be too direct without an ironic component.

Claudia Casali, the curator of your solo exhibition at MAR – Ravenna Art Museum, has stated that there's much of Picasso in your work Origami. What kind of relationship do you have with art history? Do you ever ask yourself about art as a form of immortality? Is art history still in progress?

I've always loved art history and I find it interesting to tackle the issues with hindsight, to see how my reading changes and grows: every time new discoveries happen. I find it much more exciting to follow the history of man through his art going hand in hand.

Usually, I don't deliberately put references to past masters in my work, but they are part of my cultural background so it is inevitable that they reveal.

As long as man exists, there is also history, then his art as well; I often wonder what will remain of the contemporary art context, I would be very curious. It's a very diversified age and it's subject to sudden changes, unfortunately immortality is meant for works only...



GIANNI MORETTI

(Perugia - 1978)



You've called your website Bestiary, the first time I read about it I thought that I was almost forced to interview you for this issue, given the circumstances. Why Bestiary? Who are the beasts?

I've always been attracted by animals, perhaps because of their inability to speak, or maybe because of their glances and unknown linguistic codes. I've always been fascinated by their apparent unrelatedness to things, as a tacit consent to life and death.

In my works, at least the 2006-2008 ones, the human figure is often recurring, and it is always provided in a motionless condition, unable to assert its will, only able to let go to the flow. My personal bestiary collects these bodies flexed in the stream, whether human or animals, united by the desire to be a simple conductor of something bigger.

The spolvero technique, the ancient method used to reproduce a drawing on plaster ready for fresco, becomes the work itself. Those tracks, which are like a secret language between the artist and his work, are not covered, but exposed to the viewer. A work such as Didattica [Didactics] (2007) is almost arrogant in its imposition, since it will fade away from the walls once the exhibition is finished, and only you have the power to recreate that lace of red pigment. You have a cheeky way to attract the public; do you ever worry about your audience?

I was struck by the use of the word "arrogant", a term I never thought you could use (or to see it used) in relation to my work. Actually I am aware, at least up to Didattica, that I've heavily focused on the work itself and not on what might have happened to it. The audience had just the role of the observer; I hadn't contemplated any reaction nor occurrence. You can imagine my dismay and anger when entering my room a few weeks after opening the exhibition, I saw my work had been practically destroyed by all those who had seen it and had not been able to resist the urge to touch it. From that moment I realized that this aspect, more related to the making, is integral part of my research, it's not really wanted but it creates the gap of knowledge and appropriation of life and from which I've learned we should not hide or be scared.

The pigment is aleatory, transitory, changing; that's not a new approach in recent history; sometimes it seems that contemporary art seeks this temporariness to get rid of the weight of history. During the last century the idea has certainly taken a dominant position over technique, but I honestly believe that an idea is (still) not enough to make art. How do you manage the relationship between the idea and its realization?

The question is very interesting and definitely wide, I'll try to be as concise and



Didattica - 2007

incisive as possible.

The choice of such a volatile and unstable material is not to be attributed to a desire of bearing on the fashion of the moment. In my opinion it's rather to be found in my very personal way to experience life and relationships characterizing it. Everything appears extremely volatile, passing to me. When I started working with pigments I looked for a material that more that any

other could "objectify" this dimension. The pigments are the basis of painting, as we well know. Over the centuries several binders have been used to help pigments to cling to the surface not to leave it anymore. I feel like in this historical moment those binders are the ones missing, as if everything had dried, all had become less solid and easier to remove from the fingers but also more vague and

inconsistent. I often remind of a text by Zigmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, in which Bauman argues how our society “has become lighter”. This lightening has led to greater agility in any kind of relationships but also to an inevitable decline in certainties. According to this perspective, history is read as a too heavy burden of information and the angle of perception has narrowed so that it only includes the here and now.

Well, switching to the second part of your question, how to explain this vagueness? Certainly not only through the idea. I think the idea itself is not sufficient to catalyze a work. If it were simply a good idea or a good theme to do a good work, then any journalist or philosopher or keen observer would be a great artist. I do not know why, but it seems to persist this concept of a content different or “superior” to the form which it expresses. In art, as in any other language, form is content, therefore the construction of one’s own language, as close to your way of seeing, feeling, perceiving things, is still strongly the *conditio sine qua non* for any artist. The concretization of an idea is the problem to solve each time and it’s never a single choice test but always a multiple choice one. Every time I approach a new work I feel like starting a childhood game which my mother talked about: a cake made of flour with a coin inside. She told me that every child around the table had a



knife, to cut a slice of the pie. The winner was the one who came closer to the coin. It’s like that, every time it’s an approximation to the ideal work, the best one has ever done, an approximation to the form which adheres to the idea that’s its the skeleton more than any other. To the creation, to say it with Michael Cunningham’s words, of the “perfect novel”.

You have used the monotype technique, cheating a little; for example, in Requiem



Requiem (365 singhiozzi per Dawson) - 2009

(365 sobs for Dawson), dated 2009, made while you were in Korea, you use the matrix until it consumes the ink and then you put ink again and start again to print the templates to mark everyday of the year. Almost a pedantic work in its repetitiveness, which thus expresses the frustration of the artist in his repeating a thankless task: every morning he has to face the same frantic search without even having the right tools. So the ink is overflowing and the image is repeated on itself. Do you really think it's not possible to win?

You called me a cheater; it's curious, because you mention a work in which I felt very honest. I used the monotype for other past works, in strict accordance with all the technical rules. However, in Requiem (365 singhiozzi per Dawson) I intended to follow the movements of the instrument in my hands. I supported it, studied it and understood which direction it would have taken. Every time is like walking on a wire, I always fear not to have muscles to withstand the strain, and every time I find myself more and more able to manage and assimilate the change, to let it come in and handle it without burn myself. I think the ingratitude which you talk about is an integral part of doing research, whatever its scope. It means living at the constant mercy of error and its (salvific) critical taking. I cannot answer if it is really impossible to win, that's why I never stop asking myself. Working conceptually on the succeeded failure - the process occurring through a reiteration which is always similar but never identical - is yet another side of my necessity.

Colours have a strong power in your works, you use them as symbols rather than mere pigments. In Ritratto di Famiglia [Family Portrait] (2006), thanks to the colour red it is reached a very high level of theatricality, a palpable tension between the cold blue and black on the wall and those blood-red cards. They are three-dimensional colours. Was the choice

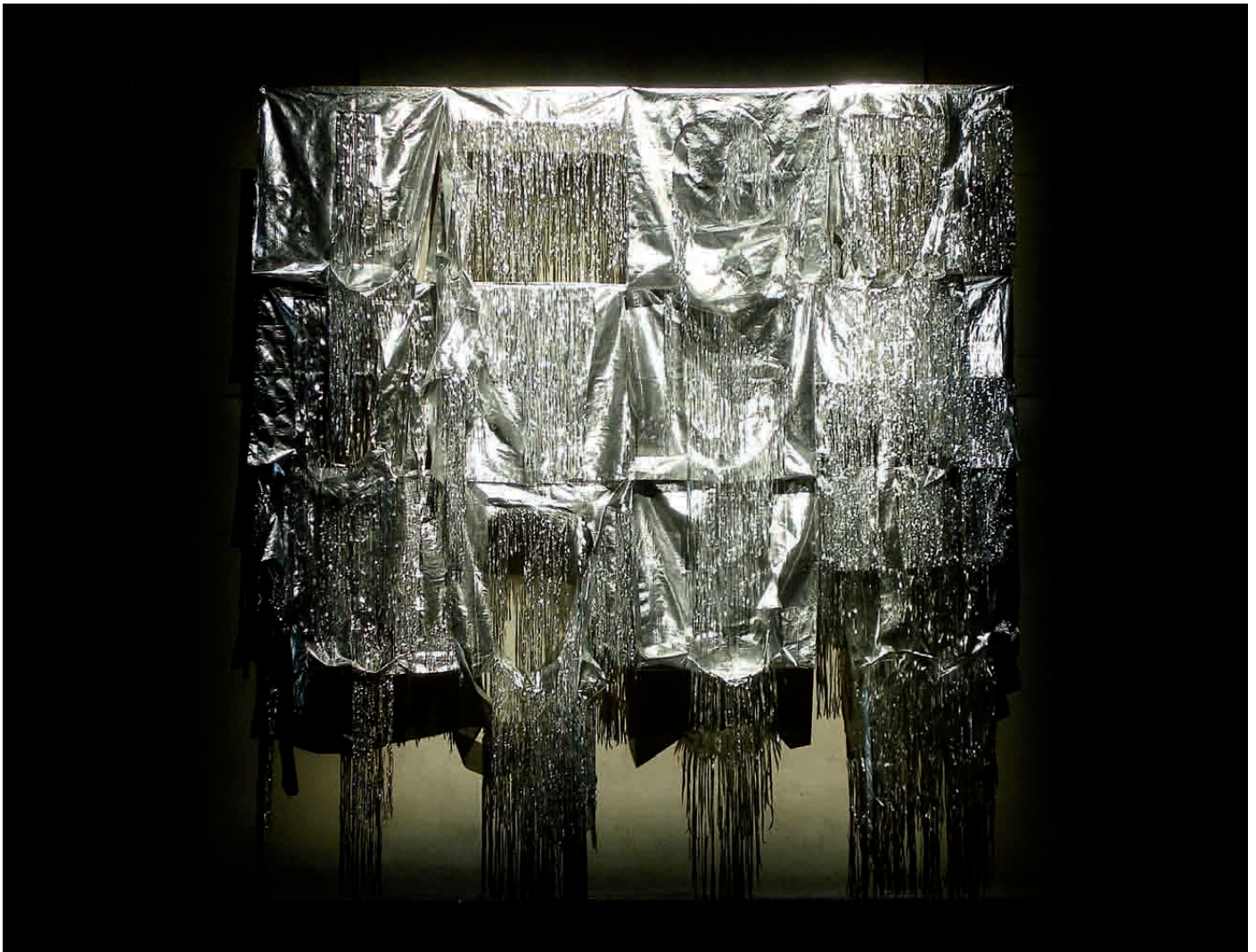
of using primary colors in this way spontaneous (not that he could be so) or was it the result of a deliberate reasoning?

It's difficult to establish a rule. In the work you mention, Family Portrait, I did not know what colours I would have used, in this case (as in others) the work has been almost "self-determined." I know that this vagueness and the inclination towards the current trend may seem an out of time romance but I still believe that the real contemporaneity lies in the careful

listening of things and in the waterfall of weaves they can create.

I remember a case, Didattica, where the choice of the colour was immediately defined: I needed a warm and very strong colour, something able to wrap the viewer. For that work then I used two different shades of red, overlapping them, and I chose to work following the "circle" of the four walls of the room to amplify the sense of wrapping which interested me.

Or again in Great Expectations it was essential to work with five of the seven





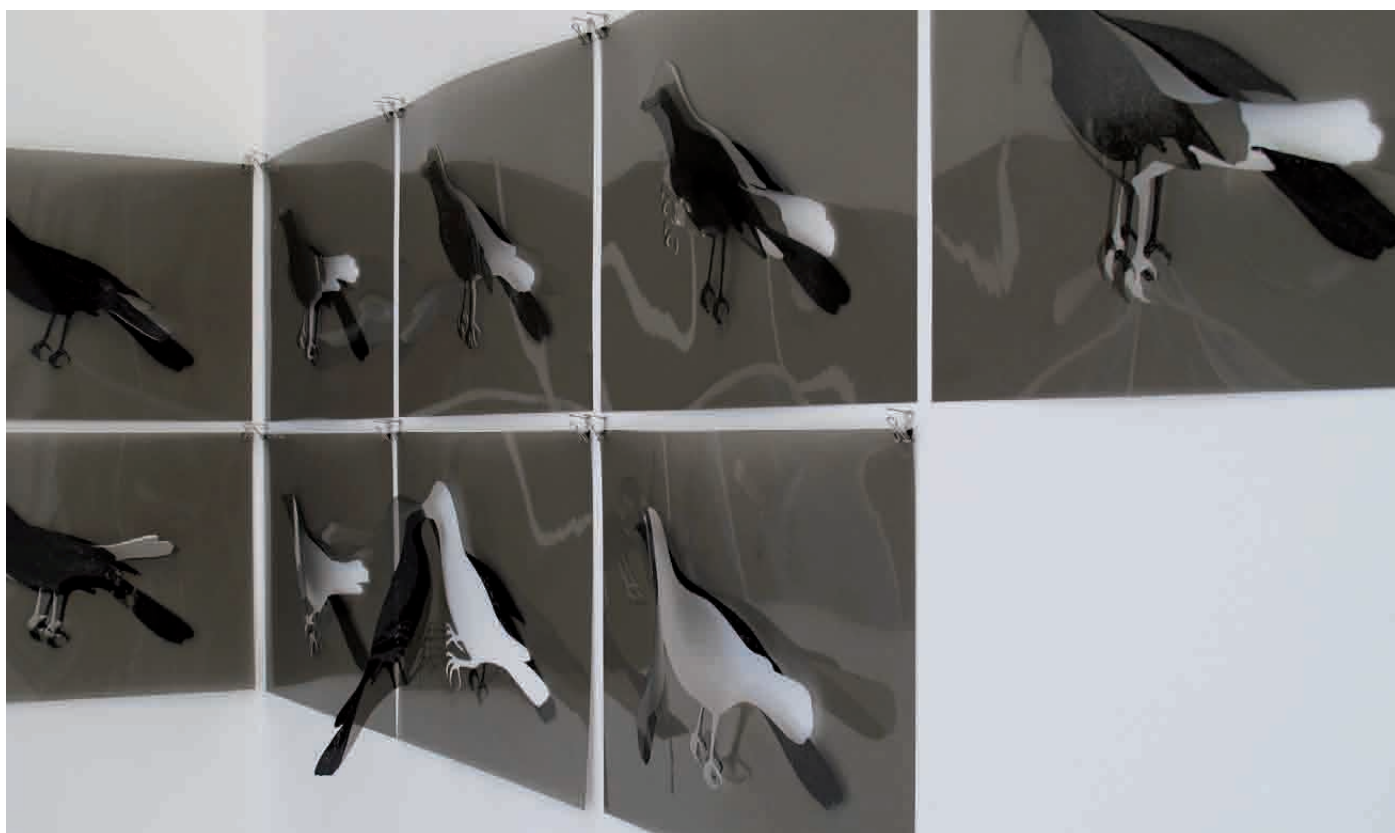
Quindici esercizi di salvataggio - 2009

colors of the rainbow to stick that needed sugary and excessive crust to the work.

Quindici esercizi di salvataggio [Fifteen rescue exercises] (2009) is one of the works that have impressed me the most. At first glance, its fragile nature of tissue-paper, black, dark, and those cuttings, as a sort of draping, are fascinating in their symmetry and clean lines. It might seem a gloomy work, a black flag, a mourning; only when the hidden side is discovered, those fifteen drawings now vanished, that you seek to protect- from who? From yourself? - show a deep tenderness and a respect for what we, the audience, would

never see. Is the memory salvific only when refolds things and gives them a new form?

That “yourself” in your question disoriented me. I guess I can answer yes. Sometimes we perform actions towards an unspecified and unknown “other” when the thing we fear most is ourselves. Nietzsche wrote “our ego is well hidden to us. Of all the treasure mines, ours is the last to be dug”. I think the memory is always salvific, I think it’s the weight at the base that allows us to maintain an axis, and it’s the only chance we have to climb up the ladder.



You defined yourself a researcher, actually sometimes it seems you feel your way along, stratifying the answers not caring whether they are positive or negative, as if you were more like interested in the process. About I Tuffatori Nei Pozzi [Divers in the wells] (2006) you have stated: "I realize that it is often not the pleasure to push me to deal with an issue but the need of destroying it or at least of trying to fix it." From there and up to Primo esercizio di approssimazione al grande amore [First exercise of approximation to great love] (2010), do you think you are still trying to destroy processes, or perhaps, as it seems, you are beginning to dominate them?

Dominion is a term that doesn't suit me much, and my work much less, I guess.

I thought for a while I could have control over my work, or at least I hoped. I finally learned to love and respect the term "management".

There was certainly a fundamental transition in my research career and, as you've noticed, a progressive attention to the process. I felt some change, as if the fear that first guided me has gradually left room to curiosity. A change of gear that went from an affirmative attitude and I'd say from such a violent and deaf determination to a questioning way of proceeding, almost naive, but highly (and sometimes painfully) rigorous and healthy. This attention is caused by the intention to discover, to let one go to searching and accepting whatever the outcome to which



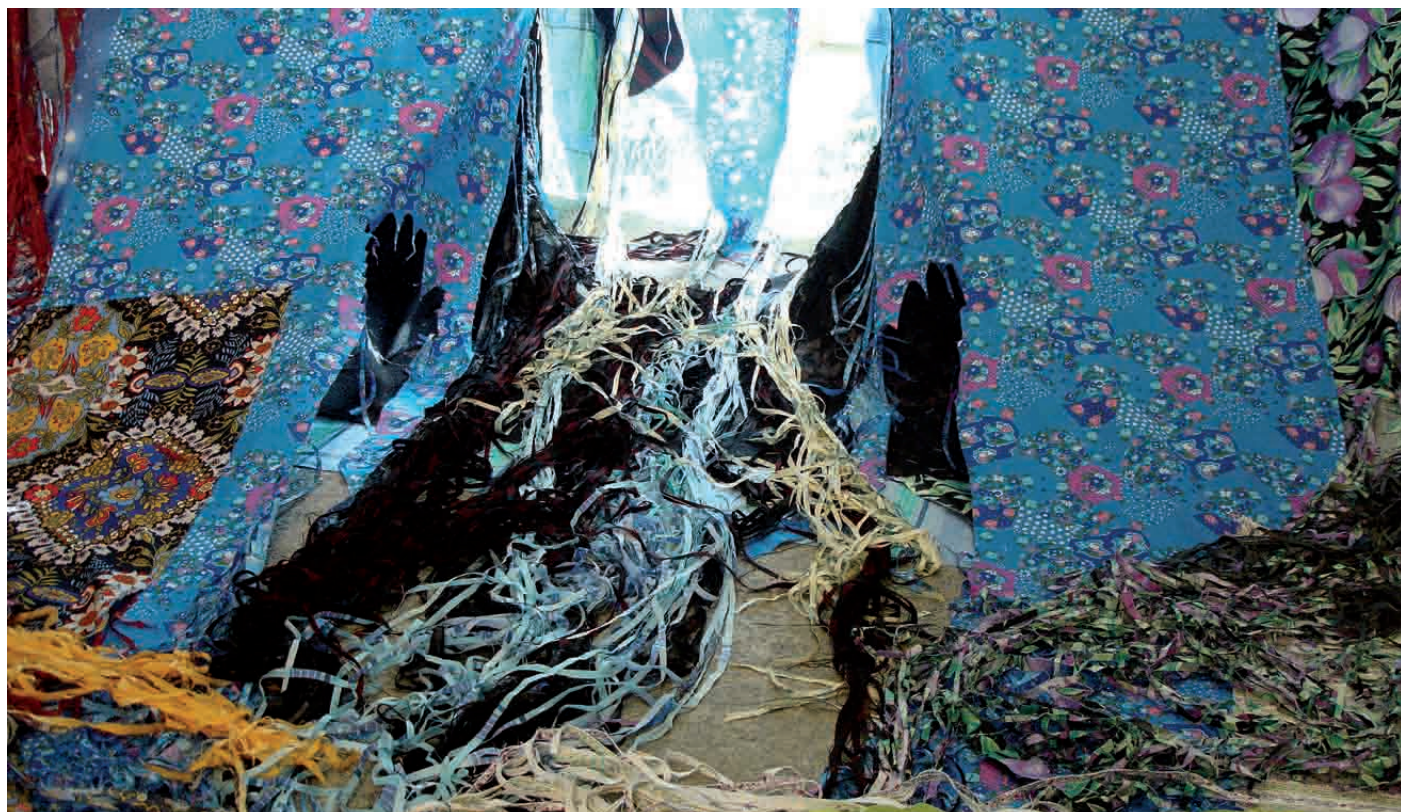
Le rapitrici - 2008

this research leads, every time redefining the parameters of what is positive and what is negative.

rhythmic, their positions on the wall as if they were on a staff. Hence here's the disintegration and aggregation of meanings and layers of matter ...

Somewhere I read, referring to your work, "shape in permanent disintegration and aggregation", so in Poena Cullei (2009), different animals come to life on too light paper sheets. The ink, wetting the paper, screws it up. On the contrary, you cut out other shapes, without detaching them, but dropping them in a stream of black paper resting on the ground. You say the inspiration for this work comes from the pain the Romans afflicted to parricides, closed into bags, called cullei, along with a viper, a dog, a cock and a monkey. The game created between full shapes and empty/cut out silhouettes is

It really wanted to be a work on this rhythmic movement, I'd say undulatory, determined by the passing through two states: intact and dismantled. I was interested in implementing a process similar to the one carried out by the Roman fathers who, terrified of being killed by their own sons avid for their wealth, had "invented" this punishment that wanted to symbolically (because of the use made of these animals) to restore the social fabric integrity torn by parricide. Thus those four animals have become to



me an excuse to implement a path, the drawing one, on which I intervened, creating a continuous circle of aggregation and disintegration, without establishing neither a beginning nor an end along the wall surface.

You like to cut out, a meticulous scissors work, violent. In Settantasette centesimi [Seventy-seven cents] (2008) you have cut out upside down man silhouettes on large printed fabric remnants. The human shape in your work is always codified; it's a line that is a man only because it has arms and legs, but never a face. Is that an inconsistent man who may be what you want or who is nothing?

That's right, that shape is a person unable to assert himself as a solid form, able to change and always think different, always prone to future time. In that installation in particular the body was set only as a faint trace, like an intermediary, only a demonstration of presence without any clear identification because unnecessary. And it was right on this bulimic cluster that the work was based, on the intention not to enter into things but to continue to skate only on their surface.

You had the luck to be accepted into residencies in New York, Berlin and Seoul: is the language of art universal? What kind of reaction to your work did you have abroad? Do we have our own space outside of this scrap of land that is Italy? And how have you been influenced by that?

I can say without hesitation that those have been the most important experiences for my growth, both human and professional.

The western art codes seem to have been imposed as universal and, especially in Seoul, I've found myself at use them to decrypt the art that is the result of a culture structured very differently from ours. Sometimes I wonder if it is misleading to consider a linguistic code as a reference model, thus implementing a continuous process of comparison which closes, or at least restricts, a real knowledge path that is not just of sterile verification, as a skeleton on which you want to place the flesh and the skin of another body.

I must admit that there has been considerable interest in my work which has inevitably been fed by the fruits of a reading "other" than usual. In particular, I felt a forward acceleration of my research, and a shift of perspective that have produced a series of very fertile changes. It is difficult to answer about the position we have abroad. I can certainly say that what impressed me is the care with which

each country in which I've been not only tolerates, but supports its artists. The kind of care that unfortunately seems not to have been adopted in our country, which considers culture a sector in which not to invest because it's unproductive. I felt that, for the same work quality, foreign artists have behind them a hard-working structure able to make them grow; we (Italians) have just a little wind.



Primo esercizio di approssimazione al grande amore - 2010

NERO

(Faenza - 1980)



Le ossa del cane nel cuore - 2008

Or: conjunction

1. used to link alternatives:

a cup of tea or coffee are you coming or not? I either take taxis or walk everywhere, doesn't matter whether the theory is right or wrong

2. introducing a synonym or explanation of a preceding word or phrase: yoga is a series of postures, or asanas

3. otherwise (used to introduce the consequences of something not being done or not being the case): hurry up , or you'll miss it all

4. introducing an afterthought, usually in

the form of a question: John's indifference — or was it? — left her unsettled

5. archaic either: to love is the one way to know or God or man

You're obsessed by the word 'or', which is one of those ambiguous terms. Is it your Linus's blanket?

Linus's blanket or Snoopy's Sopwith Camel.

I use 'or' to load with emphasis the first part of the title or to divert the possible conclusion, giving the observer a new



vision.

It helps me to create a story made of words full of feelings, emotions, logic, memories and humanity, pain ...

Thereby it's established a curious relationship between text and work, between knowledge and the unknown, where vision and understanding come into contact, breeding synergies and contrasts.

If I look at the older works of the years 2005-2007, they don't even look like yours. They are frightening, but Goosebumps style. I do not know if you remember that horror books series for children ... Those impaired dolls are really creepy. Perhaps we can say that they are immature works, if it doesn't offend you, I mean aesthetically. Slowly a research for harmony begins to be outlined: you introduce classic elements, finished forms, and spatial equilibrium. Was the aesthetic reasoning a need, or didn't you start to ask yourself about the beauty in itself?

Beauty is only skin deep, but ugly goes clean to the bone.

(Dorothy Parker)

The Aesthetics of the figure, and I mean the aesthetic harmony of shapes, has been something difficult to achieve. In part, I have been "forced" in order to clean the work, too deep forms, primitive, crass; the message was diverted, less

direct, covered with superfluous matter.

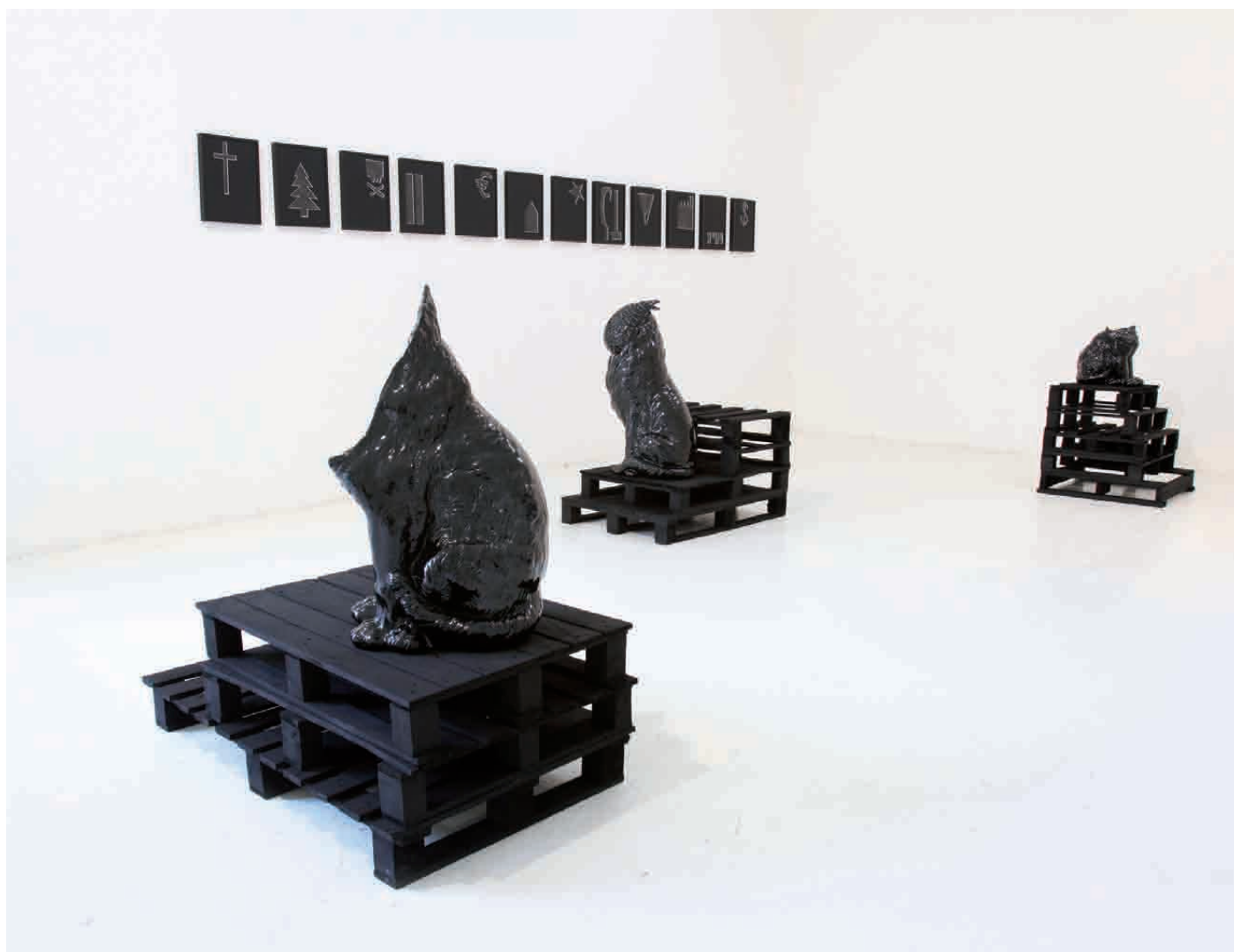
The works you refer to are all related to social criticism, abuses; they are powerful works, real, about violence on children, sick stuff. Now the point of view is anthropological, about social and economic analysis, a sharp eye on the contemporary world around us.

Now I am interested in neat forms, but they're not the only thing, and certainly not my priority; behind the emphasis on perfection I cultivate small and intentional defects that tell a ill-concealed desire of corruption of the classic, an immoral dissoluteness which constantly pervades everything.

In the composition of an exhibition or a work I prefer the pace, a sharp cut of space that can accompany its vision.

There was a time when you went from showing a little bit crooked monsters, which looked like animals, to genetically modified dogs. "You're a dog, you're a she-dog". It is strange how man's best friend can be at the same time something immoral, dirty, animal, instinctive, bad. You use them as living matter, you play to be a Victor von Frankenstein and turn them into hybrid creatures, but then you put a heart inside them and they take your place. Why dogs? Is there a difference between a Doberman and a pug? (You must know that pug is the dog of my dreams).

Amoral, dirty, bad. These are the



adjectives with which I generally would use to describe a man and not a dog. The dog has not got that dull courage to be shifty, false and treacherous. The dog is at a higher level of man as animal kind, it has preserved a purity over the centuries that makes it suitable to describe vices and virtues of men.

The dog is the perfect actor. It follows the signs, stays in place, gives meaning to space.

The matter fascinates me, all that cutting and assembling, removing to relocate, everything has to stand up, anything must fall down in pursuit of the flawless moment where the outcome is certain. This calls for a mental process so sophisticated and frantic, and there are times when there are five or six dogs on the working tables and many animals of various species, and everything must be at the right place, nothing can be thrown out or discarded, the balance must be respected, the mind must support all that “cut and sew”,

moving a little time before the hand, a few moments before everything is obvious. By contradiction there are not so many differences between doberman and pug except for the amount of poop, they are more or less like Usain Bolt and Renato Brunetta (a not very tall Italian politician, editor's note).

You often use enameled earthenware, a fragile material related to a kitsch imaginary, to ornaments, to those pretty and useless statuettes, trifles. But what you represent is far from pretty, in fact, if a black dog is already scary, you add a skull, or a forced zigzag cut of the mouth.



Or the dog finds himself without muzzle, a black hole in a black dog. The link with the material is always important; is the creation of a work like an atonement rite?

Creation is not atonement, but it is something necessary to me.

All the works contain concepts; they are images and shapes created to send signals, to fit between perception and memory.

Some works are born from the bowels of the earth, others from paper stained of ink and convulsive lines, others reborn from the road waste, from rubbish.

When working on the earth I like to do it



in a free and surgical way, sometimes out of my own logic, following its own course, and then reasoning on the result obtained. Sometimes I think monochromy on complex shapes is necessary to fully enjoy them. The elegance of pure colours summarizes the whole; it stems chaos and complexity, returning a definite harmony.

“Overlap of the past” I do not know why these words have come to my mind. There’s like an eternal return in your work, elements that reappear, pieces that assembled in a different way change their force, a journey that evolves working over itself. As if there was an inner necessity to which you could not give shape, then suddenly you find out how to mould it out of yourself and then you understand the origin of everything, in cyclic fashion. You understand what I mean?

There you go.

“Overlap of the past” tracks the right line where to start from.

Digging in my work, one realizes how much the past is important; I edited the first works that altered the statuesque shapes of sculptural-ceramic Faenza tradition as a nouvelle tradition/new tradition because of the continuous and constant mention of the elapsed time which was rebuilt by contemporary strength.

I work this way, with an eye to the past and one to my time trying to select the

memories to compose a solid structure which can stand up even now, which can support my arguments, my post-real visions.

You wrote me in an email: “As you will notice, in recent years my work has shifted from the personal/mental sphere to the social/economic one”; where the animals the personal part, and the drawings the social one? Maybe that dogs do not live in houses? Or is the evolution the headless dogs watching the Pentagon without seeing it?

Well, maybe I have to clear things up a little...

The work you refer to does not really exist, although you have a picture; it was a photo from a recent WIP / work in progress.

The work was later disassembled and reassembled to find the right balance between shape and message.

The last cycles of graphic works have changed considerably, they abandon the “monsters of the soul” and replace them with bigger and meaner monsters, those of the economic system.

Like in I nuovi apostoli ovvero Paesaggi economico-strutturali [The new apostles or Economic and structural landscapes], the “beasts” are no longer protagonists but helpless spectators without identity, landscapes oppressed by the monetary policy, by politics, by religion and the



Shed. Shelter. Search. or Simple past - 2009



Completely deep - 2009



system.

In this reasoning a series of icons are inserted, languages, inputs, and notions that are changed and expressed to be given back to the user again.

Despite the efforts, the two dimensions are not enough for you, your "paintings" play with passepartouts, adhesive tape and nails, they are sculptural. Small conceptual and ironic pearls which wring a bitter laugh, these little drawings look almost like the instruction book of social life, a crib of how the world works. Does the world spin bad?

The world spins in a way even Copernicus could have never deduced.

The rotation and revolution motion that the earth constantly carries on is nothing compared to the theories underlying the global socio-economic processes.

We are currently protected /threatened by

a massive and occult dose of rules to follow whose complexity is not even remotely imagined; those rules have been created for us, not with us ... and the box is even missing the instruction booklet.

The cycle Homework you talk about consists of a series of personal architectural visions that take advantage of passepartout and different materials (aluminum sheets, small earthenware, duct tape etc.) to present the subject, beating out the rhythm of the composition. The two dimensions contain the possibility of corrupting them, deconstructing them, layering new identities on them, building links apparently two-dimensional which break through the wall of the third dimension, not because of their shape but of the thought they contain.

I would not call them a crib, but a personal

as well as shareable contemporary mapping.

Sometimes you look like a loose cannon. I think of Reflect (2009), which might seem something completely detached from your work, it especially refers to a disco dance imaginary e one cannot imagine you on the dance floor. And the work Burnigman? triptych or not enough (2010) even more...

I've been putting away materials, images and ideas for years, methodically, and I let them settle.

These images/concepts are extremely important because they are part of my archive and document my background, the modus with which my thinking evolves. Over time this material becomes essential to express and highlight concepts. My work is a continuous journey through unexplored territories, where repeated attempts are distilled in reasoned and complex works.

The man in Burnigman triptych or not enough burns because it is the only thing he can do.

We often find ourselves helpless, trapped or deliberately avoided by the system which should somehow represent us, support us along the path. When we are undefended, without shields or guards, the self-destruction as a complaint is the only value that we can hold.

Thus my archive is made of loose cannons which I extract little by little, when needed,

when I feel the need.

In your work there are often references to Christian religion. In both titles and elements that make up the work: icons, statues, furniture. I think of Anonimo (su modello dei Ballanti- Graziani) Gesù Bambino Benedicente/ cartapesta policroma/ sec. XIX ovvero Nero (su modello di Neretti-Sonda) Ustione di 3° Grado Per Scossa Elettrica Mano Dx (2008) ovvero Sindrome da distacco temporale (2010) [Anonymous (on Ballanti-Graziani model) Blessing Jesus Child / polychrome papier mache/ sec. XIX that is Black (on Neretti-Sonda model) third-degree burn due to electric shock to the right hand (2008) or Temporal separation



That's hole folks! - 2010

Syndrome (2010)], but they are just two examples. Is it an autobiographical element, or is it connected to the national spirit? That is, are you interested in talking about religion or is it one of the languages of Italy?

Talking about religion affects primarily me and as a consequence it affects my work. Religion is a fundamental part of my daily life; in those moments of loneliness, grief or joy, it allows me to have a dialogue with my faith and to relate to the high, to the

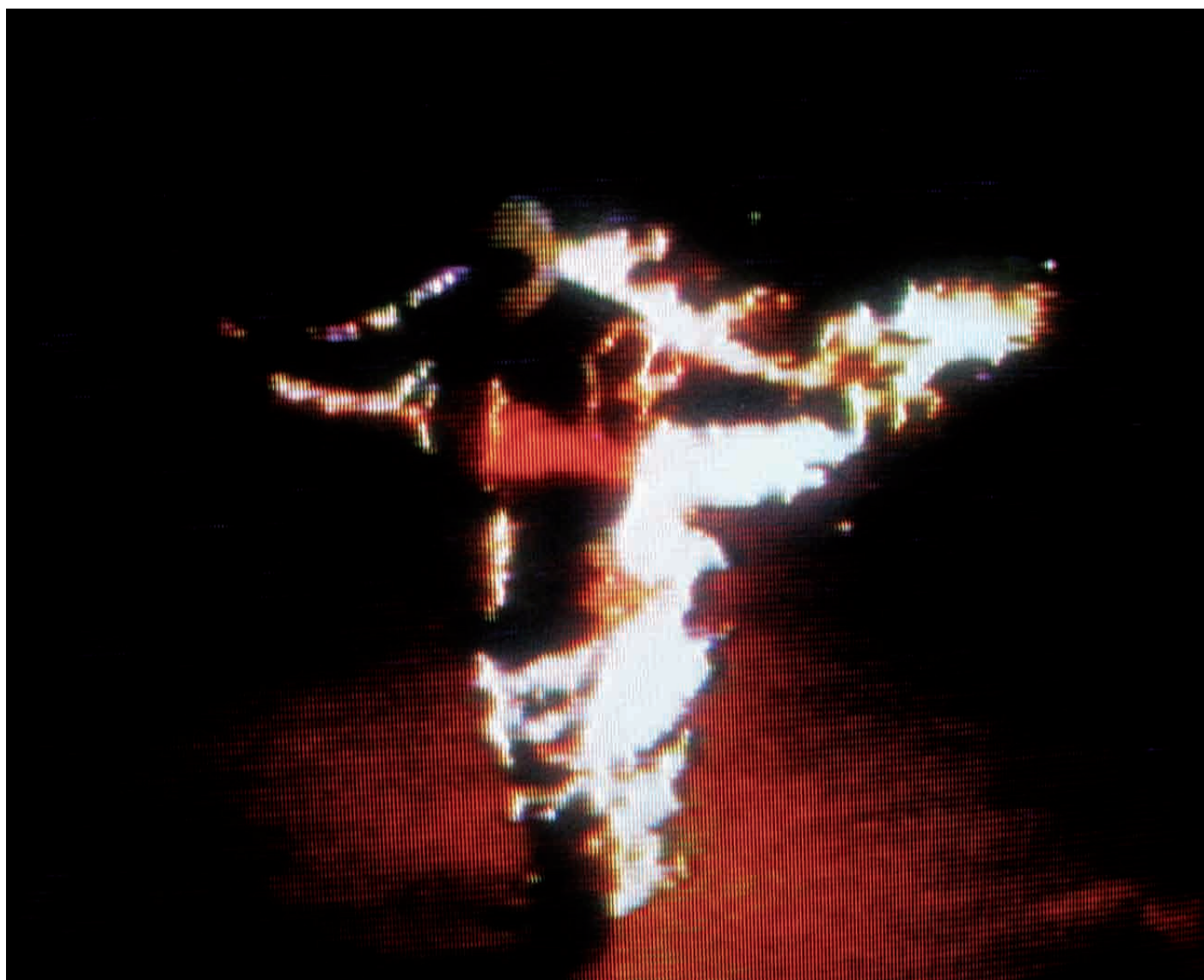
sky.

I found my creed again at the beginning of 2006, after several accidents happened to me; to be honest I cannot remember why I had moved away from God, now I can only remember why I moved close again to Him.

Now that the connection has been restored, I feel free to examine my faith critically, with no deals, through works which sometimes express personal suffering, healed by the documentation of the event, by the same evocative



ANONIMO (su modello dei Ballanti-Graziani) GESU' BAMBINO BENEDICENTE ovvero NERO (su modello di Neretti-Sonda) USTIONE DI 3°GRADO PER SCOSSA ELETTRICA MANO DX - particolare - 2008



Burnigman triptych or not enough - 2010

presence of faith.

Referring to the first work you cited, I can define my intervention as site-graphic/bio-specific.

I use this term because I have acted on a work and on its caption, both inside the church in which I was invited to exhibit.

The project is about me and an accident happened a few months before, that is a third degree burn due to electric shock

to my right hand; so the right hand of the Blessing Child has been wrapped in the point corresponding to my wound.

In the second work, all starts from an objet trouvé (found object/readymade) to recompose itself in a metaphor about decapitation, about the temporal gap exerted on a body after a clean cut. Two new parts will form two new independent spaces, continuous in time.

I wouldn't talk of national spirit in my works (unless there is a humorous sense), but rather of critical analysis of the national / international level, which is fertile ground for structuring the work.

As a child, did you have trouble with colouring inside the lines?

Which lines? Perhaps the desk edges!?!

Actually I collect children's drawings; in the most convivial situations, whether lunches or dinners with family and friends, I always find the time to reach the "table of games" and exchange some of my drawings with those I consider a real burst of inspiration.

I draw some fun zoomorphic lines to be filled with colours in exchange for some lash of scathing colour on colour.

I like them. In those drawings I find an irrational part inducing my total admiration and a part containing those stereotypes governing my life.

They simultaneously are a look on the past and on the future.

Actually I don't remember if I used to colour inside or outside the lines, but I know for sure I've never managed to stick the stickers in a dignified way, they were always a bit 'wrong' and that made me furious!



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