

PIERO GOLIA

YOU DON'T KNOW WHO I THINK I AM

*After all, the museum is one of the places that suggest a higher concept of Man.
André Malraux, Le Musée Imaginaire.*

*You want the greatest thing
The greatest thing since bread came sliced.
You've got it all, you've got it sized.
R.E.M., Imitation of Life*

Piero Golia is a small artist, as you may hear him say. A feather-weight of 52 kg by 1.72 m. Life is difficult for the small: some get away with supports in their heels, some shorten the distance by contemplating the world from the Olympus of their megalomania.

If, every evening, Alexander the Great used to read the *Ilyad*, elated by Achilles' deeds, Golia puts in the VCR his favourite movie, ultra dark Japanese anime *Akira*, and watches Tetsuo let loose devastating psychic powers against a Great **Conspiracy** hatched by mad scientists and corrupt politicians, till the final nuclear apocalypse, on the background of Tokyo's Olympic Stadium. I suspect that Golia dreams of having the superpowers of a **post-modern** paladin, capable of storming and defeating the Art System, thus conquering the Earth and becoming a hero, and that when he wakes up, his lips curls into a smile. Maybe.

Maybe it's for this reasons **that** Golia gets himself involved in bold enterprises – in between supermanism and self-irony – that generate **fabulous** *chansons de geste*. Piero G. who stops a damsel on the street and convinces her, as a token of courtly love, to get his portrait **tattooed** all over her back, framed by a ribbon **proclaiming** *Piero My Idol*. Piero G. photographed with a platinum blond pretty woman in front of five stars hotels and Californian pools, driving his Ferrari, novel Hollywood prince charming. Piero G. in a snapshot entitled *Me and J. Koons* (“I know that like this, it is not quite right, but it's exactly in this imperfection that lies all the beauty”, he says). Piero G. who accepts the invitation to the Tirana Biennale by proclaiming that he **will row** all the way to Durazzo, thus tracing backwards the route **followed** by Albanian clandestines across the Adriatic sea. Piero G. who climbs up a seven meter high palm tree, at the Turin art fair, threatening to come down only when somebody will buy one of his works. The title of this piece was *On The Edge*, the exact place where to balance yourself if you want to surface and rise, to gain the much longed for visibility. Sky is the only limit.

The myths of contemporary art **spring** up and grow at amazing speed, they become huge, bigger than life. Names and works easily tower, and sometimes risk to become lovely puppies and toys for those who show, criticise, publish, or buy them. Golia plays along, by **sticking** two life **size anti-stress** polyurethane cows in the doors of a gallery, or by raising pedestals so high that bend the neck of the (inflatable) animal with the longest neck on earth, the giraffe.

In Piero Golia's world proportions are doomed to perennial **uncertainty**, to sudden changes dictated by perspective, as in Welles' *Citizen Kane*. Like Kane's mansion, his Museum in miniature is protected by

a tall iron fence. Those bars, in the movie, appear in the very first and last sequence, to seal the present-past-present loop of the story, while in Golia's model they fix the boundaries of a paradox: a debut show as retrospective.

But unlike Kane, Golia's myth will not fall victim to arbitrary and contrasting versions, grotesque **distortions** and touching anecdotes: the artist moves in advance and jumps to conclusions, he **humorously** does away with all clichés on the posthumous genius, reshuffles the importance of the **consecration** in an institutional temple, and points out by himself the turning points of his own career (culminating, at least for the **Lilliputian** Italian scene, with a solo show in Milan), thus **neutralising** the role of spectators, tomorrow's potential witnesses.

In the only room of Viafarini's show left in 1:1 scale, the public is welcomed by a silk band with the **title** of Mister o Miss *WHITE TRASH*. Maybe we've all been shrunk to fit into the miniaturised set built for us by Piero Golia; maybe now it's our turn to know who the hell we think we are...