

...and the time, even longer, incomparably longer

Can objects have a life like us humans? Can they act, feel, grow old, communicate or think? Although they appear to be devoid of life and will, passive and manipulable, objects cry out their existence: you don't walk through a wall as if it wasn't there, you can't escape from getting wet when the rain falls on your head. Objects don't let themselves be ignored. They move us and claim their right to existence.

In his recent works, Vittorio Santoro focuses more on objects and their histories.

His works express a fascination for objects, for their form and texture, but also for what they bring to mind depending on the context, the time and the person. He is fascinated by their individual histories, as if the objects, like Men, had the past that shaped them. These histories often remain latent but they hide mysteries with which Santoro, without unveiling them, plays with in his artworks.

It is as the same time an archeology and a new grammar, a new artistic syntax: because it may be that the objects don't only exist for us, but also for themselves, so that they may create mutual relationships. This may mean that objects, like Men, think and are capable of feeling: loving or hating one another. They may even have a sort of intimate life unbeknownst to us, where they mate or kill each other. The logic with which objects exist and coexist amongst themselves, the internal intelligibility upon which they act, is what interests Santoro. It is not a question for him of combining objects to build simple aggregates, assemblages in which each element remains separate and independent from the others deep down, and in which communication between them turns out to be imperfect or at least forced. It is more a question of combining them so they immediately merge and in a magical manner. They dissolve into one another, they cease to be separate and become one as if they were made in the same unique material.

Santoro's artworks are made up of objects (masks, chessboards, candles, texts) and conductors (copper, silver, aluminium, light, pulleys, ropes, etc.). Combined together, the two types of elements react, we can imagine them comfortably starting like the cogs of a

well-oiled mechanism. However, through its own strength, its movements stop all of a sudden from being fluid or obvious. The current exhibition is a good example.

The artworks presented in the gallery space are often doubled, without being identical, as if they were seen from different perspectives. We first see the resemblance that brings them together, then the dissimilarities that set them apart. Three pieces between those that are exhibited do not have a double: *Pulleys I*, *Beginning/Conclusion* and *Plateau (Antemeridian/Postmeridian)*, although they seem to contain elements that make them unstable as if they were divided in two from the inside.

Two photographs *Giovanni Drogo's Surreal Delay (Pulsar CP1919)*, displayed perpendicularly to another two, reveal the intuitions that push Santoro to create: the perception of time that changes from one object to another, from one person to another; but also the different ways of living the flow of time or its suspension. At first, Giovanni Drogo, the hero of the novel "The Tartar Steppe", and the radiation of the Pulsar CP1919, discovered in 1967 by Jocelyn Bell-Burnell and Antony Hewish, have nothing in common. Nevertheless, the transcription of the rotation periods of the Pulsar mechanically brings to mind the shape of the plains and the mountains that Drogo must have seen from Bastiani Fort, the space of his never-ending military service. The conjunction of the two elements, so dissimilar, produces the unexpected effect of a swift communication that seems to not have existed before. However, the time that Drogo sacrifices waiting for the Tartars – the length of his life – and the time, even longer, incomparably longer, that it took the beam of the Pulsar CP1919, that is today only a dead star, to arrive on Earth, open the gaping abyss between these two timescales. Drogo's gaze is directed towards an undefined future and the Pulsar's signal coming from a more than undefined past – millenary, infinite – just continues to widen the abyss even more between the two.

The key of the exhibition *Pulleys, I* is an arrangement of ropes, attached to one another by knots and articulated thanks to multiple pulleys. At its edges, seven white candles are attached on one side, a pulley on the other. The arrangement of the elements

first produces a feeling of an harmonious ensemble, proportional and in perfect balance. The pulleys and the ropes immediately combine, as if the two elements were made for one another and as if the resistance between them was non-existent. However, the knots that tie the ropes and that are necessary for the mechanism to function, also stop its functioning by blocking the pulleys. The mechanism stops, it is fixed and immobile like a sculpture. As a result of this unbalanced equilibrium, the suspended pulley on the edge of the mechanism seems to weigh more than the white candles suspended on the other. Whilst also producing a fluid movement and a sought-after balance, the piece stops the first and looses the second.

Santoro conjugates objects by forcing them to interact, he is curious of the answers they will give. The heterogeneous elements that he brings together often combine marvellously well. He observes them attentively to understand their internal intelligibility, the logic with which they interact amongst themselves. Guided by intuition, he finds an element that is at the same time necessary and too much. In this way, Santoro's artworks approach the impossible: balance and instability, future and past, human finitude and the infinity of the universe, etc., meet and produce a strange – but is it unjust? – feeling in us, of our own dependance and unstable place in a reality mixed by resistances and streams. Just he said himself once « I am interested to know what this world looks like when I'm not watching. That's why I make art ».

Monika Marczuk, October 2016

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