

VIR Viafarini-in-residence Artists' profiles

may / july 2009: Sefer Memi o lu (1977, Turkey) and Scott Treleaven (1972, Canada)

Sefer Memi o lu _ The video maker artist develops his research as a reflection on the torrent of images that overwhelms our lives. The figures and places in his works are real and imaginary at the same time. Memi o lu does not make a critique of the contemporary approach to images, but he rather shows the everyday relationship with the flux of visual stimulus made possible by the hypertextual culture. His art is entirely digital and it could be generated by the computer or obtained from other sources, through photographic scanning or software drawing and computer graphics. His compositions are rich in signs and sophisticated allusions, historically pointy references and irony. The quotations he uses are not placed in a hierarchical way and the tone of the discourse stays still, never complaisant or emotionally pathetic.


Scott Treleaven _ The research undertaken by Scott Treleaven is meant to explore the border between identity and alterity, and eventually to force them out. Treleaven's aim is to discover which is the limit of the body as a unanimously recognized symbol, in the attempt to free it from the bond of gender definition. Drawing on these assumptions, his research revolves around the definition of the so-called era of the 'end of ideology', and the signs that characterize it. Treleaven has no regret for social classes dissolution and their correspondent symbolic codes, but it looks out for new possible combinations within the debris of present time. Hence the collage is a perfect complement to his investigation needs, not only as a medium, but as a method. the artist works with super-8 film and photography, following the *fil rouge* of young subcultures behaviors and expression. During the residency Treleaven will go on exploring the limits of objectivity of representation of urban space with the collage technique, starting from a photographic research, and finally acting on the photographs with ink, gouache or watercolor.

september / november 2009: Jonathan Baldock (1980, U.K.), Shane Campbell (1978, U.S.A), Julia Staszak (1973, Germany)

Jonathan Baldock _ The artist works with sculpture, installation and painting. His pieces, cheerful and flighty, are based on a research of the grotesque, deforming representation and on paradox and exasperation. His sculptures are characterized by geometric and naturalistic decorations, obtained from the tangle and shocking combination of different materials. Through this figurative approach the artist ends up comparing himself to the ideal history of human figure in the History of Art, investigating it with a hybrid eye that prefers absurdities and perception tricks like in the surrealism tradition. For his residency project Baldock will start from the analysis of the theatrical aesthetic traces to be found in Milan, linked to the farcical and bizarre artistic expressions where beauty is mixed to horror and grotesque. the artist is interested in the contraposition of these traditions and in their role in today's Milan, perceived as a cosmopolitan capital of fashion and design.

Shane Campbell _ The paintings of Shane Campbell are embedded in the expressionist research tradition, conserving the tension to the chipping of language pertaining to the historical movement. The artist seems inclined to a radical pessimism towards men and society, and expresses her feelings through a linguistic choice that exasperates, deforms and twists expressive tools and subjects, preferring violent and not naturalistic colors, the alteration of spatial structures and the simultaneous simplification and emphasis on the sign. During her residency the Californian artist will start from a study of the fragmented architectonic pattern of Milan, characterized by the juxtaposition of the monument's historical relevance and the modern temples of business. Shane Campbell wants to dwell on the contrast between traces of the past and the natural inclination toward the future, deepening the dynamism generated by these formal, historical and cultural contrasts.

Julia Staszak _ Julia Staszak education as a painter has then shifted to a combination of painting techniques with those of the conceptual tradition, along with sculpture and installation. Her installations are apparently inconsistent compositions of materials and techniques with dramatically different histories, that disclose to a careful look a series of analogies and correspondences between the elements that are at stake. The artist freely



flaws between different sources of inspiration, so blending vernacular and profane register with literary quotations, in a continuous and only apparently contradictory flux of appropriations, references, transformations and contrapositions, that the artist understands as empathic relations between dissimilar worlds. Staszak's works therefore reveals a deep tension to the construction of a shared background for social relations. During her staying at VIR, the artist, starting from a research on the logics of art commission in Italy and in Milan specifically, will take inspiration from the evolution of the relationship between patrons and artists – from the historical role of Catholic Church to the contemporary art scene and that of industrial design.

January / March 2010: Xabier Salaberria (1969, Spain), Dragana Sapanjoš (1979, Croatia), Pavel Sterec (1985, Czech Republic)

Xabier Salaberria _ Salabierra works on the proportional relations between man and architecture, reckoning man as a possible unit of measurement to which every architectonic structure is related and, most importantly, from which every project should start out. In so doing, he reveals also a second relationship, psychological, emotional, with architecture. The habitats he creates search for a communication between spectator and artist and confront themselves with ancient, ancestral fears, linked to darkness, to constraint and to every bond attributable to architectural signs.


Dragana Sapanjoš _ Disturbing sensations are recurring elements in Dragana Sapanjoš works, both in terms of interference with the signal of the instrumentations often included in her artworks, as well as unpleasant sensations provoked in the viewers. For instance considering some of her environmental and sound installations, a too low or too loud noise disconcert the viewer, putting him into a hard, uncomfortable condition. In the recent video installation *I love you*, a too insistent and shouted love declaration provokes in the viewer a sense of aggression, emotional blackmail and abuse. According to Dragana Sapanjoš art is a place for a very close physical and psychological proximity, a narrow contact zone between the artist and the audience, a kind of direct – and often painful – match, a chance for a peripheral relationship within the mass communication context, a too much vehement face to face embrace.

Pavel Sterec _ His research usually starts from a performative approach. The artwork emerges as the result of deliberately constructed situations and episodic events. After having attended the Prague Academy of Performative Arts his artistic career started as an actor and performer, then he graduated at Prague Academy of Fine Arts and founded the alternative radio Lemurie. In collaboration with Jan Pfeiffer he founded in 2008 Pavilion Gallery and in the same year he attended a course by visiting professor Polish artist Zbigniew Libera.

May / July 2010: Loukia Alavanou (1979, Greece), Marco Bonafé (1981, Italy), Johanna Laitanen (1976, Finland)

Loukia Alavanou _ “Through my animations and multi-channel installations I explore the language of cinema in relation to desire. I interweave elements from the found material into surreal collages of familiar narratives, creating a haunting landscape accompanied by - and often based upon- sounds also deriving from found films. Often focusing on images of woman and domesticity, the work examines the ways in which early Hollywood cinema has shaped to date our understanding of femininity, and how female role models constructed by it permeate consciousness from an early age. Taking into account that the directors and editors of the films appropriated are predominantly male and that I am a much later generation female artist, I find it inspiring to decompose and re-edit the historical material in a process reminiscent of traditional female craft making. None of my animations is based on a storyboard; it is always the process that feeds the narrative. I see this process of collecting, condensing, “chopping” and superimposing film-fragments taken from various cinematic genres as a form of free associating . I am interested in exploring the relationship between narrative and free-association through my practice.”

Marco Bonafé _ “I want to consider my work as a kind of dream which runs along parallel lines with the reality, a dream where there is a percentage of truth and fantasy. My methodology of work refers to the concept of the Archive: images found on the web, personal pictures and sculptures realized by myself and then revised in a further step, then



photographed and then again almost entirely destroyed. What remains inside my studio after such a massive work is only a file inside my hard disk, a photograph or a video to be projected in loop. I am fascinated by the fact that what remains at the end of this process makes me think that it was just like a dream (...) What attracts me the most is not the object in itself, but rather the desire for possession; my objects are undefined, useless, and their significance is connected to the representation of an unsatisfied society that does not even know what it s actually looking for."

Johanna Laitanen _ Johanna Laitanen s works combine analog photography and film. Whilst having a tight visual coherence between the mediums, they sustain an intended ambiguity leaving room for dialogue. Laitanen uses museum collections, arrangements and logical systems as her subject to investigate contemporary cultural and philosophical ideas. Seemingly methodological approach, formal compositions and repetition, is contrasted with aesthetics and dispositions that suggest more intuitive and personal viewpoint. In her more recent body of works he examined the Zoological Museums´ back-stage, its storage depots and archives as a natural continuation to her *A Spectacle of Nature* series.
"In the body of work *A Spectacle of Nature* (a series of photographs and a three channel film) I have examined the simulation of nature in natural history museums. Nature is viewed as a kind of cultural product representing the habitat dioramas as *tableaux* of nature. By removing the animal displays from their context, their gist turns to be something else. These carefully constructed animal displays reflect our ideas and desires projected on nature rather than representing nature objectively."

September / November 2010: Sharon Houkema (1975, Netherlands), Igor Muroni (1976, Italy), Jo Robertson (1976, U.K.)


Sharon Houkema _ A landscape can be viewed in two different ways, you can look at it from a mountaintop or by walking in it. In the work of Sharon Houkema both modes of perception are joined. Perception itself appears to be the subject, but the works are not that easily caught: what seems simple at turns out to be complex when you look closer. That which appears to be randomly chosen reveals its consistency over time. Time and space, standstill and motion and also the medium itself all take a part in this process. The shifting between the various standpoints are journeys to be taken by the viewer.

Igor Muroni _ "My project for the residency aims at 'inhabiting' both the cultural and architectural dimensions of the space located in via Carlo Farini 35, by the means of a work in progress approach, sometimes implying the direct involvement of the public: a kind of participatory dimension, addressing to record the collective experiences. The final result will be a series of temporary events, including screenings, guided listenings, performances, panel discussions, readings and other initiatives. The final formalization of the project will be an installation that will put on display the all the process of creative research led during the three month residency. The research field will be represented by the noise culture, not to be considered as a music genre, but rather as the condition of physical sickness caused by a bulimic approach to pop culture."

Jo Robertson _ "The work I make often experiments with ideas about beauty and sophistication. Painting the figure is a large part of my practice. The fleshiness and form of the figure is fascinating to me, in part for the colors and tones and also in the way the human condition can be explored. During my residency in Milan I will look out at what painting means, looking at its communicative powers and questioning if it is still something worth looking at today. Making emotive acts is important to me. Poetry, drawing, taking photographs and playing music, all inform my practice to give it a self created substance for me to rummage through. Painting is a way of looking at a visual surface, which paradoxically addresses internal hidden emotions. There is an immediacy about paint which I love, I like it to almost look gross, disgusting, ugly, but then I find some beauty still lurking inside it somewhere. I also very much enjoy painting from life, so I will be interested to see what the light is like to work with in Milan. Researching confessional poetry is something I enjoy doing, the poems I am looking at draw on the act of creating something vulnerable and raw whilst at the same time giving it a structure to compete with."

January / March 2011: Giorgio Guidi (1982, Italy), Jaša (1978, Slovenia), Matthew Stone (1982, U.K.)

Giorgio Guidi _ "My research focuses on the study of possible relationships between people,




places and objects. It is an analysis of those connections emerging within small 'ecosystems', in which I enter after an often casual encounter. During the research time, I drive myself into a scientific attitude, to best explain the experience itself. I am interested in analyzing the human environment conformation and how it can survive. In the process, I prefer focusing on the emotional response which underpins reality, constructed on webs of psychological references. I try to understand the complexity of relationships between small groups of people, and how this gives life to exchanges, matchings, fractures, accidents. Generally said, my work gives a fragment of reality, like a small city, where facts interweave just as human relationships do. It makes sometimes emerge paradoxes, extremisms, and nonsense but real way of living. I'm interested to see the emerging of rules in a small group of people, ways of thinking and acting, and how they establish the sense of belonging. At the same time, I look at social mistakes, and how unpredictable things could bring emotions. Recently I've been extended my research to understand contaminations in a cultural system, due to exchanges with other entities; these made me feel how many perception errors are possible, just watching at the identity of a human group. In this case the process brings me to decrease the outstanding points of the group to make it accessible by a comparison with an historical and cultural event usually best known or widely understadeable. All this starts from reality, so I try to move and spend periods within different situations, and to study how being part of them."

Jaša _ "Sublime euphoria and its sexy charge. Reaction to an art work is a form of its own and it's definitely not determined only by an art work; the context in which it is shown always plays the decisive role. So sometimes I don't even show the final result which is the linking element of an environment created through intense and frequently contrasting layering in meaning and form. The final sculpting form is the one I can create within the spectator's experience. I've used very different methods in the past years, but the main charge of a project is still achieved through a change that a space can provoke. Redefining its meaning is stimulated by the conflict created by introducing an idea into a given space, whether the space is art-dedicated or public. Since I'm interested in reality environments created through images and objects and especially our relationships with them, the performing moment becomes the linking element. In the process of structuring a project, my methods are focused on dissecting and understanding the ready-made environments, the wholeness of a situation and unavoidable mutual interactions of its components. I do not comprehend the environment (installation and performing element as a whole) as a document, re-creation, fraction or reflection of the real, but as spaces which provoke the real. In the end it's the reality which an art work can create that interests me."

Matthew Stone _ "For Memories and Encounters at Viafarini I propose a period of research and development, exploring multi-dimensional and sculptural installations of photography and drawing. I have been developing sculptural installations of photography that allow two-dimensional images to be installed within free, three-dimensional space or 'a-perspective constellations'. This sculptural installation method allows for the creation of complex interactions in space and intimate relations within networks of images. I feel that these networks can be related to my research into collaboration, creative compromise and social artistic networks. The intricate relations that develop from the positioning of the photographs or my curated human networks, create the possibility for multiple, simultaneous and coexistent readings and perspectives. This thinking and approach emerges from my commitment to exploring the complexities of ideological coexistence, the intimacy of human interaction and creative collaboration. With a history of building art as a collaborative effort, an open conversation and a spiritual belief, my social-sculptures function as poetic diagrams of a working practice. The objects crystallise, without ever simplifying, the ordered chaos of human motion."

May / July 2011: Fausto Falchi (Italy, 1982), Hannah Heilmann (Denmark, 1978)

Fausto Falchi _ My current artistic research is based on a number of considerations that revolve around the nucleus of the potential endemic problems to the relationship between man and machine, the appearance sociological survey of technology, its use, and its ability to influence the nature gestures and human activities. My work is composed by an important constructive part, characterized by phases of experimentation with various materials, technological equipment, both analog and digital materials; these materials are often part of obsolete technological objects, relics of an industrial architecture that is enhanced so exponential, following the increase of equipment production intended for mass consumption, in them the human component is almost absent, their materiality does not refer to an



conformable organic act. The nature of the objects, substantially technologized, that we use, transfers to gestures and human activities a character not entirely devoid of mechanized instances. On the other hand, the increased pace of industrial production generates, creating them from scratch, need for consumption and use of technology that is self-justifying. The technology machine comes to be seen as extension of self, so close is the relationship that is established, to absorb the problems of the machine as personal complications. This attitude, on one hand, humanizes "technology", moved to its sphere purely human competence, on the other it creates a problematic relationship with the sphere of human action, which is inextricably bound to mechanical power.

Hannah Heilmann _ "My work takes place as video, installation, computer collage, staged photography and explorations of poetic language. I am informed by many years of practice in collaboration and collectives, so I seek to avoid the element of distance that characterises the act of description or referencing. Therefore my work often contains a performative element that may be in the form of collaboration, life-as-art, or involving and integrating the third party of an audience. My motivation for making this project is among others that I for many years have been fascinated with Italian design, which I find particularly sensuous, especially if compared with insipid Scandinavian design. It led me to quietly fetishize Gio Ponti, Piero Fornasetti and Bisazza, admire Miuccia Prada, and adore Mina – there's something about the visual power that refines a certain precision in the unrestrained; something pregnant and unashamed. More than this, I am fascinated by how, as I perceive it, there is a highly developed aesthetic culture in Italy that takes place not only as a phenomenon of people of means and education, as it is in so many other places, but as something more natural and main stream."