

Vittorio Santoro

Pulleys, I & The Supposed Half of a Day &...

20/10/2016 - 26/11/2016

Artist's statement for the exhibition

Maybe more than in other exhibitions, in this one, I deepen my sculptural research to highlight the dichotomy between the inside and the outside and, by extent, to dwell on the membrane each individual is willing to forge or develop between him/herself and the visible constraints and silent coercions of the socio-cultural world.

I mostly conceive of an exhibition like a metaphorical dissection table where the everyday surrounding and different levels of my thoughts converge. I try to compare present social mechanisms and aesthetic phenomena and incorporate past equivalents by looking for their signs and symptoms across different disciplines. This is how I try to explain the everyday to myself.

I am aware that everyday or assembled objects are activators of collective, shareable thoughts. Objects contain the patina of history. They can be used, reexamined and activated in relation to different cultural contexts and historical situations. They might be able to speak a more subtle language across time. In this exhibition, the combination of materials forming, what I would call sculptural situations and their spatial arrangement in space, might underline this phenomenon.

The work *Pulleys, I* is spreading like a tentacle in the exhibition space. The adjacent works related to it seem to present each one a different version of a story, only from different viewpoints. Repetitions – works which are quasi-doubled – point out that the same thoughts incorporated in a work might occur over and over again but each time are uttered with different words. I believe that artworks are a source of ideas – not just one, but many – rather than a vessel for a single thought or a concept. They by definition speak a language that ignores tags. It is the role of the artist to show that there are multiple, mysterious grey-zones in language and that they are more powerful when left unspoken. I like to think of the viewer like someone that would like to join an open-ended conversation.

Vittorio Santoro, Paris, October 2016

...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 at 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 loses 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, 10/2016

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