

The world of Diego Perrone (Asti, 1970) is one that is populated by presences poised between the fantastic and the grotesque, a world in which drama, poetry and cruelty blend into each other, in which the triviality of the quotidian is revealed in its most magical, surreal and troubling elements.

His work is developed almost exclusively through video, sculpture and photography, and it probes the most intense aspects of human psychology, the moments of relations and hard-to-define existence. In essence, we could say that his entire oeuvre concentrates on everything in human nature that is most impervious to rational understanding and communication.

The works in this selection offer an overview of the most frequently recurring subjects and atmospheres of Perrone's production: the motif of death and that of recording the pure passage of time in all its existential density, the world of childhood and the preverbal states of communication, violence as an extreme form of vitality, the absurd, and nature as the mirror and symbol of laconic, visceral emotional states that are as unexpressed as a strangled breath.

Perrone seems to use non-sense and the drift of the ridiculous and morbid within a specific tradition that touches universal issues such as life, death, pain and the problem of meaning, turning to triviality, intestinal noise and language as an expressive effort. This is a tradition that is effectively a philosophy of the body and of feeling, and it extends from the Cynics to Boccaccio and Antoni Artaud.

The animation entitled *I verdi giorni* (*Green Days*, 2000) portrays a group of children performing an act of pure and seemingly unmotivated aggression. Nothing in the designation of the victim reveals the existence of a will or logic that are not part of the game, and the roles of the aggressors are arbitrary and interchangeable with the role of the one being attacked. The violence ends exactly as it began: the immediate impulse of energy that generated it stops abruptly and is transformed into a moment of stunned incredulity and aching relief. On other occasions as well, Perrone has used the figures of childhood and old age, and thus the two extremes of existence: the former is a stage in which verbal language is still being formed – and with it a “realistic” rather than “symbolic” vision of the world – whereas the latter is one in which language becomes progressively detached from reality.

*Angela e Alfonso* (*Angela and Alfonso*, 2002) records different and seemingly inexplicable relational dynamics, shedding paradoxical light on too much love and self-giving. Inside a car, a couple celebrates an extreme sacrifice by maiming a limb, an action

that appears to be voluntary yet is also necessary in order to fulfil a tragic fate. Here too, as in other works, the filmed rendering of time as it continues to tick away is accompanied by formal research into the ultimate possibilities of realistic representation. Expressed here as pure and unknowable gratuitousness – almost as if it were a mystery of faith – violence encompasses a value bordering on the abstract. On the one hand, it emerges as the zero degree of narrative development and film representation, yet at the same time it takes a dimension of human existence and of irreducible and intolerable sentiment – love as mutilation – and brings it to a radical level of visualisation, transforming it from a metaphor to the central motif of these few minutes of existential splatter.

Similarly, *Vicino a Torino muore un cane vecchio* (*An old dog dies near Turin*, 2003) is an investigation of the linguistic drift of the selected medium, yet it is also a sorrowful poem on suffering and on the possibility of portraying it. In this case, the use of digital animation exaggerates the image's pictorial quality and technology's own potential for realism. In a dark, damp landscape that seems to evoke a more general social portrait of contemporary Italy – even as it calls to mind how Michelangelo Antonioni and Pierpaolo Pasolini made psychological and metaphysical use of the harshness and aridity of the countryside – a dog's last moments of life are recorded in their maddening entirety. Its agony has no deliverance or climax. It is solitary pain that would elude religion and solidarity alike, if it weren't for the memory of the realism of the flesh that it preserves and that spans works from the paintings of Courbet and Fautrier to the emotionality, verging on autism, of Lars von Trier's films.

*Il primo papà gira in tondo con la sua ombra, la mamma piega il suo corpo cercando una forma, il secondo papà batte i pugni per terra* (*The first father circles with his shadow, the mother bends her body as she seeks a form, the second father beats his fists on the ground*) is the surreal and contorted title of an equally surreal digital animation dated 2007. The leading player in this work is a being with an undefined nature, a disjointed hybrid with animal-like features and mechanical movements. The visual field as well as the duration and narrative development of the video are saturated with cries and squeaks, with the faceless protagonist's obsessive insistence on the same rotational motion. Of Perrone's entire oeuvre, this work is probably the one that most closely approaches his parallel research in the field of sculpture, viewed as the genesis and development of form. In effect, his sculptures allude to organic forms that evoke the cavities of the human body while also comparing this dimension to that of geological cavities, above all through the materials he uses: although they are synthetic, they mimic the transitory and unstable

states of elements such as mud, clay and tar. Through this aspect, the most recent in his oeuvre, Diego Perrone reveals a highly personal and elusive proximity to the experiences of Italian art, ranging from Lucio Fontana to Alberto Burri and Pino Pascali, to name just a few examples of the quintessentially Italian oscillation that crosses through Metaphysics and Arte Povera, and brings with it the varied facets of mimicry and artifice, of formlessness and mystery, of whispering and *mise en scène*.

Diego Perrone was born in Asti in 1970; he lives and works in Berlin. He had solo shows at MAMbo Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna and CAPC Musée d'Art Contemporain in Bordeaux in 2007, and at the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo in Turin in 2005. The artist participated in the Berlin Biennale in 2006, the Moscow Biennale in 2005, the Venice Biennale in 2003 and Manifesta 3 in 2000. His works were also exhibited as part of collective shows at the Guggenheim Museum in New York and the Musée d'Art Contemporain de Nimes in 2007; MART of Trento and Rovereto in 2003; the Museo Cantonale d'Arte in Lugano in 2006, P.S. 1 in New York, GAMEC in Bergamo and the Bolzano Museion in 2001.

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