

**TEXT FOR THE GROUP SHOW “RIFINITURE D’INTERNI” CATALOGUE- VIOLAZIONI DI DOMICILIO DI 9 ARTISTI ROMANI IN UN APPARTAMENTO NAPOLETANO, PALAZZO MONTERODUNI, NAPOLI, SEPTEMBER 15-17, 1999.**

## **RIFINITURE D’INTERNI**

*A big house divided by a long corridor. Several rooms on each side. Two beautiful views of Naples. One looking towards the infinite sea, the other one towards the hills, past the sky. On the horizon, Capri; up above: San Martino. The sun, and the immensity of one big colour: blue. But when it rains, an island which seemed to disappear at times, and a monastery that looked enchanted.*

*Only traces of a few memories, imprisoned between the walls of this Palazzo...*

Entering for the first time in this apartment, obtained from the transformation of this once large home, and the incorporation of the floor below, emotions ran high.

Seeing that everything had changed so much, I had a lump in my throat. Then I briefly stopped breathing, and was overwhelmed by a series of vivid recollections. But now that the past was behind me, I saw things differently.

The fragments of memories belonging to what used to be my grandparents’ home were gone (I still remember how the house was divided when I was a kid, when my father and his brothers still lived in it, before they all got married). Then came the successive transformations made by my cousins “from Naples”: now it was a splendid apartment, being renovated.

Walking around the rooms, I tried to imagine it once the re-structuring was finished, I tried looking into the future, with a new point of view: I saw a completely empty space, which I decorated in my mind, with works of art only.

The artists who participate to this exhibition have realized their work by conceiving them specifically in function of these particular surroundings; following an imaginary client request, but remaining absolutely free in the choice of their creations.

They occupy this *transient space*, especially in view of the fact that this apartment is being re-structured, waiting for its new occupants, they furnish “symbolically” this private apartment which has now become an art space. Through their creative intervention they transform a “house-space” in an ideal container for works of art.

In this particular context the exhibit takes on a precise meaning because on one side the actions of the artists can be considered like an ideal redefinition of the apartment’s interior, on the other side they are acting in a space which was, and will be, private, and this could be interpreted as a break-in, or home invasion. Entering the space of the exhibit, the visitor is involved in a particular situation: that fracture point, or movement of suspension typical of the individual who owns a house which is being renovated. While wandering around the various rooms accessible for the time being, because they are being restored, he acts like a voyeur, violating the intimacy of a private home.

The memories of past occurrences animating old apartments usually vanish when a new owner arrives. In this case on the contrary, the traces of the past will not disappear, they will be engulfed by the walls, and superimposed by stories of the new owners.

In defining the spaces of the place, the pieces of art represent a bridge through time. In front of each creation is a different interpretation, but beyond them lies the past, the present, and the future. The past, or space of memory, as a meeting point between memories of past owners and those of the artists, who by evoking the sensations felt when they first entered the house, transform this feeling into a creation. The present as a symbolic incursion from the outside world into the interior of the private space. The future as a discovery, through the pieces of art strategically placed in different spaces, of what the future use of the rooms will be. The visitor, finally, will have the pleasure of discovering the decor, and to guess for each piece of art, the nature of the broken secret that lies within.

*Walking through the gates of this Palazzo, the memory of the alley, with its characteristic ground floor homes, abruptly leaves us, and once inside this apartment, of the uproar of exterior life, only a trace in the auditory memory.*

With Roberto Falconieri, the city's image silently invades the intimacy of the domestic space.

In the private room, emblematic urban scenes are violently reflected on the walls, with no trace of Man among them. By staying true to his repertoire of urban images, the artist has chosen for this occasion two buildings in Via Marina.

With these new oil paintings reminiscent of watercolours, Falconieri exposes us to the magic of pictorial art. In the big building on the waterfront, silent stories of mysterious tenants unfold, but through the irrepressible realism of its balconies, sketches of abstract paintings can be observed.

Inserted in the frame of the painting, the Neapolitan buildings participate to the artistic game of fiction as if they were model-sized theatre buildings, while the power of a sunset, and the light of a lamppost remind us they are real indeed all the same. Hanging from the apartment walls, these mini-sized metropolitan palazzi offer a different perspective, as theatrical, visually stunning panels. In front of Falconieri two paintings we experience a slow re-emerging of near perceptible sensations, immortalised in visual memory...a sky backdrop, a reflection of a ray of light in the sea, on a building's façade, the salty smell of laundry hanging outside.

*On the dresser of the grandparents' bedroom memories of past lives were objects brought back from distant journeys, photos worn out by time.*

In the work of Valentina Coccetti the past re-emerges in various forms. In this new apartment, "a room for memory", and in the rotation of the artworks, we can find a re-visitation of the adulthood and childhood of the artist alike.

Looking at old collected photographs, Coccetti lingers on the profoundness of "ancient" faces. Seizing the spirit of the archaic images, the artist then accurately prepares the paper base, often choosing antique papers, and proceeds to apply watercolour strata to the pictorial background. In the "ancestors' gallery" the faces of the forefathers (at first "gouache" stains, then carbon drawings) emerge from the remote past on sophisticated holders, and as forms bordering a non-form, they seem to enshrine mysterious secrets. Beyond their troubling gazes, lies the dreamlike aspect of internal ghosts.

As a child again, Coccetti retraces time in a playful manner. With the quick move of a marker, the artist has drawn funny animals on a series of postcards of Naples: the tentacles of a giant octopus envelop the stage of the Teatro San Carlo, in place of Piazza San Plebiscito columns: the heavy paws of a giant elephant. An imaginary relationship between the sober architectural forms and the funny animals ensues. Whether they are sent or received, the postcards made for this exhibition become the symbol of those playful happy thoughts sent by mail through the years.

In the journey through memory, the light is always accompanied by darkness.

*In the minds of the home owners, a suspension of time: the long and exhausting wait for the house renovations. To accompany this gradual transformation of the apartment an alternation of states of mind. But in visual memory finally, a series of images in which the present, is already overlapping with the future...*

Starting from a series of photographs shot on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 1999, the day the artists visited the apartment for the first time, Federico Pietrella gives back to the owners the first traces of a future memory.

Among the selected shots, a first choice: the artist's look over the city. However, if from afar Naples seem composed by an ensemble of uniform signs which move perpetually, when you get closer you can notice this apparent uniformity disintegrating, gradually revealing the magic of the artist's technique. In order to realize this large painting about Naples, only the sound of a stamp with a date on it can be heard. In the repetition of this gesture with which Pietrella marks his paintings every day, changing the date every time he stamps them, one can guess a desire to immortalize in the artwork the exact time of its creation, but also a vain attempt to stop time itself.

Dwelling then on that "special" day's details, the artist made a series of pencil drawings to catch, beyond a smile or in a gaze, fleeting traces of casual expressions. For Federico Pietrella creation is a continuous confrontation with the concept of time: following its unstoppable flux, an obsessive repetition of a stamp printing a date, to immortalize the fleeting nature of states of mind: a gentle pencil stroke.

*Drawn by the familiarity of smells, as soon as we arrived in the big house, a visit to the kitchen was mandatory. On the stove, the unavoidable "sauce", almost purple because it was left to cook for hours, waiting for the ancient ritual of dipping bread in it...*

A typical Neapolitan coffee machine, an old teapot, a sprinkler... These are the protagonists of Emmanuele Costanzo's work, anonymous objects that become a symbol of those intimate moments lived in the privacy of one's home.

To make these art pieces Costanzo starts from a series of photographs, he transfers them on a wooden base, drops a layer of alkyd acid on them, and carves with a metal tip the shape of the chosen object.

On one side, the photographic backgrounds, quick pics of nondescript Naples landscapes, or other domestic utensils; on the other the engraved objects, in their essence, whose static nature is even more evident.

Next to these artworks, the artist made, with a mixture of acrylic clay resin and soap, a series of artworks which can be fixed to a wall. The “soaps”, which bear this name due to their consistency which can be felt by touching them, show anonymous metropolitan scenes on the background.

Emmanuele Costanzo likes to bring together images which are in contrast, and at the roots of his search one can always find the water element: it spins rapidly in the washing machine, and boils gently in the Neapolitan coffee machine, like in one of those “carved paintings”, or as damp residue, catching a reflected view of reality, on the “wall objects”.

Moving between the speed of the photographic medium – backdrop of the “Soaps” and “Carved Paintings” – the slow carving, and the craftsmanship with which he creates the “wall objects”, Costanzo offers to the viewer the ancient dualism between the active and contemplative life: two distinct times of conscience we perceive in our daily lives, in the contrast between the placid flow of internal rhythms, and the incessant movement of the exterior world.

*Eduardo, Sofia Loren: symbols of “being Neapolitan” by definition, to re-live through the magic of the small screen another atmosphere lived in the large house: like the holy Christmas with the huge Nativity scene and the shouting and laughter of happy children...*

In order to capture and freeze on the canvas the continuous flux of images that come and go, and offer, through art, the constant brutalisation to which the modern times icon is submitted, Alessandro Reale presents his work: salient images of famous films.

Observing the language of modern communication, which by incessantly repeating images ends up deteriorating them, the artist tries to capture their form, emptied of its meaning, as an essence, original nucleus and mark, in order to give it a new meaning.

Two cult images of famous actors for this exhibition: De Niro’s face in Taxi Driver, and Sofia Loren in “Two Women”. Inside this concept of “home” then, a man and a woman, as the backbone of the family unit.

In both films Reale selected two extremely emotional frames, capturing in De Niro’s facial expression – after the killing spree and failed suicide – and in Sofia Loren’s body – bent over her own body after the rape - the peak of drama.

Reminding us the cruelty of the outside world, the artist further brutalises the iconic actors on the serigraphs through the use of paint. In the alternation of red and blue, the symbolic contrast of opposites: masculine/feminine, noise/silence.

With the triptych “Aghia Sophia”, Reale brings to the house the icon of the most typical Mediterranean beauty: a symbol of being Neapolitan by definition, Sofia Loren is a generously curvaceous woman, and a custodian of ancient wisdom.

*On the terrace of the big house they invented childhood games: “le belle statuine”, “il ballo delle sedie”, but also to chase one another, happy to be together again, in that recurrent playing ritual...*

Julie Polidoro has long ago made a clear choice: to paint objects, images and visions of the domestic world, to which she gives through her vision an almost sacred aura. They are laid out tables, hung up clothes, room’s corners, chairs... that the artist perceives each time from a very precise viewpoint.

In order to outline the field of action and freeze the portrayed image, Julie Polidoro composes her modular structure paintings. Once the subject is chosen he observes it in a square (a simple piece of cardboard cut out by her, which will be double, triple, or quadruple up according to her needs) to then proceed with the composition.

An almost mathematical rigour with which she creates her paintings, and that she supplements, as far as the effects of light on colour, with a careful study of nature.

In Polidoro's work, the holders she chooses always have a decisive role: they are sometimes neutral, sometimes coloured, always the same tone of the painting. And if the background is used to outline the dark areas, colour is only applied to bright areas. However, if the colour defines the dark tones, then the backdrop highlights the bright tones.

With her paintings Julie Polidoro brings out the soul of those objects we have seen for years in our homes, and to which we never paid attention, like a series of chairs for instance, that bring back to mind the games we played on the terrace when we were kids.

*In the narrow space of the bathroom, ancestral moments of intimate seduction are remembered. And in this archaic world of feminine mysteries, a window on creation opens up: sky, earth, sea...*

Between earth and sky, the mind and the body. This is the nexus, in the work of Paola Gandolfi, between the archetypal feminine universe, studied in depth, and the representation of women it offers to us.

Analysing the soul, Gandolfi disassembles the forms, the body, because in the internal search of oneself the mind is separate, and it dissects the body. Observing her paintings can be quite shocking: heads, hands and arms mixed for no apparent reason. However, through her body fragments, the artist invites us to think about the division of self. And once an internal boundary with oneself is found, even the body regains a different shape, together with a renewed internal awareness.

Through the representation of the body, Paola Gandolfi compensates, by painting, an incessant mental activity.

Among the paintings exhibited, "Vertigo A" represents the back of a woman's body. Sitting in a position reminiscent of yoga's lotus flower, she seems to symbolically derive energy from the earth and the sky.

The title's choice is perhaps not accidental: a vertigo as an emotional state in which one is suspended between the earth and the sky, before one finds his place inside an archetypal non-aggressive, emotionally stable state. A warm, paste-like colour, perfect synthesis between feeling and emotion, also contributes to that absolute state of equilibrium. Observing Paola Gandolfi's women, many madonnas of Piero della Francesca come back to mind: virgins, saints, or symbolical mothers, like the statuesque "Politico della Misericordia", who like a mother, protects the religious believers kneeling down. The Madonna of Piero della Francesca, a symbolic mother, also represents a homely state of mind.

*By recounting the exhibited works, a backwards journey through memory, and every space in the apartment, a distant recollection re-emerges. But in the next to last room, everything about Naples which stays inside us lingers on...*

In Stefano di Stasio paintings a path to the most recondite spiritual regions of the mind becomes apparent. Through his figurative language, Di Stasio leads us into a poetic universe, populated by characters who seem apparitions coming from distant worlds, in which the irrational is king.

In the cosmos of painting, the artist records the images which are personifications of pure intentions, by laying them on the canvas randomly.

When looking at Di Stasio's paintings the mind is free to give a profound meaning to the encounters with different characters who look realistic, but wander in the midst of an enchanted space filled with mysterious magic.

In his work for this exhibition the artist – born in Naples, but Roman by adoption – confronts himself with the image of his birthplace engulfed in the depths of his sub-conscious.

Seen from behind, naked and majestic, the protagonist of "Magia del Golfo" gazes afar, towards the Vesuvio mountain. An arm bound to a wooden scaffolding, he turns on with the other arm magical coloured lightbulbs, as if to start a party of which he is the main protagonist.

As an almost symbolic incarnation of Memory, this mysterious figure, like the oedipal Sphynx, seems ready to challenge us, and its creator, to yet another riddle. Towering over normal people who stroll around ignoring his gaze, Memory erects itself, as a giant, contemplating the gulf of Naples. For Di Stasio, as for us, Naples is an eternal and magical mystery to reveal.

*Admiring the sea from the top of this Palazzo, more memories, from the horizon. From the fragments of memories gathered between the walls of this apartment, to those linked to another home, in Capri: omnipresent island in my gaze, in the sea mirror in front of my eyes, as in the heart, those last traces of childhood memories...*

Looking at Paolo Laudisa's paintings is like entering imaginary rooms of memories. His work has not an immediate impact on us, but reveals itself slowly, like a woman, divulging at closer inspection new secrets.

It is as if Laudadia is testing us, and once we have decided to embark on this mental journey required by his paintings, he progressively lets us in his internal world: poetic, melancholic, dream-like, mysterious.

Laudisa's artworks are not descriptive, they evoke sensations, they take back to the surface dormant emotions. In "I Faraglioni" a ray from the moon lights up a rock, and on closer inspection one also sees, beneath the moon light, a woman's profile contemplating the blue colour of the sea and the sky.

At the centre of the canvas a flash of light looks like a reflection of a moon ray, or perhaps of plankton in the sea at night. In Laudisa's work painting and engraving are perfectly united. The engravings made on the white canvas, stamped on Japanese paper, are subsequently glazed: a uniform drafting of colour highlighting details, having the task to cover by revealing.

Fragments of mnemonic images are condensed in the artist's canvases, slowly revealing to the alert observer their profound essence.

Elisabetta Giovagnoni