

REVIEWS



to Golia and
artli," 2009.

covered in dust), Marti digitally scans the resulting arrangements to create photographic images of spatial ambiguity, playing with our sense of depth.

A roughly two-foot-wide opening in one of these photographs led inside the structure; crawling into the shadows amid the odor of wood, one came upon seven hidden works by Golia. The viewer unexpectedly confronted pieces such as *19 Mercedes Hood Stars Ring*, 2005, a framed, circular chain of Mercedes-Benz hood stars, and *Concrete Cube with Juicer*, 2007, a Philippe Starck fruit juicer set in concrete with its legs protruding, all created recently but rarely or never exhibited. The arrangement formed an atemporal passage through this artist's oeuvre, removed from the context of Marti's formal references to the early twentieth-century avant-gardes, with their allusions to the scientific and the subcultural. Rather, Golia's sequestered work turned inward, toward a personal past, one culled from the oxymorons and artifacts of American popular culture. Not only visible but also invisible ruins, a kind of postindustrial melancholy, remained.

—Francesco Stocchi

Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.

NAPLES

Giulia Piscitelli

GALLERIA FONTI

A *protocol*, in Italy, is a register in which documents and data of every type are transcribed, usually related to a subject or company under review. It serves to identify and describe a person or a thing—characteristic elements, peculiarities, and relevant factors. It is a sort of cataloguing that, if conducted correctly, can take on an appearance of certainty. The same cannot be said of the exhibition "*Protocollo*" (Protocol), compiled by Giulia Piscitelli. Here, data are catalogued and exhibited in the gallery—suggesting autobiographical references that are nevertheless difficult to trace back to any definite, unified subject. Piscitelli implies many different truths, despite the citation of apparently objective factors such as illness, psychological elements, and material objects. Each of her apparently objective elements gives rise to an infinite series of possible visions, offered up for the viewer's scrutiny beneath powerful neon lights.

Our apprehension of this data is gradual. The artist decided to place the most hermetic works, those that seem inscrutably personal and idiosyncratic, in the first room of the gallery. Thus she implied that one could detect psychological factors through signs made on two

small sheets of graph paper, both titled *Quando inseguo la mia ombra* (When I Follow My Shadow, all works 2009)—works created by tracing the shadow of her own hand. The pencil mark spans the sheet but is uneven; it traces torturous paths, spins around and around itself, at first appears rapid and nervous, then becomes calmer, full, and dense. It is as if within a few minutes, the various emotions and thoughts that passed through her mind were charted. In a large tapestry on the wall, *Tornado (Il formidabile destriero di Zorro)* (Tornado, [Zorro's Extraordinary Steed]), Piscitelli has created an image that brings to mind the tail of a horse, rendered by selectively bleaching the black fabric. In this case, the artist works via subtraction—as if excavating the image. The drawing is a kind of phantasm that reemerges from the unconscious.

In the second room of the gallery, the artist's thoughts and obsessions took the form of images rather than traces. Within a photographed mass of hair, a sneer seemed to emerge, as if it were possible to glimpse a human presence behind the tangle—someone who might be familiar to the artist, as the title of the work (*Non ti riconoscevo per un pelo* [I Didn't Recognize You by a Hair]) suggests. Specters of the imagination became increasingly vivid in the video projected on the wall, *Plessimetro* (Pleximeter), a black-and-white depiction of human silhouettes in movement. The accompanying sound recalls that of a ball bounced repeatedly on the floor—a noise that bears no relation



to the action of the figures visible in the video. These are evanescent, indistinct presences, due to the grainy image and the fact that Piscitelli has deliberately blurred their faces. On the opposite side of the wall was *Sunshine*, a gigantic scan of a Polaroid depicting the head of a woman seen from the back. Her face is turned away but one can intuit an interior drama—the sparseness of the woman's hair is evidence of illness, exposed without modesty in order to put in place the final piece of an extremely personal protocol.

—Filippo Romeo

Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.

STOCKHOLM

Jonas Dahlberg

GALERIE NORDENHAKE

Were Jonas Dahlberg a film director, his camera work might be described as front and center or a little bit square—but that's OK, because his work is otherwise flush with mystifying dramas. In his earlier three-screen video *Three Rooms*, 2008, domestic interiors simply melt into nothing. There's no trace of special effects, you can't

Giulia Piscitelli

On the occasion of the exhibition *50 Moons of Saturn*, by explicit request of the curator, the Neapolitan artist presents *Rodolfo centodie (Rodolfo 102)*, 2002.

Shot in 2000, two years before being edited, soon after the death of 100-year-old Rodolfo, the protagonist, the work is a full shooting of the old man's lunch, without interruptions or editing interventions on the filmed material.

The old man shows concentration but apparently lacks an object, and performs the mechanical act of consuming the meal in his dish, alternating the savage gesture of tearing the food to pieces with a state of complete devitalization.

The man is seen in a three-quarter view, against the background of a council house interior, a cupboard, and the soundtrack of Federico Fellini's film *La dolce vita* (1960).

Rodolfo performs his cannibal act fluidly, seconding the passing of time, whereas the artist, after putting down her camera on the table—as Piscitelli herself recounts—, joins him, consuming her lunch off-screen.

Living death seems to be the undisputed subject of this work—death delivered from its time and poeticized by the voice of Marcello Mastroianni, who, encouraging the listener to buy islands and love, exclaims: “We disgruntled have become so few.”

Giulia Piscitelli carries out her job with a mythological sense of poetry: by attributing a symbolical rituality to an everyday gesture, she transposes the man's action into the domain of fantastic and religious narration and, triggering a mechanism that revives archaic meanings and restores life's existential intensity, she turns Rodolfo into a mythical figure. This melancholic episode drowns into its own abyss, awakening a primordial essentiality, a severity apparently derived from the authentic image the artist sets her eyes upon every day—the Gulf of Naples, the crystal air and the volcano, which is nothing but another devouring Chronos. The same look gets amplified, melting in the practice of devouring, through which—in the words of Calvino—we imagine, along with the artist, “the sensation of his teeth on the palate, bathing me in saliva, then pushing me under the tip of his canines (...), in order to propagate myself in the body of the other, in a mutual, complete relationship that sucked us in and overwhelmed us.” (MV)

Catalogue: 50 moon of Saturn, T2, curated by Daniel Birnbaum
Giulia Piscitelli

Born 1965 in Naples. Lives and works in Naples.

It is above all the human, in all its complexity, fragility, and absurdity, what Giulia Piscitelli engages with. Her artwork contains something very personal, often revealing those peculiar aspects of a human being that are generally neglected. It becomes a universal illustration and an observation of what humans do, what they are, and what they leave behind.

In the video *Untitled '89* (1989), one witnesses the washing of a skull. The scene is obscured through a blurred camera lens, changing angles, and dimmed light. Associations of memento mori and religious rituals come to mind - but the cleansing procedure takes place in the artist's bathtub, as if this was a typical daily activity that considers the trace of a human being as something familiar. At the same time, there is a sense of oddity to it and, through this, the wit inherent in Piscitelli's whole body of work becomes apparent. Her photograph *Tigre in Gaiola* (2002) shows the scene of a "tiger" sleeping on a meadow, in the background a miraculous view of the Gulf of Naples, at a place called "La Gaiola". But the tiger is not a tiger. It is the artist wearing a tiger's mask. The enchanted landscape is interrupted by a "real" person, which might merely seem like a staged fairytale, were it not a perfect example of the way Piscitelli's photographic and video work troubles jaded sensibilities by offering a vision of the world at once touchingly plain and disarmingly strange.

For her new film *Unter den Linden* (2008), Piscitelli documented encounters that took place during her brief spell in Berlin, shedding light onto unknown stories of the everyday. In the video we observe a lonely, soaked "one-legged" duck standing in the puddle of a park. We expect the sound of splashing, but listen to two drunken people insulting each other. The juxtaposed scenes seem unrelated and absurd, but they do exist and exemplify an integral—even if minor—aspect of life. Piscitelli has kept her acute sense for singling out situations that retain a bit of the momentary magic and cruelty of the everyday.

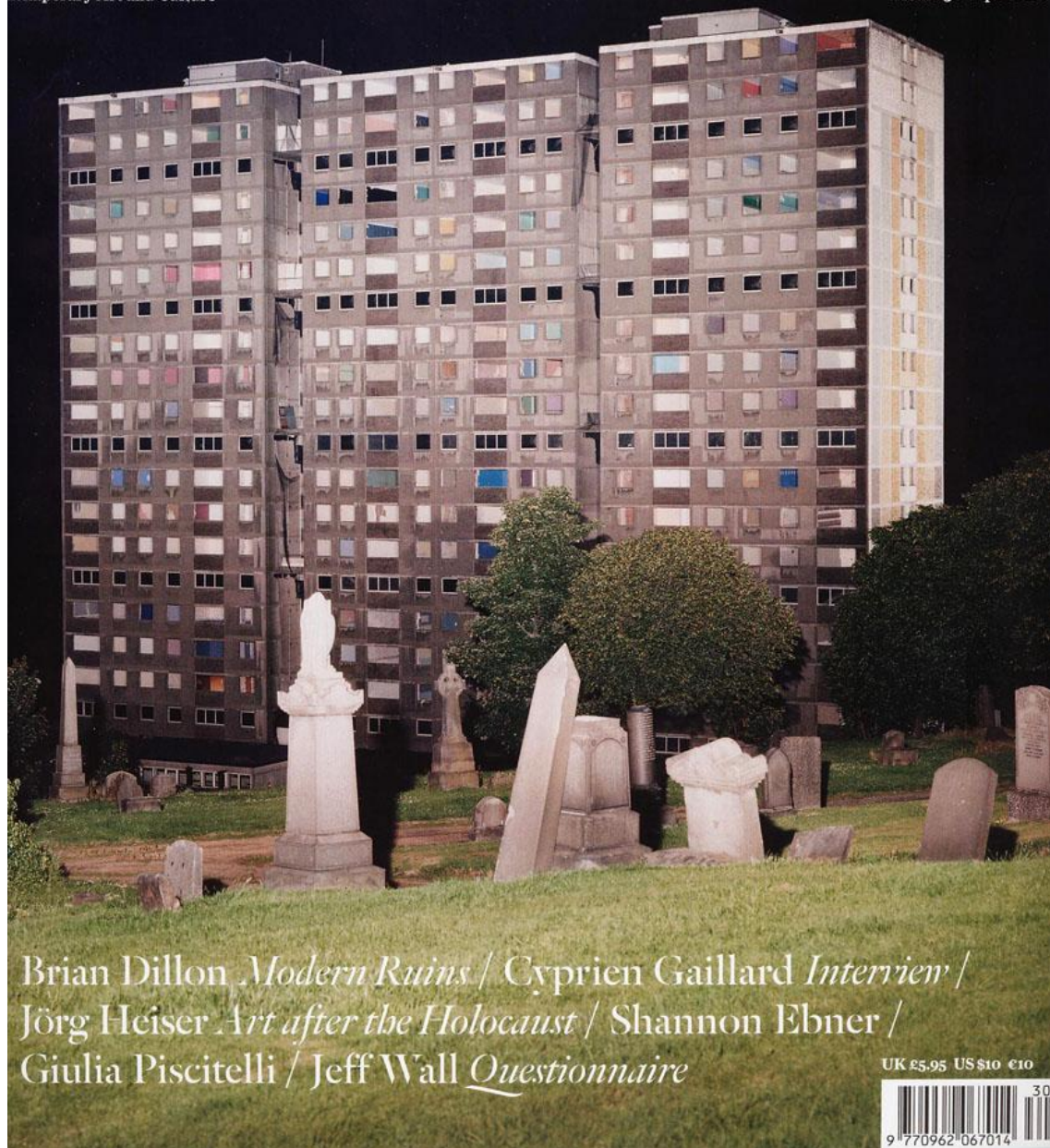
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Issue 130 April 2010



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Italsider/Collant
1994
Colour photograph
100x70 cm

108 | frieze | April 2010

Between Me and You

Recuperation and representation
in the work of **Giulia Piscitelli**

by *Pádraig Timoney*

We all live facing something. Giulia Piscitelli lives and works in a building on a narrow street across from the site of Naples' now-defunct Italsider steelworks. The dismantling of the factory's perimeter walls and internal superstructures, around 15 years ago, left her with a view out over a vast wasteland. The scene seemed strange to the artist, who was used to seeing nothing beyond a towering black wall ten metres away. As for the sounds, it was not so much the infernal cadences of the factory during the day that she missed, as its snuffling, fitful, nocturnal presence. How quickly can the black wall fade, given the afterimage of memory, which conjures up a present overlaid with the sooty transparency of the past? In 2003, Piscitelli made a diminutive, gold-leafed box enclosing a series of metal 'reeds' and a small fan blowing through them; a piece that suggestively re-created the wheeze of industry after the machines were silenced. The work's alchemical title, *Musicaloro*, can translate as either 'Musical Gold' or 'Music to Them' – music to the artist's ears, perhaps, or music 'right back at you'?

The Italsider site's changing appearance has formed a frequent backdrop to the artist's photo-based works. *Italsider/Collant* (1994) was Piscitelli's attempt to negotiate some space between the two machines dominating her physical and intellectual environment: the industries of steel and of art publishing. The artist depicts herself between the overbearing bulk of the factory behind her and a copy of the Italian art magazine *Collant* that she holds up in front of her. *Yasbica* (2008) portrayed the artist's old SLR camera, photographed in front of the backdrop of demolished buildings, as both a replacement factory and a threshold to another world.

As Piscitelli explains: 'With this camera, my point of view goes through a channel and a space previously unknown to me. This camera helped me to see more of what there was inside than what was outside.'

Recuperation is something Piscitelli has been exploring for many years. When the artist broke her nose in the Amalfi Coast town of Furore, it prompted a number of works examining the healing process and how trauma necessitates a re-evaluation of perception. In *Furore* (Fury, 1996), the artist took four passport photographs of her bruised face, modifying one by collaging a pair of sunglasses over her eyes. In the companion video *Furore* (Fury, 1996), Piscitelli recorded her own face healing, monitoring the progress only by watching the footage,

which she felt presented a truer version of events than looking in the mirror. By taking control of the representation – by making her image detour through her own hands – Piscitelli felt she was healing herself.

Naples is full of bodegas – tailors and menders, polishers and carpenters – that offer a host of techniques for restoring things. It's to these artisans that Piscitelli turns when one of her works demands a restorative or modifying intervention – not to have them do it, but to learn how to do it herself. Such was the case with *Materasso Argento* (Silver Mattress, 2003), to which Piscitelli appended the following text:

'Once upon a time there was a woollen mattress; it was warm and quiet. Every evening,



Materasso Argento
(Silver Mattress)
2003
Silverleaf on wool
mattress
15x190x80 cm



Above:
Lucertola su strada
(Lizard on the Street)
2008
Bleach on cloth
320x160 cm

Below:
Furore
(Fury)
1996
Passport photographs
12x9 cm



the mattress would wait for the body of a young girl, to give her shelter. The girl used to lie down on the mattress, rock on it and, in this continuous movement, she used to tell it all about her fears, joys and wishes. The mattress saw and listened to so many things: a birth / an act of love / the cold of a fever / a never-born baby / a girlfriend with a heart / the desire of dying / a peaceful rest / and so much light. One day the mattress was removed and placed in a grotto, but it continued to live and nourish itself with all the memories it had. After some time, the young girl – now a young lady – went to see it. She looked at the mattress and saw herself reflected in it as if it were a rectangle of water. The mattress was so happy that all the light that it had kept within itself came out, like silver leaf. This is the way it remained forever.'

The mattress tells of the shift in existence it has undergone: it was removed and the girl 'went to see it'. In the fabulous realm of a moment's exchange between viewer and object, 'she looked at it'. This is an object dependent on an imported fantasy, as theatrically patinated as its use is mundane. *Materasso Argento* explores how we make the world by making ourselves in tune with what the world we make makes us into: 'This is the way it remained forever.'

Piscitelli's practice locates its object as the frame of its history, as its own threshold between two worlds.

There are several counterparts to the mattress in Piscitelli's practice. *Portabagaglia* (Luggage Rack, 2003), for instance, is a baggage rack that has undergone an apotheosis, lifted from its customary flat, burdened angle. *Trapezium* (2000) is made from a mirror stand, configured as the base and legs of an empty bed, the illusionary effect redoubled by the bed's receding lines being themselves reproduced from lacquered wood. *Ramaggio* (Mending, 2000) is a bedsheet, patched and repaired so many times that its beautifully textured, assemblaged appearance could no more be called a bedsheet, or used as such.

In a series of tapestries from 2008, Piscitelli employed selective bleaching on second-hand cloth and brocades in an attempt to control the uncontrollable – using an unpredictable process and selecting the best results – to produce banners for a chance procession: heraldic tie or astrological symbol. Imagine the head of a swordfish severed from its body. These works are a combination of remnants, from which the colour of one object has been stripped to produce a de-territorialized image of something else – a lighthouse, a giant squid, a crushed lizard, a moped. Piscitelli's 2005 series of spindly ink drawings of battered rowing boats, 'Senza Titolo (Barca)' (Untitled [Boat]), depicts some vessels 'alive' in the water, some 'dead', dried and shrunken, with their timbers popped open as though ribbed and boned, haunted

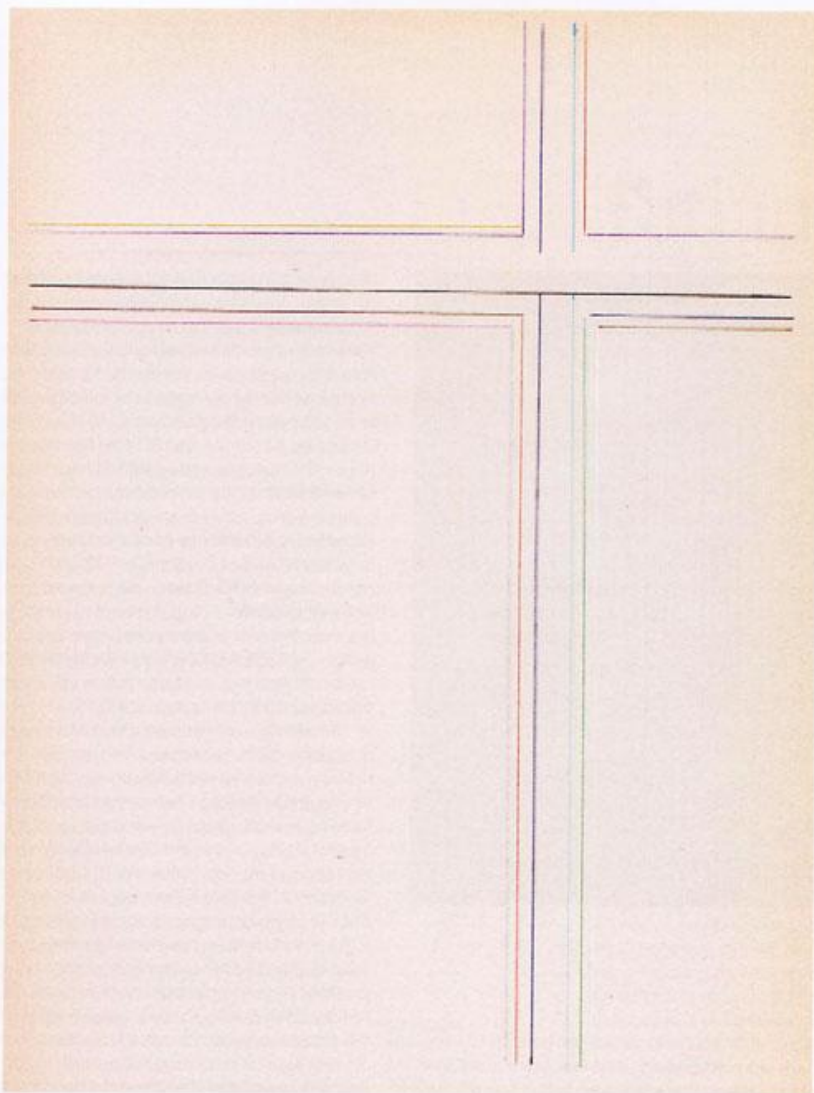
by their earlier incarnations. In each sketch, some detail is picked out in silverleaf; Piscitelli has adopted the techniques of a silversmith to bring light, like a reflection, into these works; the effect is an optical illusion of a glistening, wet surface or of the squeaky-tight fit of swollen wood.

Bandiera Pac (Pac Flag, 2003) is an Iraq War protest flag, its fibres worn away from being snapped back in the wind: having lost the final letter of 'PACE' (Peace), the banner now reads 'PAC', which could be taken as an acronym for Proletariat Armed for Communism. The duration of the neglected appeal for peace mutates the meaning into something exasperated, more combative. With its worn curve of inevitability, the flag speaks a different language of truth-to-material.

Piscitelli's fascination with used objects is likely rooted in her father's favourite hobby, to which the artist pays homage in the video *Todos* (Done, 2008). A former taxi driver, Piscitelli's father knows all of the city's prime locations for illegal dumping. These sites service his passion for repairing broken mechanisms – clocks, lamps, meters. He does not resell them, or even use them himself; he is just at peace with things when they can function as originally intended. Whether they ever re-enter the world in a fully functioning state doesn't matter to him; his work is a non-acceptance of entropic decay, or of its lazy contemporary cousin – the tendency to bin things for want of a fuse. Piscitelli's front room has shelves full of these rescued objects, and some of her own restored items nestle in among them.

Piscitelli's focus is on impairment as the condition of – and reason for – rejection or a loss of functionality. Used to articulating threshold space literally – as in the drawing series 'Berlin Windows' (2008), depictions of the blank simplicity of window frames, or in the Italsider photographs – Piscitelli's practice locates its object as the frame of its history, as its own threshold between two worlds (before and after its presentation as an art work) of real import by implication, and fantastical shortcuts to that implication. While her father's objects may be at peace with their status, Piscitelli's still have some work to do: the artist aims to restore them not only to themselves, but also to the point at which their new viability can be tested. Piscitelli sounds out the hollows in each scenario, and demands a space in which an attuned sensitivity may concuss apperceptions together. Such is the case in the photographic work *Sunshine* (2009), in which the palpitating, stringy orb of a balding head is reconceived as splendidly solar. That's a huge transformation. Piscitelli finds a niche through her work from where she can deploy a lever to shift massive energies.

These art works won't allow wallowing – they never have. Instead, they acknowledge that the integral assessment of viability and impairment is both a power play and a judgement on the status of another thing, image or person, and its position in relation to ideality. Take the handwritten labels from jars for a local cure/treatment for HIV – *Polline de api, fieno greco, cardo mariano, tarassaco* (Bee Pollen, Fenugreek, Milk Thistle and Tarassaco, 1994). Confronted by their intention and hopefulness, Piscitelli has



Left:
Berlin Window (f)
From the series
'Berlin Windows'
2008
Ink on paper
28x21 cm

Above:
Sunshine
2009
Lambda print on
aluminium
110x90 cm

paused, acknowledged the itch of affinitive significances and dealt with it – then moved straight on. *Ape* (Bee, 1987–2000) is a small, bee-like construction – a fibrous body, gauze and wire wings – to which Piscitelli adds a short line: 'Such a small object, so fragile, for which it was worth the time I spent to make it.' That's putting it straight to you. Practical and prayerful investment are conceded by almost all of Piscitelli's works; but they are presented with non-judgmental matter-of-factness, provoking us to measure our reaction to them against our own registers of surety, uncertainty and hope. The video *Rodolfo Centodieci* (Rodolfo 102, 2002), which depicts a 102-year-old man eating a plate of spaghetti, dares you to examine how you assess viability: the solidity and hinterland of this life amidst its appallingly decrepit visual. The protagonist, Rodolfo, is somehow less damaged, irrespective of his diminished capabilities, than Federico Fellini's frozen 50-year-old iconic film about the high life of Rome, *La Dolce Vita* (1960), from where the soundtrack to Piscitelli's work comes.

In 2008, for the 5th Berlin Biennial, Piscitelli videoed in close-up a duck on Berlin's Unter den Linden boulevard, standing in the rain on its one good leg, with the other bent at an angle (*Unter der Linden*,

2008). The soundtrack to the work consists of a loud conversation, taking place in the street at the same time, between a drunk and a taunting passer-by. The drunk, Piscitelli noted, was more aware of himself in his impairment than the person trying to make fun of him. Since the exchange took place in German, the artist was unaware at the time of what was being said, but it seemed so forceful as a soundtrack that she had it translated and subtitled onto the footage of the duck. Suddenly, as if it has been listening to the exchange, and waiting only for the discussion to end, the duck spreads its wings and flies out of the frame. Despite its handicap, it is capable of disappearing from our sight and escaping our attention.

Back at the Italsider steelworks, Piscitelli is responsible for the preservation of a daubed piece of graffiti on the low perimeter wall that remains: 'Less Smoke, Less Noise'. When she saw some mural painters were about to cover it up, she shouted down to them to leave it alone, claiming that it was 'historical'. It sits quite comfortably now within the context of its prophetic revelation, its request fulfilled.

Pádraig Timoney is an artist and writer who lives in Naples, Italy.

Tigre in Italsider
(Tiger at Italsider)
2002
Lambda print on
aluminium
90x90 cm



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MICHELANGELO PISTOLETTO



Giulia Piscitelli

INSEGUIRE LE OMBRE

Stefano Chiodi

“FACCIA GIALLA! FACCIA GIALLA!” è il grido delle “parenti del Santo”, le fedeli di San Gennaro che così lo apostrofano, con un grido insieme strafottente e devoto, incitandolo a compiere il miracolo. “Faccia gialla” è il volto d’argento dorato del Santo, ed è anche la faccia itterica del malato per cui si invoca la grazia: il colore del contagio, della quarantena e del veleno. E giallo è il colore della carta su cui Giulia Piscitelli ha tracciato i disegni che aprono (o forse chiudono) “Protocollo”, la mostra tenutasi a Napoli pochi mesi fa. *Quando inseguo la mia ombra*

è il titolo di due pagine di quaderno su cui appare un reticolo a matita simile agli schemi “da riempire”, gli esercizi di pigrizia applicata dei giornali di enigmistica. Sono autoritratti in cifra, o forse anche mappe per non ritrovarsi: fanno venire in mente le foto cancellate di Arnulf Rainer, con i segni neri che si allargano su una faccia ricacciata con violenza sul fondo. Nella loro mescolanza di sfiguramento e dissimulazione, di malattia e convalescenza, di ironia, autodisciplina e sarcasmo intelligente, ritrovo il carattere di molti lavori realizzati da Piscitelli (classe

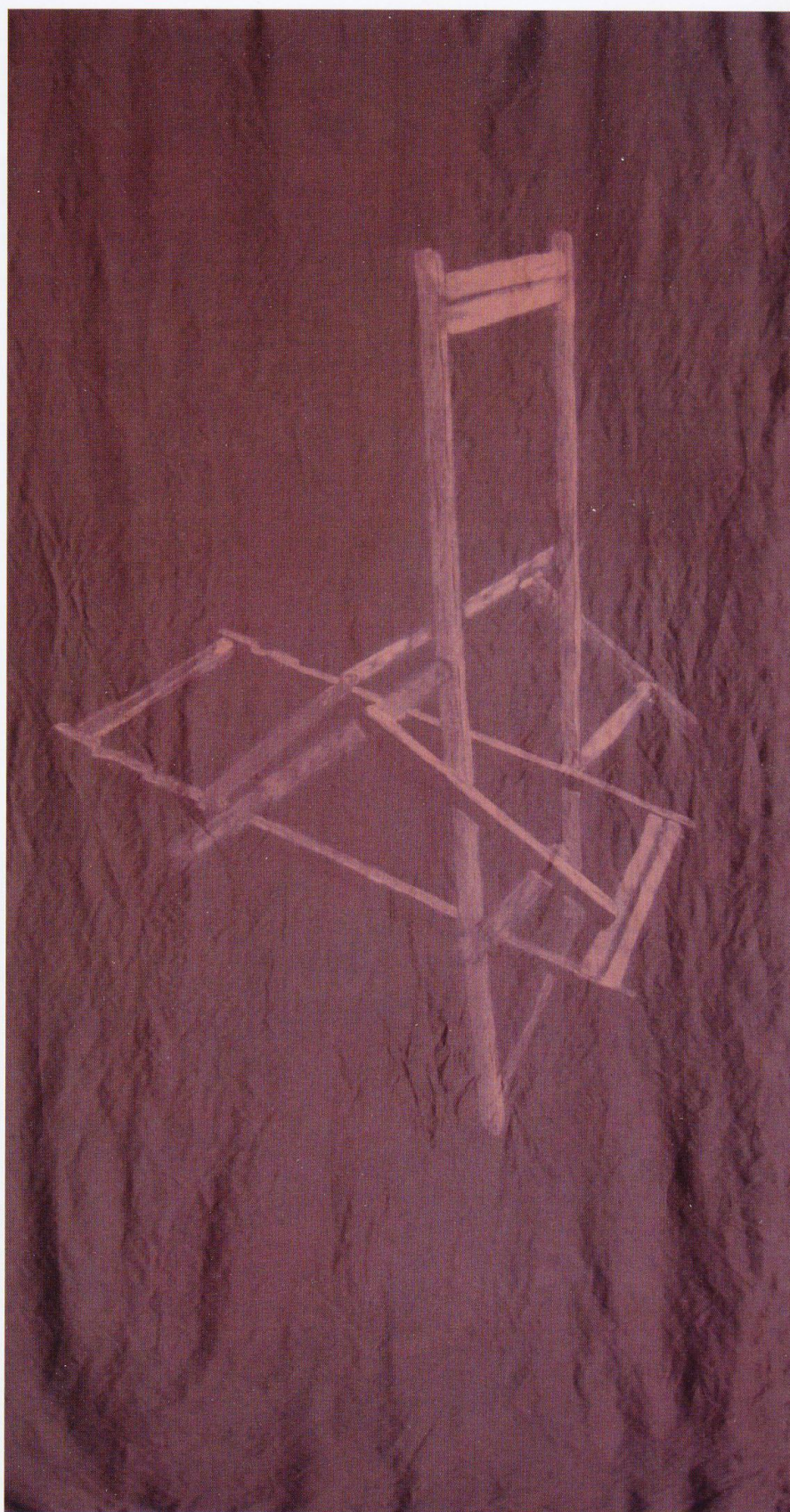
1965) in questi ultimi anni, dopo un periodo di incubazione creativa durato due decenni — un caso che mi pare senza equivalenti nella scena artistica italiana contemporanea.

Se dovessi trovare una formula sintetica per descrivere questo percorso, direi: una celebrazione del quotidiano compiuta allo scopo di smantellarlo, oppure di scomporlo e spolparlo, un po’ come si fa con un oggetto rotto, per vedere se è possibile comunque salvarne qualche pezzo. E ci si può servire di qualsiasi cosa: un lenzuolo *à la* Burri, rammentato fino all’estenuazione (*Rammaggio*,

2000); una scala di legno sghemba, come per una caviglia storta (*Scaletto organico*, 2007); una bandiera multicolore che ha perso letteralmente la parola per il troppo sgolarsi (*Pac*, 2003). Oppure, come nella serie degli "Arazzi", è lo stesso medium che si incarica di accelerare il deperimento. Qui la pittura, invece di colorare, scolorisce, agisce per sottrazione e, usando la candeggina come "rivelatore", mangia il tessuto come in un lavaggio sbagliato. Ne escono fuori forme familiari, sagome di pesci, oggetti e animali morti ritagliati su fondi di colore compatto (*Pesce spada*; *Lucertola su strada*, 2008). È una soglia al contempo allegorica e semiotica: ritratti malinconici dell'azione corrosiva del tempo, della sparizione, attraverso una pittura che fuoriesce dalla sua dimensione iconica e si fa marchio, impressione, indice, *mise en abyme* del procedimento fotografico, oggettivazione impersonale.

Il tempo, ancora il tempo. In un Super 8 mm del 1989, per la durata di due minuti e nove secondi, due mani puliscono sotto l'acqua corrente un teschio sporco di terra (*Senza Titolo*). Per diciotto minuti e ventitré secondi, invece, *Rodolfo centodieci* (2002) consuma un pasto di fronte ai nostri occhi di commensali non invitati: metodico, attento, completamente assorbito in un'azione che nella gestualità elementare di un vecchio riassume come un'epigrafe il senso di una vita, nonostante tutto. E, in un altro video, per due lunghi minuti e sedici secondi (*Senza Titolo*, 1997), una torcia elettrica illumina un ripostiglio ingombro di oggetti, libri e vestiti. Un ritratto in contumacia si potrebbe chiamarlo: qualcuno c'è stato, è andato via, è latitante, è morto, è vivo, torna, non torna. Tutte le domande e tutte le risposte sono possibili; sullo sfondo, l'idea che la presunzione di conoscere l'altro sia patetica quanto quella di afferrare se stessi. Nel lavoro di Giulia Piscitelli, in effetti, il conoscere sembra coincidere sempre con il fare esperienza di ciò che non sappiamo di sapere, come avvertire una fitta o sentirsi pungere da qualcosa che buca da dietro lo schermo.

Un pensiero improvviso: cambiar pelle, faccia, mestiere, vita. Così, l'artista va in giro indossando la maschera di un animale feroce (*Tigre*, 2005), oppure, in quello che rimane il suo lavoro più performativo e autobiografico (un video senza titolo del 1995), di fronte a uno specchio e con le spalle rivolte alla videocamera, si taglia i capelli e li infila in bocca, si passa ossessivamente il rossetto sulle labbra, spalmandolo su un volto trasformato in maschera sotto lo sguardo inerte di una sagoma femminile sullo sfondo. Figlia/madre, donna/uomo, desiderio/repulsione: le opposizioni si toccano in un rituale di iniziazione sadomasochistica, di redenzione e punizione che segna il passag-



Erosdraio, 2008. Candeggina su tessuto, 150 x 290 cm.
Nella pagina a fianco: Bandiera Pac, 2003. Nylon, 90 x 100 cm.
Per entrambe: Courtesy Galleria Fonti, Napoli.

IN PRIMO PIANO

gio a una maturità ormai non più rimediabile. Sono tutte immagini attraversate da una duplicità perturbante e da una precisa cognizione del paradosso: la fedeltà a se stessi non può che essere convenzionale, come la natura dei codici e dei media. Non c'è altra via d'uscita se non l'incredulità verso il proprio stesso travestimento, in cui tuttavia si ripone alla fine ogni speranza. Far finta di scherzare senza essere seri. Il beckettiano ed enigmatico germano che ascolta imperturbabile su una sola zampa il vaniloquio dell'ubriaco berlinese nel video *Unter den Linden* (2008) decide alla fine di volare via: se le cose facili non riescono, vale la pena provare quelle impossibili.

Guarire, guarirsi. Si potrebbe dire che, lungo tutto il suo percorso artistico, Giulia Piscitelli abbia cercato di praticare la difficile arte di una medicina omeopatica con cui curare l'avvelenamento con il veleno, la mancanza con la perdita. È proprio questa valenza a emergere dalle altre "stazioni" della mostra "Protocollo" (un nome che richiama non a caso la sequenza di una terapia): un video in bianco e nero dalle immagini sfocate, in cui sagome ectoplasmatiche cercano invano di muoversi all'unisono (*Plessime-tro*); una Polaroid ingigantita con la sagoma inquietante di una nuca calva (*Sunshine*); il primissimo piano di una massa di capelli (*Non ti riconoscevo per un pelo*); un "araz-

zo" nero su cui appare una chioma o una criniera (*Tornado, il formidabile destriero di Zorro*). Possiamo leggere questi elementi in chiavi di volta in volta diverse: dal punto di vista temporale, le immagini sottintendono una progressione, una sorta di transito dal passato verso il presente; dal punto di vista dell'esperienza, convocano strati di ricordi traumatici con un procedimento di liberazione emotiva; sul piano figurativo, visualizzano e mettono in relazione le tappe di un percorso che dallo spazio reale retrocede fin dentro quello dell'immaginazione e da lì si riverbera nel luogo occupato dallo spettatore; sul piano semiotico, infine, si dispongono su un asse che va dall'iconico all'indicale, in modo tale che ogni "tappa" contraddica e riconvochi la precedente. Tutte queste componenti sono intrecciate tra loro come i capi di una tessitura: sono distinte ma solidali e mutuamente necessarie: offrono, osservate nel loro insieme, l'immagine di un dispositivo di ri-sensibilizzazione, una macchina mentale il cui combustibile è il trauma stesso e la cui logica è l'isolamento, la scissione dell'esperienza traumatica nelle sue componenti elementari. Come in un esperimento di fisica sperimentale, l'esito non è mai garantito: il risultato può essere futile o controproducente, e coincide sempre con la riproposizione del problema, con un'ulteriore trafittura. Sottrarsi è, ancora, un compito impossibile. ■

Stefano Chiodi è storico e critico d'arte. Vive e lavora a Roma.

Giulia Piscitelli è nata nel 1965 a Napoli, dove vive e lavora.

Principali mostre personali: 2009: Galleria Fonti, Napoli. 2008: Cappella dell'Incoronazione, RISO, Palermo. 2006: Galleria Fonti, Napoli.

Principali mostre collettive: 2009: "Barock - Arte, scienza, fede e tecnologia nell'età contemporanea", MADRE, Napoli; "Eppur si muove", Palazzo Ducale, Genova; "Strutture Precarie - Palinsesti", Galleria Tina Modotti/Ex Mercato del Pesce, Udine; "Passaggi in Sicilia. La collezione di Riso. E oltre", RISO, Palermo; "Time in Jazz. Acqua", Museo PAV, Berchidda (SS). 2008: "VideoReport Italia 06-07", GC.AC, Monfalcone (GO); "50 Lune di Saturno", T2-Torino Triennale, Torino; "Fate presto", Complesso Monumentale di Santa Sofia, Salerno; "Italia Italie Italien Italy Wlochy", ARCOS, Benevento; "When Things Cast No Shadow", 5th Berlin Biennial; "Dai tempo al tempo", Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Guarone d'Alba (CN); "Camera con vista. Arte e interni in Italia 1900-2000", Palazzo Reale, Milano; "Were, there, severe, (thin line)", Galleria Alessandro de March, Milano. 2007: "Vesuvius", Moderna Museet, Stoccolma.

Protocollo, 2009. Veduta dell'installazione alla Galleria Fonti, Napoli 2009.



AURIZIO CATTELAN HANGS IT UP AT THE GUGGENHEIM

MODERN PAINTERS

SEPTEMBER 2011 | ARTINFO.COM

ART / ARCHITECTURE / DESIGN / PERFORMANCE

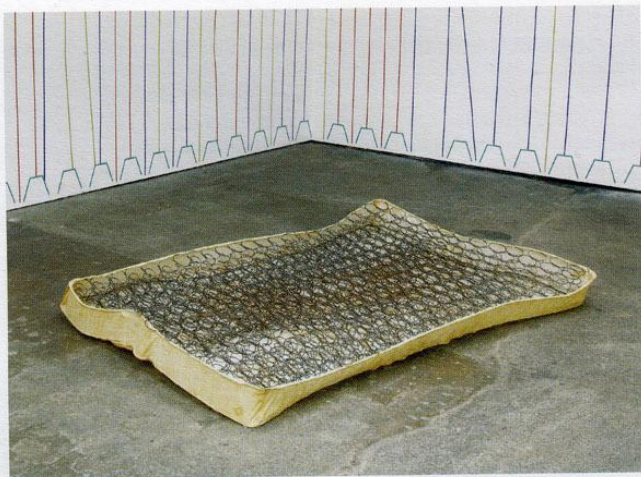


ERCE
UNNINGHAM
MICHAEL
ORREMANS
ENNIFER
EST
ANIEL BUREN
OSELEE
OLDBERG
OBERT LONGO

DAVID ALTMEJD
FACE-TO-FACE
A DECADE OF WORK



REVIEWS



LONDON

Giulia Piscitelli

Cubitt Gallery // September 3–October 16

A MATTRESS, or a mat, is home degree zero. It is the piece of furniture that you might hold on to when you've lost everything else, the one that immediately gives any place—even an arch under a bridge or the dark corner of an underground car park—the feel of a human dwelling.

There are both a mat and a mattress in Giulia Piscitelli's solo show "Contested Zones" at Cubitt, her first exhibition in the U.K. Each is a subtle take on the idea of having, or not having, a place to call one's own. *La firma non si paga*, 2011, is the artist's worn-out blue yoga mat hung on the wall like a picture. She signed it and asked immigrants in her hometown of Naples to add their own signatures. Together these inky scrawls seem to claim collective ownership—of the intimate space that the mat represents and also of the artistic statement it becomes when displayed in a gallery context. This foam monochrome suggests destitution, a sense that Piscitelli's temporary collaborators may be in want of even the bare essentials, their only home the knackered old mat they share. But their dignity remains intact: The signatures affirm their singularity, a core identity that has nothing to do with possessions. A clue here is the title, which can be translated as "the signature cannot be bought," the answer one of the immigrants gave to Piscitelli when she tried to pay for his contribution.

In *Temporary State*, 2011, the metal armature of a mattress is covered with a skinlike sheet of cotton and latex and turned upside down to expose the simple mechanics of its springs. Stripped of its associations with comfort, it is unusable, almost hostile, a cumbersome object, not a place for solace. Yet presented as such, the mattress gains in plastic qualities. The dark coils unspool like so many drawings in space. They suggest internal turmoil, geometric echoes of the yoga mat's hasty scribbles.

On their own these two works might have felt too solemn, dry even, but Piscitelli cannily balances them with *Contested Zones*, 2011, a colorful piece involving paper party streamers stretched out on three of the four gallery walls at regular intervals. Some bent, some interrupted, these bright lines are modeled on the security railing encircling the volcanic Isle of Nisida, off the Neapolitan Coast, home to a NATO naval base and a juvenile detention center. Piscitelli effortlessly marries formal and political concerns. Her work evokes immigration, homelessness, delinquency, and military-controlled territories with an alluring aesthetic and lightness of touch rarely found in so-called engaged art. —CM

FROM TOP:
Giulia Piscitelli
Installation view of
Temporary State,
2011. Mattress
springs, cotton
sheet, and latex,
75 x 14 x 8 in.

Jorge Macchi
N Hotel, 2007.
Acrylic paint on
wall, lamp,
13 x 10 x ½ ft.

Ghent

Jorge Macchi

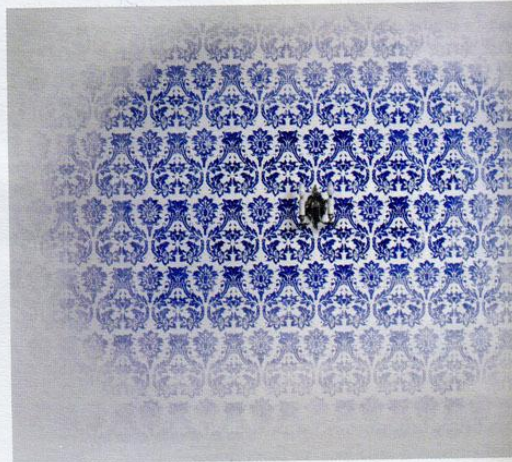
S.M.A.K. // April 30–September 18

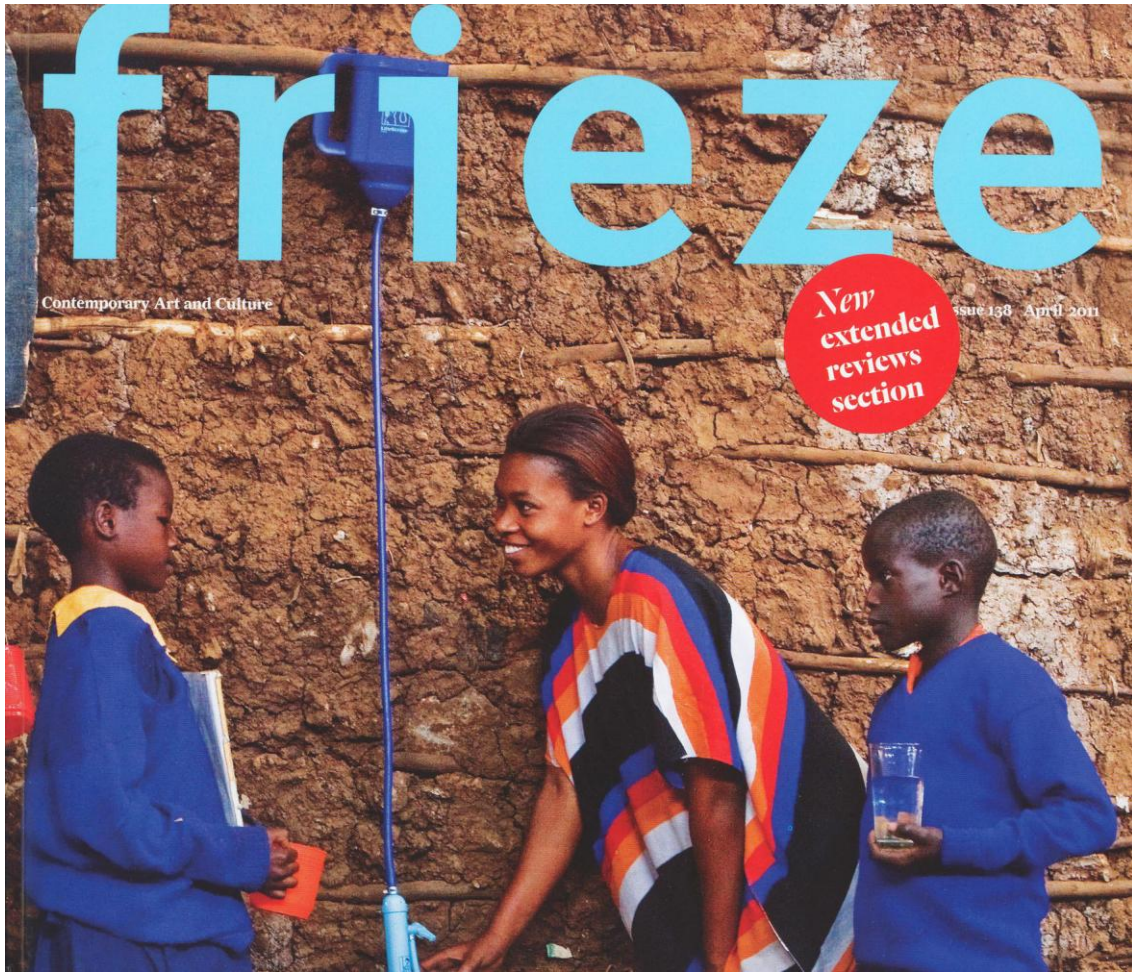
IT'S RARE THAT an exhibition successfully blends human tragedy with raw joy. "Music Stands Still," S.M.A.K.'s show of pieces by the Argentine artist Jorge Macchi, pulls off just such a tour de force. It begins with *The longest distance between two points*, 2011, a cavernous room full of the pole-and-belt labyrinths familiar to anyone who has joined the serpentine queue at an airport security checkpoint. The piece demands that the viewer crisscross more than a dozen empty lanes to come out the other end. That's it: no hidden surprises, no payoff, just repetitive and totally unnecessary walking. Nevertheless, it's one of the most pleasant and enlightening art pieces I've experienced recently, both for its internal, personal effect (a few minutes of idle self-reflection, akin to what one might experience during a long shower) and for the way it brings together museumgoers socially, if only through shared glances, smirks, and shrugs. At the risk of overanalyzing a glorified line, my reaction morphed through several stages, from bemused humor to anger ("I've already gone this far, damn it, and now it would be pointless to turn back") to mild epiphany that blossomed into real excitement, however undefined. This new work—whose wall text describes it as being of variable dimensions, leaving open the possibility for even more extravagant itera-

tions—is emblematic of the exhibition as a whole, well full of elegant ideas superbly executed.

The remainder of the show falls into various categories from watercolors—which seem to be whimsical drawings but are obviously an integral part of the artist's practice—to sculptures involving ligatures, nails, or water to works of cut-up maps and newscuttings Viewed in terms of the even the seemingly stupid achieves a certain glory. *Fantasma*, 2009, holes into the gallery wall at eye level to form a wall figure, or *Celebration*, an assemblage of cork and paper that turns nothing into something, à la B. Gabriel Kuri.

Music is a constant tone. In *12 Short Songs* a hand-cranked music box, ticker-style, pieces punched with holes speedily depressingly familiar to case headlines—COLORED PEOPLE, JOB LOSS IN THE U.S.—turns into tunes. Regrettably, the message, the core "short song" is tinkly and treble heavy, suggesting perhaps that bad news is up forming a never-ending homogenous acoustic to our lives, or that even the worst calamities can be a pleasant melody. The notion of tragedy and audience is also the focus of *Inc Music*, 1997, three large sheets of paper across which Macchi has arranged lines of text about shootings, murders, accidents, beatings, food poisonings so that







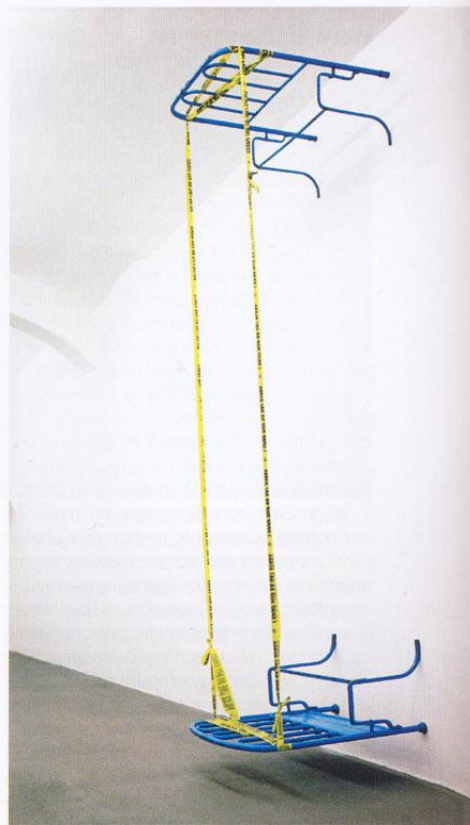
Giulia Piscitelli

Fondazione Giuliani Rome

Giulia Piscitelli
Left: *Rischi minori*
 (Minor Risks)
 2010
 Latex-coated
 work uniforms
 Dimensions variable
Right: *Line, Do Not Cross*
 2010
 Painted iron, barricade tape
 Dimensions variable

A tiger paces furiously around its cage: the video installation *Untitled* (2010) which opened Giulia Piscitelli's exhibition 'Rischi minori' (Minor Risks) at the new Fondazione Giuliani (curated by Stefano Chiodi) suggests a self-portrait of the artist as an alienated animal. Shot in the Naples Zoo, a place Piscitelli regularly visits, the video returns to themes from her earlier work: the Italian artist has pictured herself wearing a tiger mask in *Tigre in Italsider* (Tiger in Italsider) and *Tigre in Gaiola* (Tiger in Gaiola, both 2002). In conversation Piscitelli has said: 'I know the story *Beauty and the Beast*, so I guess my approach is an attempt to look at my inner beast, upset by captivity, but also a way to emphasize how this caged animal never lost his beauty, his light.' In close proximity to the video hangs a bleach painting depicting a bottle of morphine (*Molteni*, 2010); the air is filled with the anaesthetic drone of hundreds of slot machines recorded by Piscitelli ten years ago in an American casino (*Atlantic City*, 2010). The series 'Rischi minori' (2010) could be viewed as a study in the alienation of organized labour: it comprises a number of uniforms that Piscitelli coated in latex and hung on metal bars like drying skins. Each one is, in a sense, a kind of portrait – the white dungarees covered in paint belong to the artist, who used them when she was working as a restorer, and the worn vest is her father's.

The show's recurring theme is confinement, be it in cages, social systems or the home. *Neapolitan Windows* (2010) – a



group of blocked-off windows – are made from collage and ink on Perspex; *Personal Belongings* (2010) is an iron weight attached to the leg of an old chair; *Line, Do Not Cross* (2010) comprises a yellow barricade tape wrapped around a vertical blue iron bed. The threshold between inside and outside – the delicate border between vulnerability and aggression – is where Piscitelli operates: she describes her approach as a 'ballet'. In an interview with Trevor Rots, Louise Bourgeois once said that 'violence comes from frustration. Every frustration makes an animal violent. Now, one way or another, we are all frustrated, and frustration and violence are like a pendulum, oscillating back and forth, back and forth [...] But after violence comes reparation'. As if reflecting this, one of the strongest pieces in Piscitelli's show is *Little Italy* (2010), an installation created from two small neon lights covered in sanitary pads – a technique used by female inmates in jails to soften the atmosphere.

The exhibition also incorporates a selection of older videos, including the powerful *Untitled '95* (1995) – in which Piscitelli sports a long tail which she cuts off and sucks – and a compact group of five works created by the artist in 2009 for her solo show at Galleria Fonti, in Naples. These include the video installation *Plessimetro* (Pleximeter, 2009) which depicts the blurred profiles of a group of elderly people doing gymnastics (the artist is disguised among them). To the ambient sound of a bouncing ball, they tortuously move up and down. Over and over again Piscitelli moves between irony and empathy in her exploration of life's Sisyphean tasks.

Barbara Casavecchia

ARTFORUM

Giulia Piscitelli

GALLERIA FONTI

Via Chiaia 229

February 15–May 18

Giulia Piscitelli, *ART. 12*, 2013, ministerial Italian flag, 86 1/2 x 41 3/4".

[Giulia Piscitelli](#)'s research entrusts its poetic power to nuances, to the revival of fragility and the ephemeral, to the revaluation of small things and gestures. She investigates tensions in the aesthetic redemption of the quotidian; her process often favors minimal intervention, a focus on microevents or micronarrations that lead, as if by magic, to epiphanic experiences of those nearby. Magic as art has the power to modify reality, an equation that Piscitelli reintroduces with "Sim Sala Bim," the title she borrowed from an exclamation that will be familiar to those, like this writer, who were children in Italy in the late 1970s and watched on TV the exploits of Silvan the magician. Like Silvan, the artist creates a jagged landscape of disorienting images and impressions—disrupted fragments of reality.

Viewers are welcomed by an unsettling sound of wind, emitted by *BRICST*, 2013, a video whose acronymic title (referring to Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, and Turkey) gestures toward economic growth rather than crisis. A stationary shot of a torn red flag—the sort used on beaches to indicate danger—stands out against a stormy background. This image is echoed in the piece *ART. 12*, 2013—an Italian flag from which the red strip hangs down, having come unstitched—its title referring to the article in the Italian constitution that precisely defines the formal characteristics of the nation's flag. Enchantment finally materializes in full as a sculpture, for which the artist revived an ancient traditional technique, working on a hand-woven woolen blanket. But Piscitelli makes the process dysfunctional by impregnating the piece with water and sugar and transforming it into a rigid structure. This is the artist's moment of true prestidigitation, during which she transforms everyday materials into something with unexpected form—as magically, in a sense, as the women's work to which this piece pays homage. In this piece Piscitelli offers a sort of mysterious trunk: provisions for an exhibition that provides no answers, but poses further questions.

Eugenio Viola



Giulia Piscitelli

Fuani Marino

21.03.2013

"Sim Sala Bim", Galleria Fonti, Napoli

Giulia Piscitelli protesta, come è tratto distintivo della sua ricerca. E nella mostra "Sim Sala Bim", allestita nella galleria Fonti di Napoli, lo fa a largo spettro contro "una crisi che, prima ancora di essere economica, è dei valori e di appartenenza".



Purtroppo, però, guardando bene le opere si può facilmente intuire che non basterà neppure la formula magica tanto cara al Mago Silvan per cambiare le cose. Così, a ricordare la persistenza di problemi e criticità, c'è il suono incessante di una bandiera rossa, che nel video "BRICST", proiettato nella prima stanza della galleria, è agitata con forza dal vento. Brasile, Russia, India, Cina, Sudafrica, Turchia, sono i nuovi (temuti) paesi che condividono lo stesso status economico di "in via di sviluppo" e le cui iniziali formano appunto l'acronimo che dà il titolo all'opera, simbolo di un pericolo individuato e annunciato. Se il rumore induce nel pubblico uno stato di allerta, il mondo, nella sua complessità, è quindi dalla Piscitelli "dipinto" - la tecnica questa volta è quella della foglia d'argento su masonite - avvalendosi della metafora di campo minato, con mine antiuomo mimetizzate dietro forme giocattolo e colori sgargianti nella serie dal titolo "Campo Paradiso". Ma quel che più scuote è l'opera scultorea "ART. 12", dove l'artista sembra rivolgersi direttamente alla Costituzione e in cui la bandiera italiana campeggia sbilenca sulla parete, simbolo di un paese che cade a pezzi. Uno stato di cose che sollecita l'importanza del fare qualcosa (non importa cosa): ne è un esempio la coperta patchwork irrigidita con sapienza da acqua e zucchero attraverso un'antica tecnica tradizionale popolare e trasformata dall'artista napoletana in una sorta di vasca. Come un'abile prestigitrice, infine, nel raccontare gli scenari della nuova geopolitica Giulia Piscitelli lascia spazio a un incantesimo: quello in cui, sezionando fisicamente il capolavoro di Tolstoj la pace diventa di gran lunga più estesa della guerra.