

How long can a second last?

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Michelangelo Consani's work focuses on things which escape our normal threshold of perception because they are too small and too fast, or else too large and too slow. In this ongoing study the exhibition space becomes a stage on which to put on a series of minimal performances that strive to become intangible. One of the first works in which he began to reveal this interest is *Blow* (2003), a 3 second video in which an old lady tries to blow out the candles on her birthday cake and fails to do so. The concept of time, of elusiveness, of fragility and in the end of emptiness become constants in his work from this time on. This discourse silently takes form in all his works, up to the most recent ones, such as the 2007 video *Naviganti* (Sailors) in which a boat sailed by an old man lands at a dock, picks up a woman and sails off again. This interest appears again in the exhibition *Anarchica morte di un occidentale* (Anarchic death of a westerner), presented in Pescara in 2005. The title is a play on the title of a text by Dario Fo, *Morte accidentale di un anarchico* (Accidental death of an anarchist), in which reconstruction of the episode of the death of the anarchist Pinelli becomes an opportunity to address the issue of state-sponsored massacres. The space of representation remains completely empty, with the exception of minimal traces which are insufficient to determine either the artist's intentions or the spectator's role. But there is a window open between the two: it might just be to let air into the room, or we might start to reflect on the fact that, just by letting air in, without any symbolic references, we have let something natural into a space dedicated to make-believe. Is it a matter of interrupting a repetition, a mechanism that repeats itself, the irrepressible ambiguity of every public act, like every piece of information, every representation? The fact is that air comes in from the real street in the real town of Pescara: and this is what becomes essential, in the end, even though it is invisible and unmentionable.

These projects are tools for instituting a process, parts of a mechanism capable of attracting new flows of thought. The same happens in *Quanto può durare un secondo?* (How long can a second last?), an exhibition produced in Pietrasanta in 2008. The most important pieces in the exhibition are two sculptures made of marble dust: *Fragili equilibri#2*, a ski boot with a stiletto heel, and *Colonna-finita*, a series of disposable cups stacked one on top of the other from the floor to the ceiling to form a column. At first they seem to be made of the prestigious material characteristic of the Tuscan town, white Carrara marble, but in actual fact they are made out of the waste products of its industrial processing. And while that very dust produced by the quarrying of marble covers the Apuan Alps, creating the illusion that they are eternally covered with snow, on the other side of the world the icebergs are melting. As we are reminded by *Intervallo*, a collage of an iceberg supported by a toothpick. For how long? Now that it has broken off from the polar ice cap, it will slowly die, melting away in the water. The water into which divers jump in a vintage photograph

from the artist's own personal archives, and a hesitant boy leaps, filmed with a home video camera. The actions are stratified in time without defining a territory or creating new codes for a precarious reality weighted down by immanent collapse.

The artist thus attempts to break those images which fix our convictions, ideas and thoughts, going beyond their reconciling appearance and revealing what goes on in between them.

His work sets itself at a distance from spectacular aesthetics; it does not represent something, but rather chooses a way of getting to know the world that avails itself of devices which query the sensible and define what Georges Perec calls an aesthetic of the "infra-ordinary". The eyes focus on "what happens every day and recurs everyday: the banal, the quotidian, the obvious, the common, the ordinary, the infra-ordinary, the background noise... [ed. and reflect on] the habitual, how should we take account of, question, describe it?" (Georges Perec (1994), *The infra-ordinary*, Italian publisher Bollati Boringhieri)

This is the case of *Progetto di disperdere energia* (Project for wasting energy) (2007), a video in cui which the song of a cicada is filmed: an insect that is almost extinct and whose sound few people know. This fascination with little, marginal things is mixed with a sensation of precariousness, leading us directly into extra-dimensional spaces. And so Consani's works do not seek out the hidden structure or the essence of things, but render perceptible the profound movements whose forms are simply the effect and timing of which those movements are symptoms.

Consani's second solo show in Pescara is named after this video. But while on the first occasion the representation space was an empty stage, in *Progetto di disperdere energia* the artist comes up with a series of works in which minimal movements produce a system of vital energies which is continually changing and expanding on different levels, from that of growing and developing natural forces to that of human reality. A nucleus of works which generate aesthetic energy triggering an invasive perceptive stress which is never neutral and gets its context and therefore the onlooker involved: in an uncalculated instant the column of marble dust suddenly collapses, changing its shape; a lever leaks water into the floor and slowly rises; an athlete in front of the entrance to the exhibition performs virtuoso exercises. All this is reflected not in metaphorical terms, but as an immanent presence that grasps the event, not the spectacular one but the one that "is inseparable from down time. So that even the most commonplace of events makes us soothsayers" (Gilles Deleuze (2000), *Pourparlers*, Paris: Minuit, 1990; Eng.tr., Interviews 1972-1990 [forthcoming from Columbia University Press], Postscript). Consani once again focuses on "becoming imperceptible" and his visualisation becomes a form of resistance capable of changing the way we perceive space and time.