

Archaeology of Vision: Marcello Maloberti Giovanna Manzotti

A stream of consciousness of notes, drawings, collages, and scraps of images. Performative language, sculptures, and use of the body as medium for revealing inspirations, from day-to-day events to suggestions from urban contexts. Marcello Maloberti's artistic approach brings these elements into condensed atmospheres where visuality is intended as rapture and love at first sight.

GIOVANNA MANZOTTI

Let's start with the concept of spatiality developed in *Sbandata* (2019), your last project curated by Pierre Bal-Blanc and hosted in the three spaces of Galleria Raffaella Cortese, Milan. One of the first suggestions after visiting the exhibition was the idea of a dislocated geography of the body in a landscape where paths are connected through echoes and narrative references. In this sense, how have you conceived the whole project?

MARCELLO MALOBERTI

In a certain sense it was the space that designated the work and not the other way around. I conceived a certain notion of a plan to enable the images that I had in mind to interact, and Raffaella's gallery was the space best suited to allow the same to happen. Thus we have *Marmellate* (2018), the series of collages that here digress into a long minimalist horizon line, as if forming a frieze. This allowed me to create a sort of displacement that linked the gallery's storage to its exhibition area, eliminating the wall that normally separates the two. I have striven to create a unique and potentially infinite vision. The trompe-l'oeil effect that bursts forth in *Trionfo dell'aurora* (2018) in turn creates a totally topsy-turvy visual derangement. The images cut out and haphazardly spread on the ground appear like fragments of frescoes fallen from the ceiling. It is a painting of flight. In turn the wall-mounted photograph is a tableau vivant where a boy—like a Nigerian angel—cuts out subjects from old art catalogues. To me it appears as an excess of Baroque Mannerism that finds its own compact formality in *Vir Temporis Acti India* (2018), a small painting housed in the third space. The spaces are directed by the photo of me in a dinner jacket, midway between being inspired by the images of Andrea Vesalius's flayed figures (as if the gallery were in actual fact the roadway) and *Cicerone*, the performance given by Roberto Carozzi during the opening, which was a sort of ready-made. Carozzi works as a guide at the renowned Suardi oratorium in Bergamo, and he here gives an account of Lorenzo Lotto's fresco as if it were present in the gallery, conjuring the physical presence of the painting with his superb oratory.

GM

Vir Temporis Acti India is a small oil painting on birch wood that faithfully depicts the reproduction of a performance you put on at the Pune Biennale in 2017. With this work you experimented for the first time with a new technique and substrate that are fully part of the performance, with the photographic documentation constituting a further dimension. How did you manage it?

MM

Vir Temporis Acti India is not only a painting, but a sort of occult performance. A copier of ancient art created it as a performance that is invisible to the public. The result

is an icon that, starting from a photo of an action of mine done in India, tries to be as faithful as possible to the initial image that generated the same. The preciousness of the gesture lies in the obsession for details. On this occasion painting and performance, two languages conventionally distant from each other, combine as one.

GM

I'm interested to hear more about your relation with the *Marmellate* series.

MM

The *Marmellate* collages are visual embraces, forms of loving endearment, and containers of ideas. They are notes that influence the first part of my work, perhaps the most instinctive and capricious part. In the gallery they were placed inside open ring-binder notebooks and hung on the wall. The display is very simple and resembles an open archive.

GM

And what about the stream of consciousness of the *Martellate* project?

MM

Martellate are physical phrases that I have been writing since 1990. They are born out of a dialogue between me and the world but also one between me and my friends. They are in the form of slogans and can be read on the move, at a glance, the way we read social media these days. They contain my thoughts on art and life. I like the idea of writing them with a marker, which is the closest way of going from thinking to doing. They are my theory on art and I also use them to recount my work. They are absent images, uttered written words.

GM

Who are your masters today?

MM

My masters are Luciano Fabro, my teacher at the Brera Academy in Milan; Giulio Paolini, a sort of acquired uncle; and Maurizio Cattelan, who always spurs me on. And all my students at the NABA in Milan.

GM

Your approach to the gesture of cutting, in fact, conjures up Paolini's work on paper. I am curious how you insert this action in your way of working. I wonder whether one is nearing the rhetorical figure of the synecdoche, representing all via a fragment.

MM

I am inspired by Paolini in re-evoking the ancient as if it were today. I love his way of being something of an archaeologist. The cutout for me is a sculptural rendition of the flat surface, an elegy to the flat surface, where my eye flattens everything out a bit. Perhaps the work of cutting is an archaeologist's approach, digging for information. Here too my work is very much born out of destruction—also for instance when I break the ceramic tigers, which are then used to create a new form.

The paper of the book from which I do my cutouts is as much material as marble or stone is. Which is why my work is haphazard, because there is no before and after, like when you leaf through a book, but a moving chaos.

The cutouts are set out on the floor like fallen leaves; you cannot call them to mind, and they are shifted by the people who pass. I thus create a form that is not closed but forever free, like life itself.

161 Marcello Maloberti, *Trionfo dell'aurora*, 2018. Courtesy: the artist and Galleria Raffaella Cortese, Milan

162 Marcello Maloberti, *Sbandata* installation view at Galleria Raffaella Cortese, Milan, 2019. Courtesy: the artist and Galleria Raffaella Cortese, Milan. Photo: Lorenzo Palmieri

163 Marcello Maloberti, *Marmellate* (detail), 2018. Courtesy: the artist and Galleria Raffaella Cortese, Milan





