

Subtitled untitled

When the process is half the work

“Subtitled untitled. When the process is half of the work” is the title of a group show dedicated to the research practices at the bases of the works of Gabriella Ciancimino, Zoltan Fazekas and Alessandro Gagliardo, who were invited to conceive a new exhibition approach. Without displaying a real site specific project in the straight sense of the term, this group show is, more than anything, a “specific situation”. It is the link of a chain that connects artists, curators, users, spaces, forms and contents, all involved in exploring the event, that becomes a new instrument of analysis, as a continuously open place and as a form that is not necessarily defined.

The three projects in the show come from different experiences, maturations and levels of perception and elaboration. Different are also the origins of the authors, as well as their careers and expectations. Nonetheless they share unquestionable affinities, methodologies and contents (even if these are not founding qualities). They have in common a rigorous planning and solid theoretical basis, but above all they partake a similar approach to research, in which observation is a fundamental moment of the creative process, identifying an unexpected potential inside it.

In substance, the work is embedded in the research process that is completed with its realization. In order to conclude the research, they find necessary to depart from an attentive observation of all its elements. Observation is a complex practice; it requires attention on a specific element and the extraction of information from that entity. Sometimes this practice becomes a militancy, which is exactly what seems to happen in the case of this group show, if we consider the degree of involvement between the author, what he researches, and the final product. When I speak of militancy, I am considering the spirit and the behaviour that the three artists assume towards the object of analysis: if initially they are foreign to each other, with time (observing, practising, interacting) they learn to know it and to extract from it the desired detail. In order to achieve this degree of knowledge, the three authors participate “from the inside”, becoming almost empathic with what they study. Seen from this point of view, if not purely scientific, the motivation of these researches is similar to that of the experiments that took place in the last decades in the anthropological and sociological fields. However, it would be reductive and out of place to simply allocate their intentions and successes in these two areas.

In *If lu Fil Homsik, Tink in Dailect!* (the most recent project of Gabriella Ciancimino) a photo, a video and an installation of mini-sculptures reconstruct the set in which the artist dwelled (physically and conceptually) in order to conceive a multimedia puzzle that put together tradition and experimentation. The photo/postcard entitled *Paesaggio* (2008) is the portrait of a patch of landscape of Palermo: in the distance, Montepellegrino and the Gulf of Mondello create a typical and recognizable picture. In close-up, instead, a small field of wild fennel, a red windmill and a white handkerchief pay an ironic homage to the three colours of the Italian flag and to the “private” landscape of the artist, from where she took inspiration for the nostalgic feeling and the sense of belonging that are on the basis of the research. “If you feel homesick, think in dialect” advises Gabriella Ciancimino, writing-out the title of the project exactly the way in which it is pronounced in Italian. This “utilitarian” slogan – in a fragmented version – can be found in the twenty “Bandierine” (2010) in linoleum and aluminium, projected and hand made with great accuracy and detail. Distributed irregularly, the rigid and fixed mini-sculptures activate, paradoxically, a dynamic motto that seems to emerge from the surface of the exhibition wall that hosts them. In the video *Ritratto in nero di seppia* (2010) a woman from Palermo gives a lesson of typical cuisine to two boys who, in the meanwhile, beat box a soundtrack, thus imitating with their own voice the produced sounds. In this case, every cultural and generational distance is reset in a (surprisingly) natural way by the same actors who – in a short time and unconsciously – attest the artist’s thesis, according to whom art can become a crucial point of meeting, exchange and confrontation between different expressivities, genders, languages and ways. Following the same wake, the work of Zoltan Fazekas enhances what was – and remains – his direct experience as a “foreigner” that sees the adopted land as a new source of empirical knowledge. The

exhibited project, made of a photographic installation and a Super 8 video, oscillates between the documentary and the personal imagery. It can be read as a family album, contaminated by the (partial) gaze of who was on the other side of the lens when those precise objects, gestures and moments were recorded and immortalized. *La famiglia* (2010) tells of a Sicilian family (husband and wife) that the Hungarian artist met and still relates with. A regular sequence of shots (individual and in pairs) presents the creations, more or less imaginative, of the talented couple: found and revisited objects; brand new architectures with a naïf taste; typical cookery objects and home made bread.

In what concerns militancy and participation, there is such a degree of involvement that it inevitably triggers the rise of the kitsch element to the “altars of taste” (to use an expression used by Dorflès about Kitsch and camp). After depicting the environment, the video shows all the moments of the bread-making process, from the processing of the flour to the baking: energetically kneaded by the co-protagonist of the tale, cranked out by the husband, flavoured and served to the present ones. However, the documentation of the domestic ritual becomes a socio-cultural claim. Once again, Fazekas’ interest comes from unsuspected “moral” qualities inherent to the “simple things”.

In revenge, Alessandro Gagliardo’s research recalls what Deleuze, when speaking about the work of Nietzsche, defined as the “claim of a nomadic thought and life”, making reference to his anti-legislation and anti-institutional nature. Quotes apart, Alessandro’s work pays homage to thought and to cognitive process. It is a hymn to continuous doubt and experimentation, in life as well as in the “artistic dimension”. His video about *Polvere* (2009) originates from a poem by Silvia Maglioni (director of the film *Facts of Life*), sent to the author in the context of an exchange of reflections. In fact, this work is only an excuse to natter. A compromise to question the real possibilities of arriving somewhere and to summarize a whole research that seems condemned to instability.

It is not a snobbish refusal against “this or that form”, if even, it simply shows the real impossibility to conceive steady alternatives. The exhibited video is an element of “*Città-Stato. Un mito antropologico televisivo*”, a research he is presently developing, and that will end up with the creation of a contemporaneous Myth through the use of audio-visual media. The “fragment” captures dust illuminated by the beam of light of a film projector and represents a founding moment in Gagliardo’s career. Narrating its genesis, the author wrote: “I realized that this fascination for the acting substance of the vivid darkness was, somehow, the most similar thing to notion of cinema that I conceived and that I continue to elaborate (...) I can’t really explain the nature of this thought, I can only picture a visible darkness, that however cannot be an image”. However, the dust is not the single exhibited element. A second channel broadcasts a wonderful quote, concealed under the form of *Traccia nascosta*. The former, on its own, constitutes a synthetic manifest, a revelation and a spontaneous homage to the work of the collective *canecapovolto*, to whom Gagliardo is deeply connected. But it also represents “the mental tic tac of thought, that impulse that moves you forward”, beyond the limits of experimentation.

The experimental nature of the exhibited researches becomes, now, the starting point to the conception of the exhibition research as an ulterior moment of collective and interactive inquiry.

After all, as Duchamp already stated in 1957, during the Convention of the American Federation of Arts in Houston, “all in all, the creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualification and thus adds his contribution to the creative act.”

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