

Pietro Roccasalva, Z
Park Avenue Armory, New York City
February 21 – 25, 2008

In Z, Pietro Roccasalva has constructed a situation that ravishes the viewer in a crossfire of abstraction and figuration, classical iconography and pop imagery.

Roccasalva always builds his installations based on some element of a previous work. In this case, the public is welcomed by *D'après La Tempesta* [After the Tempest], a work composed of a sculpture and a painting. Hung in the corridor among many nineteenth century figurative paintings, Roccasalva's monochrome is derived from one of the most notable and mysterious paintings of the Renaissance, *La Tempesta* [The Tempest] (1507-08) by Giorgione. Obtained by mixing all the colors found in Giorgione's painting, Roccasalva has treated the colors as if the tempest had literally mixed up all the pigments and reduced the work to a state of entropy and definitive stillness.

The sculpture is installed inside the Mary Divver room, opposite the painting. A minimalist monument, it composed of a paper stack surmounted with an arancino [fried rice ball]. On the one hand, the white paper with its surrounding black line is inspired by Ellsworth Kelly's extremely reduced painting *White Square* as well as Felix Gonzalez-Torres' paper stacks. On the other, it is also directly related to the form that obituaries are posted on the facades of Italian city squares. In the artist's iconography, the arancino, a typical southern Italian snack, becomes an image of a dead sun, fallen down.

Three persons surround the sculpture, like three angels around an altar, acting either as guardians of the sculpture or as witness to the sacrifice of the dead sun. This tableau vivant is composed of the exhibition's curator, his twin brother and their father. In this way the curator voluntarily decides to be subjected (ruled) by the artist, becoming a subject of his work, rather than directing operations from the outside.

Dressed like soccer referees, the trinity is also, for Roccasalva, a depiction of Zurvan, the Persian god of infinite time, space, and fate, father of twin brothers, who are the personification of good and evil.

Finally, all the elements are held together by a text in violet neon that can only be read by looking at it in the mirror. It reproduces a famous phrase by Jacques Lacan and overlooks the installation as a whole.

Vincenzo de Bellis

Pietro Roccasalva was born in Modica Italy in 1970, currently lives and works in Milan. Recently his work has been shown as part of *Senso Unico*, a group exhibition of contemporary Italian Art at MOMA/PS1. Roccasalva has exhibited extensively in Europe in galleries and institutions including Fondazione Querini Stampalia, Venice; art: concept, Paris; Prague Biennial; Galerie Johnen + Schöttle, Cologne and Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Bergamo. In 2005 Roccasalva was the recipient of the Premio Furla per l'Arte, one of Italy's most prestigious prizes for contemporary art. In 2008 Pietro Roccasalva will participate in *Art Statements*, *Art 39* Basel and *Manifesta 7*. A monograph on his oeuvre will soon be published by JRP Ringier, Zurich.



Pietro Roccasalva, *Study For Z*, 2008



Z, Installation View: Front: part of *D'Après La Tempesta* (Paper Stack and arancino) and Tableau Vivant. In the central mirror are visible also part of *You Never Look At Me From The Place I See You* (violet neon light) and part of *La Tempesta* (Oil on Canvas)
The Tableau Vivant is composed by the curator (right), the curator's twin brother (left), and curator's father (center)



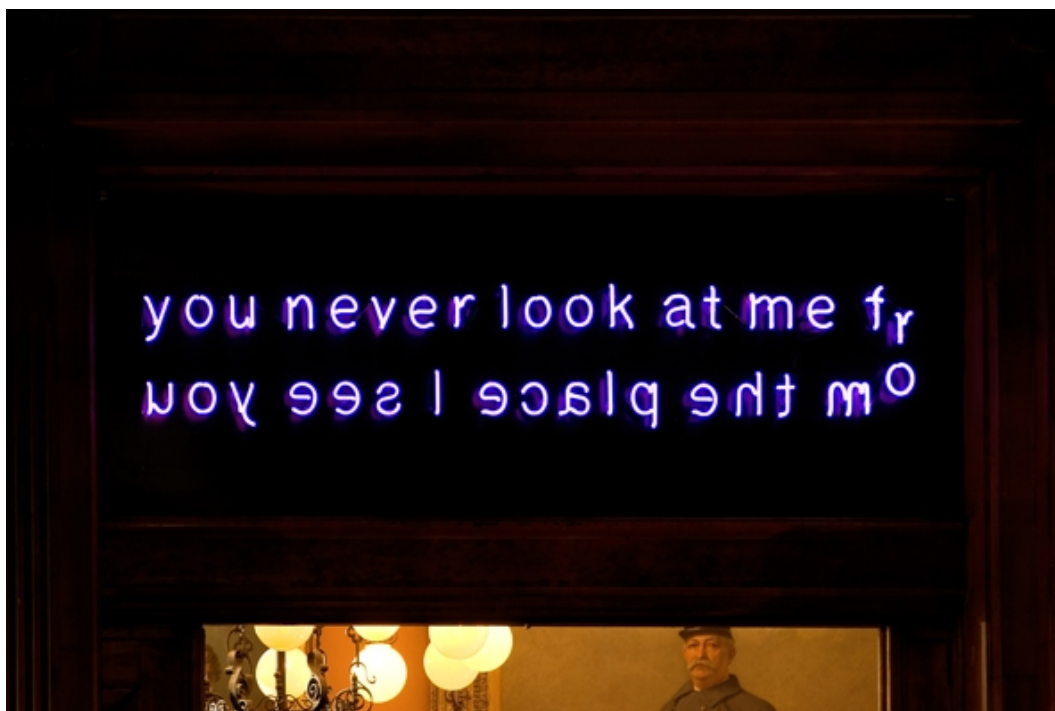
Z, Installation view (opposite side) Front: Tableau Vivant, and part of *D'Après La tempesta* (Paper Stack and Arancino) Rear High: *You Never Look At Me From The Place I See You* (violet neon light) Rear Corridor: Part of *D'Après La Tempesta* (Oil On Canvas)



Front: Part of *D'Après La Tempesta* (Paper Stack and Arancino) Rear High: *You Never Look At Me From The Place I See You* (violet neon) Rear Corridor: part of *D'Après La Tempesta* (Oil on Canvas)



Part of *D'Après La Tempesta*, 2006, offset print on paper, 80 x 80 x 50 cm,
fried rice ball, Ø 30 cm



You Never Look At Me From The Place I See You neon, 33 x 185 cm



Installation view of part of *D'Apres La Tempesta*, 2006



Part of *D'Apres La Tempesta*, 2006, oil on canvas, 83 x 73 cm